

REAL ESTATE REVIEW

Karnas tackles Carpenters Union

BY STEVE GINSBERG | SPECIAL TO NMBW

After a year, the Carpenters Union Local 1319 campaign to organize in New Mexico shows no signs of abating, and is creating growing hostility from building contractors. The carpenters continue to picket job sites in their attempts to organize, while the contractors, led by Chet Karnas of Albuquerque's Lone Sun Builders Inc., are aggressively fighting back.

Karnas' job sites are among those targeted by the union, whose picket signs say Lone Sun pays substandard wages and benefits. Karnas has taken it upon himself to try to discredit the union through a media relations campaign. He is producing a 10-part campaign to document "the more serious and unlawful infractions and assaults," and will be distributing DVD versions as well as Internet versions once all

opened in October.

"The bottom line is, people are fed up and tired of this in our community, and it's ruining the reputation of all businesses and the construction industry, in particular. I want to turn this union's efforts to sully my reputation, and that of our community, upside down, and have them find in the end that the only reputation they've damaged is their own," Karnas said.

The local Carpenters Union activities are being directed from the group's Southern California headquarters. Union organizer Hal Jensen has not responded to Karnas' requests for a dialogue, nor has he commented to the media. The carpenters are building a new headquarters site in the North I-25 corridor in Albuquerque.

Residential realtors see promise for 2010

The year is ending on a positive note for the Duke City residential market, leading to optimism heading into 2010. The latest statistics from several sources indicate that home sales are gaining momentum and Albuquerque is performing well ahead of other cities and regions.

In October, 731 home sales closed in the



FILE PHOTO

Carpenters Union reps picket a construction site in Albuquerque earlier this year.

production is complete.

Karnas said that his campaign against the union is starting to gain traction. In November, he was contacted by a representative of the Building Trades Council, a union group, asking if the group could hold his banners in protest of the Carpenters because the Council alleges the Carpenters' tactics are unethical and are ruining the reputations of all trade unions. Karnas also has heard from state Senator Dede Feldman, D-Albuquerque, who contacted the carpenters' union directly.

Karnas has been strategizing with developer Gary Goodman on how to handle the union's sidewalk protests. Goodman's Andaluz Hotel was picketed soon after it

Albuquerque metro area, a 43 percent gain over October 2008. It was the best performance since the market's peak in 2006, when 917 home sales were closed, according to the Greater Albuquerque Association of Realtors.

Pending sales for October were up 56.5 percent, to 900, again the most since 2006's 1,042. Low interest rates, lower home prices and buyers taking advantage of the federal government's \$8,000 first-time home buyer tax credit were listed as the primary reasons for the sales gains by Realtors. Uncle Sam's program has been extended into 2010, and that should keep the market moving forward, residential brokers say.

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