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May marked a month of new records for some Northwest MLS market indicators

KIRKLAND, Washington (June 7, 2021) – May was a month of record-setting highs and lows for some key housing market indicators tracked by Northwest Multiple Listing Service.

Northwest MLS director Robb Wasser, branch manager at Windermere Real Estate/East in Bellevue, noted the number of active listings for single family homes dropped from April to May for the first time in at least 20 years. The month-to-month decline was small (only 83 listings), but compared to 12 months ago, May's inventory plummeted by 4,824 listings (down 46.6%).

Months of inventory of homes and condominiums fell to just over two weeks (0.59 months) system-wide, which encompasses 26 of Washington's 39 counties. Only March 2021 and December 2020 have been lower when both months ended with only 0.53 months of supply.

Year-over-year price increases measured by percentages appeared to hit a new high with the median price on last month's 9,374 closed sales soaring 30% from a year ago.

A check of Northwest MLS data shows prices on the 8,011 single family home sales (excluding condos) that closed last month sold for 107.3% of the asking price. In the 4-county Puget Sound region (King, Snohomish, Pierce and Kitsap), the figure was 108.6%, while in King County it was 109.5%.

"Everything is about breaking records this past year with record-breaking housing prices, record-breaking low inventory, and record-breaking consumer savings rates during the pandemic," remarked Meredith Hansen, owner/designated broker at Keller Williams Greater Seattle. "All this equals a very strong, chaotic market that may not slow down for the next year," added Hansen, who is also a member of the NWMLS board of directors.

"Last month's listings came in lower than we would normally see due to the month starting on a Saturday and ending with a holiday weekend," noted J. Lennox Scott, chairman and CEO at John L. Scott Real Estate. "New resale listings typically go on the market on Wednesday, Thursday or Friday," he explained, adding, "In today's instant-response market, new listings often go pending over the weekend or early the next week."

Scott expects an elevated number of new resale listings for just three more months before the fall housing market. "This time period will be critical for home buyers looking to secure their home of choice while interest rates are at historically low levels."

"The summer real estate market is upon us with an increased number of new listings giving homebuyers more selection. Record low interest rates and job gains continue to drive the market, along with focused lifestyle changes," reported Dean Rehhuhn, owner at Village Homes and Properties. He also noted rising home prices are prompting buyers to drive farther north, south, and east to find affordable homes.

Brokers added 11,922 new listings of single family homes and condos during May, slightly fewer than April's total of 12,043. Compared to a year ago, as brokers, sellers, and buyers were adjusting to pandemic related restrictions on the real estate industry, the volume of new listings rose 20.8%.

Pending sales edged above the volume of new listings, with brokers reporting 11,969 mutually accepted offers. That number also outgained the year-ago total of 10,389 (a gain of 15.2%), and was the highest number since September when MLS members logged 12,053 pending sales.

High demand kept supply depleted. At month end, there were 5,533 active listings in the NWMLS database, nearly half the inventory of a year ago when buyers could choose from 10,357 listings.

"The dramatic increase in prices and low inventory just continue in such a way that although we have more inventory coming on the market, it is immediately absorbed because of a demand that simply cannot be met," said NWMLS director John Deely, executive vice president of operations at Coldwell Bank Bain.

Frank Wilson, Kitsap regional manager and branch managing broker at John L. Scott Real Estate-Poulsbo, said brokers there are seeing increases in new listings, like most counties, and also pent-up demand. However, he noted, "We are also beginning to see isolated instances of homes not selling right away, or homes that only receive one offer. Part of this could be the backlog of buyers is shrinking, or it could be that sellers are just asking too much for their home."

Kitsap brokers are also experiencing increases in the time it takes to get an appraisal, according to Wilson. "In some cases, appraisers are just not picking up an appraisal unless it comes with a rush fee," he reported.

Another Kitsap County broker, Frank Leach, owner at RE/MAX Platinum Services in Silverdale, described the market in that county as “extremely active.” MLS figures show there is only 0.62 months of supply (about 19 days) with most homes selling at 108% above asking price. Closed sales jumped nearly 42% from a year ago. Prices on last month’s closed sales of single family homes and condos (combined) in Kitsap County increased from $395,600 to $486,944 for a gain of more than 23%.

Leach, a board member at Northwest MLS, said Kitsap County continues to be an affordable alternative to counties to the east. “New construction is booming throughout Kitsap with thousands of single family and multifamily projects underway. Low interest rates and easing of COVID-19 restrictions are bringing buyers out to take advantage of the market.”

