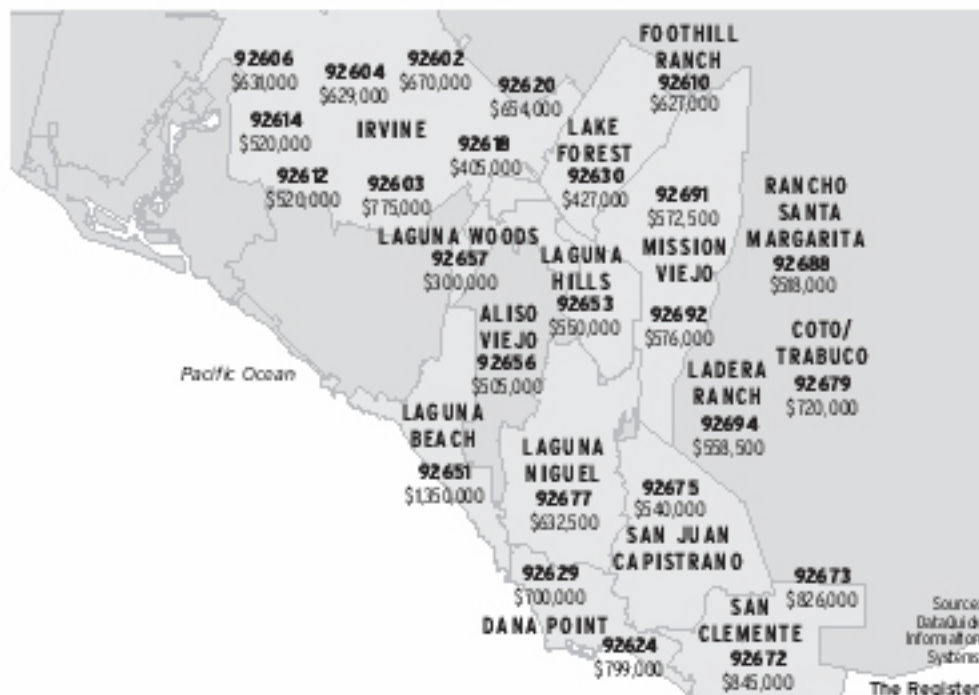


# picture-perfect landscape

## Compare your median price

How does the median price for your ZIP code stack up against prices for neighboring areas? The figures below are for March 2005.



### ALISO VIEJO \$525,000

Two bedrooms, two baths, 1,102-square-foot detached condominium, built in 1999, gated community, wood flooring, built-in barbecue in backyard brick patio, ceiling fans and wired for surround-sound system. Source: Melinda Harris of Preferred Group Properties.



### HUNTINGTON BEACH \$760,000

Four bedrooms, three baths, 2,522 square feet, built in 1974, fireplace, tile floors, cathedral ceilings, brick patio, two-car garage, 6,031-square-foot lot. Source: Linda Hahn, Star Real Estate (714) 356-3329.



### FULLERTON \$541,000

Three bedrooms, two baths, 1,314 square feet, built in 1964, fireplace, two-car detached garage, RV parking pad, 6,175-square-foot lot. Source: Steve Vartanian (714) 524-4137.



# How to access equity from your home

By MIKE KRONSBURG  
SPECIAL TO LAGUNA NEWS-POST

As a homeowner in Laguna Beach, you have realized a significant increase in your home equity over the past several years. According to DataQuik, the median sales price of a home in Laguna Beach was \$1.3 million in December 2004, a 33.4 percent increase from the same month the previous year.

Laguna Beach and other south county cities traditionally represent the highest home values in Orange County, thanks to factors such as coastline proximity. In comparison, the median sales price of a home in Orange County, including resale houses, condominiums and new homes, was \$551,000 in December 2004.

If you're looking to access the equity in your home to pay off debt, make home improvements, invest or just pay for a well-deserved vacation, now is a great time to take advantage of a plethora of mortgage lending programs offering attractive interest rates.

Accessing the equity from your home



MIKE KRONSBURG

can be easy — as long as you meet the traditional prime lending guidelines: You have a good credit rating and you are able to prove your income using W-2s and tax returns. In a housing market like Orange County, higher prices make it more difficult for candidates with lower incomes, credit blemishes, self-employment status, or other income challenges to qualify for a purchase home loan or refinance. If you fall into any of these categories, you are considered a non-prime candidate since you do not fit neatly into the prime-lending underwriting guidelines. So where can you turn?

#### WHERE TO GO

Since traditional banks and credit unions do not originate non-prime loans, finding a reputable mortgage company who specializes in this market can be difficult. Asking friends and family members for referrals is often a good option — unless you feel uncomfortable openly

sharing your personal financial information. The Internet is a great resource for finding mortgage companies who specialize in non-prime lending. But remember, when choosing a mortgage company, bigger does not necessarily mean better. Large mortgage companies charge higher interest rates or charge higher closing costs to cover their marketing budgets and overhead expenses. Do some research, and then apply with at least two or three companies. This method allows you the opportunity to compare loan terms and fees.

#### WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN A LOAN OFFICER

Your loan officer is an important ingredient in your loan process, especially for non-prime loans. A seasoned non-prime loan officer has experienced an array of unique situations and knows how to manage just about any deal. It is important to find out how long your prospective loan officer has worked in the mortgage business, and to assess his or her familiarity with the non-prime market.

The sea of mortgage companies is im-

mense, and trying to fish for the company whose loan agents will listen patiently and help you resolve challenges can take time. However, the above plan will get you closer to reeling in the right mortgage company and an experienced loan officer to fit your lending needs.

#### Helpful Tips:

- Find a reputable mortgage company via the internet or ask close friends and family for referrals.
- Bigger does not always necessarily mean better when choosing a mortgage company. Investigate your options thoroughly.
- A seasoned non-prime loan officer can make a substantial difference in the time it takes to get your loan approved and funded.
- Apply with more than one company to compare rates and fees.

Mike Kronsburg is president of Allstate Lending Group, a non-prime mortgage banking company servicing Orange County and the Los Angeles markets.