NW REporter

Serving More Than 30,000 Real Estate Professionals in the Northwest

Market offers hope for homebuyers, but Northwest MLS brokers say it may be temporary

KIRKLAND, Washington (July 7, 2021) – Homebuyers may find some good news in the latest report from Northwest Multiple Listing Service (NWMLS). The number of active listings at the end of June, 6,358, reached the highest level since November when buyers could choose from 6,505 properties. The volume of new listings added last month was the highest number in 17 months (13,111 last month versus 14,689 at the end of November 2019).

"Homebuyers will be happy to hear that between May and June the number of listings in King, Pierce, and Snohomish counties rose, giving them more homes to choose from and possibly easing the pressure just a little," remarked Matthew Gardner, chief economist at Windermere Real Estate.

For the tri-county area, total active listings of single family homes and condominiums increased 14.5% from May. System-wide, the report covering all 26 counties served by Northwest MLS shows month-to-month inventory improved 14.9%.

"Buyers need some relief, so I hope this trend continues," said Gardner.

Broker Dean Rebhuhn, owner at Village Homes and Properties, agreed the slight increase in new listings is good news for buyers, but tempered his optimism. "Low inventory and high demand coupled with low interest rates continue to drive up the market." He also noted Kittitas County "is no exception to brisk sales. Many homes in that county are selling within one or two weeks."

NWMLS director Frank Leach, broker/owner at RE/MAX Platinum Services in Silverdale, described Kitsap County as another "heated market" but said brokers there are growing inventory very slowly, resulting in more selection for buyers. Brokers added 621 new listings to that county's inventory, improving on

May's volume by more than 13%. That number also marked the first time since May 2019 that the number of new listings in Kitsap County topped 600.

Other industry analysts suggested the uptick in inventory might be short-lived, citing vigorous activity as Washington state lifts several strict coronavirus restrictions.

"We continue on a trajectory that will keep the Puget Sound region at the top of national lists for one of the hottest housing markets," stated John Deely, executive vice president of operations for Coldwell Banker Bain. "Inventory on hand remains at two-to-three weeks in the larger counties," he noted.

The latest report from Northwest MLS shows a year-over-year (YOY) drop in active listings of more than 34%, with only about two weeks (0.58 months) of supply available areawide. Last month marked the first time since July 2020 that the year-over-year decline fell below 40%.

Only 10 of the 26 counties in the MLS report have more than one month of supply. Of these, only one (Ferry) has more than two months of supply. Snohomish County's inventory declined more than 44% from a year ago, leaving it with only about 10 days of inventory (0.35 months of supply), the lowest of all the counties served by Northwest MLS.

"While pending sales saw a significant drop over this time last year, we believe that rather than that being an indication of a flattening of the market, this is a result of our extreme heat events, a typical summer slowdown as schools let out and people starting vacations, and, this year, the reopening of the country and discontinuation of COVID-19 restrictions," explained Deely.

Pending sales rose about 3.5% compared with a year ago (from 11,916 to 12,328) but fell slightly from May when mutually accepted offers outgained the number of listings added during the month.

"The local real estate market is virtually sold out in the more affordable and mid-price ranges, even into the luxury market in some areas," reported J. Lennox Scott, chairman and CEO of John L. Scott Real Estate. "This places extra focus on each new resale listing as it comes onto the market."
An analysis of last month's statistics by price range illustrates Scott's point. Fewer than 23% of June's listings had asking prices under $400,000. About a third of the inventory was listed at $800,000 or above.

James Young, the director of the Washington Center for Real Estate Research at the University of Washington, said the decline in active listings volume suggests homes are selling and closing very quickly once listed. He noted that while listing levels for June were higher than two years ago, pending and closed sales are much higher. "This indicates that well priced properties are closing very quickly."
Lennox Scott concurred. "Many homes are going under contract within days due to the intense buyer demand." He anticipates two more months of "elevated new resale listings" before the selection starts decreasing. "We expect the extremely high intensity for each listing will continue in most price ranges locally into the spring of 2022 due to historically low interest rates creating a large backlog of buyers looking to purchase a home."

