REALTYLINE

A FAMILY-OWNED PUBLICATION SERVING THE AUSTIN METRO AREA AND SURROUNDING CITIES

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Simple Tips To Getting A Home Ready For Market

By Rachel Arterberry **Contributing Writer**

When looking to stage a home, the goal is to have the perfect buyer fall in love with it and truly imagine themselves living there. The current homeowner has probably spent years making the home feel just right for them. But what they need to know is it's time to remove themselves from the equation and make room for someone else to make their personal mark on the home. This means they will most likely have some work to do — with your guidance to go through this editing process and get the home staged just right.

Figuring out how to present the home in a way that allows potential buyers to see themselves living there can be tricky. It can be especially tricky for the current homeowner because all those special touches they have added to the home over the years — as attached to them as they may be — will have to go.

It can be daunting for those who cannot get past the personal connection or sentimental aspects of certain home design choices. You will need to remind the homeowners to remove themselves from the equation and look at things from an outsider's perspective. In some cases, it may even be easier to bring in an objective third party to look through the home and make recommendations on what to edit.

At the end of the day, buyers want to see a home that looks lived in but not too lived in. Some personal touches are OK, but things like 20 years of kids' school photos do not need to be on display and can be packed away for their next home.

Edit and Curate

Style each room with items that make sense for its type, and choose the right things - especially the right-sized things. For instance, an exercise machine should not be in the corner of a formal living room, and a giant sectional sofa should not be in a small-scale family room.

Eliminate Too Much Personality or **Pattern**

Aprospective buver should not have to look through "stuff" to see themselves in the space. Overly patterned fabrics, large collections of knickknacks, and too many themed items are not the best presentation. You want buyers to focus on the

home and not be distracted by things in the way of that.



If you're unsure if a room has too much, it probably does. Plus, with fewer furnishings in a space, rooms will actually look bigger (hello, more perceived value!).

When It Comes to Color, **Stick With Neutrals**

While you don't necessarily want a home to be bland and boring, color psychology will tell



you that cool, light colors create a sense of calm, while active colors like red and orange have a more manic vibe.

Keep It Clean

Buyers won't even make it past the first room if a home does not look, feel, and even smell clean. Sensory appeal is important. On open house days, you may even suggest baking cookies in the oven to give the house an extra "homey" feel.

STAGING: CONTINUES ON PAGE 10



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Founded in 1995, RealtyLine is a trade publication for real estate professionals. As a non-subscription publication, it is distributed by the US Postal Service to over 18k+ members of the Austin Board of REALTORS® (ABoR), over 1,800+ members of the Williamson County Association of REALTORS® (WCREALTORS) and the Home Builders Association of Greater Austin, as well as those involved in the real estate industry.

It is our pleasure to be a member of ABoR, WCREALTORS, HBA, and have been designated as an honorary member of the WCR Austin Chapter. We are equally proud to be a Major Investor in TREPAC (2019, 2020).

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Strategic Moves: How ABoR, Unlock MLS Support Agents Amidst Transition



XENT REDDING 2024 PRESIDENT

The next few months are a critical period for your business and our marketplace. The National Association of REALTORS (NAR) has set a deadline of August 17, 2024, for the settlement-required MLS rules and broker business practice changes to take effect locally.

My brokerage is preparing by updating our business practices and forms to align with the required changes and building in time to train our agents. By the time you read this, Unlock MLS will have released a wave of events, resources, and education tracks to help everyone navigate this transition. It's both encouraging and empowering to know that my association and MLS are providing the support I need to confidently and smoothly navigate this important transition.

It's also reassuring to know that I have what I need to keep my business running strong during this period. Your ABoR and Unlock MLS boards of directors have been hard at work this year to roll out many free benefits and discounts to enhance your business, save time, and ultimately sell more homes in 2024.

ABoR & Unlock MLS Benefits Released Since January

You can learn more about all these benefits, including how to sign up, from the ABoR. com homepage.

January: Key Reciprocity

Your MLS provides automatic access to Supra lockboxes in the San Antonio and Houston MLS areas. You can access and show properties from Uvalde to Galveston, covering nearly 70 percent of the Texas housing market. That's an expansion of almost 50,000 active

properties. Wow!

