



REALTOR® Involvement
in Smart Growth

The idea is to involve citizens, public officials and myriad stakeholders in working together to plan ahead for development according to a set of common-sense principles.



REALTOR® Involvement in Smart Growth

NAR's Community Outreach department and its Smart Growth Program help members and boards get involved in shaping their communities as they grow and change. Because REALTORS® sell communities as well as houses, it is in the REALTOR's® best interest to make the whole community a great place to live. The resources NAR offers ranges from information to small grants. Some of these resources are targeted to individual REALTORS® while most are for use by REALTOR® associations.

The following resources are intended for both individual REALTORS® and REALTOR® associations

Transportation Toolkit

This 140-page primer on the topic of transportation planning provides REALTORS® and REALTOR® associations with the knowledge to get involved in local and regional transportation planning issues.

See: www.realtor.org/transporttoolkit

Public Schools Toolkit

This 123-page primer on the topic of public school development, including financing, location, and size issues is designed to provide REALTORS® and REALTOR® associations the knowledge to get involved in local and regional public school development.

See: www.realtor.org/PubSchoolsToolkit

On Common Ground Magazine

NAR's smart growth magazine is published twice a year on a variety of growth and land-use topics. This is the perfect way for any REALTOR® to stay up to date on these activities. REALTOR® associations around the country have found *On Common Ground* to be an excellent "leave behind" when they visit local elected officials. The magazine reminds these officials that REALTORS® are interested in smart growth issues and are knowledgeable.

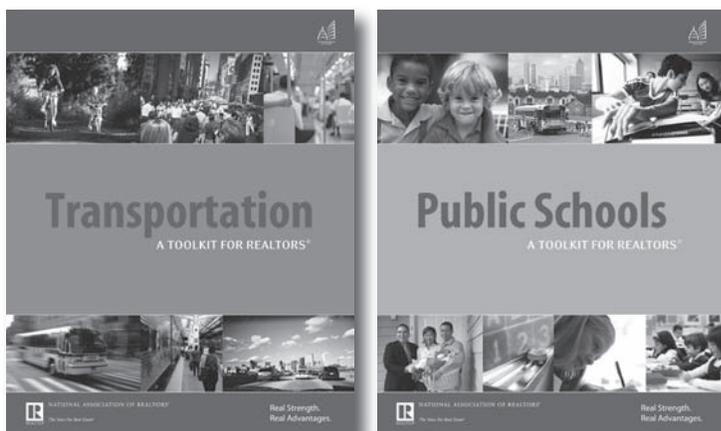
See: www.realtor.org/ocg

The following resources are intended for use by REALTOR® associations.

Smart Growth Action Grants

Designed to spur smart growth-oriented activity by local REALTOR® associations, the grant program has two application cycles per year and awards up to \$3,000 per applicant. Most REALTOR® associations use the funds to provide an educational event for their members as well as local public officials about a growth issues that is particularly germane to their area.

See: www.realtor.org/ssggrants



Issues Mobilization

NAR's Issues Mobilization program was created to support state and local REALTOR® associations through education, technical assistance and/or financial support, and to enable them to organize and manage effective issue campaigns to promote NAR policy. A principal objective of the program is to provide state and local REALTOR® associations with financial assistance toward effective issue campaigns benefiting and promoting REALTOR® public policy. This is a matching funds program.

See: www.realtor.org/issuesmob

Land-Use Initiative

NAR's Land Use Initiative assists state and local REALTOR® associations in their public policy advocacy of land use issues. Upon request, NAR will provide free expert analysis of the legal, planning, economic, and environmental issues surrounding legislative and regulatory land use proposals. The program will accept for analysis land use measures in draft form or as formally introduced, as well as reports or studies that future legislation or regulation may be based upon. NAR will only accept requests from state or local REALTOR® associations.

See: www.realtor.org/lui

Customized state legislation on land use and growth

The Customized State Smart Growth Legislation Program provides assistance to state REALTOR® associations who wish to take the lead in writing and introducing legislation to help the state better address the challenges of growth and improve local communities. NAR offers, at a reduced rate, the services of respected land use law firm Robinson & Cole to draft state legislation to encourage smart growth. Examples might include new zoning enabling legislation; requirements for local planning; changes in subdivision law; or open space protection, to name a few. These proposals must be related to land use and smart growth, and

should be issues that can gain support from a constituency beyond REALTORS®.

See: www.realtor.org/customleg

Voter surveys

This program allows state and local REALTOR® associations the ability to conduct polling on growth-related issues in their areas. The program uses one of two NAR-affiliated public opinion firms to survey the opinions of local or state residents concerning growth. These surveys usually contact about 400 registered voters living in the defined area and can be powerful tools to assess the opinions of your community for local and state government officials. The cost varies according to the detail of the poll, and the public opinion firm used. In an effort to promote the program and to make this polling available at all levels of the REALTOR® organization, NAR will pay for 50 percent of the survey.

See: www.realtor.org/polling

Shared GAD Program

Through the Shared GAD (Government Affairs Director) Program, NAR assists local and state REALTOR® associations that are looking for new and unique ideas on how to share governmental affairs resources. NAR assists interested state and local associations in facilitating meetings and new approaches for those associations looking for ways to increase their ability to represent their REALTOR® membership effectively.

See: www.realtor.org/sharedgad

To learn more about any of the following resources, contact:

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REALTOR® Associations in Action

REALTORS® sell more than homes. They sell communities. Every day REALTORS® see first-hand how our communities are growing, changing, and becoming more diverse. Who better to assure that their communities grow to be the best they can be than the people who know their communities better than anyone else? As professionals and residents, REALTORS® have a vested interest in making sure our communities are as healthy as they can be. That includes strengthening schools, making our transportation system more efficient, and ensuring that open space is available for recreation.

Many REALTOR® associations and their members have stepped up to help address the challenges that result from growth and change. The following case studies provide examples of REALTOR® associations that have become deeply involved in helping to shape their communities as they grow.



Washington REALTORS® Quality of Life Campaign

Summary

In the 1990s, Washington REALTORS® (WR) frequently found themselves in the position of constantly opposing efforts to stop or slow growth. Their solution was the creation of an ongoing Quality of Life Campaign to engage in a positive way in promoting smarter growth. The campaign has had a string of legislative successes, but, more importantly, it also has made the association a key player in planning for the state's future.

Creating the Quality of Life Campaign

When faced with a growth management law that threatened to stifle development, REALTORS® in the state of Washington mobilized for engagement and soon found themselves pitted against no-growth activists. Realizing that most citizens didn't want to stop

growth, the Washington REALTORS® worked to reframe the debate.

What started as an Economic Development Task Force in 1999 is now the state association's Quality of Life Campaign, which strives to sustain and enhance the quality of life for Washington residents by supporting quality growth.

“The Quality of Life Campaign has transformed us from being a group that is known for what it opposes to one that is known for what it supports,” says REALTOR® Mike Flynn, CRS, 2004 president of Washington REALTORS®, who has been actively involved in developing and promoting the campaign.

