

What Bubble Burst?

Three Realtors Redefine Niche & Networking —
Even as Their Peers Leave the Business for Good

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Aaron Auxier

The height of the Vegas real estate boom brought out a motley crew of people with only one thing in common: They were looking to make a quick buck. So many people were crossing the border to invest that for a while there, it seemed like they were handing out Las Vegas property to everyone with a California state driver's license. Heck, even the local strippers were leaving the clubs to make more money in real estate.

But with the market slow-down, dancers are heading back to the clubs, athletes are going back to being personal trainers and some Californians have headed back to the beach (or on to the next big thing). But those who chose to stay, who actually enjoy the business, are left with the remnants of a once-explosive market.

And thus began their realtor reinvention.

The Blogger

Aaron Auxier, 33, was born in Los Angeles and dabbled in acting as a kid before finding his first true passion: photography. Four years ago, he married his first passion with his second, real estate, and threw in some hometown connections to carve out a niche as an expert in luxury high-rise. The result? An e-mail blast titled "VIVA VEGAS! Update" The update goes out every other week to thousands of developers, investors and clients — even some Hollywood heavyweights, although he won't divulge who. Articles appearing on any of the 10 blogs he contributes to reach even farther, he says.

"People recognize me as an expert on high-rise," he says. "I don't make quotes that I'm the best; I educate. And people see me as an expert because of it. And then they hire me."

His stories have included a how-to on avoiding pitfalls, an analysis of the industry, and video and still photography of projects under construction.

"I get up, and I read," he says. "I go out, and I see. I have conversations with people, and I analyze. It's a lifestyle. It's not a career; it has to transcend that. It is my life. There is no separation for me."

Luxury high-rise isn't a game for those who have to bring home the bacon on a regular basis. Auxier, however, isn't faring too poorly. He, with Luxury Realty Group, the boutique brokerage for which he works, was recognized as one of the top 10 sales agents in January by MGM MIRAGE's CityCenter. He wants to own his own Strip property within 25 years.

"Forget the money and anything else," he says. "It's about helping people do this the right way. There are a lot of caveats to this — I don't share all my secrets."

If he's said it once, he's said it a dozen times — he blogs and e-mails in order to give high-rise



construction a truthful face.

"Las Vegas is a unique place," he says. "The Strip is unique and definitely misunderstood at times. My doing all these things helps everybody. It helps me. It helps Vegas. It helps the projects. At the end of the day, that's what it's all about."

The MySpace-r

Mahsheed Barghisavar, 25, was one of those people who got into real estate four years ago, but instead of falling in love with the money, she fell in love with the business. She grew up in San Jose, Calif., and double majored in business marketing and business management at San Jose State University. About two years ago, after the real estate drought hit her hard, she turned to her "friends" on MySpace. If actors, musicians and politicians could utilize it for business, why couldn't she?

"I decided to post it on my page that I did real estate," she says. "I didn't try to advertise. I just wrote what I did, and I got a response from it. From last October until now has been the best time for me ever. Every time I posted a bulletin, I would get responses."

Barghisavar increased her visibility on MySpace by posting property information and photos on her blogs. (Her page is set to "private" in order to weed out the weirdos.) From October 2006 to July 2007, Barghisavar closed 12 properties. ("It's insane," she says.) She claims the site works because of the personal connections you make.

Following the rules, Barghisavar admits, has never been her forté. She originally moved to town, in fact, to work for her father's car business, because she didn't want a standard 9-to-5 job. She then discovered real estate but knew she'd have to carve her own niche.

"I tried open houses; I tried cold calling," she says. "Nothing worked. And that's not me anyway. I didn't enjoy doing it the way other real estate agents were doing it." She currently has about 4,000 "friends" on MySpace, and says networking and referrals are key: "You've still got to get to know something in order to sell it and close the deal," she says.

The Downtown Revitalize-r

Eve Mazarrella's Distinctive Real Estate &



Eve Mazzarella

Investments is located downtown, right smack in the center of the community she wants to build. Growing up, she saw Seattle and San Diego flourish due to revitalization, and she believes Downtown Las Vegas will follow.

Instead of taking on new housing, like Auxier and Barghisavar have done, Mazzarella, 30, thinks about historic significance and building a community with people who have lived there for longer than she's been alive.

"I'm a property owner down here," she says. "I want to be the forefront of the revitalization effort."

Based on population demographics, Mazzarella and her team decided a quarterly newsletter was the best way to reach out to the neighborhood. The newsletter contains a calendar of events and community news, as well as property information. Her goal is to develop a cadre of property owners who can cultivate new ideas.

"There's always something new, always something going on," she says. "This area is in a transitional phase. You have people who have been here for 40, 50 years. It's going to take all of us who

have a parcel here and there. The strength is in numbers."

The brokerage's new digs will be located at 408 S. 7th Street, a stop on the Las Vegas Historic Walk. The house was built in 1931, and since she couldn't bear to tear it down, the home will be cut in half and raised to be the new building's third story.

"I'm not just trying to sell it to other people; I'm investing myself," Mazzarella says. "I can keep my finger on the pulse that's going on down here. And I can't do that everywhere."

Her niche is working, she says. People are moving downtown to lofts, condos and older homes. When the market slowed down, she says she enjoyed the challenge. Like her counterparts, she built a reputation and expertise in an area to make her stand out among the struggling agents who thought it would be an easy gig.

"I think agents are going to have to do that, because you can't be the best at everything," she says. "It's going to weed out the weak, so to speak. They sold property to their friends, their cousins. Then, it dried up."

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— Eve Mazzarella