

📌 Brokers say home buyers are back, but they're choosy

KIRKLAND, Washington (Nov. 5, 2014) – Home buyers are back, and they're savvy and selective, according to officials who commented on the latest statistics from Northwest Multiple Listing Service. For sellers, that means pricing a home correctly at the start is vital, said industry veteran Kathy Estey, a member of the MLS board of directors.

The new report summarizing October activity shows year-over-year gains in new listings, pending sales, closed sales and prices.

Northwest MLS members reported 8,643 pending sales last month, which is up nearly 6.9 percent from twelve months ago when members reported 8,086 mutually accepted offers. Most of the increases are from sales of single family homes, which rose more than 7.8 percent while condo activity was flat with less than a 1 percent rise in sales.

“New listings that are coming on the market are receiving a substantially higher than normal sales activity,” remarked J. Lennox Scott, chairman and CEO of John L. Scott Real Estate. He said a backlog of buyers and shortage of homes across the most popular price segments are fueling a strong seller's market.

“Sellers who are thinking of putting their homes on the market are well advised to do so now,” suggested Estey, the branch managing broker for the John L. Scott Bellevue Main office. Although the pace of sales has slowed somewhat since June, she said demand is steady, with about half of all new listings selling in the first 30 days.

Brokers are scrambling to keep inventory replenished as last month's pending sales of single family homes and condominiums (8,643) outpaced the number of new listings (8,102).

A comparison of total inventory shows a drop of nearly 3.7 percent from a year ago. At month end there were 23,501 active listings across 21 counties in the MLS database. That's nearly 900 fewer listings than the year-ago total of 24,391.

Inventory at the end of October, as measured by months of supply, stood at 3.24 months, a slight drop from the previous month's figure of 3.7 months. In King County there is less than two months of supply, well below the four-to-six month level that many industry analysts use as a gauge of a balanced market.

Not all counties experienced declining inventories. Five counties served by Northwest MLS reported gains in the number of active listings: Cowlitz, Grant, Ferry, Pierce, and Snohomish.

As the selection expands, buyers who have been on the sidelines are being lured back into the market, according to MLS director John Deely, principal managing broker at Coldwell Banker Bain in Seattle.

Deely noted sellers whose properties were languishing on the market are now seeing brisk activity and even multiple offers after adjusting their prices. “This activity indicates there is still strong buyer demand and that buyers are watching the inventory closely,” he added.

“Watching some markets around the Puget Sound is like watching a championship tennis match, first a buyers' market, then a sellers' market,” remarked George Moorhead, a board member for the multiple listing service. “As these shifts become more of a blend, as they have the last 18 months, we will see good balance and stability in our market with healthy growth and competition,” stated Moorhead, the designated broker and owner of Bentley Properties/America's Home Caretakers in Bothell.

Another positive indicator during October was a healthy increase in closings. MLS members reported 7,257 closed sales during the month, a 7.5 percent gain from a year ago.

Prices on those sales were up 7 percent, rising from an area-wide median price of \$271,000 to \$290,000. Four counties reported double-digit price hikes, led by San Juan County, where prices jumped 18.4 percent, and Snohomish County, with a 17.4 percent year-over-year gain.

Despite only a slight improvement in the number of condo sales from a year ago, the median price system-wide surged more than 14 percent, rising from \$200,000 to \$228,500.

“It has never been more important to properly price properties,” advised Deely. Despite recent news about easing of mortgage standards, he reported an increase in low appraisals, which can delay or jeopardize a transaction.

MLS director Dick Beeson agreed. “The main thing sellers are realizing is that buyers have lots of data to base a sound offer on and there is no “fluff” available when pricing their home for sale,” he explained. Also, he emphasized, “Buyers are realizing they better take advantage of these incredible interest rates before they are gone, which could be after Jan. 1st.”

Beeson, the principal managing broker at RE/MAX Professionals in Tacoma, said even with attractive rates, some new home buyers are “struggling with the noose of student debt” as they try to meet underwriting standards currently imposed by lenders. There’s no easy way out of the student debt, but he expects lending standards will improve.

