

LATEST NEWS RELEASE

Housing market rebounds from February freeze

KIRKLAND, Washington (April 5, 2019) – Both pending sales and new listing activity around Western Washington surged during March as buyers, sellers, and brokers emerged from February’s record snowfall.

Brokers added 10,516 new listings of single family homes and condos to the Northwest Multiple Listing Service inventory last month, the highest monthly volume since August 2018. Compared to the same month a year ago, new listings across the 23 counties in the report were down slightly (79 fewer units).

MLS members also reported 10,261 pending sales during the same timeframe, the highest number of mutually accepted offers since July, and nearly matching the year-ago total of 10,311.

“After the housing adjustment in 2018, this year’s spring market is back to frenzied in the more affordable and mid-price ranges,” remarked J. Lennox Scott, chairman and CEO of John L. Scott Real Estate. Noting March is the start of the prime-time selling season, he expects this year “will be no exception.” He also commented on improved affordability from last fall’s price adjustments in the close-in job centers of Seattle and the Eastside. “This improved affordability, along with lower interest rates and very strong job growth, all point us in the right direction for red-hot acceleration again this year,” Scott stated.

Year-over-year prices area-wide were up 3.5 percent, rising from \$401,761 to \$415,950, with most counties reporting gains. King County was an exception. Prices there were flat (down 0.4 percent), slipping from the year-ago median of \$625,000 to last month’s figure of \$622,500, but rising from February’s price of \$604,000.

Compared to February, prices rose 2.2 percent system-wide. The four-county Puget Sound region had larger month-to-month increases, led by Kitsap County, up 5.9 percent from February. Prices in Snohomish County jumped nearly 5.5 percent, while King County’s median prices rose more than 3 percent when comparing February to March.

Commenting on the uptick in new listings and new sales, broker Dean Rebhuhn pointed to lower mortgage interest rates and a growing selection of properties as drivers of activity. “Well-priced properties are selling. Buyers who are getting fully underwritten loan commitments are winning the prize – the home,” stated Rebhuhn, the owner of Village Homes and Properties in Woodinville.

At month end, there were 12,017 active listings of single family homes and condos in the Northwest MLS database. That represents an increase of more than 36 percent from a year ago when there were only 8,825 active listings. Inventory more than doubled in King County compared to a year ago, rising from 2,060 active listings to 4,263 at the end of March. Nine counties reported less inventory than 12 months ago.

Even with improving inventory, there is less than two months of supply overall and in seven counties, including Pierce (1.2 months), Snohomish (1.3 months), Kitsap (1.4 months) and King (nearly 1.9 months).

“March signaled the beginning of the annual rise in King County residential listing inventory, and this year’s active listings are building on a higher base of listings than previous years,” observed John Deely, principal managing broker at Coldwell Banker

Bain in Seattle. He also noted pending sales (10,261 during March) kept pace with new listings (10,516) to slow the buildup of inventory.

“Many buyers found the increased inventory meant more choices and less competition in many market areas,” said Deely, a member of the Northwest MLS board of directors. “In core Seattle markets, new listings that are competitively priced are seeing multiple and contingency-stripped offers,” he added.

OB Jacobi, president of Windermere Real Estate, described March as an “eventful month for real estate,” as the snow finally melted and interest rates dropped, “nudging buyers off the fence and back into the market. The result was a spike in pending sales between February and March (up more than 49 percent), and a pop in price growth in several counties, suggesting we are entering an active spring market.”

Another MLS director, Meredith Hansen, attributed the downturn in last month’s closed sales to inclement weather. Tight inventory makes spring an excellent time for sellers to put their homes on the market, she suggested. “Buyers have more selection, good interest rates, and a less frenzied market to make solid decisions. Overall, I’d say it’s a win-win for both sides,” remarked Hansen, the owner/designated broker at Keller Williams Greater Seattle.

Brokers from Kitsap and South Sound markets are reporting strong activity, with pending sales outgaining new listings, and heavy traffic at open houses.

“In Kitsap County, the buyers have arrived to the market faster than sellers,” reported Frank Wilson, Kitsap regional manager and branch managing broker at John L. Scott’s Poulsbo office. “Low interest rates are giving buyers a break in house payments, which allows them to buy a little more house. Buyers have received the message about the spring market, but sellers are still waiting in the wings,” he commented.

