



# NW REporter

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## Northwest MLS brokers see signs of busy spring market despite slow January

KIRKLAND, Washington (February 7, 2022) – A frigid first week of January, surges in coronavirus cases, and depleted inventory were among factors brokers from Northwest Multiple Listing Service cited for last month's slower than year-ago sales.

In newly released statistics for January, the MLS reported 6,350 pending sales of single family homes and condominiums during January, about 1,000 fewer the same month a year ago for a drop of 14%. The year-over-year (YOY) number of closed sales also fell, dropping from 5,896 completed transactions to 5,085 for a decline of nearly 13.8%).

“When there's uncertainty, the default position for most sellers is to stay put, do nothing, and hunker down,” suggested Mike Larson, managing broker at Compass Tacoma. He said many things are contributing to sellers' reluctance to put their homes on the market, “most notably, COVID, inflation, the economy, the holidays, and finding a replacement property. Security and certainty are more important than cashing in on record amounts of equity.”

Broker-members added 5,927 new listings during January, nearly 1,000 fewer than the same month a year ago, but an improvement on December's volume of 4,617. Only five counties reported YOY gains in new listings.

Last month's pending sales outgained new listings to further shrink inventory. At month end the selection included a meager 3,092 active listings, down more than 30% from a year ago. There is about 2.5 weeks of supply (0.61 months) across the 26 counties served by Northwest MLS.

King County had the steepest drop in active listings, shrinking nearly 59% from a year ago, followed by Jefferson County, down 40%, and Snohomish County, down more than 35%.

A comparison of counties in the listing service report shows only about half of them have more than one month of supply, and these areas tend to be in more rural areas. King, Pierce, and Snohomish counties all have less than two weeks of supply. Kitsap County is slightly better with 0.58 months.

“The year started off with more of a whimper than a boom thanks to listing inventory in King, Pierce, and Snohomish counties being lower than any January on record,” observed Matthew Gardner, chief economist at Windermere Real Estate.

“The market remains virtually sold out, and there is a significant backlog of buyers looking for a home to purchase,” reported J. Lennox Scott, chairman and CEO of John L. Scott Real Estate. With higher mortgage rates expected, he said buyers are more anxious to get a home, even during the inventory shortage.

“Given the market conditions, nearly all homes are going under contract within a week of being listed, and multiple offers are commonplace in price ranges where there is a shortage of available homes for sale,” added Scott.

Meredith Hansen, founder and operating principal at Keller Williams Greater Seattle and a member of the Northwest MLS board of directors, agreed saying, “The market in Seattle continues to be extremely competitive with multiple offers and prices escalating. The imminent rise in interest rates has buyers scrambling to find properties to buy.”

Larson, also a director at NWMLS, emphasized rates are still historically low. Expected increases “may be spooking some buyers, but it’s also getting others off the fence.”

“Strong activity along the I-5 and I-90 corridors outside of the Seattle area continues with strong double-digit price increases being recorded,” noted James Young, director of the Washington Center for Real Estate Research at the University of Washington. He expects strong demand and a search for value outside of Seattle will continue to push up values.

Last month’s prices were up nearly 14.9% from a year ago, climbing from \$483,250 to \$555,000. Five counties reported price gains of 30% or more, led by Okanogan at 46.3%. Other counties with price increases of at least 30% were Chelan, Kittitas, Pacific, and San Juan.

Condominium prices surged nearly 21% area-wide, rising from \$359,950 to \$435,000, while the number of new listings, active listings, pending sales and closed sales all declined from the same month last year.

Young said the combined price trend and activity levels suggest suburban growth should continue for a while longer as households seek lower costs and a more home-based lifestyle.

“The market is crazy,” exclaimed Dick Beeson, managing broker at RE/MAX Northwest Realtors. “We’ve been experiencing huge increases in median sales prices and a continued lowering of the number of days homes are on the market. The massive reduction in inventory has led to fewer pending sales and super-charged prices. Many properties have literally gained 40%-to-50% appreciation in just the last two years or so – a rate of increase no one can comfortably live with.”

Kitsap County was one of the few areas with YOY gains in new listings (up 22.3%) and only single-digit changes in active listings (-6.4%), pending sales (+8.4%) and closed sales (-2.14%). However, like nearly all the counties in the MLS report, prices jumped by double digits (up 20.8%).

“New construction in Kitsap County is roaring ahead to meet buyer and renter demands,” stated NWMLS director Frank Leach, broker/owner at RE/MAX Platinum Services. “We are seeing unprecedented construction in all areas of the county in both the residential and commercial arenas. There are more than 670 rental units currently being built in Bremerton and Silverdale alone and building permit activity at the county is at an all-time high at 3,321 units.”

Leach said available inventory is being snatched up quickly in a rush to take advantage of low interest rates. He also said they are not expecting a flood of inventory coming from foreclosures in part because of the 12%-to-18% increase in equity over the last 12 months. “Forbearance across the U.S. is below 800,000 units, down from over 4.5 million in 2020,” he noted, citing several sources.

Despite the slow start in sales and persistent shortages of inventory, the MLS brokers expect robust activity during 2022.

“The market dipped slightly in January, mainly due to weather and concerns over the latest pandemic variant, but the general feeling is that it’s going to be a good year,” said John Deely, executive vice president of operations at Coldwell Banker Bain. Commenting on last year’s record-setting volume of closings, he believes “rate increases during 2022 combined with the sunset of the pandemic will bring more sellers to the market.”

