

Spring 2015 HomeLifeStyle



COURTESY OF LOUISE KRAFFT

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His and Hers: Special Spaces

BY JOHN BYRD

On the face of it, adding a two-level structure to a 30-year-old brick house is not especially difficult. Essentially, Vienna homeowners Al Dobson and his wife Joan Davanzo each have a pet project — a spacious first level garage to house sport cars, motorcycles and '60s rock for him; a lovely sunroom comprised of floor-to-ceiling window walls for her.

Knock out the existing screen porch; slightly expand the footprint for the garage; sun room goes on top embracing the rear deck and pool; and, Bingo, it's done.

Yet as anyone who has lived in the Fairfax County for a while knows, no project is without complications, and add to this the problems of a sloping grade, set-back restrictions, strict rules on structures with lots of glass and the owner's desire to preserve all the surrounding trees, and suddenly there are the makings of an intricate engineering challenge.

"County rules on glass in new construction have been in place for over a decade,"

said David Foster, president of Foster Remodeling Solutions, the contractor the couple hired to execute the project.

"Our dogs can even look out the windows," Joan Davanzo said. "The design gives us a really a stunning view in all directions."

For Al Dobson, the favored hang-out now is his "man cave" garage which houses a Corvette, his Italian motorcycle and a sound system that plays choice sounds of the '50s and '60s. A racing enthusiast who participates in time trials at Summit Point, Dobson wanted a room that speaks to his passion for motor sports. Underfoot, an iconic checkerboard pattern set the tone for a private retreat decorated with '60s movie posters and other period memorabilia.

"It's a really peaceful spot to just relax," Dobson said. "That's what this process was always for, so I'm glad we pursued it."



Al Dobson and his new spacious garage to house his sports car, motorcycles and '60s rock memorabilia.

PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

Below, the sun porch emphasizes views. Extra large windows are insulated and wind-resistant.



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Spring Pop for the Real Estate Market?

Agents again optimistic for a strong spring

BY TIM PETERSON
THE GAZETTE

Just like last year, real estate agent Ron Kowalski is optimistic coming out of the winter doldrums. He runs Ron Kowalski Real Estate Group with Keller Williams Capital Properties, covering Lorton, Fairfax Station and Springfield.

"Expectations are again high for the spring market," he said. That's due in part to mortgage interest rates being attractively low, just like last year. "The rates haven't gone up, as we all thought."

Interest rates for a 30-year fixed mortgage, both nationally and in Virginia, weren't quite as low in April 2014 (4.1-4.2 percent) as the year before (3.3 percent), according to the online real estate database Zillow. But with the economy gradually recovering, agents were feeling a surge coming on.

In 2014, "the year started off strong until we got up to about July and August," said Rex Reiley, with RE/MAX Allegiance in the Mount Vernon area, "when things started to taper off a bit."

Agents were also anticipating a raise in rates, but that didn't happen. And now, the national and state interest rates are currently hovering around 3.8 percent for a 30-year fixed mortgage with a credit rating of 740 to 850 according to Zillow.

Though rates have dipped somewhat from a year ago, prices and available inventory have grown.

In the past year, Fairfax County has seen the average selling price of homes rise from \$491,144 to \$526,786 (a 7.3 percent increase) versus the Mid Atlantic Region average increase of 3.2 percent. Over the same period the number of active listings in the county increased from 1,634 to 2,198 (a 34.5 percent increase over last January). (Source: RealEstate Business Intelligence)

With the spring 2015 market preparing to bloom, agents are hopeful the low rates and available inventory will motivate more buyers and sellers to get off the fence and into the arena. Particularly because it's unclear when rates might rise again.

"People don't want to wait," said Pattie Mancini, whose coverage area with Avery-Hess Realtors includes Springfield. She said her office has been hitting sales goals for the first time in over a year. "With prices going up, and interest rates might be going up, this is the perfect storm."

Mancini said she's seeing more "millennials" coming into the market in Springfield, and finding more houses available from older individuals who had been holding out while the market was worse over the last five years.

