

# 2015 Spring Real Estate & New Homes



PHOTO BY BRYAN BURRIS

**How to bring the outside into your home. The 25-by-16-foot window wall in the home of Ginni Mulligan was designed to maximize a dramatic backyard view while meeting tight local code regulations. To accomplish dual goals, Sun Design replaced the bulky traditional bulky wooden frame with a steel “moment” frame that covers less of the window surface. Sitting at the dining counter and looking out at nature has become a favorite activity for the Mulligans and guests.**

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# On Tour: Aging in Place Renovation

BY JOHN BYRD

A Vienna whole house remodel that incorporates an Aging-In-Place solution will be featured in the Parade of Homes/ Remodeled Home Tour April 25-April 26.

The circa-1970s split-level owned by Andre and Katy Hollis was substantially repurposed and renovated by Sun Design Remodeling of Burke.

"I decided that I really liked our neighborhood and that with changes we could stay in the house indefinitely," Katy Hollis said.

Mindy Mitchell, the Certified Aging-In-Place Specialist (CAPS) at Sun Design Remodeling who executed the Hollis design solution, says such inquiries have become more common in recent years.

After considering options, the Hollis family settled on several revisions: a spacious first floor bedroom; a gourmet kitchen; a better entertainment plan; and a guest suite with dedicated bath.

"I thought we probably had enough

square footage to achieve what we wanted," Katy Hollis said, "but there were lots of functional problems, and we weren't sure how to address them." The challenge was reconfiguring adequate existing space into a better plan serving long term horizons.

Katy wanted both a guest suite and a larger, more private master bedroom suite.

The former master bedroom suite now becomes spacious guest quarters. A corner bedroom has been transformed into a second upstairs bathroom

Mitchell and team re-deployed 300 square feet on the rear of the first level for a very private master bedroom suite that includes a master bath and generous walk-in closets.

A home office behind glass-facing French doors opens directly into the redecorated living room.

"It's a terrific solution in every detail," Hollis said. "And knowing we've already made some solid decisions about the future has really given me peace of mind."

Call 703-425-5588 or [www.SunDesignInc.com](http://www.SunDesignInc.com).



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

A whole house aging-in-place solution by Sun Design Remodeling will be featured in the Parade of Homes' Remodeled Homes Tour, April 25 and April 26. The firm executed a top-to-bottom makeover to a circa 1970s split-level, creating a first level master suite and a gourmet kitchen.

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## Staged to Sell

Real estate agents give the lowdown on getting your home ready for the market.

BY MARILYN CAMPBELL  
THE CONNECTION

When a Burke family hired E. Diane Neustrand to sell their home, she did her standard walk-through of the house to assess it, but when she reached the dining room, she stopped cold.

"It was painted with three different shades of orange and accessorized with black, white and gold furniture," said Neustrand, a real estate agent with Long and Foster Real Estate, Inc. in Burke, Fairfax Station and Clifton.

First on Neustrand's chopping block: a pair of zebra print chairs. The boisterous wall colors were next.

"It wasn't harmonious at all," said Neustrand, who also works as a professional home stager. "We had to calm that down because orange is not a color that sells well. You want neutrals in paint and furniture, so potential buyers can visualize their own items in your home."

Residential real estate staging, the practice of preparing a home to go on the market for sale by making it aesthetically appealing, is credited with giving homes an advantage over the competition.

Staging can range from rearranging furniture, decluttering and painting the walls to furnishing a home in which the seller no



PHOTO BY ROBERT WHETZEL

**Realtors say professionally staged homes spend less time on the market.**

longer resides.

The National Association of Realtors' 2015 Investment & Home Buyers Survey showed that staging can have a positive impact on the number of days a home sits on the market and the amount of money potential buyers a willing offer for the home.

"**STAGED HOMES** traditionally present themselves better than the competition by being clean, clutter-free and ready to show to prospective buyers," said Mona Bekheet, a real estate agent with McEneaney Associates, Inc. in McLean. "Home staging is decluttering, depersonalizing and preparing a seller's home to look like a model

home so the potential buyers can see themselves living in the home."

The survey showed that 49 percent of agents say most buyers are affected by home staging, while a 2013 study by the Real Estate Staging Association showed staged homes sold 83 percent sooner than houses that weren't staged.

Realtors also believe buyers usually offer a 1-5 percent increase on the value of a staged home.

"Staged homes take less time on the market and they sell at the best price," said Bekheet. "Buyers view them as well cared for properties and appraisers are more likely to appraise staged homes at a full or higher value."

That increase can offset the expense of having a home professionally staged. Services, including consultations and furniture rental, can cost \$250 to \$2,000. Neustrand uses as many of the homeowners' possessions as she can to minimize out-of-pocket expenses.

"Since staging gives a home a clean, fresh, current look, it makes a home more attractive to buyers," said Betsy Schuman Dodek of Washington Fine Properties in Potomac, Md.

