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Brokers detect good news for home buyers, citing gains in listings and moderating prices

KIRKLAND, Washington (May 5, 2021) – Finally, some good news for home buyers! Sizeable increases in new listings compared to a year ago and reports of moderating prices “might mean we are seeing some relief for buyers,” suggested John Deely, a board member at Northwest Multiple Listing Service.

In commenting on the latest statistics from Northwest MLS summarizing April activity, Deely said the market remains hot while emphasizing active listing numbers do not always reflect actual overall activity. “With a market like ours, and the velocity of new listings moving to pending status, active listing data tend to get more attention,” stated Deely, the vice president of operations at Coldwell Banker Bain.

Northwest MLS figures, which cover 26 counties, illustrate that point. At month end, April’s active listings stood at 5,616, yet during the month, member-brokers added 12,043 new listings of homes and condos. There was a jump of more than 57% from the same month a year ago when the pandemic shutdown began. Compared to March, the volume of new listings rose 14%, and even compared to two years ago (April 2019), new listings were up about 3%.

April’s month-end inventory of 5,616 listings was a year-over-year (YOY) drop of 45%; a year ago, there were 10,282 active listings in the MLS database.

Pending sales continue to surge, keeping inventory depleted. Brokers reported 10,583 pending sales during April, up nearly 47% from a year ago when they logged 7,207 mutually accepted offers. Last month’s pending sales dipped slightly (2.58%) from March.

Two other industry experts, J. Lennox Scott and Matthew Gardner, also commented on the significant gains in new listings.

“At long last, May is here. Historically, we see a nice uptick in new listings every May. This increased availability and selection will be present throughout the summer,” suggested Scott, the chairman and CEO of John L. Scott Real Estate. He tempered his prediction by noting there is a large backlog of prospective home buyers, a situation he says will “keep the market in a state of ‘instant response’ for each new resale listing.”

Matthew Gardner, chief economist at Windermere Real Estate, noted 16 of the 26 counties in the report had at least a 20% increase in active listings at the end of April compared to March, saying “There is finally some good news for buyers!” NWMLS figures show active listings increased by 1,463 properties (up 35.2%). He also pointed out the rise in inventory had a softening effect on the average listing price. He calculated a drop of 5.1% between March and April. “It’s too early to suggest this trend will continue, but it’s encouraging to see and hopefully the beginning of a shift back towards a more balanced market.”

Even with some improvement in listings, the MLS report shows only nine counties have more than one month’s supply of inventory. Areawide, there is only 0.64 months of inventory, with even less supply (0.57 months) in the four-county Puget Sound region. Many analysts consider a balanced market to be in the four-to-six-month range.

“The time between coming on the market and going off the market is the shortest I’ve seen in the last 40 years,” stated Dick Beeson, managing broker at RE/MAX Northwest, Tacoma-Gig Harbor. “The housing bubble more than a dozen years ago didn’t look like this. There was inventory. There were choices for buyers. Now they comb the internet daily, hoping they’ll get the chance to compete with other battle-weary buyers for the one new listing that appears in their price range near where they really want to live,” he remarked, adding he does not expect the situation to get better soon.

With supplies depleted, prices continue to climb. Brokers reported 8,791 closed sales of single family homes and condos during April, nearly 50% higher than the year-ago total of 5,866 completed transactions. Year-over-year prices on closed sales surged 25%, from \$452,030 to \$565,000. Nearly every county had double-digit gains.

Prices on single family homes rose about 26.5%, while condo prices increased by a more modest 12%.

“As long as housing supply remains constrained and interest rates remain low, we could see these price trends continuing well into the summer,” said James Young, director of the Washington Center for Real Estate Research at the University of Washington. He expects continued price increases along the I-5 and I-90 corridors and noted peripheral areas are continuing to outperform as people seek value in a low interest rate environment.

Frank Leach, broker/owner at RE/MAX Platinum Services in Silverdale, said Kitsap County and the Olympic Peninsula are experiencing vigorous activity from would-be buyers from the Seattle/King County area who are looking for “safety, community, affordability, and choices.” He also cited the area’s low unemployment rate and robust economy as market drivers.

Inventory in Kitsap County has not expanded at anticipated rates, according to Leach. “Builders are perplexed with new regulations, increasing costs of construction materials, and increased bureaucratic overlays,” he stated.

The volume of new listings (including single family homes and condos) in Kitsap County increased 47.4% from a year ago and nearly 17% from March, but total active inventory was down 47% from a year ago, resulting in about two weeks of supply (0.57 months). Leach estimates 80% of sales in Kitsap County exceeded listed values, with “many buyers making the buying decision from a virtual tour.” Year-over-year prices rose 22.7%, with the median price on last month’s sales, at \$485,000, significantly lower than King County where it was \$750,000.