"The millennials are getting older," she said, "seeing it's not such a bad idea, and



PHOTO COURTESY OF PATTIE MANCINI

5409 Yorkshire St., in the Kings Park area of Springfield, listed at \$535,000.



PHOTO COURTESY OF RON KOWALSKI

"The builder, McShay Communities from Springfield, is building four homes on spec since he's optimistic about the spring market in this price range (\$949,900-\$1.3M)," said Ron Kowalski, of the new McDonald Estates development in Lorton. "We even painted, decorated and staged the model home (pictured, available for \$1.25M), which is rare for a seven-home development." One active listing is 9324 Dachshund Drive, listed at \$949,900.



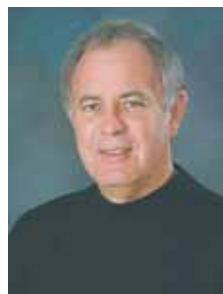
PHOTO COURTESY OF REX REILEY

8717 Falkstone Lane in Mt. Vernon Manor, Mount Vernon. "This house went on the market Feb. 25 and a contract was ratified Feb. 28th," said Rex Reiley. "There were multiple offers because this was listed at \$370,000. The interior needed to be remodeled totally and with its low price, it attracted many investors and builders who will renovate it."



PHOTO COURTESY OF REX REILEY

4505 Dolphin Lane, located in Yacht Haven, Mount Vernon, is listed at \$875,000. Its renovations include a two-floor addition on a half-acre lot.



Rex Reiley with RE/MAX Allegiance.



Ron Kowalski of Keller Williams Capital.



Pat Richter of Residential Preferred.



Pattie Mancini of Avery-Hess Realtors.

seeing more value in a mortgage than rent."

Pat Richter with Residential Preferred Properties in Burke could use more sellers putting up their property. With more people gaining confidence in their economic stability, she said there are more buyers looking to "move up" in her area.

"For years, we haven't had much of a move up market," Richter said. "Now, people are starting to say this townhouse is

too small, this single family home is too small, and want a bigger one."

With the move up market and more buyers looking to move into Burke, "It's a good time to be a buyer," she said. "But that doesn't mean prices have escalated tremendously. It's interesting because assessments all went up. Now starting April 1, we'll see prices go up a little, pricing for the spring and summer market."

Fairfax County mailed its 2015 real estate assessment notices Feb. 17: 74 percent of residential properties saw an increase.

SEE LOW INTEREST RATES, PAGE 7

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213 South Royal Street



217 Gibbon Street



519 South Lee Street



508 South Fairfax Street



Alexandria Celebrates Virginia Garden Week

Old Town Alexandria was in 1946 the third city in the country to create a historic district to preserve its downtown. Today it has 4,000 buildings with a historic designation, according to the garden tour information.

The Virginia Historic Garden Tour on April 18 is a walking tour in Old Town including five row houses with courtyard gardens in this preserved area, and refreshments at St. Paul's Episcopal Church.

In addition to the private properties featured, the tour ticket allows access to The Carlyle House Historic Park, Lee-Fendall House Museum and Garden, George Mason's Gunston Hall and George Washington's Mount Vernon Estate and Gardens. The tour is hosted by The Garden Club of Alexandria and Hunting Creek Garden Club.

The Virginia Historic Garden Tour is an 8-day event that stretches across the Commonwealth. Each spring visitors are welcomed to over 250 of Virginia's most beautiful gardens, homes and historic landmarks. This event provides the opportunity to see unforgettable gardens at the peak of Virginia's springtime color, as well as beautiful houses sparkling with more than 2,000

flower arrangements created by Garden Club of Virginia members.

Tour proceeds fund the restoration and preservation of Virginia's historic gardens, and provide graduate level research fellowships for building comprehensive and on-going records of historic gardens and landscapes in the Commonwealth, and support the mission of the Garden Club of Virginia.

For a complete list of tours, see www.vagardenweek.org

All descriptions from Virginia Historic Garden Week.