However, real estate agents say initiating conversations with homeowners about their homes and suggesting changes must be

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## Optimism for 2015 Real Estate Market

BY ANDREA WORKER  
THE CONNECTION

After what seemed to be an endless winter, spring has finally come calling, signaling the start of the year's first real estate high season. Homes trade hands all year long, but spring is often for buyers, seller, agents, brokers and lenders like those weeks between Thanksgiving and Christmas; buyers at full speed searching out the best bargains and sellers looking to move their wares without having to resort to price-slashing sales tactics.

So far, area real-estate experts and the data from sources like the Northern Virginia Association of Realtors (NVAR), Movoto

Real Estate, and SmartCharts (powered by RealEstate Business Intelligence with data supplied from the MLS listing service) are all aligned in their assessment of the outlook for the 2015 market in Northern Virginia. Compared to a lackluster 2014 after a strong 2013, there's reason for optimism.

Veronica Seva-Gonzalez, NVAR board member and Realtor with Compass Real Estate, noted that the spring weather and positive housing market news had arrived simultaneously. "It's great to see how all of the numbers are up from last year and also from the beginning of this year," she said.

Across the board, the numbers do look positive. Combined data collected for the counties of Fairfax and Arlington, the cities

of Alexandria, Falls Church and Fairfax and the towns of Vienna, Herndon and Clifton, show a first quarter increase of total units sold of just over 9 percent, with 3,657 units sold in 2015 compared to 3,352 the prior year. For the same period and for the same localities, days on the market (DOM) per unit actually rose in 2015 and the average ratio of sales price to list price showed marginal slippage, but Realtors and market analysts see the significant improvements in March 2015 numbers vs. March 2014 figures as an indicator of a healthy selling season ahead.

The March 2015 increases were seen in

SEE OUTLOOK, PAGE 4

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## Outlook Optimistic for Local 2015 Real Estate Market

FROM PAGE 3

all sectors of the residential market, with “attached” homes like townhouses leading the way with a 3.6 percent uptick in average sales price. Condominiums came in at second place, with a 1.8 percent increase in the month compared to 2014. Single-family homes came in last for the March 2015 totals, but still better than the prior year by 0.7 percent.

Greatly increased inventory versus last year could be one factor in the more modest single-family home price increases. In 2015, 3,165 new properties came onto the market during the month, while only 2,656 were put on the books during that month last year. A total of 3,381 units were available to buyers in March this year compared to 3,011 last year.

“In some areas and some price ranges, there is definitely more choice,” said Reston Long and Foster Realtor Anita Lasansky. “Sellers are starting to get more confident.”

Realtor Jennifer Boyce, Long and Foster Gold Team, also noted that some buyers were starting to “come out from under,” having held on during the worst of the economic downturn. “Equities are looking stronger, so they can get back in, selling or buying.”

The data does vary around the region. Not all areas experienced an increase in sales prices in the month-to-month comparison. Falls Church City, for example, posted an increase in the numbers of units sold, but a 19.12 percent decrease in median sales price.

Arlington County, on the other hand, saw the largest increase in the March 2015 vs. March 2014 side-by-side; with 24.43 percent more closed sales and a 10.68 percent increase in the median sales price.

Janet Gresh of the Gresh Group in McLean says that her experience so far this year is in line with those numbers. “Arlington is definitely hot right now, close in and enough quality properties that you see serious competition.”

Lasansky gave the numbers she is seeing for Reston a “thumbs up,” as well. “We’re up about 15 percent in the first quarter over last year and about 5 percent up in median sales price.”

In the City of Alexandria, the median sales price rose by more than 10 percent in March on an increase of 14.37 percent in closed sales.

Fairfax County and Fairfax City both saw more moderate improvements in median sales prices at 2.79 percent and 2.00 percent respectively. For Fairfax City, the positive takeaway from the March figures is that the median sales price rose despite a drop in total closed sales of more than 50 percent compared to last year.

While all of the data provided is considered preliminary and still subject to revision, the numbers available to date suggest a good start to the year – and barring the unforeseen negative impact – a positive 2015 real estate market.

