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## Rising interest rates not yet slowing home sales or “too concerning” for NWMLS officials

KIRKLAND, Washington (April 7, 2022) – Rising mortgage rates are not yet slowing home sales in most areas across Washington state, according to several brokers who commented on the latest statistical report from Northwest Multiple Listing Service. The report showed a 7.4% year-over-year drop in pending sales, but brokers suggested the decline is likely a reflection of limited supply.

“Typically, by now, we would start to see rising mortgage rates impacting homes sales and/or prices,” observed Matthew Gardner, chief economist at Windermere Real Estate. “That has yet to happen despite rates rising significantly since the start of the year.”

Freddie Mac reported the average rate for a 30-year loan rose to 4.56% last week, with rates climbing at the quickest pace in almost three decades.

Gardner said he expects mortgage rates to continue trending higher in the coming months, adding, “I will be watching to see if there are any negative market impacts, but as of now, I’m not too concerned.”

Northwest MLS brokers reported 10,059 pending sales (mutually accepted offers) during March across 26 counties. That’s down from the year-ago figure of 10,863, but compared to February, the volume of pending sales jumped nearly 31%.

Broker Dean Rebhuhn, owner at Village Homes and Properties, also said rising mortgage rates have not slowed activity. “However, if homes are priced over the market, savvy sellers are making price adjustments.” For now, Rebhuhn said multiple offers “are still the rule. Buyers are making strong offers, pre-inspecting homes, and making sure financing is in place.”

Well-paying jobs and lifestyle needs are driving the market, with some buyers using investments, 401K funds, and family assistance, according to Rebhuhn. He noted Grays Harbor and Ocean Shores offer

“good inventory and great values.” Prices in Grays Harbor County surged nearly 25% from a year ago, rising from \$280,000 to \$349,950. That’s about \$489,000 less than the median price in King County.

“The market is following the normal seasonality of spring,” according to J. Lennox Scott, chairman and CEO of John L. Scott Real Estate. “This season brings more resale listings coming on the market.”

The latest MLS report shows brokers added 11,197 new listings of single family homes and condominiums to inventory during March, up from the year-ago total of 10,562. Last month’s total is up from February’s figure of 7,920 for a gain of more than 41%. It also marked the highest volume of new listings added during a month since September 2021 when members added 11,373 listings.

James Young, director of the Washington Center for Real Estate Research at the University of Washington, noted improvements in inventory in “many of the markets along the I-5 corridor.” His analysis of active listings show robust growth since January in several counties, including Snohomish (up nearly 54%), Lewis (up 47%), Thurston (up 42%), Pierce (up nearly 40%), and Skagit (up 32%).

Nevertheless, with pending sales (10,059) nearly matching new listings, inventory remained limited system wide. The MLS report shows only 0.58 months of supply, with King, Pierce, Snohomish and Thurston counties all having less than two weeks of supply.

“When you consider at one time a normal market inventory was 4-to-6 months, we now consider that measure a relic of times gone by,” commented Dick Beeson, managing broker at RE/MAX Northwest Brokers, adding, “We will not see such numbers of homes for sale for possibly a generation or more.”

The supply squeeze is contributing to competition among hopeful homeowners and rising prices.

“We continue to see fierce competition for the available inventory,” stated Frank Leach, broker/owner at RE/MAX Platinum Services. “Buyers have been very frustrated with some writing as many as 15 offers before landing on a home.”

Median prices continue to escalate.

For last month’s 7,989 completed transactions, the area-wide median price was \$638,000, up about 16.4% from a year ago and up 9% from February.

Of the 26 counties in the report, only one county (Ferry) reported a year-over-year price drop, and only three counties had single-digit increases; all others had double-digit gains from a year ago.

Gardner noted median listing (asking) prices continue to rise, saying “this suggests that sellers remain quite bullish when it comes to pricing their homes.”

Beeson described rising prices as being at “shock and awe levels,” noting it is the third consecutive year for such escalations.

Northwest MLS figures show prices in the four-county region (King, Kitsap, Pierce and Snohomish) have surged nearly \$200,000 (38.5%) since March 2020, jumping from a median price of nearly \$520,000 to nearly \$720,000.

“With rising interest rates and fuel prices, it will be an interesting time for the markets along the I-5 corridor,” remarked Young. “Increased costs make purchasing a home outside of the urbanized areas a less viable option for first time buyers and others seeking value to move up the housing ladder.”

Young believes the return to the city has begun in earnest. He also commented on steadily rising prices in King and Snohomish counties. “Since January, prices in King County are up 16.5% and up 10.5% in Snohomish County. No other counties in the central Puget Sound region break double digits in house price growth for this period.”

Nevertheless, recent census reports indicate people are moving out of King County. Such reports are “allowing surrounding counties, such as Snohomish, Pierce, and Kitsap to prosper,” surmises John Deely, executive vice president of operations at Coldwell Banker Bain. “In part, this is due to a lack of affordability and King County’s inability to create new inventory given restrictions on development and the tight labor markets.” He also cited work-from-home policies as “helping people decide to live in other places” – a trend he expects will continue.

Like many areas, Kitsap County is “dealing with a very active market with prices hitting unprecedented values as inventory remains extremely low,” reports Leach. MLS figures show there is slightly more than a half-month of supply (0.56 months of inventory).

The median price on last month’s sales of single family homes in Kitsap County rose 19.7% from a year ago, from \$450,000 to \$538,500. Year-over-year condo prices shot up nearly 54%, from \$297,500 to \$457,000.