James Young, director of the Washington Center for Real Estate at the University of Washington, commented on the challenges facing first-time buyers. “Residential month’s supply (excluding condos) has continued to decline with less than two weeks of inventory in King, Snohomish, and Pierce counties, and slightly more than two weeks in the region. These are amazingly low levels of inventory,” he noted.

“Coupled with continued low interest rates and eased borrowing criteria, rapidly rising prices reflect huge supply imbalances. Given these imbalances, first-time buyers have had almost no chance to take advantage of low interest rates unless they leave the city. Unfortunately for them, continued supply constraints along the I-5 corridor mean they are increasingly being left out of the market for the whole region. Only a decrease in demand will moderate house price trends,” Young stated.

Industry veteran Mike Grady expects demand will remain strong. “While we’re starting to hear some talk about increasing inflation given a lack of new construction and skilled labor and supply chain shortages, our market is counteracting that,” suggested Grady, the president and CEO at Coldwell Banker Bain. He believes three factors will continue to drive demand for the next six to 12 months: having the main bulk of the millennial generation finally entering their home buying years; the acceleration of retirement of boomers and their subsequent home downsize or relocation moves; and the relocation of people from all over the world to the Pacific Northwest as part of the Work from Home (WFH) mindset due to the coronavirus lockdown.

Windermere Chief Economist Matthew Gardner commented on the “pronounced impact” COVID-19 had on the urban Seattle condominium market last year as many condo owners decided to sell and relocate away from the downtown area. “By summer, inventory had jumped to levels we had not seen since the bursting of the housing bubble in 2008, resulting in more supply than demand and lower listing prices.”

Continuing, Gardner said, “The good news is the Seattle condo market has settled back down with inventory dropping and sales rising. Because of the shift in this market there was a price reset, but this appears to be luring buyers who previously thought they could not afford to buy downtown, leading to more balance between supply and demand."

The NWMLS report for May shows condo inventory is down nearly 36% from a year ago as pending sales (1,613) outgained new listings (1,607). At month-end, the condo selection totaled 1,093 listings, with about three weeks of supply (0.80). Young noted the condo supply in King County is dwindling. There was about a month's supply at the end of May, down from 1.67 (about 50 days) in January.

Pending sales of condos in King County surged 62.4% from a year ago. In Seattle, last month's pending sales shot up 83.7%, while area-wide, they rose 37.2%.

Closed sales of condos system-wide more than doubled from a year ago, from 658 to 1,363 (up more than 107%). Prices on last month's sales increased 21.7% from last year, with the largest gains outside of King County. Within King County, which accounted for 799 of the total sales volume (58.6%), year-over-year prices rose 9.3%, from $420,000 to $459,000.

Commenting on the uptick of condo activity, Deely noted there is less than a month's supply (0.80). "As many of our large companies announce their intent for a hybrid work-from-home/in-office approach, it appears concerns about commutes are starting to drive buyers into the urban condo markets once again."

Scott is confident the robust activity will continue. "We are in a prime position to see a good number of resale listings and a proportional number of homes going under contract. Frenzy-level buyer demand has not waned. The local market is still virtually sold out in the more affordable and mid-price ranges, as well as into the luxury ranges in some areas."

Hansen agreed, reminding buyers "they need to be ready to compete in this market by reviewing successful offer strategies with their broker and lender."

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.