Deely said affordability, especially for first-time homebuyers, continues to be a concern. “Given indications from tech companies like Amazon and Microsoft to lease large office spaces and hire thousands of employees in our region, drawing people from higher-priced markets like Silicon Valley with lots of money to spend, we don’t see much change in this scenario for buyers in the short term.” Brokers reported 10,923 completed transactions during June, a 31.4% increase from twelve months ago, and up 16.5% from May’s total of 9,374. Prices on last month’s sales, which includes single family homes and condominiums, rose nearly 27% from a year ago, from $465,000 to $589,000.

The single family segment accounted for about 86% of the sales. The median sales price on those 9,417 transactions was $611,000, which was 27% higher than the year-ago figure of $480,950.

Condo sales jumped a whopping 59% from a year ago, with prices increasing more than 20%. For last month’s 1,506 closed sales, the median price was $440,000; a year ago it was $365,000.

Looking at month-to-month, rather than YOY changes, Gardner noted King and Pierce counties experienced only modest price increases, while prices in Snohomish County rose by “a solid 3.1%. I believe this points to an uptick in buyers who can continue working from home and have made the choice to move from King to Snohomish County where housing is more affordable. The same can be inferred for Kitsap County.”

A comparison of Northwest MLS figures shows the median price on last month’s completed transactions in King County was $779,919, while in Snohomish County it was about $105,000 less ($675,000). In Kitsap County, where the median price was $505,000, the difference is nearly $275,000. Pierce County homes that sold last month had a median price of $507,375.

Commenting on the NWMLS report, Dick Beeson, managing broker at RE/MAX Northwest, Tacoma-Gig Harbor, said it reflects a “slight turn of the wheel. Sellers are still in control, but their expectations need a slight readjustment. Instead of 20 offers, there may only be five or fewer. Maybe even only one.”

When that happens, some sellers balk at selling, thinking they are being undersold, according to Beeson. “Sellers must remember, you can’t underprice a home in this market. You can still overprice a property. The market will find you out and drive the price to the appropriate market value.”

Given the strong, competitive market across all price ranges, Beeson offered a recipe for buyer success. “Scour the new inventory coming on the market daily; write the best offer you can using all the offer strategies you’re equipped to employ, and then decide if the extra cost to win the sale is an acceptable value to you. Close the sale quicky, and don’t whimper!”

Rebhuhn also offered hope for buyers who are prepared to act. “Generally speaking, July and August provide more opportunities for buyers as there is less competition because of vacations and fewer relocation buyers in mid-summer.”

Builders are also caught in the frenzy. “Builders are racing to bring new communities online and hoping to hit the sweet spot as prices on building materials for new construction begin to fall,” reported Frank

Leach. He said new apartment buildings and condos are being approved and built all across Kitsap County to accommodate newly arriving residents. Notably, Leach said an aircraft carrier due to arrive shortly could potentially add 3,500 people to that county's rental market.

Although pending sales in Kitsap County dipped slightly from a year ago, they were up nearly 12% from May. "The market in Kitsap County is expected to remain very competitive with exposure of only eight days on the market, on average, across all price ranges," Leach noted.

Northwest Multiple Listing Service is a not-for-profit, member-owned organization that facilitates cooperation among its member real estate firms. With more than 2,500 member firm offices and 32,000 brokers across Washington state, NWMLS (www.nwmls.com) is the largest full-service MLS in the Northwest. Based in Kirkland, Washington, its service area spans 26 counties, and it operates 21 local service centers.