“While we often speak in percentages, the actual numbers of listings are drastically low, and the demand is outstripping supply,” Leach stated. On a brighter note, he added, “Kitsap continues to grow, and new inventory continues to pop out of the ground throughout the county. There are thousands of new residential, condominium and apartment buildings under construction and due to be available in the fall of 2022.”

Leach also noted rents are rising in Kitsap County, “and there appears to be no relief on the horizon.” He suggests the only way to control future expenditures in housing is to own. “With interest rates on the rise there is no better time to buy, refinance, or resize your real estate investment.”

Deely saw hopeful signs in the March statistics. “King County’s new listings last month exceeded the number of both pending and closed sales. Whenever new listings exceed pending, the standing inventory increases with more selection available for buyers. It’s still a great time for sellers to come to the market due to buyers who are willing to pay a premium. While interest rates have gone up, slightly narrowing the buyer pool, there’s still high demand.”

Scott pointed to the overall economy “and specifically job growth in the central Puget Sound region” as factors for the future housing market. “For the local areas considered lifestyle and destination markets, we will be watching local in-migration as a key indicator of future home price appreciation.”

Beeson acknowledged not everyone shares a rosy outlook, noting a report from the Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas that stated price and value have “become unhinged and now have little relationship to each other.” He said they fear a housing bubble may be brewing, adding, “It does feel strange to be in a market that no one has experienced before. There is no road map for this one.”

Commenting on an “unexpected 4.1% decline” in U.S. pending home sales, Lawrence Yun, chief economist at the National Association of REALTORS®, suggested the dip was mainly due to the low number of homes for sales, adding, “It is still an extremely competitive market, but fast-changing conditions regarding affordability ahead.”

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	4,150	1,395	3,557	2,863	\$1,079,936	\$838,753	0.49	0.60
Snohomish	1,767	517	1,543	1,238	\$859,238	\$758,707	0.42	0.28
Pierce	1,788	621	1,716	1,291	\$604,375	\$550,000	0.48	0.35
Kitsap	526	218	496	392	\$631,816	\$534,997	0.56	0.42
Mason	144	90	122	114	\$449,604	\$410,000	0.79	0.60
Skagit	238	140	197	160	\$595,614	\$550,000	0.88	0.67
Grays Harbor	192	193	184	134	\$374,050	\$349,950	1.44	0.83
Lewis	158	110	146	126	\$436,749	\$399,500	0.87	0.57
Cowlitz	167	88	159	131	\$406,866	\$370,000	0.67	0.42
Grant	132	89	156	106	\$370,954	\$352,500	0.84	0.89
Thurston	543	196	507	445	\$541,029	\$500,000	0.44	0.37
San Juan	32	52	22	16	\$1,450,469	\$897,500	3.25	2.33
Island	173	78	163	138	\$678,541	\$610,000	0.57	0.45
Kittitas	96	62	75	50	\$823,348	\$555,730	1.24	0.92
Jefferson	53	34	49	46	\$684,087	\$547,450	0.74	1.32
Okanogan	53	72	53	28	\$381,675	\$336,750	2.57	1.83
Whatcom	390	218	322	276	\$659,687	\$619,975	0.79	0.82
Clark	103	33	112	90	\$569,461	\$465,000	0.37	0.35
Pacific	59	60	62	43	\$350,998	\$330,000	1.40	0.87
Ferry	8	17	9	7	\$267,271	\$224,000	2.43	3.40
Clallam	107	76	106	77	\$482,101	\$430,000	0.99	0.51
Chelan	117	94	109	67	\$655,990	\$520,000	1.40	0.89
Douglas	64	38	53	37	\$564,183	\$525,000	1.03	0.73
Adams	15	18	14	11	\$359,090	265,000	1.64	1.00
Walla Walla	63	38	64	52	\$426,237	423,500	0.73	0.85
Columbia	11	9	12	1	\$229,000	229,000	9.00	1.50
Others	48	65	51	50	\$468,586	\$392,495	1.30	1.61
<b>Total</b>	<b>11,197</b>	<b>4,621</b>	<b>10,059</b>	<b>7,989</b>	<b>\$797,444</b>	<b>\$638,000</b>	<b>0.58</b>	<b>0.53</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
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	8049	8586	7880	7405	6022	3943
2022	4405	5560	7312									



## NWMLS update members on products, services, rules and more during spring meeting

Member brokers gathered in late March for the Northwest Multiple Listing Service spring meeting, held virtually, to hear updates on MLS services, products and rules, along with legal and industry updates.

Tom Hurdelbrink, NWMLS president and CEO, told attendees the MLS offices are scheduled to be fully opened on May 16. For the Kirkland office, which houses around 60 employees, a hybrid model of in-office and remote support will be used, while satellite offices will have in-person staff available.

The multiple listing service plans to resume in-person classes, workshops and office visits, but will continue offering virtual classes and webinars.

Justin Haag presented the “legal and industry” segment of the meeting. He briefed member-brokers on several class action lawsuits affecting the industry, noting he is in regular communication with industry attorneys to discuss these cases and related issues. In general, the litigation is centered on rules related to compensation.

Commenting on this year’s short session by state legislators, Haag complimented Washington Realtors for its work in opposing HB 1951 concerning seller disclosure statements. WR described the proposal as a “dangerous bill that will have the unintended consequences of giving buyers less protection instead of more.” Haag also mentioned another bill that did not pass, but expects to be reintroduced next session pertaining to the agency law.

One bill that passed, HB 1793, concerns electric vehicle charging stations in condominium developments and common interest communities. As a result, NWMLS will add a question covering this issue in Form 27 and Form 27CIC.

