

Van Metre Wins Sales, Marketing Awards

an 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

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 De-

Van Metre Companies has constructed more than 16,000 houses and several thou-

Rookie of the Year, Ernie Kyger for Sales sand 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 surrounding 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.

Near Zero Temperatures Call for Back-to-Basics

What mid-winter maintenance can reveal about your home's needs.

By John Byrd

hile common sense suggests that home improvements should be put off to warmer weather, a sustained period of colder temperatures often reveals systemic problems that will need correction sooner or later.

As temperatures dropped precipitously several weeks ago, all Reston homeowner Craig Mattice knew was that his original mansard roof was plagued with ice dams and his 10-year-old, 600-square-foot addition was so cold the pipes were freezing. Moreover, no amount of thermostat adjustment improved the situation much.

"After living in the house for over 25 years the chill was a surprise," Mattice said. "It wasn't just that the winter has been colder than usual ... it was beginning to look like a larger problem, particularly in the new wing, which was five degrees colder than other rooms."

To determine the cause of ice-clogged gutters, Mattice turned to remodeler David Foster who had completed a number of home improvements for his son.

"The damming was literally the tip of the iceberg," said Foster, principal of Foster Remodeling Solutions. "When I inspected the attic it was clear that the envelope was not adequately sealed, insulated or ventilated, which is why the upstairs had been too hot last summer."

Add to this the fact that prior to 1980 local building code required less thermallyresistant insulation (R-19) than the current R-38 standard and the outlines of a common problem with older production homes begins to emerge.

"It's not unusual to find that the existing insulation just isn't the best application for some of our coldest days" Foster said. "Different parts of a house can call for different insulation strategies."

Since the goal for the Mattice attic was to dramatically increase R-value, Foster rearranged the old insulation, adding soffit



Photo courtesy of Foster Remodeling Solutions

A sustained period of cold weather can reveal problems with your home's basic systems that will need to be addressed in any season if further deterioration is to be prevented.

baffles to improve ventilation. The larger technical solution, however, was to blowin R-25 fiberglass, which raised the attic's thermal resistance to R-44.

"One of the benefits of fiberglass is that it wraps everything...creating an air-tight insular envelope," Foster says. "This makes all aspects of the home's heating and cooling more efficient.'

The more recently completed family wing was another matter. Turns out the Mattice's artfully-designed addition was built over an unheated crawl space, and the HVAC duct wasn't even connected in the kitchen.

"An appropriate insulation strategy starts with a kind of forensics," Foster said. "Where is a wall, ceiling or roof exposed to outside conditions? Is it difficult to regulate temperatures in different parts of the house? These are some basic questions we start with."

Given challenges inherent in insulating rooms built over an unheated crawl space — which also must support air circulation, Foster re-engineered the entire thermal equation: existing fiberglass batt was removed; sprayed-in closed cell foam was then applied to the underside of the floor system. This elevated the thermal value to

R-20 while providing a draft-free air-tight seal to the kitchen floor. To accommodate for summer conditions, Foster added ventilation to both the crawl space and the attic.

So how do the upgrades perform?

"Beautifully," Craig Mattice says. "The house is noticeably tighter and the new wing is much more comfortable."

A PROFESSIONAL REMODELER for 35 years, Foster said he's somewhat surprised by the calls he gets when temperatures drop, usually from homeowners who've found that previous attempts at keeping the house comfortable and well-functioning haven't worked very well.

A few months ago, for example, he executed a re-roofing and gutter protection assignment for Alexandria homeowner Steve Piper, who had previously hired him to design and build an extensive interior makeover.

'We knew we had a leaking problem before we met David," Piper said. "But the situation had gotten worse — and I wasn't sure what to expect from roofers. Finally, it occurred to me to ask David for his assessment."

Foster traced the problem to inappropri-

"An appropriate insulation strategy starts with a kind of forensics. Where is a wall, ceiling or roof exposed to outside conditions? Is it difficult to regulate temperatures in different parts of the house?"

ate and poorly installed flashing which was allowing water to seep into siding and under roof shingles.

His prescription: a re-shingled roof, a new gutter protection system and attic ventilation equipped with an electronic thermo-

"It's important to address the whole problem when the system has failed," Foster said. "This is a plan that not only eliminates the leaking, but functions much better in all seasons.'

A few miles away, Alexandrian Jeff Hage came to Foster when he noticed one of the posts to a front porch was sagging.

