

Qualified renters harder to come by, survey finds

More than half the respondents to a survey of 870 property managers nationwide said they're having more difficulty finding qualified renters for their residential properties than they did last year.

And 81 percent of respondents said they are concerned they will not find reliable tenants for the rest of the year, according to the survey by TransUnion, a credit and information management firm.

Access to income and employment information was the most important factor in screening prospective tenants for 33 percent of the respondents, and 28 percent said criminal background checks were the most important factor, followed by credit history.

Margaret Jackson, *The Denver Post*



Wine-and-cheese tour of 7th Avenue homes today

Real estate agent Sonja Leonard Leonard is hosting a wine-and-cheese tour in the Seventh Avenue Historic District from 2 to 4 p.m. today.

Leonard, who is billing the tour as her new stimulus plan, is giving away lottery tickets to those who take the tour of the five houses.

Homes on the tour include:

- 680 Emerson St., listed for \$1.4 million.
- 735 Emerson St., listed for \$865,000.
- 3601 E. Seventh Ave., listed for \$550,000.
- 1333 Lafayette St., listed for \$459,000.
- 811 Marion St., listed for \$539,000.

Margaret Jackson, *The Denver Post*



Little touches can make a big deal

From theaters to sinks, properties for sale are flush with amenities.

By Christian Toto
Special to *The Denver Post*

The economy continues to suffer, and the housing market remains a mixed bag.

That doesn't mean area homebuyers aren't still interested in properties featuring top-of-the-line amenities.

For some home and condo buyers, money remains no object. For others, home shopping means perusing properties that took advantage of the early 2000 boom by installing wine rooms, saunas and other posh additions.

The Pinnacle at City Park South exemplifies the kind of chic condo complex where the list of amenities would make Donald Trump blush.

The Pinnacle offers a full-fledged movie room, a guest suite that owners can rent out when a family member comes to town, a wine nook and a large lap pool with a deck featuring top-notch views.

The rise of wealthy baby boomers means more-affluent Denver residents are seeking amenity-soaked homes, said Scott Menefee, vice president of real estate with Opus Northwest, the group responsible for The Pinnacle.

David Steel, a partner with Western Development Group, which brought NorthCreek to Denver, said folks from Aspen and Vail are making units in the Cherry Creek condo complex their second — or third — homes.

NorthCreek's opulent units feature soundproof rooms, and heated decks and toilet seats.

Not all amenities age well.

Steel said steam showers, once a popular feature, aren't in vogue anymore. Menefee said The Pinnacle's wine room gets far less foot traffic than the movie theater or business center.

First-time homebuyers probably won't have the resources to move into either The Pinnacle or NorthCreek, but they can be the most susceptible to the lure of more modest amenities, said Sabrina Soto, the host of "Get It Sold" on HGTV.

"For a first-time buyer, the littlest thing can really sell them on a house, like a his-and-her sink," Soto said, adding that first-timers are so used to their perfunctory rental homes with sterile white walls that amenities offer an irresistible attraction.

Amy Dorsey, president of the Colorado Association of Realtors, said amenities including workout rooms, home theaters and outdoor fireplaces are commonplace.

The rush to add amenities to homes occurred after 2001, a dual response to an economy that was rebuilding and the desire to stay closer to home following the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks, she said.

"People began beefing up their houses. The mentality changed somewhat," she said.

Today, fewer homeowners are eager to sink extra cash into their homes. They are focusing on more practical home components, and return on investment for amenities is uneven at best, she said.

"Pools are very personal; you can take it or leave it," she said. "Workout rooms are great, but a lot of people can't get themselves motivated at home. They end up using the room for something else."



One amenity likely to turn a shopper's head is a decked-out media room, she said.

Brandon Bidwell, broker associate with Re/Max Alliance in Fort Collins, said owners in Observatory Village can sample more traditional amenities like its pool and clubhouse.

The Village offers one amenity few competing complexes can match — an actual observatory owners can use.

In a way, the observatory offers a fitting analogy for amenities as a whole.

"I don't think the observatory is the reason people bought here," he said.



Scott Menefee, above, is with Opus Northwest, the group behind amenity-rich The Pinnacle at City Park South, which features a decked-out theater, left.

John Prieto,
The Denver Post