

King County Tells Residents: Prepare Now For Flooding in Auburn, Kent, Renton & Tukwila



"Serious flooding may occur in some areas of King County this winter. Homes, farms and businesses in the Green River Valley are particularly at risk. Residents should prepare now for the winter season." That's the word from King County Government following discovery of problems with Howard Hansen Dam on the Green River.

According to King County, "Residents, businesses and farms below the Howard Hanson Dam in the Green River Valley should prepare now for a higher risk of flooding.

Parts of Auburn, Kent, Renton, South Seattle and Tukwila—could be flooded and evacuations in some communities are possible." Again, according to King County, "Evacuation plans and routes are under development now." Residents are encouraged to check the County's website (www.metrokc.gov) in early September for detailed information.

Early estimates made public by the County indicate the cost to residents and businesses from flooding impacts could exceed \$2 billion. The County anticipates \$10 million could be required just to deal with minimizing the impacts of potential flooding issues at County facilities. Sewage overflows into homes and businesses are a possibility depending upon the amount of flooding.

Some cities are already preparing to train volunteers to help fill and place sandbags. For example, Renton has already begun recruiting and training volunteers to assist the City with sandbagging, and dyke building. Some early reports indicate perhaps as many as 10,000 volunteers might be needed to assist throughout the Green River Valley, depending upon how much flooding occurs.

Basic infrastructure could also be in jeopardy depending upon water levels. Emergency planners and elected officials are hopeful that *El Niño* (mild winters) might help by resulting in milder conditions and less rainfall during the rainy season that typically begins in November, but could run from October to March.

The concerns of flooding arise in connection with problems discovered at Howard Hansen Dam in January of this year. The County says that following a record high level of water behind Howard Hanson Dam in January 2009, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers restricted flood storage behind the dam after the Corps became concerned about two depressions on the right earthen abutment, increased water levels in groundwater monitoring wells, and the appearance of silty water entering the abutment drainage tunnel. To date, engineers have excavated the depressions, installed additional monitoring equipment and conducted tests while a summer conservation pool was stored at the dam.

The County says there is no imminent risk of dam failure. However, what the Corps has found so far hasn't yet increased confidence in using the full flood storage capacity of the dam. Should a major flood event occur with the temporary restriction of pool elevation, it is possible that levees in the lower valley could be overtopped.

The Corps has been working closely with King County and the downstream cities of Auburn, Kent, Renton, Tukwila and Seattle to prepare for flood season, should higher-than-standard flows be necessary from the dam.

Preparations for the upcoming flood season include constructing an interim seepage barrier wall and improving the drainage tunnel to control seepage through the most critical part of the right abutment, continuing to monitor the abutment, and repairing segments of levee along the Green River. Simultaneously, the Corps has initiated test borings, geotechnical modeling and analysis to support planning for a long-term repair project to address seepage. The Corps of Engineers will continuously reassess the pool restriction as conditions change and may change the maximum pool elevation after careful deliberation.



County and city Emergency Management Professionals are urging residents to prepare now for the increased flooding risk. Their recommendations include:

- Make an emergency plan and assemble an emergency kit. For assistance see: <http://www.govlink.org/3days3ways/makeaplan.html> and <http://www.govlink.org/3days3ways/buildakit.html>
- *Buy flood insurance now.* For information see: www.floodsmart.gov.
- *It takes 30 days for a policy to take effect.* Review your current policy; a standard insurance policy will not cover flood damage. Contact your insurance agent or use the link above.
- Purchase an inexpensive AM radio or NOAA weather radio with batteries in case of power outages for urgent news day and night.
- Monitor area news media for information if severe weather is predicted.
- Listen for alerts about evacuation routes or find the latest evacuation route information on this website.
- Monitor local road conditions and obey closure signs.
- Take medications and supplies with you, for those with medical needs.
- Be ready to relocate animals and livestock out of harm's way.
- Minimize flood damage:
 - Store valuables and electronics higher on the ground floor, on the second story or in your attic.
 - Store chemicals above possible flood levels; recycle them or dispose of them at the King County Wastemobile.
 - Ensure underground storage tanks are sealed and secure.
 - Learn how to use sandbags and locate where you can buy or get them ahead of time if needed for flood fighting.
 - Move vehicles and equipment to high ground before flood waters rise.
 - Keep storm drains free of leaves and other debris.
 - Know who to call and how to protect yourself if flooding leads to sewage overflows into homes and businesses. For assistance see: <http://www.kingcounty.gov/safety/FloodPlan/EmergencyContacts.aspx>

King County has invited the public to a Public Safety meeting on September 9th at 6:00 P.M. at Green River Community College in Auburn to discuss the situation at Howard Hansen Dam and downstream on the Lower Green River, including what it could mean for residents in Auburn, Kent, Renton, Tukwila, Seattle and surrounding communities who are present in, or who depend upon access to, or through, the Green River Valley along the Hwy 167 corridor.

