NW REporter

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Northwest MLS brokers say September's home sales reached highest level since June 2018

KIRKLAND, Washington (October 7, 2020) – Northwest Multiple Listing Service brokers completed 10,175 sales transactions during September – the highest monthly volume since June 2018 when MLS members reported 10,072 closed sales. September's closings also marked a jump of nearly 28% from the same month a year ago, according to the latest statistical summary from the MLS.

"I believe this significant increase speaks to sellers becoming much more confident and buyers competing more effectively, most likely due to low interest rates," remarked Mike Grady, president and COO at Coldwell Banker Bain. "It's as if we just completed our typical 'spring' market," he added.

The new report from Northwest MLS showed a sharp year-over-year (YOY) drop in inventory (down 43% from a year ago), a robust increase (23%) in pending sales (mutually accepted offers), and a sizeable surge (19%) in prices for single family homes and condos combined. Northwest MLS serves 23 counties, mostly in Western and Central Washington.

Whether last week's announcement from Boeing to consolidate to a single 787 production location in South Carolina resulting in the loss of about 900 Puget Sound jobs will dampen home sales is unclear.

"It's too soon to make any solid predictions about how Boeing's announcement will affect the Snohomish County housing market, but I am watching it closely," stated Matthew Gardner, chief economist at Windermere. "We could see an increase in the number of homes for sale as workers either leave the area or decide to sell to access the equity they have in their homes. If this does happen, the increased supply will likely be absorbed by buyers who currently have a limited number of homes to choose from and counter any downward pressure on prices."

Grady believes any impacts will be counteracted "given recent expansion announcements by Facebook, Amazon, and Microsoft to either purchase, build or renovate major office buildings in the region."

Impacts of the coronavirus pandemic on the housing market are prevalent, according to several Northwest MLS representatives who commented on last month's activity.

"COVID-19 has made many reflect on what their home means to them," remarked J. Lennox Scott, chairman and CEO of John L. Scott Real Estate. "As a result, many people are looking to create that ideal place to call home. We are seeing a rotation of home ownership, whether that means refinancing, remodeling, or moving."

"With the trend toward employers allowing (and in some cases, requiring) employees to work remotely, we have seen a very noteworthy increase of sales in the more affordable suburban cities," stated Gary O'Leyar, owner and designated broker at Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices Signature Properties.

"I consistently hear examples of COVID-related housing movement from our agents, such as a willingness to live further out, plans to move to the Pacific Northwest due to the ability to work remotely, a desire for a yard, home office, vacation property, etc." said Robb Wasser, branch manager at Windermere Real Estate/East, adding, "But I do wonder if I'm noticing these instances because I'm on the lookout for them."

James Young, director of the Washington Center for Real Estate Research at the University of Washington, also commented on shifting desires. "People working from home, especially those with kids being schooled at home, seek both space and value. Those who already have a home have little incentive to leave." He described the current scenario of "too much demand and limited supply" coupled with low interest rates as "the perfect price storm."

Supply continues to be inadequate to meet demand.

Brokers added 11,210 new listings to inventory during September, a healthy increase from a year ago when they added 9,435 for a YOY gain of 18.1%. Compared to August, the volume declined by 733 listings (down about 6%).

At the end of September, the supply totaled 9,099 active listings, well-below the year-ago selection of 15,982 listings (down 43%), and the lowest level since February.

Measured by months of supply, there is less than one month of supply (0.89) system wide. In the Puget Sound region, only King County notched more than a month's supply, but if condos are excluded there is only 0.85 months of supply. Mason, Thurston and Snohomish counties had the tightest inventory, with only about two weeks of supply.

Dean Rebhuhn, broker-owner at Village Homes and Properties in Woodinville, attributes the "very active market" to record low interest rates, jobs, and lifestyle choices. "We see a desire for homes with large yards or with acreage. Prepared purchasers are bringing strong offers to sellers, at or over asking prices with few, if any, contingencies," he stated.

"In most areas, we are virtually sold out in the more affordable, mid-price and upper end segments of the market," stated Scott, adding, "We're also seeing a record-setting number of luxury properties going under contract across King, Pierce, and Kitsap counties."

