



## Homes on the Range

FROM HOME AUTOMATION TO WHAT A VIGOROUS STOCK MARKET MEANS FOR LOCAL RESIDENTS, TOWN'S TOP EXPERTS DISCUSS THE LATEST TRENDS IN ASPEN REAL ESTATE. **BY LINDA HAYES**

"What brought you here?" For a dozen of Aspen's top realtors, architects, designers, shop owners, builders, and tech gurus—all of whom have lived in Aspen and its surrounds for more than 15 years—the reasons cited then are the same cited today, and they continue to entice new residents and visitors alike: Alpenglow. Laps down Little Nell. Mountain biking. Golden aspens. Family.

Other questions, posed during a discussion over lunch (alongside ahi spring rolls, mini duck BLTs, and pot de crème) at BB's Kitchen (525 E. Cooper Ave., 970-429-8284; [bbskitchen.com](http://bbskitchen.com)), found a consensus of opinion on a variety of topics, the foremost being the status of the local real estate market and where things appear to be heading.

"The worse the world gets, the better Aspen looks," quips Charles Cunniffe, principal of his namesake architecture firm. "A recent article in *The Wall Street Journal* shows that, for the very wealthy, New York and Aspen are the top two [places] people want to live. It bodes well."

"People are feeling good," adds realtor Erik Berg, of Portfolio Aspen Properties. "The stock market is at an all-time high, and Aspen is a proven commodity. The [national] economy will fuel Aspen for this year and spill over into 2016."

A conversation ensues about international buyers influenced by the current strength of the US dollar. "We're looking at buyers from South America, Australia, and there's no question that we're seeing a change in buyers based on monetary exchange," notes Carrie Wells, a realtor with Coldwell Banker Mason Morse. "But with the dollar so strong, we'll continue to see a strong trend of domestic buyers [as well]."

But can our current inventory, some of which is

showing its age, support the demand? Wells puts the burden on local architects and builders to "figure out what to do" with older condos. In response, Berg sends kudos to John Rowland whose Rowland+Broughton firm recently completed a total renovation of the historic Der Berghof condominium complex in town.

Lorrie Winnerman, of Lorrie B. Aspen Associates, warns against the trend of turning West End Victorians into cookie-cutter structures that "all look similar"—something that "will change the [neighborhood's historic] look." Everyone agrees that, be the solution new construction, renovation, or to tear down and rebuild, the emphasis needs to be on quality. "New is not good enough," declares custom home builder Bob Bowden, who also owns the new Aspen Design Room. "People will pay a premium for 'great.'"

The vibe in the room changes on the mention of a younger generation of buyers influencing the size and function of homes. "There's no question that a lot of our clients are younger families," says Doug Leibinger of Sotheby's International Realty. "They are the driving force behind the quality of life, excellent schools." Builder Marty Schlumberger, who's been on the job in Aspen for more than 50 years, comments on the younger dynamic: "I call it the 'triathlon group.' We find that the younger generation requires larger homes [to accommodate] larger families. We see the need for swimming pools, workout gyms, and indoor and outdoor living spaces."

John Rowland has a different take. "Half of our work is hotels and restaurants, in addition to custom residences," he says. "What we are seeing

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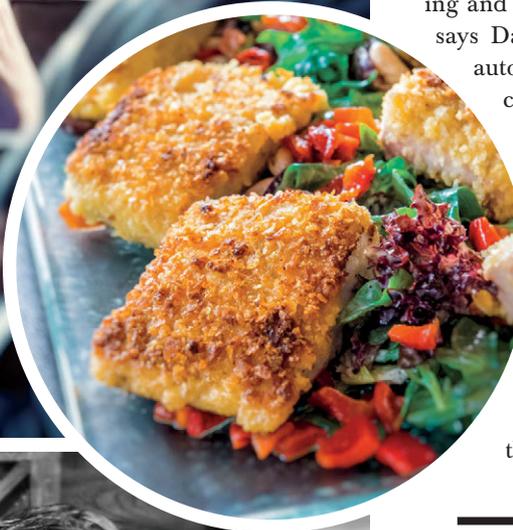


Furnisher Becky Dumeresque, realtors Steven Shane, Doug Leibinger, and Lorrie Winnerman, and architect Charles Cunniffe in a corner banquette at BB's Kitchen. ABOVE: Realtors Erik Berg and Chris Flynn listen to realtor and Aspen Design Room owner Bob Bowden. RIGHT: BB's chef Matt Zubrod shaves pink salt over flat-iron steak served with potatoes and artichokes.



## HAUTE PROPERTY *Brokers' Roundtable*

Realtor Carrie Wells argues that a strong US dollar is good for both international and domestic buyers. **BELOW RIGHT:** BB's potato-crust mahi-mahi with arugula, roasted peppers, niçoise olives, and beans.



Realtors Doug Leibinger and Steven Shane. Increasingly, says Leibinger, "a lot of our clients are younger families."



right now as a big indicator is the research on development going on in the hospitality industry. We're seeing that things are going to get simplified and smaller and more communal. Millennials don't need excess space and all the hidden boxes within a building. They want things that will add attributes to their homes."

No matter their age, or the square footage of their homes, local homeowners are interested in the value of what they put inside. "Before the recession, we noticed conspicuous consumption—everything was disposable," says owner-designer Becky Dumeresque of Chequers furniture store. "Now people want quality. It's [great] design, not fashion—a well-stated trend that can evolve and move on with time."

Homeowners are also looking to high-tech home automation systems to handle everything from lighting and security to networks. "It's an exciting time," says Damon Roth of Xssentials, home and office automators with four locations in Colorado. "New construction is [making] homeowners flexible about what goes into their houses and about getting devices off walls and into hands."

Inevitably, the concept of luxury slipped into the conversation, and with it private jets and mega homes. Schlumberger shared that such concerns are really just a way of life for certain people. "It's their standard of living and what they require—their comfort zone," he says. "It's the realtors' job, architects' job, and my job to find a client's comfort zone and put them in a house for their comfort zone." **AP**

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