Broker Dick Beeson said the South Sound market is somewhat of an anomaly, as prices continue to rise despite growing inventory. “Multiple offers are less frequent in this market, and, unlike 6-to-12 months ago, sellers are now agreeing to do repairs and pay buyer’s closing costs,” according to Beeson, principal managing broker at RE/MAX Northwest Realtors in Gig Harbor. “Some type of negotiation is once again prevalent in almost every sale,” he added.

Beeson said in certain higher price ranges buyers and sellers have “almost equal footing.” He suggested it could become a buyer’s market in South Sound “when the Seattle/King County market flattens out even more and can provide homes at affordable prices so those who don’t work in high tech can afford them.”

“Areas outside of King County and along the I-5 corridor outperform as people continue to look for value outside the main urban centers,” observed James Young, director of the Washington Center for Real Estate Research at the University of Washington. He expects the spring price growth will be “solid” as long as demand remains.

“The market is highly interest rate sensitive, and this is reflected in current price trends in the region,” Young stated. “Given interest rates are now 70 basis points lower than their peak in November last year (and back down near historic lows), house prices could rise by 8.4 percent and people could keep the same mortgage repayments. This means someone who could have purchased a \$450,000 house six months ago can now purchase a house costing \$487,800 and keep the same monthly repayment, an 8.2 percent increase,” he explained.

Northwest MLS members report 6,750 completed transactions during March, a drop of about 8.3 percent from a year ago, and likely a result of February’s heavy snows that resulted in hazardous roads and kept many people housebound for several days.

“Although closed sales were down in March, we believe February’s snowy weather slowed the closing of pending transactions,”

suggested Mike Grady, president and COO of Coldwell Banker Bain. “Most notably in determining the strength of our market is the ratio of new listings and pending sales, which were close, resulting in less than two months of inventory in many areas. We expect the market to continue these trends as we head into what is always the busiest time of the year.”

Scott also expects momentum to continue. “Looking ahead, more new listings are on the way, and the more affordable and mid-price ranges will see strong price appreciation this year – just not at last year’s extreme levels,” he commented.

Deely said one change from past markets is the trend of buyers who are unwilling to participate in properties with an offer review date. “This has the notable effect of fewer competing offers and an increase in properties going past their offer review date without a sale.”

Condo activity remains mostly unremarkable, although inventory is improving. Brokers added 1,487 new listings to the selection last month and reported 1,387 pending sales. Inventory at month end stood at 1,610 active listings, up more than 85 percent from a year ago. That still leaves months of supply below two months in many areas, including King (1.95 months of supply), Snohomish (1.1 months), Pierce (0.83 months), and Kitsap (1.67 months).

MLS members reported 932 closed sales of condominiums during March with a median price of \$367,150, about the same as the year-ago price of \$365,000. In King County, the median sales price for condos was \$434,000, a drop of almost 7 percent from twelve months ago.

Northwest Multiple Listing Service, owned by its member real estate firms, is the largest full-service MLS in the Northwest. Its membership of around 2,200 member offices includes more than 29,000 real estate professionals. The organization, based in Kirkland, Wash., currently serves 23 counties in the state.

Statistical chart tables begin on next page.

March 2019 activity

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	4,153	4,263	3,657	2,290	\$751,693	\$622,500	1.86	0.83
Snohomish	1,623	1,435	1,680	1,107	\$513,249	\$479,995	1.30	0.67
Pierce	1,567	1,474	1,759	1,226	\$398,357	\$359,225	1.20	0.99
Kitsap	466	448	492	317	\$402,641	\$357,950	1.41	0.95
Mason	127	164	144	99	\$254,463	\$234,995	1.66	2.19
Skagit	242	351	213	136	\$429,316	\$363,950	2.58	1.92
Grays Harbor	169	303	141	107	\$226,138	\$195,000	2.83	3.50
Lewis	112	202	142	84	\$275,427	\$250,400	2.40	2.01
Cowlitz	128	169	147	134	\$277,566	\$272,250	1.26	1.40
Grant	116	212	99	63	\$210,066	\$210,500	3.37	2.66
Thurston	539	489	581	357	\$350,219	\$325,000	1.37	1.13
San Juan	37	161	23	15	\$617,087	\$577,000	10.73	8.33
Island	183	297	182	130	\$394,249	\$357,500	2.28	1.97
Kittitas	75	159	61	49	\$505,697	\$354,999	3.24	2.47
Jefferson	67	115	60	43	\$425,287	\$439,000	2.67	2.96
Okanogan	55	199	39	26	\$239,091	\$174,000	7.65	8.23
Whatcom	388	558	373	256	\$383,572	\$358,750	2.18	1.79
Clark	104	148	109	64	\$404,728	\$357,450	2.31	1.83
Pacific	52	188	65	32	\$203,605	\$195,000	5.88	5.29
Ferry	6	44	7	3	\$306,667	\$325,000	14.67	12.67
Clallam	103	225	90	66	\$307,135	\$279,500	3.41	1.70
Chelan	90	169	98	60	\$331,023	\$298,450	2.82	2.75
Douglas	58	78	50	35	\$334,334	\$321,000	2.23	2.40
Others	56	166	49	51	\$228,248	\$220,000	3.25	3.71
Total	10,516	12,017	10,261	6,750	\$520,998	\$415,950	1.78	1.20