Another bill that passed in 2021 becomes effective in June. It requires Fair Housing education and training for real estate brokers and managing brokers in order to renew their licenses.

Brokers were reminded to review Legal Bulletin 221, published on [nwmls.com](http://nwmls.com), which covers upcoming revisions of several rules. The bulletin includes sections on updated terminology, substantive revisions, and “clean-up” revisions that become effective April 27.

To conclude his remarks, Haag summarized disruptions in Department of Licensing services that affected the professional and business licensing system. Brokers should expect notification letters from the DOL with details on free credit monitoring. NWMLS will continue to track this issue and provides updates as necessary.

Next on the agenda was an overview of product updates. Devin Bacon, membership manager and business analyst, summarized enhancements to:

- OneHome client portal and its “fresher features and a cleaner, more contemporary interface.” He noted almost 38,000 consumers have registered to activate advanced features.
- Digital Home Warranty, a new integration in TransactionDesk with nine different home warranty companies in Washington State. Members were invited to contact [education@nwmls.com](mailto:education@nwmls.com) to add other companies.
- Showing Beacon, which provides new safety features in ShowingTime.
- Increases in listing photo sizes (to 1600 x 1200 pixels).
- RESTB.AI, artificial intelligence that enables the MLS quality assurance team to better monitor listing photos to uncover items that are not permitted such as people, phone numbers, license plates and watermarks.

Madeline Feder, the communications supervisor at NWMLS, continued the presentation with summaries of upcoming projects and events.

Staff is working on complete redesigns of both the member site and corporate site. Expected to launch later this year, the sites will be more mobile friendly and offer streamlined navigation and search functions, as well as better access to products.

Feder also announced dates for this year's golf tournaments (June 30, August 4, and September 1), noting a third location in Eastern Washington has been added. Brokers who work with banks, title/escrow companies, insurance brokers and other affiliated businesses that might be potential sponsors were encouraged to submit leads to [golf@nwmls.com](mailto:golf@nwmls.com). (NWMLS members are ineligible for sponsorships.)

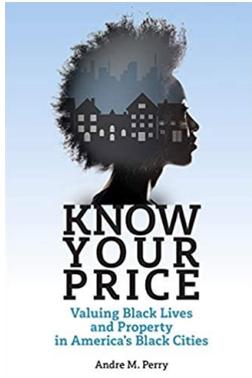
Attendees were also reminded about competitively-priced print and design services NWMLS offers for a variety of promotional materials.

To conclude the spring meeting, John Bozich, training supervisor, outlined an array of training opportunities, ranging from instructor-led classes with optional clock hours, self-paced classes, virtual one-on-one sessions, more than 25 live webinars, and custom office trainings that may be scheduled by emailing [education@nwmls.com](mailto:education@nwmls.com). All opportunities are described in the "Classes" tab on the NWMLS website.

In a "Just for Fun" poll, brokers were asked to speculate on the Seahawks starting quarterback, the most used web browser, the most violated MLS rule, and favorite wine tasting areas in the state.

## Action plans being implemented to combat appraisal bias

Various studies and anecdotes show appraisers tend to undervalue homes in Black and Hispanic neighborhoods. That devaluation amounts to about \$156 billion in lost equity, according to one well-known educator, journalist, and scholar.



In his book, *Know Your Price: Valuing Black Lives and Property in America's Black Cities*, Andre Perry, a Senior Fellow in the Metropolitan Policy Program at Brookings and nationally known commentator on race, structural inequality, and education, discusses the cost of racial bias.

Last month, as part of a broad federal effort to address the wealth gap associated with systemic inequity, Vice President Kamala Harris unveiled a 21-step action plan designed to end racial and ethnic discrimination in home appraisals and improve oversight and accountability. It also includes a legislative proposal to modernize the governance structure of the appraisal industry.

The plan's wide-ranging reforms culminate work by an interagency task force created by President Joe Biden. Among trade groups across the housing industry that supported the effort was the National Association of REALTORS®. NAR met with the Property Appraisal and Valuation Equity Task Force (PAVE) to help formulate solutions, which include a [five-step plan](#). (*Editor's note: see box.*)

One piece of the action plan calls for government expansion of the complaint hotline for the Department of Housing and Urban Development and the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau. Additionally, there will be appraisal bias training in homebuyer education classes.

Since 2019, appraisal bias complaints have spiked tenfold, according to HUD.

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reports about 97% of appraisers are white, making it one of the least diverse professions in the country. According to research, appraisers choose comps in a narrower geographic range for properties in Black and Latino neighborhoods than in white neighborhoods.

In response to some of the research findings, the Appraisal Institute only recently acknowledged that racial bias is an issue, but it has not yet fully acknowledged such bias is structural. A statement from Rodman Schley, president of the international professional association, said "unconscious bias is real and exists in all industries."

"Know Your Price" author Perry, who is also a scholar-in-residence at American University and columnist for the Hechinger Report, co-authored a 2018 Brookings Institution report, "[The Devaluation of Assets in Black Neighborhoods](#)," which found homes in Black neighborhoods are valued at 23% less, on average, than those in white neighborhoods, even though they have similar neighborhood and property characteristics and amenities. In an extension of that report's focus on housing, he has also examined other assets such as businesses, schools, and banks.

#### PAVE Action Plan

- Make the appraisal industry more accountable.
- Empower consumers with information and assistance.
- Prevent automatic algorithmic bias.
- Cultivate a more inclusive appraiser profession.
- Leverage more federal data and expertise.

