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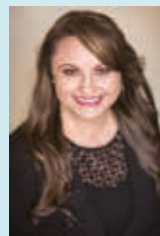
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BUILDING SOMETHING BIGGER: A NOTE ON OUR GROWTH

I can't help but feel incredibly grateful for what this community has become and where we're headed.

What we're building here has never been just about numbers or reach. From the very beginning, my vision has been to create a space where real relationships are formed, where people feel seen and valued, and where success is shared. Watching that vision come to life and continue to grow has been one of the most rewarding parts of this journey.

Over the past year, not only has our community expanded, but so has our internal team. That growth has been just as meaningful to me. Behind every event, every feature, and every connection is a group of people who believe in what we're building. As our team has grown, so has our ability to create more intentional experiences, deepen our relationships, and show up at a higher level for all of you.

What I'm most proud of is that even as we grow, we've remained grounded in our values. Both within our team and throughout this community, there's a shared commitment to showing up with purpose, supporting one another, and leading with authenticity. That culture doesn't happen by accident. It's something we protect and prioritize every step of the way.

I've seen firsthand how this community shows up for one another, the support, the encouragement, and the conversations happening behind the scenes. Those moments are what make *Silicon Valley Real Producers* so special, and they're the reason this continues to thrive.

I'm also excited to continue expanding how we stay connected beyond our events and print. With the launch of our *Silicon Valley Real Producers* website, you can now easily access

our latest issues, stay up to date with what's happening in our community, and connect with our trusted preferred partners all in one place. It's another step forward in making this network even more accessible and valuable to you.

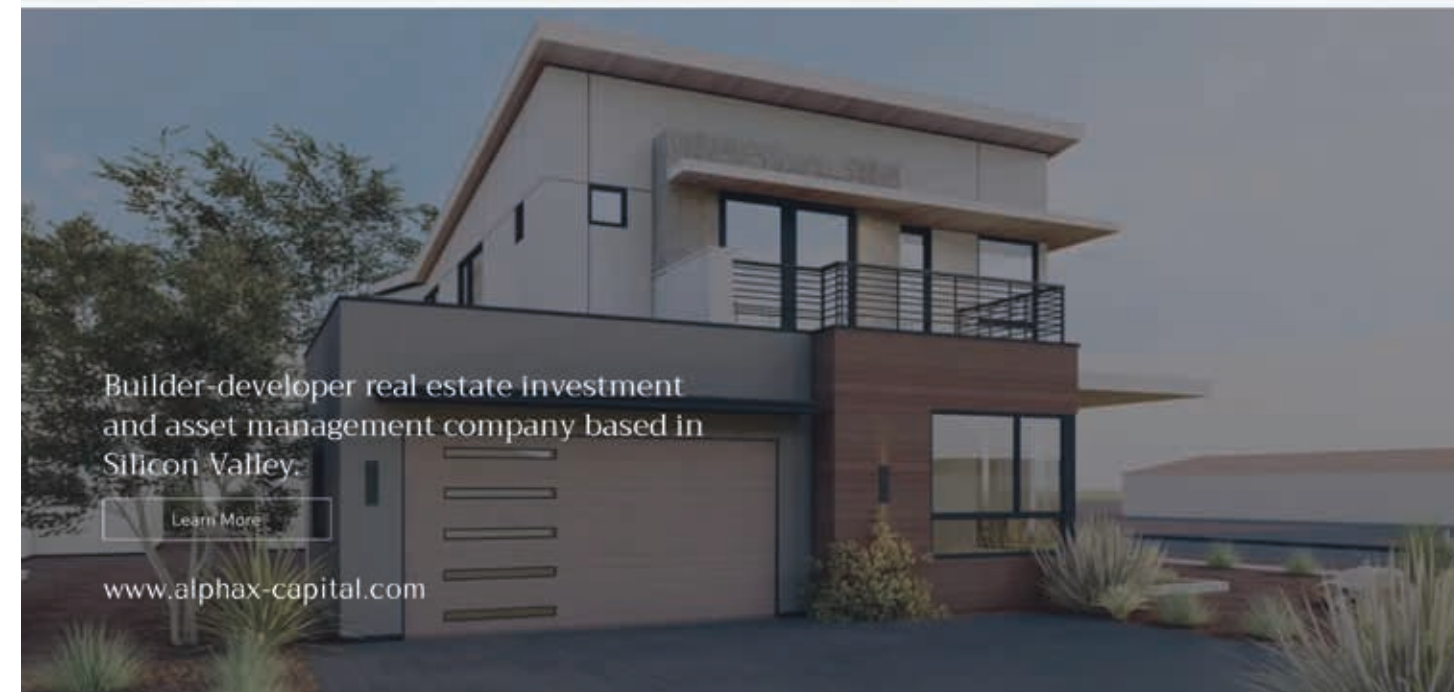
As we continue to grow, both as a community and as a team, my commitment remains the same: to build something meaningful, to create opportunities for genuine connection, and to lead with intention in everything we do.