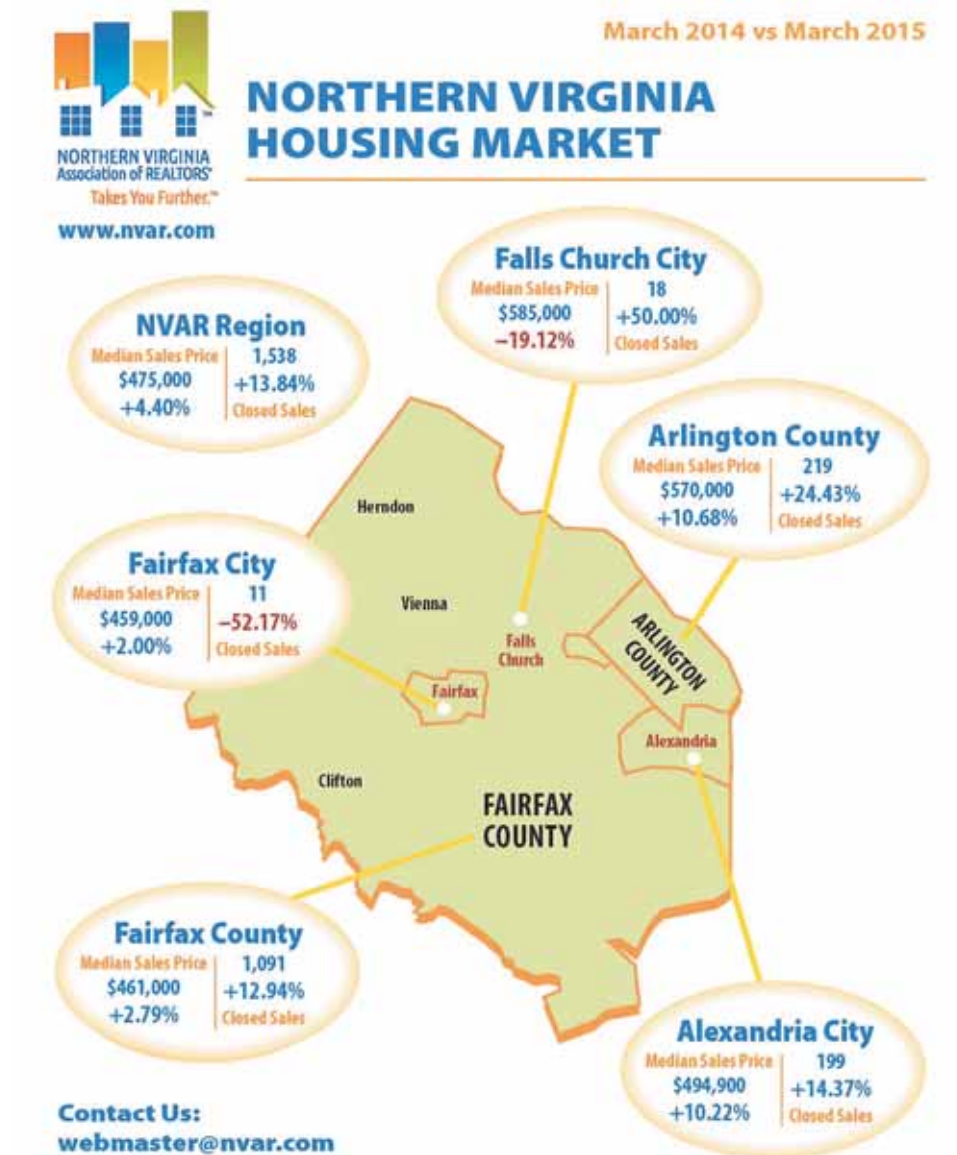


IMAGE COURTESY OF NVAR

Plus-column numbers on the books, the collective optimism of many of the area’s top real estate professionals, and respected organizations like the Northern Virginia Association of Realtors adding that “2015 may be different because of its more sustainable, positive market direction,” all offer signs that the real estate market in the region is looking at a healthy year. Any number of factors, including the ever-present threat of the Federal Reserve raising interest rates sometime this year, could stall or even reverse the positive trends.

Whatever comes along, realtors like Kathleen Quintarelli, Weichert Realtors, Burke, think we will deal with it. “People have kind of stopped believing that the rates will go up again and when they do it will be a shock and have its impact, but we will adjust to that new norm, as well.”

With the latest figures in hand, we asked some of our area’s top real estate professionals for their perspectives, and to offer some expert advice to buyers and sellers alike.

❖ **Virgil Frizzell, Ph.D., MBA**, realtor Long and Foster Reston: “I think the March housing statistics indicate a healthier spring housing market in the footprint of the Northern Virginia Association of Realtors than for the rest of the country. The con-

tinuing improvements ... are good for both homebuyers and home sellers and likely indicate a more balanced market. Buyers should benefit from increasing inventory, still low mortgage [rates] and easing credit standards. The year-over-year increase in housing units sold and modestly rising median prices may embolden sellers.” (Frizzell is the 2015 NVAR Chairman-Elect.)

❖ **Mary Bayat**, owner of Bayat Realty in Alexandria and 2015 NVAR Chair: “Finally, many buyers who had distressed house sales years ago could have enough repaired credit to qualify for a new loan. They will get more house for their money now than if they wait. We expect the Federal Reserve to raise interest rates later this year. Another local indicator is that active listings have risen more than 25 percent.”

❖ **Jennifer Boyce**, Long and Foster Gold Team Burke/Fairfax Station/Clifton: “Don’t price too aggressively in late spring or early summer is my advice. Homes that are well priced and in good condition will sell. The \$500,000-\$800,000 homes are in high demand. Homes that are priced over \$1 million face a smaller and sometimes more acting buyer base, not willing to compromise much and expecting top quality for their money.”