February: Forewarn

I love this app! Forewarn allows users to access vital insights on prospective clients in seconds using either a phone number or name. You can verify details such as identity, phone numbers, address history, financial indicators, property records, and nationwide criminal history.

March: Matrix 11.2.3 & New Search

The recent update to Matrix 11.2.3 brought a much cleaner design and a greatly improved search module. I will admit, it took me a minute (yes, your president!) to get used to these changes, and I was tempted to stay in "classic mode." But it's important to lean into change to keep your competitive edge sharp. I encourage you to block some time this month to get to know the new search — perhaps by signing up for a free MLS training on **ABOR.com/Take-A-Class**.

April: CubiCasa CubiCasa!

Unlock MLS subscribers have FREE access to CubiCasa to create accurate 2D and 3D listing floorplans in minutes, straight from their phones! Leverage the Cubicasa app to create more powerful listings, impress your clients, and sell homes faster.

Add these to the amazing benefits we already offer!

Economic Data & Research Reports

Our most recent report, "The Impact of Minimum Lot Size on Housing," examines the impact of minimum lot size on Austin's housing supply and affordability and focuses on the potential effects that reducing Austin's minimum lot size can have on housing affordability.

You can expect more research releases throughout the year from ABoR and Unlock MLS Housing Economist Dr. Clare Knapp, including weekly episodes of the Driving It Home podcast! View research reports at ABoR.com/Research and tune into the podcast weekly at **ABoR.com/DrivingItHome**.

FREE Inman Select and Austin Business Journal Access

As you know, the industry is experiencing some changes. Thankfully, we've got ways to stay connected with the latest developments in our marketplace and our industry. ABoR members have free access to both Inman Select and the Austin Business Journal! Don't miss out on the next breaking news in the industry by activating your free accounts at ABoR.com/Benefits.

Apply for the 2025 Board of Directors

One of the most overlooked, yet most powerful, ABoR benefits is the career-building leadership opportunities that being a member of our community provides. Are you ready to go big? Applications to serve on the 2025 ABoR & Unlock MLS Boards of Directors are open until Friday, May 31.

I cannot speak highly enough about the positive experiences, growth opportunities, and connections I've made throughout my time on the Board. It's single-handedly the best way to stay connected in our industry. Join me in serving and step into leadership with YOUR Association and MLS by applying at **ABoR.com/Leadership**.



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Built on Relationships

Power of Geographic Competency in Williamson County's Real Estate Market



KIM DALE 2024 PRESIDENT

When it comes to buying or selling a home, one of the most critical factors in ensuring a successful transaction is having a REALTOR® with strong geographic competency. This expertise goes beyond simply knowing the layout of streets and neighborhoods; it encompasses a deep understanding of the local real estate market, community dynamics, zoning regulations, and more. Williamson County continues to be a thriving hub of economic growth, natural beauty, and vibrant communities. As one of the fastest-growing counties in the nation, Williamson County offers an abundance of opportunities for homebuyers, sellers, and investors alike.

The fusion of a proficient REALTOR® and a deep understanding of local geography is an unbeatable force. With their expertise in the market, insights into neighborhoods, adept navigation of each community's nuances, utilization of local networks and resources, customized marketing tactics, and active community involvement combined with personalized attention, achieving geographic competence guarantees an exceptional home buying or selling journey for clients.

Central Texas/Williamson County's real estate market is characterized by rapid growth and diverse neighborhoods. A REALTOR® with geographic competency possesses in-depth knowledge of local market trends, property values, and neighborhood dynamics. From historic homes in Georgetown to modern developments in Round Rock and Cedar Park, they understand the unique features and amenities that distinguish each community, allowing them to match clients with properties that align with their preferences and lifestyle.

Buying or selling a home involves navigating a maze of complexities, from zoning regulations to legal requirements. A REALTOR® with geographic competency understands the intricacies of Williamson County's zoning laws, land use regulations, and permitting processes. They can guide clients through these complexities, ensuring compliance and minimizing potential issues that may arise during the transaction.



REALTORS® with geographic competency have extensive networks of local professionals, including lenders, inspectors, contractors, and attorneys. These connections are invaluable resources for clients, providing access to trusted service providers who understand the nuances of the Williamson County market. Whether it's securing financing or coordinating inspections, these local resources streamline the transaction process and enhance the overall client experience.