Tables continue on next page

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
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	5220	4410
2015	5791	6541	8648	8671	8620	8608	8248	7792	7179	6977	5703	4475
2016	5420	6703	8130	8332	9153	8869	8545	8628	7729	7487	6115	4727
2017	5710	6024	7592	7621	9188	9042	8514	8637	7441	7740	6094	4460
2018	5484	5725	7373	7565	8742	8052	7612	6893	6235	6367	5328	4037
2019	5472	4910	7588									

Two tech companies announce alliance so brokers would have single platform for broker business functions

Called a “groundbreaking collaboration,” two real estate technology companies announced plans to integrate advanced functions that will enable members of Northwest Multiple Listing Service and brokers from more than 170 other MLS organizations to perform essential business functions with a single platform.

CoreLogic, a leading global property information, analytics and data-enabled solutions provider, and Homesnap, provider of the top-rated agent mobile productivity platform announced the agreement last month. The integrations will be provided to their customers and users at no additional charge.

In an announcement to its members, Northwest MLS said the integrations are expected to be available later this year. Once unveiled, MLS brokers will be able to perform many essential tasks using Homesnap on their mobile devices, including:

- Full synchronization of contacts, prospects, saved searches, and “favorites” between Matrix and Homesnap;
- The ability to edit a listing directly in Homesnap; and
- The ability to add a new listing into Matrix from Homesnap.



Homesnap officials said the new alliance represents the first time that CoreLogic has allowed these combined integrations directly into Matrix.

“Our clients have asked for integrated solutions that make the products they use more powerful and efficient. We are always trying to make Homesnap Pro an even better tool for agents, brokers and multiple listing organizations, and this relationship with CoreLogic was a natural step for us,” said Homesnap CEO John Mazur. “CoreLogic provides one of the top software solutions for multiple listing organizations, and the integrations that we’re developing together will be incredibly valuable for our mutual customers.”

“The demand for Homesnap Pro was evident when it became one of our most rapidly adopted services ever. The upcoming integration with Matrix will ensure continued strong usage going forward,” said Hurdelbrink, president and CEO of Northwest Multiple Listing Service.

Homesnap Pro is touted as the most popular agent productivity app on the market, currently available to an estimated one million agents in more than 170 multiple listing organizations across the country. It is also the public-facing brand of the Broker Public Portal, providing a real-time home search platform with multiple listing information to millions of consumers each month.

CoreLogic’s combined data from public, contributory and proprietary sources includes over 4.5 billion records spanning more than 50 years, providing detailed coverage of property, mortgages and other encumbrances, consumer credit, tenancy, location, hazard risk and related performance information

The companies expect the first phase of the integrations will be introduced by mid-year.

Industry’s leading attorneys spar over flawed transactions at sold out Battle of Barristers education program for REALTORS®

Five experienced attorneys, including one who served as moderator, and a sold-out crowd of 550 Realtors and affiliates gathered in Bellevue last month for the annual Battle of the Barristers presentation of Seattle King County REALTORS®.

Along with being approved for three clock hours, the event was a fundraiser for the Seattle First Citizen Scholarship Foundation.