“People waiting longer to sell their home should not expect the same steep price increases we were seeing in 2021,” Deely said, adding, “An influx of people coming to the market and a decrease in the buyer pool due to interest rates going up should help to keep prices level.”

Dean Rebhuhn, owner of Village Homes and Properties, said rising mortgage rates and the addition of inventory as spring arrives should bring more opportunities for buyers. “I see no buyer hesitation caused by rising interest rates,” he commented, adding, “Many buyers are considering homes farther north, south and east with more affordable prices and more selection. Hybrid work-from-home conditions are allowing more flexibility for buyers. Job demand and lifestyle choices continue to drive sales.”

Also commenting on the outlook for 2022 was economist Gardner. “One of the biggest questions for 2022 is how the market will be further impacted by the work-from-home paradigm given that many companies have postponed their long-term WFH plans. This is likely holding back sellers during a time when we desperately need additional inventory, as well as buyers who are concerned about rising mortgage rates.”

Gardner said he expects more sellers will list their homes and more buyers will start their searches once they know how often they need to commute to work, and this may lead to a busier spring market than expected.

Beeson believes there will not be any substantive market changes, come spring, “except for higher interest rates. That may be. But someone please explain that to a desperate buyer willing to pay more, accept less, and be glad they did.”

Leach is optimistic of upticks in activity, dismissing suggestions of a “bubble,” saying “We don’t see that happening in Kitsap or in the Pacific Northwest.” He also advises against postponing purchasing. “If you think you are saving money by waiting, you should run the numbers. Economists and pundits in real

estate all say buy now. The anticipated increase in equity across the next two-to-four years will be astonishing.”

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](http://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	2,083	761	2,009	1,557	\$892,935	\$720,000	0.49	0.92
Snohomish	867	241	901	734	\$747,134	\$686,792	0.33	0.41
Pierce	975	404	1,148	863	\$554,686	\$515,000	0.47	0.51
Kitsap	334	160	347	274	\$583,528	\$506,250	0.58	0.61
Mason	69	64	84	85	\$399,006	\$400,000	0.75	0.62
Skagit	127	95	121	108	\$589,883	\$529,325	0.88	0.80
Grays Harbor	125	167	135	103	\$374,328	\$335,350	1.62	0.81
Lewis	103	94	104	92	\$414,924	\$375,000	1.02	1.18
Cowlitz	95	60	131	84	\$368,534	\$359,250	0.71	0.45
Grant	99	118	116	78	\$362,555	\$325,000	1.51	1.16
Thurston	304	130	368	345	\$491,415	\$475,000	0.38	0.42
San Juan	12	44	15	21	\$1,275,506	\$821,000	2.10	2.03
Island	105	46	120	101	\$657,606	\$518,000	0.46	0.56
Kittitas	30	45	47	66	\$638,003	\$517,225	0.68	0.90
Jefferson	26	31	28	24	\$608,663	\$545,000	1.29	1.53
Okanogan	17	67	31	31	\$399,303	\$365,000	2.16	3.08
Whatcom	200	150	224	195	\$562,306	\$530,000	0.77	1.08
Clark	68	26	78	46	\$546,729	\$499,475	0.57	0.69
Pacific	50	50	61	35	\$331,013	\$330,000	1.43	1.44
Ferry	6	23	2	4	\$324,975	\$162,500	5.75	5.25
Clallam	64	63	65	67	\$471,569	\$431,000	0.94	0.83
Chelan	44	77	64	48	\$678,650	\$607,500	1.60	1.16
Douglas	34	32	38	24	\$514,977	\$441,000	1.33	0.94
Adams	9	21	12	9	\$196,993	\$165,000	2.33	0.83
Walla Walla	42	49	47	46	\$374,905	\$354,500	1.07	0.83
Columbia	2	8	4	3	\$202,000	\$194,000	2.67	1.00
Others	37	66	50	42	\$417,474	\$412,500	1.57	1.84
<b>Total</b>	<b>5,927</b>	<b>3,092</b>	<b>6,350</b>	<b>5,085</b>	<b>\$669,434</b>	<b>\$555,000</b>	<b>0.61</b>	<b>0.75</b>

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

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

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>2003</b>	4746	5290	6889	6837	7148	7202	7673	7135	6698	6552	4904	4454
<b>2004</b>	4521	6284	8073	7910	7888	8186	7583	7464	6984	6761	6228	5195
<b>2005</b>	5426	6833	8801	8420	8610	8896	8207	8784	7561	7157	6188	4837
<b>2006</b>	5275	6032	8174	7651	8411	8094	7121	7692	6216	6403	5292	4346
<b>2007</b>	4869	6239	7192	6974	7311	6876	6371	5580	4153	4447	3896	2975
<b>2008</b>	3291	4167	4520	4624	4526	4765	4580	4584	4445	3346	2841	2432
<b>2009</b>	3250	3407	4262	5372	5498	5963	5551	5764	5825	5702	3829	3440
<b>2010</b>	4381	5211	6821	7368	4058	4239	4306	4520	4350	4376	3938	3474
<b>2011</b>	4272	4767	6049	5732	5963	5868	5657	5944	5299	5384	4814	4197
<b>2012</b>	4921	6069	7386	7015	7295	6733	6489	6341	5871	6453	5188	4181
<b>2013</b>	5548	6095	7400	7462	7743	7374	7264	6916	5951	6222	5083	3957
<b>2014</b>	5406	5587	7099	7325	8055	7546	7169	6959	6661	6469	5220	4410
<b>2015</b>	5791	6541	8648	8671	8620	8608	8248	7792	7179	6977	5703	4475
<b>2016</b>	5420	6703	8130	8332	9153	8869	8545	8628	7729	7487	6115	4727
<b>2017</b>	5710	6024	7592	7621	9188	9042	8514	8637	7441	7740	6094	4460
<b>2018</b>	5484	5725	7373	7565	8742	8052	7612	6893	6235	6367	5328	4037
<b>2019</b>	5472	4910	7588	8090	8597	8231	7773	7345	6896	6797	5788	4183
<b>2020</b>	5352	6078	6477	5066	7297	8335	8817	9179	8606	7934	6122	4851
<b>2021</b>	5216	5600	8002	7716	8674	8824	8049	8586	7880	7405	6022	3943
<b>2022</b>	4405											

