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Empty-Nesters Re-invent the Family Home

Built-ins, cleverly articulated interior increase usable space without need to add-on.

BY JOHN BYRD

Sometimes life's second act requires a bold set change. How else are others to know that the featured players have moved on, embracing new beginnings?

Reinvention is after all the quintessential triumph of creativity, and can be a very personal process when the thing reinvented is your home itself.

"Of course, large-scale life changes don't necessarily demand a whole house makeover," recently retired teacher Cindy Borer said. But in the past year, her only son moved out to start a new career and her husband is now traveling less, so the timing was right for discoveries.

BUT TO START AT THE TOP: last spring the Borers had celebrated 20 years residency in their two-story, four-bedroom Colonial-style house in Burke, and were taking stock of what they wanted from the years ahead.

At just over 800 square feet, the home's primary living area had been serviceable enough; even so, the formal dining room and adjacent den on opposite sides of the front facing foyer were hardly ever used and the rear family room was dark and cramped.



By borrowing a mere nine square feet from the dining room, the designers found space for a small mudroom with bench immediately to the right of a side kitchen door.

Evaluating options, Borer considered enlarging a few rear rooms. She also wondered if some of the home's interior walls could be modified in way that would allow for more natural light. What to do?

It was at this juncture that Craig Durosko, founder of Sun Design Remodeling, was called-in to discuss possible space improvement scenarios.

Durosko pointed out that the couple

didn't so much lack square footage as a sensible space plan tailored to how they actually use their home. The existing "center-

SEE EMPTY-NESTERS, PAGE 4

Kitchen Confidential

BY MARILYN CAMPBELL
THE CONNECTION

When Allie Mann of Arlington, a designer and senior interior specialist at Case Design/Remodeling, Inc. was tasked with giving the first

From light-filled to dramatic, local designers create dream kitchens.

floor of a McLean, Va., home a face lift, she had to think free-flowing and airy.

"[The] client wanted to focus on making the kitchen feel open and connected to rest of home," said Mann. "[They] needed to have plenty of space to cook and entertain plus lots of storage."

Mann said the homeowner was making a cross-country move and settling in Virginia, so adhering to a strict timeline and budget were critical.

However, near the end of the project, the homeowner wanted to make a change.

"At nearly 85 percent job completion, client decided they wanted to completely remove the wall between the kitchen and family room. In the original design, we partially removed the wall," said Mann. "This meant a shift and redirection of scope, additional



PHOTO COURTESY NICELY DONE KITCHENS

A vertical, glass subway tile backsplash adds a dramatic flair to this kitchen by Nicely Done Kitchens.

engineering [because] the remaining portion of the wall housed a three-story fireplace, relocation of cabinets had already been installed and modifications to counter tops. And still deliver a project close to on

time."

The finished kitchen is a light-filled space with cabinets by Crystal Cabinetry, honed Vermont Marble countertops and appliances

SEE KITCHEN, PAGE 4

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Empty-Nesters Re-invent the Family Home

FROM PAGE 3

hall” configuration defined rooms were consistent with tradition, yet were functionally underutilized most of the time. This accounted for daily traffic patterns that didn’t work as well as they might, and a nagging sense that the entire first floor was space-restricted.

On a second subject: the mid-house floor-to-ceiling bearing wall dividing the front and rear sections of the house could be completely deleted by installing concealed vertical supports at strategic intervals, Durokso said. Such a move would dramatically increase natural light, creating the floor space needed for an alternative layout more appropriate for both daily use and entertainment.

“On the first visit Craig pretty much solved our space plan problem,” Borer said. “From this point on, I was mainly to think about the interior design details.”

So Borer’s meeting with Jon Benson, the makeover’s lead designer, proved a revelation from the start.

A veteran home remodeling specialist as well as a nationally recognized furniture designer, Benson’s input shaped a floor plan focused on personal requirements in which custom built-ins eliminate unneeded walls while sharply improving both room function and interior design integrity.

To create a more functional relationship between the kitchen and the dining room, for instance, the designer replaced an interior pantry with a 27.5-square-foot food preparation surface and dining counter that serves both rooms equally.

By borrowing a mere nine square feet from the dining room, Benson also found space for a small mudroom with bench immediately to the right of the side entrance to the kitchen.

Re-situating the front hall closet to the right of the front door not only widened the front foyer but also created dramatic front-to-back sight lines that make the entire house seem much larger.