Freddie Mac's research uncovered "pervasive appraisal gaps" after they analyzed more than 12 million housing appraisals for transactions spanning the years 2015 to 2021. As the concentration of Black or Latino residents in census tracts increases, so too does the appraisal gap, according to the analysts.

That 2021 study found that 12.5% of appraisals for home purchases in Black neighborhoods and 15.4% in Latino neighborhoods came in below the contract price. By comparison, only 7.4% of appraisals in white neighborhoods were below the contract price. Researchers also noted the appraisal gaps are wider now than during the 1980s.

Such forms of discrimination can reduce the cash-out available and result in higher interest rates and mortgage insurance premiums when refinancing. It also widens the racial wealth gap, making it harder for many from disadvantaged backgrounds to move up the economic ladder. Additionally, Perry stated, it's money that could have been invested in education and entrepreneurship.

Sociology professor Junia Howell from the University of Illinois, Chicago, has conducted various studies on appraisal bias. Commenting on the Freddie Mac study, she said it reinforces that the disparity is systemic.

"Individual bias is affecting these things, but it's actually a structural issue, across different appraisers who have different background, and in different counties," she told a writer for Bloomberg. "We're seeing this inequality across the board, really demonstrating that it is deeply embedded in the ways and the methods of appraising.

"Historically, many groups have faced unfair home undervaluation," Leslie Rouda Smith, NAR's president, said in a statement following the release of the PACE report. "Addressing those wrongs is key to providing financial stability to not only homeowners, but entire communities, and benefits the nation as a whole."

## Builders reveal what buyers really want

Double sinks and walk-in pantries topped the list of most popular features first-time home buyers want, according to research by the National Association of Home Builders. Using a four-tiered scale (see box) NAHB asked hopeful homeowners to rate 200 home features, including 30 in the kitchen.

The 2021 version of *What Home Buyers Really Want* is available as a paperback or as a digital (EPUB) report.

Eight in 10 buyers (80%) said a double sink and walk-in pantry were essential or desirable features. Three other features also ranked high on the “must-have list:” water filtration (78%), kitchen table space for eating (77%), and a central island (72%).

A high percentage (from 63% to 67%) of first-time buyers rated seven features as essential or desirable. The list included pull-out shelves, a desk or computer area, granite countertops, an instant hot water dispenser, breakfast bar, customized backsplash, and recessed lighting.

Of the 30 kitchen features buyers were asked to rate in the 2021 edition of the report, 23 were rated essential or desirable by more than half the first-time buyers.

The seven features buyers rated as indifferent or “do not want” included a warming drawer, glass front on at least one cabinet, double island, ceramic tile countertop, steam oven, wine cooler, and laminate countertop.

Like first-time buyers, home buyers in general gave high ratings to double sinks and pantries, with 81 percent rating them as essential or desirable.

Differences between repeat buyers and first-timers were revealed at the low end of the scale for most and least popular kitchen features. Repeat buyers are more inclined to say they “Do Not Want” a feature. Examples included:

- Laminate kitchen countertops. Whereas 24% of first-time buyers said they do not want this feature, significantly more – 38% of repeat buyers – rejected them.
- Asked about a wine cooler, 36% of repeat buyers rated it as a “Do Not Want” feature, compared to 24% of first-time buyers.
- 32% of repeat buyers don’t want a steam oven, while only 22% of first-time buyers rated the feature as a “Do Not Want” item
- Ceramic tile kitchen countertops were rated “Do Not Want” by 31% of repeat buyers and 17% of first-time buyers.
- Nearly three of every 10 repeat buyers said they don’t want a double island, compared to 19% of first-time buyers.

When asked about their “most wanted” options from the 200 home and community features in the survey, 83% of first-time home buyers put a laundry room at the top of their “essential” or “desirable” lists. A ceiling fan and exterior lighting were the next most popular items on the wish lists. Rounding out the “top 10” list were double kitchen sink, hardwood flooring, walk-in pantry, drinking water filtration, patio, security cameras, and kitchen table space for eating.

#### Four-tiered scale

**Essential** (unlikely to buy a home without this feature)

**Desirable** (seriously influenced to buy home if included)

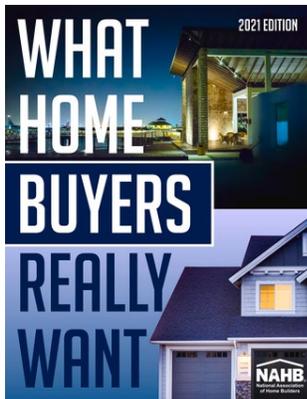
**Indifferent** (would not influence purchase)

**Do not want** (not likely to buy a home with this feature)

Researchers said the ratings of many features tend to be positively correlated with income, noting first-time buyers have somewhat lower incomes.

NAHB reported the most noticeable difference between the features most wanted by first-time buyers and buyers in general is the absence of energy saving features on the first-time buyers' top ten list. Buyers in general ranked ENERGY STAR rated windows as their #4 most wanted feature, with ENERGY STAR rated appliances 9th on their list.

The builders also tallied buyers' most unwanted features. Among first-time buyers, elevators were on the "do not want" list for 46% of respondents, followed by a golf course in the community at 42%. They found at least 40% of first-time buyers were also unlikely to buy a home with glass walls or cork flooring on the main floor living spaces. Also high on the "rejected" list were a pet washing station, daycare center, wine cellar, roof partially or completely covered by plants, and in-law suite.



The 306-page report was based on a nationwide survey of 3,247 recent and prospective home buyers, including 541 who bought, or were about to buy their first homes. [What Home Buyers Really Want](#) includes tabulations of all home buyer preferences by Census division, age, generation, race/ethnicity, income, price expected to pay for the home, and household composition.