Also crimping activity is the practice of a delayed seller’s review of offers. “Interestingly, new listings without the delayed review restrictions are often not selling immediately, but in a few days or within a week there are suddenly multiple offers,” Estey reported. “Many buyers are just not willing to compete, so they wait to see what happens with a new listing, then ultimately end up in competition.”

Diedre Haines, another MLS director, said seasonal factors are starting to affect activity. “We are seeing the beginning signs of the post-election, year-end, holiday slowdowns,” she remarked, but described them as “modest” compared to past history. “First time and second time move-up buyers are still in abundance, but they’re taking their time in making decisions and offers,” according to Haines, the regional managing broker for Snohomish County at Coldwell Banker Bain.

Commenting on anticipated increases in interest rates, Haines said they are not expected to be dramatic. “The recent changes in FHFA’s easing of standards for mortgage qualifications will give the buyers’ ability to buy a major boost in the coming year,” she predicts. She also expects the relaxed qualifications will spur an increase in activity during the first quarter of 2015 and continuing throughout the year.

Northwest MLS brokers also commented on distressed sales and upticks in remodeling and new construction.

REO (bank-owned) inventory levels have continued to fall, according to an analysis by Moorhead, who also found a slight increase in foreclosure filings, “but nothing alarming for the local economy.”

Haines reports more buyers, “first time and otherwise,” are completing major renovations on their purchases before moving into that property. She said the most common improvements are kitchen and bathroom updates or makeovers, along with patios, decks and garage extensions.

“With the promise of increases in new construction by local builders, a positive economic forecast for the region, and more homeowners surfacing from being “under water” and now able to sell due to increase in appreciation, 2015 is gearing up to be as active if not more so than 2014,” Haines stated.

Northwest Multiple Listing Service, owned by its member real estate firms, is the largest full-service MLS in the Northwest. Its membership includes more than 21,000 real estate brokers. The organization, based in Kirkland, Wash., currently serves 23 counties in Washington state.

Statistical Summary by Counties: Market Activity Summary – October 2014

Single Fam. Homes + Condos	LISTINGS		PENDING SALES	CLOSED SALES			*Months of Inventory	
	New Listings	Total Active	# Pending Sales	# Closings	Avg. Price	Median Price	This month	Same mo., year ago
King	3,162	5,614	3,350	2,870	\$504,655	\$399,950	1.96	2.07
Snohomish	1,264	2,776	1,327	1,113	\$332,751	\$317,000	2.49	2.53
Pierce	1,234	3,725	1,363	1,127	\$249,095	\$228,000	3.31	3.52
Kitsap	360	1,262	429	378	\$300,403	\$244,475	3.34	4.52
Mason	109	587	103	96	\$181,387	\$152,500	6.11	9.47
Skagit	183	673	195	163	\$265,693	\$245,000	4.13	5.31
Grays Harbor	106	685	107	93	\$140,885	\$122,000	7.37	9.83
Lewis	126	655	101	82	\$156,516	\$151,950	7.99	12.89
Cowlitz	115	487	139	97	\$187,805	\$164,500	5.02	4.26
Grant	105	514	86	75	\$174,368	\$161,000	6.85	9.28
Thurston	385	1,222	433	302	\$247,561	\$227,500	4.05	4.23
San Juan	25	352	35	28	\$500,429	\$454,750	12.57	15.56
Island	138	602	166	159	\$326,708	\$278,000	3.79	6.76
Kittitas	66	461	88	65	\$254,468	\$197,000	7.09	7.33
Jefferson	65	428	64	56	\$297,600	\$296,500	7.64	11.26
Okanogan	41	465	51	30	\$169,877	\$139,000	15.50	20.96
Whatcom	309	1,351	319	267	\$286,083	\$260,000	5.06	5.14
Clark	57	195	56	69	\$234,354	\$228,000	2.83	5.75
Pacific	32	362	47	42	\$133,525	\$119,250	8.62	13.84
Ferry	5	74	7	2	\$59,500	\$59,500	37.00	23.00
Clallam	66	348	57	61	\$222,210	\$200,000	5.70	6.84
Others	149	663	120	82	\$231,314	\$225,975	8.09	7.90
MLS TOTAL	8,102	23,501	8,643	7,257	\$364,286	\$290,000	3.24	3.61

* Months of inventory are calculated using active listings divided by closed sales.