More information about Howard Hanson Dam is available from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers at:

Howard Hanson Dam Pool Restriction Fact Sheet (July 2009; 2 pages):

http://www.kingcounty.gov/safety/FloodPlan/GreenRiverValley/~/_media/safety/prepare/documents/FloodPlan/2009_07_HHD_Fact_Sheet.ashx

Howard Hanson Dam Reduced Storage Capacity Frequently Asked Questions (July 2009; 3 pages):

http://www.kingcounty.gov/safety/FloodPlan/GreenRiverValley/~/_media/safety/prepare/documents/FloodPlan/2009_07_HHD_FAQs_Restricted_Pool.ashx

Northwest MLS Brokers Agree “There’s a Lot to be Optimistic About”

NWMLS KIRKLAND, WA, October 5, 2009 – “There’s a lot to be optimistic about,” according to one director of the Northwest Multiple Listing Service upon reviewing summary statistics for September’s housing activity. The report shows a big jump in pending sales compared to a year ago (up almost 27 percent), continued drops in inventory (down 17.7 percent versus a year ago) and brisk demand for homes at the lower end of the price spectrum.

Distressed properties in the system continue to be a drag on prices – median prices for last month’s sales were down about 7.5 percent from a year ago – and brokers continue to voice frustration with slow response time by lenders. (Banks are taking 9.5 weeks to respond to short-sale requests, versus 4.5 weeks a year ago, according to research by Campbell Communications of Washington, D.C.)

Joe Spencer, president and COO of John L. Scott Real Estate, estimates up to 10 percent of pending sales do not close because they’re caught in the short sale cycle. Still, he comments, “There is a lot to be optimistic about.” He cites interest rates that are now in the high four percents as bordering “on being epic” and the federal tax credit as stimulants to the market.

Northwest MLS brokers reported 7,581 pending sales (offers made and accepted but not yet closed) during September, outgaining the same period a year ago by 1,599 transactions for a 26.7 percent increase. Last month’s condominium sales surged, with pending sales up nearly 25 percent from a year ago after languishing in negative year-over-year figures for the first five months of 2009 and only modest gains over the past three months.

During September, members added 10,054 new listings of single family homes and condominiums to inventory, about 7.6 percent fewer than a year ago. With the combination of fewer new listings and more sales, inventory at month end dipped to its lowest level since March. At month end, the selection included 40,041 properties for sale (33,332 single family homes and 6,709 condominiums). That’s down 17.7 percent from twelve months ago.

“Our market has certainly come a long way since this time last year,” said Ron Sparks, managing vice president of Coldwell Banker Bain, who said demand is at its highest level in two years. “For all the challenges that remain, it would be difficult to not appreciate the reemerging market vitality that continues to build even as the summer buying season closes,” he added.

Activity at open houses is reported to be brisk in many areas, which MLS directors attribute to a combination of factors, including expanded use of a “Public Open House” program. This program allows buyers to search schedules of all open houses in the NWMLS system from the website of any member broker that uses the feature.

Brokers also credit improved affordability, incentives and the looming deadline for the \$8,000 tax credit for first-time home buyers as boosting activity. As the Nov. 30 deadline for the federal \$8,000 tax credit program approaches, Spencer advises buyers to “be under contract by the third week of October, to close by Thanksgiving, and to stay away from short sales.”

“Because there are so many short sales and bank owned property sales, it was inevitable that prices would fall slightly,” explained NWMLS director Dick Beeson, the broker/owner of Windermere Commencement Associates in Tacoma.

Year-over-year prices are down nearly 7.5 percent across the 19 counties served by NWMLS, but the median sales price of \$273,000 for last month’s sales of single family homes and condominiums (combined) equaled the figure for January. Beeson described the price drops as “a necessary adjustment given the number of short sales and bank owned property sales in the mix. (A survey by the National Association of REALTORS indicates distressed homes accounted for 31 percent of transactions in August and July.)

A comparison of year-over-year prices of closed sales by county shows wide variation for September, from a decline of almost 17 percent in Cowlitz County to an increase of nine percent in San Juan County. For the four-county Puget Sound region (King, Snohomish, Pierce and Kitsap counties), prices were down about 7.6 percent from twelve months ago.