## Champion for families experiencing homelessness named 2022 First Citizen

Few can deny homelessness is a worsening problem, but one organization serving Seattle and King County is making remarkable progress in achieving its goal of "No Child Sleeps Outside."

From modest beginnings in 1999 as a drop-in day center for women experiencing homelessness, Mary's Place has grown to five 24x7 family center shelters across King County that provide critical services for women and families. For its thoughtful and innovative approach to providing safe, inclusive shelter and housing solutions for families, **Mary's Place** has been selected **2022 Seattle-King County First Citizen**. Marty Hartman, executive director since 1999, will accept the award on behalf of the nonprofit organization.



In announcing the 84<sup>th</sup> recipient of the prestigious First Citizen award, Rachel Mehmedagic (Adler), president of Seattle King County Realtors (SKCR), said an unwavering commitment to eliminating barriers to housing by Mary's Place, its exemplary record for continuous improvement of services, and its inspiring engagement of staff and stakeholders, deserve recognition. "We look forward to commemorating the many ways they address this critical community concern."

A civic celebration of Mary's Place, presented by SKCR in partnership with John L. Scott Real Estate and Windermere Real Estate, is being planned for summer or early fall. Once the date and venue are finalized, guests will be able to make reservations online at [firstcitizenevent.org](http://firstcitizenevent.org).

"Congratulations to Mary's Place for this well-deserved honor — an important recognition of the innovative work they do to address the crisis of family homelessness in our community," stated Seattle Mayor Bruce Harrell. "Mary's Place has offered critical shelter, care and services for over two decades, helping women and families in our region move quickly into safe, stable homes. Unsheltered families are too often unseen in our community — our commitment is not just to recognize them, but to support bringing these parents and their kids inside and help them return to housing. We're grateful for the partnership and leadership of Mary's Place in these important efforts."

This year marks only the third time SKCR has presented the First Citizen Award to an organization rather than to an individual, couple or family. Children's Orthopedic Hospital (now Seattle Children's) was honored in 1944; in 2012, Rotary International District 5030 received the award.

"On behalf of everyone at Windermere, I want to congratulate Marty Hartman and her team at Mary's Place for being selected as this year's Seattle-King County First Citizen," said Christine Wood, executive director of the real estate company's foundation. "The tireless work they do to help families on their journey out of homelessness is critical to the health of our community and the Windermere Foundation is proud to partner with them on these efforts."

Some noteworthy numbers illustrate the impact of their efforts. During 2021, Mary's Place provided 141,412 overnight stays for 586 families and 1,204 children at their five locations. Their housing and mobile outreach teams helped 549 families find permanent, stable homes.

Broker Trish Coy, chair of the First Citizen Committee, said the Selection Committee was very impressed not only by the number of families the organization serves, but also by its flexibility during the coronavirus pandemic, and its efforts to address systemic racism.

"Mary's Place pivoted to address the challenges of COVID-19," Coy said, citing examples from its 2020 Gratitude report. "Its leadership, staff and volunteers turned to community volunteers and went virtual to adapt housing, youth, and employment services, to name just a few of the ways they supported families."

Coy, whose philanthropic work includes support of several human services nonprofits, also commended Mary's Place for prioritizing families during the pandemic. The team at Mary's Place noted emerging

“red flags” and began raising funds to help support families facing evictions, foreclosures, and/or needing rental assistance as moratoriums and COVID-related rental assistance stipends end.

First Citizen event vice-chair Lara Weasea said the Selection Committee also reported being impressed by the initiatives this year’s award recipient has undertaken in the areas of diversity, equity, and inclusion. “Clearly, they are responsive to their guests, who are predominantly from communities of color,” Weasea remarked. “Racial equity trainings for staff and Board, partnerships with BIPOC-led organizations to provide culturally relevant services, and recognition of inequities in health care are among ways Mary’s Place is trying to remove barriers.”

“Shedding light on the crisis of children experiencing homelessness became our focus when we found out there were children in homeless encampments in 2015,” said Jim and Fawn Spady of Dick’s Drive-in Restaurants. “After reaching out to Mary’s Place, we began our journey to tackle this difficult issue. Together we launched the No Child Sleeps Outside campaign to raise awareness and funds. It now is a major annual campaign for so many individuals and corporations. We join in congratulating Mary’s Place on this well-deserved honor for their innovative, efficient, and effective work.”

SKCR representatives were also impressed by the data-driven decision process Mary’s Place uses to implement ideas and programs, along with its willingness to share information with policymakers, other service providers, financial backers, and others.



Executive director Marty Hartman, who is widely respected as an engaging advocate and coalition builder, is quick to credit others for the ways Mary’s Place initiates and implements wraparound programs and services for families who are on the journey out of homelessness.

“I want to be sure we’re getting the most current information from nationwide resources on best practices, that we have excellent staff that are implementing those ideas and programs, and most importantly, that we’re gathering and using good data to drive decisions and share those results with policymakers, other homeless service providers, and our community,” Hartman remarked in an interview with NEDDIE, a social impact platform.

Mary’s Place and Hartman are the recipients of other honors for their contributions to the community well-being.

Thrive Global, a behavior change technology company, named Hartman as one of “nine women leading the charge for diversity and inclusion in the U.S.” Noting that her childhood entailed frequent moves (16 times before she was in the 5<sup>th</sup> grade), and her mother’s recurrent urging to meet others and give back no matter where they lived, Thrive Global recognized Hartman for transitioning “into a natural giver and community builder.”

