

Residential Real Estate

San Francisco's Green Couch believes high-end home staging should move beyond sight



Jeff Schlarb is a co-founder of Green Couch, which is taking staging homes beyond artfully placing some furniture.

TODD JOHNSON | SAN FRANCISCO BUSINESS TIMES

Staging a home for sale has long meant artfully placing furniture to enhance a property's potential sale price and other design tricks. But a San Francisco business owner is trying to convince home sellers to move beyond sight.

Jeff Schlarb has found favor with agents by moving beyond landscaping to "fridgescaping" and more. As the principal of Jeff Schlarb Design Studio and co-founder of Green Couch, a luxury home-staging firm in the city, he has been

busy this spring, especially in S.F. and on the Peninsula, where Green Couch staged a record-breaking [Burlingame mansion that sold at the end of April for \\$17 million](#).

The tactic that's been the biggest hit is Green Couch's new "Beverage, Scent and Sound" program, he said.

The first part lies in the refrigerator.

"When agents go to open the fridge when they have showings, they're like, 'Would you like one of these seven different beverages,' and it's just kind of really neatly fridgescaped," Schlarb said.

"It's a wow factor," said Green Couch Managing Director Tabatha Petersen, who joined the company more than a year ago. "They open the fridge and are like, 'Oh my gosh, is this staged or can we drink this?'"

And while a beverage may seem small, it can also play a larger role in a deal. Green Couch recently had a focus group with some top Realtors, Schlarb said. One said that the curated refrigerator was handy to have something to offer to potential buyers when they came in for a showing.

"You say, 'Would you like a water?' And at first people are like, 'No, no, no, I'm fine.' And then they would circle back around and say, 'You know, I would like a water, thanks,'" Schlarb said. "It kind of chills them out a little bit. You know when you're looking and you probably really like it, you have to pretend you don't like it, so no one else knows.

"It just makes the job so much more fun when everyone's chill and just more themselves," he said.

Petersen said the scent part of the program is a diffuser from a company called Hyascent.

"It's a beautiful, hourglass-shaped bottle and smells really nice," she said. "It's a clean oil."

The sound aspect includes music delivered through a speaker that has an MP3 player connected to it with four or five different playlists curated by Green Couch.

"The agent doesn't have to use their iPhone to connect to the speaker, because then somebody calls them and then it disconnects from the speaker, or it plays the whole conversation on the speaker," Petersen said.

Overall, the [luxury market in the Bay Area remains robust](#), up about 24% from April 2024, and hit its highest monthly total since the peak of the pandemic boom in May 2022. Of sales reported for April, 39% were in Santa Clara County, 30% in San Mateo County, 14% in Marin, 13% in San Francisco and 4% in Contra Costa. In addition, over a dozen \$10 million-plus were reported for April, including a \$32 million sale in Atherton, a \$25 million sale in Portola Valley, a \$24 million sale in San Francisco and an \$18 million sale in Lafayette.

Selling those properties could get even more expensive, though. Schlarb said tariffs could affect the staging and interior design businesses as about 30% of the supplies are foreign purchases.

"There's sort of an anticipation that cost of goods purchased will increase, and that's just what everybody will have to bear," he said.

Schlarb said he's also looking into deploying artificial intelligence in the near future, and will be hosting a talk with AI expert Jonathan Brill on May 22 at his design studio at 5324 Sacramento St. on how AI is reshaping the real estate landscape.