YOUR MONEY

MONEY LESSONS FROM PANDEMIC

After a stressful and uncertain year, consider five habits worth sticking with when life starts to return to normal. **C2**

U-T ECONOMETER

IS IT TIME TO ZOOM OUT?

Is it time to pull back on so much videoconferencing in the workplace? Out panel of experts weighs in. **C3**

BUSINESS SUNDAY

Model homes are seen in The Highlands community in Pacific Highlands Ranch, where homes range from $2 million to $2.5 million.

EDUARDO CONTRERAS U-T

NEW SINGLE-FAMILY HOMES ARE RARE, CAN EXCEED $2 MILLION

Despite feverish demand, new homes are mainly in pre-existing masterplan communities as building shifts toward density

BY PHILLIP MOLNAR

To buy any house in San Diego is an expensive exercise compared to much of the nation. But, the purchase of a new one is on another level.

The region is expected to produce around 3,000 new single-family homes by the end of 2021, considered a small number by some experts for a population of 3.3 million. The scarcity means it is common for homes to reach $1 million, and much more than that closer to major job centers.

New homes are expected mainly at two masterplan communities that took decades of planning: Otay Ranch in Chula Vista and Pacific Highlands Ranch in northern San Diego. Much of the other homes coming out are far from job centers in Fallbrook and Valley Center.

Location makes a big difference in price. Pacific Highlands Ranch homes start around $1.5 million; Otay Ranch at roughly $700,000; and around $500,000 to $600,000 in Valley Center and Fallbrook.

Considering the price of a resale single-family home in San Diego County went up by 13 percent in 2020, it might be expected the construction industry would be in a feverish rush to build. Developers said they were limited by the usual issues: Lack of land designated for housing, community opposition to new projects and the specter of regulations.

A positive way to look at it: The industry still managed to build 3,160 homes in 2020 in the middle of a global pandemic, which actually was 117 more than the previous year. It might not meet demand, but it is a lot better than if building stopped completely.

Jimmy Ayala, division president of Tri Pointe Homes, said the company was able to somewhat keep up with demand this year because the company has an advantage other developers don't — 65 years in San Diego County.

Tri Pointe owns a lot of land in San Diego County that often takes decades to get approvals and begin construction. All of its roughly 464 homes opening this year are in long-term projects in Fallbrook and Pacific Highlands Ranch.

Ayala said his company plans to keep producing single-family projects, including efforts to develop a new community in Otay Mesa. But, he said the writing is on the wall that the single-family home is probably going to become even more difficult to find in San Diego's future.

"We're not going to see a lot more single-family detached," he said. "It is going to be a rare commodity soon."

There is a practical reason why building is shifting to denser developments, such as condos, townhouses and apartments. The state-certified housing plan, called the housing element, requires communities to build a certain amount of homes each year. So, it is a lot easier to meet housing goals with a large multifamily building than a few houses.

San Diego County's population is still growing, although much slower in recent years, so denser development can sometimes get new residents closer to jobs in-

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"We're not going to see a lot more single-family detached. It is going to be a rare commodity soon." Jimmy Ayala • Tri Pointe Homes

U.S. STIMULUS COULD POWER REBOUND ABROAD

Spending by Americans can help lift all boats

BY JEANNA SMIALEK & JACK EWING

VINCENT YU AP

Asian stocks rose last week after Wall Street hit a new high and investors were encouraged.

Washington's robust spending in response to the coronavirus crisis is helping to pull the United States out of its sharpest economic slump in decades, funneling trillions of dollars to Americans' checking accounts and to businesses.

Now, the rest of the world is expected to benefit, too.

Global forecasters are predicting that the United States and its record-setting stimulus spending could help to haul a weakened Europe and struggling developing countries out of their own economic morass, especially when paired with a rapid vaccine rollout that has poised the U.S. economy for a faster recovery.

As Americans buy more, they should spur trade and investment and invigorate demand for German cars, Australian wine, Mexican auto parts and French fashions.

The anticipated economic rebound in the United States is expected to join China's recovery, adding impetus to world output. China's economy is forecast to expand rapidly this year, with the International Monetary Fund predicting 8.1 percent growth. That is good news for countries like Germany, which depends on Chinese demand for cars and machinery.

Yet the United States is particularly important to the world economy, because it has long spent more than it makes or sells, spreading dollars globally. China is one of the major beneficiaries of Washington's largesse, because many Americans have spent their stimulus checks on video game consoles, exercise bicycles or other products made in China.

The United States' comparatively fast recovery was neither guaranteed nor expected: It was the result of a little bit of luck — new variants of the virus that have coursed through other countries have just begun to push infections higher in the United States — and a large policy response, including more than $5 trillion in debt-fueled pandemic relief spending passed into law over the past 12 months. Those trends, paired with the accelerating spread of effective vaccinations, seem likely to leave the U.S. economy in a stronger position.

"When the U.S. economy is strong, that strength tends to support global activity as well," Jerome Powell, chair of the Federal Re-

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LIZ WESTON Money Talk

More options to find financial planners

Dear Liz: You often recommend in your column to seek the advice of a fee-only financial planner. Where would I find such a financial planner? Our understanding is that a person has to have at least $1 million of savings to invest before a "fee-only" financial planner will consult with you. Can you be more specific?

Answer: Once upon a time, it was difficult to find fee-only financial planners if you didn't have a lot of money to invest. Many required you to invest at least $250,000 and charged 1 percent of those assets annually.

Today you have many more options.

There are now fee-only planners who work on an hourly basis (such as those affiliated with Garrett Planning Network) or who charge monthly retainer fees (the XY Planning Network).

There are also accredited financial counselors and accredited financial coaches (Assn. for Financial Counseling & Planning Education) who often work on a sliding scale. The National Assn. of Personal Financial Advisors and the Alliance of Comprehensive Planners are two other organizations that represent fee-only planners.

One positive outcome of the pandemic is that many more planners now work virtually, which widens your potential options.

Also, many discount brokerages and robo-advisers now offer more affordable ways to get fiduciary advice. ("Fiduciary" means

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