4-county Puget Sound Region Pending Sales (SFH + Condo combined)

(totals include King, Snohomish, Pierce & Kitsap counties)

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
2000	3706	4778	5903	5116	5490	5079	4928	5432	4569	4675	4126	3166
2001	4334	5056	5722	5399	5631	5568	5434	5544	4040	4387	4155	3430
2002	4293	4735	5569	5436	6131	5212	5525	6215	5394	5777	4966	4153
2003	4746	5290	6889	6837	7148	7202	7673	7135	6698	6552	4904	4454
2004	4521	6284	8073	7910	7888	8186	7583	7464	6984	6761	6228	5195
2005	5426	6833	8801	8420	8610	8896	8207	8784	7561	7157	6188	4837
2006	5275	6032	8174	7651	8411	8094	7121	7692	6216	6403	5292	4346
2007	4869	6239	7192	6974	7311	6876	6371	5580	4153	4447	3896	2975
2008	3291	4167	4520	4624	4526	4765	4580	4584	4445	3346	2841	2432
2009	3250	3407	4262	5372	5498	5963	5551	5764	5825	5702	3829	3440
2010	4381	5211	6821	7368	4058	4239	4306	4520	4350	4376	3938	3474
2011	4272	4767	6049	5732	5963	5868	5657	5944	5299	5384	4814	4197
2012	4921	6069	7386	7015	7295	6733	6489	6341	5871	6453	5188	4181
2013	5548	6095	7400	7462	7743	7374	7264	6916	5951	6222	5083	3957
2014	5406	5587	7099	7325	8055	7546	7169	6959	6661	6469		

Seattle real estate a gateway for foreign investors

Seattle is now considered a “gateway city” by foreign investors and its single-family housing market ranks 17th among the country’s top 75 markets. Those are among key findings in the 2015 edition of *Emerging Trends in Real Estate* that will be discussed at an upcoming breakfast program of ULI Northwest.

The event, scheduled for November 18 in Seattle, is titled “Emerging Trends 2015 | A to Z: The Intersection of Commercial Real Estate with Technology and E-Commerce.” It features insights from a distinguished panel of local and national experts.

Reservations for the event may be made [online](#) at the Urban Land Institute’s website.

ULI’s widely-read forecast report concluded “the tide has come back in.” It ranked Seattle third for development and fourth for investment, noting the fast-growing city is attracting investors – and Millennials – in part because of the tech boom.

Consensus among the 43 economists and analysts who participated in the study



was for three more years of solid economic growth domestically.

The “Emerging Trends” report lists Seattle as the third highest ranked West Coast city, behind San Francisco (3rd overall) and Los Angeles (6th overall). Tacoma ranked 62nd, placing it ahead of Las Vegas, Tucson and Sacramento. Texas is the top state in the rankings, with Houston ranked first among U.S. cities.

Survey respondents also remarked on diversification beyond coastal markets and the emergence of “18-hour cities” among communities that once rolled up the sidewalks at 5 p.m. “Downtown transformations have combined the key ingredients of housing, retail, dining and walk-to-work offices to regenerate urban cores, spurring investment and development and raising the quality of life for a roster of cities,” according to the *Emerging Trends* report.

Emerging Trends in Real Estate® 2015 is a trends and forecast publication with a 35-year history. The 2015 edition was a joint undertaking of PwC and ULI. Along with an outlook on U.S. investment and development trends, it covers real estate finance and capital markets, property sectors, metropolitan areas, and other real estate issues. The content is based on interviews and surveys of more than 1,400 investors, lenders, fund managers, developers, property managers, brokers, advisors and consultants.