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	4,801	2,257	4,351	4,052	$974,895	$779,919	0.56	1.25
Snohomish	2,008	610	1,926	1,727	$719,953	$675,000	0.35	0.81
Pierce	1,995	834	1,954	1,733	$559,535	$507,375	0.48	0.84
Kitsap	621	288	593	529	$642,778	$505,000	0.54	0.94
Mason	189	100	183	139	$393,844	$370,900	0.72	0.88
Skagit	233	135	235	189	$585,971	$517,000	0.71	1.20
Grays	200	187	209	137	$331,456	$319,900	1.36	1.88
Lewis	171	151	151	147	$402,060	$375,000	1.03	1.48
Cowlitz	177	96	175	145	$397,502	$369,000	0.66	1.08
Grant	171	123	151	124	$326,929	$305,500	0.99	1.66
Thurston	687	232	708	574	$495,986	$466,823	0.40	0.65
San Juan	56	80	35	47	$1,284,27	$875,000	1.70	5.68
Island	228	113	219	184	$660,028	$527,500	0.61	1.10
Kittitas	148	102	134	103	$655,672	$475,000	0.99	1.64
Jefferson	75	62	72	56	$650,125	$552,500	1.11	1.86
Okanogan	69	100	57	61	$375,732	$350,000	1.64	3.72
Whatcom	489	291	459	379	$585,178	$510,000	0.77	1.85
Clark	130	60	124	111	$534,665	$485,000	0.54	1.14
Pacific	77	58	83	60	$290,687	$264,500	0.97	2.34
Ferry	9	24	9	10	$312,690	$275,000	2.40	10.33
Clallam	146	115	120	112	$510,828	$430,000	1.03	2.03
Chelan	155	124	142	100	$673,366	$553,500	1.24	1.75
Douglas	72	37	68	57	$451,343	$425,050	0.65	1.62
*Adams	26	18	16	14	$282,687	$262,497	1.29	2.00
*Walla	88	53	82	79	$448,934	$375,800	0.67	5.00
*Columbia	5	10	12	8	$295,313	$248,250	1.25	N/A
Others	85	98	60	46	$395,768	$343,025	2.13	3.32
Total	**13,111**	**6,358**	**12,328**	**10,923**	**$730,280**	**$589,000**	**0.58**	**1.16**

**Adams, Walla Walla and Columbia counties are added as separate rows this month; previously, statistics for these counties were included in the row for "Others/Out of area."*

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
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	7934	6122	4851
2021	5216	5600	8002	7716	8674	8824						

Amazon to invest $300 million from its Housing Equity Fund for 3,000 new affordable housing units in three metro areas

Amazon will invest $300 million to build 3,000 new affordable housing units in the Puget Sound, Arlington/Metro D.C., and Nashville regions. The ecommerce giant will work with “traditional and non-traditional partners,” to acquire land near public transit in hopes of creating move-in ready homes by as early as 2025.

The latest commitment is part of Amazon’s $2 billion Housing Equity Fund to develop transit-oriented housing for moderate- to low-income families. Amazon will work closely with public transit agencies in the three areas to fund development on either surplus land owned by the agencies or privately owned land near active transit corridors.

The public-private partners believe the funding will help ensure families with low to moderate incomes can afford to live in neighborhoods with easy access to employment, schools, healthcare, education and other amenities.

Of the $300 million, one-third ($100 million) of the funding is earmarked for Puget Sound to accelerate the creation of up to 1,200 units on surplus transit properties near light rail stations across the region. The first $25 million will fund pre-development activities such as site due diligence, engineering and permitting. The remaining $75 million will support the direct creation and construction of new affordable housing.

In a statement announcing its commitment, Amazon officials said they are partnering with Sound Transit and providing below-market funding to help create and significantly expedite the development of affordable housing.

“Transit-oriented development (TOD) is a unique approach to preserving and creating affordable housing options so moderate- to low-income families can afford to live near – and benefit from – quality public transit,” stated Amazon, which is now Washington state’s largest private employer. “When successful, TOD has a range of benefits, including greater economic activity, reduced traffic congestion and associated environmental benefits, and a strengthened, more resilient labor force.”