On a brighter note, Beeson said activity is brisk for lower priced homes in many areas. “Multiple offers are occurring on a regular basis and many buyers have to make two or three offers on different properties just to secure one,” he reports.

Sparks echoed that report, saying, “Describing much of the current market as ‘lively’ is probably a bit of an understatement,” adding, “I’ve heard agents describe open houses as ‘mayhem’ and ‘chaos.’” Modestly priced homes in good condition and in popular neighborhoods can certainly draw more than one offer, according to Sparks, who also noted, “This is not to say that all neighborhoods and price points are rebounding at the same pace, but there is an awful lot of economic momentum in our region, including our housing market, that can’t be ignored.”

Emphasizing recovery comes in stages, Beeson acknowledged some “hard adjustments” are being made in higher priced homes where inventories remain high, but expects that segment to recover. He said the main focus of many agents is meeting the needs of the first-time buyers and those who have needs because of lifestyle changes due to advancing age, change in marital status, the birth of children or death of a family member. “These people always need help solving their real estate problems,” he observed.

Northwest Multiple Listing Service, owned by its member brokers, is the largest full-service MLS in the Northwest. Its membership includes more than 24,000 brokers and agents. The organization, based in Kirkland, currently serves 19 counties in western and central Washington.

Statistical Summary by Counties:

Market Activity Summary- September 2009

Single Fam. Homes + Condos	LISTINGS		PENDING SALES		CLOSED SALES	
	New Listings	Total Active	# Pending Sales	# Closings	Avg. Price	Median Price
King	4052	12912	2927	2016	\$421,293	\$349,000
Snohomish	1551	5445	1222	755	\$303,020	\$282,000
Pierce	1513	5720	1303	838	\$246,942	\$221,600
Kitsap	498	1954	373	260	\$295,529	\$249,725
Mason	118	778	83	67	\$207,691	\$181,500
Skagit	261	1341	144	94	\$266,821	\$233,900
Grays Harbor	132	855	116	62	\$156,295	\$134,000
Lewis	136	772	80	48	\$176,736	\$167,500
Cowlitz	152	690	85	62	\$163,072	\$149,900
Grant	127	726	95	65	\$193,067	\$160,000
Thurston	473	1754	391	265	\$266,564	\$242,000
San Juan	30	491	23	18	\$527,251	\$480,000
Island	188	1204	111	81	\$333,741	\$280,000
Kittitas	71	607	42	40	\$280,344	\$220,495
Jefferson	62	622	49	33	\$286,133	\$230,000
Okanogan	42	403	26	21	\$211,305	\$160,000
Whatcom	356	1935	314	244	\$262,737	\$236,450
Clark	92	334	72	50	\$212,036	\$197,450
Pacific	41	401	34	21	\$172,222	\$155,000
Others	159	1097	91	92	\$218,170	\$188,750
MLS TOTAL	10,054	40,041	7,581	5,132	\$325,871	\$273,000

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
2000	3706	4778	5903	5116	5490	5079	4928	5432	4569	4675	4126	3166
2001	4334	5056	5722	5399	5631	5568	5434	5544	4040	4387	4155	3430
2002	4293	4735	5569	5436	6131	5212	5525	6215	5394	5777	4966	4153
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			

 Built Green Launches New Remodel Checklist

In 2002, Built Green was one of the first green building certification programs in the country to offer a checklist and certification program for remodels. Today, it remains one of only a handful of programs nationwide to offer such a certification.

The original Remodel Checklist evolved from the previously developed Single-Family Checklist, and as such, it often didn't truly reflect the complexities of remodel projects. Now, after seven years of certifying remodels under the first incarnation of the remodel checklist, two years of review and pilot by the checklist update committee, and hundred of hours of time spent by green building experts and Built Green member remodelers, the Master Builders Association of King and Snohomish Counties (MBA) has unveiled a vastly improved new version of the Built Green Remodel Checklist.

In updating the certification to reflect changes in the green building market, which have been numerous since 2002, and reflect the depth and breadth of best practices in the green remodeling market, significant changes have been made to the certification.

One of the most noteworthy changes is the requirement that all remodel projects undergo an energy retrofit as a part of their certification. This requirement was included for two reasons, according to MBA officials. First, because in order to make positive change in our collective energy consumption and resultant emissions, we must find a way to meaningfully address the poor energy performance of existing housing stock, and second, to level the playing field for the listing of properties on the Multiple Listing Service (MLS) form when homes are listed for sale. This means that small scope remodels that only included the updating of a kitchen or small addition are no longer eligible to receive full certification.