To read the Trends report go to <http://on.uli.org/1nA9ktk>.

Millennials lag previous generations on home buying

Real estate professionals probably won’t be too surprised by this statement:

Millennials are less likely to be homeowners than young adults in previous generations.

That fact was one of 15 in a new publication from the Council of Economic Advisers (*see box*). The 49-page report titled “15 Economic Facts about Millennials” looks at how this diverse and well-educated generation is faring in the labor market and “how they are organizing their personal lives,” so far.

Millennials represent one-third of the total U.S. population. Noting the significance of this cohort (those born between 1980 and the mid-2000s) extends beyond their numbers, the authors believe they “will shape our economy for decades to come.”

Declining homeownership rates among Millennials are a consequence of the Great Recession and recovery. An estimated 31 percent of those ages 18 to 34 lived with their parents in 2014, up from 28 percent in 2007. The pace of household formation is low and the rate at which Millennials head their own households has fallen, prompting the report’s authors to conclude “With fewer Millennials as independent renters or homeowners, the demand for housing and the pace of residential investment is likely lower than the level implied by more typical rates of household formation and headship.”

Three forces are in play with regard to drops in homeownership, according to the report:

The gradual shifts in labor force participation, increased college enrollment, and delayed marriage;

Challenges in the labor market (which for some Millennials means being renters to maintain more flexibility in location decisions as job opportunities arise); and

The tight lending environment.

On a more encouraging note for real estate brokers who understand factors that influence a community’s quality of life, Millennials want to make a positive social impact. They value staying close to family and friends, having free time for recreation, and working in creative jobs.

15 Economic Facts about Millennials

1. Millennials are now the largest, most diverse generation in the U.S. population.
2. Millennials have been shaped by technology.
3. Millennials value community, family, and creativity in their work.
4. Millennials have invested in human capital more than previous generations.
5. College-going Millennials are more likely to study social science and applied fields.
6. As college enrollments grow, more students rely on loans to pay for post-secondary education.
7. Millennials are more likely to focus exclusively on studies instead of combining school and work.
8. As a result of the Affordable Care Act, Millennials are much more likely to have health insurance coverage during their young adult years.
9. Millennials will contend with the effects of starting their careers during a historic downturn for years to come.
10. Investments in human capital are likely to have a substantial payoff for Millennials.
11. Working Millennials are staying with their early-career employers longer.
12. Millennial women have more labor market equality than previous generations.
13. Millennials tend to get married later than previous generations.
14. Millennials are less likely to be homeowners than young adults in previous generations.
15. College-education Millennials have moved into urban areas faster than their less educated peers.

The Council of Economic Advisers, an agency within the Executive Office of the President, is charged with offering the President objective economic advice on the formulation of both domestic and international economic policy. The Council, established in 1946, bases its recommendations and analysis on economic research and empirical evidence.

Northwest MLS Managers Touring the State with Updates, Updates and More Updates

Buyers and sellers may take brief timeouts during the fourth quarter of a calendar year, but there's no lull in activity at Northwest Multiple Listing Service.

In keeping with past practices, managers from Northwest Multiple Listing Service packed a lot of information into its latest series of membership meetings. The road show – offered at locations around its service area – covered updates on Transaction Desk, the keybox exchange, member communications and outreach initiatives, plus the always-popular overview of rules infractions.

The series of November meetings opened with the introduction of local nominees for the MLS board of directors and the call for any additional nominations. Voting members will receive an election packet in late November for voting in December.



Bob Gent, director of business development and member relations at Northwest MLS, announced Transaction Desk now has more than 14,000 active users since its soft launch in March. Phase two of the project is under way, with a target release date during March. It offers auto-populate features and a single entry listing input tool.

Activity has surged in the past three months, rising from around 37,000 logins in July to more than 183,000 in September. During the same period, the number of transactions more than quadrupled, jumping from 6,806 in July to 27,740 in September. Equally impressive statistics for the number of forms and the number of documents have also been tallied.