Intense competition is causing buyers and sellers to consider shortening offer review dates, according to Dean Rebhuhn, owner at Village Homes and Properties. “Sellers with offer review dates within five to seven days of the listing date are receiving strong offers on day one or day two of listing,” he said, adding, “Some sellers are considering offers with no contingencies and aggressive prices.”

Although bidding wars are common, Deely said some brokers are reporting things may be starting to moderate related to pricing. “Brokers tell us some sellers who have been pushing the envelope on their home price are now experiencing longer list times and, in some cases, have had to drop their prices.” He emphasized sellers need to price appropriately. “With things starting to return to normal, the off-the-chart activity placing sellers in the driver’s seat may be moderating,” he remarked.

NWMLS director Mike Larson, managing broker of the Harold Allen Team at COMPASS, agreed in part. “The real estate market was the cornerstone of the US economy during the darkest days of the pandemic, and things are not changing as we return to normalcy. “It’s still very tough for buyers.”

Larson said the value used to be what the comparable properties sold for. “Now it’s whatever the buyer is willing to pay, which is almost always more than the list price.” Although inventory remains a challenge, he believes “there may be hope on the horizon as we head into the prime-time months for sellers.”

The latest Northwest MLS report indicates condominiums may be an option for some house-hunters. A check of the MLS database shows 1,127 current condo listings with prices on these offerings ranging from \$75,000 for a listing on a golf course in Adams County to \$13.5 million for a penthouse on First Hill in Seattle.

Condo supply remains tight at 0.88 months (down 27% from a year ago), with prices up 12% areawide. In King County, where nearly three-fourths of current inventory is situated, year-over-year prices increased about 7%.

“It is interesting to note a continued decline in King County’s condominium inventory – down from nearly 1.6 months of supply in January -- perhaps marking a return to the urban markets with increased vaccinations,” suggested Young. The MLS report for April shows pending sales of condos for the map areas encompassing Seattle spiked nearly 184% from a year ago, from 135 units to 383.

CoreLogic research shows condos are increasingly popular with millennials with 47% of all condo mortgage applications submitted by millennials in 2019. Research by the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB) indicates improving perceptions about the availability of homes among some buyers, and especially among millennials, the largest share of home buyers. In its latest Housing Trends Report, NAHB reported the share of millennial buyers who expect housing availability to ease up in the months ahead rose decisively between the first quarters of 2020 and 2021, from 26% to 42%.

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

Single Fam. Homes + Condos	LISTINGS		PENDING SALES	CLOSED SALES			MONTHS OF INVENTORY	
	New Listings	Total Active	# Pending Sales	# Closings	Avg. Price	Median Price	This month	Same mo., year ago
King	4,602	2,212	3,977	3,402	\$936,621	\$750,000	0.65	1.57
Snohomish	1,898	632	1,630	1,285	\$676,104	\$630,000	0.49	1.39
Pierce	1,844	696	1,657	1,490	\$541,729	\$490,000	0.47	1.33
Kitsap	520	224	452	393	\$591,422	\$485,000	0.57	1.48
Mason	152	83	134	93	\$456,581	\$361,800	0.89	2.11
Skagit	217	129	209	149	\$523,326	\$455,000	0.87	2.32
Grays Harbor	155	113	156	113	\$297,066	\$280,000	1.00	3.09
Lewis	148	95	142	124	\$378,958	\$335,650	0.77	2.77
Cowlitz	139	65	137	110	\$380,846	\$373,000	0.59	1.61
Grant	140	89	148	98	\$303,092	\$272,250	0.91	2.97
Thurston	599	228	528	468	\$475,316	\$430,000	0.49	1.18
San Juan	45	61	33	32	\$1,195,416	\$735,056	1.91	14.31
Island	232	83	193	134	\$636,939	\$527,000	0.62	1.85
Kittitas	111	69	87	66	\$620,373	\$450,000	1.05	3.94
Jefferson	66	58	57	50	\$505,300	\$478,000	1.16	2.76
Okanogan	74	75	60	29	\$366,745	\$379,900	2.59	4.59
Whatcom	428	263	366	305	\$555,355	\$499,900	0.86	2.84
Clark	115	52	98	86	\$537,558	\$460,000	0.60	2.02
Pacific	61	40	72	61	\$303,203	\$278,252	0.66	4.93
Ferry	8	16	12	6	\$365,148	\$399,500	2.67	8.25
Clallam	114	65	93	66	\$421,048	\$384,500	0.98	2.12
Chelan	168	99	140	76	\$520,645	\$440,750	1.30	3.90
Douglas	41	27	44	46	\$445,054	\$391,250	0.59	3.24
*Adams	8	13	12	13	\$227,148	\$250,000	1.00	1.78
*Walla Walla	90	49	79	59	\$392,185	\$359,900	0.83	8.50
*Columbia	6	8	9	5	\$188,600	\$155,000	1.60	1.00
Others	62	72	58	32	\$366,263	\$342,500	2.25	3.33
Total	12,043	5,616	10,583	8,791	\$699,939	\$565,000	0.64	1.75

