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PAGE 26

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REAL ESTATE

Q&A

Lee Johnson

By JACQUELINE PRIMO
Reporter

Lee Johnson, president and founder of West Realty Group, brings 15 years of experience in the industry to Pacific Palisades and the Westside and is among the top 3 percent nationwide of Broker Associates at Sotheby's International Realty. With a genuine enjoyment and understanding of the home-selling process, and an appreciation for the gem that is the Palisades, Johnson brings a depth of real estate knowledge to each client.

"There is no place like the Palisades," Johnson told the *Palisadian-Post*.

Jacqueline Primo: What brought you to practice in the Palisades?

Lee Johnson: I was actually a big-city guy. I was born in Flushing, Queens, grew up in New York City and spent numerous summers with my grandparents in Syosset, Long Island.

These different and diverse surroundings allowed me to absorb the values of neighborhood and community. So when I moved to Los Angeles in 1998, I was immediately drawn to the Westside.

In my mind, the Palisades is like a small town within a big city—the best of all worlds. You've got access to the best amenities in the world but tucked away within a very nurturing community. My daughter Siena is entering second grade at Village School.

Primo: How did your background prepare you for your work here?

Johnson: Real estate is in my blood. My grandfather started his own development company in the 1960s and I saw how much he loved what he did, so it was a natural fit for me.

For over 15 years, I've developed or brokered the sale of commercial property, condominiums and high-end, single-family homes throughout the Palisades, Santa Monica and the Westside. It is the love of beautiful, comfortable places that led me to residential brokerage.

Primo: Tell me about the other avenues of real estate in which you practice.

Johnson: I have a passion for all things real estate and I wouldn't want to feel limited. I often say that what makes me different is I speak many different languages of real estate, including commercial investment property sales, as well as performing lease negotiations on both the landlord and tenant sides.

I also offer market analysis and even property management—both for residential and commercial buildings.

Primo: Do you have any advice for someone planning to sell a home?

Johnson: It's extremely important to position your home for sale *before* you put it on the market. We provide clients a pre-market checklist, which includes knowing exactly *why* you're selling. When you are clear about your goals, you are more likely to achieve them.

Also, make sure you look up comparable homes. Do they match yours in value and appearance? This is the kind of information a seller needs to know to evaluate the advantages and liabilities.

Primo: What advice do you have about preparing the home itself for sale?

Johnson: People sometimes overlook this but when your property goes on the market, not only will the property be closely scrutinized, but you as the



Lee Johnson, president and founder of West Realty Group.

Rich Schmitt/Staff Photographer

seller will also be under the microscope.

Clean like you've never cleaned before! Fix everything, no matter how insignificant. Even a leaky faucet can be seen as a reflection of you and the home.

Also, try to remove all traces of "you" from your home. A residence that looks "neutral" allows buyers to project themselves onto it.

Primo: What kind of satisfaction do you get from your business?

Johnson: Selling or buying a home is, for many people, the largest and most meaningful decision they will ever

make. When that happens, when I am able to deliver someone the home of their dreams or they have concluded a successful deal, there is no better feeling in the world for me.

I listen very closely to what they want and I realistically explain what to expect. Whatever the scenario, I get them as close as possible to their goals.

Primo: Any further thoughts on the Palisades?

Johnson: The pride of ownership here in Pacific Palisades is truly inspirational. It comes from the heart of

a beautiful community set within the Santa Monica Mountains, overlooking the ocean.

Also, I'm very excited to see Rick Caruso's Palisades Village. He is a genius at creating indoor/outdoor environments with innovative retail. In the Palisades, he has the ultimate canvas for his artistry.

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