Measured in square feet, the changes are small. Yet such revisions liberate the first level circulation plan, re-organizing the home’s primary living area into rooms that are both interactive and articulated.

To visually differentiate the front-facing library from the family room, the designer converted existing overhead beams into an elegant tray ceiling supported by Craftsman-style piers.

A floor-to-ceiling bookcase—also a Benson original—provides an elegant yet useful wall for the new reading room. The new family room fireplace hearth was custom-designed to accommodate the plasma TV that now hangs above it.

Additional interior design decisions emerged from Borer’s collaboration with



PHOTOS BY BRYAN BURRIS PHOTOGRAPHY

To differentiate the front-facing library from the family room visually, Sun Design converted existing overhead beams into an elegant tray ceiling supported by Craftsman-style piers.



The new transitional-style interior employs decorative elements to create distinctive use-zones in an open floor plan.

Sun Design’s Jessica Page.

“Jessica helped me discover the design style I’d been looking for,” Borer said. “She opened up a lot of resources. Ideas that I liked were added to a project scrapbook which we both referenced regularly to keep the decision process on track.”

As space plan modifications proceeded, Borer’s research revealed a strong personal attraction to transitional-style interior design, a contemporary concept that seeks to reconcile traditional architecture with the spatial freedom of an open floor plan.

On this score, Benson’s original floorplan sketch anticipated the use of loveseats as



Transitional interior design style seeks to reconcile traditional architecture with the spatial freedom of an open floor plan.

space dividers between the family room and the den. Meanwhile, Borer’s preference for soft white and grey duotones inspired an interior paint scheme that combines sharp white and khaki.

In the kitchen, Giallo Sioriato granite surfaces are set off by a vividly original glass tile and stone backsplash which lends an invigorating streak of color to the broader visual panorama.

“Its very comfortable balance of traditional and open really works well for us,” Borer said. “I found the whole process really enlightening.”

Kitchen Confidential

FROM PAGE 3

by Sub-Zero, Wolf, KitchenAid and Miele.

NICELY DONE KITCHENS in Springfield, Va., created a kitchen with drama for a Centreville, Va., family. “White semi-custom cabinetry and a contrasting dark island creates a dramatic look,” said Stephanie Brick, designer. Brick cited the focus on the vertical, subway tile back splash.

The rest of the back splash in the kitchen is horizontal, which is the standard for subway tile, said Brick.

The kitchen also includes ample, easily accessible storage space.

“The paneled refrigerator helps conceal the appliances and helps them to blend in with the cabinetry to give the aesthetic more continuity,” said Brick. The kitchen includes easily accessible storage space and ogeedged granite counter tops.

OPENING UP and adding light were priorities when Guy Hopkins Semmes, partner and founder of Potomac-based design-build firm Hopkins and Porter and Lea Allen, one of the firm’s senior architects, remodeled the kitchen of a Bethesda, Md., home.

“The kitchen was small, but we were able to add a lot more space, by making few minor changes,” said Semmes. “Before there was an enclosed porch next to the kitchen. We opened the wall between the kitchen and the adjacent enclosed porch.”

Semmes and Allen made another major elimination: appliances. “We got rid of the



COURTESY OF CASE DESIGN/REMODELING INC

Arlington, Va., designer Allie Mann of Case Design/Remodeling, Inc. created a free-flowing and elegant feel in this McLean, Va. kitchen.

refrigerator and moved it downstairs,” said Semmes. “All of the other appliances are located under the counter and open up like drawers.”

Semmes also found a creative way to make the space more light-filled. “We took out a stairway wall to the second floor and replaced it with a triangular opening so light from stairwell came down into the kitchen.”

The kitchen now has maple cabinetry and white Silestone countertops. “It was done on a budget. It’s amazing what you can do when you work with what you’ve got.”



PHOTO COURTESY OF HOPKINS AND PORTER

Guy Semmes and Lea Allen of Potomac-based design-build firm Hopkins and Porter removed walls to create space and add light to the kitchen of this Bethesda, Md. home.

Garden Club of Virginia Celebrates 81st Tour



This Alexandria garden will appear on the 81st Historic Garden Week tour.

House and garden tours will take place across Virginia during the 81st Historic Garden Week. Garden week runs from Saturday, April 26-Saturday, May 3.

Tour proceeds fund the restoration and preservation of Virginia’s historic gardens. Each spring visitors are welcomed to more than 250 of Virginia’s most beautiful gardens, homes and historic landmarks during “America’s Largest Open House.” This eight-day statewide event provides visitors an opportunity to see gardens at the peak of Virginia’s springtime color, as well as beautiful houses sparkling with over 2,000 flower arrangements created by Garden Club of Virginia members.