Next page: statistical charts

Single Fam. Homes + Condos	LISTINGS		PENDING SALES	CLOSED SALES			MONTHS OF INVENTORY	
	New Listings	Total Active	# Pending Sales	# Closings	Avg. Price	Median Price	This month	Same mo., year ago
King	4,372	1,995	4,379	3,643	$962,712	$775,000	0.42	1.74
Snohomish	1,757	500	1,886	1,469	$701,278	$655,000	0.37	1.35
Pierce	1,865	737	1,878	1,451	$553,533	$500,000	0.49	1.21
Kitsap	548	253	531	410	$596,782	$486,944	0.59	1.51
Mason	149	83	153	115	$416,037	$375,000	0.73	1.78
Skagit	205	126	206	175	$570,545	$490,000	0.75	2.22
Grays Harbor	225	158	198	146	$348,000	$302,500	1.06	2.79
Lewis	149	119	158	93	$374,735	$350,000	1.27	2.01
Cowlitz	174	79	166	107	$388,350	$352,000	0.75	1.40
Grant	139	103	135	116	$306,680	$296,750	0.85	2.92
Thurston	617	223	649	476	$479,348	$450,000	0.45	1.10
San Juan	54	67	50	28	$1,222,535	$745,000	2.40	8.13
Island	232	97	213	164	$617,598	$525,000	0.59	1.51
Kittitas	145	90	116	92	$644,948	$483,225	0.95	2.69
Jefferson	66	54	68	47	$659,118	$590,000	1.16	4.24
Okanogan	78	80	74	43	$345,355	$277,000	1.86	5.23
Whatcom	437	264	419	313	$586,622	$510,000	0.84	2.86
Clark	115	54	121	85	$511,732	$450,000	0.68	1.47
Pacific	64	60	51	57	$306,232	$272,000	1.10	3.21
Ferry	13	24	7	02	$229,500	$229,500	12.00	7.25
Clallam	137	80	138	80	$471,078	$425,000	0.99	2.62
Chelan	135	109	133	106	$613,376	$498,750	1.01	3.12
Douglas	66	29	66	53	$489,486	$441,000	0.53	3.03
*Adams	14	13	14	08	$276,263	$308,576	1.63	3.60
*Walla Walla	86	43	88	46	$413,608	$352,000	0.93	10.00
*Columbia	12	15	5	03	$255,000	$255,000	5.00	N/A
Others	68	78	67	46	$355,603	$352,000	1.68	5.00
Total	**11,922**	**5,533**	**11,969**	**9,374**	**$722,909**	**$585,000**	**0.55**	**1.74**

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

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

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

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
2003	4746	5290	6889	6837	7148	7202	7673	7135	6698	6552	4904	4454
2004	4521	6284	8073	7910	7888	8186	7583	7464	6984	6761	6228	5195
2005	5426	6833	8801	8420	8610	8896	8207	8784	7561	7157	6188	4837
2006	5275	6032	8174	7651	8411	8094	7121	7692	6216	6403	5292	4346
2007	4869	6239	7192	6974	7311	6876	6371	5580	4153	4447	3896	2975
2008	3291	4167	4520	4624	4526	4765	4580	4584	4445	3346	2841	2432
2009	3250	3407	4262	5372	5498	5963	5551	5764	5825	5702	3829	3440
2010	4381	5211	6821	7368	4058	4239	4306	4520	4350	4376	3938	3474
2011	4272	4767	6049	5732	5963	5868	5657	5944	5299	5384	4814	4197
2012	4921	6069	7386	7015	7295	6733	6489	6341	5871	6453	5188	4181
2013	5548	6095	7400	7462	7743	7374	7264	6916	5951	6222	5083	3957
2014	5406	5587	7099	7325	8055	7546	7169	6959	6661	6469	5220	4410
2015	5791	6541	8648	8671	8620	8608	8248	7792	7179	6977	5703	4475

2016	5420	6703	8130	8332	9153	8869	8545	8628	7729	7487	6115	4727
2017	5710	6024	7592	7621	9188	9042	8514	8637	7441	7740	6094	4460
2018	5484	5725	7373	7565	8742	8052	7612	6893	6235	6367	5328	4037
2019	5472	4910	7588	8090	8597	8231	7773	7345	6896	6797	5788	4183
2020	5352	6078	6477	5066	7297	8335	8817	9179	8606	7934	6122	4851
2021	5216	5600	8002	7716	8674							

Study shows how overregulation worsens housing affordability crisis

Regulatory costs account for $93,870, or 23.8% of the current average sales price of a new home ($394,300), according to a recent study by the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB). The group said rising regulatory costs are a limiting factor on housing supply, “particularly for the entry-level market in need of inventory.”

Of that nearly $94,000 in costs attributable to regulations imposed by all levels of government, about 42% ($41,330) is associated with regulation during development, with the remaining $52,540 due to regulation during construction.

In 2011, regularly costs for a new home were around $65,000.

“This study illustrates how overregulation is exacerbating the nation’s housing affordability crisis and that policymakers need to take bold steps to reduce or eliminate unnecessary regulations that will help builders increase the production of quality, affordable housing to meet growing market demand,” said NAHB Chairman Chuck Fowke.

In another report, NAHB found lumber prices have tripled over the past 12 months. Consequently, the price of the average new single family home increased by $35,872. From April 2020 to the beginning of May 2021, the price of framing lumber was nearly $1,500 per thousand board feet – a jump of 250%. That figure is on top of the $93,870 due to regulation.