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

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

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

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

National Association of REALTORS® picks King County group to be part of new mentor program

Seattle King County REALTORS® (SKCR), in collaboration with the National Association of REALTORS® (NAR), is launching a unique [mentorship program](#) for multicultural individuals who are interested in exploring careers in real estate and developing the necessary skills for success.

SKCR is among eight associations – and the only one in the western United States – to be selected by NAR for the initiative. The new program pairs an experienced real estate professional (mentor) with an individual (mentee) from diverse populations to promote awareness of career options within the real estate profession.

As facilitator of the mentor program, NAR will provide resources and tools to help participants collaborate on delineating expectations, setting objectives and an action plan, and completing a formal mentoring agreement. The national organization also provides application forms for [mentees](#) and mentors along with two live educational sessions each month.

“This is a great opportunity for our members to reach out and share their knowledge with an aspiring young person or career-changer who wants to serve traditionally under-represented communities,” said Lynn Sanborn, president of Seattle King County Realtors. Sanborn, a managing broker at Windermere Real Estate Yarrow Bay in Kirkland, said being selected to partner with NAR on this important endeavor will further SKCR’s emphasis on protecting and promoting the right to own, transfer, and use real property.

Realtor Samantha Enos of was one of the first local Realtors to volunteer for the mentor program. Although she is a relatively new broker, she is a strong believer in mentoring, saying it was a big part of her prior career as a business solutions professional. In real estate, Enos, who is Black, said, “It’s important to have mentors who look like me.”



Having invested in residential real estate since 2008, Enos is keenly aware of Fair Housing, landlord-tenant relationships, and past practices of redlining, restrictive covenants and predatory lending. She believes her experiences as an investor, property manager, and landlord will prove beneficial to her mentee.

“I’m excited NAR is rolling out this program and specifically targeting minority communities,” Enos remarked, noting the timing during Fair Housing month and the past year’s nationwide demonstrations on civil rights violations and social injustices. “We have to start righting some of the wrongs that have happened, including in real estate.”

In her role as a mentor, Enos plans to draw on her reputation for open communication and being a strong, proactive advocate for clients. She knows success can take many forms and believes there is no such thing as failure. “Because I grew up in a household where we were not allowed to say ‘I can’t,’ I view failures as training opportunities. I can help my mentee focus on such opportunities and understand success may not be just about making a lot of money.”

In a statement announcing the mentorship program, NAR said it is intended to “build bridges to the holistic real estate community.” In addition to helping individuals learn the fundamentals of the real estate industry, the Realtor mentorship program will also “foster education, empower serious consideration of real estate as a career path, and encourage and promote the development of generational wealth through property ownership.”

The mentor program is an initiative of NAR president Charlie Oppler. At an event earlier this month to commemorate Fair Housing Month he said NAR strives every day “to ensure our 1.4 million members are leading this nation in the fight for fair housing,” adding, “We are committed to the belief that Americans of every background have the right to live where they choose.”

Realtors know there is much work to be done to close homeownership disparities. U.S. Census Bureau statistics show large gaps in homeownership rates when measured by ethnicity. Among non-Hispanic whites, the rate was 74.5% for the fourth quarter of 2020, but it drops to 56.3% for all other races. Only

49.1% of Hispanics and even fewer, 44.1% of Blacks, are homeowners. For the U.S. overall the rate at the end of last year was 65.8%.

Joining the Seattle King County Realtors in NAR's mentor program are Realtor associations in Illinois, Maryland, North Carolina, New Jersey, New York, Tennessee, and the District of Columbia.

The Seattle King County REALTORS® is a nonprofit professional trade association whose goals include promoting ethical business practices and supporting policies that preserve and expand real property rights and housing affordability. Based in Bellevue, SKCR has more than 7,000 members and is a local board of the National Association of Realtors®. The term Realtor® is a registered collective membership mark that identifies a real estate professional who is a member of the National Association of Realtors® and subscribes to its strict Code of Ethics.

“Priced out” gaps for new homes vary widely by race, ethnic groups

Affordability challenges for new home buyers continue to be more pronounced for minority households, according to the latest “priced out” estimates by the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB).

Only 24% of Black households can afford a new home at the U.S. median price of \$346,577, according to an analysis by NAHB. Hispanic households fare better with 32% of this segment being able to afford the mid-priced new home.

