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Carpe diem Manzanita Ventures

Written by **William West**

Suzanne Candini, left, and Rachelle Souza, principals of Manzanita Ventures, a new multi-disciplinary real estate corporation.

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Technically the economy is out of recession, but local real estate is as dead as the lawn on a foreclosed three-bedroom-two-bath house.

Why, then, did Suzanne Candini, formerly co-owner and President of Florsheim Homes choose to open a multi-faceted real estate business called Manzanita Ventures?

Actually, it's a great time to open a business," Ms Candini said. Times are changing. Real estate offices can't do business the way they did a few years ago."

Manzanita Ventures is not your father's real estate company. Five divisions handle residential resale, property management, commercial brokerage, interior design/space planning and custom building/remodeling.

I was retired for a few years," Ms. Candini said. I played golf and tennis and traveled. But I eventually decided I wanted my own business."

She looked at various businesses but a few disappointing experiences with other real estate companies gave her an idea.

We were looking for investment properties," said Rachelle Souza, co-owner and Ms. Candini's daughter. The level of service was horrifying. We couldn't understand why customers were treated so badly."

Agents wouldn't call back or show up to let us into the home," she said.

There was an obvious need in the marketplace," Ms. Candini said. We knew we could do a better job."

Now, more than ever, you need an experienced realtor," she added.

The paradigm is that the general decline in real estate values creates opportunities. The prices are low. For move-up sellers the selling price may be lower than it was, but so is the price of the move-up home. The value proposition that Manzanita brings to the table is expertise based on years of experience. They can navigate the treacherous waters of short sales and foreclosures.

We've been working for a year," said Ms. Candini. We made a solid business plan. We created a website, Manzanita.me. The office just opened a few weeks ago."

On the commercial brokerage front, Manzanita Commercial has already acquired Oakdale Station Shopping Center as one of its newest clients. The commercial building, located on the corner of Oak and West F streets in Oakdale has seven retail and executive office vacancies.

Manzanita's ability to do interior design and space planning complements the commercial brokerage. Prospective tenants can deal with the same company for leasing or sales and interior design. The services create a value-added level of professionalism.

We also feel the market for remodeling is tremendous," said Ms. Candini. In the residential area some people are not willing to move. So instead of buying another home they improve the one they have."

There is competition in the property management sector, but most of the competitors are quite large. If a client wishes to have an experienced team with national and local connections, yet still small enough to give high-level service, Manzanita feels they are the logical choice.

Do you have an opinion about the central valley's real estate recovery?

We don't have a crystal ball," Ms. Candini said. No one knows. But it's not going to be the way it was for a long, long time."

Agents and contractors and designers need to adapt to change," said Ms. Souza, and we are doing it now."

Where did the name 'Manzanita' come from?

I didn't want my name on my real estate company," said Ms. Candini. It comes from the toughness of the Manzanita tree, and to us it means strong, resilient, hard to kill. It came about because we went to Napa to look at a home furnishings store. We were sitting at Silverado and saw a Manzanita tree."