213 South Royal Street

This Federal-style house was probably built by Thomas Davy, a merchant, around 1834. The house has a more modest history than many of its regal neighbors on Royal, Duke and Prince Streets, though its rooms are rich with the history of the sail makers, cooper, china merchants and other tradesmen listed in the city's 1850 census as residing on the block. By 1850, two separate families lived on the property: Davy, his wife Susan and their daughter Louisa; and James Lugenbille, a physician, his wife Martha and their daughter Emma, as well as Thomas Crook, an unmarried clerk. Well into the 20th century, the house was still

used as a multi-family residence and fell into disrepair. Previous owners undertook major renovations in the 1990s and were able to keep much of the original trim and some of the original hardwood floors. The garden is shaded by a magnificent red oak that was planted soon after the Civil War and is one of the largest trees in the area today. Hydrangeas, camellias, rhododendron, crepe myrtles and wisteria decorate the garden and provide a special place for small children to play. The current owners (the wife is an interior designer) have added artistic and youthful touches to the interior while still maintaining its history.

212 Prince Street, Garden Only.

Behind 212 Prince Street, the house on the left side of the "Double Dwelling" at 212-214 Prince Street, is a lovely garden. The current owners, who have lived at 212 for 12 years, completed an extensive renovation of the rear garden in 2008, adding a goldfish pond, a heated swimming pool with a whirlpool on the side, and enlarging the "pool house" in the back corner of the lot. Originally built as one of the first rental properties in Alexandria, the house was transferred to the daughter of the original builder, William Hartshorne, in 1794. She was married to Mordecai Miller, a prosperous Quaker merchant, who leased the property to a commercial bakery in 1811. When renovating the pool house at the back of the lot, the current owners uncovered a brick-lined cistern under the house, which appears to have been used as the oven for the bakery. The curved edge of the cistern is visible outside the pool house.

214 Prince Street

The lot was first purchased by William Hartshorne in 1774 upon his arrival in Alexandria from Philadelphia. After the Revolu-

tionary War, Hartshorne abandoned his idea to build a personal residence there and instead built an investment property for merchants and renters in 1786. The home (along with 212 Prince Street) is collectively referred to as the "Double Dwelling House" and was a single property until 1916. Originally Hartshorne designed the dwellings for merchants and others who used the first floor as shops or offices and lived with their families above. Original hardwood floors remain throughout the house. Sometime before 1885, the first-floor central stairs were relocated to the back of the existing house beyond the current dining room. There were additional fireplaces added in the 1940s or 1950s. The current owners have remodeled the kitchen and bathrooms, added the backyard lap pool and finished the attic space. In addition, they created an intimate courtyard feeling with copper planters atop the walls and urns on the upper deck for year-round seasonal plantings. Mr. and Mrs. Jeffrey Sopko

519 South Lee Street

Built around 1800 as a two-story frame house by Alexander Veitch, the home was sold to George Noble Lyles in 1803. The original house had one bedroom and was confined to the footprint of the existing living room, kitchen and dining room areas. The heavy brass lockset on the living room closet is from the original entry door. A rear addition was added by 1921. Additions made in 1942 include the living room fireplace, a kitchen and a screened porch. The current owners completed extensive renovations in 2006. The screened porch was enclosed to become a dining room. Its Palladian arched windows echo the arches of the former porch. A family room was added to the side and the back garden was converted into a walled courtyard. A focal point

of the patio is the unique wall plaque depicting John Tradescant (1608-1662), gardener to King Charles II, who was famous for bringing numerous plant species to England, including many from America. The home enjoys a beautiful vista of the Lee Street Park and Potomac River.

508 South Fairfax Street

This restored carriage house has an interesting history. Its nucleus was built in 1801-07 as a horse stable. By 1852 it had evolved into a handsome brick carriage house of "fair dimension." Remodeled in 1874, the building was owned by a wealthy banker and his wife, a direct descendant of Thomas Jefferson, and was further converted to living quarters in 1848. At the front gates a delightful scene unfolds, from ornamental hornbeams along the left wall to a front pergola draped with clematis. Walk along the front path and into the entrance hall. The dining room is the center of the house and the glass doors bring the lush side garden inside. The living room with its cozy fireplace looks out at the pergola. Beyond the kitchen is the original carriage house with a yellow-hued den and library beyond. Follow brick walkways through gardens filled with spirea, autumn fern, hellebores, peonies and heuchera. A female goddess sculpture from Bali creates a focal point in the midst of ferns. There is a bronze Peter Beard sculpture on oak plinth surrounded by perennial geraniums.