❖ **Will Farnam**, Long and Foster Falls Church: “I think the data so far for this year would be considered bright - not a boom - but strong. It’s a market that’s good for good properties, not good for just anything. There’s enough choice. One good sign is the traffic at Open Houses. The last two weekends I have had house-fulls, quite different from last year. Smaller down payments on many FHA and VA loans is helping, but despite some lending requirement easing, I find that buyers with credit problems are still struggling to get a loan.”

❖ **Janet Gresh**, The Gresh Group@Keller Williams: “The market is looking good, but it is still a bit more of an art than a science at times. If an under-\$1 million home is priced right, I am starting to see multiple offers, especially in Arlington. ... In some of these areas, if the house doesn’t sell or have offers in the first two weekends, it could be a sign of trouble and time to re-evaluate. ... Don’t overprice and you may end up getting more than you ask for. I have experienced that recently.”

❖ **Anita Lasansky**, Long and Foster Reston: “It’s looking good, strong numbers over last year for Reston especially, what some call the ‘Silicon Valley of the East.’ Some homes are selling now in days, not weeks, if they are well-priced with updated kitchens and bathrooms. Those homes take top dollar and for the first time in years I am seeing multiple offers on those properties. The properties over \$1.2 million are still sitting. Sellers should also be cautioned not to overprice based on the addition of the Metro Silver Line. I see that a lot of people are riding it, but it hasn’t had that much of an impact on house prices in the area, at least not yet, but some sellers are factoring in 5-10 percent in their list price based on the Metro.”

❖ **Kathleen Quintarelli**, Weichert Realtors, Burke: “I’m excited. 2015 looks slightly better already. Open Houses are really packed. With interest rates staying so low, more choice, the easing up on credit requirements, and fewer short sales and foreclosures - all those factors are really giving the market energy. There’s just not enough inventory in some categories, especially anything around \$350k - \$450k. Anything in good condition in that price range can go in the first week. My advice to sellers: Price well, prepare your home and stage it. And have your photographs taken by a professional. If the potential buyer comes in and says “Wow! This place looks a lot better than the pictures on the internet!” then your agent - or you - have done something wrong. Sellers should be ready to buy, even the same day you see the house you want. That means pre-approval and preferably by a local lender that we can work with quickly, especially if you’re faced with multiple offers or counters.”



# Staged to Sell

FROM PAGE 3

handled delicately.

“You don’t want to hurt someone’s feelings by telling them that they need to move items or get rid of items like the wrong artwork or too much furniture,” said Maria Smith of Arlington Realty in Arlington. “But the homeowner’s objective should be to sell the home.”

Staging helps when a home is too cluttered, or even if a house is already empty. It’s also a good idea “for those with dated, mismatched furniture or too many pieces in a room,” said Realtor Marsha Schuman of Washington Fine Properties. “For homes that don’t have a traditional floor plan, staging helps a buyer see how the rooms can be laid out.”

“Even if you have a large home, if your closets are overstuffed or if you have too much furniture, a prospective buyer can’t get a sense of the space and dimension of a room or visualize themselves in the home,” said E.J. Stone, a real estate agent with Coldwell Banker Residential Brokerage in Alexandria.

**REMOVING ULTRA-PERSONAL ITEMS** like family pictures or bills is another part of the staging process.

“You want to get a potential buyer to envision their things in the home,” said Stone. “Neutrals can help with that. Those are things that a home stager can suggest.”

**“Staged homes traditionally present themselves better than the competition by being clean, clutter-free and ready to show to prospective buyers.”**

— **Mona Bekheet, McEneaney Associates, Inc., in McLean**

Less is often more in the home staging game, say Realtors. “I tell my clients to take stuff off the walls, rent a storage space and take all the stuff you don’t need and put it into a storage unit, so it opens up more space,” said Michael Richter, real estate agent for residential preferred properties at the Richter Group in Burke.

Realtors rank the living room as the number one room to stage, followed by the kitchen. Also in the top five rooms are the master bedroom, dining room and the bathroom.

“Your home should be a model home, like no one lives there,” said Neustrand. “The bathroom counters should not have products or clutter. There should not be trash in the garbage can.”

