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The Neighborhood Watch

DAVID K. CHOO



EASY ACCESS: Realtor/Web master Bryn Kaufman steps out of his home office. Kaufman's Web site provides gigabytes of in-depth information at your finger tips.

SERGIO GOES

surprised at how popular it's gotten."

Even if you're not actively looking to buy or sell a house, a visit to the real estate Web site OahuRE.com is an informative and fascinating experience. It also may be a bit of a guilty pleasure. At your fingertips are reams of data on the real estate market and, therefore, plenty of information on your neighborhood, or anyone else's.

The site made a splash more than two years ago when it began offering free and unfettered access to detailed Multiple Listing Service information that was normally restricted to Realtors and their clients. Since then, Webmaster Bryn Kaufman, a Realtor himself, has kept refining his site, adding additional data and tools for searching the gigabytes of information. As a result, OahuRE.com averages more than a million page views per month, with approximately 15 page views per user on each visit. Not bad for a one-man operation.

"I've got a high Google ranking, maybe second or third among the Hawaii real estate sites," says Kaufman. "I'm kind of

While there are numerous sites that offer similar data, OahuRE.com collects the disparate information and places it in clear, concise spreadsheets, which make for easy reading and analysis. For instance, OahuRE.com's comparative market analysis page, its most popular, offers a colored-coded chart, which indicates if a property is active, on the market for less than 10 days, in escrow, sold, sold over list price and withdrawn or expired.

Kaufman is able to quickly keep pace with the market's trends and his users' needs, because he probably knows as much about computers and programming as he does about Hawaii's real estate landscape. The Webmaster/ Realtor was the chairman and chief technical officer of CMPEXpress.com, which Kaufman started in his family's garage when he was still in high school. The company was one of the first to sell computers on the Internet, and in 2000, it was acquired by fellow Web-based retailer Outpost.com.

EMPOWER YOURSELF ONLINE

This selective list represents a snapshot in time and is not meant to be comprehensive.

Top Real Estate Sites by U.S. Market Share, December 2007

- 1) Realtor.com

Several years later, Kaufman and his wife, Ning, relocated to Hawaii. He started doing Web site design for some local real estate companies, found the field interesting and eventually got his real estate license and developed his own site.

Kaufman earns no income from OahuRE.com. He estimates that 95 percent of his visitors don't contact him or request his services as a Realtor. However, the people who do call have kept him busy. In 2007, his total sales were valued at \$25,027,000.

"I know programming, and I like doing it. And since I also work as a Realtor, I'm always talking to people and getting a feel for what they're looking for," says Kaufman. "It's also a big plus that I'm a one-man committee, so if something needs to be changed [on the site], I don't have to call a meeting. I just do it."

Some of the revisions have been made quicker than others. Last year, Kaufman tied the MLS listings to the city's tax database, allowing users to compare 2007 property tax assessments with 2008's. Then he linked it to the owners' information, which enabled the data to be searched by street, owner's name and neighborhood.

"I actually had to remove some features. Even though you can go to the city's Web site and get the same information, I guess my site made it too easy to access it and compare," says Kaufman. "I thought it was interesting."

Sure, if you were looking to buy. But if you have no intention of selling, it may have been a little *too* interesting.

CLICK A LINK BELOW TO READ OTHER
STORIES IN OUR REAL ESTATE SURVIVAL GUIDE



Buy Now?

In Hawaii's unique real estate market, it's think locally, act

2) Move.com	8.03
3) HomeGain.com	2.73
4) Zillow.com	2.34
5) Re/Max Real Estate.com	2.29
	2.28

Hawaii Real Estate Sites, Ranked by
Popularity, February 2007

- 1) hicalentral.com
- 2) OahuRE.com
- 3) cbpacific.com
- 4) HawaiiMoves.com
- 5) BrokersMLS.com

Credit Check

Three Web sites every borrower should visit:

▶ annualcreditreport.com

Everyone is allowed a free credit report from each bureau once a year.

▶ myfico.com

This site has some good information about credit reports and credit scores.

▶ www.ftc.gov

The Federal Trade Commission has some good information about credit under their Consumer Protection/Consumer Information tabs of their Web site.

SOURCES: Hitwise 2008, Alexa.com, Hawaii Homeownership Center

locally



7 Tips for Today's Market

Whether you are buying or selling, these bits of advice can help you navigate through Hawaii's uncertain real estate world

CLARIFICATION: A note was added to the real estate site rankings list indicating that it is a selective listing representing a snapshot in time and is not meant to be comprehensive.

Is enough being done to ensure local people can afford to buy homes?

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