Foster, who had finished an interior for Hage a few months before, quickly recognized that the whole roof had settled, making it impossible to stop worsening deterioration by simply replacing the corner

"When the problem becomes structural you have to remake the basic supports, "he says. "In this case that meant raising the porch roof and re-aligning posts and beams."

Foster has encountered similarly shortsighted solutions associated with window replacement. Homeowners with drafty homes procure state-of-the-art insulated windows only to have them installed with inadequately sealed window jambs.

"Winter is not particularly forgiving of partial solutions," Foster said. "When a problem is recurring, it's time to look at the larger system. After all, this is how a house works."

Empty-Nesters Re-invent the Family Home

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

By John Byrd

ometimes 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

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



CONNECTION NEWSPAPERS LOCAL MEDIA CONNECTION LLC

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CALL 703-778-9431 OR EMAIL SALES@CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM

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.

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

However, near the end of the project, the 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

The finished kitchen is a light-filled space with cabinets by Crystal Cabinetry, honed Vermont Marble countertops and appliances SEE KITCHEN, PAGE 4

From Page 3

hall" configuration defined rooms were consistent with tradition, vet 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 de-

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-squarefoot 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 ar-

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 the plasma TV that now hangs above it. spatial freedom of an open floor plan.



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, Benson original—provides an elegant vet Borer's research revealed a strong personal useful wall for the new reading room. attraction to transitional-style interior de-The new family room fireplace hearth sign, a contemporary concept that seeks to was custom-designed to accommodate reconcile traditional architecture with the tional and open really works well for us,"

Additional interior design decisions On this score, Benson's original floorplan really enlightening." emerged from Borer's collaboration with 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 tradi-Borer said. "I found the whole process

Empty-Nesters Re-invent the Family Home Kitchen Confidential

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 ogeeedged granite counter tops.

OPENING UP and adding light were priorities when Guy Hopkins Semmes, partner and founder of Potomac-based designmodeled the kitchen of a Bethesda, Md., drawers."

"The kitchen was small, but we were able to add a lot more space, by making few out a stairway wall to the second floor and minor changes," said Semmes. "Before there replaced it with a triangular opening so light was an enclosed porch next to the kitchen. from stairwell came down into the kitchen." We opened the wall between the kitchen and the adjacent enclosed porch."

elimination: appliances. "We got rid of the when you work with what you've got."



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 build firm Hopkins and Porter and Lea Semmes. "All of the other appliances are Allen, one of the firm's senior architects, re- located under the counter and open up like

> Semmes also found a creative way to make the space more light-filled. "We took

The kitchen now has maple cabinetry and white Silestone countertops. "It was done Hopkins and Porter removed walls Semmes and Allen made another major on a budget. It's amazing what you can do to create space and add light to the



Guy Semmes and Lea Allen of Potomac-based design-build firm kitchen of this Bethesda, Md. home.

ouse and garden tours will take

place across Virginia during the

81st Historic Garden Week. Gar-

den week runs from Saturday, April 26-Sat-

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 gar-

dens, homes and historic landmarks dur-

ing "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

Statewide tour passes are available for

\$175. The Alexandria tour takes place Sat-

urday, April 26, tickets are \$35. The Vienna

tour takes place Tuesday, April 29 and tick-

ets are \$25. There is a 240-page guidebook

with detailed descriptions of properties on

each tour. The \$10 charge covers the ship-

ping 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.

Club of Virginia members.

urday, May 3.

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



Getting Your Garden Ready for Spring

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

By Marilyn Campbell on the environment. It reduces bad bug THE CONNECTION populations and is safe over all."

last thing on your mind. However, local annual flowers in pots on patios, but you gardening experts say this is the ideal can plant annuals like pansies, which are time to start preparing your landscape cold season annuals," he said. "They to yield colorful spring foliage.