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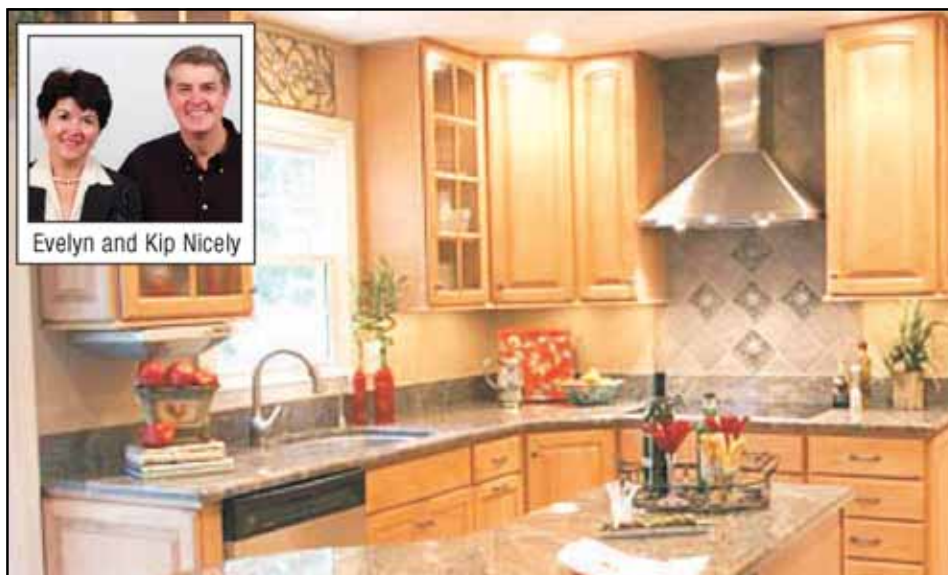
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# Trendy Bathroom Transformations

Designers share the hottest ideas in lavatory design.

BY MARILYN CAMPBELL  
THE CONNECTION

Imagine stepping into a resort inside the comfort of your own home. Contemporary, spa-like bathrooms with clean lines and features such as floating vanities, open shelving, innovative storage and low-maintenance materials are on trend this year in bathroom remodeling projects.

When the main level master bathroom in a 1970s-era Reston home got a major facelift earlier this year, Dean Turner, of Evolution Design & Build in Reston was tasked with addressing structural issues as well updating the entire space.

"This bathroom had a sunken tub and shower combination that was leaking into the basement below," said Turner. "They wanted me to solve their water problems ... update their bathroom, and they



PHOTO COURTESY OF NICELY DONE KITCHENS AND BATHS  
**Low maintenance porcelain tile accented with river rock stone are used in this Burke bathroom.**

were very interested in a floating vanity." The floating, walnut piece was made a by a local cabinetmaker and hovers 12 inches above the floor, and Turner was able

to give the homeowners an abundance of storage by incorporating cabinetry into the vanity. A simple touch of the fingertip opens and closes its drawers and doors, eliminating the need for visible hardware. Motion detecting, LED lighting under the vanity is another convenience.

Turner's team removed the existing wall and floor tile, replacing it with scratch- and stain-resistant porcelain tile that has the appearance of natural stone, while the wall tiles were made in the image of natural wood.

"When you look at it," said Turner. "It looks just like hardwood flooring on the wall."

**AFTER MOVING** into a retirement community, an empty-nester couple decided to overhaul the builder-grade bathroom that came with their home. They enlisted the help of Stephanie Brick, of Nicely Done Kitchens and Baths

in Springfield, who designed a contemporary space.

"The homeowners were looking for something that was calming and had a spa-like

energy," said Brick. "They also wanted more storage, especially open storage for linens and displaying items."

Brick and the Nicely team installed cabinetry with open shelving over the toilet. The vanity has a quartz countertop with veins of blue and turquoise that bears a close resemblance to marble. "Those colors were carried through in an accent piece in the shower," said Brick.

The porcelain tile floor has a marble-like appearance.

"You get the beautiful look of marble, but you don't have the maintenance or the cost," said Brick. "The new bathroom has a much more spa-like aesthetic. It was very bland and vanilla and it needed a face lift."

When the owners of a contemporary home in Burke decided to remodel their master bathroom so that it matched the style of the rest of the house, they called on designer Cathy Gross, also of Nicely. She used porcelain tile on the walls accented with river rock stone, a material that she also used on the bathroom floor.

"They wanted to continue the calm, zen, contemporary feel in the remodel of their master bath," said Gross, who also designed the home's kitchen five years prior.

More designs in the unabridged story at [www.connectionnewspapers.com](http://www.connectionnewspapers.com)

## Connecting Outside to In

BY JOHN BYRD

"When we started this company twenty seven years ago, our core specialty was opening up views," said Craig Durosko, chairman and founder of Sun Design Remodeling. "Northern Virginians like their green backyards, so finding ways to connect the house with what's just outside your door is a strong local incentive—especially as spring unfolds into summer."

Homeowner expectation for better integrated outdoor spaces evolves with each season, he said. To accommodate, Sun Design professionals constantly assess emerging building technologies, code issues, design literature. "You are always learning," Durosko says. "Improving on the quality of what you stand for as a company is a constant motivator for everyone here."

By way of example, Durosko cites three recent trend-setting projects.

### Poolside Pavilion, Outdoor Kitchen

Entertaining outdoors has become a primary recreational activity for Monte Zaben and family. Though he commutes regularly from his Fredericksburg home to an office in McLean, Zaben's weekends by the pool have become treasured quality time.

"The house was built to my requirements, but I hadn't thought much about the grounds," he says, "We added a saltwater pool a few years ago, only to realize that the back of the house was so sun-

exposed...it was uncomfortable sitting outside."