MBA representatives say this change is important not only for the commitment to lessen the environmental impact of existing housing stock, but also to achieve a modicum of consistency for people seeking to buy a green remodeled home that has been put up for sale, which will in turn strengthen the Built Green brand promise for all certified projects. Further, with a heightened focus both nationally and locally on energy retrofits, and funding available for incentives and rebates, Built Green remodelers will find it easier to put best practices into action.

The new remodel certification takes effect on Nov. 1, and will be supported by a fully updated handbook. The new handbook is designed as a two-way educational tool for homeowners to educate remodelers about their needs, and for remodelers to educate their clients on why green building practices are important.

All Built Green remodeler members will be sent the new handbook once they are printed, and others will be available for purchase. There will also be a letter sent to remodeler members outlining the sunset for already existing projects under the current checklist.

The new certification will be presented at the October Remodelers Council Dinner. A two-hour class on the requirements and handbook is scheduled for Oct. 20 at MBA University in Bellevue. Preregistration is required and may be done online at www.mbaks.com.

A copy of the new Remodel Checklist may be viewed on Master Builders/Built Green website at http://www.builtgreen.net/assets/Remodel_Checklist_2009.xls.

From October 2009 Built Green News. Reprinted with permission

Have You Given Your Home a Health Check Up?

By: Jolene Anderson

For many Americans, their home is their single most important investment and is also where they spend the majority of their time. But how many of us think about giving our homes a “health check up”? If you could hire a professional who could give your home a health check up, test your home for energy leaks and could recommend easy retrofits, which could create healthier indoor air quality, save on utility bills and save hundreds if not thousands of dollars from your upcoming 2009 tax return, through federal tax credits, most of us would ask where do I sign.

Local contractors such as Home Performance, Inc, Vesta Home Performance Retrofitting, Inc and Northwest Homecrafters, Inc., specialize in addressing the problem of providing a complete energy audit and retrofitting Seattle’s single family homes to current energy standards from a holistic point of view combining science, technology and the latest advances in sustainable building. As members of Home Performance Washington, a local association of Washington State businesses offering whole house energy efficiency solutions, they can perform a professional energy audit designed to assess your home’s energy usage and recommend the most efficient way to enhance your home’s energy efficiency, indoor air quality and overall comfort.

Professional energy auditors have successfully completed a training and certification program to ensure the auditors and contractors are fully qualified to assess your house and implement the changes required to make the home more energy efficient.

A professional energy audit assesses the most efficient way to increase the energy performance of the entire home from a holistic approach.

According to the American Lung Association, American adults spend about 90% of their time indoors, and thanks to our more tightly insulated/sealed homes and workplaces, the concentration of pollutants indoors may be even higher than outdoors.

Major indoor pollutants include environmental tobacco smoke (secondhand smoke); combustion by products stemming from improperly vented gas appliances, pet dander, pollen, molds, and dust mites; volatile organic compounds present in paints, cleaners, pesticides, copiers, printers, glues, and adhesives; lead dust from old, lead-based paints; and asbestos. For more information, visit: www.alaw.org.

Healthy homes address four key principles: air-tightness for energy-efficiency/pollutant control; ventilation for fresh air and moisture control; source control for potential pollutants; and effective monitoring and maintenance. A professional energy retrofitter or remodeler can recommend and retrofit homes utilizing affordable construction techniques and materials which reduce exposure to common asthma and allergy irritants, such as dust mites, molds, mildew and volatile organic compounds (VOCs), like formaldehyde, acetone and toluene.

The Federal Government has provided consumers with an incentive to make the changes to create more energy efficient homes and healthier homes through its Federal Tax Credit rebates such as: windows and doors, insulation, roofs, (metal and asphalt), water heaters, solar panels, geo thermal heat pumps and appliances. For more details visit: www.energystar.gov.

According to a recent study, improving the nation’s residential carbon use by 25% is equivalent to doubling the gas mileages of all of the cars in the United States. In an effort to reduce our carbon footprint, many major cities in the US are looking at a mandatory requirement for each home to have an energy audit done at time of sale. The City of

Seattle has no such law to date, but is providing information and resources for consumers to voluntarily have an energy audit done on their home.

Companies such as Home Performance, Inc, which specialize in holistic home energy solutions, are knowledgeable and savvy and can make a significant difference in the comfort and energy efficiency of most homes. For instance, an energy audit can identify air leaks in the home which account for 20-70% of the home's heat loss and draw polluted air from crawl spaces into upper living areas. Recent research conducted by David Hales, of Washington State University's Extension Energy Program, indicated as much as 40% of the air we breathe in our homes comes from the crawl space. According to Owner, David Vollan, they are typically able to reduce this uncontrolled of air leakage by 20 -50%.