In 2019, Mary’s Place was one of 32 organizations across the U.S. to receive a monetary award from the Bezos Day 1 Families Fund for doing “compassionate, needle-moving work to provide shelter and hunger

support to address the immediate needs of young families.” The previous year (2018), Hartman was a *Puget Sound Business Journal* Woman of Influence honoree. The Seattle Storm presented her with a Woman of Inspiration honor in 2016.

#### About [Mary's Place](#)

Mary's Place believes that no one's child should sleep outside. They provide safe and inclusive shelter and resources for women, children, and families on their journey out of homelessness. Today, Mary's Place operates five crisis response family shelters providing refuge and community for around 700 family members. The organization focuses on an innovative strategy of combining prevention, mobile outreach, emergency shelter, and resources for transition back into housing to end family homelessness.

## Real Change committee files initiative to form social housing in Seattle

“Social housing,” a concept popular in Europe, is being proposed for Seattle by House Our Neighbors (HON), a political committee of Real Change. The group filed an [initiative](#) late last month to create a Seattle Social Housing Developer.

In announcing the initiative, HON said signature gathering would “begin soon.” It first needs to be reviewed and approved by the city clerk’s office. An estimated 27,000 valid signatures are needed for the initiative to appear on the fall ballot.

House Our Neighbors (HON) describes social housing as “publicly owned, permanently affordable, cross-class housing, removed from market forces and speculation. It is built with the express aim of housing people equitably and affordably, not producing a profit. Under public control and oversight, social housing is sustainable and remains affordable in perpetuity.”

HON says establishment of a publicly owned developer would mean “Seattle would have a powerful new tool to create publicly owned, permanently affordable housing throughout the city to combat homelessness, displacement and poverty, and to create a city where all can live and thrive.”

If approved, the measure would create a public developer governed by a 13-member board. Seven of the board members would be renter-residents from the housing units, with the remaining six members to be appointed professionals with varying housing and government backgrounds.

Building upon existing models in Europe, HON’s plan is to create housing for people making from zero to 120% of median income, with no renter paying more than 30% of their income. Rent would be based on each building’s operational, maintenance and loan costs.

Among countries in Europe, some of the larger social housing agencies are in the Netherlands (80,000 units at Vestia), France (Paris Habitat with 124,000 units), Germany (SAGA with 130,000 units), Scotland (Wheatley Group with 40,000 to 60,000 units) and Italy (ATC Piemonte Centrale with 33,000 units). Other examples are found in Portugal, Belgium, Sweden, Austria, and Denmark.

# California lawmakers considering bill to convert golf courses into housing

Legislators in California are considering a bill that would provide incentives to golf courses who want to convert their property into affordable housing. Upon clearing the Assembly Housing and Community Development Committee, Assembly Bill 1910 was sent to the Assembly Committee on Local Government.

According to an analysis of the bill, nearly 250 of California's estimated 1,100 golf courses are owned by local governments. Based on an average size of 150 acres, analysts estimate the state's municipally owned golf courses could yield 375,000 housing units at moderate density.

If enacted, the measure would establish a program providing grants to local agencies to convert locally owned golf courses into housing and public open space. The development must make 25% of new units affordable housing, with 15% of the project retained as public open space.

The bill's author, Assembly member Cristina Garcia, told her colleagues the bill would provide another tool for the state to address the housing crisis in Southern California. She introduced similar legislation in 2021, but it failed to garner approval of the Assembly Appropriations Committee.

Critics called last year's bill, AB 672, as "the very definition of legislative overreach."

Among opponents of the reintroduced bill are members of several golf associations. They contend the bill "singles out" locally owned golf courses for development. Speaking on behalf of the California Alliance of Golf, Nick Bailey, vice president of the Northern California PGA section, said the bill would reduce green space in communities that already lack it. He also reminded lawmakers golf courses provide habitat, promote biodiversity and sequester carbon to the benefit of the surrounding community.

# Earth Day marks 42nd anniversary with return of in-person events



Stewardship Partners will be observing the 42<sup>nd</sup> annual Earth Day with monthlong, “in the field” events. The [volunteer opportunities](#) include multiple riparian restoration events focusing on salmon habit restoration on the Snoqualmie River in Carnation and Duvall.

Also returning this year is [The Great Global Cleanup](#) being organized by Earthday.org. This year, they aim to have cleanups in 192 countries across the globe. The world’s largest recruiter to the environmental movement works has more than 150,000 partners, enlisting more than one billion participants.

## News In Brief

- The median home sales price in the United States rose 7 percent over the four-week period ending March 13, marking the largest month-over-month surge since Redfin began tracking the statistic in 2017.** The median sales price was up 17 percent year over year to a record high \$376,350 and up 36 percent from the same time in 2020. As mortgage rates soar, so do payments. The median monthly mortgage payment across the country sits at an all-time high of \$2,123 — over \$530 a month more than homebuyers were paying before the pandemic. Pending home sales are up and new listings have dropped. Fifty-nine percent of homes that went under contract had an offer accepted within the first two weeks of being on the market. According to Redfin, Seattle home prices were up 8.2 percent in February compared to last year, selling for a median price of \$771,000. Seattle homes sold, on average, after just six days on the market, which is down from 12 days a year ago.