Among non-Hispanic white households, 44% have sufficient income to qualify for a mortgage using standard underwriting criteria. Asian households claim the largest share, at 56%.

The impact of a \$1,000 price increase varies among different racial/ethnic groups, but NAHB reported it is essentially proportional to population size. The largest priced-out number as a result of a \$1,000 price bump is 106,278 for non-Hispanic white households, which account for about two-thirds (67%) of total U.S. households. Some 15,840 Black households and 21,376 Hispanic households would be priced out of the market due to a \$1,000 price hike.

Affordability gaps between non-Hispanic white households and minority households persist across all states. NAHB analysts said the higher the home price, the smaller the number of households that can afford new homes.

The home builders' researchers noted the share of households that can afford new homes is largely affected by the state's median new home prices, emphasizing more affordable markets do not mean housing is equally affordable to all ethnic groups.

Not surprisingly, income plays a key role in housing affordability and [“priced out” gaps](#). Differences in income distribution among race/ethnicity are large. An estimated 17.6% of non-Hispanic white households earn more than \$150,000 annually, while only 7% of Black households are in that category.

At the lower end of the income spectrum, around 30% of Black households have incomes below \$25,000, about twice as many as non-Hispanic white households.

Rising interest rates can also price out households. NAHB’s 2020 priced-out estimates indicate around 1.3 million households would no longer afford new median-priced homes if mortgage rates rose from 3.75% to 4% nationwide.

Households Priced Out of the Market by a \$1,000 Price Increase, 2020
Washington vs. Nearby States

State	Median New Home Price	Income Needed to Quality	# Households	# Priced Out	% Priced Out
United States	\$344,652	85,533	124,488,189	158,857	12.76%
California	\$530,987	120,739	13,207,210	8,870	6.72%
Idaho	\$341,739	78,255	676,648	737	10.89%
Oregon	\$469,855	111,163	1,715,128	1,622	9.46%
Washington	\$513,941	122,506	3,009,210	2,100	6.98%

NAHB’s priced-out calculations assume a 10% down payment and a 30-year fixed rate mortgage at an interest rate of 3.75% with zero points.

REALTORS-led legislation addresses racial discrimination in housing

A bill championed by Washington REALTORS® and approved nearly unanimously by legislators will help property owners purge unlawful racial covenants and deed restrictions from their property records.

In addition to amending RCW 64.06.020 and 49.60.227, the recently approved bill, [HB 1335](#), adds a new section to chapter 49.60. It reads, in part:

“The legislature finds that the existence of racial, religious, or ethnic-based property restrictions or covenants on a deed or chain of title for real property is like having a monument to racism on that property and is repugnant to the tenets of equality. Furthermore, such restrictions and covenants may cause mental anguish and tarnish a property owner’s sense of ownership in the property because the owner feels as though they have participated in a racist act themselves.”

Nathan Gorton, government affairs director at Washington REALTORS®, said the bill improves the court process for eliminating such racial language if requested by the homeowner, and adds a notice to the

Seller Disclosure Form so buyers and sellers are aware of the process available to remove racial covenants. He noted the bill, which applies to real estate transactions entered into on or after January 1, 2022, had the support of racial justice groups and local governments.

The bill also provides for reviews of existing recorded covenants and deed restrictions by researchers at the University of Washington (UW) and Eastern Washington University (EWU). They are charged with identifying recorded documents with the unlawful discriminatory language. Additionally, their tasks will include notifying the property owner and county auditor where the property is located and providing information to the property owner on “how such provisions can be struck pursuant to RCW 49.60.227.”

Since 2005, UW students, as part of the university’s Seattle Civil Rights & Labor History project, have pored through property records on microfilm and uncovered more than 20,000 documents with restrictive covenants. Egregious examples are spread throughout Seattle as well as surrounding suburbs.

UW history professor James Gregory directs a collection of online sites grouped as the Civil Rights and Labor History Consortium, which includes the [Seattle Civil Rights and Labor History Project](#). Therein is a comprehensive database of restrictive covenants that includes an interactive map of neighborhoods in King County. He estimates counties statewide maintain 12 million pages of property records from 1926 when such restrictions became common. (In 1948, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled covenants restricting ownership by race as unenforceable. Housing discrimination was made illegal by Congress in 1968 with passage of the Fair Housing Law.)

HB 1335 received unanimous support by state senators and drew only one nay vote in the House. (Rep. Vicki Kraft from Vancouver was the sole dissenter.) Twenty-one legislators sponsored the bill.