Professionals such as Vesta Performance Retrofitting and Northwest Homecrafters, Inc. are knowledgeable about assessing and recommending a "whole house" approach to energy retrofitting which will reduce the energy consumption, improve the overall health of the home and its residents and result in a tax savings to the consumer. Through their association with Master Builders of King and Snohomish County and the BUILT GREEN© program, Home Performance Washington and attending regional sustainability conferences, the consumer can have confidence in their industry knowledge and commitment to providing state of the art information combining science and technology.

Many of the "home improvements" must be placed in service between Jan. 1, 2009 and Dec. 31, 2010 to qualify for federal tax credits. By calling a certified energy auditor now, consumers can take advantage of low interest loans available now for remodeling and realize a healthy return on investment through a healthier indoor air quality, reduced utility costs and a tax savings on their 2009 tax return.

The City of Seattle offers regular Green Building Events. For more information, contact: rebeccabaker@seattle.gov.

*Submitted by: Jolene Anderson Lifestyle Editor
Representing SKCAR Mayor's Green Task Force City of Seattle*

Seattle: Hot, Hip Destination for New Grads

Seattle tied with Washington, D.C., as the most desirable destination for "the new generation of young, restless grads," according to an informal poll by a *Wall Street Journal* columnist.

Panelists were asked which 10 cities will emerge as the hottest, hippest destinations for highly mobile, educated workers in their 20s when the U.S. economy gets moving again. Those who were polled picked their cities based on criteria they deemed most important, from economic diversity to lifestyle.

Seattle's allure included its diverse high-tech sector, cultural life, strong university presence and access to rugged natural terrain. Also mentioned as plusses were its reputation as "home to a lot of brainy people" and relatively low joblessness.

The WSJ columnist asked panelists, who included demographers, economists, geographers and authors on urban issues, to discuss what cities, in the wake of the recession, offer the most to young professionals.

New York emerged as the third-place pick, followed by Portland, Ore., and Austin, Texas.

Commenting on the rankings, Sue Shellenbarger, who writes the Journal's "Work & Family" column, said panelists believe today's recession-scarred young people are more pragmatic, and "will value finding high-quality, high-paying jobs over access to the funkier music or the biggest rock-climbing wall."

The young are likely to be more restless than usual when the recovery comes, according to Shellenbarger, noting the recession has stalled migration.

Fewer people moved across state lines in 2008 than at any time since 1950, according to William Frey, a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution, a nonprofit Washington research organization.

Shellenbarger noted cities once lauded as youth magnets fell of the radar. Naples, Fla., cited in a 2003 Census Bureau Report on cities that are alluring to young adults was bypassed by panelists. Another past favorite, Las Vegas, did not make the most recent list, with its housing collapse cited as one reason.

REALTORS® to Assist with Landscaping at Mercer Slough Environmental Education Center

More than 40 King County REALTORS® will shift their attention from listing and selling homes to landscaping on Friday, Oct. 23. The volunteers with The Realtors Environmental Council (TREC) are expected to plant up to 600 native specimens at a wetland nature park near the heart of urban Bellevue.

“With this help, we will really transform the landscape surrounding the new Mercer Slough Environmental Education Center,” said Christina Krueger, park ranger in the Natural Resource Division for the City of Bellevue.

Working under the direction of Krueger and other staffers from the City of Bellevue Parks & Community Services Department, the volunteers will significantly increase the density to “turn this urban forest into a thriving native habitat,” Krueger remarked.

The upcoming planting project at the Mercer Slough marks the third annual “on the ground” activity of The Realtors Environmental Council (TREC), a combined educational/volunteer initiative of the Seattle *KingCounty* REALTORS®.

Among their tasks, the Realtors will be planting sword ferns, red-flowering current, dogwood, nine-bark, salmonberry and Indian plum. They’ll also plant some trees and transplant plants.

SKCR established The Realtors Environmental Council to be a nonprofit affiliate to promote environmental stewardship among REALTORS, its affiliate members and homeowners, and to support projects and policies to preserve a healthy natural habitat.

In its inaugural on-the-ground project in 2007, REALTORS spent a day at the Hylebos watershed in Federal Way. Under the direction of The Friends of the Hylebos, 40 participants planted more than 500 native trees and shrubs and undertook other tasks to help protect various areas within the North Fork Open Space.