Commenting on the affordable housing crisis across the Puget Sound region, Sound Transit CEO Peter Rogoff said his agency is expanding rail service into communities that are becoming less and less affordable for working families. The public transit agency builds and operates regional transit service throughout the urban areas of King, Pierce and Snohomish counties.

“We have a forward-leaning policy of partnering with developers to facilitate affordable housing near our stations but obtaining the necessary funding to build those units has always been a challenge,” Rogoff stated, adding, “Amazon’s $100 million commitment to help fill the gap and make transit more accessible to those who need it the most is truly welcome and appreciated.”

The new funding pledge builds on a previous commitment totaling $185.5 million for the King County Housing Authority, which supports health and self-sufficiency through its rental housing and assistance. The below-market loans and grants are enabling KCHA to preserve up to 1,000 affordable homes in Bellevue. As of February 2021, more than 11,000 households rent affordable housing at one of the organization’s 138 properties, with 55% of its resident population identifying as non-white.

Amazon officials say they recognize there is no one-size-fits-all answers to affordable housing. “We’ve taken a unique approach in each of our hometown regions to work with transit agencies in the most efficient, expedient, and regionally pragmatic ways possible.

The $125 million commitment in below-market capital to the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (Metro) will be used to create more than 1,000 transit-accessible new homes in the Washington, D.C. area. Of the amount allocated, $25 million is set aside to fund development led by minority developers.

In January 2021, Amazon committed $381.9 million in below-market loans and grants to the Washington Housing Conservancy. That investment from its Housing Equity Fund supports the preservation and creation of up to 1,300 affordable homes on the Crystal House property in Arlington.

The third recipient of funds, Nashville, will use its $75 million pledge in below-market capital for developers to create an estimated 800 affordable homes to meet urgent needs. Amazon will choose the development partners to construct affordable homes on privately-owned properties within a half-mile of transit stops. Working with WeGo, the primary regional transit agency, Amazon said priority will be given to minority-led organizations and racially and economically diverse communities.

In January, when Amazon announced its new $2 billion Housing Equity Fund to create or preserve 20,000 affordable homes in three regions, Founder and CEO Jeff Bezos said the Fund would help local families achieve long-term stability “while building strong, inclusive communities.”

In each of the three headquarters regions, Amazon supports households making between 30% and 80% of the area’s median income. In the Seattle-Tacoma-Bellevue metro areas, this translates to a household of four earning less than $95,250 a year.

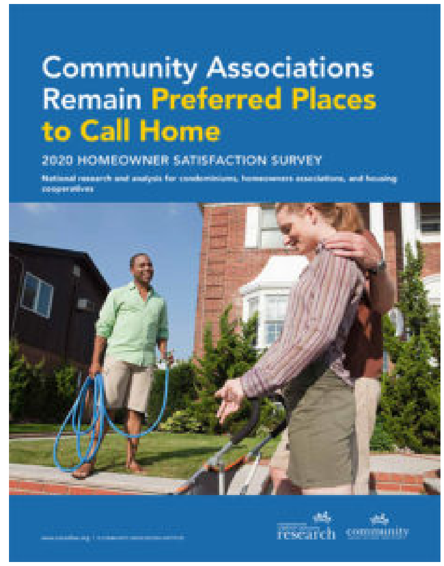
“Low-income and minority families are disproportionately affected by an affordable housing shortage in the U.S.” states Amazon in its Equity Fund’s position statement, adding, “While only governments at the local, state and federal level have the capacity to implement more effective housing policies, we believe the private and public sectors can work together to address this challenge.”

More Americans are living in common-interest communities, and larger percentage express satisfaction with their experiences

More than 73 million Americans live within community associations, which continue to be a preferred housing option in today’s overheated housing market. That number translates to about 25% of the U.S. housing stock.

Projections by the Foundation for Community Association Research indicate the number of new condominiums and homeowner associations is expected to increase by 4,500 this year. Those additions would bring the total number of common-interest communities to about 349,000 across the U.S. Included in the count are homeowners associations, condominium communities, and housing cooperatives.