Builders use various strategies to cope with volatile lumber prices

Builders have been beset with unstable lumber prices. In fact, rising prices and the availability of building materials ranked as the top challenge builders expect to face this year, according to the April 2021 survey for the NAHB/Wells Fargo Housing Market Index.

In its monthly survey – which the National Association of Home Builders has been conducting for 35 years – NAHB added a question asking builders how they are coping with the challenge of volatile prices and supply.

Softwood lumber prices nearly doubled during an unprecedented four-month surge in 2020, according to NAHB. Since reaching an all-time high in September, prices continue to fluctuate and even surged past that historic peak earlier this year.

NAHB estimates rising softwood lumber prices over the past 12 months have added \$35,875 to the price of an average new single family home. For an average new multifamily home, the market value jumped nearly \$13,000. Researchers say that increase means households will pay \$119 more a month to rent a new apartment.

Nearly half (47%) of single-family buildings in the Housing Market Index (HMI) panel indicated they were including price escalation clauses in their sales contracts. Thirty percent said they were pre-ordering lumber and 22% are obtaining lumber price guarantees from their suppliers.

By smaller numbers, builders are dealing with fluctuating prices by:

Otherwise delaying building or sales when costs spike (19%);

Laying the foundation, then pausing before starting the framing (15%);

Including shared price clauses in contracts (10%);

Using lumber options or futures to hedge against future price changes (4%)

None of the aforementioned responses (13%).

In reporting the findings of its April survey, NAHB researchers noted neither guaranteeing prices for a month, nor any of the other practices builders cited, completely compensates for the historic surge and price volatility the industry has been experiencing. “Price escalation clauses seem to offer some protection for builders, but don’t prevent them from losing sales to customers unable to afford the escalated house prices,” stated Paul Emrath, Ph.D., the association’s vice president for survey and housing policy research.

NAHB said housing starts have been “relatively strong” lately, but noted a rising number of unused permits signaled some stress in the market. The group’s [housing affordability pyramid](#) shows the strength is due largely to demand at the high end of the income distribution.

A large number of households with more modest incomes have been priced out of the market for new homes. In fact, its 2021 Priced-Out Estimates shows that 75.1 million households are unable to afford a median priced new home, and an additional 153,967 would be priced out if the price increased by \$1,000.

The National Association of Home Builders is a Washington-based trade association representing more than 140,000 members involved in various aspects of residential and light commercial construction. NAHB is affiliated with more than 700 state and local home builder associations around the country.

94 communities in Washington earn “Tree City USA” designations

Nearly half of Washington’s residents (48.25%) live in one of the state’s 94 “Tree City USA” communities, according to the [Arbor Day Foundation](#). Collectively, these communities planted 46,517 trees, and spent, on average, \$10.31 per capita for urban forestry management during 2019 (the most recent reporting period).

Mountlake Terrace became the latest city in Washington to earn the Tree City USA recognition.



Also recognized were eight “Growth Award” recipients, with Bellevue claiming the longest active growth streak at 27 years. No new growth award recipients within Washington were named in 2019.

The primary goal of the Tree City program is to promote viable tree management programs. To earn the designation, four standards must be met:

A tree board or department, which assumes legal responsibility for the care of all trees on city- or town-owned property. Many communities delegate tree care decisions to a professional forester or arborist, but also have a citizen-led advisory board.

A tree care ordinance, which provides guidance for planting, maintaining and/or removing trees from streets, parks and other public spaces in that community, and stipulates activities that are required or prohibited. Such ordinances typically assign the task of crafting and implementing a plan of work and documenting annual tree care activities.

A Community Forestry Program with an annual budget of at least \$2 per capita. Such investments demonstrate a community’s commitment to grow and protect the health of their tree assets.

An Arbor Day observance and proclamation. Such events, whether brief and a weeklong observation, enable citizens to gather to educate other residents about the benefits of community trees, and to celebrate work accomplished to plant and maintain trees.

As extensions of its Tree City USA designations, the Arbor Day Foundations also has several related recognitions, including a “Tree Line USA Utilities” program, a “Tree Campus Healthcare” program, and a “Tree Campus Higher Education” program.

PUD 1 of Chelan County earned the distinction of the state’s longest active Tree Line USA Utility, celebrating 22 years. A dozen two- and four-year accredited colleges and universities in Washington state have met the five standards for the “Tree Campus Higher Education designation.”

The Arbor Day Foundation cites numerous benefits of trees for communities and homeowners. They suggest trees can be a stimulus to economic development, attracting new businesses and tourists.

Additionally, the Foundation states commercial retail areas are more attractive to shoppers, apartments rent more quickly, tenants stay longer, and space in a wooded setting is more valuable to sell or rent.