Statistics compiled by Northwest MLS for these three counties show there were 883 closed sales of single family homes and condos last month in the “luxury” segment based on selling prices of $1 million and above. A year ago, there were 429 sales in this category.

“With the region’s supply plummeting by over 43% compared to a year ago and month’s supply below one, double-digit house price growth should come as no surprise,” remarked Gardner.

The median price for homes and condos that sold last month across the Northwest MLS market area was $499,950, a hefty 19% jump from the year-ago figure of $420,000. San Juan County had the highest median price at $850,000, followed by King County at $698,230.

For single family homes only (excluding condos), last month’s median price system wide was $519,864. In King County, the median price for single family homes was $753,600. Within King County, where NWMLS tracks 30 sub-areas, six of these areas had median prices over $1 million; five of those areas were on the Eastside.

One of the few counties that did not have double-digit price increases from a year ago was Kitsap. Prices there were up almost 8.9%.

Frank Leach, broker/owner at RE/MAX Platinum Services in Silverdale, described Kitsap County as a “hotspot” for both first-time homebuyers and high-end buyers. “The phenomenal affordability factor in Kitsap bodes well for first-time buyers and those looking to downsize or upsize.” The median price for last month’s sales in Kitsap County was $418,000, according to the MLS report. That was $280,230 less than the price in King County.

Leach has noticed significant movement in the million-dollar-plus segment and said many rentals are now going on the market as investors look to move into new investments or change platforms.

Considering depleted inventory (down nearly 44% from a year ago) and vigorous demand, Leach said buyers need to “step up with their best foot forward to compete in the multi-offer environment or deal with the frustration of being outbid. Those without a pre-approval letter are not even going to get on the playing field.” He reported a resurgence of offer escalation clauses, adding, “The Kitsap market is exceptionally hot on anything below $375,000.”

“Kitsap County, like all regions, is going into year-end with an extreme deficit of listing inventory,” said Frank Wilson, the Kitsap regional manager and branch managing broker at John L. Scott Real Estate in Poulsbo. “With 507 new listings come to market and 564 go to pending status, our deficit is deepening.”

Wilson also reported a backlog of buyers. “Our brokers are working with buyers who have made offers on 10 or 12 homes only to lose out to cash buyers or buyers who were willing to pay significantly more than the list price and waive all conditions, including an inspection.” He said brokers are bracing for an influx of buyers from King County where some residents have concerns about living in the Seattle area. Wilson believes “more buyers in the hunt for homes in Kitsap will only intensify competition and inflate prices.”

O’Leyar believes Seattle continues to be a desirable destination. “Despite the numerous negative news stories about Seattle and anecdotes of an exodus out of the city, it is still a city where more people are moving into versus out of." MLS figures indicate YOY closed sales of homes and condos in Seattle jumped from 750 sales in September 2019 to last month's total of 1,189 (up 59%).

Notably, the Seattle map areas tracked by Northwest MLS showed a modest 8.4% gain in active listings compared to a year ago, fueled by the addition of 527 listings of condos. That's up from the year-ago total of 308. The median price for last month's closed sales in Seattle (including single family homes and condos) rose 11%, from $684,500 to $760,000.

Northwest Multiple Listing Service is a not-for-profit, member-owned organization that facilitates cooperation among its member real estate firms. With more than 2,300 member firm offices and 30,000 brokers across Washington state, NWMLS (www.nwmls.com) is the largest full-service MLS in the Northwest. While based in Kirkland, Washington, its service area spans 23 counties and it operates 20 local service centers.

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Next page: statistical charts