Zaben set up a meeting with Sun Design. From the start, the homeowner was impressed with plans for a shaded pavilion outside the home's lower level.

Under roof, a lounge area; a smaller closer-in footprint with a cozy poolside vista; an outdoor kitchen equipped with a traditional grill, a smoker and a power burner. When the summer guest list rises to fifty or more the vaulted canopy is a perfect spot for buffet tables.

"We use our outdoor space on just about every seasonable day of the year," Zaben says. "It's very much part of our lives now."

### Screen Porch, Rear Decking

As Fairfax homeowner Joanne Alger tells it, Sun Design's solution to a previous problem was key to a new project.

Impressed with the outcome, the Algers now sought Durosko's ideas for a grander rear elevation indoor/outdoor component, one that would better connect the sprawling house with its six acre wooded setting.

The Algers embraced a Sun Design scheme with three main components: a 17-by-16-foot screen porch, a grilling deck, and a ground-level patio. The patio, in turn, segues to a hard-scape platform featuring an eight-foot stone hearth and comfortable seating. Overhead fans and portable heaters keep the outdoor room habitable in all but the coldest days of winter.

"It's our preferred gathering place now,



PHOTO BY MITRO HOOD

**The outdoor kitchen is equipped with a grill and a power burner.**

"Alger says. "And so comfortable we can use it from early spring to late fall."

### Bringing the Outside Indoors

Nick Bonadies, Sun Design's Director of New Business Development, points to the 25-by-16-foot custom window wall in a newly remodeled Fairfax home as a kind of triumph of glazing technologies over the strong wind.

"Homeowners come to us for ideas that will open up space and invite visual continuum," he said.

Sun Design had converted Gini Mulligan's 2,200-square-foot 1960s split foyer home into a 4,238-square-foot French colonial complete with wrap-around porches, a new

master bedroom suite addition, and a spacious gourmet kitchen with a jaw-dropping view of towering backyard trees.

"We bought the house over 20 years ago, mainly because of the lovely wooded setting," Mulligan said. "I then spent so many years gazing out of a small back window, trying to imagine how the house would feel if we had a better view." The scale of Mulligan's vision, a two-story window wall, presented feasibility questions.

A steel "moment" frame, unusual in a residential application, allows for as much as a 40 percent increase in unobstructed glass surface. "It all looks very delicate—but this window can withstand winds of up to 90 miles per hour," Bonadies said.