# Northwest MLS brokers tally 107,354 sales during 2021 valued at more than \$75 billion

Northwest Multiple Listing Service member-brokers reported 107,354 closed sales during 2021. That marked the first time the annual sales volume surpassed 100,000 transactions. Last year's completed sales were valued at more than \$75 billion, eclipsing 2020's figure by nearly \$18.9 billion for a year-over-year (YOY) gain of almost 33.6%.

Sales of residential (single family) homes and condominiums during 2021 outgained 2020 by 11,594 transactions for a 12.1% increase. Of the total completed sales, around 86% (92,713) were single family homes and the remaining 14% (14,641) were condominiums.

The activity in the Northwest MLS report reflects the work of more than 36,000 brokers in 26 counties. Collectively, these counties encompass more than 83% of the state's population.

Last year's robust sales came despite record low inventory. No month had more than a month of supply. In general, industry analysts define a balanced market as having 4-to-6 months of inventory. A check of Northwest MLS records shows the last time there was at least four months of inventory was in February 2014.

Further evidence of a seller's market is indicated by the ratio of listing (or asking) price to sales price. For last year's sales, buyers found themselves in competitive bidding situations, often paying above asking price. Overall, buyers paid an average of 104.7% of the listing price. Buyers of homes in King County paid 106.6%, followed by purchasers in Snohomish County who paid 106%.

The area-wide median price for last year's sales of single family homes and condominiums (combined) was \$565,000, a (YOY) jump of nearly 19% from 2020's figure of \$475,000. All but two counties reported double-digit price gains in 2021 compared to 2020.

Prices for single family homes (excluding condominiums) increased 20.4% system-wide, jumping \$100,000, from \$490,000 in 2020 to last year's median sales price of \$590,000. A comparison of counties shows San Juan County with the highest median price for single family homes at \$860,000. That's up 26.8% from the 2020 figure of \$678,000. Not far behind was King County where the median sales price was \$828,111. Prices there rose 14.2% from 2020.

Ferry County had the lowest median selling price at \$230,000, but on a percentage basis prices surged 42.4%, surpassing all other counties.

Condo prices area-wide rose 11.8%, from \$380,000 in 2020 to \$425,000 for last year's sales. In King County, which accounted for about six of every 10 condo sales (59%), the median price was \$459,000, up a modest 6.7% from 2020.

Inventory was sparse throughout the year as brokers scrambled to replenish supply. Brokers logged 121,025 pending sales (mutually accepted offers) during 2021, while adding 117,948 new listings. At the start of 2021 there was 0.75 months of inventory but as the year closed supply dwindled to 0.40 months (about 12 days), keeping sellers in the more favorable position.

A comparison of property types shows depleted selection for both single family homes and condominiums. Based on a monthly average, last year's buyers looking for single family homes (excluding condos) could choose from 4,666 listings. That was 2,389 fewer per month than averages for the previous year, a drop of nearly 34%.

Condo seekers fared even worse. On average, there were just 998 condos offered for sale each month during 2021. The year before, condo shoppers could choose from a monthly average of 1,611, or 613 more units per month.

Tight supply contributed to escalating prices.

MLS members reported 14,614 sales of single family homes priced at \$1 million or more during 2021. That was a whopping 75.8% more than 2020's total of 6,301 million-dollar-plus sales.

High-end condo sales were up 51.5% YOY. Last year, brokers reported 5,381 sales of condos priced at \$500,000 or higher. In 2020, they sold 1,828 such properties.

Of the luxury home sales, 174 fetched \$5 million or more. Topping that list was a gated estate in Seattle with 161 feet of Lake Washington waterfront that sold for \$30,750,000. Three other homes – all on the Eastside -- commanded prices of more than \$20 million.

Twenty-one condos had sales prices upward of \$3 million, including three that sold for more than \$6 million. The most expensive among these was a top floor penthouse at Escala in downtown Seattle that sold for \$7 million. Another penthouse at the same high-rise building had a selling price of \$6,625,000, while a condo on Kirkland's waterfront drew a buyer who paid \$6.5 million.

Less than 6% of last year's sales of single family homes system-wide sold for less than \$300,000. About half (48.8%) had sales prices between \$500,000 and \$1 million dollars.

Almost two-thirds of condos (63.1%) sold for a half-million dollars or less.

Sales Prices	SFH	Condo
<\$299,999	5.92%	20.66%
\$300,000 to \$499,999	29.41%	42.44%
\$500,000 to \$749,999	32.96%	22.86%
\$750,000 to \$999,999	15.81%	8.73%
\$1,000,000 to \$2,499,999	14.39%	5.03%
\$2,500,000 & higher	1.51%	0.27%
TOTALS	100.00%	100.00%

Of last year's sales 12,203 units, or about 11.5%, were new construction. Those new homes included 10,857 single family homes that sold for a median price of \$659,000, and 1,346 newly built condos that had a median sales price of \$701,365.