The Foundation provides research and analysis on community association trends, issues, and operations. It is an affiliate of Community Associations Institute, an organization dedicated to fostering vibrant, competent, harmonious community associations.



One of the Foundation’s recurring reports is its homeowner satisfaction survey. Conducted by Zogby Analytics, the biennial report assesses perceptions about homeowners’ association experiences, governing boards, community managers and rules.

The latest survey, conducted during 2020, revealed overwhelming homeowner satisfaction with their communities:

- 89% of residents rate their overall community association experience as very good or good (70%) or neutral (19%).
- 89% say members of their elected governing board “absolutely” or “for the most part” serve the best interests of their communities.
- 74% say their community managers provide value and support to residents and their associations.
- 94% say their association’s rules protect and enhance property values (71%) or have a neutral effect (23%); only 4% say the rules harm property values.

Notably, compared to 2018, improvements of at least 4% were found in three areas: overall experience, the role of the board, and perception of rules.

CAI, with around 40,000 members, works in partnership with 36 legislative action committees and 63 affiliated chapters within the U.S., Canada, United Arab Emirates, and South Africa. It is a global nonprofit 501(c)(6) organization.

Pandemic prompted remote workers to snatch up vacation homes

Vacation home purchases skyrocketed during 2020, with the trend continuing this year, according to a report from the National Association Realtors®. Workers with the ability to log on from anywhere are credited with spurring the surge.

"Vacation homes are a hot commodity at the moment," said Lawrence Yun, NAR's chief economist. "With many businesses and employers still extending an option to work remotely to workers, vacation housing and second homes will remain a popular choice among buyers."

In its [2021 Vacation Home Counties Report](), NAR said the share of vacation home sales to total existing-home sales increased to 5.5% in 2020 versus 5% in 2019. Sales of vacation homes jumped 16.4%, easily outpacing the 5.6% overall growth in existing-home sales.

NAR also reported the share of vacation home sales to existing-home sales rose to 6.7% from January to April 2021. Sales of homes in this category jumped 57.2% year-over-year compared to 20% YOY growth in total existing-home sales.

An analysis of top vacation home destination ranked Lee County, Florida, on top. Located in Southwest Florida on the Gulf Coast, it includes Cape Coral and Fort Meyers.

Rounding out the list of top 10 counties were: Oscoda County, Michigan; Swain County, North Carolina; Collier County, Florida; Dukes County, Massachusetts; Alleghany County, North Carolina; Garrett County, Maryland; Barnstable County, Massachusetts; Alcona County, Michigan; and Macon County, North Carolina.

NAR researchers also analyzed prices. The median existing-home sales price typically rose by 14.2% in vacation home counties, compared to 10.1% in non-vacation home counties. Notably, vacation home buyers are more likely to pay all cash.

NAR classifies a county as a vacation home county if the vacant housing for seasonal/occasional/recreational use accounted for at least 20% of the housing stock. Based on Census Bureau data for 2019, NAR identified 323 out of 3,143 counties (or about 10.3%) as vacation home counties.

NAR based its analysis on Multiple Listing Service data in 1,205 counties, survey data from the monthly REALTORS® Confidence Index Survey, and publicly available data from the US Census Bureau.

Lured by on-water living?

Calling them Seattle's quirkiest type of home, journalist Sarah Anne Lloyd wrote an "explainer" report on "aquatic residences" for *Seattle Metropolitan* magazine.

Northwest Multiple Listing Service brokers know them as "style code 24 – floating home/on-water residences." Currently the NWMLS database features only 14 such listings, with current inventory ranging from 162 to 4,850 square feet and asking prices of $147,500 to $3,950,000.

Of course, the area's most famous houseboat is thanks to Sam Baldwin, Tom Hanks's character in the 1993 romantic comedy *Sleepless in Seattle*. (It is unknown if the actual owners of that iconic home received any cut of the $227 million the still-popular film grossed!)