# Local REAL ESTATE

## February, 2015 Top Sales



**1** 7300 Bull Run Post Office Road, Centreville — \$1,154,990

**6** 10744 Beechnut Court, Fairfax Station — \$815,000

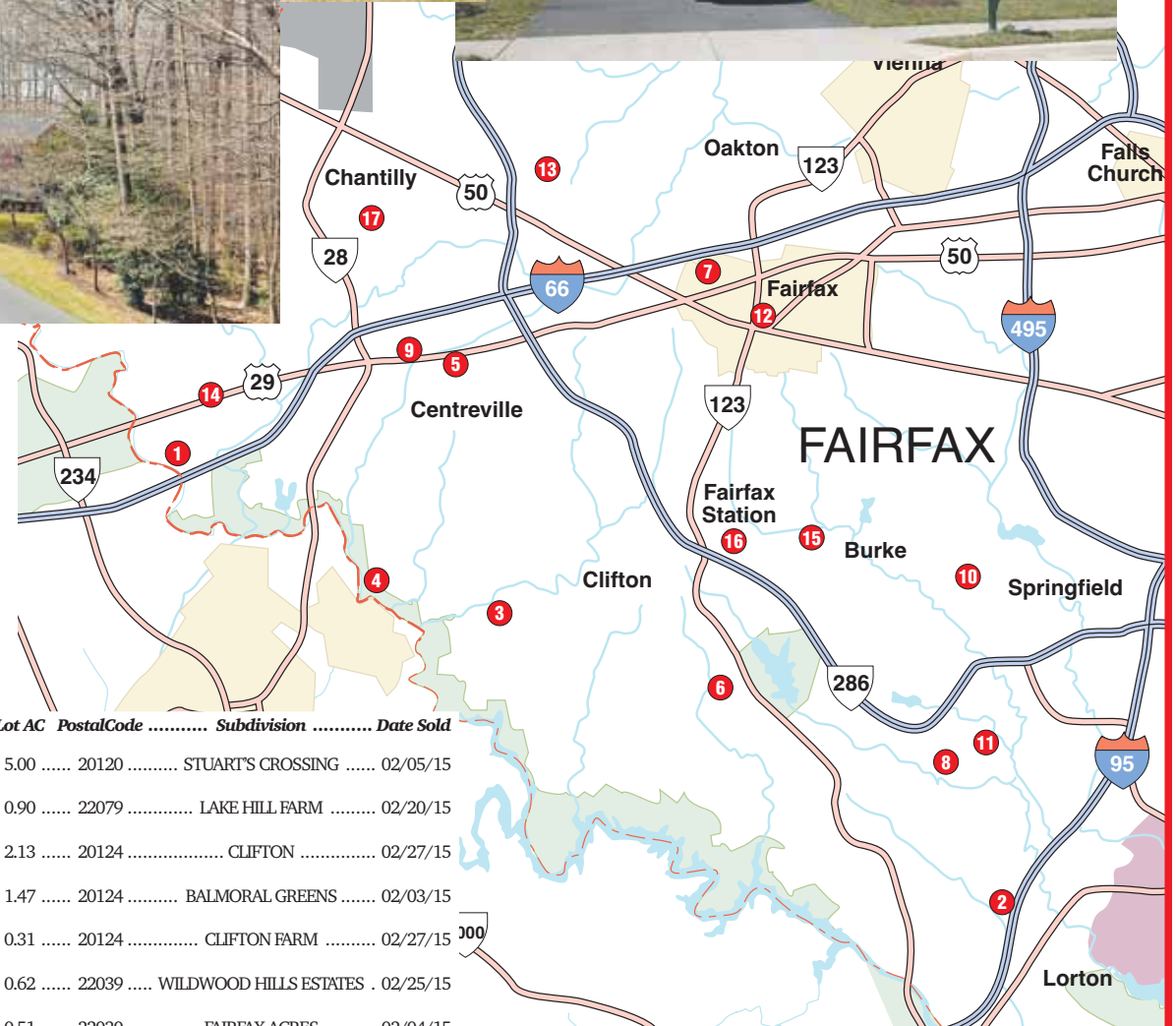


**17** 4608 Fillingame Drive, Chantilly — \$512,000



**9** 13529 Lamium Lane, Centreville — \$775,000

**4** 13745 Balmoral Greens Avenue, Clifton — \$1,415,700



Address	BR	FB	HB	Postal City	Sold Price	Type	Lot AC	Postal Code	Subdivision	Date Sold
1 7300 BULL RUN POST OFFICE ROAD	5	5	1	CENTREVILLE	\$1,154,990	Detached	5.00	20120	STUART'S CROSSING	02/05/15
2 9400 BETTGE LAKE CT	4	3	1	LORTON	\$1,100,000	Detached	0.90	22079	LAKE HILL FARM	02/20/15
3 12801 CHESTNUT ST	4	2	1	CLIFTON	\$1,095,000	Detached	2.13	20124	CLIFTON	02/27/15
4 13745 BALMORAL GREENS AVE	4	4	1	CLIFTON	\$880,000	Detached	1.47	20124	BALMORAL GREENS	02/03/15
5 5414 WILLOW VALLEY RD	5	5	1	CLIFTON	\$860,000	Detached	0.31	20124	CLIFTON FARM	02/27/15
6 10744 BEECHNUT CT	5	4	1	FAIRFAX STATION	\$815,000	Detached	0.62	22039	WILDWOOD HILLS ESTATES	02/25/15
7 3614 HILL ST	4	4	2	FAIRFAX	\$790,000	Detached	0.51	22030	FAIRFAX ACRES	02/04/15
8 8017 FLINT ST	5	4	1	SPRINGFIELD	\$789,000	Detached	0.61	22153	CHAPEL ACRES	02/26/15
9 13529 LAMIUM LN	4	4	1	CENTREVILLE	\$775,000	Detached	0.19	20120	FAIRCREST SOUTH	02/23/15
10 8552 CENTER RD	4	3	1	SPRINGFIELD	\$740,000	Detached	0.22	22152	JAMES CREEK	02/03/15
11 8309 KINGS RIDGE CT	5	4	1	SPRINGFIELD	\$735,000	Detached	0.35	22153	GAMBRILL OAKS	02/05/15
12 10411 WHITEHEAD ST	4	3	1	FAIRFAX	\$720,000	Townhouse	0.04	22030	MADISON MEWS	02/19/15
13 3419 TILTON VALLEY DR	5	3	1	FAIRFAX	\$710,000	Detached	1.48	22033	MARY RIDGE	02/12/15
14 15371 WETHERBURN CT	4	3	1	CENTREVILLE	\$660,000	Detached	0.47	20120	VIRGINIA RUN	02/20/15
15 9931 WOOD GROUSE CT	4	3	1	BURKE	\$640,000	Detached	0.18	22015	BURKE CENTRE	02/19/15
16 5802 OAK MOSS TER	5	2	2	BURKE	\$638,000	Detached	0.27	22015	BURKE CENTRE	02/27/15
17 4608 FILLINGAME DR	5	3	1	CHANTILLY	\$512,000	Detached	0.21	20151	LEIGH PROP	02/26/15

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**15** 9931 Wood Grouse Court, Burke — \$640,000



# Award-Winning Connection Newspapers

More Reasons the Connection Newspapers are the Best-Read Community Papers

Winners of Awards in the 2014 Virginia Press Association and Maryland-Delaware-D.C. Press Association Editorial Contests

## First Place Winners

**Steven G. Artley**, *Alexandria Gazette Packet* – Editorial Cartoon. Judge's comments: Smart and insightful.

**Bonnie Hobbs**, *Centre View* – Feature Series or Continuing Story. Judge's comments: Clear and concise writing with a good flow. Journalist captured the emotion of the event and engaged the reader well.