Gent said Instanet Solutions, the provider of the suite of real estate forms and document management tools is reportedly “pleased at the reception.”

On Dec. 1, a planned upgrade of Authentisign is scheduled. It will be mobile friendly and offer the same interface on all devices.

Gent reminded brokers to encourage subscribers to take advantage of the array of training the MLS offers, including workshops, clock hour classes, on-demand video tutorials and user guides, and recorded webinars.

MLS president and CEO Tom Hurdelbrink discussed member outreach and communication programs involving System Advisory Groups and member satisfaction surveys, all of which yield valuable feedback on services.

Chief Operations Officer Monica Beck summarized the status of the keybox exchange, along with some friendly reminders. The ambitious undertaking requires switching out more than 100,000 keybox devices by year-end. She reminded members the cutoff is coming and those who think exchanging is optional will discover otherwise.

Some key features of the overhauled MLS website were also highlighted.

To close the program, attorney Justin Haag summarized common rules infractions, including:

Rule 1(e) – accuracy of listing data

Rule 2(c) – promotion of property before submitting listing to NWMLS

Rule 11(g) – showing instructions

He reminded brokers to use the NWMLS mobile app to check showing instructions before ending the session on a humorous note by unveiling submissions to a website called TerribleRealEstateAgentPhotos.com. (A book by the same title is being released this month, just in time for holiday giving!)



Free resources help homeowners get ready for hazardous weather

October brought fall's first big storm with widespread power outages, downed trees, and numerous reports of standing water from clogged storm drains. It also brought a reminder to prepare for winter weather.

Homeowners are encouraged to avail themselves of the information and advice on the [Take Winter By Storm](http://TakeWinterByStorm.org) website. It outlines three steps for getting ready:



Create an emergency preparedness kit with at least a three-day supply of non-perishable food and water for homes and offices. Kits prepared for vehicle road travel and winter weather evacuation go-kits are also advised.

Make a plan and practice the plan with your family and those who depend on you.

Stay informed and know the weather approaching so you are prepared for whatever Mother Nature throws our way.

The website is intended to be a one-stop emergency preparedness center. It includes safety tips and information about the weather, power outages, heavy rains and flooding, freezing temperatures, roads and transit during adverse weather.



Among the resources residents will find are downloadable emergency checklists and an emergency contact card. A comprehensive “Take Winter by Storm” pamphlet published by The Seattle Times is also available. The checklists are offered in multiple languages.

Take Winter By Storm is a collaborative, public-private effort between organizations in King, Pierce, Snohomish and Kitsap counties. The multi-media public awareness program began in 1998 as a one day media event to help protect lives and property.

Seattleite one of 5 Winners of National EverGreen Award

For REALTOR® Kim Mulligan, being green is not only easy, it’s about to make her the recipient of national recognition. On November 9, she will be honored as one of only five winners of the 2014 EverGreen Award from the Green REsource Council.

Mulligan, a broker at Cooper Jacobs Real Estate Services in Seattle, is the only winner from the Pacific Northwest. The award will be presented this month during the annual REALTORS® Conference & Expo in New Orleans.

The EverGreen Award recognizes dedication to green lifestyle and work style, commitment to the advancement of the Green Building Industry, green industry skills as evidenced by training, competency and experience, and creative implementation of green events and practices in one’s office or community. Candidates for the award must be active participants in the Green REsource Council, other professional associations, and in community organizations.

Mulligan joined Cooper Jacobs in 2010, but claims a lifelong interest in sustainability through her background as a specialty tradesperson and experience in property management. Her professional credentials include a Green Designation from the National Association of REALTORS®, which is conferred upon completion of a rigorous training program on energy efficiency and sustainable homes. Only a couple dozen REALTORS® in Seattle are Green designees.

Among her community activities, Mulligan chaired the Northwest Green Home Tour, an annual showcase of sustainable and green new homes, remodels and energy retrofits around the Greater Seattle area.