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	4,371	3,970	4,153	3,535	$849,073	$698,230	1.12	2.17
Snohomish	1,741	888	1,997	1,596	$586,331	$550,000	0.56	1.72
Pierce	1,591	1,001	1,892	1,590	$482,189	$428,750	0.63	1.43
Kitsap	507	337	564	480	$553,625	$418,000	0.70	1.56
Mason	143	100	168	171	$384,732	$368,800	0.58	1.67
Skagit	224	201	269	235	$485,799	$435,000	0.86	2.47
Grays Harbor	174	179	222	172	$285,236	$269,450	1.04	3.16
Lewis	162	173	175	140	$348,207	$321,200	1.24	2.06
Cowlitz	154	120	188	139	$335,405	$319,900	0.86	1.70
Grant	153	175	140	120	$291,793	$267,450	1.46	2.42
Thurston	560	252	610	554	$429,538	$389,000	0.45	1.12
San Juan	45	115	69	52	$1,026,18	$850,000	2.21	10.04
Island	187	126	205	177	$579,494	$456,000	0.71	2.18
Kittitas	118	117	127	113	$496,137	$379,500	1.04	2.60
Jefferson	60	87	76	79	$533.223	$480.000	1.10	3.29
Okanogan	59	141	75	62	$335,341	$298,000	2.27	5.57
Whatcom	389	414	470	407	$489,432	$439,900	1.02	2.59
Clark	114	110	132	113	$457,171	$410,000	0.97	2.78
Pacific	62	97	95	70	$253,381	$236,500	1.39	4.22
Ferry	6	36	6	7	$202,157	$124,000	5.14	9.20
Clallam	106	130	143	116	$395,880	$365,750	1.12	2.85
Chelan	147	146	135	127	$522,451	$435,000	1.15	2.79
Douglas	67	53	76	81	$432,602	$389,900	0.65	2.17
Others	70	131	66	39	$296,979	$220,000	3.36	4.43
Total	**11,210**	**9,099**	**12,053**	**10,175**	**$616,301**	**$499,950**	**0.89**	**2.01**

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
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	8090	8597	8231	7773	7345	6896	6797	5788	4183
2020	5352	6078	6477	5066	7297	8335	8817	9179	8606			

Seattle among cities with big drops in net arrivals

Seattle is among five cities with the steepest declines in net arrivals, according to new data from LinkedIn's Economic Graph team. The group analyzed city migration patterns amid the pandemic comparing April to August 2020 to the same period a year ago.

"Smaller metro areas are gaining, some famous big cities are slipping, and hints of de-urbanization can be found across the country," the Economic Graph team reported. Across the United States, city-to-city migration patterns have been redefined in recent months, stated George Anders, senior editor at large at LinkedIn.

New York City topped the list of cities with the sharpest decline in net arrivals (down 23.4%), edging out San Francisco (down 21.1%). Seattle was third on that list with a 10.6% drop, followed by Boston (-9.9%) and Portland, Ore (-9.67%).

As people reconsider where to live, some are choosing smaller cities as evidenced by net arrivals numbers. Jacksonville led the list of biggest gainers, registering a 10.7% increase in net arrivals. Other cities on that list were Salt Lake City, Sacramento, Milwaukee, and Kansas City, MO.

Some of the movement is circular, according to LinkedIn. Their inflow-to-outflow data indicate people leaving Boston most likely to opt for San Francisco, Los Angeles, or Seattle.

Anecdotal information indicates some of the reasons people are forsaking life in bigger cities and once-coveted destinations:
"All of the things I loved about New York City kind of just disappeared because of COVID, one former resident who moved to Tampa, Fla. said in an interview.
Some affluent New Yorkers have relocated to second homes in rural areas. Whether those moves are temporary or permanent is not yet known.
The New York Times reports a surge of home-buying in New York's suburbs.
In the San Francisco Bay area where many tech companies have switched to an extended work-from-home-routine, employees are deciding "home" may be a few hundred miles from their workplace. The LinkedIn report noted schools near Lake Tahoe, about 200 miles from San Francisco, are swamped with applications from relocating Bay Area families.
"We don't need to be in Silicon Valley," says Robert Wood, chief executive officer of digital license-plate maker Reviver. He relocated the company earlier this year from the San Francisco suburb of Foster City

to Sacramento. Wood cited lower costs and growing acceptance of a work-anywhere attitude in response to pandemic dislocations as spurring the decision.
The LinkedIn report acknowledged Seattle and Portland are still experiencing an overall influx of people, but at a lower rate than before. "Overall, though, a sizable share of departees is opting for somewhere smaller and more affordable."

The top 10 destinations for New Yorkers who plan to relocate include Miami, Charlotte, and Denver. Phoenix, Boise, and Bend, Ore. top the list for Seattleites who are moving.