The campaign's five core principles share many elements of the National Association of Realtors® Smart Growth Principles:

- 1 Ensure economic vitality that creates good jobs and promotes economic diversity.
- 2 Provide housing opportunities so that everyone can find safe and affordable homes near where they live and work.

- 3 Preserve our environment by planning for open space and developing policies to protect clean air and water.
- 4 Build better communities by adequately investing in infrastructure (transportation, water, and sewer systems), schools, and public services that provide the framework for a high quality of life.
- 5 Protect property owners' ability to own, use, and transfer property.

These principles are “the irreducible elements of community,” Flynn says. “This program brings together what our clients tell us goes into their decision-making about homes and communities,” he adds. “Because REALTORS® sell community, we have a perspective that’s unique. And it has a unifying energy. ... It allows us to walk into the legislative and policy-making process and offer input that is broader than what elected officials usually hear – and that makes us very welcome at the table.”

Washington’s population, which increased by a million people during the 1990s, is expected to jump by another 1.7 million residents in the next 20 years. Without proper planning, REALTORS® believe that housing opportunities will be limited and the state’s cherished environment and robust economy may be at risk. That’s why the Washington REALTORS® are getting the ears of elected officials at the state and local level. The Washington Growth Management Act requires every community across the state to review and update its comprehensive plans and to establish new regulations to guide growth. Specifically, the GMA requires communities to:

- ▶ Identify and protect critical areas
- ▶ Designate countywide planning policies and urban growth areas
- ▶ Prepare and adopt comprehensive plans
- ▶ Implement the comprehensive plan
- ▶ Evaluate and update the comprehensive plan and develop regulations

The Quality of Life Campaign seeks to influence public policy that accommodates quality growth, housing, and economic development; define quality growth and its benefits; enhance the image of REALTORS® and elect candidates who will sign a pledge to carry out the Quality of Life principles if elected.

Washington REALTORS® also have created an in-house team of experts on land-use law and regulation and fiscal policy to develop proposals that the campaign can use to help expand infrastructure funding, increase the housing supply and more. The team provides guidance and assistance to local associations in their efforts to promote and adopt those policies.

Washington REALTORS® has staff dedicated to raising money for REALTORS® Political Action Committee (RPAC) to support policy-makers who will adopt and implement those policies. The campaign coordinates its public advocacy messages with the RPAC to contact targeted voters and show support for endorsed candidates. The campaign also works to share government affairs representation among local associations and to train government affairs directors to make the best use of the Quality of Life resources.

The state association also distributes an “Action Guide” (see the REALTOR® Action Guide at the end of this section) to its 24,000 members to encourage them to take an active role in their communities. It outlines the program’s principles and details specific ways for REALTORS® to take part in the local planning process. It shows how to develop partnerships with other organizations, work with the local media, establish relationships with elected officials, and identify potential opponents.

A Quality of Life toolkit is also available to every member to help them better understand issues and to educate policy makers. The Quality of Life CD contains more than 350 research briefs, policy guides, media tools and presentations to help REALTORS® affect

local decisions that frame their community's growth. Every year more tools are added as the REALTORS® range of influence on issues in the state broadens.

All of these initiatives have led to more buy-in from state association members, according to Bryan Wahl, WR Government Affairs Director. "More than one-third of our members recently polled consider the Quality of Life Program a top benefit of their membership. We've more than doubled our RPAC investments in the last two years, and they've grown exponentially since we started the campaign. Last year, we brought in more than \$700,000 in RPAC investments. This year, our goal is \$1 million."

As the Quality of Life Program gains momentum, more people are familiar with the REALTORS® work. A recent public opinion survey showed a high level of public recognition for the Quality of Life program statewide. One quarter of all voters (nearly 2 million people) are aware of the Quality of Life Program, and a whopping 75 percent support the program's goals. Sixty-five percent believe REALTORS® share their same interests for community and family, and 60 to 70 percent agree that REALTORS® are strong advocates who protect property rights, make housing affordable, improve the economy and job opportunities, and improve quality of life. The results show that REALTORS® have gained a strong credibility that allows them to speak effectively on issues that the public cares about.

"You don't need to be operating under a growth management act for this program to make sense," asserts Flynn. He says the campaign's principles can capture the minds of the public and the electorate regardless of location. In fact, several states are already adapting the program (or portions of it) for use in their own states, including Wisconsin, Kansas, Colorado, Hawaii, Mississippi, South Carolina, Nevada and Washington D.C. In addition, most of the provinces in Canada have initiated successful programs.

After seven years, the campaign's results are impressive. "We've had great legislative success since 2000," says Wahl. "When typically only 15 percent of all bills introduced are signed by the governor during any given session, the REALTORS® are successful every year at getting most of our priority legislation passed, including improvements to the Growth Management Act, measures to increase housing opportunities, urban and rural economic development incentives, condominium liability reform, permitting efficiency, transportation and infrastructure funding packages. We were also able to win the votes in the state legislature to bury a serious attempt to increase real estate taxes.

"We've successfully gained support to defeat bad legislation and pass good legislation because we've reached across party lines and addressed rural and urban issues and liberal and conservative agendas," he says. "The success we've had is something we like to share with all other REALTOR® associations. When you look at our agenda – jobs, homes, and community – that's a broad approach that all the public supports. These really are the kitchen-table topics, the issues people care about."

Flynn concludes that other associations developing similar programs can transform their advocacy programs. "Elected officials find a lot to like about our program because it has the extraordinary benefit of being intuitively sensible and factually accurate. And that's why it works!"

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Florida Association of REALTORS® Smart Growth Council

Summary

In 2000, South Florida
REALTOR® Sandra

Goldstein took the helm of her local association and began a quest to investigate solutions to her area's gridlock and seemingly chaotic development. She quickly gravitated toward smart growth. The educational events the association sponsored proved popular and led to creation of a similar, statewide effort under the Florida association's Smart Growth Council, which has evolved into a permanent subcommittee of the association that sponsors, among other smart growth efforts, two local smart growth conferences per year, each one in a new location. These conferences are cosponsored by the local board of REALTORS® in the jurisdiction in which the conference takes place.

Leading a discussion on growth and development

When Sandra Goldstein takes on a leadership position, she wants to know she's making a difference. As she prepared to chair the 7,000-member REALTORS® Association of Greater Miami and the Beaches starting in 2000, she asked herself, "How can I have the biggest impact?" The answer, she decided, was smart growth.

"In Miami, we're in gridlock all the time," said Goldstein, president of Sandra Goldstein & Associates, a commercial brokerage and building management firm in Key Biscayne. "We paved over agricultural land to build roads to the suburbs, and now people are feeling disenfranchised. Families are separated from their jobs, their homes, and their children for most of the day, and people spend hours in traffic."

To jump start activism for better planning and development, she went out into her community and met with leaders – elected officials,

planners, environmentalists and others who could play a role. She realized that they all had concerns about over-burdened roads, the loss of farmland and the economic health of the region. But none of them were talking to each other. The association organized a conference to help educate REALTORS® and others about smart growth while showing community leaders that REALTORS® want to be involved in community issues.