217 Gibbon Street

This historic residence, built in 1790, is purported to be the home of Robert Fulton while he secured a patent for his steamboat. The brick, detached house still has the original dentil moldings on the exterior. Other historic features include the wide-wood floors, interior moldings, window glass, and the original mechanical doorbell, restored by the current owners. Earlier owners added the built-in cabinetry in the living room, which includes antique art and furniture inherited from the owner's English family, mixed with more contemporary furnishings. The French doors at the back of the dining room were

installed in 1902. The doors are said to be from the White House, reclaimed after a renovation under President Theodore Roosevelt. A British potting table converted to a dining table and contemporary compacted-paper art create a bright and inviting dining experience. The renovated kitchen has slate flooring and exposed brick walls. The dining room and kitchen both open onto a brick-walled garden with climbing hydrangea, established crepe myrtles and dogwoods, and plantings of hellebores, azaleas, ferns and daffodils. The garden's rear gate exits on to an original cobblestone alley.



PHOTO BY DONNA MOULTON

The self-drive garden tour in Fairfax Station and Clifton in Fairfax County features four private homes with gardens and two stables in all.

Clifton and Fairfax Station, Tuesday, April 21

Wooded hills, wildlife and elegant equestrian estates describe Clifton-Fairfax Station. The Clifton Historic District, registered as a Virginia Historic Landmark, was a Civil War railroad stop and is filled with shops, memorable restaurants and restored homes. Clara Barton, founder of the American Red Cross, tended to soldiers after the Battle of Second Manassas at St. Mary's Church and the historic Fairfax Station, now a Railroad Museum.

Advance Ticket Sales: \$30
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Home Improvements Earn Awards

Four Sun Design remodeling projects named Washington-area “Contractor of the Year” winners.

BY JOHN BYRD

It’s been a good year for Sun Design Remodeling.

In January, the full-service design/build remodeler won four “Contractor of the Year” awards from the Washington, D.C. chapter of the National Association of the Remodeling Industry (NARI). Then, in February, an already locally-honored gourmet kitchen was named category best (“kitchen above \$150k”) in the 10-state southeastern region.

Winning projects include: a rear elevation poolside recreation solution; a French Country gourmet kitchen (the southeastern regional winner); an open kitchen plan in a traditional interior style; and a lower-level build-out to designed for use by three generations.

French Country Kitchen Is Local and Regional COTY winner: Residential Kitchen Over \$120,000

For Dr. Rick Layfield and his wife Kelly Layfield, the search for their dream kitchen started shortly after they purchased their 3,700-square-foot, four-bedroom home in Clifton eight years ago.

“The kitchen suite was a primary selling point,” Kelly Layfield said of the 400-square-foot room.

But she found the rear of the house dark and dated. Sightlines to the children’s backyard play areas were not well-aligned. And there was a visually obstructive bulkhead over the primary food preparation zone.

Also, the pentagon-shaped food preparation island and dining counter wasn’t well suited for in-kitchen dining. And the corner breakfast area was cramped — making it hard to access a door to the back porch which used to be a pathway to the family’s outdoor grill.

Fortunately, Kelly Layfield’s first meeting with designer John Benson was productive from the start. He proposed a rectangular food preparation island with a granite surface, parallel with the two corners of the cook’s work zones.

Benson also helped Layfield explore the lighter, more textured hues she had been seeking: marble subway tile wall covering; surfaces in Granite Bianco Antico; white cabinets with glass facings; and an oven backsplash in a white quatrefoil tiling. The coffers, likewise, are delineated in a white and grey duotone.

“This is just the balance I was looking for,” Layfield said. “It feels like home.”



PHOTO BY BRYAN BURRIS

With its private entrance, fully operative kitchenette and dining table for four, the new lower level allows Tina’s mother, Kay, to host bridge parties for friends independent of any other household activities.



PHOTO BY MITRO HOOD

BEST RESIDENTIAL KITCHEN: Sun Design’s winning kitchen solution takes full advantage of a 13’ cathedral ceiling with a two-level window wall. Owner Melynda Britt says the space is much better organized, yet more accessible — perfect for entertaining.