This isn't just my vision anymore. It belongs to all of us. And I'm excited for what we'll continue to build together.

With gratitude,

Sandra Magana

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BY OLHA MELOKHINA

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- Texture + confidence photograph best.

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- Even simple things like flowers, coffee mugs, or your favorite pen, can help communicate your vibe. Any props that have your logo on it.

Pro tip: Pack everything in a tote or rolling suitcase so transitions are quick and organized.

Get in the Right Headspace

- Mindset is everything.
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- Remember: you're not "posing", you're showing up as the face of your brand.
- Confidence is magnetic.

Plan Your Timing + Energy

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John Killen & Dominic Conetto

WITH FIDELITY NATIONAL TITLE

BY CHRIS MENEZES • PHOTOGRAPHY BY OLHA MELOKHINA PHOTOGRAPHY

In an industry where turnover is common and relationships can feel transactional, the team at Fidelity National Title in Silicon Valley has built something different—something steady, consistent, and deeply rooted in the people behind it. That starts at the top, with County Manager John Killen and Sales Manager Dominic Conetto. Together, they've built a culture that feels less like a corporate office and more like a team people genuinely want to be part of.



It's not just how they lead—it's how they show up. "He's Batman, I'm Robin," Dominic says with a laugh. It's a funny comparison, but it captures something real. There's a rhythm to how they operate—different roles, same mindset. That alignment has helped shape a culture built on consistency, trust, and a shared commitment to the people around them. For John, that approach has been decades in the making. After earning his bachelor's degree in Communications from BYU, he started his career in commercial real estate in the late '80s. However, when the 1989 earthquake shook the market, it changed everything. "I was trying to figure out what to do," he recalls. "There was a title sales rep who kept coming into my office, taking me to lunch. I finally asked what he did. He explained it, and I asked if they were hiring." That conversation turned into a 30-year career.

Starting as a sales rep, John worked his way up through the company,



eventually stepping into his current role as County Manager in 2008. From the very beginning, John has built business and his team on three things: support, communication, and having fun. That mindset is what stood out to him when he first met and hired Dominic as a sales rep. "He had great character. He was professional. He took it seriously," John recalls. "I was impressed right away." Dominic's path into the business took a different route, but it carries the same thread of adaptability and work ethic.

Raised in Willow Glen, where his family's roots stretch back generations, Dominic grew up around hard work, family, and a connection to real estate through his parents' investments.



“WE WANT TO MAKE THE AGENT LOOK GOOD.”

After earning his degree from Cal State Long Beach, his early career moved from teaching and personal training to corporate fitness, and even a stretch in Italy, where he launched an import business. Eventually, he found his way to Fidelity in 2002. More than two decades later, he’s still there—now serving as Vice President of Sales, leading a team of 11 while still maintaining his own book of business. “I’m a working sales manager,” he specifies. “I’m still in it every day with the team.” That hands-on approach mirrors John’s, and it’s part of what keeps their leadership aligned. Their goal is to create an all-inclusive, family-like environment with the benefits of being a Fortune 300 company. “John and I work hard to keep a family feel here,” Dominic emphasizes. That shows up in how the team operates. They meet regularly, share ideas, and lean on each other.

