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## Second season of 'Flip This House' spotlights San Antonians

Their company, Montelongo House Buyers, purchases at least 25 houses a month to fix and resell for a profit. On top of that, they're two of the newest stars of "Flip This House," a reality TV show on A&E.

The show, which has about 1.8 million viewers, started its second season Sunday.

Montelongo brother David, 29, and his wife, Melina, 27, also star in the show, which portrays the fast times of high-risk real estate investment along with the ups and downs of being a Montelongo.

"It's not just about flipping real estate, it's about young people who are successful and the conflicts that go with it," said Montelongo said.

The Montelongs are young, rich and beautiful — perfect for a prime-time drama.

But they're just a highlight of the true media darling here. Featured on talk radio shows and in national publications, the Alamo City's seductive real estate market is the hero of their story.

"We picked San Antonio because it's one of the fastest-growing real estate markets in the country," the show's producer, Liz Tracy, said.

Fortune magazine in December picked San Antonio as the nation's best real estate market and predicted 9 percent appreciation for 2007.

Since then, real estate agents say, the phones have been abuzz with long-distance calls.

"We're not riding the bubble. We're appreciating, but not at 40 and 50 percent a year like you've seen in Las Vegas and some other places. We're at 7 or 8 percent, and that's just about right," said John Brown, broker and owner of Realty Executives Alamo. "Investors like steady growth like that."

Phoenix-based real estate investor Mike Weinstein likes it plenty. He recently bought into a San Antonio condominium development near the Medical Center because the price was like pocket change compared with real estate in Phoenix or California.

Weinstein is such an investment pro he has his own bi-monthly radio talk show in Los Angeles. He says so many people have been calling his show asking about the San Antonio market that he asked his San Antonio real estate agent, Diane Motz, to fly out and give a seminar.

"About 95 percent of our investors are in California, but we've priced people out of the market there," he said. "And if we can't help them in Phoenix, we're going to turn them on to San Antonio."

For the Montelongs, San Antonio represents much more than a bunch of real estate and a way to make money — it's home. And construction has been the family business.

Patriarch Armando Montelongo Sr., who was a football coach at Lanier High School, started Montelongo Lumber in 1975. That business in 1993 became Montelongo Homes and Remodeling, with his son Rick Montelongo as president.

David Montelongo became a successful construction manager in his early 20s.

The family signed up for five episodes of "Flip This House" with an option to renew their contract for 26 episodes a year for four years.

The Montelongs flip more houses than the original cast and their family dynamic makes for high drama.

But San Antonio's allure played a large part in A&E's decision to cast them, producer Tracy said.

"It's such a unique place — the history, the culture. It provides a really interesting backdrop for the show," she said.

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