# Great Falls

Snow Days! PAGES 2-3

Sahaana Meka and Natalie Rutkowski taking an afternoon sledding break with their neighborhood buddies.

WELLBEING PAGE 7

What's Ahead in Housing Market?

Will the Grocery Tax Depart? PAGE 6 Аттеитіои Розтмазтек: Тіме зеизітіve матекіаl. Requested in home I-6-22

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Photo by Kavya Yeddala Harrison Rutkowski enjoying the neighbor's big hill for his first sledding adventure of 2022





hoto by Rachael Ari Georgopoulos, 3, built his first snowman of the season and had his plastic bat ready to hit snowballs with Myles and Matijs Lobato - his favorite neighbors.



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Snow blankets and covers the driveway and road off of Springvale Road in Great Falls, Va. late Monday morning, Jan. 3, 2022. Meghan M. McGinty, PhD, is a a botanist and owner @cultivatenature. She volunteers with plantnovanatives.org

# News

# Let It Snow, Let It Snow

t was a beautiful day for the children of Great Falls, sledding, making snowballs and snowmen, and enjoying their pets and siblings. In Vienna, 7 inches of snow was recorded at the end of the storm.





Blair Garvey, 2, and her brother Graham, enjoy the snow in Great Falls.





Photo by Meredith Barker, DVM Coco Burkholder having snowman fun in Great Falls.



Photo by Meredith Barker, DVM Florida pony's first taste of a snowball. Coco Burkholder offers the snowball to Tate.



Photos by Katie Browne CeCe and Stella Browne, sisterly love on a snow day.



Photo by Kathryn Rutkowski Sahaana Meka and Natalie Rutkowski taking an afternoon sledding break with their neighborhood buddies



Molly Lavin, 3, spent three hours at the Chesapeake pipeline sledding with her parents and neighbors. She stayed out there longer than some of the adults. At one point she said, "My fear is gone!" before hurling herself down the hill once again. www.ConnectionNewspapers.com



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Tracy Williams and The Alliance Group of TTR Sotheby's International Realty in McLean: from left, Mona Banes, Janet Million, Joshua Baumgardner, Tracy Williams, Holly Tennant, Libby Gensler, Gregg Zeiler

# 2022 Real Estate Forecast

By Mercia Hobson The Connection

he Northern Virginia Association of Realtors recently spotlighted predictions for Fairfax County. Arlington County and City of Alexandria. The association collaborated on the consensus housing forecast with the Center for Regional Analysis at Courses Manapulations of Schere

Regional Analysis at George Mason University's Schar School of Policy and Government to answer one question: Where is the market headed?

"In 2022, we expect the market to be a little slower but still fast-paced in terms of sales. Homes are going to move quickly. We're

still going to see a lot of opportunities to buy, but you have to be ready for it," said NVAR CEO Ryan McLaughlin. He also predicted that inventory would be scarce and that home prices would rise, but more slowly.

Derrick Swaak, 2021 president of NVAR and partner/managing broker at TTR Sotheby's International Realty McLean, said

they convened a panel of key experts from different industry sectors.

Terry L. Clower, Ph.D.

McLaughlin predicted that moderation would be the theme for the 2022 market. "[It] will be a bit cooler, but it will still be a very good year for residential real estate. We do expect a slower pace in home sales as mortgage rates increase and housing options remain scarce. Although home prices will continue to rise, they will still be at a more moderate pace than in the past year."

According to McLaughlin, since the spring of 2020, Realtors witnessed a residential real estate market that defied expectations amid a pandemic that brought the economy to a near standstill. The housing market, McLaughlin said, did more than just survive; it thrived. He attributed this to the region's built-in competitive economic advantages, including a strong

"There's going to be heavy competition for most houses ... If you want to buy a home, you're going to have to compete for it. If you want to sell a home, you'll get everything you're asking for, particularly for a single-family."

— Terry L. Clower, Ph.D., GMU's Center for Regional Analysis

technology sector and employment boosted by federal government jobs. "The influx of new jobs provided and still to come by Amazon has created a ripple effect that benefits the region," McLaughlin said.