Potomac, Md., said spring garden prepa- in like petunias and geraniums." ration plans differ from year to year. "It depends on the landscape beds you have and whether or not you're planning to and surrounding them with flowering put in a vegetable garden," he said.

damage that might have been broken ornamental," he said. "It is nice to have during the snow load," said David plants in the pots that stay year round. I Watkins of Merrifield Garden Center, put a Japanese maple in a pot on my which has locations in Fair Oaks, deck. In another pot I put ilex verticillata Merrifield and Gainesville, Va., Don't go [winterberry] and I had red berries all overboard, however: "You don't want to winter long. In the spring, I'll put petuprune plants before they bloom. A good nias in the soil around it, and around the rule of thumb is to prune a flowering edge I'll plant a flowering plant that will 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 so cold, there are going to be some plants seeds into the soil." that won't have made it."

ing the yard for winter damage," saud enous plants. "Look for sources for na-Mann. "This is a great time of the year tive plants — they help sustain our local to look for insect damage and deer dam- wildlife. If we didn't have local plants,

Mann expects extensive deer damage except for plants like azaleas and rhodo-

difficult to identify. "This is the time to wisteria vine," said Wilson. do damage-control by using safe or or-
If a new patio is in your plans this time of year and it is a lot safer and easier the better."

t doesn't feel like spring. Last WHILE EAGER GARDENERS may be week's snow made it seem like excited to start planting spring flowers warm weather might never arrive, in their newly cleaned plots, Watkins ofso planting a garden might be the fers a caveat: "It is a little early for most don't like heat, so in June they start to Bill Mann, of Behnke Nurseries in whither. Then you can put other flowers

Watkins recommends planting hearty, ornamental shrubs in patio flowerpots plants to ensure year-found foliage. "A "This is the time to inspect shrubs for nice thing to do in pots is plant a woody trail down over the pot from April to October. Then the rest of the year I'll get

Sowing grass seeds is also an ideal mulch and just clean up," said Watkins. project to begin now. "The seeds won't "Everybody is sick of winter, especially germinate until it gets to be 52 degrees," this winter. This is the time to clean up Watkins continued. "So even if we get old leaves. Because the winter has been another snow storm, it helps work the

Randee Wilson of Nature By Design in "In March, a lot has to do with inspect- Alexandria encourages the use of indigbutterflies would be gone."

Native plants also require less maintethis year. "Deer didn't have much to eat nance. "Some native plants are cardinal flower, which is bright red; bee balm, also bright red; blue cardinal; iron weed, Insect damage is less obvious and more which has purple flowers, and native

ganic-based products like neem oil," said spring, Watkins says to get started now. Mann. "When sprayed on plants, it "We've been putting down putting pa smothers insect eggs or some insects in tios all year long," he said. "A good garthe larva stage. It also kills stinkbugs. If den center is going to get backed up you can see them, you can control them. when the weather is warmer. The sooner You can use a higher concentration this you start getting your job in the line,

Garden Club of Virginia Celebrates 81st Tour

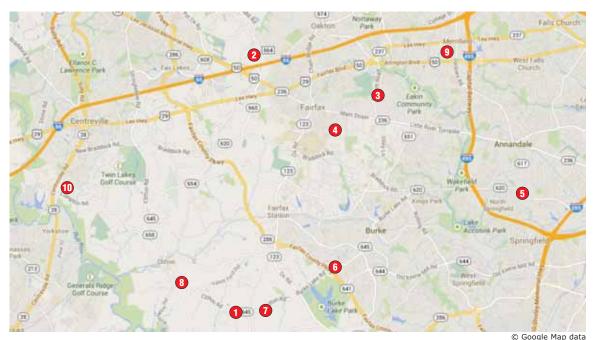


This Alexandria garden will appear on the 81st Historic Garden Week



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



Local designers will turn this estate into a "flowing design home" to raise funds for a local charity.

The D.C. Design House Designers Announced

ome of the area's top designers competed for an opportunity to donate their talent to transform a local, grand home into a showcase home. Local designers chosen to help transform the 2014 DC Design House include:

- ❖ Jim Rill and David Benton of Rill Architects in Potomac, Md.
- ❖ Victoria Sanchez of Victoria Sanchez Interiors in Old Town, Alexandria, Va.
- ❖ Jeff Akseizer and Jamie Brown of Akseizer Design Group in Alexandria, Va.
- ❖ Allie Mann, based in Arlington, Va., of Case Design/Remodeling
- Susan Donelson and Sharon Bubenhofer of Cleveland Hall Design in Alexandria.
- ❖ Nancy Colbert of Design Partners, LLC in McLean, Va.

Now in its seventh year, the annual event is a fundraiser for Children's National Health System (formally Children's National Medical Center). The D.C. Design House has raised more than \$1 million and attracted more than 55,000 visitors over the past six years.