Participating attorneys included Annie Fitzsimmons, Washington Realtors hotline lawyer and instructor; Lars Neste, shareholder at Demco Law Firm and a licensed real estate instructor; Chris Osborn, with Stoel Rives LLP and the general counsel for Northwest Multiple Listing Service; and Doug S. Tingvall, also a licensed real estate instructor and attorney whose practice focuses on residential real estate.

SKCR’s general counsel, Mike Spence, partner at Helsell Fetterman and a licensed real estate law instructor, served as moderator.

Over the course of the program, Spence introduced six scenarios covering actual real estate disputes, but substituted fictional characters for the real participants. In a departure from past formats, he invited one of the barristers to do the initial analysis of the issue, then opened it up for debate by the other lawyers, followed by questions from the audience.

To start the program, Spence outlined a case he titled “The Buyer Who Couldn’t,” which involved a transaction that failed to



close, resulting in disputes over forfeiture of earnest money and possible charges of fraud. The case raised questions about the roles and promises of both the seller's and the buyer's agents, a seller's reliance on a broker for advice, buyers who may have misrepresented their income, and the need to properly monitor progress toward closing.

Fitzsimmons said the seller's agent should have had a conversation with his client about instructions to be included in an offer, such as verification of funds for the purchase offer. "In today's world there is no reason to take a property off the market until there is an underwriting pre-approval letter, including any conditions," she emphasized.

Fitzsimmons believed the "buyer loses on every point," but advised the audience that what the listing broker did in encouraging clients to take a financial risk by proceeding with plans to sign a franchising agreement "is not what you want to do." Neste concurred, saying promises about quick closings could expose brokers to claims of breach of duty. The barristers agreed the brokers should have made better use of MLS forms pertaining to financing and checkboxes on remedies.

Scenario #2, "The Sweaty Buyer," was centered on title issues and covenants, conditions and restrictions, and a demand letter from an attorney sent two years after the transaction closed.

The "Sweaty Buyer" case raised issues around "informational inspections," waiving contingencies, and misrepresentation of material facts. It involved purchasers who had expressed plans to install a ductless heat pump at a "live-work" condominium, and a contingency for ADA parking. That contingency was later waived by the buyer, who had revealed a medical condition to the listing broker when inquiring about ADA parking and installation of a heat pump.

Tingvall said the doctrine of waiver could come into play, but because of the buyer's decision to waive a previously stated contingency involving handicapped parking, the burden is on that buyer. "The buyer is deemed to have read and understood the Declarations. Nothing says the listing broker had a duty to verify," he noted.

Osborn said such cases could go to trial over a question of "who is lying." He suggested the broker assumed some responsibility by saying "he'd look into reallocating the building's ADA parking space to the buyers," and subsequently reported, via text, the outcome of a conversation with the HOA president which cast doubt on that possibility.

Neste said the listing broker's inquiries about the buyer's disability indicates clear knowledge of it. He also suggested this case raises questions about Fair Housing. "HOAs are governed by Fair Housing requirements and have a responsibility to allow a reasonable amount of accommodation, such as for the ductless heat pump." He also said brokers who suspect a Fair Housing violation have an affirmative duty to address or report it.



Fitzsimmons told the audience, “There is no possible good that could come to a seller from an ‘information only’ inspection. Spence also said communicating via text could be problematic. Osborn reminded the audience, “If a transaction exists, it should go into the file.” Fitzsimmons reiterated that point, saying, “What is important is the groundwork in the file.”

“T-Clyde Returns” was the theme of the third scenario, which was centered on the listing broker’s agreement to settle the demand letter in the previous case for \$10,000, based in part on advice from a relative who was a recent law school graduate. The following year, the listing agent received a letter from the Seattle Office of Civil Rights and Compliance accusing the agent of a Fair Housing violation. Acting again on advice from the novice attorney, the agent forwarded a copy of the settlement agreement to the Office of Civil Rights.

The barristers debated the concept of settling, the fact that the Office of Civil Rights is not the same as the Department of Licensing, and the failure to include a broad release with a specific promise not to file other complaints.

Neste emphasized, “If you violate licensing, you won’t be able to settle your way out of it.” Osborn also warned the audience about private agreements, saying they could be counterproductive, and could signal some merit to a claim. Tingvall suggested DOL might back off if there is a settlement.