Among other highlights in its annual compilation of statistics, Northwest Multiple Listing Service reported:

- Brokers added 117,948 new listings during the year, up 6.6% from the previous year's total of 110,599. June was the busiest month for replenishing inventory; brokers added 13,111 new homes and condos during that month.
- Pending sales totaled 121,025 for the year for a slight improvement (about 2%) from 2020 when there were 118,607 mutually accepted offers.
- Ten counties ended 2021 with double- or triple-digit gains in closed sales.
- The median price for a 3-bedroom home ranged from \$239,900 in Ferry County to \$836,550 in San Juan County.

- Prices vary widely when comparing school districts in the MLS service area. In six districts, the median sales price for single family homes was \$1 million or higher, led by Mercer Island at \$2,222,500. Also in this seven-figure segment were three districts in King County: Bellevue, Issaquah and Lake Washington, along with school districts in Bainbridge Island in Kitsap County and Lopez Island in San Juan County.
- *Average* prices for single family homes (excluding condos) in the tri-county areas of King, Pierce and Snohomish have skyrocketed since 1991:
  - From 1991 to 2001 prices rose 88.8% in King County, 57% in Snohomish County and 32.3% in Pierce County.
  - From 2001 to 2011 prices increased 31.2% in King County, 16.2% in Snohomish County and 23.5% in Pierce County.
  - From 2011 to 2021 prices surged 249% in King County, 274% in Snohomish County and 258% in Pierce County.
- A closer look at 8,580 condo sales within six “sub areas” of King County (where nearly 60% of all condo sales were located) shows Seattle accounted for 3,373 of them (about 39%), followed by the Eastside with 36%. The priciest condos, with a median sales price of \$550,000, are on the Eastside, followed by Seattle (\$495,000). Head south for more affordably priced condos. In the Southwest part of King County, the median sales price was \$280,000, followed by the Southeast segment at \$340,000.

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Tri-county comparison of average prices since 1990.  
Includes single family homes and condominiums

Year	King	Snohomish	Pierce
1991	169,033	144,063	132,540
2001	295,240	222,077	174,536
2011	392,185	253,364	213,466
2021	943,739	697,892	546,318

## Helping turn home searchers in homeowners

Aspiring homeowners say their number one hurdle is the down payment. Down Payment Resource (DPR), an online service that is directly integrated into the Northwest Multiple Listing Service Matrix system and client portal, provides a list of potential financial programs available for specific listings.

DPR tracks and monitors homebuyer assistance programs to bring hard-to-find programs to the forefront. Northwest MLS has partnered with DPR to bring the latest information about these programs to help “turn home searchers in homeowners.”



The company monitors around 2,500 programs across the country, including 80 or so from 40 different housing agencies across Washington state. They estimate 75% of all active residential listings in the MLS database are eligible for at least one, if not many, of the available programs. (Northwest MLS member-subscribers can learn more and view an introductory webinar via a link on the MLS website.)

Looking back on 2021, DPR identified its most popular blog posts. They believe these posts reflect a continuing desire for homeownership, even during a pandemic as buyers look for alternatives and guidance in a tight market.

The five leading topics were:

1. [Is down payment assistance for everyone?](#)

The buyer *and* the property must meet certain criteria. Homebuyers are advised to invest time to [investigate the options](#) for their personal situation.

2. [You don't need 20 percent down to buy a new home. Here's why.](#)

Potential buyers need to know there are alternatives to putting 20% down. Low down payment loans and a variety of homeownership programs, such as grants, forgivable loans, below-market first mortgages, tax credits and others are [available across the country](#).

3. [Manufactured homes, plus down payment assistance, could be an affordable housing solution.](#)

Manufactured homes could be an affordable option for first-time buyers. There's been an increase in the number of financing programs for these purchasers.

4. [6 Steps for buyers competing in a tight market](#)

Competing in a tight market is especially challenging for first-time buyers. DPR outlines six ideas to help give newbies an edge.

5. [Four New Year steps for every renter](#)

The path to homeownership can be smoother and less stressful by following four easy steps, including taking advantage of financial literacy and education offerings.

# Microsoft issues progress report on year 3 of multimillion dollar housing initiative

Three years after launching an affordable housing initiative, Microsoft estimates 9,200 affordable housing units are being preserved or produced.

In the same [update report](#), the Redmond-based company said it would increase investments in land acquisition, utilize a new financing approach to acquire existing housing for conversion to middle-income housing, and provide cash grants and loans to support the regional homelessness response.

Microsoft is focusing on rentals, saying they are currently not addressing the challenges for people trying to buy homes. They also noted the COVID-19 pandemic “has exacerbated an already serious crisis of homelessness and income inequality.”

Since launching its housing initiative in January 2019, Microsoft has upped its investment from \$500 million to \$750 million, with around \$583 already disbursed. That figure includes \$73 million in affordable housing investments and grants.

Addressing housing security is another part of its philanthropy. Its support of United Way King County has meant some 19,000 households have been able to avoid eviction, thanks in part to rental assistance. (United Way’s research indicates 175,000 to 200,000 households in Washington are behind on rent and at risk of homelessness because of COVID-19.)

The company noted it has also joined with other employers in lobbying for housing-related policies to facilitate more construction. According to Microsoft’s data science team, for the period 2011 to 2020, the number of jobs grew 30% while housing’s growth was only 19%.

