

REAL ESTATE: 'It's an incredible buyer opportunity ...'

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months before realizing that he needed the name of a strong brand name behind him.

"I began to explore franchise opportunities that were under-utilized or available," he said. Eventually he chose RE/MAX, opening a small boutique office near his home in Tabernash that he ran for 18 months almost entirely on his own.

In February, Century 21's No. 1 sales person for the five-state Rocky Mountain region, Kristen Meyer, made a huge move, joining Gutersohn along with her husband Nick Meyer.

Independent broker Jennifer Metz and Denise O'Connell from Coldwell Banker Mountain Properties soon followed, joining Gutersohn later in the spring.

Location still proved to be a major obstacle to Gutersohn's business. Because there was already a RE/MAX office located in Winter Park, he was prevented from moving his office there, which kept away a lot of other brokers who were inter-

ested in joining him, he said: "I realized I was going to need to come to town."

Finally, in November, Gutersohn gained permission from RE/MAX International to move to Winter Park and he purchased an office space in the old brewery building across the street from the post office (and directly across the street from the town's other RE/MAX office).

With the move to town, Irene and Neil Jans and Suzy Robbins (Coldwell Banker's No. 1 team) came on board followed a few weeks later by Brenda Freeman, Mara Erlandson and Monica Anderson from Century 21 Winter Park Real Estate, and Tina Shearon of Oakwood Homes on the Front Range.

To top it off, Granby Ranch's real estate team managed by Jennifer Colley and including Laura Zeitz and Charles Haines joined forces with Peak to Peak.

"The Granby Ranch merger was very exciting," he said

Granby Ranch sold 77 prop-

erties this past year, he said, and they're getting ready to go vertical with more development. People are drawn there by the amenities, the price point and the family-friendly environment, Gutersohn said: "There's a lot there to sell to people who like Colorado."

The new Peak to Peak Winter Park office officially opened on Dec. 1.

Gutersohn said he's looking forward to the challenges of the market ahead.

"It's an incredible buyer opportunity out there," he said. "You can buy at 1999 prices right now."

Gutersohn added that he believes prices are in the process of "hitting bottom," with residential property selling for 60 to 70 cents on the dollar.

"People want to wait until it comes back, but the time to buy is now," he said. "Banks are loosening up. Interest rates are great. Banks and owners are willing to provide funding."

Not surprisingly, the properties that are selling best right

now are the foreclosures, short sales and aggressively priced houses, he said.

The future of Grand County Real Estate, he added, will be more in-state, second home-buyers (currently 65 percent of Grand County real estate is owned by Colorado residents, as opposed to other resort areas with a much higher out-of-state ownership rate.)

Traffic on I-70 is one of the best things to happen to Winter Park real estate, Gutersohn said: "People are sick of dealing with it."

And the resort's children's ski programs and the disabled ski program are other major draws for real estate clients. "This area is still very family-oriented," he said.

Gutersohn's greatest challenge now that he has all these power brokers under one roof will be "keeping everyone happy," he said. He's fairly confident he'll be able to do that by allowing people the freedom to do whatever makes them successful.

"I won't hold them back."