Geographic competency enables REALTORS® to develop targeted marketing strategies that highlight the unique characteristics of Williamson County's communities. They understand what makes each neighborhood desirable to potential buyers and can tailor their marketing efforts accordingly. Whether it's showcasing nearby parks and recreational facilities or highlighting top-rated schools, these targeted strategies attract the right buyers and maximize property exposure.

REALTORS® with geographic competency are deeply engaged in the Williamson County community. They participate in local events, volunteer activities, and neighborhood associations, building strong connections and trust within the community. This grassroots involvement not only enhances their credibility as real estate professionals but also gives them insight into local developments and concerns that may impact the real estate market. Additionally, their personalized service ensures that clients receive tailored guidance and support throughout the transaction process, from the initial consultation to closing.

To become a geographically competent REALTOR®, one must immerse themselves in the intricacies of their local market, diligently studying trends and developments. Continuous education and professional development are essential to staying updated on changes in regulations, zoning laws, and emerging market opportunities. Luckily, you do not have to go on this endeavor alone; your local associations are here to help guide you through your journey to be geographically competent. From City Updates to our award-winning Selling the Suburbs WCSpecialist Certification, WCREALTORS is committed to building strong geographic competency for our members and Central Texas.

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Celebrate, Connect, and **Climb: WCR Austin's Vibrant Lineup of Events**



DELAINE MCMURRY 2024 PRESIDENT

As we gear up for an exciting season filled with engaging activities and opportunities for growth, WCR Austin Chapter is thrilled to announce a lineup of events that promise to bring both fun and valuable networking experiences



REGISTER NOW! Heels and Deals: Pedicures and Bingo Tuesday, May 21 9:30 to 11:15 a.m. Arbor Nail Bar 10515 N. Mopac Expy Suite A126

Come celebrate at our special event hosted by Austin's Women's Council of REALTORS, dedicated to showing appreciation for the influential women in your life. Treat yourself and your loved ones to pedicures, Prosecco, and BINGO! Whether it's your mom, a mother figure, a valued client, or a cherished friend, all are welcome to join in the festivities this "Mother's Day" season. While we adore our dog moms, this event is exclusively for the human variety. Let's come together to honor our esteemed members and the women who have played pivotal roles in shaping their journey towards becoming the strong, empowered individuals they are today!

Our eagerly anticipated Virtual Networking Event, which will be held from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. on Thursday,

June 13. This event hosted by the collaborative efforts of the Austin, Brazos Valley, and Hill Country networks. Pour yourself your favorite glass of wine or cocktail while mingling from the coziness of your own home! Here's what awaits you: acquaint yourself with fellow Texas WCR members and their unique specialties and niches, expand your referral network, gain insights into entering specific niche markets, and educate yourself on the art of successful networking. Secure your spot by registering now! Don't let this amazing opportunity to connect and learn slip away. We look forward to seeing you on Zoom! Contact Laura Finkenbinder at 512-745-0061 or laura@ homeconnectpathway.com or Renee Damron at 512-786-1817.



SPONSORS NEED **REGISTER NOW!** 2nd Annual Purse

Bingo 6 p.m. Location TBA

Our second annual and highly popular Purse Bingo event will be held on Wednesday, July 31. The event is scheduled from 6 to 9 p.m. and a north Austin location will be announce soon. Join us for an evening of excitement and camaraderie as we come together to play for fabulous prizes.

Additionally, we are excited to announce the upcoming elections for our 2025 board. This is an excellent opportunity for dedicated individuals to step up and take Wednesday, July 31 on leadership roles within our organization. Tanya Chappell will automatically assume the role of President next year, and we are now seeking passionate individuals to join her in shaping the future of our network. Positions available

include President Elect, First Vice President, Treasurer, Membership, and Events. If you have a drive to make a difference and are eager to contribute your skills and expertise, we encourage you to consider applying for one of these pivotal roles. Candidate applications open on Wednesday, May 15.

For updates and information on our events, be sure to check out our Facebook page. We look forward to seeing you there!









Unlock the Power of Canva Pro to Dominate the Spring Selling Season in Austin



SONIA GUARDADO 2024 TEXAS PRESIDENT

The Greater Austin area is kicking off its spring selling season with a record number of homes on the market. With such a crowded field, how can your listings stand out? Canva Pro could be your secret weapon. Think of Canva Pro as your personal design assistant, available to help at a moment's notice. It offers a wide range of templates, from eye-catching property flyers to engaging social media posts. What's more, you can personalize each template to reflect your unique style.