Open Floorplan Defines Casual But Elegant Kitchen Residential Kitchen; \$80k to \$120k; COTY Honorable Mention

Steve and Melynda Britt’s four-bedroom colonial in Vienna offered considerable charms when the couple purchased it 10 years ago.

There was a nicely finished library and living room, a formal dining room and a sizable family room in the back half of the house with a 13-foot cathedral ceiling framing a lovely view of mature landscaping.

For Melynda Britt, the larger goal was a kitchen footprint that offered an efficient work space — integrated with the surrounding great room.

“Since the emphasis was on a more intelligent use of limited square footage,” Sun Design’s Durosco said, “we thought custom-built-ins would help create better coordi-

nated work zones.”

Critiquing the kitchen now, Britt is amazed at how much more effectively the solution works on several fronts: The food preparation island protects the cook’s work triangle, and is positioned for easy service to the family room; the beverage station, an effective space divider, is accessible from both the breakfast area and family room; the coffee bar is situated between doors leading to the dining room and the breakfast room, out of the chef’s way; the kitchen’s mosaic tile flooring has been replaced by a refinished hardwood flooring.

“We can now comfortably entertain 20-25 guests,” Britt said. “Better yet, the space is really warm and comfortable.”

Finished Lower Level Offers Multi-Gen Family Solution COTY Honorable Mention

Eric Park and his wife Tina, both physicians, were already quite busy 10 years ago when they purchased a 3,400-square-foot two-level neo-colonial in Falls Church.

“Our plan all along was to create a family home,” Tina Park said. “We saw the lower level eventually playing a part in our daily lives, but were only using it for storage. It wasn’t until my mother began regularly helping us with the girls that we began looking at the house more closely.”

At first Park’s mother, Kay, would stay in the guest room, but gradually everyone started looking at ways to increase available privacy.

It’s at this point that Sun Design Remodeling enters the story.

“A basement conversion is challenging,” said Sun Design’s Liz Lee-Sint, who guided the Park project from concept to completion, “especially when it’s going to be mainstreamed with the rest of the house.”

For Kay, the top priority was a suite with all the features of independent living, including a private entrance, a comfortable master suite and a fully functional kitchenette with dining for four.

On a separate note, the Parks envisioned a 195-square-foot family fitness center and a children’s play zone with custom built-ins.

Describing the finished décor as “modern Asian contemporary,” Tina Park stressed simple lines, soft tones and open visuals.

“It’s really the nicest place in the house now,” Park said. “And it satisfies so many different needs that it’s become our main gathering place.”

House and grounds reconciliation judged this year’s best Exterior Solution/COTY Grand award winner

As Monte Zaben tells it, the rear elevation to his 8,300-square-foot colonial in Fredericksburg was so sun-exposed it was uncomfortable sitting by the pool he had just installed the year before.

After researching several options, however, he stumbled on Sun Design’s portfolio of indoor-outdoor solutions, and set up a meeting.

Combining an extended radius that steps down to the pool with vaulted entrance way, the structure’s architecture is welcoming.

Tapered craftsman-style piers support a seam metal roof. Inside, three distinct activity zones flow together: an open-air lounge; a cozy poolside vista with a pair of wicker chairs; and an outdoor kitchen equipped with a traditional grill, a power burner and refrigerators. A second level grilling deck is now, likewise, under roof.

Happy with the outcome, Zaben said he enjoys the outdoor kitchen so much he was out grilling one of his specialties this past January. “We make regular use of the outdoor space on just about every seasonable day,” he adds. “It’s very much a part of our lives now.”

John Byrd has been writing about home improvement for 30 years. He can be reached at byrdmatx@gmail.com.

Luxury Apartments Popping Up

Renters want resort-like amenities and access to transportation.

BY MARILYN CAMPBELL
THE GAZETTE

After a long, hard day at work, Jordan Coleman comes home to a large apartment with modern amenities, including a 24-hour concierge, ample living space, a state-of-the-art fitness center and a pool. The apartment features high-end appliances and finishes as well as an open, flowing layout and large walk-in closets.