“Orcas and Landslides” were the themes for the fourth scenario. It involved a listing on a steep cliff and a disclosure on Form 17 from a previous listing wherein the seller answered no to questions about surveys or notices that would adversely affect the property, or material damage from earth movements or landslides. The scenario raised questions about seller disclosure and buyer’s duty to investigate “when there are obvious but undisclosed latent defects.”

When the current broker inquired about the disclosures he was advised by the seller that the previous broker, who had been made aware of a large landslide on the adjacent property, had told the seller the correct answer to the questions was “no” since that damage had been repaired and it affected the next door property.

The house sold quickly, but two years later it was destroyed in a landslide. Six months thereafter, the seller contacted the broker saying he was being sued for fraudulent misrepresentation, negligent misrepresentation, breach of contract, and violations of the Seller Disclosure Statute (RCW 64.06). The seller was faulting his most recent broker for failure to advise him to amend the prior Form 17 or disclose to the buyers a geotech survey that had been done after the neighbor’s landslide that identified landslide concerns on the seller’s property.

Neste said both the listing and buyer brokers should have inquired about the slope stability based on what was obvious when viewing the property. Both he and Osborn reminded Realtors of their duty to correct known errors, omissions or inaccuracies, and a duty to exercise reasonable care, even though they may not have a duty to investigate or verify. “An affirmative representation is worse than a nondisclosure,” Neste commented.

The fifth scenario pertained to the capacity to contract and convey real property when representing a seller who does not have a clear title because of a divorce.

The dispute involved a couple involved in an ugly divorce from which the husband was awarded the house. Upon pulling a title report, the listing agent learned the title was vested in the names of the husband and wife. The buyer’s agent failed to notice that but saw the divorce decree and relied on that information. The title reps refused to clear title without a quitclaim deed.

Even though the seller’s agent had negotiated a temporary rental agreement with a buyer and arranged an extended closing date, no transaction could be finalized.

"It's a dead deal," declared Osborn since the seller is unable to deliver titled insured. Neste agreed, saying, "There is no deal as there is no marketable, insurable title."

"Moreover, leasing the space out was a boneheaded act," Osborn remarked, adding, "Significant commission issues arise here."

Divorce decrees often lack specificity, Neste noted. "The biggest error was by the listing broker who should have noticed the red flag, but the buyer's broker also should have noticed the ex-spouse's name was missing.

The final scenario, "I Want My Oil," involved a transaction in which a buyer sought to terminate an agreement based on a newspaper report suggesting the housing market was crashing. When the buyer submitted a Form 90C, the seller rejected it.

Then, four days before closing the oil furnace breaks down but instead of getting it fixed due to unavailability of parts, the broker and seller fail to disclose the newly-discovered defect, instead replacing the oil furnace with a gas one. Upon discovering the switch, the buyer submits another Form 90A (Notice of Rescission of Agreement Pursuant to RCW 64.06), which the seller refuses to sign. At the next day's closing, the buyer refuses to sign the documents and the deal fails to close.

Fitzsimmons said an unanswered question was whether the seller maintained the property in the same condition, given the hole to remove the oil tank.

Osborn said the wrong forms may have been used, suggesting Form 90A and Form 51 (Rescission Agreement) may have been preferable. He also noted there is no disclosure requirement on Form 17 on whether a furnace is gas or oil.

Neste also wondered if the oil tank was leaking and whether there was contamination. "Given the modification to the property, there should have been disclosure." The listing broker has a responsibility to review forms to make sure they are completed, including checkboxes.

With this year's proceeds, the Battle of the Barristers events have raised nearly \$380,000 in scholarship funds since 1999. SKCR president Rich Bergdahl also announced the creation of the Peter Freet Memorial Scholarship, named in memory of the longtime broker and volunteer leader who passed away late last year. The new scholarship will be awarded to this year's highest ranked applicant.

Event sponsors were Chase, Modus, Northwest Multiple Listing Service, and Avenue, Old Republic Title and Old Republic Home Protection. Several of SKCR's annual affiliate partners also attended and showcased various products and services.

Is King County's growth attributed to in-migration waning? Statistics from the state's Department of Licensing suggest it may be.

Seattle Times columnist Gene Balk analyzed DOL data and found the number of driver's licenses issued to new King County residents from out of state declined for the second straight year.