It also shows up in how they support one another outside of work. “We’re very flexible when people need time with family,” John & Dominic explains. “We believe family always comes first.” The result is a level of longevity that’s rare in the industry. Many members of their team have been with Fidelity for 10, 15, even 20-plus years. That same mindset carries into how they work with real estate agents as well.

“What we really do is act as business consultants,” Dominic explains. “We sit down with agents, ask questions, and figure out where the gaps are—where we can help them grow.” That support can take many forms—from connecting agents to in-house tools to helping them build more consistent business. At the center of it all is a simple priority. “We want to make the agent look good,” John says.

For both John and Dominic, life outside the office is a big part of what shapes the culture inside it. Family and friends are at the center of everything. Dominic enjoys going to the gym, hosting friends at his house, traveling and runs an authentic Italian cooking channel on



“WE SIT DOWN WITH AGENTS, ASK QUESTIONS, AND FIGURE OUT WHERE THE GAPS ARE—WHERE WE CAN HELP THEM GROW.”

YouTube with his family. John brings that same energy in his own way. From playing with his band—Floyd’s Ordeal—to traveling the world surfing and competing in ice hockey leagues, he brings a level of enthusiasm that naturally carries into the workplace.


That balance—between hard work, support, and genuinely enjoying life—is what holds everything together. Because at the end of the day, the

culture they’ve built isn’t just about business. It’s about people. ❏

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BY DIANE ROWE
PHOTOGRAPHY BY
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PHOTOGRAPHY

**Building a
Business with
Courage,
Authenticity,
and Heart**

HEREDIA

Jessica Heredia's path into real estate began during a season of transition, uncertainty, and bold decision-making. In the midst of a major life shift, she walked away from her traditional 9–5 job, packed her belongings, and moved to the Bay Area almost overnight. At the same time, she was finishing her master's program remotely, flying back once a week just to attend a single in-person class. She had already come too far to stop, and she was determined to see it through.

That period of change created space for reflection. While completing her degree, Jessica began to realize that the field she had been studying was not where her passion truly lived. Stepping away from a rigid routine pushed her to ask deeper questions about what kind of work would actually fulfill her.

The answer began to take shape closer to home. Her partner worked in the construction world, and being immersed in that environment sparked something in her. She found herself drawn to homes, renovations, design, and the process of helping people create spaces that reflected their lives. That curiosity led her to explore real estate, and once she stepped into the industry, everything clicked. Choosing this career, she says, has been one of the best decisions she has ever made.

Jessica's first year in real estate was a whirlwind. She earned her license halfway through the year and immediately felt the pressure of playing catch-up. She joined a team right away, and the people she met there became some of her first real friends in the Bay Area, a meaningful support system for someone who had moved without an existing network.



The team also had clear production standards designed to create accountability and momentum. While the structure was demanding, Jessica understood the intention behind it and used those expectations as motivation to push herself early on. She made a deal with leadership: if she could not close a deal within her first three months, she would seriously consider joining a sub-team or working under a mentor. It was a significant challenge, especially given that she had no sphere of influence, no family, and no established relationships in the area.

Still, she committed fully. In those first three months, Jessica closed three deals, all from cold leads. That experience became a defining moment. It proved that she could build something from nothing and that effort and authenticity could overcome the absence of connections. From there, she continued learning, refining her approach, and discovering her own style within the

business. That first year pushed her more than she expected, but it laid the foundation for how she works today.

One of the most important skills Jessica developed early on was learning how to manage the anxiety of meeting new people. Walking into rooms full of strangers, initiating conversations, and putting herself out there did not come naturally at first. Over time, she taught herself to push past the nerves and lean into her outgoing side. She began approaching conversations as if she were speaking to someone she had known her whole life. That mindset made interactions feel more genuine and allowed people to feel at ease.

She also reminds herself that everyone is human. People respond to authenticity, and in real estate, being known and trusted is essential. That willingness to initiate, connect, and show up as herself became one of her greatest strengths.