“Improving the housing outlook for all Washingtonians will require a comprehensive statewide strategy of strategic investments and innovative public policies to dramatically increase the number of housing units available at all levels of affordability,” stated Irene Plenefisch, Microsoft’s government affairs director, in a company blog.

In its update, Microsoft detailed how the \$583 million of expenditures to date have been allocated among three areas of focus: homeless, low-income, and middle-income.

“To make a difference at the scale our region requires, we need more innovative financing tools that encourage market investment in the type of housing in greatest demand – and then pairing these resources with bold policy changes at the state and municipal levels that help to address our region’s growing population,” the company stated.

In an effort to address the gap in funding for middle-income housing, Microsoft announced it was pioneering what it calls the Middle-Income Tax-Exempt Mezzanine program (MIT-E-Mezz), designed to help create and preserve existing middle-income housing. It is based on attracting new private investment and no public funding or capital investment from non-profit organizations or housing authorities.

“We hope the strategy will attract both traditional and new investors looking for steady investment returns with lower risk and positive community impact,” noted Jane Broom, senior director of Microsoft Philanthropies.

The need for housing across income levels is not only growing, it is also becoming harder to solve, Broom stated, citing the region’s fiercely competitive markets for acquiring land and real estate as a big challenge.

To illustrate the need, Microsoft developed interactive research based on housing costs and the gap in income for teachers, nurses, and first responders. A middle school teacher earning \$76,000 falls well short of the estimated \$131,000 needed to buy a home.

“If you don’t provide housing further up the housing ladder, you’re not going to be able to solve the issue of homelessness,” said James Young, director of the Washington Center for Real Estate Research at the UW. Working on the supply side “is definitely the way to go,” he believes.

Along with innovative financing and public policies that encourage affordability and housing development, Microsoft said the complex issue of homelessness must be addressed. It believes people living unsheltered is a humanitarian crisis for the Puget Sound region. A coordinated, regional approach to homelessness is essential, the company emphasized.

“The challenges ahead are significant,” Broom acknowledged, adding, the “combination of strategic investment and well-designed public policy will provide benefits to Washingtonians today and for years to come.”

## Interest in newly-built homes is shrinking

Low inventory and rising costs are contributing to a steady decline in interest for new construction, according to the latest Housing Trends Report from the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB).

By the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter of 2020 (after the start of the pandemic) 42% of buyers were looking to purchase a newly-built home. That marked a sharp increase from the first quarter of 2018 when only 15% indicated they were looking for new construction. With double-digit gains in new home prices, interest declined for four straight quarters, dropping to 25% in Q421. Those who were ambivalent between new or existing jumped from 27% in Q420 to 39% in Q421.

A comparison by region shows the share of buyers who would prefer a newly-built home declined in every region from Q321 to Q421.

Among generations, the share of Millennial and Gen X buyers who prefer a new home was nearly halved, dropping from 50% to 28% for Millennials and from 48% to 24% for Gen X shoppers.

Asked about their availability expectations, only 16% of home buyers in Q118 expected that finding a home would be easier in the months ahead. In the early phase of the pandemic it soared to 36% (Q420), but then declined throughout 2021. By Q421, on 24% thought finding a home would be easier in the forthcoming months.

Buyers' affordability expectations also worsened throughout 2021. By Q421, after rising all year, the share of buyers who said they could afford *less than half* the homes in their markets reached 76%, up from the year earlier figure of 63%.

Rising home prices are discouraging a growing share of prospective buyers from engaging in the purchase process. Until Q221, the share of potential buyers actively trying to find a home grew steadily for six straight quarters, peaking at 61%. It fell to 57% in Q321 and dropped again in Q421, to 52%. All regions reported declines, with the largest plunge occurring in the South, where it fell from 51% to 42%.

The survey also showed active buyers are spending longer periods of time searching. In Q118, slightly more than half (52%) had spent 3+ months house hunting; by Q421, it grew to two-thirds (67%).

When buyers who had searched for 3+ months were asked to cite reasons why they had not been successful, the inability to find an affordably-priced home was the most common reason, listed by 41% of would-be buyers. That was followed by an inability to find a home with desirable features (39%). Nearly as many (35%) said their lack of success was because other buyers outbid them.

The Housing Trends Report is based on research conducted for NAHB by Morning Consult, a global firm that surveys an estimated 6,000 U.S. consumers every day. The builder association measures prospective home buyers' perceptions about the availability and affordability of homes for-sale in their markets every quarter.

## Turning trash into treasure with no strings attached

Instead of sending usable items to a landfill, why not share them with neighbors who will give them a new home? That's the idea behind [freecycle.org](https://www.freecycle.org), a grassroots network in more than 5,300 towns in 110 countries. Combined, there are nearly 10 million members, including several thousand in [Seattle](#) and vicinity.



The nonprofit movement started in 2003 in Tucson, Arizona by an individual who wanted to “keep good stuff out of landfill” and instead see it reused.

[Membership](#) is free, and everything posted must be FREE, legal and appropriate for all ages. Local towns are moderated by volunteers.

According to its website, the mission of Freecycle is “to build a worldwide sharing movement that reduces waste, saves precious resources and eases the burden on our landfills while enabling our members to benefit from the strength of a larger community.” The website includes a website with FAQs, how-to articles and links to articles on solving common problems.

Members of The Freecycle Network™ give freely and help instill a sense of generosity of spirit while strengthening local community ties and promoting environmental sustainability and reuse. Groups are formed locally so items can be exchanged within a short distance. The “winner” is usually the person who is quickest to respond or offers the best reason for needing a given item.