LinkedIn's Economic Graph is a digital representation of the global economy. It is based on more than 690 million members, 36,000 skills, 50 million companies, 11 million open jobs, and 90,000 schools.

The LinkedIn Economic Graph Team analyzes data from user profiles and user activity to help people identify the skills they'll need to work in the future economy. It partners with governments and organizations worldwide to analyze labor markets, recommend policy solutions, and better connect people to opportunities.

Mortgage activity wanes with various reasons cited

Mortgage availability in August dropped to its lowest level since March 2014, according to an index from the Mortgage Bankers Association. The group suggested the weak economy is prompting lenders to tighten standards.

Credit continues to tighten because of uncertainty still looming around the health of the job market, according to Joel Kan, MBA's associate vice president of economic and industry forecasting. "A further reduction in loan programs with low credit scores, high LTVs, and reduced documentation requirements also continued to drive the overall decline in credit availability," he explained.

In another report, MBA said its **Weekly Application Survey** for the week ending September 25, 2020 showed a decrease in application activity, both in purchasing and refinancing. Volumes dropped 4.8% from the prior week.

The decreases were despite a 5 basis points decline in rates to 3.05%, the lowest in MBA's survey.

"There are indications that refinance rates are not decreasing to the same extent as rates for home purchase loans, and that could explain last week's decline in refinances," stated Kan. "Many lenders are still operating at full capacity and working through operational challenges, ultimately limiting the number of applications they are able to accept," he added.

Kan said even though purchase applications decreased in late December, activity was strong at a year-over-year growth rate of 22 percent. He also noted there continues to be considerable action in the high price tiers, with the average loan balance remaining close to an all-time survey high.

MBA's survey, conducted weekly since 1990, covers over 75 percent of all U.S. retail residential mortgage applications. Respondents include mortgage bankers, commercial banks and thrifts. Base period and value for all indexes is March 16, 1990=100.

The MBA's credit availability indices analyze data from Ellie Mae's AllRegs Market Clarity covering several factors related to borrower eligibility such as credit scores, loan type, and loan-to-value ratios. The data comes from about 95 lenders and investors, MBA said.

MBA represents all segments of the real estate finance industry. It has more than 2200 members.

New home sales surging, bolstering builder confidence

Low interest rates, a renewed consumer focus on the importance of housing, and rising demand in lower-density markets like suburbs and exurbs are credited with surging sales of new single-family homes. Citing Census and HUD estimates, the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB) reported sales during August reached a seasonally adjusted total of 1.01.

The volume for August marked a 4.8% gain over a revised July rate of 965,000 and a whopping 43.2% jump from the August 2019 estimate of 706,000. Analysts said it was the strongest seasonally adjusted annual rate since September 2006. A comparison of year-to-date totals show the first eight months of 2020 are outgaining 2019 by 14.9%. Sales are higher in all regions, led by the Midwest and the Northeast which are up 24%.

The builders' group said the gains for new home sales are consistent with the NAHB Wells Fargo Housing Market Index which notched an all-time high of 83 in September. That represents a 5-point gain from both August 2020 and December 1998 when the previous high reading of 78 was attained.

Industry watchers say these metrics are strong signals that housing is leading the economic recovery and are also noteworthy considering high unemployment.

NAHB signaled some concern over inventory, which fell to just 3.3 months of supply in August, the lowest level since 1963 when the tracking began. The group tallied a count of 54,000 completed, ready-to-occupy new homes nationwide. Total inventory dropped almost 40% year-over-year, with supply down to 282,000.

While builders are seeing positive market conditions, their trade group found many in the industry who are worried about rising costs and delays in obtaining building materials, especially lumber. Lumber prices have jumped more than 170% since mid-April, which adds more than $16,000 to the price of a typical new single-family home.

NAHB conducts its HMI survey monthly to gauge builder perceptions of current sing-family home sales and sales expectations for the next six months using ratings of “good,” “fair,” or “poor.” Survey respondents are also asked to rate traffic of prospective buyers as “high to very high,” “average,” or “low to very low.”

Second home sales surging, but buyer expectations have changed

Demand for second home within a reasonable drive of a family’s primary home is booming, according to a report from John Burns Real Estate. Developers and builders who understand these buyers’ mindsets and preferences stand to benefit.