For homeowners, the benefits include:

If you plant a tree today on the west side of your home, in 5 years your energy bills should be 3% less. In 15 years, the savings will be nearly 12%. *Dr. E. Greg McPherson, Center for Urban Forest Research.* Landscaping, especially with trees, can increase property values as much as 20 percent. *Management Information Services/ICMA.*

Having large trees in yards along streets increases a home's value from 3 percent to 15 percent. *Wolf, Kathleen L, PhD, University of Washington (2007) City Trees and Property Values. Arborist News. 16, 4:34-36.*

Healthy, mature trees add an average of 10 percent to a property's value. *USDA Forest Service*

One acre of forest absorbs six tons of carbon dioxide and puts out four tons of oxygen – enough to meet the annual needs of 18 people, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

The USDA Forest Service says trees properly placed around buildings can reduce air conditioning needs by 30 percent and can save 20-50 percent in energy used for heating. Planting trees also means improved water quality, resulting in less runoff and erosion. Tree plantings also allow more recharging of the ground water supply, according to the Forest Service. Wooded areas help prevent the transport of sediment and chemicals into streams, they explain.

Founded in 1972, the Arbor Day Foundation has grown to become the largest nonprofit membership organization dedicated to planting trees, with more than one million members, supporters, and valued partners. During the last 45 years, more than 350 million Arbor Day Foundation trees have been planted in neighborhoods, communities, cities and forests throughout the world.

Tree City USA is supported by USDA Forest Service, Urban and Community Forestry, and the National Association of State Foresters.

DOL implements paperless license retention requirements

Paper copies of real estate licenses no longer need to be given to a broker's firm or designated broker for retention. The Department of Licensing (DOL) eliminated that requirement effective April 29, 2021, although individual brokerages may have different policies requiring copies of licenses.

DOL also abolished its requirement that a firm or branch license be displayed at the licensed location. Real estate firms and branches may access their license and a roster of affiliated licensees through the

online Business License Portal. (Brokers need to have a SAW account with its business licensed linked to it.)

Printed licenses are no longer mailed to licensees or real estate firms or branches unless requested. Instead, licensees are emailed an electronic copy of their license, which firms can access via the online Business License Portal. Designated brokers and branch managers must be able to provide a copy of the firm or branch license and a roster of affiliated licensees upon request of the DOL or the public.

NWMLS has posted DOL's step-by-step [instructions](#) to help real estate firms and branches add or separate licensees and export the Licensee Relationships Report, which lists all affiliated brokers and managing brokers and their license and relationship statuses.

Resources abound for statewide info, help on COVID-19

More than 5 million COVID-19 vaccine doses have been administered throughout Washington, with nearly 29% of residents now being fully vaccinated. Even so, public health officials urge continued mask wearing (especially in crowded places), social distancing, and frequent handwashing.

With vaccine supplies more plentiful statewide and eligibility open to everyone 16 and older, the state's Department of Health (DOH) and various volunteers are offering resources to help residents get vaccinated as quickly and easily as possible.

In addition to public sector resources, several volunteers have initiated social media platforms to help people – especially high-risk and vulnerable populations -- navigate the system to uncover appointments or walk-up locations.



One such effort on Facebook called [FindaCOVIDShotWashington](#) was started by two siblings in Snohomish County. Since launching their page a few months ago, this dedicated brother-sister team has attracted more than 50,000 followers and trained 75 multilingual volunteers.



The founders say their mission is to make COVID-19 vaccines more accessible for Black, Indigenous, and people of color, along with elderly people and high-risk communities. Individuals with no access to the Internet or Facebook can call 425-780-5785 and leave a voicemail message in English or Spanish.

Members of this Facebook group are invited to post links to vaccine openings. Volunteers who speak more than 15 languages are available to provide one-on-one assistance.

A group of tech-savvy individuals combined efforts to create a site serving older seniors and vulnerable groups who need help finding actual appointments around Washington. Volunteers check more than 1100 providers at 5-minute intervals to identify appointment availabilities. Individuals can subscribe to text alerts for openings by calling or texting a ZIP code to 206-222-9793, or they can visit the WA COVID Vaccine Finder [site](#) to search current listings.

The state-run [vaccine finder](#) will list locations with appointments within 50 miles of a specified ZIP code.

The Washington State Department of Health also offers a COVID-19 [vaccine toolkit](#) for employers and businesses. It includes videos, social media images, and banners. Other resources include a [two-page information sheet](#) with answers to frequently asked questions (FAQs), a 30-second [video](#), a data dashboard, and a multilingual [COVID-19 site](#) with details on the state's coronavirus response and resources.



Green Home Tour offers free, inspirational showcase of projects



Northwest EcoBuilding Guild’s annual green home tour is underway. This year’s event will showcase more than 20 homes and projects “in all shades of light to deep green.” The interactive virtual tours are scheduled for three Saturdays: May 1, 8, and 15. Different homes and projects will be featured from 9 am – 11:30 am on each date.