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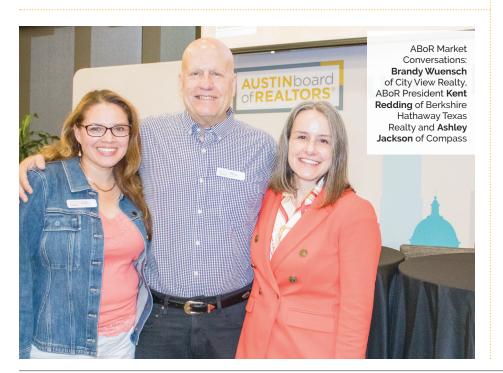
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9:30 to 11:15 a.m.
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But Canva Pro is about more than just attractive designs. Its multimedia capabilities allow you to transform photos into stunning slideshows and virtual tours that impress potential buyers. For those working in teams, Canva Pro's collaborative features make it easy to share and comment on projects, helping you craft marketing materials that get noticed.

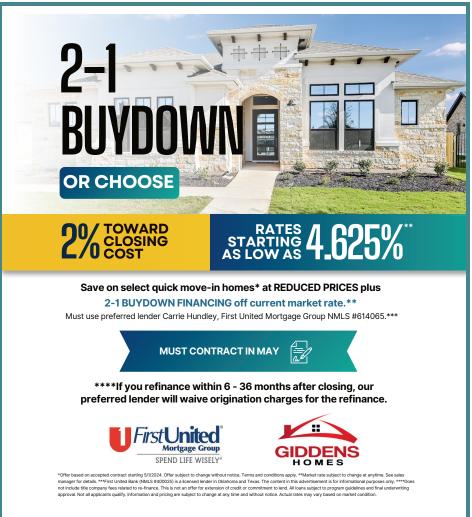
Ready to enhance your real estate marketing? Try adding Canva Pro to your toolkit. It's like a magic touch that will make you wonder how you ever got by without it. If you're unsure how to get started, the Texas RRC is here to help.

Join us for our Summer Sizzler Series, held monthly from June through August. This series includes three dynamic sessions designed to boost your business using Canva Pro, along with

the latest in AI technology, video templates, and strategic social media planning. The first session, focusing on cutting-edge photo and video editing, will be conducted via Zoom on Thursday, June 13, at 2 p.m. Register at Texas.CRS.com to reserve your place in this free series. I look forward to welcoming you!













STAGING: CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE

Finish the Rooms

This means that if you had to suggest removing something major from a room (like a ratty old recliner, for instance), and there is an obvious hole in the room design, encourage the homeowner to find something from another part of the house (that will not be missed) to fill the void. If, for some reason, they don't have the right thing, they can consider renting items while the house is on the market, or this can be another good reason to utilize a staging service.

Some homes will need more design help than others to put the home's best foot forward and get it ready to list. In this instance, you may want to call in the experts (an interior designer, decorator, or professional stager) as they can help you and your homeowner achieve the perfect balance between an aspirational presentation of the home that has personality but that also allows buyers to see through the interior design and imagine how they would style it for their likes and needs.

If hiring professional help is not an option, keeping design elements and principles in mind will help guide you and your homeowner to make smart staging choices.

Design Elements & Principles

Whether you hire a stager or not, it's important to remember the elements and principles of design. By doing so, you can offer your listing clients an added level of service that they will remember when referring you to others they know who are looking to buy or sell a home. A few key design elements and principles to consider when staging rooms (indoor and outdoor) in a home you are listing for a client.

Balance & Rhythm

True interior design is all about balancing color, pattern, scale, and styles. It's that feeling you get when you look at a well-designed room; you may not know all the details that went into finding that balance, but when it's achieved, it feels good and looks good. Rhythm plays a key role in this balance by guiding how your eye follows things around a room. Is it a chaotic rhythm or a soothing line created by the flow? Achieving the right rhythm ensures a harmonious and visually pleasing space.

Contrast

Simpler styling is recommended for staging purposes, but contrast is still important. For example, a dark wood coffee table could be paired with a light-colored fabric sofa — the dark and light contrast in this scenario.