Researchers found second homes in convenient locations “are benefiting from a rise in the YOLO (you only live once) mindset as people across the country look to get away and enjoy life as safely as possible during the pandemic.”

Researchers at Burns found five characteristics are contributing to record-setting activity:
Buyers favor drive-to destinations. They cited figures from the Sierra Tahoe MLS, which logged a 200% year-over-year increase in sales during July, and from Long Cove, a luxury lakeside masterplan community near Dallas, where sales reached all-time highs in June and again in July. Also mentioned were Bend, Oregon, when YOY pending sales jumped 150%, and Rehoboth Beach, Delaware, where sales doubled from a year ago, thanks in part to buyers from New York and New Jersey.
Second-home buyers with school-age children have a strong preference for get-away destinations that are within a four-hour drive.
Now that people can work remotely and children can learn remotely, homeowners are measuring second-home stays in weeks and months, rather than days. “This use pattern flips the traditional weekend second-home model on its head.” It also means high-speed internet, home offices, and learning spaces for children are important, if not essential.
Today’s buyers tend to prefer a finished product so they can enjoy their second-home lifestyles now, rather than purchase a homesite and wait months or years to design and build the home. For to-be-built homes, Burns recommends a simple and short build process that includes consumers’ most sought-after design elements. (Burns is tracking trends.)
“The YOLO mindset is driving sales.” In addition to fear of missing out (FOMO), the psychology of “you only live once” (YOLO) is driving the surge in second-home sales. Buyers are opting to use funds that may have been allocated to more traditional vacation travel to purchase a home now. Additionally,

buyers are showing more interest in lifestyle and use rather than rental potential and future appreciation.

Team members from John Burns real estate who contributed to the report included Chris Dorociak, senior manager, consulting; Ken Perlman, managing principal; and Lesley Deutch, managing principal.

Active adult buyers are reemerging

Active adult buyers – a key component of housing demand – are reemerging according to researchers with John Burns Real Estate. They found "particularly strong" home sales in August and September at many age-qualified communities.

"We know one of the highest priorities for this buyer set is being close to children and grandchildren," wrote Ken Perlman and Lesley Deutch in a recent newsletter. "This means that as the Great American Move takes place in hot markets from Phoenix to Southern California's Inland Empire to Sarasota, Florida, active adult buyers are following," added Perlman and Deutch, who are managing principals at the research and consulting firm.

While the pandemic prompted this cohort, and others, to pause plans to purchase a home, in part due to worries about their stock portfolios, their fears have subsided with brighter economic news. These discretionary buyers are "restarting" their purchasing process, bolstered by increased confidence in the ability to sell their current home at a good price. Researchers at Burns report active adult buyers prefer visiting sales offices or models in person so long as proper safety precautions are in place.

The 65+ population will grow by a net 17 million people over the next decade. Developers and builders who want to attract active adult buyers should be mindful of four factors, according to the Burns team, which monitors product trends and buyer preferences.

The four "keys to success" Perlman and Deutch delineated were:
Make sure you have inventory. Some builders contacted by representatives from Burns Real Estate said they are tripling production to satisfy demand. Some also said they're simplifying their offerings, both to streamline production and to keep prices more attainable, recognizing active adult buyers are sill prudent about spending, despite their wealth.
Design elements that appeal to primary buyers also appeal to active adults. Among the more popular elements are work-from-home spaces and outdoor living rooms.
A strong virtual presence is essential. Active adult buyers rely on technology for their searches so they can do extensive research before visiting a sales site.
Active adult buyers still want to visit sales offices before they buy, and they want to make their purchase in person. "On-site sales offices, decorated models, and a well-organized system for coordinating appointments are still critical for selling homes to this buyer profile," according to analysts with Burns Real Estate.

John Burns Real Estate Consulting focuses exclusively on housing, providing analyses and forecasts, proprietary surveys, independent research and various data resources. It has offices throughout the country, serving builders, developers, institutional investors, equity investors, building product manufacturers, and others.