The biggest influence in Jessica's journey has been her partner, Oscar. She recalls the day she came home to learn that he had quit his engineering job without a backup plan, choosing instead to build something of his own. The decision surprised her, but it also mirrored the advice he had once given her. He was the one who encouraged her to quit her job, move to the Bay Area, and pursue work that truly made her happy. Watching him take that same leap, bet on himself, and build his business from the ground up deeply shaped the way Jessica approaches her own career.

A pivotal realization came when she noticed how fulfilled she felt in her work. Helping people find homes and witnessing the impact that process had on their lives gave her a strong sense of purpose. She was no longer just working. She was helping people achieve something deeply meaningful. That combination of fulfillment and excitement confirmed she was exactly where she was meant to be.

Building trust has always been central to Jessica's approach. Early on, she recognized that the traditional sales-

driven style no longer resonates. Instead, she leads with transparency. She is honest about what she knows, and when she does not have an answer, she finds it. She emphasizes that real estate is not a race, but a journey, and she never wants a client to feel pushed into a decision.

That philosophy has paid off. In one instance, clients tested her transparency by asking another agent the same questions she had answered honestly. When that agent misrepresented the facts, her integrity stood out. A week later, she sold them a home. Moments like that reinforced her belief that authenticity builds trust better than any sales tactic ever could.

One lesson Jessica wishes she had learned sooner is that she did not need to have everything figured out from day one. Early in her career, she placed immense pressure on herself to be perfect. Over time, she learned that confidence and expertise are built through experience, curiosity, and consistency.

When setbacks occur, Jessica stays grounded by remembering why she



chose this path. She reflects honestly, adjusts where needed, and keeps moving forward. Organization, routine, and a strong support system help her stay balanced, as does recognizing her own growth.

When clients work with Jessica, she wants them to feel supported, understood, and genuinely cared for. She prioritizes communication, education, and anticipation of potential challenges. Her goal is for every client to walk away feeling confident, empowered, and excited about the next chapter of their life.

Looking ahead, Jessica hopes to continue growing her business in a way that feels authentic and impactful. She aims to expand her reach, support more clients, and strengthen her presence in the community. Through initiatives like Homes for Paws, where she donates from every transaction to Pets in Need, she hopes her success creates a ripple effect beyond real estate.

Jessica Heredia is building a career rooted in courage, honesty, and heart. Her story is one of taking risks, staying true to herself, and creating meaningful impact through the work she loves. 🏡

You can follow Jessica's journey on social media @ jessicasrealty




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Krystle Thai



**Clarity,
Care, and a
People-First
Practice**

BY HANNAH COLLINS
PHOTOGRAPHY BY
OLHA MELOKHINA
PHOTOGRAPHY

Krystle Thai remembers the moment she realized just how overwhelming the first-time home buying process can be. As a first-time buyer herself, what should have been an exciting milestone also came with a flood of unfamiliar terms, fast-moving decisions, and high-stakes choices.

“I remember thinking, I wish someone would slow this down and explain what’s happening,” Krystle reflects. “There are so many details, and it can be hard to see the full picture.”

That experience stayed with her. Rather than accept it as the norm, Krystle made a decision that would eventually reshape her career. If the process felt overwhelming for her, it likely felt the same way for many others. She wanted to become the kind of advisor she had hoped to find herself.

Today, as a REALTOR® and a Doctor of Pharmacy, Krystle has built a practice grounded in education, empathy, and thoughtful strategy. Since launching her real estate career in 2022, she has closed over \$75 million in sales across 44 transactions, quickly earning a reputation for helping clients navigate complex decisions with clarity and confidence.

For Krystle, real estate was never about chasing momentum. It was about creating a better experience.

A Foundation in Precision
Before entering real estate, Krystle spent years working in healthcare as a director at a Fortune 500 medical company focused

on medication access and population health. Her role required interpreting complex data and helping healthcare leaders make decisions that would ultimately affect patients’ lives. The stakes were high, timelines were tight, and precision mattered.