Last year, the TREC group worked on the Kelsey Creek West Tributary Restoration Project in Bellevue where they installed native trees and snags, shrubs and forbs to improve the riparian habit along 2,000 feet of the stream.

Real estate licensees interested in participating on this environmental restoration project are encouraged to register by calling 425.974.1011. Local media have been invited to cover this project.

The on the ground project is complemented by educational offerings. Earlier this month, SKCR hosted the Green Designation Core Course of the National Association of REALTORS. It provides real estate professionals with knowledge of green building principles applied in residences, commercial properties, developments and communities so they can help consumers in purchasing, retrofitting and operating green properties. The course encourages real estate professionals to be advocates for green principles in the design and use of homes and commercial buildings and to be a positive force for creating sustainable communities.

That two-day program was followed by elective courses on Green Residential Real Estate, Green Commercial Real Estate and Green Property Management.

NAR’S Green Designation is supported by the NAR Green Resource Council. Students who complete the Core Course received a one-year membership in NAR’s Green Resource Council.

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Since forming The Realtors Environmental Council, the first such council in the country, SKCR staff and members have participated in numerous activities and collaborations, including:

Advocating for the advancement of sound environmental public policies to protect and enhance the quality of life in Washington's communities;

Collaborating with various individuals and organizations to create state-approved continuing education programs on environmental topics and sustainability issues;

Offering training to help Realtors® attain certification and professional designations to better assist green-minded consumers.

Presenting regular news and feature articles in Northwest REporter (the official online monthly publication of SKCR and the Northwest Multiple Listing Service) to enhance understanding of environmental issues and their impact on the sustainability, utilization and development of real property;

Promoting the use and expansion of "green" information on multiple listing services' databases;

Producing consumer information that promotes environmental stewardship, including a downloadable brochure titled "Green Living: A Resource Guide for Residents of King County."

Information on upcoming courses on environmental topics for REALTORS is available on the SKCR website at nwrealtor.com or by calling the association offices in Bellevue, 425.974.1011.

About SKCR

The Seattle *KingCounty* REALTORS®, with 6,000-plus members, is a local board of the National Association of REALTORS® (NAR). Its members adhere to a strict Code of Ethics and participate in matters at all levels of government that affect private property rights, housing supplies, affordability and homeownership opportunities. Membership is voluntary, and only members may use the term REALTOR®, which is a licensed collective trademark.

Japan Delegation, Washington Realtors Forge Landmark Agreement to Promote Mutually Beneficial Cooperative Real Estate Transactions

In a landmark ceremony, representatives from real estate associations in Washington state and Japan signed a Letter of Intent for a Bilateral Cooperative Agreement in mid-September in Olympia. The reciprocal document, believed to be the first of its kind between local associations in the U.S. and Japan, culminated a three-day whirlwind visit by five representatives from the Hyogo Prefecture Real Estate Transaction Association (Hyogo Taku-Ren).

The agreement, signed by officers of Hyogo Taku-Ren and Washington REALTORS®, promotes information exchanges, trade missions, education, networking, mutual understanding and referral opportunities. Another clause of the agreement supports promotion of private property rights around the world and the United Nations goal to achieve adequate shelter for all.

Washington Lieutenant Governor Brad Owen witnessed the Sept. 17 signing ceremony at his office. It will be followed by a formal, reciprocal event next February in Kobe, Japan during ceremonies commemorating the 50th anniversary of the Hyogo Prefecture Real Estate Transaction Association.

Bellevue Realtor Jason Watabe, who serves as the NAR (National Association of REALTORS') President's Liaison to the National Federation of Real Estate Transaction Associations, organized the recent trade mission, which took nearly a year of planning and preparations. He was appointed to the NAR liaison position last year while serving as president of the Seattle KingCounty REALTORS.

Besides the signing ceremony in Olympia, Watabe arranged numerous educational and entertainment opportunities for the delegation, including:

- A welcome reception with the Consul General of Japan and 70 other guests at the waterfront home of a member of the Asian Real Estate Association of America. (Watabe serves as president of this state's chapter.)
- Discussions and classes on title insurance, real estate transactions in the State of Washington and the referral system between Hyogo and Washington state;

- A tour and meetings at the headquarters office of Northwest Multiple Listing Service;
- Tours of construction sites;
- Sightseeing and a Seattle Mariners baseball game.

The delegation from Japan included the president of the Hyogo Prefecture Real Estate Transaction Association (Hyogo Taku-Ren), two members of the group’s board of directors, the association’s CEO and one other staff member.