Groups collaborate to facilitate rentals for residents facing homelessness

More than 1,000 individuals in King County who were experiencing or facing homelessness found housing during the first year of operations for Housing Connector, a nonprofit cross-sector collaboration. Nearly half the newly housed were children and 70% were people of color.

Housing Connector, a partnership of the city of Seattle, King County, the Metropolitan Seattle Chamber of Commerce, and Zillow, collaborates with 320 operators of multifamily properties and 572 case managers at 54 nonprofit service providers. It acts as the bridge that connects private property owners and managers in King County to those most in need of housing.

Launched in 2018, Housing Connector has its roots in Seattle Mayor Jenny Durkan's Innovation Advisory Council, which includes representatives from the corporate, academic, and nonprofit sectors. The group uses data and technology to solve Seattle's most urgent challenges, including homelessness. Its mission is to partner with property owners and managers to lower barriers to housing and increase the region's affordable housing capacity.

Earlier this year, Mayor Durkan and King County Executive Dow Constantine unveiled a new Zillow-powered search tool that helps match local nonprofit services providers and their clients experiencing homelessness with owners of affordable vacant rental units. The tool eliminates the need for case managers to sift through available homes property-by-property; instead, they can search through Zillow's online listing platform.

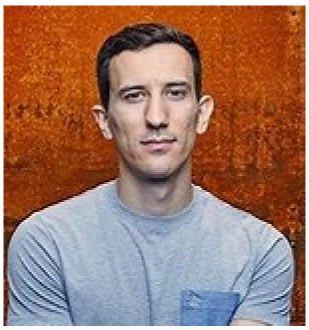
Housing Connector Executive Director Shkëlqim Kelmendi said Zillow dedicated "significant resources" at no cost to Housing Connector. The organization and Zillow envision scaling the idea nationally, so they view King County as the beta.

In early 2019, Zillow Senior Software Development Engineer Steven Kwan became Zillow's first engineer on the company's social impact product team. He devoted 10 months to developing the search tool, with contributions from 30 colleagues. Forty others consulted on the program, according to Kwan.

According to a Zillow news release, Housing Connector partner landlords will be able to quickly upload housing inventory through its search tool, and local non-profit service providers will be able to find housing inventory in real time for tenants who need affordable housing. Housing Connector landlords have adjusted or waived criteria that would normally prevent those most in need from qualifying for the home. Service provides have free access to properties whose owners are willing to rent to households with rental barriers, such as an eviction.

(Editor's note: A study by the city of Seattle Women's Commission and the Housing Justice Project of the King County Bar Association indicated among some 1,200 King County households that were evicted in 2017, only about 12% found another home to move into. Most of the rest ended up on the streets or in shelters.)

Zillow's search tool does not require or knowingly collect the personal information of tenants and no user information through Housing Connector is sold to third parties.



Upon accepting the position as executive director for Housing Connector, Kelmendi spent four months interviewing landlords and case managers. He subsequently developed a "business proposition" for landlords that addressed their concerns around timely rent payments and possible property damage. They are guaranteed rent will be paid, plus up to $5,000 of damage mitigation, and they know every renter will have two yeas of support services to help them be stable in their housing. Housing Connector also offers 24-hour support to resolve lease violations.

In writing about his experience in developing the tool, Zillow's Kwan said what's been most impactful is how partnering with the Housing Connector "has shown us we cannot simply build an ap to solve an issue as complicated as homelessness." Continuing, he wrote, "Through our early success, it became clear that we'd be more effective as partners. Social issues like homelessness are nuanced and require subject matter experts like our colleagues at Housing Connector. They had the expertise to do the work that we as a tech company can't. This included building relationships and working with public offices, community partners, and property managers. We simply couldn't replicate their experience.

Dozens of community and property partners are supporting Housing Connector. The organization does not provide direct resources or housing, but has a comprehensive Community Resource list on its website that includes information on programs that can assist with rent, eviction prevention move-in costs, energy costs, employment, and legal concerns.

"Some Elbow Room" adds spaces for myriad uses

SOME Elbow Room

Like many start-ups, the inspiration for Some Elbow Room came from a personal need. Erin and Patrick Callahan, who live in San Antonio, launched their venture after they built a small freestanding studio in their backyard to accommodate Erin's art projects.