“You’re constantly balancing information, urgency, and people’s wellbeing,” she explains. “You have to understand the details, but also communicate them clearly so people can make the right decision.”

That background now shapes how she guides real estate clients. Contracts, disclosures, inspections, and negotiations often come with layers of complexity. Krystle’s strength lies in translating those details into plain language so clients understand not only what is happening, but why it matters.

“Buying or selling a home isn’t just financial,” she says. “There are emotions, life changes, and big decisions tied into it. My job is to help people feel informed and supported every step of the way.”

Learning the Pace of the Business

Like many new agents, Krystle’s first year in real estate was both exhilarating and demanding. Late nights reviewing disclosures and early mornings following up with clients quickly became routine. The pace of the business was fast, and the learning curve was steep. What surprised her most, however, was how personal every transaction became. Every client arrived with different priorities, circumstances, and emotions. Some were relocating for

work. Others were planning weddings or navigating major life transitions.

“That’s when I realized strategy matters, but understanding people matters even more,” she says.

The Power of Preparation

Ask Krystle what drives her results, and she points to something deceptively simple: preparation.

Behind the scenes, her days revolve around consistent habits. Daily client touchpoints, weekly market study, pre-call planning, post-showing debriefs, and regular role play all help sharpen her skills.

“I believe clarity creates calm,” Krystle says. “When people understand what’s happening and what their options are, they feel more confident making decisions.”

Her approach centers on transparency from the beginning. She outlines risks early, sets expectations clearly, and encourages questions so clients never feel rushed or uncertain.

The result is a process that feels collaborative rather than transactional.

Seeing Homes Through a Craftsman Lens

Krystle’s appreciation for homes extends well beyond contracts and negotiations. It is rooted in a hands-on understanding of how houses are built, how they age, and how thoughtful craftsmanship shapes long term value.

While restoring and caring for her own 1918 Craftsman home, she developed firsthand insight into the systems and structure behind a house. From



“I want people to feel like they understand what is happening and that this is something they can do.”



crawling through crawl spaces and climbing into attics to repairing and maintaining different parts of the property, the experience gave her a deeper understanding of how a home truly functions over time.

“When you take care of a home yourself, you start noticing things most people overlook,” she says.

That hands-on perspective sharpened her eye for quality workmanship. Today, it helps her guide clients through seeing homes with greater clarity, recognize potential issues early, and identify improvements that can strengthen a home’s long term value.

A Lesson in Perspective
Of the many mentors who have influenced Krystle along the way, the most important has been her father.

When the pressure of a transaction builds, he offers a simple piece of advice: stay steady and keep moving forward.

“I remember him telling me to walk alongside the client and just keep going,” she says.

That mindset stayed with her during one transaction that ultimately affirmed why she chose this work. A homeowner came to her wanting to move, but feeling stuck. The market felt uncertain, and the decision to sell carried real financial and personal weight. Krystle helped him study his numbers carefully and create a strategy.

The home sold beyond expectations. But what stayed with Krystle was the conversation afterward. “He told me that because of the sale, he wouldn’t need a mortgage on his next home,” she recalls. “And that his wife would be able to retire sooner than they had imagined.”

Moments like that remind her why the work matters.

Looking Ahead

Looking ahead, Krystle is focused on making homeownership feel more accessible and understandable for more people across the Bay Area.

Through workshops, educational content, and community outreach, she hopes to help demystify the process for people who may not know where to start. Many families, including those navigating a new country, language, or financial system, simply need clear information and someone who can help explain the path forward.

Krystle also plans to expand her educational efforts through online content and practical guides that break down the fundamentals of buying a home, from financing and inspections to long term planning.

“I want people to feel like they understand what is happening and that this is something they can do,” she says.

