

Workplace with Marie G. McIntyre

Our group has one person, "Cindy," who is called the team lead. This is not a supervisory position. She is just supposed to assist our supervisor and fill in when he's away. Although she's not my boss, Cindy constantly tells me what to do. She monitors my work, times my breaks and even contradicts my supervisor's instructions.

Cindy is good at her job. I don't dislike her, but I want her to back off and stop giving orders. Because our open-door policy says we can go straight to the vice president, I plan to discuss the situation with her. What do you think?

A: Given a little authority, power-loving people often become petty tyrants. But while Cindy's position may have gone to her head, your supervisor is actually the responsible party. Cindy only has the authority that he is willing to delegate. So either he has sanctioned her actions or he isn't supervising her properly.

Despite the open-door policy, meeting with the vice president would not be wise. Your supervisor will view this as going over his head. You need to talk with him directly.

For this conversation to succeed, don't complain about Cindy. Your goal is to define her role. For example: "I'm a little confused about when to take direction from Cindy and when to come to you. Can you help me understand exactly what a team lead is supposed to do?" If his description

matches Cindy's behavior, then you need to adjust.

But if his expectations seem different, ask for clarification. Should you notify Cindy when you go on break? What should you do when her instructions conflict with his? Hopefully, your boss will get the message.

Q: I sit near a human resources employee who talks very loudly on the phone. She gossips about confidential personnel matters, such as the amount of someone's bonus check or which employees are being pursued by collection agencies. Everyone in the group can hear her. We are all afraid to go to her boss, so what can we do?

A: By failing to protect confidentially, this chatty employee damages the credibility of her entire department. So someone in management needs to know. If you fear that her boss will blow off your concerns, seek out a manager with a more sympathetic ear. Then present the facts in a calm, businesslike manner. For example: "I hate to get anyone in trouble, but I hear a lot of confidential salary information being shared when Mary is on the phone. This seems inappropriate, but I don't think it's my place to tell her. So I just wanted to make you aware of it."

It's then up to management to deal with the problem.

Marie G. McIntyre is a workplace coach. Submit questions at www.yourofficecoach.com.

Housing: Most blame factors other than gas prices

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may have played in the housing downturn. Most say the mortgage lending crunch, overbuilding by homebuilders and speculation by investors played larger roles.

Cortright's argument goes like this: For decades, the growth of suburban housing has relied on cheap gas prices. Realtors told buyers to "drive till you qualify," sending first-time buyers to ever more distant suburbs where they would pay less for a house, though it meant driving farther.

But gas prices have spiked quickly since 2004: Adjusted for inflation, the average price of

regular has doubled from \$1.50 to more than \$3.50 today. The higher prices have cut into suburban household budgets, leaving them less money to pay for housing. That means homebuyers are offering less for a new house than they otherwise might have.

"The rise in gas prices has fundamentally altered the landscape of urban housing markets in a way that will not quickly be undone, barring an unforeseen collapse in oil prices," Cortright's report says.

His research covered 20 metro areas, Cortright said, though the report contains more detail on five for brevity's sake: Portland, Los Angeles, Chicago, Pittsburgh and Tampa, Fla.

The pattern held up for Portland, which has relatively strong urban neighborhoods, but also for Los Angeles and Pittsburgh, where downtown-area living is almost unheard of. Compare houses in the same price range, and it also holds.

Critics were unmoved by Cortright's argument.

Inner city homes certainly have a "better ability to weather the downturns," said Jerry Johnson, an economist who specializes in studying the Portland market for banks and local governments. "New supply goes on the periphery, because that's where you can put new supply. No one's leveling Laurelhurst to put up 100 new homes, ... so it's supply-constrained."

Randall Pozdena, an economist with ECONorthwest in Portland, called it a "spurious correlation." The effect of the increase is trivial compared with the cost of home ownership, he said.

Say you drive 10,000 miles a year, Pozdena said. With a car getting 20 miles per gallon, you would buy about 500 gallons of gas a year. If gas prices rise by \$1, you'll spend about \$500 more in a year. "That pales in comparison with any other cost in owning a home."

But the gas price argument makes sense to Peggy Hoag, a top-producing real estate agent

who works with clients in in Portland and Washington County. "The commute is the third biggest factor in the third largest market."

Some neighborhoods in Washington County's high-tech corridor seem to be holding their prices well, said Hoag. Prudential Northwest Property says that for the most part, homes in the inner east side of Portland are fetching higher prices, she said.

Homes sold for \$400,000 to \$500,000 in inner Portland in 30 days ending Tuesday sold 99 percent of their asking price according to a search of RMR data by Hoag's staff. Homes in the same price range near Beaverton sold for 97 percent of their asking price.

Two years ago, homes in the same areas and price ranges sold for 100 percent of their asking prices, she said. "This is a spread that's not typical."

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First Citizen: Developer encourages loyal renters

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contract with \$2,500 from sling newspapers and pulling Green River phosphates after class at Central Catholic High School. But he never became a high flier. He still pays outright for existing properties and doesn't leverage one building project to pay for another.

Weston isn't escaping the real estate downturn unscathed.

The Encore, his latest condo building in the Pearl, is under construction at Northwest Ninth Avenue and Overton Street. Just 12 of 177 units are sold. But he's paid off his construction loan on the Benson at Southwest 11th Avenue and Clay Street and is poised to do so on the Metropolitan at Northwest 10th Avenue and Lovejoy Street with fewer than 25 unsold units remaining in each.