In 2016, more than 76,000 newcomers to King County received licenses, but that number slipped to 72,000 the following year. Last year, another decline occurred, with DOL issuing 65,000 licenses to King County residents who moved from out of state.

For the first two months of 2019, the lowest number of new driver's licenses (8,000) were issued to new arrivals from other states, the fewest during that period since 2013.

In his “FYI Guy” column, Balk noted double-digit declines also occurred in Pierce and Snohomish counties compared to their 2016 highs.

California continues to lead the list of “top exporter” of people to the Seattle area, typically accounting for about 20 percent of newcomer licenses, but its numbers are shrinking. Compared to 2016, in-migration from the Golden State dipped about 12 percent.

Some of the top feeders of new residents to King County had even bigger declines, and a handful are down by 25 percent or more from 2016: Nevada, Alaska, Idaho, Arizona, Montana and the nations of India and China.

Among foreign countries, India and China had sharp declines, but three nations – Japan, Brazil and Kenya were up, along with the U.S. territory of Puerto Rico.

DOL notes its reports only include people who apply for a Washington state driver’s license. People who don’t drive and children are not reflected in the data.

Reports from other sources indicate fewer teens are obtaining a driver’s license. In its 2015 “Monitoring the Future” survey the University of Michigan found the share of high school seniors across the country who have a driver’s license fell from 85.3 percent in 1996 to 71.5 percent in 2015, a record low.

Another University of Michigan study found steadily declining numbers of millennials with driver’s licenses. Its Transportation Research Institute found 76.7 percent of people ages 20 to 24 had a driver’s license, down from 79.7 percent in 2011, 82 percent in 2008 and 91.8 percent in 1983.

Researchers there cited the emergence of ride-sharing services and the fact that “new vehicles are becoming less affordable for debt-strapped college students and recent grads” as likely factors.

 **Americans value local news, but few pay for it**

Contrary to what those within the news industry believe, most Americans think local news is doing well financially. In fact, there is widespread unawareness about the revenue challenges facing many local news media operations, and only a small percentage of news consumers pay for or donate to local news organizations, according to a report from Pew Research Center.



Pew’s recent poll found that 16 percent of Seattle area residents support local news operations, slightly more than the U.S. average of 14 percent. Survey respondents were asked if they subscribed, donated to, or became a member of any news source, whether print, digital, public broadcasting pledge drive, or any other form.

“There’s really a disconnect there between the public’s knowledge and understanding about the industry and how it’s functioning, compared with what we see in headlines day in and day out about budget cuts and revenue declines,” said Amy Mitchell, Pew’s executive editor of journalism research. She noted that industry attempts to educate consumers “seems to largely have gone unheard.”

The most popular reason for not paying for local news was the availability of free sources, cited by 49 percent who don’t pay.

More than one fourth (46 percent) said they're not interested enough to pay for it, while 12 percent said it is too expensive and 10 percent said the news provided is not good enough to pay for it.

Asked about the preferred sources for news, local TV stations led the list, followed by radio stations, daily newspapers, and online forums. Puget Sound area news consumers also preferred TV as their primary source of local news, followed by news apps or websites, print, radio and social media.

Weather proved to be the most important local news topic Americans follow in their daily lives, with 70 percent listing it first. Other topics ranked high, but respondents indicated it was difficult to stay as informed about them. These topics included crime, changing prices, traffic and transportation, and sports.

Pew researchers found about 15 percent of U.S. adults prefer social media as their "pathway to local news," edging out print newspapers. Those who prefer social media for news tend to come from areas with a high proportion of younger residents, a high proportion of black and Hispanic residents, and that have a lower voter turnout, according to survey findings. These consumers also prefer to get news online via mobile phones.

For the Seattle-Tacoma-Bellevue area adults who get news online, 52 percent use their mobile device, 26 percent use a desktop/laptop and 22 percent said, "both equally."

Researchers also asked about community connections, including how in touch and influential they feel local journalists are.

Among Seattle area adults who took part in the poll, two-thirds (67 percent) believe local journalists are in touch with the community, but only 35 percent believe local news media have a lot of influence.

- Respondents were also asked to rate local news media performance on various core job functions. Across seven core job functions, Pew found the public clearly places top priority on accuracy. Fully 65% name this as the most or second-most important function. Next, though at much lower rates, come covering stories thoroughly (35%) and dealing fairly with all sides (30%).