Attendees can view backyard cottages, kitchen remodels, and new homes built with cutting-edge green features. Builders, designers, suppliers, and homeowners will demonstrate ways to generate your own electricity, lower energy bills, and conserve water. Experts will offer tips for creating healthier home environments.

Two [ticket options](#) are available for this educational program: a “set your price” admission for each tour (with a suggested donation of \$5) or a “tour lovers” package that includes access to all virtual events and unlimited access to all recordings from the tours.

Founded in 1993, the [Northwest EcoBuilding Guild](#) is a 501(c)3 community concerned with ecological building and long-term sustainability in the Pacific Northwest. The organization was founded by a small group of professionals already incorporating green building ideas into their practices and has grown to three chapters. In addition to networking and exchanging ideas, the Guild offers monthly educational meetings and produces an online Green Pages directory with more than 100 searchable pages of professionals, businesses, and organizations.



NORTHWEST
EcoBuilding
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ADVANCING A 200-YEAR PERSPECTIVE FOR THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

Seattle is #9 (but also #1 and #5)

Seattle ranked ninth among 58 large cities that were evaluated for their walkability and outdoor recreation assets. The rankings were compiled by COMMERCIALCafé, a real estate listings and data provider.

Six metrics were used to determine the rankings, with New Orleans coming out on top by scoring 68.29 points on a 100point scale. Seattle accumulated 47.18 points.

When considering the measurements separately, Seattle ranked first for the metric based on park spending per capita, and fifth when comparing the share of workers who walk to work. Researchers reported Seattle spends roughly \$351 per resident on its parks, including both public and private investments in park maintenance and improvements.

In announcing the rankings, CommercialCafe commented on the value of walkability and outdoor recreation. “During the past year, many of us have realized the importance of outdoor spaces by either having or not having access to them, and this is even more true in the more densely populated urban centers,” the author of their [blog](#) wrote. “It is difficult to convey simply just how important it is to properly integrated green open spaces with the fabric of our ever-expanded cities,” the writer added.

The rankings included 58 cities with populations of at least 300,000 residents. In addition to park investments per resident, each city was evaluated for:

- Percentage of walking commuters (Boston was #1);
- average walking commute time (Virginia Beach, Virginia was #1);
- public parks to city area ratio (New Orleans was #1);
- ratio of public lands (in acres) to 1,000 residents (Jacksonville, Florida was #1);
- a trail index (which considers walking trails, athletic field space, dog parks, and playgrounds) (Minneapolis was #1);

In addition to New Orleans, other cities that ranked ahead of Seattle were #2 Washington, D.C., #3 Minneapolis, #4 Virginia Beach, #5 San Francisco, #6 Portland, Oregon, #7 New York City, and #8 Albuquerque. Rounding out the top 10 was Cincinnati.

CommercialCafe is part of California-based Yardi Systems. Its walkability and outdoor recreation rankings are part of its Urban Sustainability series.

Washington among states with strong employment in home building

Washington is among 15 states with the highest share of residential construction workers, according to NAHB Economics, an arm of the National Association of Home Builders.

Using data from the Census Bureau's American Community Survey (ACS), researchers estimate 4.4 million people work in residential construction. That accounts for 2.8% of the US employed civilian labor force.

The NAHB findings, released last month, are based on 2019 statistics, the latest available. The builders' group noted in 2020, home building created additional jobs even though many sectors of the economy struggled due to COVID-19.

California claims the highest number of workers in home building with close to 640,000. On a percentage basis, that amounts to more than 3.3% of its employed labor force. Idaho had the highest share of residential construction workers at 5.2%, due in part to a high prevalence of seasonal, vacation homes.

Washington surpassed the national average (2.8%) with an estimated 3.5% of its labor force employed in home building.

NAHB's analysis of data by congressional district indicated the average district had about 10,000 residents working in residential construction in 2019. In Idaho's 1st congressional district, which covers the western part of the state, some 24,000 residents work in home building.

Other areas where home building is credited with particularly high employment levels and share of local jobs include Florida's 25th congressional district, Arizona's 7th district, Utah's 4th, and Montana's single district. All these areas reported at least 21,000 residents work in residential construction.

NAHB's residential construction employment estimates include self-employed workers, which that trade group says is particularly relevant in the home building industry since they traditionally make up a larger share of the labor force.

The NAHB report notes the home building employment estimates only include workers directly employed by the industry. Not counted are jobs created in related industries such as design and architecture, furniture making, building materials, landscaping, and others. Consequently, NAHB says the estimates understate the overall impact of home building on local employment.