For Krystle, real estate is about helping people move into the next chapter of their lives with confidence and a place to call their own. ▀

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Casey Sternsmith & Tess Salter



THE STERNSMITH GROUP

Growing Side by Side

BY CHRIS MENEZES • PHOTOGRAPHY BY OLHA MELOKHINA PHOTOGRAPHY

There's a difference between working together and building something together. For sisters Casey Sternsmith and Tess Salter, the line between business and life is almost impossible to separate—and that's exactly how they like it. They live next door to each other. Their kids are growing up together. Weeknights turn into family dinners, weekends into shared plans—tennis, hikes, trips to Tahoe—and somewhere in between, they've built one of the most consistent and high-performing real estate businesses in San Mateo County. But that closeness didn't happen by accident. After losing their parents in their twenties, Casey and Tess made a conscious decision to stay close. “

We show our kids every day that family is everything,” Tess says. “I feel incredibly lucky that I get to work alongside my sister and my best friend every single day.” That foundation—family, resilience, and gratitude—shapes everything they do. Both credit their family—especially their great-uncle and father—with shaping how they view work, opportunity, and responsibility. Their great-uncle escaped Auschwitz and came to America with nothing, later building a successful business from the ground up. Their father, a first-generation American who owned an accounting business, reinforced those values. When he passed, his funeral was standing room only, filled with clients who shared how much they trusted him—leaving a lasting impression on both Casey and Tess about what it means to build a business the right way.

Casey was the first to step into real estate, drawn to the relationship-driven nature of the work and the opportunity to guide people through meaningful moments in their lives. Early on, she faced a challenge that had nothing to do with contracts or negotiations. “I was only 23, and at open houses people would

sometimes ask if I was there helping my mom,” Casey recalls. Credibility didn't come overnight. It came through consistency—showing up, building trust, and delivering results until the business began to take shape. That same consistency became the foundation for everything that followed.

Years later, while Tess was building a successful career in tech sales—specifically in presentation skills & executive coaching at Oracle, Google, and other companies—Casey kept planting the seed of real estate. “It wasn't an overnight decision. It was more of a slow burn,” Tess says about entering real estate. When she finally made the leap ten years ago, it changed everything. “That was truly a turning point,” Casey emphasizes.





Where Casey had developed a deep, relationship-centered approach grounded in consistency, Tess brought a systems-driven mindset shaped by years of high-level sales, negotiation, and operations. One leads with steady repetition. The other with structure and scale. Together, they created something balanced, intentional, and difficult to replicate. “We function as a collaborative, strategic unit,” Tess explains. “The full strength of the team stands behind every client.”

While many agents spread themselves across wide territories, the Sternsmith Group has taken a different approach. They’ve intentionally narrowed their focus, centering their business on San Mateo County and the surrounding