Fowke said he expects lumber price hikes will ease, thanks to the successful rollout of the COVID-19 vaccine, which is enabling more plans to reopen in Canada and the U.S. To the relief of buyers, inventory should increase, and overall prices should decline.

NAHB’s survey reflects the views of 2,071 builder-members and 57 developers. Nearly every builder (98.9%) who participated reported experiencing some type of regulatory cost during construction.

NAHB analyzed the impact of costs on the price of a house:
Additional charges passed on to the home buyer depending on when a cost is incurred:
Cost imposed directly on buyer at closing....0.00%
Cost incurred by builder during construction....14.94%
Cost incurred at start of construction....16.35%
Cost incurred when applying for building permit....16.82%
Cost incurred during site development....27.63%
Cost incurred when applying for development approval....30.17%

Nine of every 10 respondents said changes to building codes over the past decade have added to their costs. Averaged across all homes, the cost increases associated with codes account for 9.9% of the builder's construction costs, and 6.1% of the final house price.

NAHB research indicated 84.5% of the developers reported being subject to design standards under regulation that "went beyond" what they would ordinarily do, which added to their costs. On average, the requirements accounted for 9.1% of the price of the lot, and 2.3% of the final price of the house.

The vast majority of developers (95.9%) said complying with regulations usually caused a delay, typically averaging six months.

In the report, Paul Emrath, Ph.D., NAHB's vice president for survey and housing policy research, said the study is not arguing that all regulation is bad or should be eliminated.

Nevertheless, NAHB said regulatory barriers add significantly to the overall expense of housing, they can consume a considerable amount of builders' time, and the lengthy and complicated review processes "represent an especially difficult challenge for affordably priced housing, fundamentally affecting who can afford to purchase a home."

Condo comeback fueling FOMO

Condos are making a comeback, declared Dean Jones, head of a Seattle-based real estate consultancy and brokerage that specializes in market research, product development, marketing and sales.

In a recent blog for Realogics Sotheby's International Realty (RSIR) where he is CEO and owner, Jones described the current market in the Seattle metro area as "a perfect storm for savvy homebuyers that know how to spot the opportunity," adding, "The fundamentals are creating FOMO (fear of missing out)."

With more than 100,000 tech workers being encouraged back to work by some of the industry's major players, Jones said that call-back decision is "having a noted effect on the housing demand of in-city apartments and condominiums." Residents that may have fled high-density markets during the COVID pandemic are returning, according to Jones. "Basically, all the trendlines that were pessimistic a year ago have reversed course and that's shoring up consumer confidence," he remarked.

Data from Northwest Multiple Listing Service confirm the uptick.

Through May, year-to-date pending sales of condominiums county-wide are up more than 62%. In MLS area 701 encompassing the downtown-Belltown area, pending sales have jumped more than 57%.

Research by RSIR shows the resurgence includes Californians as the top inbound buyer demographic "lured by the Evergreen State's more favorable tax structure and economic opportunities."

Jones acknowledges "it may take more than a year to see the urban ecosystem looking like they were before the pandemic and following other political headwinds," but believes waiting "will more likely mean less supply, more buyer competition, and both prices and interest rates on the rise."

RSIR's research reveals 15 condo buildings either recently built or under construction within Seattle's city limits. Combined, these projects will add 2,256 units scheduled for occupancy between 2018 – 2023. About half the units in this pipeline is either sold and closed, or under contract.

Jones said growing demand is not limited to Seattle as "boom-burbs are also seeing impressive sales momentum." He noted projects in Kirkland and West Seattle as examples. NWMLS figures for May show pending sales of condos surged more than 78% in southwest King County compared to the same month a year ago, and nearly 62% on the Eastside.

Savvy developers attract buyers with health and wellness amenities

"Family friendliness" remains the top focus for developers of master-planned communities, but a new survey indicates "health and wellness" amenities are becoming increasingly important.

The New Homes Trends Institute at John Burns Real Estate Consulting reported the once-prolific "resort lifestyle" is being unseated as the second-most important focal point.

Researchers from the Institute reported 76% of homeowners who were surveyed said they are taking more steps to promote their physical health compared to last year. For developers, the Burns consultants say this shift is "creating a surging emphasis on connection to nature, fitness, sustainability, and local food sources."