In 2002, the Florida Association of REALTORS® created a Presidential Advisory Committee on Smart Growth. The following year, the committee became the Florida Association of REALTORS® Smart Growth Council, with Goldstein as chair. With several dozen volunteers, the council focused on education and mentoring others.

"We came to the realization that we needed to start education on a state level... with continuing education credits," says Goldstein. Working with Florida Atlantic University's Catanese Center for Urban and Environmental Solutions, they developed a smart growth curriculum. In October 2003, the council held a day-long smart growth education session for REALTORS®. The meeting took place in Abacoa, Fla., home to FAU's MacArthur Campus and an excellent example of a well-designed town. The REALTORS® toured the town between sessions on smart growth principles, planning, and bringing activism into a community.

"We tried to show that there's no smart-growth prototype that will fit every community or every village in Florida," says Goldstein. "But what we can do is educate people and alert them to what the possibilities are and what success stories exist – and that can light a fire under them."

George Cantero, Goldstein's successor as council chair, continued to educate Florida REALTORS® about smart growth, with conferences in Orlando and Seaside. "We want to maintain the awareness of what's happening in our state with smart growth," says Cantero.

The FAU curriculum was again the centerpiece of these meetings, where he added an open forum for people to talk about any positive or negative issues they are facing with smart growth. “As we articulate the issues of smart growth with more frequency, we see resistance dropping, and people realize it’s not a one-size-fits-all solution. We want to show that smart growth can be tailored to meet the needs of each community and the culture of an area.”

Based in Miami, Cantero focuses on international buyers and sellers in the residential market. He says his clients’ primary concerns are housing affordability, convenience to services, and a sense of safety, all of which he says are addressed by smart growth. “These are human issues that cut across the price spectrum when people buy real estate in any community,” he says.

What Other REALTORS® Associations can Learn from Florida’s Experience

“Start the conversation,” suggests Cantero. “We haven’t done anything earth-shattering, but we

have started increasing awareness...Everyone wants instant gratification, but everything has a period of gestation...it takes time for smart growth to catch on.”

Goldstein, now active in her own neighborhood advisory group, knows that the efforts to educate REALTORS® about smart growth will pay off in the long run. “REALTORS® are the forerunners. We’re the first ones people contact to take care of their life needs. It’s important that we learn from each other and get inspiration from each other. We want to do something else besides just collecting a commission. We want to give meaning to what we do. Ultimately, as human beings we want to have counted for something. We want to make a difference.”

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New Mexico Customized State Legislation

Summary

After nine years of fruitless attempts to amend statewide planning and zoning laws, the New Mexico REALTORS® association decided to take advantage of NAR's program that offers the assistance of a nationally known land-use law firm in writing and advocating for state smart growth legislation. The infusion of outside expertise helped members focus on essential provisions and drop unnecessary elements that engendered opposition. This process expanded the group's influence.

Making progress in New Mexico

In the early 1990s, the New Mexico legislature passed statewide planning and zoning legislation over the objections of many REALTORS®. For years, the REALTORS® Association of New Mexico (RANM) tried unsuccessfully to amend the legislation. In 2003, the organization used the NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF REALTORS® Customized State Smart Growth Legislation Program and succeeded in passing two amendments.

“For nine years we would go and beat our heads against the wall and try to make changes,” says REALTORS® Jim Maddox, who served as RANM's volunteer legislative chair in 2003 and is a past president of the statewide organization. “Then we took advantage of this program. It lightens the load on volunteer REALTORS®, reducing what they have to research and understand before embarking on a legislative effort.”

The customized legislation program helps state associations take the lead in writing and introducing legislation to better address the challenges of growth and improve local communities. Through the program, NAR provides associations with the services of land-use law firm Robinson & Cole and pays half of the fee (If a state association cannot fund its half, additional assistance may be available

through another NAR program). The law firm helps draft state legislation on smart growth issues, providing advice on legislative strategy, creating talking points, assisting with coalition development and undertaking some limited direct lobbying. The association commits to a legislative campaign, identifies objectives for the legislation to achieve, appoints a legislative task force, participates in strategy and coalition development, secures bill sponsors, and organizes member contact teams to lobby legislators. New Mexico is one of three states (along with South Carolina and Massachusetts) that has used the program.

“We had wonderful legal advice rooted in up-to-date land-use practices,” says Mary E. Martinek, RANM's first government affairs director. “Robinson & Cole carried that advice into suggestions for coalition-building that allowed us to put together the underpinnings of a successful legislative strategy.”

In previous years, Martinek explains, RANM used an all-volunteer legislative committee with dozens of members that worked together to develop new initiatives. One hurdle they faced year after year was the opposition of the environmental and public policy group called 1000 Friends of New Mexico. They strongly opposed provisions in the association's amendments calling for comprehensive zoning plans at the county level and the prohibition of forced mergers of continuous parcels of land, primarily in rural areas.

When a new government affairs director was hired in 2002, the association decided to try a different approach. RANM turned to the Customized State Legislation Program and created a small volunteer task force with only a handful of people and the ability to make decisions. This group worked closely with Brian Blaesser, a partner in Robinson & Cole, who came to New Mexico to help develop a legislative strategy, build coalitions, and draft legislation. One of the first meetings he held was with the 1000 Friends of New Mexico to understand their opposition. It turned

out that he was able to eliminate virtually all the language they opposed and still achieve the results that the REALTORS® needed. Their support ultimately helped get both amendments passed.

“It was helpful to have someone point out that we were getting to the same place,” Martinek says, “because sometimes volunteers get so wedded to the way they think it should go.”

Albuquerque REALTORS® Bill Campbell III, CCIM, a volunteer member of the legislative committee, agrees. “We’d been battling the same people over the land-use issues for a long time,” he says. “You end up drawing lines in the sand and no one wants to budge. When you bring somebody from the outside with a fresh view, it’s easier to negotiate. And Robinson & Cole brought a lot of credibility to the table. They’re good at what they do. They’re very effective, they know the issues, and they’re very fast. We wouldn’t have gotten it done without them.”

Maddox headed up the task force, which included Martinek, the association’s executive vice president Peggy Comeau, Campbell, and several additional volunteer REALTORS®, all of whom were extremely knowledgeable about the issues and were accessible via cell phones 24 hours a day. Unlike in the past, Maddox says, when a change to a single sentence might take

days to get approved, “We understood the issues and could make decisions within minutes. Robinson & Cole brought the legal expertise, but it really helped that the association streamlined the decision-making process.”

Martinek says that using a small task force was a “paradigm shift” for the association, but it was predicated upon the sense of comfort and security that came from working with Robinson & Cole. “It gave our volunteers a tremendous sense of confidence,” she says, noting that other REALTORS® can learn from the New Mexico experience. While some members worried that an outsider would fail to understand their issues, that simply was not true, she says.

By using the customized legislation program, Martinek says, the REALTORS® in New Mexico enhanced their status as “movers and shakers” in the legislative arena. Moreover, it gave them a boost toward subsequent legislative achievements.

