

## War stories from the Seattle housing market



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Seattle-area home prices have continued to soar in 2016. (Elaine Thompson/ASSOCIATED PRESS)

**Persistence only gets you so far in a market where many homes are being sold for cash at well over the asking price.**

By [Wilson Diehl](#)

*Special to The Times*

AS I write this, I'm waiting to hear from my realtor on whether or not I just bought a house. It's my sixth attempt at purchasing a home in Seattle this year, and you know what they say: The sixth time is the charm! Or maybe it's the 16th?

Well-meaning people keep offering unsolicited advice. But even my 3-year-old daughter can tell you that if this offer isn't accepted, it's not going to be because of anything I did or didn't do; it's going to be because "someone else has more money than you do, Mama."



**Wilson Diehl**

Wilson Diehl's essays have appeared in The New York Times, Salon and elsewhere. She's lived in Seattle since 2002, mostly as a renter.

It's been a harrowing adventure, trying to buy a house in this market in the year since my marriage ended and I was shooed from the family home. I've learned more than I care to know about poured concrete versus post-and-pillar foundations, stucco versus EIFS siding, knob-and-tube versus modern-era wiring, interior perimeter drains, exterior perimeter drains, sewer scopes, sump pumps and the nesting habits of rats.

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This market is a hungry, greedy beast — insane in a totally predictable way.

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I wish people would stop telling me I need to keep the faith because my perfect house is right around the corner. I need them to stop suggesting I look for houses in neighborhoods they would never set foot in, let alone purchase property in. I would appreciate it if people stopped recommending fixer-uppers and tear-down-ers. And if one more person suggests that I include a heartfelt letter and photo of my adorable children in my offer packet, I will lose my mind.

I'm on top of all these things, and I promise they aren't enough. This just isn't that kind of market. No seller is going to accept my offer of 20 percent over the asking price when someone else is going 30 percent over. And no one would choose 20 percent down over 100 percent cold, hard cash, no matter how cute my children are. (For the record: extremely.)

There's nothing quite like waiting for the call from your Realtor to find out whether you just spent your entire savings and then some on a house that may or may not survive even a minor earthquake. (You won't know until said earthquake hits because you had to waive the once-standard opportunity to have the house properly inspected because inspection contingencies are so 2015.)

Nevertheless, you hope beyond hope that you get this house, despite the fact that the foundational supports are shimmed up with a log, a brick, a wedge of plywood — and is that a stack of plates? And if you have to write one more sickeningly earnest letter about why you're the best buyer for this home, you might have to call it quits and move back to Iowa, where hundreds of thousands of dollars buys you an entire operational farm.

I'm in the state fellow home-shoppers know as "trying not to get your hopes up about getting this particular house while maintaining a modicum of enthusiasm for the general process because you might have to resume the house-hunting slog tomorrow."

Like a job interview, it's totally nerve-wracking, and it feels both personally judgy — like a beauty pageant — and vitally important. It's like hearing from the surgeon after the operation: "The good news is that you're going to live. The bad news is ..."

*Wilson Diehl's essays have appeared in The New York Times, Salon and elsewhere. She's lived in Seattle since 2002, mostly as a renter.*

## Guest: The case for missing school for the Seahawks parade



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By [Wilson Diehl](#)

WHEN a friend who teaches high-school English lamented that some of her students were cutting class to attend the Seahawks Super Bowl victory parade Wednesday, my first thought was, “Go, students!”

I was raised in a university English department by a village of cerebral heavyweights who avoided organized athletic contests and their attendant dubious postgame behavior.

They might make an exception for soccer (because it’s European) or the Olympics (because they’re as old school as Homer), but they would just as soon encourage rampant absenteeism as don team colors, pump their fists in the air and shout, “Go Hawks!”

I understand these people. They are my people — the ones who don’t know what time the game starts, what a 12th Man is or even what those big yellow sticks are at the ends of the field are for. They do not own jerseys, car flags or green wigs. They would — without exception — always rather be reading a book.

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When my husband (himself a fan of literature) started wearing an oversized Seahawks jersey in September and announced he’d be wearing it every Sunday and seeking out a bar or friend’s house with a functional television, I groaned, and not just inwardly. A giant, slippery, synthetic shirt ate my husband, and I was not pleased.

Seattle has felt like home since I moved here from Iowa City more than a decade ago. They are both towns that elect socialists to city council, are prime UNESCO Cities of

Literature and lack recent national championship-winning football teams. At least in my lifetime, the University of Iowa Hawkeyes football team has not won a national title.

Iowa has no major professional sports teams, so I thought nothing of the Sonics being sent up tornado-and-thunderstorm alley or the dismissiveness with which everyone treated the Seahawks' last Super Bowl appearance. (Was that the year I burned the queso or the time that guy who worked for Paul Allen tried to kiss me?)

I like spending my Sundays (or is it Monday nights?) reading to the kids, taking walks to the duck pond, baking bread and generally behaving as one friend calls it, "A little too 'Little House on the Prairie.' "

But I am not immune to the Super Bowl and having a team in it from my new hometown.

I tentatively made cupcakes with my preschooler and sprinkled green and blue sugar on top. I got my husband a vintage-looking cotton T-shirt to wear under (or, perhaps instead of?) his nylon-mesh jersey. I trekked to Value Village and bought a navy-blue

and neon-green striped sweater that I dismantled and turned into festive leg-warmers for myself and my daughters. I made bright green guacamole and insisted the chips be blue corn.

By game day, I'd even granted permission for temporary cheek tattoos and made myself a bracelet with a small football player figurine and wooden beads spelling "W-I-L-S-O-N." (Hi, Russell! I share a name with the quarterback!)

Yes, football is brutish and punishing and violent and concussive. And yes, school, English class and being present for your own education are tremendously important.

But why must they be pitted against each other? Why can't students attend the parade and then write thoughtful essays about teamwork, sportsmanship, patriotism, loyalty, mob mentality, sports as religion, branding, marketing, the commodification of sport, racism, rhetoric, power, sexism, elitism or pride?

We should teach our kids that participating is, sometimes, a good thing. Finding a common bond with people different from you is a good thing. Anything that unites us across racial, socioeconomic, gender, religious, educational and political divides — frat boys and hipsters, marathoners and couch potatoes, Cougars and Huskies, residents of Queen Anne, Rainier Valley and Issaquah — is a good thing.

We should encourage our kids to bear witness to and partake in the celebration of excellence and extremely hard work, even if it's just a game and the players are paid grotesque amounts of money and the whole vibe is more than a little anti-intellectual.

The Seahawks — as my 4-year-old says — did a really good job. And for that they should be given a parade, a deafening cheering section and an A+.

*Wilson Diehl's personal essays have appeared in The New York Times, Salon, Fit Pregnancy and elsewhere. She's lived in Seattle since 2002.*

**Wilson Diehl**