Savvy developers will go beyond trails and a lap pool, "which have become ordinary," suggest the experts from Burns. Its New Home Trends Institute outlined four ways innovative builders could accommodate the emerging desires:

1. Immersion into nature. Successful master plans are offering exciting outdoor adventures that bring wilderness to suburbia. Among examples, they cite the "Fish Camp Dock" in Pomona (located in Manvel, Texas); a stargazing amphitheater in Headwaters (in Dripping Springs, Texas); and "The Campout" in Esencia, a community within Rancho Mission Viejo (in San Juan Capistrano, California).

2. Integrating healthcare into community. Telehealth was growing pre-pandemic in response to consumer demand for convenient health services. Authors of the "Trends" report showcased Lake Nona in Orlando, Florida for making a healthy lifestyle easy "with purposeful integration of collaborative health care, research, and academic establishments into the community."

3. Connection and community. Nearly seven of ten homeowners (69%) told researchers they are taking more steps to promote their mental health when compared to last year. To address loneliness -- a contributing factor to poor mental health -- developers are creating welcome centers that support interaction between current and future residents (akin to a coffee shop) and plenty of "connection nodes" to promote frequent, informal gatherings.

4. Reinvestments in sustainable healthy food sources are another way successful developers are responding to priorities around health and wellness. Homeowners are shunning processed foods in favor of "natural" and locally sourced products. Amenities that support a healthy diet, like community crop-share programs and farm-to-table

dining options, will fare well, according to experts from the Burns firm. A five acre "agrihood" called Arden's Community Farm and Barn in south Florida provides residents with organically grown produce, herbs and flowers year-round and sells any surplus at an onsite Farm Store. It was recognized with a Gold Award for "Best Amenity" at a prestigious national competition presented by the National Association of Home Builders.

In its "Top 50" master planned communities report for 2020, John Burns Real Estate tallied more than 37,000 home purchases, up 31% from 2019. Six master planned projects logged sales of 1,000 new homes or more during 2020. Tehaleh, a Newland Communities development in Bonney Lake near Tacoma, reported 447 sales last year, earning the distinction of being the only master planned project in Washington to make the "top 50" best-selling list.

Students draft ordinance to enable tiny home villages in Lewiston

Photo courtesy of Washington State University

Tiny home villages may someday provide an affordable housing option in Lewiston, Idaho, thanks in part to students at Washington State University.

Nine senior landscape architecture students and an interior design student worked together to draft a model ordinance that would allow and regulate tiny homes in Lewiston, the county seat of Nez Perce County. Located about 32 miles from WSU's Pullman campus, Lewiston is home to nearly 33,000 residents. Approximately 160 of them are believed to be homeless.

“Tiny homes provide options for the unhoused and housing insecure people within the community,” said Jesus Gomez, a senior in landscape architecture who worked on the project. “We took it as a possibility of coming together as a class and trying to develop new ways and solutions to provide ideas in a time when housing is a crisis.”

As part of their project, the students prepared case studies of non-profit tiny home villages in the western U.S. to understand development issues such as zoning, management and affordable design standards. In researching existing villages comprised of both transitional and permanent housing, the students compared various forms of ownership, operations, management, and zoning.

The students from WSU’s School of Design + Construction also took virtual tours of Lewiston to familiarize themselves with its land use patterns, and met with city planners and a local developer. The “field work” was done remotely via Zoom due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

For purposes of their proposed ordinance, students considered tiny homes as ranging from 80 to 200 square feet, and typically defined to be less than 400 square feet. They noted tiny home villages are intentional collections of homes of these sizes. They also acknowledged tiny homes can encompass a range of housing options that “can serve different purposes and often different populations, but both face many of the same barriers to implementation.”

Students worked with their instructor, Steve Austin, a clinical assistant professor whose career also includes experience as an award-winning land planner and designer, town and regional planner, land use attorney, and community organizer. He reported Lewiston’s staff planners have reviewed the draft and suggested some changes before it is submitted to the Planning & Zoning Commission.

“Tiny home availability can be one solution among many others in a coordinated approach to affordability and availability,” Austin said. “This student work complements the many positive actions the community is already taking to address these issues.”

For students like Gomez, the project provided valuable experience in the legal and community aspects of land-use planning, along with appreciation for the importance of developing designs for the benefit of the community. “This was a whole new experience for me,” said Gomez, who added, ‘This project opened up new perspectives and new ways of looking at the discipline.” He plans to continue his studies at the University of Idaho where he will pursue a master’s degree in architecture.