Coleman – a lawyer and Capitol Hill staffer – shares the pricey rent with a friend. The complex is owned by Avalon, which has properties in Arlington, Fairfax, Herndon, Falls Church, Tysons Corner and Vienna, Virginia, as well as Bethesda, Maryland, and Washington.

The demand for high-end apartments in the Washington, D.C., area is high, with rents soaring over the \$7,000 mark. There are some who say the luxurious living spaces and carefree lifestyles are worth the extra money.

“There are two kinds of people who would be inclined to spend that kind of money in the luxury rental market,” said David Freishtat, who teaches in the Masters in Real Estate Development program at the University of Maryland and practices law in Potomac, Md. “First there are fairly successful, young people who buddy up and share an apartment with two or three friends. They can afford to spend 35-40 percent of take home pay in housing. They don’t spend much on food because they don’t have a family to feed.”

“Empty-nesters who’ve sold

their homes and decided to downsize are also inclined to rent high-end apartments. If they bought their house 20-30 years ago and sold it recently, they’re flush with cash,” said Freishtat. “They might be looking to buy a house in Florida or Arizona where there’s no income tax, but for the year and a half until they make that decision they’re going to live in a nice apartment because they’ve always lived in a nice house so they’re adaptable to those kinds of apartments.”

“These buildings ... are in great neighborhoods,” said Coleman. “They’re new construction and the layout is like you’re living in the suburbs, but with the convenience of living in the city. There are kitchens, bathrooms, living spaces are fluid and the closets are ridiculously large.”

One of those neighborhoods is Reston Town Center in Reston, Va., with restaurants and shops and public transportation. A new, luxury apartment building will have 360 apartments with easy access to such a lifestyle.

At The Harrison, where rent runs from just under \$2,000 to as high as \$6,650 a month, residents are offered such amenities as a culinary demonstration kitchen; a private dining room for wine tastings; a gaming area that offers pool, shuffleboard, chess, and card tables, a massage room, a spin studio and a 24-hour gym with state-of-the-art equipment. The pet-friendly property even caters to four-legged friends with a dog park and pet spa.

“People now want to simplify their lives,” said Karen A. Kossow,

Vice President of Marketing, Community Realty Company, Inc. which provides leasing and management services for The Harrison.

Also at Reston Town Center is The Metropolitan, owned by Kettler, a real estate development firm based in McLean, Va., and which manages apartments throughout Northern Virginia. Residents at some of the firm’s properties pay more than \$7,000 a month for features such as 17-foot ceilings, floor-to-ceiling windows, wood flooring and ceramic tile bathrooms.

Kettler is also putting the finishing touches on The Acadia, a 411-unit, high-rise luxury apartment building in the Metropolitan Park section of Arlington, Va., and plans to begin leasing units this spring. In October, the firm will begin construction on m.flats Crystal City. It will be Kettler’s sixth property in the Pentagon-Crystal City neighborhood in Arlington.

At Bent Tree in Centreville, Va., managed by Lincoln Property Company, high-end units include



PHOTO COURTESY OF RENAISSANCE CENTRO

Easy access to public transportation and close proximity to restaurants and shops attract residents to luxury apartments communities like The Harrison at Reston Town Center in Reston.

cathedral ceilings, walk-in closets, lighted tennis courts, racquetball courts, a resort-style swimming pool, a cyber café, a fitness center, bike trails, barbeque and picnic areas and a spacious club

house where people can hang out. Proximity to transportation is another bonus, said Jeremy Feldman of Bent Tree. “You have the Fairfax Connector and we’re near the Metro.”

Low Interest Rates Give Agents Optimism for Spring

FROM PAGE 3

“Assessments matter because the tax burden is increasing on homeowners in many jurisdictions, particularly Fairfax,” said David Versel, senior researcher with the George Mason University Center for Regional Analysis.

Another burden on homeowners who may be waiting to enter the market is lingering insecurity over the effects of government Sequestration.

“I gear it to federal government spending,” said George Mason professor of finance Gerald Hanweck. “When is that going to bottom out? When it does and they begin to spend again, then we’ll see a pickup.”