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Ventura County Coastal Association of REALTORS® and HOME

Summary

In the 1990s, REALTORS® in Ventura County, California, became worried that increasing strictures on growth and the introduction of “ballot-box zoning” were shutting out housing for all but the wealthiest individuals. Realizing that taking the lid off growth was not an option, the local association participated in creation of Housing Opportunities Made Easier, or HOME, a non-profit coalition that is advocating successfully for well-designed, higher-density development that meets the full range of housing needs.

Creating the HOME coalition

After voters in California’s Ventura County passed growth-control legislation in the late 1990s, housing prices started rising, spurred by the expansion of Los Angeles to the south and Santa Barbara to the north. When middle-class workers started getting priced out of the housing market, the local economic development association formed a housing task force, which quickly concluded that a housing crunch would make attracting new business to the county increasingly difficult. With the support of the Ventura County Coastal Association of REALTORS®, the task force became a non-profit organization in 2000 called HOME: Housing Opportunities Made Easier.

A community-based organization focused on increasing the supply of adequate housing for all people in Ventura County, HOME now includes REALTORS®, developers, affordable housing advocates, local government officials, business people, and others who want to promote rational growth strategies for Ventura County.

“We’re in a long-term battle to win hearts and minds,” says REALTOR® Fred Ferro, who runs the Ventura office of NAI Capital Commercial Real Estate Services and served as HOME’s chair during its first three years.

In 1998, residents in Ventura County overwhelmingly approved a countywide growth-control measure called Save Our Agricultural Resources (SOAR). Since then, eight of the county’s ten cities have approved similar legislation that prohibits extension of city services outside of City Urban Restriction Boundaries (CURB) and requires a public vote for development of any farmland or open space outside the line.

“There are now predetermined lines where you cannot develop without going back to the public for a vote,” explains Kay Runnion, governmental affairs director of Ventura County Coastal Association of REALTORS® and a member of HOME’s Steering Committee. After passing the restrictions, she says, people started opposing all new housing development. “That just isn’t realistic,” she asserts, noting that the county of 795,000 people could top a million within a decade. “We need to educate people about affordable housing and other smart growth principles because of these restrictions.”

Ferro says the “ballot box zoning” coupled with “double-digit annual increases” in residential home prices spurred the development of HOME. “No-growth policies are implemented largely because they’re politically popular and feasible, but no one thinks about the flip side, that home prices rise and people like nurses, mechanics, and policemen can’t afford to live in the community anymore.”

Education and outreach quickly became one of the primary goals of HOME during Ferro’s tenure as chair.

At the outset, the all-volunteer organization worked to build a diverse base of members while gathering data about housing costs, population growth, job growth, the amount of developable land within the CURB lines, and zoning regulations that limited the community’s anticipated housing demands. The County Planning Department already was forecasting a significant housing shortage

even with buildable land developed according to the county's plans. A local employer survey found that more than 90 percent of respondents cited barriers to attracting new workers because of housing concerns. Other studies showed that some residents were spending 50 percent of their household income on housing.

HOME used information like this to spread the word about the county's need for smart growth. The group's first newsletter, published in fall of 2001, said "Teachers, public safety workers, and young adults just entering the workforce will be the first to be driven out of Ventura County by the housing crisis, and if workers commute back to the county for jobs, then our already difficult traffic problems will be further exacerbated. However, an across-the-board housing shortage also affects corporate executives and entrepreneurs. If [they] can't find adequate and convenient housing, they will simply look elsewhere to locate their businesses." It concluded that the housing shortage could lead to an economic downturn and stagnation in the county.

The group also sponsored a series of seminars to increase awareness of the housing crisis in the business community and to highlight some smart growth best practices. "Infill housing can be a hard sell," notes Ferro, especially in communities offering only apartments and single-family homes. HOME showed that affordable housing can be attractive and continues to co-host one or two housing seminars annually.

HOME also used several techniques to reach out to the general public and local legislators, including creating a website (www.vchome.org) and using public access cable television. One of the most effective techniques, still used today, is a 20-minute PowerPoint presentation created for use at meetings with neighborhood groups, civic associations, developers, elected officials, and potential supporters. "We say, 'here's the problem, here are some statistics to back it up, and here are some possible

solutions,'" says Runnion. "We are trying to get people to look at the affordable housing issue, to make people aware of the different principles of smart growth, to explain that density isn't a dirty word, and to show that there are slow, mature actions to be taken."

She says many local REALTORS® needed a primer on affordable housing and other smart growth principles because single-family homes had always been the bulk of their business. "We have to start dropping the concept of only one type of housing for people. If there are other choices, people can at least look," says Runnion.

After educating the membership, the association helped launch a speakers bureau for HOME, encouraging local REALTORS® to use the HOME presentation to speak to groups in their communities. "It requires constant education to enable REALTORS® to feel confident and strong in their advocacy of housing issues," says Runnion. "Some fear it's too self serving, but we remind them that REALTORS® provide a service by getting information out to people because REALTORS® know housing better than anybody."

Ferro says all of the outreach has had an impact in Ventura County. "There's greater public awareness, there's more dialog from a more diverse group, and there's greater collaboration between groups that understand the problem." He says one of the group's future goals is to secure "long-term funding to help solve a long-term problem."

One area that he describes as a "weak spot" in HOME's early stage was its goal of endorsing projects. The idea was to have a third-party panel of experts (architects, planners, environmentalists and others) review proposed developments. If they met HOME's criteria – promoting economic stability, using good design, minimizing urban expansion, creating affordability, mixing uses and supporting public transit – they would be endorsed and publicized through press releases and supported at public hearings.

While HOME did endorse a handful of projects, the process was time-consuming and difficult to maintain, requiring constant recruitment of volunteer experts. Because of this, Ferro says, the steering committee recently decided to re-center its focus on community education and outreach.

Runnion views the project endorsement program as a learning experience for HOME and other REALTORS® Associations who are facing growth-related issues in their own communities. “Don’t try to do too many things,” she says. “Keep it simple, promote a few strong elements, stay focused, and don’t give up. There are times when you want to throw up your hands, but you just have to keep plugging away.”

She encourages all REALTORS® to get acquainted with the NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF REALTORS® Smart Growth Principles. “Even if you are not facing growth issues to the degree that we are in Ventura County, you will face growth issues eventually...It’s going to happen everywhere. As California goes, the rest of the nation goes.”

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York City Savvy: REALTORS®

Get to Know Their Hometown

Summary

Revitalization of existing towns and cities is a key element of smart growth, but selling real estate in many of them can be tricky. The REALTORS® Association for York and Adams Counties, Pennsylvania, (RAYAC) created the York City Savvy course to better equip REALTORS® to sell residential properties in the city. Modeled on the similar Select Milwaukee course, York City Savvy offers speakers who are leaders in York City's public and private sectors, giving participants a broad understanding of what the city offers potential homebuyers.

Bringing Homebuyers into York City

For years, many REALTORS® in the York City, Pennsylvania, area were reluctant to show properties in the city itself. The conventional wisdom was that schools were poor and taxes high. Buyers, too, often came with preconceived notions about the wisdom of buying in town. Frustrated that these views lingered even after the city began to turn around, RAYAC Homeownership Coordinator Betsy Buckingham went looking for ideas for how to change the situation.