Statewide tour passes are available for \$175. The Alexandria tour takes place Saturday, April 26, tickets are \$35. The Vienna tour takes place Tuesday, April 29 and tickets are \$25. There is a 240-page guidebook with detailed descriptions of properties on each tour. The \$10 charge covers the shipping and handling cost of the book. Free copies of the guide are available at Virginia businesses, visitor centers, and some AAAs. Visit www.vagardenweek.org.

David Watkins of Merrifield Garden Center says cold season annuals like these yellow pansies can add bright color to a garden now.



PHOTO COPYRIGHT CAROLINE WILLIAMS

Getting Your Garden Ready for Spring

Local experts tell you what you should do now, in spite of the cold weather.

BY MARILYN CAMPBELL
THE CONNECTION

on the environment. It reduces bad bug populations and is safe over all.”

It doesn’t feel like spring. Last week’s snow made it seem like warm weather might never arrive, so planting a garden might be the last thing on your mind. However, local gardening experts say this is the ideal time to start preparing your landscape to yield colorful spring foliage.

Bill Mann, of Behnke Nurseries in Potomac, Md., said spring garden preparation plans differ from year to year. “It depends on the landscape beds you have and whether or not you’re planning to put in a vegetable garden,” he said.

“This is the time to inspect shrubs for damage that might have been broken during the snow load,” said David Watkins of Merrifield Garden Center, which has locations in Fair Oaks, Merrifield and Gainesville, Va., “Don’t go overboard, however: “You don’t want to prune plants before they bloom. A good rule of thumb is to prune a flowering plant right after it blooms.”

Instead, spend some time tidying up. “Right now is the time to fertilize your shrubs, remove old mulch, put down new mulch and just clean up,” said Watkins. “Everybody is sick of winter, especially this winter. This is the time to clean up old leaves. Because the winter has been so cold, there are going to be some plants that won’t have made it.”

“In March, a lot has to do with inspecting the yard for winter damage,” said Mann. “This is a great time of the year to look for insect damage and deer damage.”

Mann expects extensive deer damage this year. “Deer didn’t have much to eat except for plants like azaleas and rhododendrons.”

Insect damage is less obvious and more difficult to identify. “This is the time to do damage-control by using safe or organic-based products like neem oil,” said Mann. “When sprayed on plants, it smothers insect eggs or some insects in the larva stage. It also kills stinkbugs. If you can see them, you can control them. You can use a higher concentration this time of year and it is a lot safer and easier

WHILE EAGER GARDENERS may be excited to start planting spring flowers in their newly cleaned plots, Watkins offers a caveat: “It is a little early for most annual flowers in pots on patios, but you can plant annuals like pansies, which are cold season annuals,” he said. “They don’t like heat, so in June they start to whither. Then you can put other flowers in like petunias and geraniums.”

Watkins recommends planting hearty, ornamental shrubs in patio flowerpots and surrounding them with flowering plants to ensure year-found foliage. “A nice thing to do in pots is plant a woody ornamental,” he said. “It is nice to have plants in the pots that stay year round. I put a Japanese maple in a pot on my deck. In another pot I put ilex verticillata [winterberry] and I had red berries all winter long. In the spring, I’ll put petunias in the soil around it, and around the edge I’ll plant a flowering plant that will trail down over the pot from April to October. Then the rest of the year I’ll get red berries.”

Sowing grass seeds is also an ideal project to begin now. “The seeds won’t germinate until it gets to be 52 degrees,” Watkins continued. “So even if we get another snow storm, it helps work the seeds into the soil.”

Randee Wilson of Nature By Design in Alexandria encourages the use of indigenous plants. “Look for sources for native plants — they help sustain our local wildlife. If we didn’t have local plants, butterflies would be gone.”

Native plants also require less maintenance. “Some native plants are cardinal flower, which is bright red; bee balm, also bright red; blue cardinal; iron weed, which has purple flowers, and native wisteria vine,” said Wilson.

If a new patio is in your plans this spring, Watkins says to get started now. “We’ve been putting down putting patios all year long,” he said. “A good garden center is going to get backed up when the weather is warmer. The sooner you start getting your job in the line, the better.”

