

COVER STORY

Marketing magic



Olga Soboleva / Vanguard Properties

Situated on the prime corner of Chestnut and Larkin streets in Russian Hill, the home at 1089 Chestnut St., which was built in 1990, is highlighted by its large arched windows, some of which open up to views of the Bay Bridge and Golden Gate Bridge.

Family-friendly chic

Sprawling home's interior is sleek, yet functional

By **Jeremy Schnitker**
BLOCKSHOPPER

In a competitive real estate market like San Francisco, sometimes it's all about how you present a home.

You may have the most

beautiful and palatial home on the block, but if it's not staged and marketed to fit the appropriate buyer profile, or if small-but-necessary updates aren't made, a home may sit on the market, ignored by serious buyers.

Somehow that happened at 1089 Chestnut St., the expansive home at the corner of Chestnut and Larkin streets in Russian Hill.

The six-bedroom, seven-bath, 5,740-square-foot home that was built in 1990 went on the market at various points from 2007 to 2010 without an offer owners Xavier Villarreal and Mercedes Oyuela felt was worthy.

After changing marketing and listing strategies over the winter, Villarreal and Oyuela decided to hand the listing over to Vanguard Properties agent Jean-Paul Samaha, who put the home on the market less than a month ago with a different staging concept than the previous agent.

"I had heard through a mutual friend that when the home went to market before, they weren't happy with the marketing, and they felt it was not given the chance it should have been," Samaha said. "I went and looked up the house, saw

what it was and tracked them down via e-mail, and started a conversation about how to really bring the house to life and showcase this amazing masterpiece that I think is on one of the best corners in the city.

"Basically, I felt there was no reason that house should not sell quickly."

The move has appeared to work. Samaha said the home, which is listed for \$6 million, has had a handful of interested buyers make repeated visits, one of which could make an offer soon.



Photos by Olga Soboleva / Vanguard Properties

The main living area comes with a wood-burning fireplace and hardwood flooring, while additional upper-level area (below) has room for a small dining area.

According to Samaha, the difference was in making the home — which has a modern aesthetic, soaring ceilings and a massive amount of space — approachable and comfortable. It was previously staged with a more edgy, artistic motif, but Samaha figured it would show better if it were made to look more practical.

After all, it was a home in which Villarreal and Oyuela had raised their large family; it wasn't just a place to show off at cocktail parties.

"It's a great place for entertaining, and it's got great volume for throwing parties, but we also tried to show its softer side, and make it both modern and comfortable and show that you could have kids in the home," Samaha said.

To do that, they found appropriate artwork to line the home's many tall white walls and updated some of the fixtures.

Villarreal and Oyuela, who now live in France, say they were attracted by the home's volume, because they needed it for their children.

"We are a family of six with family and friends often visiting us from other countries, so we needed a house with that many bedrooms and bathrooms," she said.

Once they moved into the



home in the late 1990s, they made a few changes to make it more family-friendly and functional, such as changing the entrance and stairway on the first floor and making the staircase more modern. But, by and large, the home hasn't been drastically changed.

"One of the reasons why we loved that house was the distribution," Oyuela said. "At the time we bought it, we had three children, and it was the perfect ages for the arrangement. The children had their own floor and we had the top floors."

Of course, the views didn't hurt either. The home is highlighted by tall, west-facing arched windows in its living room that offer expansive views of the Bay Bridge and Golden Gate Bridge. There are also views to be enjoyed from the penthouse level, which has

a terrace.

The modern kitchen has stainless steel appliances and opens up to a garden and level lot, which Oyuela said was surprisingly hard to find in that area.

Samaha said the marketing for the property got off on the right foot during an opening party that was held just before the home hit the market. Samaha said it had been a miserable, rainy day — until people started showing up in the evening.

"It was just a downpour all day, but almost right as people started showing up around 5 p.m., the sun came out and it came right through those tall windows in the living room, and it just blew the entire party away," he said. "People literally broke out into a cheer when they could see all the views from that room."