In 2002, she discovered the Select Milwaukee program and contacted Scott Bush at the Greater Milwaukee Association of REALTORS®, who told her how the association had developed a course that helps educate members about the myths and realities of city life, so that they can better meet the needs of clients for whom it would be a good fit.

The York City Savvy program is helping REALTORS® capitalize on the city's burst of growth. A night scene with restaurants and clubs has begun to blossom, plans are under way for construction of a new minor league ballpark downtown, and many new housing options have opened up, including upscale lofts and town homes, as well as options

for affordable housing. In addition, several rehabilitation projects are in progress, including major renovations led by the local YWCA and YMCA in areas adjacent to downtown. The city is home to three internationally known firms – Pfaltzgraff, Dentsply International, and Glatfelter – and is located within reach of major Mid-Atlantic hubs: about an hour from Baltimore, an hour and a half from Washington, D.C., and two hours from Philadelphia.

York City Savvy:

The Course Breakdown

REALTORS® need to meet no requirements to enroll in York City Savvy, and the course is free of charge. Upon completion of the course, participants receive a pin and “York City Savvy” designation. At-large RAYAC membership fees are not used to support the program.

The course consists of four sessions of three hours each that focus on distinct but fundamentally interrelated aspects of York City: neighborhood governance, schools, residential options for homebuyers, and financing issues.

Session one offers a brief history of the York City Neighborhood Alliance and its amenities, including parks and recreation, cultural opportunities, and special incentives for young professionals. Speakers who have volunteered their time include the chair of the Neighborhood Alliance, officials from the City Parks and Recreation Department, and the director of the Healthy York County Coalition. The session also touches on the city's rich history, including its founding in 1741 and its role in hosting the Second Continental Congress in 1777–78.

Session two puts the lens to York City schools, aiming largely to clear up misconceptions that buyers may have. In past versions of the course, this session has included a tour of Smith Middle School. Attendees learn about the various and unique programs for students of all ages and levels.

Session three provides a survey of residential options within York City. These include “row

homes, homes on tree-lined streets, condos, lofts, homes in suburban settings, and homes in commercial centers,” according to the course write-up. In past sessions, speakers have included the city’s Codes Officer, as well as representatives from the York City Human Relations Commission, who provided updates on fair housing issues. Of interest here is York’s proud architectural heritage, which stretches back nearly three centuries. According to travel writer Pat Mestern, York’s collection of Victorian-era row houses is second only to that of Baltimore.

Session four focuses on credit, mortgage products and assistance programs, and York’s Mortgage Credit Certificate, with presenters suggesting ways to use these services in combination. The most fact filled of the four segments, this session has included presenters from the Credit Bureau and the Housing Council, as well as from private banks and Rural Opportunities, Inc., a community development organization.

There also is a York-specific mortgage program and an employer-assisted housing program, developed by some of the city’s larger employers to encourage employees to live within the city. Also related to this discussion are the following York City programs:

- ▶ **First-time homebuyers program:** a down payment and closing cost assistance program for qualifying homebuyers.
- ▶ **Adopt-a-house program:** connects local corporations with neglected properties. Completed homes are sold at market cost.
- ▶ **Rehabilitation loans:** help finance construction at below-market rates.

Early Outcomes

Judging from the high course-completion rate and enthusiastic remarks on evaluation forms, the York City Savvy course has been an unqualified success. Gayle Sanders, a course participant who works for Jack Gaughen REALTOR® ERA®, explained, “As real estate professionals, we need to let our clients and customers know that we’re not just here for the commission. We’re here because we really

care about our community.” By learning more about their community on issues ranging from schools to financing options, REALTORS® can not only find the right fit for clients, they also become more involved civic members. Other participants, such as Ethel Davis, a REALTOR® with Long & Foster, saw the course as a useful refresher. “I had a knowledge of the community, and this was a very helpful review for me,” she said.

In the short term, the program delivers other benefits. Representatives of RAYAC are not authorized to recommend one REALTOR® over another to the general public. But if someone requests a REALTOR® and has an interest in moving into the city, a RAYAC representative can say, “The following people completed the York City Savvy course.” That’s where the designation comes in very handy. RAYAC’s web site includes a list of REALTORS who have earned the designation.

Added Steve Snell, RAYAC’s Executive Officer, “I’ve been pleased because this program has made it clear that our association recognizes the interrelatedness of our community’s municipalities. That means the success of the city, including downtown, affects us all. Through this program, we show we’re doing what we can.”

Aiming for Obsolescence

Course developer Betsy Buckingham notes: “My greatest hope is that the program will become unnecessary, as it did in Milwaukee.” The idea is that enough REALTORS® will become “York City savvy” that the program will have served its purpose – to increase the number of local REALTORS® better prepared to sell homes in York City and to significantly increase the percentage of homeownership in the city.

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Selling City Owned Properties Efficiently (SCOPE) in Baltimore: Joint Project Unleashes

Market Forces on Tough Problem

Summary

The Greater Baltimore Board of REALTORS® is working with City of Baltimore officials, foundations, and other organizations to list and sell city-owned vacant and abandoned property. The initiative, known as SCOPE (Selling City Owned Properties Efficiently), is a market-oriented approach to promote homeownership and rehabilitation of housing in blighted neighborhoods. The first phase of the SCOPE Project has shown significant potential, and City officials are now substantially increasing the number of properties offered for sale.

City Strives to Get Title to 5,000 Properties

Baltimore, Maryland, like other large cities across the nation, has been slow to recover from the loss of manufacturing jobs that once contributed to a robust urban environment. Population decline, which was particularly severe in the 1990s, has led to housing vacancies that now amount to about 15,000 properties in the city. Some property owners have abandoned properties rather than pay real estate taxes or make repairs – such as lead paint abatement – needed in Baltimore’s numerous older homes, including many brick row houses.

In 2002, Baltimore Mayor Martin O’Malley proposed Project 5000, under which the City planned to acquire clear title to 5,000 vacant properties within two years. Procedures for gaining title include tax delinquency proceedings, purchase, and exercise of eminent domain. With virtually all of these properties at least in the foreclosure and litigation stage, the City is now exploring options for their disposition. Some of these properties are sufficiently concentrated to enable large-scale redevelopment by the City.

But many more are scattered on individual lots, and that’s where SCOPE fits in.

Several years ago, the Baltimore Economy and Efficiency Foundation (BEEF) asked the City of Baltimore and the Greater Baltimore Board of REALTORS® (GBBR) to help develop a market-driven mechanism for rehabilitating houses on individual lots in several neighborhoods. The purpose of this project would be to return vacant and abandoned properties to productive use, bringing them back onto the tax rolls and sparking interest in adjacent residential and commercial properties.

During the development stage, GBBR invited the Real Estate Brokers of Baltimore (Realtists) to participate in SCOPE and join the review panel that selected agents to market SCOPE properties. Realtists are affiliated with the National Association of Real Estate Brokers (NAREB), which is made up of minority professionals. The Goldseker Foundation provided funding for logistical and staff support.