Members may also post about items they need.

Founder Deron Beal, who serves as executive director, estimates about 1,000 tons of items change hands via the Freecycle system every day. Although that is tiny when compared to 2 billion tons of waste the World Bank estimates is generated worldwide every year, fans believe it is one way individuals can make a difference.

Freecycle’s founder is trying to expand the platform to facilitate lending items through a “Friends Circle.” In an interview with Bloomberg’s Climate Report, he used an example of a drill. On average it is only used for 15 minutes of its lifetime, he suggested, adding it makes sense for households to share one.

“You can lend out your whole house on Airbnb, you can lend out your car – all for a fee – but no one has cracked the nut on how to lend out small items,” Beal told the writer.

Freecycle is a registered 501(c)3 with two full-time staffers. Its server and operating expenses are funded by grants, [underwriting/sponsorships](#), ad royalties, and individual [donations](#).

# Rampathon program accepting applications for free ramps until March 4



Families struggling with mobility at their homes and nonprofit organizations whose clients have mobility challenges are invited to submit applications for this year's [Rampathon<sup>SM</sup>](#) building project. Volunteers from the Master Builders Association of King and Snohomish Counties (MBAKS) will build free wheelchair access ramps at selected sites.

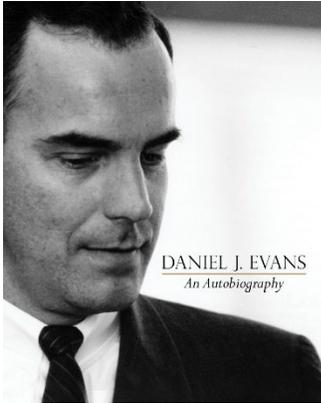
[Applications](#), which must include photos or a video of the location where the ramp is to be constructed, are due by 4 pm on March 4 and may be submitted online or by mail.

This year's Rampathon is scheduled for Saturday, May 21.

Since 1993, MBAKS members and community volunteers have built more than 500 ramps throughout King and Snohomish counties, giving people the freedom of movement.

## Autobiography of Washington's 16th governor debuts; self-styled conservative also known for liberal policies

One of Washington's most respected politicians, Daniel J. Evans, has written his long-awaited autobiography. His "90 years of memories," as he describes it, just became available for purchase at the Secretary of State's [website](#).



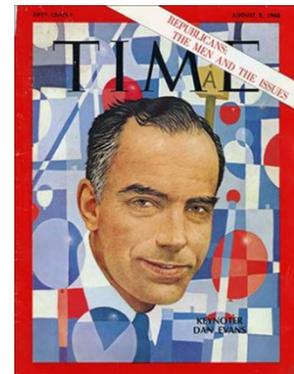
The Seattle native and University of Washington alumnus is distinguished by his service in many positions, notably as the state's first three-term governor and as a U.S. Senator. Now 96, his only election defeat occurred at Roosevelt High School where he lost a bid to be junior class president.

Evans became Washington's youngest governor in 1964 at age 39, but the statesman's career in politics started in 1957 upon his election to the Washington House of Representatives from the 43<sup>rd</sup> district. Although he concluded his service as an elected official in January 1989, he has remained active in the community as a consultant and member of numerous boards.

In his book, reflecting on the shooting death of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. while he was governor, Evans writes: "Thinking about my wife and our three young sons, I seriously considered whether it was worth continuing to face the turmoil and danger of political office. As I weighed Dr. King's bravery and my commitment to public service, I realized that danger was part of the job, and that I was probably at greater risk traveling the freeway than facing an attacker."

At an event to commemorate his 95<sup>th</sup> birthday, Evans was honored for his achievements on many fronts, from creating wilderness areas and the state's community college system to welcoming Vietnamese war refugees to the state and "standing against a rancid partisan divide." In between his stints as governor and senator, he served as the second president of The Evergreen State College (1977-1983).

Evans was featured on the cover of *Time* magazine in August 1968 after being chosen to give the keynote address at the Republican National Convention, in part "to represent a new and dynamic face of the Republican Party," according to HistoryLink. *The Seattle Times* described his speech as "an articulate call for change," and one that remains relevant more than 50 years later.



Before embarking on his political career, the state's 16<sup>th</sup> governor served in the United States Navy after high school, from 1943-1946 and 1951-1953. In between, he attended UW, graduating in 1948 with degrees in civil engineering.

Both Evans and his wife, Nancy Bell Evans, are known as tireless civic volunteers. She has been a founder and/or leader of numerous organizations, including Friends of Cancer Lifeline, Planned Parenthood of Olympia, First Ladies' Mental Health Month, and the Governor's Mansion Foundation. Also notable are the couple's commitments to the arts and higher education.

Dan and Nancy Evans, the parents of three sons, are the recipients of several awards for their community service. In 2003, they were honored as the Seattle-King County First Citizens.

Nancy Evans is the subject of a book by John C. Hughes titled *Nancy Evans, First-rate First Lady*. One reviewer of the biography and oral history describes it as a “fascinating story of an effervescent, wise and very accomplished woman who, through her many contributions, left her stamp on Olympia and the State of Washington. That [book](#) is also available in the Legacy Project collection at the Secretary of State’s office.

Also in the Legacy collection is another book by Hughes titled *Slade Gorton: A Half Century in Politics*. Gorton, who died at 92 in 2020, was the 2010 Seattle King County First Citizen.

