

Pop star Harry Styles lists Los Angeles home for \$8.495 million

M2



MANSION

'Neither the Crusades nor Alexander's expedition to India can equal this emigration to California.'
—C.N. Ormsby's 1849 letter home

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CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: VISUALHOUSE RENDERINGS; 2: SACRAMENTO KINGS; MAX WHITTAKER FOR THE WALL STREET JOURNAL; MICHELLE DREVES FOR THE WALL STREET JOURNAL; 4: THE NEW HOME COMPANY; SACRAMENTO KINGS

California's Newest Hot Spot

The once-sleepy government town of Sacramento rides a new real-estate boom.

LOOKING UP Sacramento, which was mired in a housing slump a few years ago, is now home to bidding wars and urban renewal projects. 1, 2. Renderings of the Residences at the Sawyer, one of the city's most ambitious residential projects. 3. The Golden 1 Center 4. The State Capitol 5. Bikes at the Cannery. 6. Raleigh and Nan Klein 7. The clubhouse at McKinley Village. 8. The city.

BY CANDACE JACKSON

PRICE CUTS HAVE BEEN REPLACED by bidding wars. A once-sleepy downtown is flush with urban-renewal projects. A luxury condo tower with penthouses priced over \$4 million is under construction. Sacramento, Calif., long seen as a fairly bland government town, is in the midst of a real estate boom.

When Suzanne Greer listed her six-bedroom home just outside of Sacramento last month, so many potential buyers showed up to the three-hour open house that her real-estate agent had to extend it by two hours. Offers started coming in that evening. Eight buyers entered a bidding war.

"We've been here 17 or 18 years and have never seen it like this," says Ms. Greer, who, with her husband, owns a commercial air conditioning business. She sold the home for \$40,000 over

the \$799,000 asking price—plus two months of free rent so she doesn't have to move out right away while she builds a new home nearby.

Houses are moving fast. Homes in Sacramento have been selling in an average of 34 days—six days faster than they were at this time last year, and 28 days faster than the U.S. overall.

It is a dramatic turn of events for a city that just a couple of years ago was still struggling to

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13,000 SQUARE FEET OF CHILD'S PLAY

A stage with velvet curtains; spirited games of skeeball; a hidden room under the basement stairs and a backyard zip line. This couple's South Dakota home was designed to inspire and enrich their children.

BY STEFANOS CHEN

CHAMP, EILEEN AND MAX just got home from school. Champ, 11, heads to the living room, removes his shoes and—swoosh—takes the metal slide to the basement.

On this lower level, their parents, Keith Baumgarten and Sara Keane Baumgarten, have built a vast playland for their four children, ages 4 to 11, in their 13,000-square-foot home in Sioux Falls, S.D. Here, the children practice classical guitar, mixed with some piano and percussion, on a stage flanked by velvet curtains. In a hidden room beneath the stairs, decorated with Chinese lanterns and jade carpet, the children practice Mandarin once a day with a private tutor. Later, they can play skeeball, the classic carnival game, or enjoy a snack from the basement's kitchen.

In an adjacent guesthouse, there is an elaborate, lofted playhouse with bunk beds for each of the children. Outside, there is a large swimming pool and a play set that includes a climbing

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Renovating a former school in Madrid M3



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DANA DAMEWOOD FOR THE WALL STREET JOURNAL (3)

MANSION



13,000 SQUARE FEET OF CHILD'S PLAY



ROOM TO GROW The back of the home has walls of windows, top, where Mrs. Baumgarten walks with Tigger beside the pool. Left, behind a large table in the lower level is a sleepover room with privacy curtains, a custom-cut mattress and electrical outlets for gadgets. Above, Dr. and Mrs. Baumgarten with their children, Eleanor, Champ, Eileen and Max in a sitting room.

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wall, firehouse pole and zip line.

The Sioux Falls house is nothing like the couple's former home. In 2006, Mrs. Baumgarten, a business-management consultant, and her husband, Dr. Baumgarten, an orthopedic specialist, were renting a 611-square-foot apartment on Manhattan's Upper East Side. With their first child on the way, big-city living was wearing thin.

"I wanted a place to raise the kids where they wouldn't know the brand names of cars and clothes by grade school," she said. So two months pregnant with their first child, she and her husband took a friend's advice and moved to Sioux Falls, in southeastern South Dakota.

Dr. Baumgarten, now 44, a former assistant physician with the New York Mets, was offered a partner position at the city's Orthopedic Institute. Mrs. Baumgarten, 41, left her job shortly after the baby was born.

"We thought we'd give it two years," said Mrs. Baumgarten, who now owns and manages 19 rental properties in Sioux Falls. "Four kids later and we love it here."