Scale & Proportion

It's not enough for a room to have furniture; it needs furniture that fits the room. A common design mistake is buying furniture that is either too big or too small for a space. Showing homeowners how to avoid this mistake will make you stand out in the listing and selling process.

Lines, Shape & Form

The lines of a room design should be

complementary. If a room has strong vertical lines in its architecture, then having furnishings with horizontal lines can help the room to be more balanced and less tall. On the other hand, adding more vertical lines to the same space would enhance the large scale of the space.

Take shapes into consideration when styling or staging a space. Everything having a hard edge or line may not feel visually inviting. Incorporating furnishings or accessories with softer shapes and forms can create a more pleasing arrangement for the eye. For furniture pieces, think round coffee tables and cabinets with curved tops. For accessories, consider adding curvaceous vases with fresh flowers or a round area rug.

Color, Texture & Pattern

While it's fun to experiment with color in interior design, it tends to be a very personal decision. For the purposes of home staging, neutral color schemes allow potential homeowners to see through the furnishings to the physical attributes of the home itself. After all, they are potentially buying the home, not the furnishings (in most cases). Additionally, humans are tactile, so texture is an important part of experiencing a well-designed space. A mix of textures creates interest and keeps the senses (sight and touch) engaged. Just don't overdo it; it's all about balance.

As mentioned before, too much pattern can be off-putting to potential buyers, but when used in restraint, pattern can add just the right amount of personality. Things like throw pillows, area rugs, and a statement piece of art can add patterns that carry an otherwise neutral room.

Space & Light

Creating the right balance of open space and filled space with furnishings makes a space feel welcoming and visually appealing. Similarly, lighting in a home is integral to making it feel either sterile or inviting. If a home does not have much installed lighting in ceilings or walls, freestanding lamps and sconces should be thoughtfully placed to illuminate the room and create the right ambiance. However, too much lighting can be overwhelming and glaring, so finding the right balance is essential.

Final Staging Thoughts

After you have helped your client with getting their home staged and ready to list, make sure to take photos of the finished staging. It's one thing to have people walk through and see the home in person, but you'll also be promoting it online through your MLS listing. You should also consider hiring a professional photographer to ensure the house presents as best as possible. It's important to put the house's best foot forward and not rely on personal cell phone photos.

By taking the time to help your homeowner be thoughtful about how they present their home, you and the seller will benefit from a potentially more lucrative selling price. It also doesn't hurt to gain a reputation for going the extra mile for your clients.











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A unique builder with a distinct product design, Sitterle Homes specializes in crafting top-of-the-line garden, multi-generational, estate, townhomes, and traditional homes. These residences come packed with luxury features, all nestled in the Greater Austin Area.

Comparatively a small builder, Sitterle Homes was founded over 60 years ago by Frank Sitterle Senior. Operating in seven distinct communities across Austin, this local and family-owned business is deeply integrated into the community where the Sitterle family has worked, lived, and prospered. Whether designing homes for new families, those over 55, or young professionals, each community is crafted to appeal to fellow Texans with amenities tailored to enhance their lifestyle.

Annually, Sitterle Homes constructs about 100 new homes in the Austin area, distinguished by several key attributes that set them apart as leaders in the builder and developer marketplace:

- High Standards of Quality: Sitterle Homes maintains a high quality standard in each home they design and build, evident in the craftsmanship of each property.
- Timeless Designs: Keeping abreast of current trends, Sitterle offers home designs that are both timeless and appealing to today's and tomorrow's homebuyers.
- Trending Designs: Architectural design distinguishes a Sitterle Home from other builders in the area. The foundation of Sitterle Homes is designing products that cater to the lifestyles and preferences of homeowners, fostering a loyalty that encourages buyers to return as they move through life's stages.
- Personalization: With an in-house architectural staff, Sitterle can offer extensive personalization options, enabling homeowners to design and create spaces they adore. From an extra bedroom to a hobby studio or other personal requests, Sitterle Homes offers more flexibility for customization than traditional production builders.

Ashley McKee, marketing director for the Austin Division of Sitterle Homes, has contributed six years to the company and consistently ensures that the legacy of Sitterle Homes remains a central focus of their marketing efforts. "We offer several different product lines and features across the many communities where we develop and build," Ms. McKee explains. "Each neighborhood receives a marketing approach customized to the buyer demographic specific to that area." Whether it's a young family seeking an exceptional school district, empty-nesters looking to downsize and enjoy life, or couples seeking conveniences and outdoor recreation, Sitterle Homes designs and crafts homes that meet the unique needs and preferences of each buyer.