Built in 1929, the home, located in northwest Washington, D.C., has six bedrooms, five full baths and two half baths and also features a three-car garage and a pool. The stone house offers three levels and approximately 7,929 square feet of living space for 24 designers to transform.

The DC Design House opens to the public on Sunday, April 13 and runs through Sunday, May 11.

ome of the area's top designers competed for an opportunity to donate their talent to transform

Hours are Saturday-Sunday, noons 5 p.m. and Tuesday-Friday, 10 a.m.-3 p.m., closed Monday, \$25.

Saturday, April 12, \$50. Visit www.dcdesignhouse.com.

- MARILYN CAMPBELL





Turn unwanted valuables into CA\$H!

Powerful eBay selling for households and businesses
Single Items • Full Liquidations • Buy-outs

Drop off or call for a pick-up...we'll do the rest!

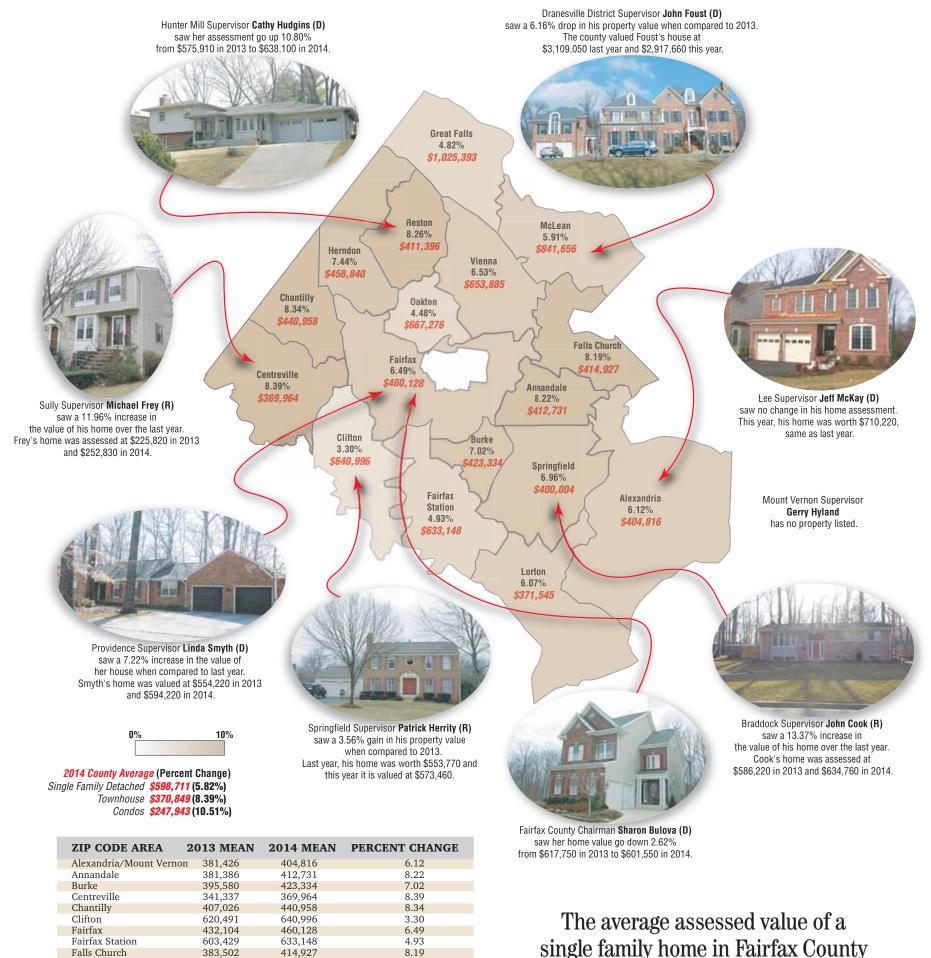
ezauctioning.com

1320 Prince St., Alexandria, VA 22314 • 703.778.6440



Fairfax County REAL ESTATE

2014 Assessments by Area



single family home in Fairfax County for 2014 is \$598,711, up 5.82%

SOURCE: FAIRFAX COUNTY

427,060

350,288 794,688

379,741

373,964 613,796

Herndon

Lorton

McLean

Reston

Vienna

Springfield

1,025,393

458,840

371,545

841,656

411,096

400,004 653,885

for single family, townhouses and condominiums

6.07

5.91

6.53