The Green REsource Council was established by the Real Estate Buyer’s Agent Council (REBAC), a wholly-owned subsidiary of the National Association of REALTORS®. Its members have access to ongoing education, leading edge green resources and marketing tools to help them promote green real estate practices.

Convergence: Driving Positive Energy and Outcomes from Knowledgeable Leadership

By Jeremy Conaway

Convergence is the term applied to what happens when two significantly powerful real estate industry forces come together in a defined space and create a new energy or reality. A coupling or convergence process might be coincidental such as the current convergence between the forces of consumer centricity and the fast growing emphasis on brokerage profitability. In the alternative, convergence can be purposeful such as the recent announcement of News Corp's purchase of Move, Inc. Either way, moving forward, convergence will be one of the most powerful dynamics impacting our industry.

The origins of any specific convergence really won't matter to the average reader as much as its ramifications and impact. Predicting a probable convergence event represents a specific skill set. Monitoring the industry universe for possible convergence events should be on every leader and decision maker's "top 5" list. It is essential that visioning and anticipating how potential convergence events might affect the industry, the marketplace and the transaction occupy an ever-greater share of every industry leader's time and energy.

Such were the circumstances in Southeast Texas last week. During the course of the week two dominant regional events, the Large Brokerage Summit and the Strategic Leadership Conference, presented substantial evidence that a convergence event was about to occur. In this case it was the convergence between the activities of the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB) and the increasing need for brokers to gain control of their businesses in the face of increased regulation, consumer power and ROI issues.

Marvin Stone, Senior Vice President of Stewart Information Systems and the head of its current CFPB project was the perfect subject matter expert (SME) relative to the activities of the CFPB. Stone's credentials are flawless. He is a career real estate industry executive and is fully engaged in the CFPB's current activities, especially those focused on providing the American real estate consumer with an acceptable new real estate transaction experience. He is a natural teacher and was able to explain a very complicated and sophisticated emerging regulatory process in a relevant and easy to understand manner.

Another star of this series was Cindy Arioso, a senior vice president with the Long and Foster companies. With over 170 offices and over 2800 agents, the independently held Long and Foster Companies can lay claim to a number of statistical distinctions in our industry. More importantly, Long and Foster isn't just big, they are also distinguished by the quality and leading edge attitude of their management program. Ms. Arioso's experience, knowledge and command abilities were more than obvious during her several presentations. She has been there through growth, success, audits and lawsuits and knows how to handle each with dignity and class.

Stephan Swanepoel's presentation, as always, provided the event participants with the industry big picture. Swanepoel, an industry icon, has over the past few years, utilized his ubiquitous trends report (found on virtually every desk of significance in the industry) coupled with his Swanepoel 200 Power Listing and his T-3 Leadership Summit event to become the official industry chronographer. Swanepoel weighed into the events with an insightful and stimulating presentation on trends that are either currently, or soon to be, impacting the industry. As always Stephan's presentation provided the participants with a much-needed personal GPS.

Curt Beardsley, Zillow's Vice President for Industry Relations, provided what only Curt can provide. After two days of listening to presentations that discussed lofty, overwhelming and almost always highly sophisticated current industry developments and events, the participants were beginning to suffer from a form of intellectual valve float. One of Curt's unique talents is the ability to create a human interface between the participants and the materials. On this occasion he used references drawn from the history of Greenland and the South Pacific to establish that, however challenging, the events of our world are in the natural flow of such things. They are the circumstances and opportunities that create great leaders and masterful decisions.

Finally, these comments would not be credible without calling attention to Bob Hale's role. Of course he was the senior architect and a major contributor to these events. But Bob has long been more than the President and CEO of

the Houston Association of REALTORS®. His unique contribution to everything he does is common sense and raw unmitigated passion and he has become a major vendor of these commodities throughout the North American real estate industry.