Seattle area participants' ratings included:

Job function	% of say they do it well
Report news accurately	75
Provide news that you use daily	69
Cover news stories thoroughly	67
Keep an eye on local political leaders	64
Are transparent about their reporting	62
Deal fairly with all sides	60
Include people like you in their stories	56

Among some of the additional findings from this study:

- A majority of Americans say local journalists should not share their views about local issues: 61%, compared with 36% who say they should.
- About one-in-five U.S. adults (21%) say it is very important for local journalists to be active on sites like Twitter and Facebook, while 40% say it is somewhat important. Roughly four-in-ten (37%) say this is not very or not at all important.
- Overall, nearly nine-in-ten Americans (89%) currently get at least some local news digitally (through news websites, apps or social media) and 41% do so often. Looking separately at websites and apps compared with social media, roughly

equal portions often get news from each (26% and 25%, respectively).

- News alerts are a prominent part of the local news environment. Roughly four-in-ten U.S. adults (42%) get local news alerts on their mobile phone.

More than 35,000 U.S. adults in 99 metro regions took part in the survey.

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Seattle City Council unanimously passes MHA upzones

The Seattle City Council on March 18 voted unanimously in favor of neighborhood upzones associated with the Mandatory Housing Affordability (MHA) program. The upzones will impact 27 transit centers around the city, some of which are already zoned for commercial and apartment buildings.

The MHA program has been controversial with several single-family neighborhoods, which are concerned about density and changes to community character. Legal appeals against MHA brought on by these neighborhoods delayed program implementation for more than a year.

With the final 9-0 vote and the mayor in support, the program can begin to help more affordable housing get built. The program will result in a significant amount of new market-rate housing and income-qualified housing throughout the city.

Seattle King County REALTORS® supported the upzones and urged the council to act swiftly so that the upzones can help bring units to market as quickly as possible. SKCR cautioned the council to avoid constraining the upzones with requirements that add undue costs and limit development, such as excessive energy code requirements, water service connection fees, potential impact fees and green building mandates.

News In Brief

- **[According to EducatedDriver.org](#), the average resident in Seattle, Bellevue, and Tacoma will spend approximately 9.88 days commuting in 2019**, which comprises daily one-way trips of 29.3 minutes and round trips of 58.6 minutes. So drivers will spend about as long driving to work as kids spend on vacation for spring break — not that knowing that helps. To calculate the time spent in traffic, EducatedDriver.org used U.S. Census Bureau on city commute times, and then factored in average work and vacation times. New Yorkers will lose an average of 12.51 days a year and Los Angeles residents 10.25 days. Recently Kirkland traffic-data firm INRIX calculated that Seattleites spent 138 hours in traffic each year, which placed Seattle congestion sixth in the nation behind Chicago, New York, Los Angeles, Washington, D.C., and Boston at number one with 164 hours.
- **The city of Seattle has agreed to pay \$3,500 and will advise City Council members against using private tally sheets to count votes ahead of public meetings under a settlement in one of two lawsuits that allege the council broke Washington’s Open Public Meetings Act before its abrupt repeal of the business tax last year.** The Seattle

Times reports the settlement with Seattle attorney James Egan calls for a city payment of \$1,000 in exchange for Egan dropping claims against Councilmembers Sally Bagshaw and Mike O'Brien. The city also agreed to pay \$2,500 to address at least five alleged open meetings-act violations by Councilmember Lorena González. The second lawsuit filed by open-government activist Arthur West remains set for trial in June. City Attorney Pete Holmes maintains the council did not break the open-meetings law..