Local REAL ESTATE

PHOTOS BY CRAIG STERBUTZEL/THE CONNECTION

Top Sales in January, 2014



1 7540 Clifton Road, Fairfax Station — \$2,250,000



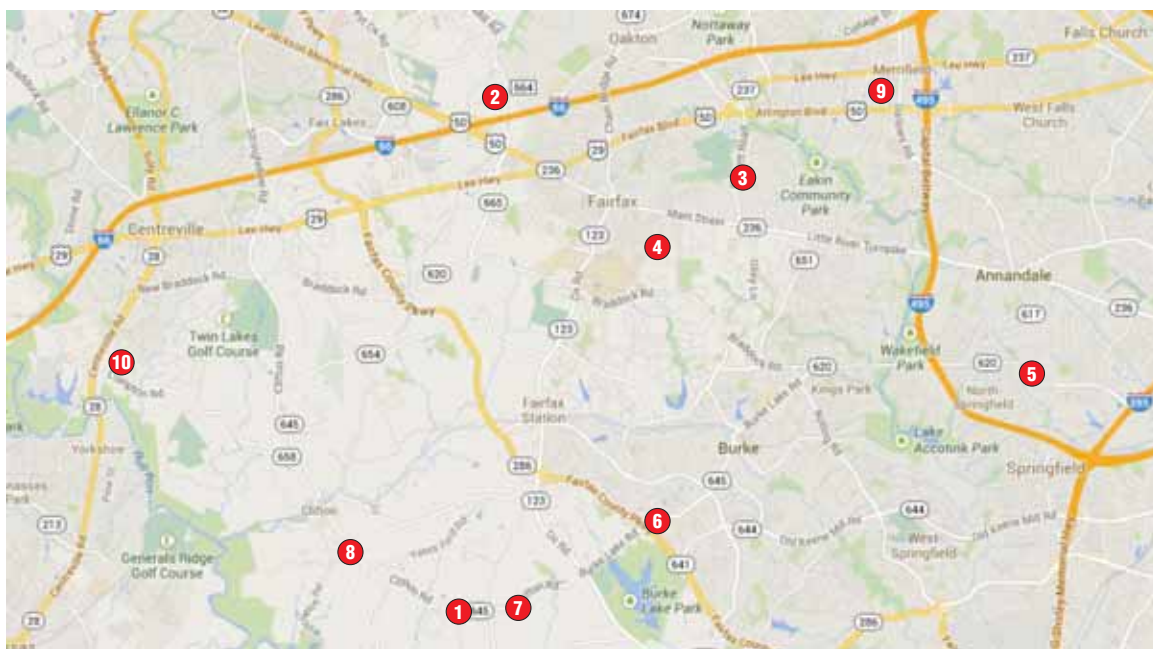
2 11394 Amber Hills Court, Fairfax — \$1,626,036



5 7111 Granberry Way, Springfield — \$1,060,000



6 6471 Lake Meadow Drive, Burke — \$1,037,500



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Address	BR	FB	HB	Postal	City	Sold Price	Type	Lot AC	PostalCode	Subdivision	Date Sold
1 7540 CLIFTON RD	7	9	1	FAIRFAX STATION	FAIRFAX STATION	\$2,250,000	Detached	4.82	22039	CRAFTOWN	01/02/14
2 11394 AMBER HILLS CT	5	5	2	FAIRFAX	FAIRFAX	\$1,626,036	Detached	1.08	22033	ESTATES AT FAIR OAKS	01/24/14
3 3518 SCHUERMAN HOUSE DR	5	5	1	FAIRFAX	FAIRFAX	\$1,175,000	Detached	0.18	22031	PICKETT'S RESERVE	01/17/14
4 4212 ORCHARD DR	4	3	1	FAIRFAX	FAIRFAX	\$1,150,000	Detached	0.33	22032	HALEMHURST	01/22/14
5 7111 GRANBERRY WAY	5	5	2	SPRINGFIELD	SPRINGFIELD	\$1,060,000	Detached	0.37	22151	GRANBERRY ESTATES	01/06/14
6 6471 LAKE MEADOW DR	4	4	1	BURKE	BURKE	\$1,037,500	Detached	0.58	22015	EDGEWATER	01/31/14
7 11090 SANDY MANOR DR	4	4	1	FAIRFAX STATION	FAIRFAX STATION	\$960,000	Detached	5.00	22039	SANDY RUN FOREST ESTATES	01/20/14
8 7242 ARCHLAW DR	4	3	1	CLIFTON	CLIFTON	\$935,000	Detached	5.00	20124	CLIFTON TRAILS	01/31/14
9 2936 Penny Lane	3	3	0	FAIRFAX	FAIRFAX	\$917,286	Detached	0.20	22031	MOSAIC AT MERRIFIELD	01/28/14
10 6720 HARTWOOD LN	6	4	1	CENTREVILLE	CENTREVILLE	\$715,000	Detached	0.34	20121	NORTH HART RUN	01/21/14

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Van Metre Wins Sales, Marketing Awards

Van Metre receives 8 awards total at The Nationals 2014.