Banking Inclusion Initiative launched to help unbanked individuals and communities

Pledging to accelerate unbanked individuals' access to affordable mainstream accounts and to address long-standing inequities, Wells Fargo & Company last month launched a 10-year commitment dubbed the Banking Inclusion Initiative. The financial services company will focus on Black and African Americans, Hispanics, and Native American/Alaska Native families.

Together, the target audiences account for more than half the country's 7 million+ unbanked households. Assistance is also promised to those who are underbanked and underserved, who may have a bank account yet still use high-cost, non-bank services.

Wells Fargo plans to bring together a "broad and diverse group of national and community stakeholders to address long-standing inequities by increasing access to digitally-enabled transactional accounts and financial health coaching." As part of its promise, the company will collaborate with partners to explore solutions to the credit challenges facing unbanked individuals.

Among specific actions it will implement are:

- Deepening its existing relationships with Black-owned minority depository institutions (MDIs) to support their work in the communities they serve. To date, Wells Fargo has invested in 11 MDIs whose customers will be able to use WFC's nationwide ATM network without incurring fees. (*Editor's note:* no MDIs in Washington state are on that initial list.)
- Continuing to recognize that unbanked and underbanked individuals need access to short-term credit. Wells Fargo is increasing funding and support to expand the Credit Builders Alliance (CBA) low-cost, credit-building consumer loan program to help low- to moderate-income (LMI) individuals meet short-term cash needs and establish or improve their credit scores.
- Increasing awareness and outreach about low-cost, no overdraft fee accounts, including ones designed for those who are new to banking or have encountered past challenges opening or keeping a bank account.
- Broadening collaborations with the Cities for Financial Empowerment (CFE) Fund and its local Bank On coalitions to pilot new strategies to help those who are unbanked navigate the financial system.

- Working closely with fintechs (financial technology used to integrate, automate, and improve financial services) that are deeply committed to helping underserved communities.

Wells Fargo claims to serve one in three U.S. households and is an investor in Greenwood, a Black owned digital mobile platform for Black and Latino individuals and business owners. Since its unveiling in October 2020, Greenwood has a waitlist of more than 550,000 community members.

Improving access to financial education and advice is also a priority of the Banking Inclusion Initiative. Teaming with [Operation HOPE](#) (whose focus is financial dignity and inclusion) and partnering with the [Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) Community Development Action Coalition](#), and introducing a new program within LMI neighborhood branches to help build trust among unbanked individuals are among ways Wells Fargo plans to boost access.

"With branches in more communities than any other financial institution, we have a responsibility to do even more to address this issue, and the pandemic has increased the urgency," stated Mary Mack, Wells Fargo's CEO of Consumer and Small Business Banking.

Give someone the freedom of movement

Members of the Master Builders Association of King and Snohomish counties (MBAKS) and community volunteers will dedicate their time on September 25 to build wheelchair ramps at homes throughout King and Snohomish counties. Applications for deserving recipients will be accepted through Monday, June 21.

Since 1993, members and volunteers have provided more than 500 ramps at no cost to recipients.

“These ramps provide a much-needed benefit for individuals and families who struggle to get themselves or their loved ones safely in and out of their homes,” stated MBAKS in the call for applications.

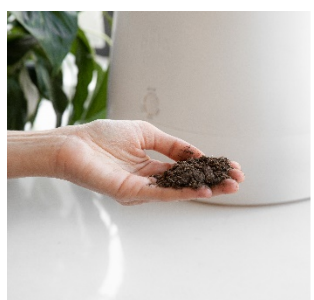
Applications may be made online or by downloading the form.

Photo courtesy of Master Builders Association of King and Snohomish Counties

New appliance converts food scraps, other waste into compost

Within days of its rollout, a Canadian company trashed its modest funding goal for a revolutionary kitchen device that converts waste into compost – but it wasn’t because of skeptics.

Apparently, 8,100 backers agreed “food waste is gross. It’s time for a change.” They gave Lomi (the name of the countertop appliance), a green thumbs up with their commitment of $2.7 million – far surpassing the initial goal of $50,000. With six days remaining in the funding campaign, crowdfunding website Indiegogo reported 17,885 backers had committed more than $6.6 million to the B.C. startup.



Materials scientist Daanvir Dhir likened the Lomi to earthworms that break down and mix plant tissue into soil, “except Lomi does this without the small and mess.” With the push of a button, heat, abrasion and oxygen accelerate the composting process, he explained. Within 24 hours, food scraps, boxes, bioplastics and other organic waste resemble dirt and become a suitably natural source of soil nutrients.