Their friends and neighbors loved the "stylish, functional, and comfortable suite." Since creating the "artist's nook," they've designed a variety of styles and sizes. Current offerings include the Elbow Room "Shell," "Studio," and "Suite," which range in size from 96 square feet to 300 square feet. Prices start at $9,000.

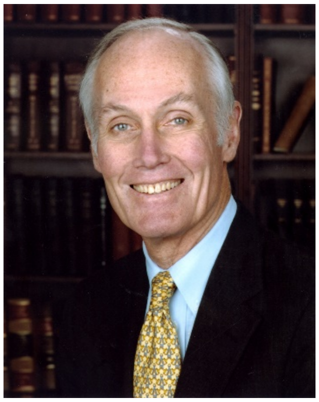
The structures are customizable for the user's needs, and are insulated air conditioned, and wired for electricity. The Callahans and the contractors who assist them can personalize the spaces with features like porches and patios, shelving and cabinets, fixtures and doors, and skylights and windows.

"Everybody wants a place where they can relax or do something that's important to them," CEO Erin Callahan stated in an interview with The San Antonio Business Journal. "This is just a great product for everyone who's just super stressed," she added.

Photo courtesy of Some Elbow Room

The couple started remodeling homes and designing custom features in 2015. Although their market focus in the San Antonio area, they will build 8x12 models and deliver it in one piece to other cities and states. They also plan to franchise the business.

Public memorial service being planned for U.S. Sen. Slade Gorton



The Hon. Slade Gorton, who was the 2010 recipient of the Seattle King County First Citizen Award, is expected to be honored at a memorial service on August 19, 2021, which coincides with the one-year anniversary of his death. The widely respected statesman died at age 92 at his Bellevue home, surrounded by his family.

Because of the coronavirus pandemic, no large public gathering can be planned for the dedicated public servant, according to his family, who noted “It would seem fitting to hold a memorial service at T-Mobile Park.” That venue is proposed because the baseball-loving lawyer is credited with “going to great lengths to save major league baseball for Seattle” when he was State Attorney General (1969-1981).

In the announcement of his selection as the 72nd First Citizen, several community leaders praised his many accomplishments locally and nationally. His distinguished political career spanned several decades, starting in 1958 when he was elected to the state House of Representatives.
“Slade Gorton’s footprints are large on the paths of progress in King County, the State of Washington and the United States,” remarked 1968 First Citizen James R. Ellis. “As Majority Leader of the State House of Representatives, he passed an 18-bill legislative miracle for Forward Thrust. As a United States Senator, he successfully preserved thousands of acres of forest land to create the Mountains to Sound Greenway across the Cascades. Each of these efforts was a historic walk-off home run for the public.”
Sen. Patty Murray, in a tribute published in the Congressional Record in 2000, proclaimed, “Throughout his career in both Washingtons, Slade defied labels. Within the Senate, Gorton has been a grand force for reasoned bipartisanship, never afraid to take a strong stand but also willing to work graciously and effectively with members of the opposition even at the tensest moments.”
Details on next year’s anticipated memorial service will be announced on a new website. The family has requested that in lieu of flowers, contributions may be made to “preserve and extend what Slade always considered his greatest legacy, the development of a new generation of leaders.” The Gorton Leadership Institute (GLI) has been established for that purpose.

News In Brief

- **A new study has found that Seattle ranks as the No.1 overall best city in the nation for coffee and coffee lovers.** It isn't exactly a surprise that Seattle - home of Starbucks, Seattle's Best Coffee and a host of excellent local coffee shops that roast their own beans - would take the top ranking. But it turns out that Seattle has plenty of competition - many other cities love their coffee, too, and take pride in their local java joints. The study, by personal finance website WalletHub to honor National Coffee Day on Sept. 29, ranked the 100 largest U.S cities across 12 key indicators of a strong coffee culture. The criteria ranged from coffee shops per capita to the average price of coffee to the number of coffee-lover meetups per capita. Seattle had the highest overall score of any U.S. city - and also ranked No. 1 for most affordable high-quality coffee shops per capita and most coffee and tea manufacturers per capita. In addition, the study found that Seattle households rank sixth in the nation for average spending on coffee per household - but only 54th in the nation for the percentage of households that own a coffee maker. A recent survey by the National Coffee Association found that 62 percent of Americans drink coffee every day, with the average coffee drinker consuming three cups daily. Rounding out the top five coffee cities in America were San Francisco, at No. 2, followed by Portland. Ore,; Miami, Fla.; and Tampa, Fla. The least coffee-friendly city in the country? That would be Toledo, Ohio. Other cities in the bottom five for coffee culture were Laredo, Texas; Greensboro, N.C.; Memphis, Tenn.; and Detroit, Mich.