For homebuyers uninterested in the amenities of developed communities, and possessing land within a 30-mile radius of the greater Austin area — from Salado to Horseshoe Bay — Sitterle can assist in building from their diverse range of unique styles. They also aid with the permitting process and leverage their extensive network of trade relationships.

Since the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, there has been a surge in demand for the personalization of existing homes in the Austin area, particularly with Sitterle Homes. "With the pressure of staying at home and the surge in remote work, many homeowners realized they weren't in love with their current homes," McKee notes, which has driven robust sales of new homes and customizations in recent years.

The distinctive design and high standards of Sitterle Homes place them at a higher price point than some competitors, but homebuyers are assured they are not purchasing a cookie-cutter home. Instead, they acquire a residence proudly bearing the Sitterle Homes Seal of Excellence.

REALTORS: Learn more about the variety of unique options and product types at Sitterle Homes by visiting www.sitterlehomes.com/realtors/. From cottages to townhomes to larger residences, Sitterle Homes is eager to collaborate with you to bring your buyers into one of our communities. With a unique product in each neighborhood, Sitterle Homes has much to offer. Let's assist homebuyers together!





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'Advertised interest rate of 5.99% has a 6.032% ANNUAL PERCENTAGE RATE (APR) based on a conventional 30-year fixed rate mortgage on an owner-occupied home with a sales price of \$500,000, loan amount of \$400,000, 760 credit score and 20% down payment with no subordinated financing allowed. The APR does not consider any other loan specific finance charges you may be required to pay. Conventional loans only, cannot exceed conventional limits, high balance, government, adjustable rate and jumbo loans are excluded. Subject to credit approval. Availability of advertised rate is limited and is on a first come, first serve basis and only available until commitment pool is filled. Some buyers may not qualify for this loan or this rate.

Rate valid only on firm, non-contingent purchase agreements for eligible, owner-occupied, homes accepted by Drees Custom Homes between April 1-30, 2024, and the home closes by May 31, 2024 with First Equity Mortgage of Ohio, Inc, an equal housing lender licensed by the Texas Department of Savings and Mortgage, NMLS #21157. Buyer is not required to finance through First Equity Mortgage to purchase a Drees Home; however, they must use First Equity Mortgage to receive this promotional rate. Other restrictions may apply. Drees Custom Homes and First Equity Mortgage reserve the right to modify and/or terminate the promotion at any time. First Equity Mortgage is a wholly owned subsidiary of The Drees Company located at 211 Grandview Drive, Suite 102, Ft. Mitchell, KY 41017. Contact your First Equity Mortgage loan officer for details.



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community for those in pursuit of a good, quality, meaningful life. Whether it's pond fishing,

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• Sports Courts in Future Phases • Future Dog Park











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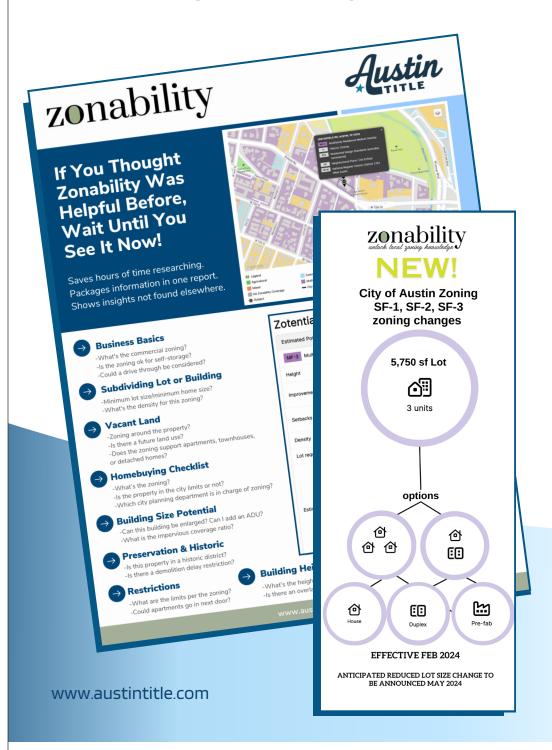
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03





SANTA RITA RANCH

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