In her "primer," Lloyd traces some of the colorful history of the area's houseboat, which Washington law defines as including "house boats, house barges, or any floating structures that serve primarily as a residence and do not qualify as a vessel. . ." She notes these sought-after dwellings once served as "affordable housing for laborers, struggling families, and off-grid types, especially during the Great Depression."

The *Seattle Met* report explains differences between houseboats, floating homes, house barges and VDUs (vessels with dwelling units). Lloyd also lists some of the drawbacks or downsides would-be owners should consider before deciding to hop aboard.

While they seem charming to sightseers and will be featured a special floating homes tour presented by the Seattle Floating Homes Association on September 11, houseboats may not be offered as short-term rentals, according to Seattle's shoreline code.

"Sleepless in Seattle" may have created the impression that this city is a mecca for people who want a funky home that bobs in the water, this housing type is much more prevalent in other metro areas such as Amsterdam, London, and Victoria, B.C. Portland claims the largest enclave of liveaboards in the country, with more than 1,400 floating homes situated along the Columbia and Willamette rivers. New York City and Sausalito, California are other U.S. metros with large houseboat communities.

Large gap exists between what homebuyers expect to pay and actual prices

Newly-built homes are out of reach for buyers in the lower one-fourth of the market, according to an analysis of recent Census data and surveys by the National Association of Home Builder (NAHB).

With inventory of homes at historically low levels (about 2.5 months of supply nationally), and prices for new homes escalating, low-income buyers are forced to look exclusively at previously owned homes.

In its "What Home Buyers Really Want" report, NAHB reported survey respondents expect to pay a median price of about $265,000. Half said they were looking to pay $250,000 to $1 million and about 25% indicated they were looking to pay less than $150,000.

Data from the HUD/Census Bureau Survey of Construction reveals the median price of single-family homes started in 2020 and built for sale was $336,000, with the vast majority (79 percent) priced between $250,000 and $1 million. Virtually none had asking prices under $150,000.

Comparing what buyers expect to pay (a median of $264,634) with the median price of 2020 single-family starts ($336,000) reveals a gap of more than $71,000.

The situation is likely to be worse this year, according to NAHB since the median price of a new home in May 2021 jumped 18 percent from a year earlier, at $374,000.

“In addition to the 25 percent of buyers looking to pay under $150,000, it is likely that builders in many parts of the country are now unable to accommodate a substantial share of the 22 percent looking to pay somewhere between $150,000 and $250,000,” wrote Paul Emrath, Ph.D., the association’s vice president for survey and housing policy research. “The reasons are not mysterious,” he added.

Among reasons cited for the price hikes were:
Rising lumber costs. The year-over-year increase added $35,000 to the price of an average new home.
Material costs in general jumped 26 percent compared to a year ago.
Shortages of labor and materials. (The number of open construction jobs increased to 357,000 in April.)
Costs associated with regulations. NAHB estimates those expenses account for more than $93,000 of the price of an average new home.

House-hunters at the lower end of the spectrum can also expect to experience rising prices for existing homes, fueled in part by the sparse inventory leading to competitive bidding.

NAHB reported the median sales price for existing homes in May was $350,300. That’s up 23.6% from the same month a year and marked the 111th consecutive month of year-over-year increases.

Sales of newly-built homes shrink, prices still climb due to market disruptions

Sales of newly-constructed single family homes declined 5.9% during May to a seasonally adjusted annual rate of 769,000 – the lowest in a year, according to estimates from the Census Bureau. Analysts say builders slowed sales due to higher material costs and declining availability of labor, material and lots.

Despite fewer sales, prices are escalating.

The median price of a newly-built home that sold in May was $374,400. That is 18% higher than a year ago, according to the National Association of Home Builders. Rising lumber costs alone added an estimated $36,000 on average, to the cost of a new home.

Robert Dietz, chief economist and senior vice president for economics and housing policy for NAHB, said residential demand continues to be supported by low interest rates, a renewed consumer focus on the importance of housing, and solid demand in lower-density markets like suburbs and exurbs.