Lomi is manufactured “sustainably and ethically” in Pela’s own China-based facility. It comes with a proprietary dual-carbon filtration system that absorbs odors and purifies the air to contain bad smells (depending on what the user is composting).

“Removing significant amounts of methane-producing food waste from landfills is going to be a serious game-changer in our fight against pollution,” exclaimed one proponent.

Pela representatives said the company is looking to attract "those who either don't compost their food scraps at all, sending more garbage to landfills, or those who are tired of current kitchen solutions such as smelly containers with biodegradable bags full of oozing yard waste."

Pela officials say Lomi marks the beginning of a new era for the company, "further positioning the brand as a leader within the waste management space." Company CEO and co-founder Matt Bertulli believes the sleek design and seamless function "will make it easier than ever for consumers to shift the way they approach household waste and composting. Similar to having a dishwasher, our goal is for every household to have a Lomi."

As a perk, Lomi backers were offered the product at a discounted price, with shipment to customers in the U.S. and Canada scheduled to start by December.

Based in British Columbia, Pela is an international sustainable company that makes "everyday products without everyday waste." Its products are made of "environmentally sensible and 100% compostable materials," and include the world's first compostable phone cases, smartwatch bans, and AirPods cases.

Photo courtesy of Pela

Seattle claims fastest growing city title for 2020

Seattle added 16,400 more residents between July 1, 2019 and July 1, 2020, bumping up its population by 2.2%. That growth rate in the midst of the global pandemic and widespread civil unrest – made it the nation's fastest-growing big city in 2020.

Only one other city in Washington with a population of at least 60,000 people grew at a faster pace than Seattle. Kirkland had a 2.6% growth rate during the study's timeframe, bringing its population to 95,400.

With the latest new residents, the number of Seattleites totals 769,700.

Fort Worth, Texas ranked No. 2, with a 2.1% growth rate, even though it added more residents (19,229) than Seattle. Mesa, Arizona, Austin and Tampa rounded out the top list of fastest-growing big cities.

In analyzing U.S. Census data, Seattle Times columnist Gene Balk reported 15 of the 50 most populous U.S. cities experienced declining populations during the pandemic. Both San Francisco and San Jose landed on the "bottom five" list, losing more than 1% of their populations. Baltimore, Long Beach, and New York City also had sharp declines between the summers of 2019 and 2020.

Balk, also known as "FYI Guy," noted it is a "little tricky" to understand how Seattle bucked the trend since Census Bureau data do not include any of the components of population change, such as in-migration vs. outmigration, how many moved to the city from within Washington, or "natural growth" (births vs. deaths).

News In Brief

- **When you go through the security line at the airport, unless you're in pre-check, you know the drill. Take off your shoes and put them back on. But that could be a thing of the past soon, thanks to new shoe scanning technology developed by researchers at a Washington state-based research lab.** Removing your shoes at the airport has only been part of the flying experience since 2006, following multiple threats after 9/11. Now, researchers with the Pacific Northwest National Laboratory in Richland, who created holographic millimeter scanning technology to detect threats under clothing, has made it possible through shoes. The millimeter wave shoe scanner has been in the works since 2013. PNNL researchers say it is more accurate at detecting threats than current systems. This new technology could speed up the screening process by about 20% and eliminate the hassle of taking off shoes and putting them back on, researchers say. Any decisions to use this system in U.S. airports will be made by the Transportation Security Administration

- **As most businesses continue to return to normal operations and vaccine availability becomes more widespread, Seattle and Washington state are lagging behind the rest of the nation in the return to full employment, according to a new study.** The study, by payroll servicing site Paychex, shows Washington ranks last, behind all other states, in jobs growth. The city of Seattle also ranks last among U.S. metros in jobs growth. For wages as well, Seattle's hourly earnings growth is weakest among regions, slowing below 1% in April. Experts compared employment gains, wages and how operations are resuming among all four U.S. regions. The southern states lead all regions with the highest job growth, specifically Texas and Florida. Tampa, Dallas and Phoenix lead in job growth among metro cities. The data shows medium and small businesses in Seattle are having a hard time finding people to work for them, for various reasons.

- **With real-estate inventory down by more than half compared to last year, the personal-finance website WalletHub today released its report on [2021's Best Places to Be a Real Estate Agent](), **as well as [accompanying videos](). To determine the best markets for real-estate agents, WalletHub compared more than 170 U.S. cities across 22 key indicators of a healthy housing market, ranging from sales per agent to the annual median wage for real-estate agents to the housing-market health index.