- **Seattle drivers lose [138 hours annually](#) stuck in traffic — that's nearly six days spent in a car last year.** That comes as no surprise, considering Seattle ranks as the sixth most congested city in America and the third for the number of hours lost per year. INRIX, a Kirkland-based company, calculated the worst daily drive from the outer fringe of the metro area, maybe some 20 miles away, to the core. Then they compared that to free-flowing traffic. Each driver loses \$1,932 in operating costs like gas, the report says – that averages to 2.9 billion lost for the City of Seattle.
- **The city of Edmonds has earned a distinction it may not want — the highest rate of distracted driving crashes in Washington state,** says a new study released in March. The study, by [insurance comparison website QuoteWizard](#) and based on figures from the state Department of Transportation, found that drivers in Edmonds are in a class by themselves when it comes to driving while distracted by their phone, food, music or some other factor that takes their attention away from the road. “The frequency of distracted driving accidents (in Edmonds) is nearly double that of SeaTac, the next city on the list, and almost triple that of neighboring Lynnwood,” says the report. Altogether, there were 276 distracted driving crashes in Edmonds in 2017, the most recent year for which complete statistics are available, among a population of 42,000 people - or one distracted driving crash for every 152 residents. Luckily, none of those crashes were fatal. Statewide, there were 11,504 distracted driving crashes in that one year alone. Of those, 87 were fatal.
- **The Seattle area [may not have the best drivers](#) when it comes to avoiding crashes, but we are among the least aggressive in the nation, a new study finds.** Of the nation's top 30 most populous cities, Seattle ranks 29th on the aggressive driving list, [according to GasBuddy](#). The app uses data from drivers who share their driving habits with the company to learn how they can improve their fuel economy. Seattle area drivers have just over 10 percent fewer aggressive driving incidents compared to the national average. Only Minneapolis ranks less aggressive at just over 12.5 percent below the national average. Portland is also considered less aggressive coming in at 27th. On the other hand, our neighbors to the south are the king of aggressive driving. Los Angeles rated the worst at nearly 22 percent above average, just edging out the “City of Brotherly Love” that apparently does not translate into the roadways around Philadelphia. But California had 4 cities in the Top 10, as Sacramento was third, San Francisco 5th and San Diego was 6th. [The study also noted](#) number which cities drivers have the “lead foot” and have the most speeding incidents and found Pacific Northwest drivers are more likely to poke along than zoom. Seattle finished dead last at 30th with a speeding rate nearly 71 percent below the national average, with Portland at 28th at 56 percent. (29th? New York. San Diego are the worst speeding offenders, ahead of Orlando and Detroit who tied for second. Whose drivers are the fastest to accelerate? Los Angeles and Philadelphia tied at 26.5 percent more rapid acceleration events than the average driver. Again, Seattle is near the bottom in a three-way tie with Portland and Pittsburgh at 25th.
- If you're looking to live somewhere where innovation is king, Washington should be a strong candidate. **The Evergreen State [was recently named](#) as the second-most innovative state in the U.S. [by WalletHub](#), ranking only behind Massachusetts and just ahead of the “other” Washington -- the District of Columbia.** Maryland and Colorado rounded out the Top 5. [The study evaluated](#) all 50 states plus the District of Columbia on 24 key metrics, including Projected STEM Job demand in 2020, highest share of science and engineering graduates who are over 25, and best

Eight Grade Math & Science Performance. Washington ranked third in both Highest Share of STEM professionals and Highest Projected STEM Job demand by 2020, Wallethub said. We were the top state, only behind Washington, D.C., on highest share of science and engineering graduates who are over 25. And we ranked 5th in highest venture-capital funding per capita. Mississippi ranked last in the study with Louisiana, West Virginia, Iowa and Tennessee rounding out the bottom 5. Oregon finished 10th while California placed 6th.

- Washington lawmakers have received updated revenue numbers that give them much more money to work with as they prepare to unveil their two-year state budget proposals. **The numbers released by the Office of Financial Management at a meeting of the Economic and Revenue Forecast Council Wednesday showed state revenues look to increase by about \$861 million more than expected through the middle of 2021.** Overall state revenues increased by nearly \$307 million for the current two-year budget that ends mid-2019, putting it at \$46.1 billion. The projections for the next two-year budget that ends in mid-2021 also increase, by nearly \$554 million, pushing the state budget up to \$50.6 billion.

Calendar of Events Through May 18, 2019

DATES	EVENT	TIME	LOCATION	CONTACT
Seattle—King County REALTORS® For updates visit http://www.nwrealtor.com/events				
4 / 12 / 2019	State Director Caucus	11:30 am - 1:30 pm	SKCR	425-974-1011
4 / 18 / 2019	RPAC Wine & Spirits Auction	5:00 pm - 8:00 pm	Bellevue Club	425-974-1011
5 / 8 / 2019	Board of Directors	9:30 am - 12:30 pm	SKCR	425-974-1011
5 / 13-18 /2019	NAR Meetings		Washington, DC	425-974-1011