Rex Reiley is looking for that to happen soon, hoping that Congress signs off on a new budget and that it eliminates or reduces Sequester cutbacks. “If that happens, think we’ll see a big boom, with everyone confident in their employment again.”

Longer term, Hanweck is encouraged by an “up-surge in technology entrepreneurship” in Northern Virginia, as well as the development of the Inova research campus in Merrifield for attracting pharmaceuticals and biotech. But that impact on the real estate market could take years to notice, he said.

In the short term, he expects house prices in Fairfax County to fall slightly, forecasting a 2 percent drop in the median over the next few months

in existing and new homes, a great opportunity for first-time buyers who qualify for low-interest loans.

“Agents have a right to be optimistic,” said Hanweck. “At same time, they’ll have to work real hard to make the optimism pay off, selling about 97-98 percent of the listing price. That’s going to certainly drop, it’s just a matter of pricing.”

In Lorton, Ron Kowalski has observed steady sales overall in the last month, about one per day for the 22079 zip code as a whole. The “move up” segment of houses priced \$500,000 to \$800,000 has lagged behind the “low end” (under \$500,000) and upper tier (\$1 million and above).

He’s confident that increasing inventory coupled with the interest rates and “lenders loosening standards a little” will continue to help with affordability and drive sales into the spring, especially with first-time buyers.

But, he said more of his clients are researching properties on the internet before they meet with him. And that’s having a mixed effect on whether they decide to make a move or not.

“They’re getting a lot of information,” he said, “but so much is filtered through what they want to look at. There are both sides to the story. People focus on the one that sold super high or low. My issue is a lot of the information is self-directed.”

Kowalski doesn’t mind buyers or sellers coming into the market loaded with their own data; he’s just happy they’re there.

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January, 2015 Top Sales

IN JANUARY 2015, 69 HOMES SOLD
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2 8105 Yorktown Drive —
\$912,500



3 8033 Washington Road — \$900,000



4 8632
Plymouth
Road —
\$824,500

5 916
Dresden
Court —
\$770,000



Address BR FB HB ... Postal City .. Sold Price Type Lot AC . PostalCode Subdivision Date Sold

1	9380 MOUNT VERNON CIR	5	..	6	.	2	.....	ALEXANDRIA	..	\$3,500,000	....	Detached	.....	0.60	.....	22309	MT VERNON ON THE POTOMAC	01/29/15
2	8105 YORKTOWN DR	5	..	4	.	1	.....	ALEXANDRIA	....	\$912,500	....	Detached	.....	0.15	.....	22308	HOLLIN HALL VILLAGE	01/02/15
3	8033 WASHINGTON RD	5	..	4	.	1	.....	ALEXANDRIA	....	\$900,000	....	Detached	.....	0.15	.....	22308	HOLLIN HALL VILLAGE	01/16/15
4	8632 PLYMOUTH RD	4	..	2	.	1	.....	ALEXANDRIA	....	\$824,500	....	Detached	.....	0.56	.....	22308	PLYMOUTH HAVEN	01/14/15
5	916 DRESDEN CT	4	..	3	.	1	.....	ALEXANDRIA	....	\$770,000	....	Detached	.....	0.35	.....	22308	WAYNEWOOD	01/16/15
6	4209 DANDRIDGE TER	4	..	3	.	1	.....	ALEXANDRIA	....	\$769,900	....	Detached	.....	0.32	.....	22309	SOUTHWOOD	01/26/15
7	7704 LOOKOUT CT	5	..	3	.	0	.....	ALEXANDRIA	....	\$760,000	....	Detached	.....	0.47	.....	22306	KIRKSIDE	01/23/15
8	8809 NORTHERN SPRUCE LN	4	..	3	.	1	.....	ALEXANDRIA	....	\$685,000	....	Detached	.....	0.46	.....	22309	WOODMILL ESTATES	01/05/15
9	4215 DANDRIDGE TER	4	..	2	.	1	.....	ALEXANDRIA	....	\$650,800	....	Detached	.....	0.32	.....	22309	SOUTHWOOD	01/29/15
10	3112 SPRING DR	4	..	3	.	1	ALEXANDRIA	\$649,950	Detached	0.19	22306	VALLEY VIEW	01/28/15

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