- **U.S. home-price appreciation accelerated in January.** A measure of prices in 20 U.S. cities jumped 19.1%, up from 18.6% the previous month, the S&P CoreLogic Case-Shiller index showed Tuesday. Phoenix, Tampa and Miami reported the biggest year-over-year gains. Price increases peaked in July and have cooled off slightly in recent months. Still, demand for homes remains strong two years after the pandemic hit the U.S., with bidding wars and cash offers common in hot markets. **Seattle ranked seventh in year-over-year gains, with a 24.7% increase.** Price growth has been ticking back up after flattening in the fall, according to the index. Prices in January were up about 2% over December. The index reflects a three-month rolling average of single-family home prices in King, Snohomish and Pierce counties.
- **As reported in GeekWire, new [estimates from the U.S. Census Bureau](#) show the population of King County, Wash., home to the tech hubs of Seattle and Bellevue, declining by more than 20,000 people between July 2020 and July 2021.** The numbers mirror a nationwide trend, fueled in part by the rise of remote work and newfound flexibility for many information workers. In King County, the decline [follows a decade of rapid growth](#), driven by a booming tech economy and more than 100 out-of-town tech companies setting up engineering centers in the Seattle area. However, the decrease in population from 2.27 million to 2.25 million in King County last year was just one-third of 1%, far less pronounced than the decreases [in some other major metro areas across the country](#). Other counties in the state saw increases in population, due in part to some workers moving further from the city. Here are the census estimates showing the change in each Washington state county between July 2020 and 2021. Apart from remote work, other factors influencing population changes over this timeframe included COVID-19 deaths and a decrease in international immigration. Across the country, [the U.S. Census Bureau reports](#), “there was a shift from larger, more populous counties to medium and smaller ones. These patterns contributed to population increases in 1,822 counties (58.0%), while 1,313 (41.8%) lost residents, and eight (0.3%) saw no change in population.”
- **Seattle is the seventh-happiest city in the nation, according to WalletHub’s [2022’s Happiest Cities in America](#) report.** The personal finance website last year found that the state of Washington was [the 13th-happiest in the nation](#). To determine where Americans were happiest, WalletHub compared 180 cities and all 50 states across several key indicators, including unemployment rates, job opportunities, the potential for income growth, divorce rates and sleep rates. Seattle had the lowest unemployment rate, ranked second in income growth and first in the number of people who play sports. The state’s happiness ranking was also based, in part, on the number of people who spend time volunteering for causes they believe in.
- **Pickleball is now officially Washington's state sport.** Gov. Jay Inslee signed a measure into law granting the game status among a long list of official state symbols, including: Palouse Falls as the state waterfall, the Columbian mammoth as the state fossil and the marmota olympus, also known as the Olympic marmot, as the state endemic mammal. According to the USA Pickleball Association, the sport was created on Bainbridge Island in the summer of 1965 by Washington State Rep. Joel Pritchard, who would later go on to represent the state in Congress and serve as Washington's lieutenant governor.
- **Washington Gov. Jay Inslee has signed a nearly \$17 billion, 16-year transportation revenue package that will pay for a variety of projects across the state, including building four new**

**hybrid-electric ferries.** In addition to the new ferries, it electrifies two existing ferries and provides funding for more walking and biking corridors, highway maintenance and fulfilling the state's court-ordered obligation to replace fish passage culverts. Funding is also provided to ensure that those age 18 and younger can ride for free on public transportation, including the state's ferries and Amtrak. It also pays for the state's share of the cost - \$1 billion - to replace the Interstate 5 bridge over the Columbia River that connects Washington and Oregon.

- **A ballot initiative proposed by a new housing and homelessness advocacy coalition would establish a public developer that would create, own and maintain public housing in Seattle.** The Seattle Times reports the initiative filed on March 28 is known as “social housing,” essentially publicly owned housing that is insulated from private market forces and designed to be permanently affordable. This model is popular in Europe. The city clerk’s office will review the new ballot initiative to ensure it has been filed correctly. Once that has been settled, the initiative will receive a ballot title and members of the coalition will begin collecting signatures from Seattle residents. The coalition needs almost 27,000 signatures to qualify for the ballot.
- **Signs of pets in homes for sale don’t spook potential buyers, and may even be appealing to some home shoppers, says a new study from Quicken Loans and published in REALTOR® Magazine.** Seventy-nine percent of buyers making an offer on a home say seeing signs of a pet in a property won’t deter them, as long as damage from the pet isn’t present, according to the study. Nearly two in 10 respondents said that seeing signs of pets would even increase their desire to make an offer if there was no damage to the property, the survey finds. That’s good news to homeowners with pets, and it counters a long-held idea in real estate that any signs of a pet could jeopardize a sale. Pet ownership has been increasing; about 70% of American households own pets as of this year. That percentage is up from 56% in 1988. While fondness for pets is growing, there can still be a wild card in a real estate sale: the neighbor’s pet. The survey found that there’s about a 50-50 chance the neighbor’s barking dog would cause buyers to regret making an offer on a home. Cat owners are more likely than those with dogs to regret making an offer on a home where a neighbor’s dog barks. But even if the neighbor’s dog may lead to some regret, potential home buyers said that wouldn’t stop them from making an offer on a home. Only about one in 10 survey respondents said that a neighbor’s barking dog would make them wish they submitted an offer on a different home altogether. Americans have also been willing to move to better accommodate their pet and are on the hunt for more pet-friendly home features, [according to a survey conducted in 2020 by the National Association of REALTORS® on pets’](#) involvement in the buying and selling process. When it comes to the house your pet-conscious clients are looking for, the most frequent requests are hardwood floors and a fenced backyard.
- **A federal judge has issued a preliminary injunction blocking Oregon’s first-in-the-nation ban on so-called real estate ‘love letters,’ personal notes from prospective homebuyers to home sellers, saying it violates the First Amendment by restricting free speech too broadly.** The conservative Pacific Legal Foundation [had filed the lawsuit](#) in U.S. District Court after the Oregon Legislature last year attempted to limit housing discrimination by prohibiting buyers from sending letters to sellers to try to sweeten their offers on houses for sale. Gov. Kate Brown signed [House Bill 2550](#), sponsored by state Rep. Mark Meek, D-Clackamas, last June. It had unanimously passed the House of Representatives and passed the state senate on a mostly party-line vote. The lawsuit, filed on behalf of Total Real

