

# WASHINGTONIAN

# TOP DOCTORS

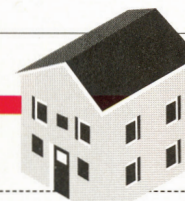
Did Your Doctor Make the List?

## Our Region's Best, Chosen by Their Peers

Pediatrician Monika Woods, at Children's National Hospital



## THE STATE OF REAL ESTATE



WHAT'S HAPPENING WITH...

### 2 REALTORS

Can this smell sell homes?

**WHAT DOES HIGH-END REAL ESTATE** smell like? Home-sales stalwart Long & Foster thinks it has the answer. The company recently developed its own olfactory logo—a first for a major real-estate business. “Scented retail spaces hold customers longer,” explains Elena Solovyov, Long & Foster’s director of marketing and special programs, who previously worked in the perfume industry and came up with this idea. “And memory is [enhanced] when influenced by the sense of smell.”

For now, the aroma will be used at the company’s offices, but eventually it will likely show up at open houses—a fancier version of the old tactic of baking cookies to give the space a homey atmosphere. The idea is more than a gimmick. It makes sense given the psychology of buying property. “Home and scent and memories are all intertwined,” Solovyov says.

To concoct the perfect olfactory tang, Long & Foster hired the French fragrance house Mane. Its mission was to create something that would smell familiar enough to offer comfort but have a contemporary zing to add a bit of intrigue. Mane came back with seven ideas that, after conducting internal surveys and doing a lot of informal sniffing, Long & Foster whittled down to one official bouquet.

Recently, we got a preview of the fragrance, which is debuting in December. It smelled . . . pretty nice! The notes, we were informed, include Champagne rose, bergamot, rhubarb, amber, and musk. If you close your eyes, you’re supposed to be reminded of a dinner party: fresh-cut roses, sparkling wine, windows open to clean air and a garden. We later asked a few coworkers what it conjured. “A hair salon,” said one. “A forest?” another guessed. “A fancy house,” said a third. Bingo.

—AMY MOELLER

WHAT'S HAPPENING WITH...

### 1 HOME SALES

What it’s like being an agent near HQ2

**WHEN AMAZON ANNOUNCED HQ2 WOULD COME** to Northern Virginia, real-estate watchers predicted that the “Amazon effect” would have a dramatic impact on home sales. That already seems to be the case in Alexandria and Arlington, where prices are up, inventory is down, and competition is intense. To get a sense of what it’s like, we tagged along with Weichert agent Gary Chute on a recent Sunday.

**11 AM:** Chute starts his workday at home, prepping for the open house he’s hosting. It’s a townhouse in the Potomac Greens development, about a mile from the HQ2 site. “The closer to Crystal City, the quicker it sells,” he says. This one should go fast; he’s already heard from multiple agents with clients who are serious about the place, which has been listed for three days, with an asking price of \$659,000. The market “is very, very hot,” Chute says. “I’ve been doing this for 25 years and haven’t seen it quite like this.”

**12:32 PM:** The open house starts at 1, but several potential buyers have shown up early. Soon a trickle turns into an ant trail of hungry purchasers streaming up the front steps, trying to maneuver around one another while quietly eyeing the competition. That guy who just jostled you could be the

person whose offer you’re competing with a few hours from now.

**1:26 PM:** The house is hopping. Most visitors seem to be feeling the pressure, with one woman assuring Chute, “I have everything in motion to put in the offer.” But another person seems unaware of the situation. “Is it a buyer or seller’s market?” he asks. Chute explains patiently, “We’re in a seller’s market.”

**2:15 PM:** Neighbors have been stopping by to size up the goings-on; rising prices have implications for the whole area, of course. “If this goes for [the asking price], I’m going to make a *killing* on my home,” one says.

**5 PM:** The open house is over. Chute already has three verbal offers from people who have come through this afternoon. He heads outside, takes down his yellow balloons, and gets into his car. “It was packed,” he says. “Time to go home and wait.”

**5:45 PM:** As Chute arrives back home, he checks his e-mail. “I’m looking at two offers right here,” he says, with more probably on the way. Later, he’ll consult with the homeowner, talk through options, and read the “please pick us!” letter that came with one of the offers. First, it’s time to sit down. “I’m beat,” he says.

—BLAIR MILLER