After a two-year planning process, the City identified 62 vacant properties as ready to go on the market. The SCOPE Project invited brokers and agents to apply as listing agents for these properties. Of the more than 100 who applied, 10 were selected to list SCOPE properties. These 10, who are Realtists and/or REALTORS®, are particularly familiar with foreclosure sales and the nature of the neighborhoods involved, as well as highly qualified in real estate transactions.

How SCOPE Works: Market Processes with Controls

Properties are listed on the Metropolitan Regional Information Systems (MRIS) and are included in the national database accessed over the Internet through www.REALTOR.com. This listing enables any real estate broker or agent to participate in the project on behalf of a buyer. GBBR has been instrumental in developing standard purchase and settlement forms, which are

now available on the Board's website (www.realtorsbaltimore.com).

Special requirements do apply. In selected neighborhoods, one condition of sale is that the house must be owner-occupied and rehabilitated within 18 months. Elsewhere, the buyers also must rehabilitate the house in 18 months, but they may keep it as a rental property or sell it as an investment property. These requirements help to ensure that SCOPE properties will be rehabbed and not merely held in a dilapidated condition waiting for resale prices to rise. Potential buyers of SCOPE properties must disclose information about other properties they own in the City, and Baltimore's Board of Estimates has the authority to reject any sale if the buyer is considered unqualified for SCOPE.

Alongside these requirements are attractive incentives. The City of Baltimore encourages real estate agents to participate by paying a sales commission of \$2,500 or eight percent, whichever is greater. Prospective buyers are offered a lien-free property and have up to 30 days after the City ratifies the contract to back out of the deal with no penalties.

Why Try a Market Solution?

The scale of the abandonment and neglect in some areas of Baltimore had put the City in the unwitting role of major real estate marketer. But few resources were available in the "cash-strapped" city to ensure that vacant properties on scattered sites were sold and rehabilitated, according to Robert Pipik, Director of Asset Management and Disposition at Baltimore's Department of Housing and Community Development. Utilizing private sector real estate professionals allows the City to avail itself of the multiple listing service and puts "a lot more feet on the street."

The City does not pay a commission on a property until that property goes to settlement. Baltimore also saves money it would have spent on advertising public sales. Market forces stimulate competition, which increases the price the City receives

for these properties and also makes it easier for the City to stipulate that properties be rehabilitated. Rehabilitation is key. Pipik notes that the SCOPE provisions ensure that redevelopment is "working for the benefit of the community. That's critical for Baltimore."

Early Outcomes: SCOPE Generates Revenue and Buzz

Although SCOPE is in its infancy, the initial response by City officials, the real estate service community, and consumers has been enthusiastic. In a meeting before the Baltimore City Council on July 1, 2004, housing officials noted that 89 percent of the original 62 properties had contracts. About 15 percent had gone to settlement. SCOPE had generated \$156,000 in revenue for the City, with another \$391,000 under contract. Sale prices for these properties, which were generally gutted shells, ranged from \$2,500 to \$50,000 with an average of about \$10,000. The City expects to receive an estimated \$6 million in home construction and value from the project based on the initial listings.

SCOPE has not been without its frustrations. Delays have resulted from the vetting needed to determine that individual buyers are qualified. Most of the properties are boarded or bricked up, making it necessary for the City to open them and provide doors that are keyed for the sellers the same way as other homes on the MRIS.

The biggest challenges stem from cumbersome administrative and legal procedures that can delay settlement for six months while the City ensures clear title to a property. According to Joseph (Jody) Landers, Executive Director of GBBR, the City is preparing a flowchart of bureaucratic bottlenecks and is working in tandem with the real estate industry to consider ways to streamline the process, possibly with the use of private resources. "This is a solvable problem," he says.

Vito Simone, a REALTOR® who has listed SCOPE properties, is convinced that "the marketplace is the best place to get things

done and to get the best results,” particularly with scattered-site housing. By using the energies and resources of real estate brokers and agents, SCOPE “creates a level playing field for consumers.” He adds: “Anything that puts housing on the open market is a good thing. You cast a wider net for potential homeowners and investors.”

With 107 houses sold as of March 2006, the combination of SCOPE and Project 5000 have been credited with helping turn-around neighborhoods such as Reservoir Hill. Pipik notes that SCOPE has attracted a “broad array”

of buyers, from “urban pioneers” to churches, small investors, and larger developers. “SCOPE has also generated a lot of buzz,” he says. “It’s definitely an important tool in our kit.”

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Michigan Land Use Academies: REALTORS® Learn to Put the Brakes on Sprawl

Summary

Through its Land Use Academies, the Michigan Association of REALTORS® educates qualified members about the importance of smart growth in the state. The program began in 2004 after Governor Jennifer Granholm's bipartisan Land Use Leadership Council reported on the need to curb unsustainable growth practices.

MAR and the Governor's Land Use Leadership Council

In the mid-1990s, land use became a prominent issue on the legislative agenda in Michigan. Communities large and small were growing unchecked, and existing laws and regulations lacked the flexibility to control the resulting sprawl. Few REALTORS® in the state understood the nuances of land use. In response, the Michigan Association of REALTORS® (MAR) initiated a statewide education campaign.

Gil White, then MAR's president-elect, and Robert Campau, MAR's vice president for public policy and legal affairs, took the lead, organizing land use summits with the Michigan Environmental Council, the Michigan Farm Bureau, and other groups. White conceived of the Land Use Academies in 2003 while attending a meeting of the Michigan Land Use Leadership Council, co-chaired by former governor William Milliken and Attorney General Frank Kelley. The 26 members, who represented a broad array of interests, studied trends and consequences of Michigan's land use policies at the local and state level.

According to White, researchers found that between 1980 and 1995 urban development, which had covered 6 percent of the state in 1978, had expanded at eight times the rate of population increase. At that rate, Michigan's

developed land was expected to increase by 178 percent by 2040.

In its final report, *Michigan's Land, Michigan's Future*, the Michigan Land Use Leadership Council recommended that the governor and state legislature take steps to better guide the state's growth. The council advocated mixed-use development with high density in appropriate locations, an approach associated with smart growth. The council also advocated the preparation of housing impact statements, economic studies assessing the effects of government regulation on the availability of affordable housing.

Finally, with strong backing from MAR, the council recommended that 60 percent of the membership of planning commissions, zoning boards of appeal, boards of trustees, and city councils in each jurisdiction be required to complete a continuing education course in smart growth in order to receive state aid.

The Land Use Academies: New and Continuing Education

MAR offered its first Land Use Academy in 2004 and has offered them at regular intervals since, at both introductory and expanded levels.

Land Use Academy I. Land Use Academy I is open to 50 students who qualify by virtue of experience addressing land use issues or collaborating with local governments, or an abiding interest in the field. There is no charge, and students receive two continuing education credits.

The brochure promises that the day-and-a-half course teaches participants "how to interact with local governments about all things land use. Students will learn market-friendly development techniques [and] good design theories." Speakers include experts from the real estate, government, and environmental communities.