### About the Legacy Project

[Legacy Washington](#) documents the lives and achievements of some of the state’s most renown citizens. The collaborative venture, spearheaded by current Secretary of State Steve Hobbs, features exhibits, stories, videos and other material from the Washington State Library, the Washington State Archives and heritage organizations across the state.

## Employer offering new houses as worker incentive

Two employees of a Florida company will receive keys to mortgage-free homes, compliments of the boss.

The prizes are an incentive being offered by Jason James, CEO and founder of Mechanical One, which furnishes new developments with air conditioning and plumbing. It is his way of addressing the Great Resignation and labor shortage while enticing workers to stay. “My passion is really trying to reinvent employee appreciation,” James said.

The privately held company, which has about 100 employees, bought two lots for three-bedroom, two-bath homes and has earmarked \$500,000 for the project. Winners will be selected by a random drawing in December.

To qualify, employees must be with the company for a full year, complete 20 hours of community service at a nonprofit of their choosing, and take a financial literacy course paid for by Mechanical One.

James said he considered giving away a car or vacation, but thought a home would have more impact. He told a reporter his business model is “if we take care of our people, they are going to do more for us than any marketing budget.”

The Great Resignation, also known as the Big Quit and the Extraordinary Exodus, is an economic trend (primarily in the U.S.) in which employees voluntarily resign from their jobs en masse, beginning in early 2021. According to Wikipedia, it started when the American government refused to provide worker protections in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, resulting in wage stagnation amid rising costs of living. A study by PwC found that upwards of 65% of employees are searching for a new job.

## News In Brief

- Originally posted on *Puget Sound Business Journal*, the highly competitive Bellevue-Seattle-Tacoma metro is likely to stay that way for at least another year, according to a recent study from [Realtor.com](https://www.realtor.com) that identified the 30 hottest markets for 2022. Our market landed at number 8 on the list. The study ranks metros based on the combined forecast of year-over-year price growth plus increase in unit sales. The Seattle region came in high at 17.1%, reflecting a projected unit sales increase of 9.6% in 2022 and a price increase of 7.5%. Salt Lake City took the top spot on the list, with a projected combined sales and price growth of 23.7%. Boise City, Idaho, was second, and the Spokane/Spokane Valley metro was third, with a combined growth score of 20.5%. The rankings found that projected growth could be found in markets all across the country, with a special focus on Midwestern cities. This is because Millennials and other first-time homebuyers have more flexible work options than ever before, and they are likely to put a premium on affordability, settling wherever they can to maximize their buying power. While the effects of the pandemic are still deeply felt in the housing industry, new options for remote work have opened up the possibility for buyers to decide where and how they really want to live — and in 2022, Bellevue and Seattle will be among the most desired locales in the country.
- **Surprisingly, after a decade of record growth, Washington was actually not one of the most popular states to move to last year according to an annual study from United Van Lines.** The study, released annually in January, tracks state-to-state migration patterns using available company data. This year's study found more Americans moved to less densely populated areas and to be closer to their families. The 2021 study found more people moved to Vermont than any other state, while New Jersey topped the list for outbound movement. New Jersey has held the non-enviable spot for the last four years. In Washington, 51.5 percent of movers were coming into the state, while 48.5 percent were leaving it, according to the study. The most common reason for leaving was family, followed by jobs, and retirement. Despite skyrocketing rents and frequently-cited cost of living concerns, just 8 percent of residents said the cost was a factor for moving. As for people moving to the Evergreen State, most said it was for a job (about 35 percent), 33 percent said it was for family reasons and 15 percent said it was to retire here. Also surprising: the biggest movers were actually the oldest. Of new the new crop of Washingtonians, most (32 percent) were 65 and older. People between 55 and 64 made up another 20 percent of Washington's newest residents. However, the same was true for people fleeing the state, with nearly 30 percent of people leaving the state being 65 and older. 22 percent of ex-Washingtonians were between 35 and 44. South Dakota, South Carolina, West Virginia and Florida were also revealed as the top inbound states

for 2021. Meanwhile, states including Illinois, New York, Connecticut and California again appeared on the list of top outbound states.

- **Seattle Police Department officers will no longer enforce certain minor violations after implementing recommendations from a working group that focused on improving public safety with equity.** The department's top brass said its officers will no longer pull drivers over for some non-criminal minor violations — provided that is the only reason for the traffic stop. The list of infractions that officers won't actively ticket for include: Vehicles with expired license tabs, Riders who are not wearing a bike helmet, Vehicles with a cracked windshield, and Items hanging from a vehicle's rear-view mirror.
- **The Q4 2021 Homeownership Program Index (HPI) covers 2,192 programs across the United States, of which 83.6% had funds available for eligible homebuyers as of January 6, 2022 (up nearly 2% from the previous quarter).** This quarter's report highlights the increasing number of homebuyer assistance programs designed to benefit teachers, first responders, law enforcement officers, firefighters, healthcare workers and other providers of critical community services. These programs accounted for nearly 9% of all homebuyer assistance programs available in Q4. Another 11% of programs offer benefits for veterans, members of the military and surviving spouses. Homebuyer programs with special incentives for community servants have been available in markets across the country for decades. These can be standalone programs or provisions that add special benefits or more flexible eligibility requirements when community heroes apply for homebuyer programs that are also open to other applicants. Program providers may structure these programs to help encourage homeownership in a revitalization area, help community heroes to live close to where they work, and help recruit and retain key service personnel. To qualify for a homeownership program, both the buyer and the property must meet certain criteria, which will vary by program. The Washington State Housing Finance Commission (WSHFC) [Veterans Down Payment Assistance Loan Program](#) enables qualified Washington State veterans to receive up to \$10,000 to help with down payment assistance. Community heroes may also benefit from special savings and rebates from [Homes for Heroes](#) when they buy, sell or refinance a home.
- **Realtor.com and Redfin are taking a stand against crime data being listed on their websites. The real estate companies have removed the data due to growing concerns that it could perpetuate racial inequity.** Realtor.com announced that it has removed its crime map from all search results to “level the playing field.” It is reassessing what safety means to buyers and renters and what information they decide to share about it going forward on realtor.com. Realtor.com® says it plans to examine closely what neighborhood safety means for buyers and renters who use its site to “reimagine how we integrate safety data on realtor.com®. Our goal is to ensure we are providing consumers with the most valuable, fair, and accurate neighborhood data so they can make informed decisions about where they want to rent or purchase their next home.” David Doctorow, CEO of realtor.com®, said in a company update this week.