While few of us believe in such dynamics, one cannot help but wonder what influence is exerted by the fact that Bob's offices are but 900 feet away from those occupied by a certain Joel Osteen. Perhaps nothing. Bob doesn't advocate for political or market causes. He is the industry's senior advocate for rational leadership engagement in both organized real estate and the corporate sector. Bob's legal background can be seen in the fact that he speaks to sensible and reasonable behaviors based, not on individual agendas, but rather upon the overwhelming evidence. Over the past several years he has been the industry's chief spokesperson for leadership focus, follow-up and commitment. This is what Bob brings to our industry and the difference he made to these events.

Some folks got together last week in southeast Texas. They used some experts to share what they didn't know and to help them make sense of what they already knew. They carefully listened and interacted with a number of learned presentations. They learned about what was likely to happen to their members over the next twenty-four months. They learned about what trends, forces and directions are currently impacting the real estate industry. They debated the subjects at hand, asked some very intelligent questions and talked among themselves. They focused on how their organization could assist its members and consumers at this critical state of their life styles, careers and businesses. Most importantly, they rediscovered the fact that their organization is more important than ever and that their leadership can make a huge difference while significantly contributing to the success of all involved.

There are many in our industry today who are confused, intimidated and anxious about its current events and direction. Rumors, distractions and negative stories are all too often the rule of the day. The ultimate solution to this situation, and the salvation for all involved, is focused and knowledgeable leadership. Leadership and knowledge is the ultimate convergence. Your organization can do this, you must do this.

📌 Nominations sought for 2015 Seattle-King County First Citizen Award

Nominations for the 2015 Seattle-King County First Citizen Award will be accepted until Nov. 12. Next year marks the 77th anniversary of the prestigious award honoring community leadership, volunteerism and public service.

Letters of nomination for the 2015 First Citizen, together with any supporting material, should be sent by Nov. 12 to First Citizen Selection Committee, c/o SEATTLE KingCounty REALTORS®, 12410 SE 32nd St., Suite 100, Bellevue WA 98005 or submitted by email to Val Towler, vtowler@nwrealtor.com. Nominees should be current or former residents of King County whose leadership, benevolence or inspiration has helped enhance the quality of life for the area's residents.

Earlier this year, former Seattle Mayor Norman B. Rice was recognized for 40 years of public- and private-sector service, during which time he played pivotal roles in revitalizing downtown, advocating for social and economic equity, and supporting public schools. As an elected official, he was a trailblazer, becoming Seattle's first African-American mayor in 1990, assembling the team that preserved Major League Baseball in the city, convening a first-ever Education Summit, and creating a model welfare-to-work program.



The First Citizen Award, believed to be this region's most senior citation of its kind, has no fund-raising expectation, but instead is designed solely as a not-for-profit celebration of community involvement.

Past recipients hail from humanitarian organizations, charitable, health and educational institutions, arts groups, environmental causes and various civic endeavors. Recent past recipients include Lenny Wilkens, a dedicated advocate for children and former player and coach with the Seattle SuperSonics (2013); Rotary International District 5030 (2012); former Seattle Mariner Jamie Moyer and his wife Karen (2011); U.S. Senator Slade Gorton (2010); retiring Seattle Symphony conductor Gerard Schwartz (2009); and Microsoft co-founder Paul G. Allen (2008). The complete list of honorees is online at seattlefirstcitizen.org.

The SEATTLE KingCounty REALTORS® is a nonprofit professional trade association whose goals include promoting business practices that reflect a strict code of ethics and supporting policies that preserve and expand real property rights and housing affordability. Based in Bellevue, SKCR is one of 1,500 local associations of the National Association of REALTORS®.

