

Seeking Houses for Win-Win Rental Arrangement

When CLAM was developing its plan to create 50 affordable homes in 25 years, we held meetings to ask for input on strategies. Inevitably someone would say, “What about all the empty houses, especially in Inverness?” With thoughtful crafting of a win-win arrangement by volunteers Murray Suid and Mark Switzer, and help from Inverness locals to identify potential homes, CLAM did a test mailing in May 2009, sending out the letter below to 68 Inverness homeowners. Our goal was to inform home owners how they and our community would benefit if the owners choose to rent their unused/occasionally-used homes at an affordable rate.

We are currently (summer 2009) exploring the possibility of putting this arrangement into practice with the first homeowner to respond. If you know someone who might consider renting an unused/occasionally-used house at an affordable rate or if you are a tenant who is interested in renting affordably, with an agreement to vacate for periodic use by the owner, please contact CLAM at 663-1005 or info@clam-ptreyes.org.

Dear Homeowner,

We’re writing to you about a win-win possibility.

If a house you own in Inverness goes unused for most of the year, please keep reading. *We’re not asking you to contribute money.* Rather, our concept can benefit you while providing much-needed living space to contributing community members.

Because Inverness is such a wonderful place to live, in the past few decades, real estate prices have skyrocketed and, despite the current recession, remain high.

That’s the good news for property owners. But for many people who contribute valuable services to West Marin— teachers, healthcare providers, first responders, and others— there is not enough housing in the area that working people can afford. As a result, many commute, which contributes to air pollution and traffic congestion, or more seriously, give up working in West Marin altogether.

Not long ago, two experienced firefighters with the Inverness Volunteer Fire Department moved away because they could not find suitable rentals. Their departure was significant because the Fire Department plays the key role in the community in protecting lives and property.

The nonprofit Community Land Trust Association of West Marin (CLAM) is creating affordable housing in an environmentally responsible way in the communities surrounding Tomales Bay. CLAM invites you to join us in a new initiative.

Here's the idea: If you own a property that is currently vacant for much of the year, CLAM could help you lease it, or a portion of it, at an affordable rate for all or part of the year. CLAM can help you find quality tenants.

This arrangement can be of value to you in ways that go far beyond the rent that you will receive. Here are some additional benefits:

1. **Upkeep:** Housing experts agree that a lived-in house maintains greater value than an empty one. Moreover, if your property requires repairs prior to leasing or later, we can help you get the work done in a quality and economical manner using the same contractors who are developing and maintaining other properties in the area.
2. **Protection:** Having someone on your property during the stormy winter months or dangerous fire season can be of great benefit in the case of an emergency.
3. **Community:** Providing affordable housing helps sustain the community by housing individuals who provide everything from health care to food services to the arts.
4. **Environment:** Local housing reduces carbon emissions from workers traveling from Petaluma and beyond.

We understand that property owners often wish to use their houses for a few weeks each year—for example, at Thanksgiving, Christmas, Easter or summer vacation. If this is true for you, we may be able to help tenants find temporary housing while you enjoy your home.

If this “everyone wins concept” interests you, we will work creatively and collaboratively with you to make this a simple and stress-free process.

Please write or call if you'd like to discuss this opportunity in a no-pressure, no-obligation way. Renting out a property may not work for everyone, but for many homeowners, with the help of CLAM, it can be a very positive experience.

If you wish to learn more about CLAM, about our past achievements, and our goal to create 50 affordable homes in 25 years, please visit www.clam-ptreyes.org or give me a call. We look forward to hearing from you.

Best wishes,

Rae Levine
Executive Director

P.S. If in the future you choose to sell your property, we would like to discuss the considerable tax benefits you may receive by selling it to CLAM.