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Alexandria City

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Shoppers for homes in Alexandria faced a tough market in every neighborhood last year, but some of the steepest price increases were in the city's least historic districts.

Median sale prices for houses in Zip code 22305, which includes new townhouse developments in the Potomac Yards area, rose 28.8 percent in 2004, the sharpest rate in the city, according to a Washington Post analysis based on government records.

"There is more new housing stock. Prices on that are going to run up much quicker than a more mature area," said Paul Valentino, a regional vice president of Coldwell Banker Residential Brokerage.

"Those areas are going to appreciate more because everybody wants something that's newer."

Throughout the city, median prices for single-family houses and townhouses jumped 23.3 percent in 2004, a dramatic increase compared with the 9.8 percent rise the previous year. The median sale price was \$499,500 in 2004, up from \$405,000 in 2003. Alexandria continues to be the priciest jurisdiction in the region.

Agents say homes in Del Ray and surrounding areas have remained in great demand, in part because the neighbor-

hoods offer a sense of community that young families are looking for. The median home price in Zip code 22301, which includes Del Ray, rose 23 percent to \$481,000.

The median sale price for homes in Old Town Alexandria was still among the highest in the city, at \$575,000, which is up 21.7 percent from the previous year. Zip code 22302, which includes the Braddock Heights neighborhood, was the laggard of the city, rising 13.6 percent, but

its median sale price of \$576,150 surpassed that of the Old Town district.

"Generally, I think Alexandria is moving faster than much of the region. Days on the market are short," said David Hawkins, managing broker of McEneaney Associates in Alexandria.

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The volume of sales rose only slightly in 2004, with 1,918 homes turning over, compared with 1,907 the year before. Condominium sales were not included in these statistics, but that market was even more active last year, with 2,028 units sold, according to a separate analysis of city records. The median price for such units rose 32 percent to \$235,000.

Real estate agents say they don't see a slowdown. "2004 started out more competitively than 2003, and 2005 is starting out more competitively than 2004," Valentino said.