

Weekly column: EdTalk
Superintendent of Schools: Dr. David Leach
March 13, 2024

This EdTalk is the third in a series presenting the Warwick Valley Central School District's latest Long Range Planning Study. This week, I will outline Warwick's housing market.

This information is helpful for understanding trends and conditions within the community, and can support school district decision making. By staying educated about the housing market, the district can better understand its constituents' needs and preferences and make informed plans.

The New York State Association of Realtors reports that affordability challenges continue to limit market activity. This is with buyers and sellers at a standstill due to fluctuations in mortgage interest rates. These rates are up considerably from this time last year. These higher interest rates, coupled with elevated sales prices, have resulted in affordability issues for many buyers hoping to enter the market. NYSAR indicates closed sales in New York State were down 12% in Q4 of 2023, compared to the same quarter in the prior year. The median sale price increased slightly to \$375,000, a year-over-year increase of 5.6%. The number of homes for sale fell by 18%, and while a strong housing market generally offers a 6.5-month supply of inventory,

NYSAR data indicates that there was just a 2.7-month supply of available inventory in Q4. Q4 of 2023 also saw a quarterly year-to-year sales loss of 23.4%. At the same time, the Q4 median sale price of \$410,000 reflects a year-to-year increase of 6.5%.

Despite surging home prices, the homeownership rate for Q2 of 2023 increased to 65.9%; this compares to the lowest level in ten years (2013-2023) of 62.9% in 2016. During that second quarter, the homeownership rate was highest among the 65+ demographic (at 78.9%), followed by 75.5% for people ages 55-64, 70.8% for people ages 45-54, and 63.1% for people ages 35-44. This year, the lowest homeownership rate in Q2 was among young adults, 35 and under, at 38.5%. Similar to last year, interest rate hikes and continued price increases continue to hamper further growth in first-time home buyers.

Between 2012 and 2022, housing turnover reached a historic low in 2012, when 181 units were sold. Sales increased to their highest level in 2021, when 474 units were bought. In 2022, 337 units sold. The median sale price has continued to rise, reaching a peak of \$485,000 in 2022. This represents a gain of 10% compared to the prior year.

Year Number Sold Median Price

2012	181	\$296,500
2013	195	\$303,000
2014	213	\$320,000
2015	244	\$309,500
2016	303	\$340,000
2017	323	\$317,000

2018 343 \$360,000
2019 345 \$356,500
2020 400 \$400,000
2021 474 \$441,100
2022 337 \$485,000

Source: NYS Office of Real Property Services

Last year, we reported that, in our district in 2020, 80% of residential housing was owner-occupancy, while the remaining 20% was renter-occupancy. For Orange County during that same period, 65% of housing was owner-occupied, and 35% was renter-occupied. This data remains the latest at this time.

Here are some highlights from our schools this week:

Park Avenue Elementary School

First graders enjoyed a visit from the Orange County Water Authority to learn about the water cycle. A major focus of the week included building vocabulary and gaining knowledge about freshwater, salt water, bodies of surface water, water distribution, and the water resources we use and need to protect. Students also created a visual representation of the Earth's layers using colored water and created bracelets that represent a water droplet's journey. This was a hands-on, engaging way to learn about our planet's water cycle and the students enjoyed each day's lesson.

Our fourth grade scholars have read many books written by authors they've selected for their "Reading Like a Fan" Author Study Unit. By reading books by the same author, groups of students become familiar with the author and their craft techniques. The focus of the unit is to identify commonalities between books, such as their themes, characters' motivations, etc... Students worked on a "Think Sheet" as they recorded their books' themes, symbolism, setting, and otherer significant details. Students greatly enjoyed reading and meeting with their author study groups to discuss what they had discovered. A choice of a mini-project will be offered as a culmination of this reading unit

Sanfordville Elementary School

The PIE 3/4 classes traveled back in time. They were treated to a visitor from Museum Village. Mr. Stowe brought in hundreds of artifacts from the Colonial period. After the presentation the students were treated to a penmanship lesson where they could practice signing their own names using a quill pen. They were also able to make candles in their classroom as well.

Sanfordville fourth graders visited Warwick Valley High School and participated in a video production class. While our fourth grade students were at the high school they were able to collaborate with the high school students and acquire some valuable hands-on experience with the different aspects of video production. We are so happy to have such a meaningful connection with Warwick Valley High School students and staff. Thank you to Mr. Cecconie and Danielle Cancel for coordinating these valuable learning experiences for our students.

Fourth grade classes have been busy at work during their fraction unit. To celebrate the students' accomplishments their classrooms were transformed into pizza shops. Students created their own aprons, hats, pizza boxes, and "made" their own personalized paper pizzas with toppings of their choosing. Students participated in hands-on learning activities about making fractions and solving fraction word problems using pizza slices, orange wedges, apple slices, and chocolate bar pieces. Such a yummy way to learn!

Timothy Ferraro, Associate Principal, and I attended the Odyssey of the Mind Competition held at Orange-Ulster BOCES. It was a record-setting day for our Warwick OM teams with all eight competing Warwick teams taking first place and moving on to the state-level competition on April 12. Go Wildcats!

Warwick Valley Middle School

Warwick Valley Middle School was filled with cultural excitement this week as students celebrate World Language Week. This week the school was alive with languages from around the globe. Each morning announcement was delivered in a different language, offering students a daily dose of linguistic diversity. In addition to this linguistic journey, students in seventh and eighth grade foreign language classes had the opportunity to share their language skills with younger peers. This was done during study halls and advisory sessions. These interactions not only fostered language learning but also promoted cross-grade connections and displayed the true characteristics of a Portrait of a Graduate.

The main hallway of the middle school received a colorful makeover, thanks to the dedicated efforts of the PTA. This was done by adding decorations celebrating world cultures.

One of the highlights of the week was the opportunity for students to embark on a global voyage during lunchtime. Through imaginative setups and backdrops, students could "travel" to various international destinations and capture memorable moments with photographs. Study halls and advisories were transformed into bustling hubs of cultural exploration. Students created flags representing different countries and investigated culinary delights of various cuisines from around the world.

The school community came together for a special assembly organized by the PTA. Students were treated to mesmerizing international dances performed by their peers enrolled in The Warwick Center for Performing Arts. Additionally, Fei tian College students from Middletown mesmerized the audience with their talent and cultural flair in Chinese dance.

Danny Villegas shared his bilingual poetry and drumming skills. This was truly another memorable World Language Week.

Warwick Valley High School

On Saturday, March 2, 2024, Warwick Valley High School proudly hosted The Great Cut Warwick—an event dedicated to supporting children experiencing hair loss. The Great Cut, established in 2000, has been a beacon of hope, providing over 8,000 hair replacements at no cost to children in need. All hair donations gathered by The Great Cut are generously given to Children with Hair Loss, furthering their mission of compassion and support. This year marked a significant milestone as we hosted Warwick's inaugural event in support of this noble cause.

The Great Cut Warwick epitomizes the power of collaboration, as evidenced by the remarkable total of 89 hair donations, amounting to an impressive 12.5 pounds!

Considering that it typically takes between 10 and 15 hair donations to create a single human hair wig, Warwick's contribution alone can cover 6 to 8 children in need. Think about the impact: at least 6 children, whose lives will be forever transformed, owe their joy and newfound confidence to the collaborative spirit that ignited this endeavor. Your kindness, coupled with the dedication of Warwick, Sonny Frommeyer, our Cosmetology classes, and local hairdressers, has catalyzed a ripple effect of positivity that transcends our immediate community. It touches countless others.