Sitting on a gold mine

Meanwhile he's sitting on a gold mine in close-in eastside apartments. Though he's sold a few to investors who converted them to condos, he retains 2,500 units at \$595 to \$635 a month for an average one bedroom. Blue collar workers, he believes, deserve decent housing.

"I have no intention of eating at The Ringside," said Weston of the spendy steakhouse, "so I don't need more rent."

Weston also encourages loyal tenants. He doesn't generally accept federally subsidized renters but retains long-timers who later transition to subsidies — particularly senior citizens to whom he otherwise offers a discount.

"If you take a senior citizen and treat them right, they'll stay with you. What kills you in the apartment business is the churn," said Weston, who named his Mel-Grace apartments on Southeast Taylor Street at 25th Avenue after his parents and moved them there in the 1960s.

"I have no intention of eating at The Ringside, so I don't need more rent."

Joe Weston, developer



STEPHANIE YAO/THE OREGONIAN

Weston, 70, is shrewd yet compassionate. He's retained most of the eastside affordable rentals with which he started his empire rather than forcing out blue collar renters with condo conversions.

Next project on hold

His next planned Portland project, a 30-story condo tower called the Cosmopolitan near the Convention Center, is in design review with the city.

"But I don't know when I'll build it," he said. "It may not be in my lifetime."

Another planned condo tower, at Southwest 14th Avenue and Morrison, is also on hold. Weston wants to see people putting up "hard money" — not reservations — for condos again before he moves forward on either project.

His strategy on the President-

tial race is little less clear.

A lifelong Democrat, like his parents, he said if he had to vote today it would be for Sen. Barack Obama.

"He has the charisma to attract young people and young people have talent," said Weston, who compares him to John F. Kennedy.

But he turned to Passadore, who's going for Sen. John McCain, about interviewing interviews that Obama's controversial former pastor gave this week. He wants to see McCain's choice for running mate. Weston thinks the 71-year-old cancer survivor could die in office and is

Joe Weston

Honor: The Portland Metropolitan Association of Realtors presents Weston with its First Citizen Award today. Recipients of the 80-year-old award range from ship builder Edgar F. Kaiser in 1942 to community builder Tony L. Hopson Sr. in 2003. The Oregonian is a co-sponsor.

Why Weston: Born to working poor parents in Portland, Weston owns 2,500 apartments and 4.6 million square feet of commercial, industrial and self-storage space in Oregon and Washington. His Joseph E. Weston Public Foundation, administered by the Oregon Community Foundation, gives to nonprofits from Sisters of the Road Cafe to Special Olympics. Upon his death, his more than \$500 million in holdings will go to his foundation.

Family: Divorced. Tiffany and Jeff are his grown children.

Quote: "What he has given back to our community quietly has been tremendous," said Kathy Quinn, chief executive officer of the Realtors association.

interested in whether his presidential pick is less of a "hot hawk."

"I want no more Bush policy," Weston said.

Before leaving Subway, Weston and Passadore reviewed its guest list for the awards luncheon. Weston filed a suit with his classmates from Northwest Portland's All Saints School and the octogenarian was retained in his error spelling in the fourth grade. See page B1.

Then Weston bid his final goodbye, climbed into a taxi and drove up the hill.

Joe Weston: www.jweston.com

People

REAL ESTATE

NBS Real Estate Capital has added **Marcus Parker** as vice president of acquisitions. Parker will the share responsibility of sourcing, underwriting and closing investments on behalf of the Morrison Street Funds, a series of discretionary equity funds managed by NBS Real Estate Capital.



Parker
NBS Real Estate
Capital

Groups. Lindsay will focus on representing clients in the following areas: software licensing, internet, domain names, and establishing, acquiring, transferring, preserving, enforcing and defending IP rights.

FINANCIAL

U.S. Bank has added **Joyce Campbell**, **Cyrus Vafi** and **Sharon Wynde** as vice president and relationship managers. They will work in the bank's commercial banking division serving customers in the Portland and Vancouver areas.

MISCELLANEOUS

The YMCA of Columbia-Willamette has added **Bill Blackburn**, operations manager for Pacific Inns, to the board of trustees.

— Mark Graves

LAW

Shawn M. Lindsay has joined Lane Powell's Portland office as an associate in the Intellectual Property and Business Practice

Industry notes

REAL ESTATE

Portland-area transactions

Doug Bailey has leased 2,300 square feet of retail space for a Kung Fu Academy at Orchards Center, 10411 N.E. Fourth Plain Blvd., Vancouver, from Orchards Center. Laura Pallin, Bluestone & Hockley Real Estate Services, represented the lessee; Gina Barendrick and Pam Lindloff, Norris, Beggs & Simpson, represented the lessor.

K & B Commercial Flooring has leased 4,000 square feet of industrial space at Vancouver Busi-

ness Park, 3315 N.E. 112th Ave., Vancouver, from Bennett Family Trust II. Garrett Harper, Norris, Beggs & Simpson, represented the lessor.

Select Sole, a shoe manufacturing business, has leased 2,647 square feet of office at Vancouver Commerce Center, 101 E. Eighth St., Suite 250, Vancouver, from Amberhill Properties. Terry Phillips, The Phillips Group, represented the lessee; Pam Lindloff and Doug Bartocci, Norris, Beggs & Simpson, represented the lessor.

— Mark Graves

Calendar

TODAY

Columbia Corridor Association Breakfast Forum: 7:30-9 a.m. "Annual Real Estate Trends and

Portland State Business Accelerator: Noon-1:15 p.m. "Creating New Products and Services in a Changing Wireless World."

Alder logs:

There is no substitute for alder. Alder could stockpile raw material. Those logs for consumer products.