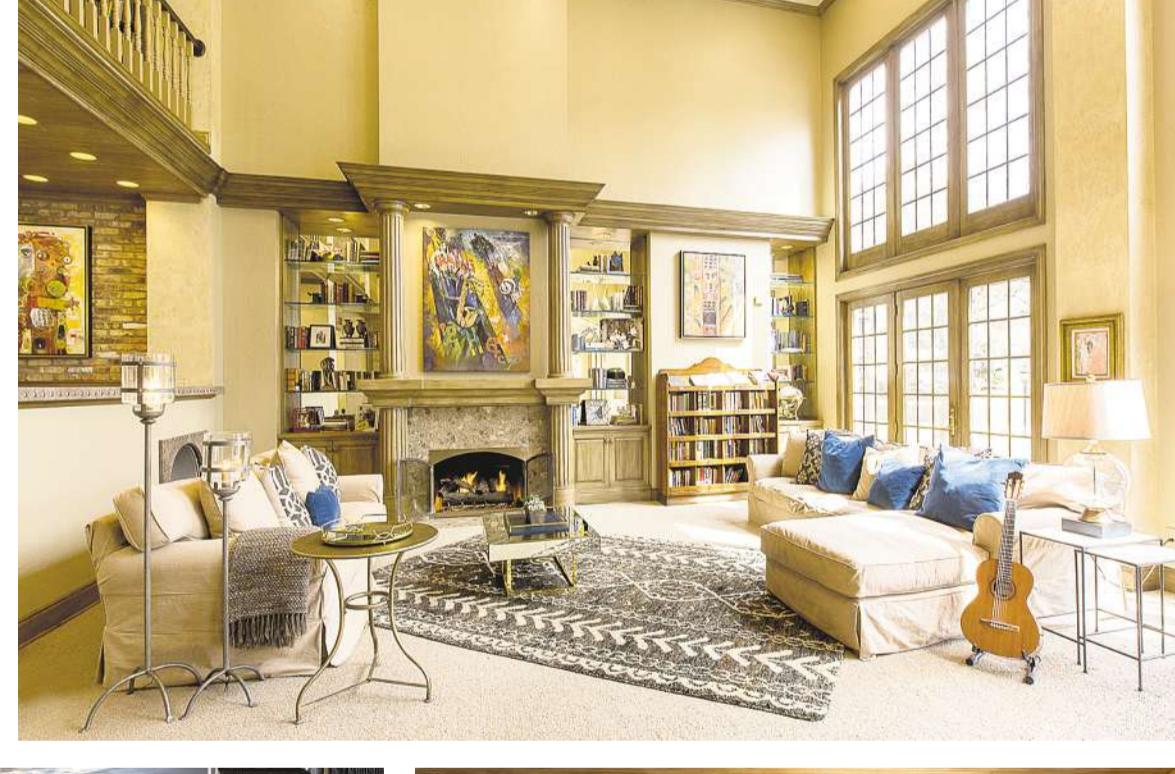
In 2009, they bought a house on 2½ acres in a tree-lined neighborhood about a 10-minute drive from downtown, paying \$2.05 million, according to county records. With an eye toward making the home fun for their four children, the Baumgartens embarked on a four-year, roughly \$1.2 million renovation. They also built a guesthouse with a 2,500-square-foot apartment for Mrs. Baumgarten's mother, Mary Keane.

"Sara and I made a pact that I would stay and help raise the kids," said Mrs. Keane, 67, who moved to Sioux Falls from Kansas City, Mo., in 2010 after the couple's third child, Max, was born. Mrs. Keane's apartment includes the children's custom bunk beds for weekend sleepovers.

Extracurriculars are a big part of the couple's parenting philosophy. "I never wanted my kids to say they hate [a subject], because they're not good at it," Mrs. Baum-



FUN AND GAMES In the loft of Mrs. Keane's home, the children have custom bunk beds with peek-a-boo windows, above. Clockwise from right, the main home's living room, a skee-ball game and a performance stage.



garten said. "Also, I like discipline."

To that end, the children take Mandarin and Spanish lessons from two international students who also live at the home. Math and music practice are a daily routine.

Building a fun house is serious work. The 4,000-square-foot base-

ment was jacked up to raise the ceiling height from 8 feet to 12 feet, said Troy Prosa of TAP Architecture, based in Minneapolis.

The family lived for a year with a large hole blown out of the lower level, where tons of dirt had to be excavated.

Mr. Prosa also designed the basement's musical stage, which has professional lighting and



sound. Nearby he created a sleepover room with privacy curtains, lots of plugs for electronics, and a custom-cut Tempur-Pedic mattress on the floor that can sleep eight. The custom-built curly slide gets more use than the stairs.

With four children, a grandmother, two visiting language tutors and two dogs, Spanky and