Van Metre Homes won eight Silver Awards at the 2014 National Sales and Marketing Awards, hosted by the National Sales and Marketing Council.

Van Metre Homes were honored as Rookie of the Year, Sales Person of the Year, Sales Manager of the Year, Best Direct Mail Program, Best Print Campaign, Best Overall Advertising Campaign, Best Computer Sales Tool, and Best Design Center.

Individuals recognized for outstanding achievement included Omayra Dehring for Rookie of the Year, Ernie Kyger for Sales Person of the Year, and Danny Faulkner for Sales Manager of the Year. Van Metre Homes won for Best Direct Mail Program with their Fashion Week. Their Fresh Campaign won two awards for Best Print Campaign and for Best Overall Advertising Campaign. Van Metre Homes' Hologram won for Best Computer Sales Tool and the Van Metre Design Studio won for Best Design Center.

Van Metre Companies has constructed more than 16,000 houses and several thousand apartments, as well as office buildings and shopping centers in Northern Virginia. Van Metre communities include their own master-planned developments, as well as neighborhoods in smaller subdivisions and third-party planned communities.

The Van Metre portfolio of new homes includes condominiums, townhomes and single-family homes designed for first-time and move-up buyers throughout the Northern Virginia suburbs.

Van Metre's exclusive Design Studio, located in Stone Ridge, Va., allows homebuyers to choose their interior finishes and options. Van

Metre also offers turnkey mortgage financing services through their own lending affiliate, Intercoastal Mortgage. Through the Van Metre in-house architecture team, buyers can modify architecture based on a community's design plan and sur-

rounding environments. They are also able to quickly adapt to market changes, as well as offer customization with Van Metre's Dream Home Portfolio — offering homebuyers an easy path to personal home customization.



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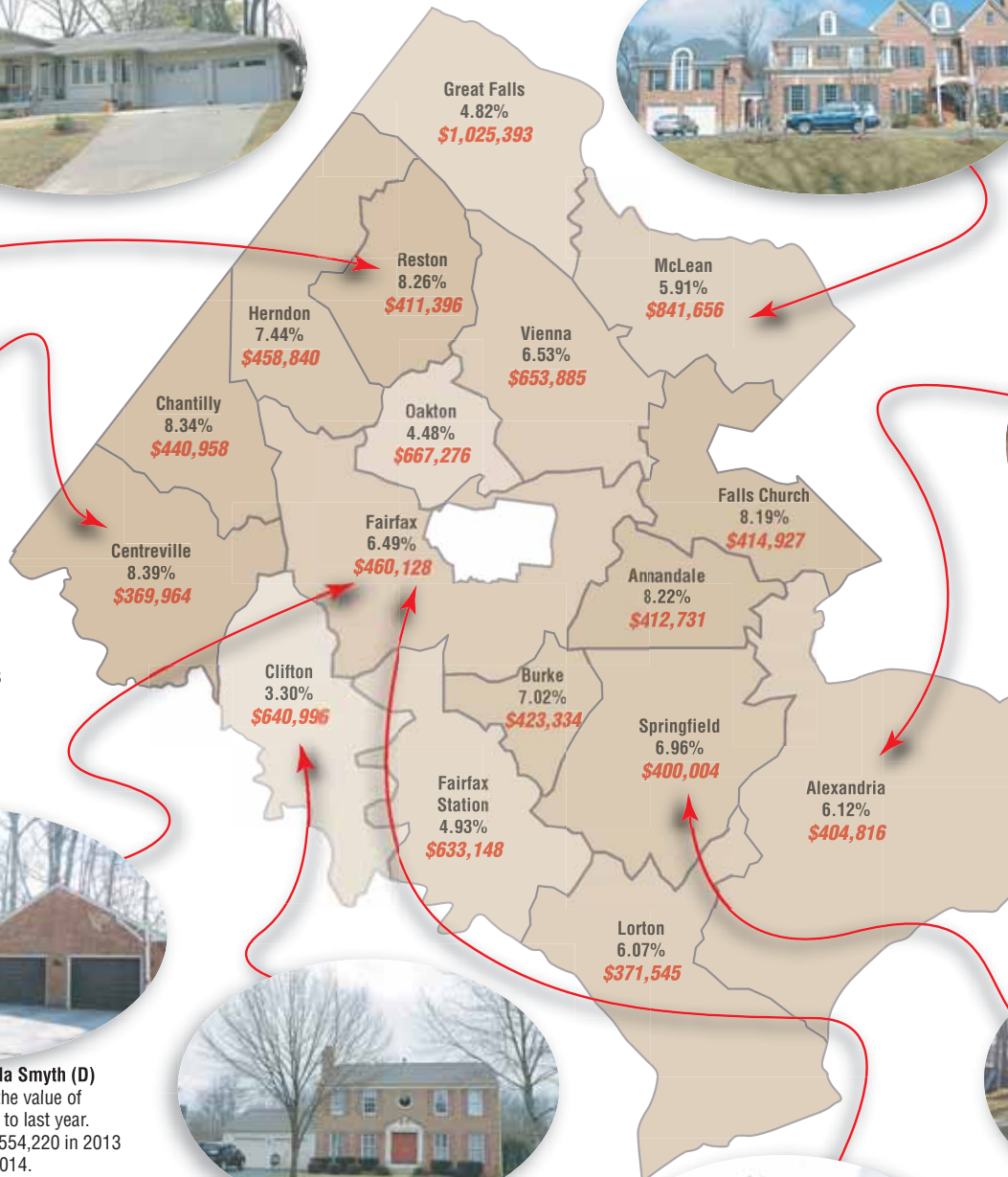
Fairfax County REAL ESTATE