Terry L. Clower, professor of Public Policy at George Mason University and director of GMU's Center for Regional Analysis, said median prices would rise about 5.7 percent at the national level, but they expect a drop by about 1.7 percent in the number of home sales. "What we're expecting in this region is a little bit slower price increase, and that's somewhat because our prices are already pretty high," Clower said. "We are at the top of our market," he said, particularly for entry-level purchases."

## Drop in Inventory

Clower predicted a 23 percent drop in inventory in Fairfax County. What that means, Clower said, is that in "an average month through 2022, we're expecting there to be fewer than 500 homes on the market."

# REAL ESTATE 2022 Real Estate Forecast

#### From Page 4

"That's a significant new number. ... We're not going to see that big of a drop in sales, about 0.8 percent, and we expect to see a rise in price ... in Fairfax County, 3.2 percent," Clower said. He said he expects to see an increase in the inventory of townhomes. "Now, when we say they're increasing, though that's [only] ... about 300."

Clower said many believe inventory in Northern Virginia cannot fall any further, but it does. There might be some variation in the submarkets, but there would not be a lot of choices overall.

"There's going to be heavy competition for most houses ... If you want to buy a home, you're going to have to compete for it. If you want to sell a home, you'll get everything you're asking for, particularly for a single-family," said Clower.

View the 2022 NVAR Region Forecast Briefing at https://www.youtube.com/ watch?v=yMqiwQ5tvD8&t=3s

#### Fairfax County Single Family 2022 Market

#### KEY MARKET STATISTICS





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## Wellbeing

## Making Decisions During COVID

By Marilyn Campbell The Connection

hould I allow my 12-year-old daughter to go the movies with a group of friends, two of whom haven't been vaccinated?" "Should I let my son play in games with the basketball team when players on both teams haven't been vaccinated?"

These are the types of questions that Potomac parents Elaine and Brett Madden ask themselves almost daily. In the age of the coronavirus pandemic and omicron variant, the Maddens, like many others, face making decisions that have the potential to cause a major chain of events. This cycle often leads to stress that impacts one's overall health and wellbeing.

"It's like living with a low grade anxiety that is subtle, but builds up if we're not in tune with our body," said Elaine Madden, a licensed therapist who specializes in stress management. "Almost 99% of the clients I'm seeing are dealing with anxiety around making decisions that are related to COVID. If they make the wrong decision, will they catch the disease or spread it to others? Will their job be affected by COVID? Should they begin looking for a new job? With the spike in new cases, there's been a new wave of uncertainty."

Madden points to a recent study by the American Psychological Association, which showed that daily tasks and decision-making have become more difficult during the pandemic, particularly for parents.

"I've been telling my patients to take a step back, breathe and really think through the ramifications of each decision and write them down," she said. "This can work for decisions that range from small things like what to pack in your kids' lunches, to larger ones like whether to plan a vacation."

For larger decisions, like a career or job change, Madden suggests enlisting the help of a few trusted advisors who can offer objective guidance.

"You need someone who has experience dealing with your issues, but won't be impacted by them," she said. "For example, a college student who is deciding whether or not to study abroad might get the opinion of an older adult who has actually spent a semester abroad rather than, or in addition to, a parent who would be paying for that semester. If you're deciding to change jobs, someone with a financial stake in your decision should not be the only person offering an opinion. But just know that these opinions are just advice. The final decision should be made jointly with those closest to you."

Some decisions are minor, but can feel monumental. "Many of us are on decision overload, so we start shutting down, and things like deciding what to wear or what to eat can feel paralyzing," said Great Falls psychologist Rachel Cohen. "Try planning ahead during a time when you're feeling relaxed. For example, my husband and I gather our kids on Saturday and we decide on a menu for the week for breakfast, lunch, dinner and snacks. We create a chart and pre-make as much of those meals as we can. The same goes for our clothes for the week."

"Know your limits and boundaries and have a backup plan," said Alexandria-based therapist Lee Tripp, MSW. "If going into the office is mandatory for you, but your child has to quarantine and miss school unexpectedly, what is your childcare plan? At what point will you decide to have your child tested for COVID? When you hear snuffles? When they have a persistent cough? Having these guidelines in place can cut down on the number of last minute decisions."