<u>Best Places to Be a Real-Estate Agent</u>

1. Seattle, WA	11. Vancouver, WA
2. Pearl City, HI	12. Reno, NV
3. Sacramento, CA	13. West Valley City, UT
4. Salt Lake City, UT	14. Billings, MT
5. Denver, CO	15. Portland, ME
6. Nashville, TN	16. Portland, OR
7. Washington, DC	17. San Diego, CA
8. Huntsville, AL	18. Atlanta, GA
9. Austin, TX	19. Boston, MA
10. San Jose, CA	20. Irvine, CA

- **The new Regional Homelessness Authority (RHA) got its first budget approval just as a group of business executives suggest helping the chronically homeless should be the region's top priority.** The Governing Board of the RHA unanimously approved the $2.3 million requested by CEO Marc Dones. The money will cover the administrative cost to get the RHA up and running for the remainder of 2021. The authority will start assuming the contracts in September. Twenty-three service providers should be fully operational during the 2022 year with at an administrative staff of 35 people. The vote comes at the same time a report on chronic homelessness was released by Challenge Seattle, an alliance of CEO's of 21 of the region's largest employers. The report said 73 percent of the counties chronically homeless have serious psychiatric and emotional conditions compared to four percent of the county's population. The report indicated 64 percent have a substance use disorder compared to five percent of the county population with the same issue. Challenge Seattle made six recommendations, including an argument on why helping the chronically homeless is a humane and smart direction to go. A report recommends following a command center model the cities of Bakersfield and San Diego have adopted to handle the chronically homeless.

- **Washington state is the best place in the U.S. for millennials, that generation of Americans now in their mid-20s to early 40s who make up the largest segment of the**

population. That's according to a new study by the personal finance site WalletHub. With a population of around 80 million, millennials have a huge influence on American culture and consumption. Yet despite millennials' trillion-dollar purchasing power and higher educational attainment, they are economically worse off than their parents due to the after-effects of the Great Recession and the COVID pandemic. But the millennial experience is not the same everywhere. WalletHub compared the 50 states and the District of Columbia across 34 key metrics to determine where this generation has thrived and struggled, ranging from share of millennials to millennial unemployment rate to millennial voter-turnout rate. For the purpose of this study, “millennials” were defined as individuals who were born between 1981 and 1996. According to the study, Washington state had the highest overall score when the metrics were tallied and compared with other states. In individual areas, Washington state also ranked No. 1 for millennial affordability, No. 2 for millennials' economic health and No. 3 for highest average earnings for millennials. But the Evergreen State was outranked by other states in some areas, such as education and health (15th place), and civic engagement (11th place). Rounding out the top five places for millennials were Washington, D.C. (No. 2), Utah (No. 3), Massachusetts (No. 4) and Iowa (No. 5). Oregon ranked in 15th place and Idaho came in at 25th place, according to the study. The worst five states for millennials, the study found, were West Virginia, New Mexico, Mississippi, Nevada and Louisiana.

- **New data from the U.S. Census Bureau shows that between July 1, 2019, and July 1, 2020, Seattle had a net gain of about 16,400 residents, hitting a total population of 769,700. That pencils out to a growth rate of 2.2% last year.** And that means that among the 50 biggest U.S. cities, Seattle is — No. 1 for growth in 2020. What about all those Sunbelt cities that everyone has been flocking to during the pandemic? Sure, they're growing fast, but they were behind Seattle. Fort Worth, Texas, ranks No. 2, followed by Mesa, Arizona; Austin; and Tampa. Seattle's 2020 growth was actually pretty much in line with the numbers we saw back in the 2010s — and Seattle was also the fastest-growing city of the past decade. It doesn't match our fastest growth rate, which exceeded 3%. But last year's 2.2% actually beat out the rate of growth between 2018 and 2019, which was 1.4%.

Calendar of Events

DATES	EVENT	TIME	LOCATION	CONTACT
6/4	Housing Issues Briefing	12 p.m. - 1:30 p.m.	Zoom	425-974-1011
6/10	Affiliate Council	9 a.m. - 10 p.m.	Zoom	425-974-1011
6/22	Gov't. Affairs Committee	10:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.	Zoom	425-974-1011
7/5	Holiday-Office Closed			425-974-1011

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