2014 Assessments by Area

Hunter Mill Supervisor **Cathy Hudgins (D)** saw her assessment go up 10.80% from \$575,910 in 2013 to \$638,100 in 2014.



Dranesville District Supervisor **John Foust (D)** saw a 6.16% drop in his property value when compared to 2013. The county valued Foust's house at \$3,109,050 last year and \$2,917,660 this year.



Sully Supervisor **Michael Frey (R)** saw a 11.96% increase in the value of his home over the last year. Frey's home was assessed at \$225,820 in 2013 and \$252,830 in 2014.



Lee Supervisor **Jeff McKay (D)** saw no change in his home assessment. This year, his home was worth \$710,220, same as last year.

Mount Vernon Supervisor **Gerry Hyland** has no property listed.



Providence Supervisor **Linda Smyth (D)** saw a 7.22% increase in the value of her house when compared to last year. Smyth's home was valued at \$554,220 in 2013 and \$594,220 in 2014.



Springfield Supervisor **Patrick Herrity (R)** saw a 3.56% gain in his property value when compared to 2013. Last year, his home was worth \$553,770 and this year it is valued at \$573,460.



Braddock Supervisor **John Cook (R)** saw a 13.37% increase in the value of his home over the last year. Cook's home was assessed at \$586,220 in 2013 and \$634,760 in 2014.



Fairfax County Chairman **Sharon Bulova (D)** saw her home value go down 2.62% from \$617,750 in 2013 to \$601,550 in 2014.



2014 County Average (Percent Change)
 Single Family Detached **\$598,711 (5.82%)**
 Townhouse **\$370,849 (8.39%)**
 Condos **\$247,943 (10.51%)**

ZIP CODE AREA	2013 MEAN	2014 MEAN	PERCENT CHANGE
Alexandria/Mount Vernon	381,426	404,816	6.12
Annandale	381,386	412,731	8.22
Burke	395,580	423,334	7.02
Centreville	341,337	369,964	8.39
Chantilly	407,026	440,958	8.34
Clifton	620,491	640,996	3.30
Fairfax	432,104	460,128	6.49
Fairfax Station	603,429	633,148	4.93
Falls Church	383,502	414,927	8.19
Great Falls	978,233	1,025,393	4.82
Herndon	427,060	458,840	7.44
Lorton	350,288	371,545	6.07
McLean	794,688	841,656	5.91
Oakton	638,692	667,276	4.48
Reston	379,741	411,096	8.26
Springfield	373,964	400,004	6.96
Vienna	613,796	653,885	6.53

for single family, townhouses and condominiums

The average assessed value of a single family home in Fairfax County for 2014 is \$598,711, up 5.82%

SOURCE: FAIRFAX COUNTY