"Try not to get stuck on over-analyzing," added Cohen. "At the end of the day, we just need to make a decision, take a chance and stop procrastinating."

# Grocery Tax Change Proposed

#### From Page 6

public education." The primary purpose of the tax was for upgrading public education. The first year's revenue of \$109.6 million had grown to \$349.8 million five years later in 1972. Interest in public education remains high as evidenced in the recent Youngkin-McAuliffe race.

The grocery tax became a campaign issue in the 1973 campaign between incumbent Governor Mills E Godwin Jr., who had enacted the tax, and Democratic challenger Henry Howell, who was then the Lieutenant Governor. Godwin narrowly won election to his second term. Democratic Gov. Douglas Wilder (1990-1994) also ran on the populist message of "no new taxes" and sought to remove taxes on prescription drugs and groceries.

Such taxes are considered "regressive" meaning they have a greater impact on low income people than the wealthy. Because the tax is applied uniformly it has the effect of taking a greater percentage of income from low income earners than from high income earners; the average tax burden decreases with income.

Although 45 states have general sales taxes, only 13, including Virginia, still tax groceries; Virginia is one of ten that impose a lower rate on groceries than their general sales tax rate, according to the Center On Budget and Policy Priorities (April 2020).





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## No Car and No Computer



#### By KENNETH B. LOURIE

Due to circumstances beyond my control, for two days after the deer accident, I had no car and as it happened, no computer either. The no-car situation you regular readers know about from the previous edition's column: "Oh Deer." The no-computer element just occurred as machines, technology, almost anything I guess, eventually succumbs to old age/extended use. As a result of this dual inconvenience, I can't get anywhere, literally, and figuratively. Moreover, with these two losses, temporary though they may be, I've sort of lost my way. To invoke author Robert A. Heinlein: I'm a "stranger in a strange land."

Though I now have a courtesy rental care, I don't yet have a computer. It's being delivered later in the week by Amazon. It won't be an expense as it is being paid for my part-time employer. When the computer arrives, my brother's IT guy will come over and set it up. That means I won't have that problem to solve. As for the car, in five days or so, I was told, I'll learn whether my car can be repaired or if it will be declared a total loss. Soon thereafter I imagine, if the car is "totaled," I'll be receiving a settlement check from the insurance company. Then the fun will begin.

If in fact, I receive a settlement check, since the car I was driving was a model year 2000 Honda Accord, unfortunately the amount will be nowhere near what I'll need to purchase a new car. The net effect will be an increase in my monthly car payment from zero dollars to likely multiple hundreds. Money, I don't really have and are not eager to spend. However, the new computer can't arrive quickly enough. And given the evolution in technology since I last bought a computer, 10 years ago at least, I can well imagine the improvement/benefit in my life it will provide. As for the improvement/ benefits in my life a new car will provide? Not really important to me if it costs money, which it will. I am not looking to add another car with bells and whistles since I already have a new-ish car with all the bells and whistles already. I was not looking to whistle any more bells however. What I/we need is only one car payment. Which, for the past 13 years, since my mother passed away in 2008, and I inherited her car, I've had. And I've enjoyed every minute of it. Now, I'm afraid, the party is over.

Now this is where not having a working computer at home becomes a problem. I can't research a potential solution. Consequently, I'm stuck in a kind of limbo between the car I used to own and the car I'm about to own. Right now, I'm driving a rental car, a temporary solution. What I need is a permanent solution. Sure, I receive a daily newspaper and I do have a car to drive, but I'm not going to drive randomly around and/ or trust the classified ads to direct me to a proper solution. What I need is a version of Indeed.

The conclusion: I need a computer before I need the car. In fact, it's very likely that if I'm told the Honda is totaled, having a new computer will provide me with the tools and information necessary to perhaps make an intelligent and acceptable decision. Acceptable meaning a moderate impact to our finances. For me, it's not so much about creature comforts as it is about this creature's comfort.

Kenny Lourie is an Advertising Representative for The Potomac Almanac & The Connection Newspapers.







Twee Ramos, Susan Canis, Joe Trippi and Justin Scango

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