Homebuilder acquires large parcel in Woodinville

Thirty-two acres in Woodinville where one home, a barn, and an arena are currently situated, will be redeveloped by homebuilder D.R. Horton.

The parcel, which is near 132nd Ave NE and NE 143rd Place, sold for \$19 million. Public records indicate plans for 87 townhomes and seven single family homes.

D.R. Horton is the country's largest homebuilder. The publicly traded company, which has mortgage, title, and insurance subsidiaries, also ranks as the largest local homebuilder. The Texas-based builder, with offices in Kirkland, built 1,264 single family homes in the Puget Sound region in 2019, according to the *Puget Sound Business Journal's* "Book of Lists."

News In Brief

- **Washington state's economy has weathered the coronavirus pandemic better than any other state in the nation, a newly released study has found.** The report, [by personal finance website WalletHub](#), compared the 50 states and the District of Columbia across 13 key metrics, including the share of employment from small businesses to the share of workers with access to paid sick leave and the increase in unemployment insurance claims. A score was then assigned to each state based on those metrics, and Washington state's economy ranked as the least impacted so far by the pandemic. Specifically, the study found that the Evergreen state has: One of the highest shares of workers who are able to work from home; A gross domestic product that is one of the least dependent on industries highly affected by the pandemic; A higher than average number of employees returning to work after being unemployed; A higher than average share of workers with access to paid sick leave. Arizona's economy was the second least affected by the pandemic, while Oregon was third, Utah was fourth and the District of Columbia was fifth. States hardest hit economically by the pandemic were Louisiana, Oklahoma, Hawaii, Ohio and Nevada. Experts say that states that did comparatively well through the pandemic are likely to remain in good condition as it ends.
- **The new Northgate light rail station will open to passenger service on Sat., Oct. 2, extending the public transportation system's reach by another 4.3 miles, Sound Transit officials announced recently.** The new extension, which reportedly is moving forward under budget, will take riders from Northgate to downtown Seattle in 14 minutes, with stops at underground stations in Seattle's University District and Roosevelt neighborhoods. Of the 4.3-mile extension, all but 0.8 miles of elevated track at Northgate are located underground. Officials said the opening of the Northgate station will kick off a three year period of major light rail extensions,

nearly tripling the region’s light rail system from 22 miles to 62 miles by 2024. Voters approved the Northgate light rail extension in 2008 as part of the Sound Transit 2 ballot measure. Construction on the project began in 2012 following six years of planning.

- The Washington state Legislature has passed a measure that makes Juneteenth a legal state holiday.** The measure making June 19 a state paid holiday passed the Democratic-led Senate on a bipartisan 47-1 vote and now heads to Gov. Jay Inslee for his signature. The House passed the measure in February on an 89 -9 vote. Juneteenth commemorates when the last enslaved African Americans learned they were free in 1865 in Galveston, Texas, where Union soldiers brought them the news two years after the Emancipation Proclamation.
- Washington's unemployment rate dropped to 5.4% (March 2021), down slightly from the previous month's 5.6% rate.** The state also added 23,100 jobs in March. Private sector employment increased by 18,600 jobs and government employment increased by 4,500 jobs. Leisure and hospitality, government and education saw the largest gains, and manufacturing was the only sector that saw a downswing, with 200 job losses. The national unemployment rate decreased from 6.2% in February to 6% in March.
- Voters in King County will decide in August on a proposed extension and expansion of a levy that has given millions of dollars to programs over the last five years to foster child development.** The Seattle Times reported that the Metropolitan King County Council approved County Executive Dow Constantine's proposal to send the expiring Best Starts for Kids levy to the ballot. Council staff say the proposal would raise about \$872 million over the next six years. Constantine's office says the owner of a median-priced home in King County would pay \$114 per year for the new levy.
- Fireworks will be illegal in all of unincorporated King County starting in 2022 under a measure approved Tuesday by the full King County Council.** The legislation, sponsored by King County councilmembers Joe McDermott and Claudia Balducci, will prohibit all types of fireworks - including sparklers and smoke bombs. This new ban brings unincorporated King County communities in line with most other municipal jurisdictions in King County. Properly permitted professional fireworks displays will still be allowed under the new measure. State law requires a one-year waiting period before the ban can take effect, so it will be effective before July 4, 2022.

Calendar of Events

DATES	EVENT	TIME	LOCATION	CONTACT
5/3-14	NAR Virtual Meetings		Zoom	425-974-1011
5/5	Board of Directors	9:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.	Zoom	425-974-1011
5/13	Affiliate Council	9 a.m. - 10 a.m.	Zoom	425-974-1011
5/31	Holiday-Office Closed		Zoom	425-974-1011