Estate Group, a Bend company of 20 agents, said lawmakers provided no proof that such discrimination was taking place and that state and federal laws already prohibit housing discrimination. [In his March 3 preliminary injunction](#), U.S. District Judge Marco Hernández said Oregon’s goal was laudable, given its “long and abhorrent history of racial discrimination in property ownership and housing” that for decades explicitly blocked people of color from owning property. But House Bill 2550 was overly inclusive, the judge said, banning significant amounts of innocuous speech in love letters beyond references to a buyer’s personal characteristics.

- **Seattle is America’s most desired city to live in for college students post-graduation, according to the [Axios-Generation Lab Next Cities Index](#).** The index tracks rising U.S. work and culture trends through geographic preferences. Axios credits Seattle’s elite tech-hub status, cool climate, green-energy embrace and music and art scene for the top ranking. New York City, Los Angeles, Denver and Boston rounded out the top five, respectively. Of the survey’s 2,109 participants, half said they wanted to live outside their home states upon graduating college. About a quarter of those surveyed desired to live in their hometowns. Healthcare (29 percent), education and research (15 percent) and tech (12 percent) were the top three industry choices for careers. Political party identification also weighed into participants’ preferences as Seattle took home the No. 1 spot among independents. Austin was the top choice of Republicans and New York reigned supreme for Democrats. Democrats (54 percent) were more likely to want to leave their home state than Republican students (41 percent). Overall, 45 percent of the survey respondents said they want to live somewhere different than they think they will live. Niche, a website designed to connect students and families with colleges and schools, combines data from the Census and the FBI with its resident ratings and recently released its 2022 results. It named Seattle the No. 1 city in the nation for outdoor activities, No. 3 for best cities for young professionals, No. 8 for best cities to raise a family and No. 13 for best cities to live in overall.
- **Mayor Bruce Harrell and the Office of Housing announced Monday the city of Seattle’s latest investment in affordable housing: \$5.3 million, which will be matched by the Washington State Department of Commerce.** The money will support Sea Mar Community Health Centers’ acquisition of a newly constructed apartment building on Beacon Hill. The building’s new residents, women who have experienced chronic homelessness, have already begun moving in. Sea Mar Community Health Centers specializes in providing healthcare and social services for historically marginalized populations, with a focus on Latino/a immigrants. Residents of the building’s 39 rent- and income-restricted homes will have access to on-site case management services to assist them in accessing healthcare, counseling and financial assistance, as well as education, job training and employment opportunities. The homes are in transit-rich, pedestrian-friendly areas near North Beacon Hill and Mount Baker, as well as the Chinatown-International District. The Office of Housing invested more than \$140 million to support the production, preservation and acquisition of more than 1,500 affordable rental housing and homeownership opportunities in 2021. Funding comes from the voter-approved Seattle Housing Levy, payments from the Mandatory Housing Affordability program and other local, state and federal resources.
- **Amazon has committed \$42.5 million to help build affordable homes in the Puget Sound region.** The company announced the funds are to build 318 affordable homes near public transit sites in partnership with Sound Transit. This all started with Amazon committing \$300 million in

2021 to help build 3,000 affordable homes. Amazon is doing this in the Puget Sound, Virginia and Nashville regions. There will be a development in the Spring District at the 120th station. A press release said there will be 233 new-construction affordable apartments there in Bellevue. They are set to open in 2023. Angel Lake will also have a station. Amazon is helping create at least 85 new apartments near the light rail station in SeaTac.

- Bosa Development said it expects to begin construction in April on a 57-story tower with 422 condos, retail on the ground level and a public plaza in downtown Seattle.** The tower should be finished by 2026, the developer says. The city issued a permit to allow for shoring and excavation at the site, according to the Seattle Department of Construction and Inspections. Future permits for construction of the tower will be issued in phases, a department spokesperson said. The site between Cherry and James streets and Third and Fourth avenues has been empty since 2005, when the city's old Public Safety Building was torn down. Bosa would pay \$16 million for the land and at least \$5.7 million in affordable housing fees, while also requiring that the project include a public plaza of at least 25,000 square feet. The agreement includes potential fines for delayed completion of the project. The new tower will include one-, two- and three-bedroom condos, some with views of Elliott Bay, and a rooftop pool on the 57th floor. The 25,000-square-foot plaza will include an upper plaza on Fourth Avenue, a water feature that "cascades down James" Street to Third Avenue, "extensive landscaping" and a glass elevator connecting lower and upper plazas, the developer says.

## Calendar of Events

DATES	EVENT	TIME	LOCATION	CONTACT
<b>4/5</b>	Gov't Affairs Committee	10:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.	SKCR	425-974-1011
<b>4/7</b>	Affiliate Council	9:00 a.m. – 10:00 a.m.	SKCR	425-974-1011
<b>4/13</b>	YPN Brunch & Networking	10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.	WAC	425-974-1011
<b>4/20 – 4/22</b>	WR Spring Conference		Suncadia	425-974-1011
<b>5/1 – 5/6</b>	NAR Legislative Meeting		National Harbor	425-974-1011

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