**Michael Lee Pope**, *Mount Vernon Gazette* – Business and Financial Writing. Judge's comments: First-rate, data-driven reporting and analysis on important issues. Fine work.

**Michael Lee Pope**, *McLean Connection* – Health, Science and Environmental Writing. Judge's comments: Michael Lee Pope's stories on driving habits, cesarean deliveries and the Affordable Care Act are well-researched, clearly written and engaging. His use of real-live people high up in his stories to illustrate his findings makes for very compelling material. He seems quite capable of turning some of these topics into a book. If he does, I'll read it.

**Jon Roetman**, *Vienna/Oakton Connection* – Sports Writing Portfolio. Judge's comments: Strong and clear writing and excellent storytelling helps game stories feel more like features. Excellent work.

**Victoria Ross**, *Oak Hill/Herndon Connection* – Government Writing. Judge's comments: An engaging look at a lobbyist who fights for the little guy; an entertaining story on a political candidate, helping readers put the upcoming election into context; one of the better budgeting stories I've seen lately that helps readers understand how the county's budgeting process is going to cost them more money. The supporting sidebars help bring the message home.

**Jeanne Theismann**, *Alexandria Gazette Packet* – Personal Service Writing, Obituaries. Judge's comments: These stories provide a glimpse inside the lives of people who have played significant roles in their communities. The writing is engaging and well-researched. And the stories serve as an example to others of how to live a life of purpose.

**Jeanne Theismann**, *Alexandria Gazette Packet* – Column Writing, Entertainment. Judge's comments: Ms. Theismann's entertainment columns demonstrate a breadth of knowledge that gives her opinions a ring of authority and authenticity.



Steve Artley



Bonnie Hobbs



Michael Lee Pope



Jon Roetman



Victoria Ross



Jeanne Theismann



Jean Card



Steve Hibbard



Louise Krafft



Joan Brady



Veronica Bruno



Vernon Miles



Marilyn Campbell



Mary Kimm



Steven Mauren



Geovani Flores



Laurence Foong



Renee Ruggles



Ken Moore

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Though I live nowhere near her area, I found it easy to be influenced by her writing and to wish that I had the opportunity to attend some of the events she talked about. All three examples are nicely written.

**Jean Card, Jeanne Theismann, Steve Hibbard, Louise Krafft and Kara Coleman**, *Alexandria Gazette Packet* – Lifestyle or Entertainment Pages. Judge's comments: Good balance. Front page article has good detail and info.

## Second Place Winners

**Joan Brady**, *Great Falls Connection* – Column Writing.

**Veronica Bruno**, *Mount Vernon Gazette* – Feature Story Writing.

**Jean Card**, *Alexandria Gazette Packet* – Page Design.

**Vernon Miles**, *Arlington Connection* – Breaking News Writing.

**Jeanne Theismann**, *Alexandria Gazette Packet* – Headline Writing.

## Third Place Winners

**Steven G. Artley**, *Alexandria Gazette Packet* – Editorial Cartoon.

**Marilyn Campbell**, *Chantilly Connection* – Health, Science and Environmental Writing.

**Bonnie Hobbs**, *Fairfax Connection* – Personal Service Writing.

**Mary Kimm**, *McLean Connection* – Editorial Writing.

**Michael Lee Pope**, *Alexandria Gazette Packet* – Public Safety Writing.

**Steven Mauren, Mary Kimm, Steve Artley, Geovani Flores and Laurence Foong**, *Alexandria Gazette Packet* – Editorial Pages.

**Jean Card, Renee Ruggles and Laurence Foong**, *Mount Vernon Gazette* – Informational Graphics.

The *Potomac Almanac* participates in the Maryland-Delaware-DC Press Association, and while 2014 award-winners there will not be fully announced until May 1, 2015, we do know that Ken Moore and Marilyn Campbell are winners.

## PARKS AN INSIDER'S GUIDE TO MAJOR PARKS IN FAIRFAX COUNTY

### National Parks

#### GF Great Falls National Park

9200 Old Dominion Drive, McLean  
www.nps.gov/grfa

Great Falls Park is open daily from 7 a.m. until dark. The Visitor Center and bookstore are open from 10 a.m. until 5 p.m. daily, spring through fall seasons. Picnic, hike along the Potomac River. Swimming and wading in the Potomac are prohibited.

#### GW George Washington Memorial Parkway

www.sps.gov/gwmp  
703-289-2500

The GW Parkway includes more than 25 sites, ranging from historic houses to

