Will Napa’s recent earthquake affect Bay Area real estate?

A: Despite the severity felt by earthquakes in the short term, home prices in the Bay Area have continued to appreciate over the long term at an astonishing rate. The impact that earthquakes have had on home prices honestly depends on the period of time we focus upon.

There have been six earthquakes in the Bay Area with a magnitude of at least 5.0 since 1979. The National Association of Realtors reported in 1989, the same year as the Loma Prieta earthquake, that the median home price in San Francisco was $260,600. In 2014 that figure has risen to $972,800.

The greater question to pose to ourselves can be stated simply: Do we believe that these specific and erratic occurrences will derail the long list of positives that this region has to offer homeowners? Using history as a guide, I would not bet against this place. Back even before the Gold Rush, Bay Area residents have always been a determined and resilient breed with a history of rolling with the punches—or earthquakes—and bouncing back.

I believe that the response to these natural events comes with a positive contribution from every person who has a stake in this unpredictable and beautiful place we call home.

A: As a fourth-generation Bay Area native, you become accustomed to seismic jolts, but the most recent earthquake centered here in Northern California last Sunday surprised me in the middle of the night.

Twenty-five years ago during the Loma Prieta earthquake, I was caught on the 30th floor of a building in downtown San Francisco—not only a surprise but quite a roller coaster ride.

Luckily, California and Californians are prepared and ready for quakes like the one last week. As prepared as we are, I know these events can be unnerving for those who are new to the West Coast and may be apprehensive about investing in the housing market here.

I am certain, though, this will not affect the housing market in the East Bay.

The prices in the East Bay remain very attractive compared with those in San Francisco, the job market is secure and thriving here and our weather can’t be beat.

A little shaking in the middle of the night won’t crack the Bay Area’s market.

A: Buyers have been asking more questions about the seismic stability of the properties they are considering, but I don’t see the recent Napa Valley earthquake affecting real estate values in the long run.

A good real estate agent can recommend various licensed experts to evaluate the soils and building components, including foundations, framing, chimneys, etc. Homeowners associations can report on past or planned earthquake repairs, retrofitting measures and whether they expect to have special assessments to pay for these repairs.

Experts recommend identifying potential weaknesses in the home and working to fix them. Property owners can also decide whether it makes sense to buy earthquake insurance to protect against a major loss.

Last week’s earthquake is a reminder that we must prepare for natural disasters. I personally need my own disaster kit stocked with food, water, first aid and supplies, as well as a plan to keep loved ones safe and in communication when the inevitable disaster strikes.

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