General unpredictability in the residential construction supply-chain is having measurable impacts on new home prices, according to NAHB.

Higher costs are pricing out buyers, particularly at the lower end of the market. While 44% of new home sales were priced below $300,000 a year ago, only 26% of May 2021 sales were under that threshold.

Bellevue celebrated as one of 10 All-America Cities

Bellevue was among 10 cities nationwide to be honored with this year's prestigious All-America City Award. Cities, counties, tribes, neighborhoods, villages, towns, and regions that engage residents in innovative, inclusive and effective efforts to tackle critical local challenges are eligible for consideration.

Doug Linkhart, the National Civic League's president, said this year's 20 finalists managed the compounding difficulties of the past year, all while building equity and resilience. "Their accomplishments are a testament to what can be achieved when government, residents, businesses and other stakeholders collaborate."

This year's theme focused on building equitable and resilient communities. The celebration was held virtually in June with workshops, panel discussions, receptions, networking opportunities, and presentations by civic leaders and national thought-leaders.

"We are honored to receive this award on behalf of a city that addresses community needs together with resilience and equity, even in the midst of new and unprecedented challenges, said Mayor Lynne Robinson.

In its application, Bellevue outlined some of the city's strategic initiatives to become a more equitable community and to meet the profound needs during the pandemic. Applicants acknowledged struggles with the pains of tremendous growth, including a lack of affordable housing, increasing homelessness, and the struggle seniors to afford "aging in place." Also noted were concerns about environmental sustainability and a diminished sense of community.

Bellevue highlighted projects that aligned with the theme of using inclusive civic engagement to address issues and reflect collaborative efforts to mitigate the growing pains. Three initiatives cited were:

- Inspirational Playground, a concept proposed by the Bellevue Breakfast Rotary Club to create an inclusive playground designed for children of all abilities. Led by Rotarians, a multi-year community-wide fundraising campaign involving 25 organizations and numerous individual donors enabled the $4.5 million project.
- Diversity Advantage Initiative, a city-community collaboration to create specific recommendations around the areas of cultural competence within both groups.

- Jubilee REACH and the community's redirected efforts during the pandemic to become an essential service in support of the most vulnerable segments of the population.

Joining Bellevue as a 2021 All-America City Award recipient were Carlisle, Pennsylvania; El Paso, Texas; Evanston, Illinois, Fort Wayne, Indiana; Kansas City, Missouri; Livermore, California; Miramar, Florida; Morrisville, North Carolina; and Wheat Ridge, Colorado.

The award, first presented in 1949, recognizes communities that leverage civic engagement, collaboration, inclusiveness and innovation to successfully address local issues and create stronger connections among residents, businesses, and nonprofit and government leaders.

This year marked the second time Bellevue, the state's fifth largest city, has been honored. The first year dates to 1955, two years after Bellevue incorporated with a population of 5,950, and the same year voters approved bonds to build schools, parks, and a water system.

According to past recipients and the National Civic League, the benefits of winning the award include economic stimulus (attracting and retaining job-generating businesses), community pride, community collaboration (in part through the application process itself), and national recognition. Once a community wins, it retains its status as an All-America City.

The 2022 All-America City Awards, scheduled for July 18-22, will focus on "Housing as a Platform for Equitable Learning Recovery."

News In Brief

- With coastal states like Florida, North Carolina and Maine among the most popular places people relocated to last year, **the personal-finance website WalletHub today released its report on 2021's Best Beach Towns to Live in, as well as accompanying videos**. To determine the most livable beachside communities, WalletHub compared 191 cities across 62 key metrics. The data set ranges from housing costs to share of for-sale waterfront homes to quality of beach water.

  Our study divides beach towns into two categories, those by the ocean and those by lakes.