Watabe said the overall goal of the Hyogo visit was to further establishment of an international real estate referral system. NAR has been working with Watabe and other “President’s Liaisons” to develop international norms and standards to govern the real estate profession globally.

Watabe, whose real estate career spans more than 24 years, said he would like to develop a small pilot program between regional associations here and in Kobe, rather than at the national level, in hopes of seeing some “fruitful results in relatively little time.” Hyogo Taku-Ren showed strong support for strengthening connections with NFRETA, according to Watabe. “The delegation promised their board would discuss specific plans to facilitate meetings between our organizations. That would be a great step,” he remarked.

About NFRETA and Hyogo Taku-Ren

The National Federation of Real Estate Transaction Associations (NFRETA) is Japan’s largest trade organization in the real estate industry. It consists of 47 transaction associations, each of which represents a prefecture in Japan. Members belonging to this association represent about 82 percent of all licensed real estate agents in Japan.

The Hyogo association consists of 5,300 companies and ranks sixth among the 47 prefectural associations that make up NFRETA. (Hyogo, whose capital is Kobe, is in the geographical center of Japan, and is a sister state to Washington.)

About AREAA (www.areaa.org)

Founded in 2003, the Asian Real Estate Association of America (AREAA) is a nonprofit professional trade organization dedicated to promoting sustainable homeownership opportunities in Asian American communities. Membership represents a broad array of real estate, mortgage and housing-related professionals that serve the diverse Asian American market. Washington is one of 10 chapters around the country.

About SKCR (nwrealtor.com)

The Seattle *King County* REALTORS®, with 6,000-plus members, is a local board of the National Association of REALTORS® (NAR). Its members adhere to a strict Code of Ethics and participate in matters at all levels of government that affect private property rights, housing supplies, affordability and homeownership opportunities. Membership is voluntary, and only members may use the term REALTOR®, which is a licensed collective trademark.

Think You Know How to Prevent Pollution? Take the P24U Quiz.



“Everyone knows that most pollution comes from big, ugly pipes – factory smokestacks, sewer outfalls, and the like, right? Not exactly,” according to the Pacific Northwest Pollution Prevention Resource Center (PPRC).

This go-to source for pollution prevention information reminds us a significant share of pollution comes from small sources that add up – the cars we drive, the energy we use to heat and light our homes, the water we consume for cleaning and sanitation, and the chemicals we use around the house.

Since its formation in 1990 and the opening of its doors on April 22, 1991, the 21st anniversary of Earth Day, PPRC has worked collaboratively with business, government, non-government organizations, and other sectors to promote environmental protection through pollution prevention.

The council realized that preventing pollution at the source made the most sense as an environmental management strategy. The non-profit organization serves Alaska, Idaho, Oregon and Washington and strives to be the Northwest's leading source of high quality, unbiased pollution prevention information.

Much of its work is centered on the tag of "P2" (pollution prevention). It is defined as avoiding the creation of pollution in the first place rather than dealing with its consequences after the fact. "P2 means rooting out little inefficiencies or wasteful habits that don't add much value to your home. In doing P2, you do a little rethinking about the way you run your house," according to information on PPRC's website. The benefits it cites are money saved, a healthier, more comfortable home, and a helping hand for our environment.

Among its services is "P24U," a compilation of resources to help consumers keep their homes clean, comfortable, efficient and safe. On its website at <http://pprc.org> is a bounty of information and publications on wide-ranging topics, including:

- Green Building
- Home Comfort
- Home Appliances & Fixtures
- Breathing Easy Indoors
- Painting, Staining & Sealing
- Housecleaning
- Out in the Yard
- Car Care
- What do I do with these Chemicals?

There's even a "P2Quiz," a 16-point, multiple choice self-test to assess what you do and how much you know about energy, transportation, water, solid waste, cleaning, yard and lawn care, and painting. Check it out at: <http://pprc.org/pubs/quizzes/p2quiz.html>.

Among its other contributions, PPRC lists:

- Making high quality information available to decision-makers in business and other sectors to help them integrate pollution prevention into their operations. (*See box for information on a free webinar.*)
- Identifying P2 obstacles and opportunities through collaborative networking with business, government and other constituencies.
- Catalyzing projects that address project needs, and bringing people and resources together to implement pollution prevention.
- Promoting pollution prevention as an essential element of sustainable development strategies
- *What's New in P2*, a monthly digest of news, new tools, upcoming meetings/events and more.

Also offered are Topic Hubs™, topic-specific guides to collected resources about the topic. Topic Hubs™ provide web-based guides to resources specific to a particular industry or subject. More than a dozen topics are currently available, including Economic Incentives, Environmental Measurement, Lean and Green, and Product Stewardship.