- Reuven Carlyle, a longtime Seattle legislator who has championed government transparency, digital privacy and key climate-change legislation like the new statewide cap-and-invest law, announced he won't seek reelection this year. A Democrat from Seattle's 36th Legislative District, Carlyle won election to the state House in 2008, eventually chairing the House Finance Committee, which handles tax policy. He won his first Senate campaign in a 2016 special election, and won a full four-year term in 2018. Carlyle, who is a business consultant in his day job, isn't retiring from the Legislature to take another position, he said, and will serve out the remainder of his term.
- With around 11% of Americans having moved during the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic, the personal-finance website **WalletHub recently released its report on [2022's Best & Worst States to Raise a Family](#)**, as well as [accompanying videos](#) and expert commentary. To determine the best states in which to put down family roots, WalletHub compared the 50 states across 51 key indicators of family-friendliness. The data set ranges from the median annual family income to housing affordability to the unemployment rate.

**Raising a Family in Washington (1=Best; 25=Avg.):**

- 15<sup>th</sup> – % of Families with Young Children
- 6<sup>th</sup> – Infant-Mortality Rate
- 18<sup>th</sup> – Median Annual Family Income (Adjusted for Cost of Living)
- 16<sup>th</sup> – Violent Crimes per Capita
- 11<sup>th</sup> – % of Families in Poverty
- 22<sup>nd</sup> – Separation & Divorce Rate
- 10<sup>th</sup> – Percentage of Residents Aged 12+ Who Are Fully Vaccinated

For the full report, please visit:

<https://wallethub.com/edu/best-states-to-raise-a-family/31065>

- Starting late January, the MyShake app will be available for download by Washington state residents who want to receive as much early notice as possible before the ground starts shaking during an earthquake. The [Washington Emergency Management Division](#) said in a written statement that the app, which was designed by seismologists and engineers at the University of California, Berkeley, was available to be downloaded on Jan 26. The app is free for iOS users through the Apple App Store and can be found in the GooglePlay store for Android devices. With the addition of Washington, the entire U.S. West Coast is covered by the app's early warning system. Alerts based on information from the USGS ShakeAlert earthquake early warning system are already available to all mobile phones through the Wireless Emergency Alert system and/or through a built-in-earthquake

alerting system for Android devices. MyShake provides a third option that may be a faster way for users to get an earthquake alert on their phones than the WEA system. According to the state, the app as well as Android’s built-in system will deliver alerts to subscribers during quakes that exceed a 4.5 magnitude, which will cause light to strong shaking in their area. By comparison, the WEA system is set to send alerts for earthquakes larger than a 5.0 which cause moderate to strong shaking. The ShakeAlert Earthquake Early Warning system, run by the U.S. Geological Survey in partnership with the Universities of Washington, Oregon, California-Berkeley and Caltech, uses ground motion sensors in all three states to detect earthquakes that have occurred and automatically notifies residents and visitors so that they can “drop, cover and hold on” in advance of ground shaking. The Earthquake Early Warning system has been activated in Washington state providing public alerts to mobile phones since its rollout on May 4, 2021.

- With 17 state capitals being the most populated cities in their states, the personal-finance website WalletHub today released its report on [2022's Best State Capitals for Safety & More](#), as well as [accompanying videos](#) and expert commentary.

To identify the most livable seats of state government, WalletHub compared all 50 state capitals across 49 key metrics, ranging from the cost of living to K–12 school-system quality to the share of residents who are fully vaccinated.

### Top 20 State Capitals

- |                       |                        |
|-----------------------|------------------------|
| 1. Austin, TX         | 11. Des Moines, IA     |
| 2. Raleigh, NC        | 12. Denver, CO         |
| 3. Madison, WI        | 13. Nashville, TN      |
| 4. Boise, ID          | 14. Atlanta, GA        |
| 5. Lincoln, NE        | 15. Helena, MT         |
| 6. Concord, NH        | <b>16. Olympia, WA</b> |
| 7. Salt Lake City, UT | 17. St. Paul, MN       |
| 8. Columbus, OH       | 18. Montpelier, VT     |
| 9. Bismarck, ND       | 19. Annapolis, MD      |
| 10. Oklahoma City, OK | 20. Santa Fe, NM       |

## Calendar of Events

DATES	EVENT	TIME	LOCATION	CONTACT
2/10	Affiliate Council	9:00 a.m. – 10:00 a.m.	SKCR	425-974-1011
2/21	Holiday – Office Closed			
1/26	NAR Region 12		Coeur d’Alene	425-974-1011
3/9	Board of Directors	9:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.	SKCR	425-974-1011

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