Top 10 Ocean Beach Towns

1. Naples, FL
2. Laguna Beach, CA
3. Lahaina, HI
4. Newport Beach, CA
5. North Myrtle Beach, SC
6. Sarasota, FL
7. Kailua, HI

Top 10 Lake Beach Towns

1. Traverse City, MI
2. Folsom, CA
3. **Redmond, WA**
4. **Mercer Island, WA**
5. Cornelius, NC
6. Davidson, NC
7. **Kirkland, WA**

8. Boca Raton, FL
9. Destin, FL
10. Santa Monica, CA

8. South Lake Tahoe, CA
9. Highland Park, IL
10. Brookfield, WI

- **Seattle's moratorium on evictions has been extended until Sept. 30**, Mayor Jenny Durkan announced recently. The moratorium originally was scheduled to end on June 30, leading many to fear that mass evictions would follow for many tenants who are unable to pay rent as the economy just begins to recover from the ravages of the COVID pandemic. A census survey indicates about 8% of renters statewide and 9% in the Seattle area are behind on rent. That's more than 80,000 people in the Greater Seattle area who are in trouble. The extension of the moratorium is bound to be painful news for many landlords, who say it's time to end the moratorium and that there's been plenty of help for tenants which includes about $900 million in rental assistance, according to the Rental Housing Association.

- **President Joe Biden signed legislation establishing a new federal holiday commemorating the end of slavery – a move state lawmakers made for Washington state earlier this year.** Washington Gov. Jay Inslee last month signed a measure making Juneteenth a legal state paid holiday, starting in 2022. In 2007, the Legislature had designated Juneteenth as a day of remembrance. Juneteenth commemorates June 19, 1865, when Union soldiers brought the news of freedom to enslaved Black people in Galveston, Texas — two months after the Confederacy had surrendered. That was also about 2 1/2 years after the Emancipation Proclamation freed slaves in the Southern states. It's the first new federal holiday since Martin Luther King Jr. Day was created in 1983.

- **The Level the Field Tournament hosted by the Sequim Association of Realtors will be held at The Cedars at Dungeness on July 23.** Funds from the four-person scramble tournament will go toward students in need of financial assistance to fund extracurricular activities. Registration will open at 11:30 a.m. with a 1 p.m. shotgun start. A dinner and auction will follow play. The cost is $100 per player. For more information, email Garrett Smithson at garrett.smithson@caliberhomeloans.com or call/text 360-477-2718.

- **Insurance companies in Washington state can no longer use credit scores to calculate rates for home, auto and renters insurance policies.** Washington Insurance Commissioner Mike Kreidler issued an emergency rule back in March, asking the state Legislature to ban insurers' use of credit scores when determining how much you pay for personal insurance. This new rule took effect on June 20 for new and existing policies. According to AAA Washington, people with low credit scores will celebrate a rate drop, and consumers with high credit scores should prepare for a rate increase. Senior citizens should expect to pay at least 20% more. Commissioner Kreidler says companies should rely on risk factors that matter, such as how safely you drive and how well you maintain your property to determine costs. If you do have a rate increase, they recommend you sign up for your insurance company's usage based insurance, or bundle your home, auto and other policies under one company to get the best deal.

- **The Evergreen State has just been ranked the 7th most fun state in the country, by the personal finance website WalletHub.** They compared each state across 26 metrics. Here's how Washington ranked:

  · 11th in restaurants per capita
  · 8th in movie theaters per capita
  · 30th in golf courses and country clubs per capita
  · 9th in performing arts theaters per capita
  · 12th in fitness centers per capita
  · 19th in access to national parks
  · 9th in casinos per capita
  · 25th in variety of arts, entertainment and recreation establishments

Calendar of Events

DATES	EVENT	TIME	LOCATION	CONTACT
7/5	Holiday – Office Closed			425-974-1011
7/8	Affiliate Council	9 a.m. - 10 p.m.	Zoom	425-974-1011
7/14		9:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.	SKCR	425-974-1011
8/3	Gov't. Affairs Committee	10:30 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.	SKCR	425-974-1011

SEATTLE *King County* **REALTORS®**