News In Brief

- Consumers' optimism toward the housing market showed a slight rebound, with more people saying it's a good time to buy or sell a home, according to Fannie Mae's September 2014 National Housing Survey, based on about 1,000 Americans' attitudes on the housing market. The share of consumers who say now is a good time to purchase a home rose to 68 percent in September, a four percentage point increase from August. Also, the share of Americans who said they'd prefer to buy a home on their next move rose to 66 percent, following a three-point drop the previous month. The percentage of those who reported now is a good time to sell grew to 39 percent. Those surveyed also were more upbeat about home prices rising in the next 12 months, with expectations of price gains of 2.2 percent, on average. Consumers also showed greater optimism toward the overall economy, with 40 percent now saying the economy is on the right track, posting a five percentage gain from the previous month.
 - Tight mortgage lending standards continue to affect sales for single-family builders across the nation, according to a survey released by the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB). Well over half of the single-family builders surveyed indicated that lending standards were "tight" or "very tight," while only 11 percent indicated that standards were "somewhat easy" and no builders described them as "very easy." "While housing has seen some positive growth throughout the year, there is no denying that tight credit conditions are hindering a full, healthy housing recovery," said David Crowe, NAHB chief economist. "These persistently tight mortgage credit standards continue to limit the number of creditworthy borrowers, particularly younger families and first-time homebuyers, from entering the housing market." The survey also asked builders if they had lost any sales over the last six months due to buyers not qualifying for a mortgage. Eighty-three percent answered "yes," and of these, the average share of sales lost was 9.7 percent. NAHB estimates that this 9.7 percent translates to 18,700 new-home sales lost because buyers were unable to qualify for mortgages.
 - Upgrading a home's landscape from average to excellent can raise its overall value by 10 percent to 12 percent, according to research from the University of Washington and Virginia Tech. One UW study revealed properties with mature trees showed an average price increase of 7 percent. Street trees appear to add value even to adjacent properties, up to 100 feet away. Greater increments of value are seen for tree planting and landscape improvements in lower-quality neighborhoods. Alex X. Niemiera with the Department of Horticulture at Virginia Tech found that a \$150,000 home with no landscaping could fetch an additional \$8,300 to \$19,000 by adding a landscape with color and large plants. The value of landscaping differed greatly from state to state. "The most preferred landscape included a sophisticated design with large deciduous, evergreen, and annual color plants and colored hardscape," Niemiera said. He added that different plant sizes to a front yard, for example, can boost curb appeal, as well as mixing fruit trees and flowers for added color. "Survey results showed that relatively large landscape expenditures
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significantly increase perceived home value and will result in a higher selling price than homes with a minimal landscape," Niemiera wrote. "The resulting increase in curb appeal of the property may also help differentiate a home in a subdivision where house styles are similar and thereby attract potential buyers into a home. This advantage is especially important in a competitive housing market."

- Consumer mortgages could become cheaper as a result of a new rule federal regulators have put in place, as reported by Tom Kelly on mynorthwest.com. The Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation is the first of six financial regulators to release the final version of the long-awaited qualified residential mortgage (QRM) rule, which stems from the big 2010 banking reform bill the federal government enacted after the financial crisis. According to Bloomberg News, the rule compels banks to retain 5 percent of the loans where borrowers spend more than 43 percent of their monthly income to repay debt. The clause replaced the original demand for larger borrower down payments. Regulators passed the rule in response to a surge in subprime mortgage defaults in 2006 and 2007, which spurred the worst financial crisis since the Great Depression. Lawmakers concluded that lenders would be less likely to issue mortgages and securities that would blow up if they had to absorb some of the losses. "Importantly, the final rule relies on sound and responsible underwriting rather than on an onerous down payment requirement to qualify as a QRM loan," said Steve Brown, president of the National Association of REALTORS®. The rule takes effect in 12 months. That will give lenders time to align their internal processing systems with the requirements.

 **Calendar of Events - Through December 11, 2014**

Dates	Event	Clock Hours	Time	Location	Contact
SEATTLE-King County REALTORS®					
Date	Event	Time	Where	Phone	Date
11/5-10	NAR Annual Meeting		New Orleans	425-974-1011	11/5-10
11/18	Affiliate Council	9am-10pm	SKCR	425-974-1011	11/18
11/19	Board of Directors	10:30am-1:30pm	SKCR	425-974-1011	11/19
11/27-28	Holiday				11/27-28
12/2/14		Gov't. Affairs Committee	10:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m.	SKCR	
12/11/14		Installation Banquet		6 p.m.-9 p.m.	Edgewater Hotel
For updates visit: www.nwrealtor.com and click "events"					