

R E A L E S T A T E

Listingbook offers way to search for homes online

By **DAVID WINZELBERG**

Call it virtual realty.

Introduced to Long Island just six months ago, an interactive service called Listingbook is bringing buyers, sellers and their agents together in an online real estate community. The company, which got its start eight years ago in North Carolina, entered into an agreement with the Multiple Listing Service of Long Island last fall to allow access to all of MLSLI's listing data. Since then, more than 4,000 Long Island agents and 20,000 of their clients have already signed up for Listingbook, according to Scott Feldman, a Listingbook vice president.

Agents invite their sellers and prospective home buyers to join their Listingbook community for free – an e-mail address is the only requirement for an account. Buyers can then search for homes like an agent, sellers can track market data and agents can see exactly what their buyers and sellers are looking at, all in real time, leaving little room for other agents to hijack their clients. Automatic e-mail updates also keep Listingbook members up to date with the latest MLS data.

Two live crews

A group of professional builders will try to build two homes in two days.

Formed by the Long Island Builders Institute, the group called Long Island Home Builders Care began helping Habitat for Humanity of Suffolk construct the three-bedroom, one-bath, 1,100-square-foot homes on Bourdois Avenue in Bellport on Monday. They are scheduled to finish both homes today. Habitat will hold the first of two home dedications tomorrow, June 7, at 10:30 a.m. at 604 Bourdois Ave.

The builders from Avalon Bay Communities, Ornstein Leyton Co., Pulte Homes and JCV

Development are providing the building crews.

Each family will contribute by working on their own homes, as well as homes that Habitat will be building for other families.

Habitat Suffolk Director Les Scheinfeld said that builders are a very generous group. He said, "Even in this down cycle for the industry as a whole, we are very pleased and honored to be able to count these two homes as part of 263 homes total being built by volunteers from the professional building industry across the United States."

Crab grab

Suffolk County and the Town of Shelter Island will partner to buy 12.7 acres of "environmentally sensitive" land on Crab Creek for \$5 million.

The county Legislature voted last month to contribute \$2.5 million towards the purchase, with the town contributing the other \$2.5 million.

The Crab Creek property is located on the western shores of Shelter Island and the creek flows directly into Peconic Bay.

Fewer LI homes sold

Home sales continued to decline in April, down 21.3 percent on Long Island, according to the latest numbers from the New York State Association of Realtors.

There were 1,088 single-family homes sold in Nassau and Suffolk counties, 294 fewer than were sold in April 2007.

Prices are also down. In Nassau, the median sales price for a single-family home was \$460,000, a drop of 6 percent from a year ago. The median sales price for Suffolk was \$382,750, a dip of 7 percent from April of last year.

The good news is that home sales have increased from March, especially in Suffolk, where there were 91 more homes sold in April, an increase of 18.3 percent.

Cheaper, but still expensive

The New York metropolitan area was the second least affordable housing market in the nation and Nassau County was the 10th least affordable, according to a first-quarter report from the National Association of Home Builders.

Los Angeles leads the list of least affordable places to buy a house. Seven of the 10 least affordable markets are in California.

The most affordable market was in Kokomo, Ind., where more than 95 percent of the housing is considered affordable to median-income families. Other affordable markets include Lima, Ohio; Battle Creek, Mich.; and Wheeling, W.Va.

Real deals

- Commerce Bank paid \$2.35 million for a 1.5-acre property on Portion Road in Ronkonkoma.

The bank plans to construct a 4,000-square-foot branch with three drive-thru windows, according to Roger Delisle and Chris Nicholson of Island Associates in Smithtown, who brokered the deal.

Local civic leaders opposed the development of the parcel, which is one reason it took nearly three years to gain approvals from the town. Commerce will begin construction within the next three months, according to the brokers.

- Syosset-based Blumenfeld Development Group and Apollo Real Estate Advisors recently inked three new tenants for more than 38,000 square feet at 100 Duffy Ave. in Hicksville.

One of the new tenants is the U.S. General Services Administration, which is leasing 17,000 square feet.

BDG Vice President Brad Blumenfeld said the group has also begun renovations to 102 Duffy Ave., the five-story, 160,000-square-foot former home of J.P. Morgan Chase next door, and is currently marketing the space.