During the summer 2005 session. Bob McNamara, policy representative of the

National Association of REALTORS®, led a hands-on session in which he showed slides of various land use settings – farmland, small towns, commercial strips, and so forth – and asked participants to identify examples of smart growth. Where smart growth was not depicted, students used a computer application to simulate improvements.

A guest instructor was Don Chen, executive director of Smart Growth America, a coalition of national, state, and local organizations. Chen described his organization's efforts to “improve the ways we plan and build the towns, cities, and metro areas we call home.” Additional presentations were given by MAR's outside legal counsel David Pierson, who discussed strategies for working with local government on zoning issues; Brad Garmon, Land Programs Director at the Michigan Environmental Council, who presented an environmental perspective on density; and Bill Rustem, a longtime political activist, who provided an update on land use matters across the state of Michigan.

Land Use Academy II. In the second course in the series, speakers and participants expand the discussion to case studies and principles behind effective design of residences and communities. Land Use Academy II is open to REALTORS® who attended the initial course. There is no charge for attendance and no continuing education credit.

The summer 2005 session featured talks by Peter Allen, a Michigan urban developer and adjunct professor at the University of Michigan, who spoke on urban revitalization; and Terry Sanford of the engineering and surveying firm Nederveld Associates, who analyzed case studies on smart growth. Chuck Eckenstahler, a charter member of the American Institute of Planners, discussed conservation subdivision planning; and business strategist Dave Levitt highlighted efficient ways to design and arrange residential properties. MAR legal counsel David Pierson discussed zoning and streamlining the plat process, which is the mapping or charting of

lots, subdivisions, or communities to show boundary lines, buildings, and easements.

Positive Student Feedback

Eric DeYoung, a REALTOR® at RE/MAX Vogue in Holland, Michigan, who attended the 2004 Land Use Academy, commended the “diverse and helpful” speakers. “I was expecting to hear things from the environmental groups that I would resist,” he said. “But I think they’re on the right track, and we all need to work together to make wise use of our limited land resources.”

Bill M. Nabers of Riverpointe Realty in Detroit attended Land Use Academies I and II and felt that both addressed land use issues long ignored in the state. Noting the devastating problems confronting his city, which continues to lose population and faces a financial crisis, Nabers said he appreciated what he learned about overcoming bureaucratic obstacles. He sees that topic as pertinent to efforts in Detroit to pass a land bank ordinance allowing banks to issue long-term loans on real estate in return for mortgages.

For Judy McFalda, who owns Harbor Realty Team, LLC, in rural Rogers City and attended both Academies, the session corrected misconceptions. “The discussion of unused land brought up perspectives I had never considered,” she said. “Density is not always a bad thing.”

Education Leads to Action

Recommendations of the Michigan Land Use Leadership Council are being implemented throughout the state. Measures have been adopted to streamline the plat process, implement conditional or contract zoning (the rezoning of a particular piece of property based on an agreement between the developer and local government), and adopt land bank policies to enable productive use of parcels standing vacant. An October 2004 article in the *Lansing State Journal* announced that in Meridian Township officials approved mixed-use zoning, which had been illegal since the

1960s. “People can walk and ride their bikes [from their homes to shops],” White says in the article. “It’s one part of the puzzle in creating great places where people want to live, work, and play.”

The lessons of the Michigan Land Use Leadership Council and Land Use Academies show that dialogue among interested parties can prompt legislative and regulatory action, spurring further educational efforts and more refined legislation. The long-term outlook for Michigan is one of better informed land use policy and smarter growth.

Advice to REALTOR® Associations

The Michigan Association of REALTORS® offers these tips to other associations that might want to start their own land use education programs:

- Feel free to use speakers with differing points of view, so long as the thrust of their presentation does not conflict with your overall message.
- Hold participants’ interest by presenting a mix of development or sales studies and academic or theoretical speakers.
- Screen applicants for experience and interest to ensure that participants learn from one another.

- Educate your association’s leadership about land use patterns in your state. Although a state need not be in a crisis mode to warrant a course on land use, emphasizing the urgent need for reform can give participants a sense of purpose both as community members and as real estate professionals.
- Choose an interesting venue. The Michigan academies have been held at wilderness retreat facilities in order to help participants immerse themselves in a neutral environment.

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New York State Association of REALTORS® Smart Growth Awards Program

Summary

The New York State Association of REALTORS® annual Award for Smart Growth Excellence

recognizes the successful efforts of communities within the state to incorporate the principles of smart growth into their projects, policies and programs.

Award program debuts in 2005

After adapting and adopting the National Association's smart growth principles, the NYSAR decided to create an award that would help to raise the profile of those concepts while honoring projects or communities that exemplify them. The program accepts applications for built projects, policy and regulation initiatives, and a comprehensive approach to smart growth through a combination of policy and built projects. The winner is selected by a panel of qualified individuals from organizations and public institutions that have an interest and working knowledge of smart growth, and is honored at the association's fall business meeting.

The first award, in 2005, went to the town of Warwick, located 55 miles northwest of New York City in Orange County, in recognition of the town's successful efforts to incorporate the principles into its comprehensive plan.

The plan established a farmland protection program and put into place innovative zoning techniques. Warwick's plan is designed to preserve the town's rural character and as many operating farms as possible; to direct growth toward already vibrant settled villages and hamlets; and to provide significant and unique natural areas that are important for both ecological reasons and for wildlife habitat. The smart growth initiatives eliminate the encroachment of housing on productive farmland by creating incentives to

have development on already settled villages or hamlets.

"Our comprehensive plan ... allows us to preserve what Warwick's 30,000 residents love about their community – its rural character and agricultural heritage – while allowing development now and in the future," said town of Warwick Supervisor Michael P. Sweeton. "This plan was a community-wide effort."

The new zoning ordinance encourages cluster developments, walkable neighborhoods, affordable homes and open space preservation. Since the adoption of the code, all proposed subdivisions have been clustered, preserving an average of 60 percent of the site as open space, and lot values have since increased by as much as 50 to 75 percent. Affordable housing aspects of the code require developers to provide at least 10 percent of a new subdivision as affordable housing. It also encourages development that imposes less impact on the community by allowing private and narrower roads with less curbing, thereby reducing runoff and calming traffic.

In 2006, NYSAR bestowed the award on the Town of Clifton Park which is about 20 miles north of Albany. The Town of Clifton Park has successfully implemented smart growth concepts into its comprehensive approach to planning, which has established an open space protection program and proposed innovative zoning techniques designed to maintain a sophisticated mixed use community. The town's five-year effort has resulted in: an open space plan; the permanent preservation of more than 700 acres of land; the creation of 12 miles of trails within the town; a Generic Environmental Impact Statement (GEIS) covering 14,000 acres of land in the western section of town; the creation of Western Clifton Park Design Guidelines as a tool for owners and developers; enactment of new zoning districts in the western section; and the hiring of an open space coordinator to help implement the town's program. The initiatives

are designed to maintain the quality and sense of place of Clifton Park as it continues to grow in the future.