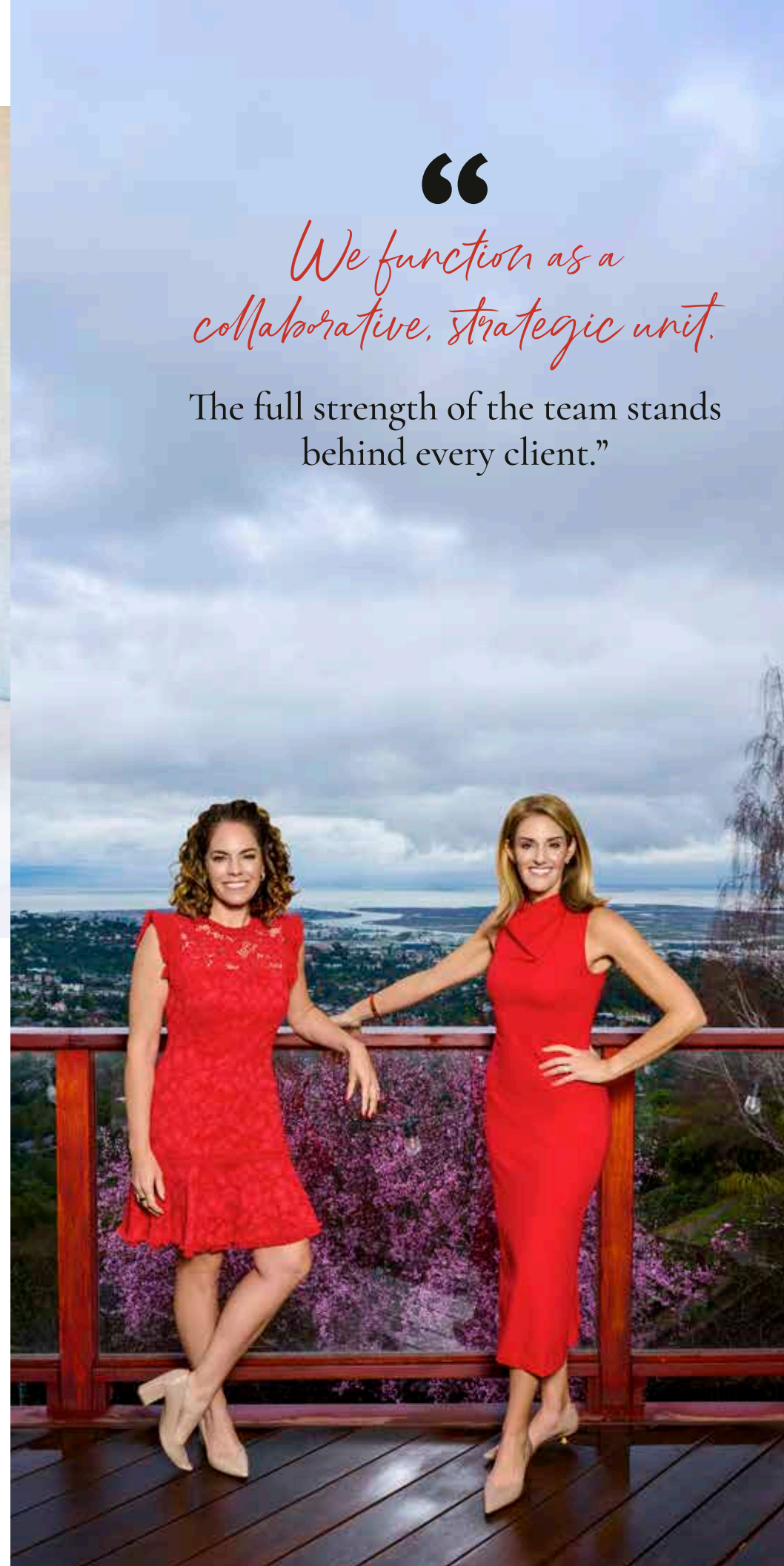
“
I truly believe the universe works in amazing ways.

The right home comes along. The right client relationship forms. The right timing reveals itself—even when it doesn’t feel that way in the moment.”



“
We function as a collaborative, strategic unit.

The full strength of the team stands behind every client.”



Peninsula communities. It’s a philosophy Casey describes simply: being “an inch wide and a mile deep” in their knowledge.

That depth shows up in the details—knowing the streets without a map and understanding how value can shift from one block to the next. “Each person on our team was born and raised on the Peninsula, in the very neighborhoods where we now work,” Tess says. “That hyper-local knowledge isn’t surface-level—it’s lived experience.” But what truly sets their business apart isn’t just where they work. It’s how they work together within it. “

What’s always guided me is simple: I have to be willing to walk away if something isn’t truly right for my client,” Tess explains. “This work is about people, not just transactions. My priority is making sure every decision genuinely serves the person in front of me—nothing less.” It’s a mindset rooted in trust—not just in the process, but in how things unfold naturally over time. “I truly believe the universe works in amazing ways,” Tess adds. “The right home comes along. The right client relationship forms. The right timing reveals itself—even when it doesn’t feel that way in the moment.”

That perspective carries beyond their day-to-day business and into the way they think about impact. For Tess and Casey, that includes a deep commitment to giving back.

Through her leadership with the PARCA Auxiliary Board, Tess helped raise significant support for individuals with developmental disabilities. Casey has found great joy in showing her children’s the importance of giving back and volunteering together through YMSL and NCL.

It’s a reflection of something both sisters share: success isn’t just measured in awards, but in what you contribute along the way. Looking ahead, they will continue to build on that—side by side, pushing forward, together. ▀



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