- **Paint company Sherwin-Williams on Tuesday announced its 2021 color of the year: "urbane bronze."** The hue is said to instill calmness and has ties to nature, Sherwin-Williams says. The color trends of 2020 ushered in a return to bolder hues, moving away from the popularity of cooler neutrals that dominated most of the 2010s. Now, Sherwin-Williams describes the 2021 choice as "bold and understated at the same time." Urbane bronze can work inside or out in a home, used as a primary or accent color in bedrooms, living rooms, dens, or home offices, Sherwin-Williams says.

- **A new housing report shows 73.9 million Americans reside in a community with a homeowners association or condominium board.** That is more Americans than ever, according to the Foundation for Community Association Research. California now leads the nation with 49,200 associations, followed by Florida, with 48,500; Texas, with 21,000; Illinois, with 18,800; North Carolina, with 14,100; and New York, with 14,000, the report says. In 2019, there were about 351,000 community associations in the U.S. The Foundation for Community Association Research estimates that the number in 2020 will increase to 354,000. Most residents say they appreciate the work of their community association in helping to maintain standards in their neighborhood, according to the report. Seventy percent of homeowner and condo association residents rate their overall experience living in a community association as "very good" or "good," according to the Foundation's 2020 Homeowner Satisfaction Survey. The value of homes in a community association is nearly $7.2 trillion. About $96 billion in assessments is collected annually from homeowners to fund essential maintenance in their communities, according to the foundation's report. As many local cities face financial challenges, many communities are requiring builders of new developments to create an association to assume many responsibilities that traditionally belonged to local and state governments, such as road maintenance and trash removal. Seventyseven percent of new housing built for sale now falls in a community association. Homeowners contribute $27.4 billion to association reserve funds for the repair, replacement, and enhancement of common property areas, such as swimming pools and elevators, or resurfacing of streets.

- **More Americans signed contracts to buy homes in August, suggesting the hot U.S. housing market will continue to churn well into fall.** The National Association of Realtors said that its index of pending sales rose 8.8% to a record high of 132.8. An index of 100 represents the level of contract activity in 2001. It had sunk to a low of 69 in April, when buyers and sellers were sidelined as the coronavirus swept through the U.S. Contract signings are a barometer of finalized purchases over the next two months, so this month's numbers point to continued strong sales into October. The housing market has been one of the highlights of the U.S. economy, which is still trying to get back its pre-virus momentum. Contract signings are now 24.2% ahead of where they were last year, after falling behind last year's pace earlier in the year because of the pandemic. The positive pending home sales numbers follow a pair of indicators showing continued strength in the housing market. The National Association of Realtors said that sales of existing homes rose 2.4% in August to its highest level since 2006. Sales are up 10.5% from a year ago and back to pre-COVID-19 levels of early 2020. Also last week, the Commerce Department reported that sales of new homes rose a solid 4.8% in August after surging 13.9% in July. Historically low interest rates of less than 3% are pushing buyers into the market, even as home prices rise due to lack of available properties. The median price for an existing single-family home reached $315,000 in August, up 11.7% from August 2019. The median price of a new home sold in August was $312,800. All four regions of the U.S. saw more contract signings for the third straight month.

Calendar of Events

DATES	EVENT	TIME	LOCATION	CONTACT
10/6	Gov't Affairs Committee	10:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.	Zoom	425-974-1011
10/14	Affiliate Council	10 a.m.-11 a.m.		425-974-1011
10/16	Battle of Barristers	9 a.m.-12 p.m.	Zoom	425-974-1011
10/21	WR Leader Retreat			425-974-1011

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