PPRC has established itself in the Northwest and nationally as an essential resource for pollution prevention. As a neutral force, PPRC educates its audiences, facilitates communication, and initiates progressive change.

PPRC was launched with assistance of the Hazardous Waste Advisory Council and the environmental consulting firm of Ross & Associates. In 1998, it

FREE
Sustainable Industries Webinar
Oct. 15, 10 AM – 11 AM

"The Business Case for Clean Energy: You've Tackled the Low-Hanging Fruit – Now What?"

Presented by Lane Powel to help business owners learn how to prioritize and finance energy efficiency upgrades.

To register:

www1.gotomeeting.com/register/918483032

partnered with similar P2 centers across the U.S. for form the Pollution Prevention Resource Exchange (P2Rx™) Network.

Its board of directors includes volunteer representatives from a diverse array of industries vital to the Northwest economy.

News In Brief

- **NAR will push hard during the coming weeks to assure that the first-time homebuyer tax credit is extended beyond its current December 1 expiration.** Under current law, homebuyers will be eligible for the credit only if they are able to complete their purchase (i.e., go to closing) before December 1, 2009. This requirement intensifies pressure on purchasers and on real estate licensees and lenders as that deadline approaches. NAR is deeply concerned that prospective purchasers, even those with binding contracts, could be denied the credit through no fault of their own. Senior members of the tax-writing committees are aware of these concerns and have noted the dangers of delay.

NAR informal surveys suggest that, depending on the market, transactions are taking anywhere from 30 to 100 days to get to closing; short sales take even longer. Accordingly, NAR has begun an intense campaign that will have major grassroots components to secure an extension of the credit as soon as possible to avert a slowdown in the market.

- **According to the Puget Sound Business Journal on September 17th, the Internal Revenue Service reports that 26,000 residents of Washington state have taken advantage of the \$8,000 first-time homebuyer's credit offered by the federal government.** The tax credit program expires December 1st, and IRS officials report that if homebuyers want to qualify for the program, they need to close on a home by November 30. To date, nearly 530,000 Americans have applied for the tax credit according to data from the U.S. Treasury.
- **Continued weakness in consumer spending will help drain another \$238 million for the state's coffers.** The drop-off in tax receipts likely means more state budget cuts when the legislature reconvenes in January. Governor Gregoire did not mention tax increases as an option to bridge the deficit, and legislative budget leaders also downplayed the likelihood of tax hikes. Overall, the revenue decline pushes the state's balance sheet about \$430 million into the red for the budget that runs through mid-2011.
- **Mortgagee Letter 2009-19 provided guidance on the new approval process for condominium projects for mortgages insured by the Federal Housing Administration (FHA).** The rule effectively places condominium projects in FHA's 203(b) Single Family Program. This new approval process was effective for all case numbers assigned on or after October 1, 2009. However, the new effective date is for case numbers assigned on or after November 2, 2009. The site condo and manufactured housing condo project changes that have already taken effect are not affected by this delay.

On July 31, 2009, NAR President Charles McMillan sent a letter to FHA Commissioner David Stevens recommending enhancements to the new condominium rule. Mr. McMillan also discussed NAR's recommendations at a meeting with the Commissioner on September 8, 2009. NAR is calling for: 1) a reduction in the owner-occupancy requirement, 2) eliminating or increasing the FHA concentration limit, 3) reducing the pre-sale requirement, and 4) clarification of the reserve study requirement.

Calendar of Events through November 30, 2009

SEATTLE-KING COUNTY REALTORS®					
Date	Event	Clock Hours	Time	Where	Phone
10/15	“RE Ethics: I am a REALTOR®” Seminar	4	9:30am-1:30pm	SKCR	800-540-3277
10/19	Membership Committee		12pm-1:30pm	SKCR	800-540-3277
10/23	TREC – Environmental Project		9am-1pm	SKCR	800-540-3277
10/30	“RE Net: Social Networks Bring You Business” Seminar	3	9am-12pm	SKCR	800-540-3277

For information visit: <http://www.nwrealtor.com/> and click “events”

SNOHOMISH COUNTY-CAMANO ASSOCIATION OF REALTORS®

For information visit: <http://www.sccar.com/> and click “events” or “education”

WASHINGTON ASSOCIATION OF REALTORS

For information visit: <http://www.warealtor.com/firstpage.asp>
 Direct: 360-943-3100 * Toll Free: 1-800-462-6024 * Fax: (360) 357-6627
 Washington Association of Realtors: PO Box 719, Olympia, WA 98507