NYSAR 2006 President J. Gregory Connors stated that, “The purpose of the award is to promote the continued advancement of smart growth in our state in accordance with the principles adopted by the National Association of REALTORS®. By honoring successes of communities such as Clifton Park through our ongoing Award for Smart Growth Excellence program, we continue to create awareness of the benefits of smart growth and encourage more communities

to embrace this approach to development. New York’s REALTORS® recognize the many benefits of utilizing a smart growth approach to community development and the positive impact it has on our communities.”

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REALTORS® in Action

Just as REALTOR® associations are stepping up to the plate to ensure that their communities grow smart, so too are individual REALTORS® making significant commitments to shaping their communities as they grow. As these case studies demonstrate, their reasons for getting involved are varied but all of these REALTORS® have found that their civic involvement has had the collateral benefit of boosting their business.

Ken Jackson, CCIM, CRS, GRI Florence, South Carolina



Ken Jackson is a busy guy. The Florence, S.C., REALTOR® is a former chair and current member of his local planning commission. He serves as chairman of the board of trustees at Francis

Marion University. He recently co-chaired the Governor’s Quality of Life Task Force and led the South Carolina Association of REALTORS®. And he’s a strong proponent of smart growth, something he simply defines as “development that enhances our quality of life.”

As a REALTOR®, Jackson does a little bit of everything: residential, commercial, and industrial, plus some property management. He says he never consciously decided to get involved with smart growth. It just turned out his interests and activities – the planning commission, REALTORS® associations, economic development, and education – happened to match many elements of smart growth. “As I got more involved in each of these, I discovered how interrelated they are and how little they are coordinated,”

he says. “I also came to realize that I could make a difference by understanding how the legislative and regulatory process works and being knowledgeable on the issues.”

Jackson believes “It is imperative that REALTORS® participate in local planning decisions. We must realize that if we as REALTORS® are not at the table when decisions are made, we have little room to complain.” His success and positive impact at the local and state level over the past 10 years may inspire other REALTORS® to follow his lead and get involved in their own communities.

Ken Jackson Starts Planning

After becoming a REALTOR® in 1990, Jackson wanted to get more involved in his community of 40,000 in northeastern South Carolina. (The City of Florence is within Florence County, which has a population of 125,000.) His home state ranks among the nation’s fastest growing states, so he also wanted to learn about new development projects. The local planning commission seemed a logical place to start.

He was appointed to the commission in 1994. “After I was there a few months it was obvious that the decisions we were making were of tremendous importance to the community,” Jackson recalled. “I realized very quickly that most people, including many elected officials,

don't realize the influence that a planning commission has on the way a community grows. I quickly felt a sense of responsibility to take this position of public trust seriously."

He says it takes years to really understand how planning works and how the different ordinances, regulations, and comprehensive plans are intended to work together. In many cases, planning commissioners may not have the time to get educated. "I have had an inside view of how planning decisions are made and how uncoordinated government entities really are in their decision making." He chaired the commission for several years and remains an active member. By understanding the issues and actively participating in the process, he says, "you will stand out and have more influence than the person who just shows up for meetings. You also become someone who is looked to by the community, the elected officials, and the press as someone with expertise and an informed opinion on planning issues."

According to Florence Mayor Frank Willis, Jackson has those traits. "Ken brings an acute understanding of the planning process to the table which many of the commissioners do not have, unfortunately. His knowledge and leadership have led the planning commission to understand the role they play in developing smart growth initiatives and in quality of life issues. The Commission has great respect for Ken so they follow his guidance. The long-term impact is that he has set a standard for the commission that will be in place for many years to come."

While Jackson was preparing to serve as state association president in 2002, he got involved in electing Mark Sanford as South Carolina's governor. A former real estate broker, Sanford made quality of life a major part of his platform. Once elected, he asked Jackson to co-chair his Quality of Life Task Force. The group included nearly 30 diverse members representing corporations, conservation organizations, civic associations, and developers. "Many of the represented organizations had disagreed on many issues

over the years," noted Jackson. "It was amazing to see that once we started talking, we all had the same goals for South Carolina."

They agreed that their mission was "to enhance the quality of life for present and future generations of South Carolinians through the stewardship of our commonly held values of PLACE," an acronym for People, Long-term, Aspire, Community, and Education. While smart growth was never directly mentioned, the group's recommendations included many smart growth principles: integrate public transportation with land-use planning; encourage downtown renewal and revitalization projects; support private-sector efforts in affordable housing; and remove legal impediments to traditional neighborhood design. Already, some of the recommendations are making headway in the state legislative process.

Summarizing Jackson's work, Governor Sanford said, "Ken is somebody who not only understands how central quality of life is to our economic development efforts as a state, he's somebody who's also constantly on the front lines throwing out creative ideas to get us where we need to be. He's a strong advocate for managing growth in a way that's consistent with market principles and private property rights, and his work on our Quality of Life task force was invaluable in helping set the tone for this administration's efforts on that front."

What Other REALTORS® Can Learn

While not every REALTOR® is going to get involved to the extent that Jackson has, his story emphasizes "that one person can make a difference," says Mayor Willis. "REALTORS® have a unique understanding and perspective of the growth of a community. On a daily basis they are contributing to the growth of the community and should understand how and why their actions help or hinder 'good' growth. They are in an industry that is dependent on growth and as such should exert some responsibility as to how that growth takes place."

James Peters, former Executive Office of SCAR, says Jackson is proof that “you can be involved and be successful. Ken’s involvement with the state association has enhanced his business, his success, and the quality of life with his own family.”

Jackson says he enjoys the various activities, which have benefited his business and made him a better REALTOR®. When asked why others in the profession should get involved in smart growth, he replies, “There should be no other kind of growth! Smart growth is about

helping create a better quality of life in our communities, and REALTORS® are uniquely qualified to serve in positions of influence on issues related to quality of life. Get educated on the issues and get involved.”

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Linda Clark Fort Worth, Texas

REALTOR® Linda Clark has lived in the same neighborhood for more than 40 years, just south of downtown Fort Worth, Texas. She wasn't happy when the area's main pedestrian-friendly commercial street morphed into an unattractive six-lane thoroughfare, but when businesses started closing their doors, Clark motivated herself and others to save Berry Street. Her tenacity and vision helped to rejuvenate the corridor, bringing new businesses, residences, and vitality back to her neighborhood.

"I watched it go from a place where you could buy practically anything to a place that offered almost nothing," says Clark, who chaired the all-volunteer Berry Street Initiative for seven years. The group's efforts led to streetscape improvements and the opening of small businesses. Now a sizable mixed-use development is under construction, solidifying the street's turnaround. "This kind of thing pushes my buttons and makes me more excited about what I do on a day-to-day basis," says Clark, a commercial REALTOR® with Kline & Co. "It's exciting – and it's my neighborhood."

Conceived as a residential street near Texas Christian University in the 1920s and 30s, Berry Street started attracting commercial businesses in the 1940s and '50s, when perpendicular parking spaces were added. As a TCU college student in the 1960s, Clark frequently walked to Berry Street's department store, drycleaner, grocery store, and other neighborhood businesses. A 1970s urban renewal project widened the brick-lined street to a six-lane paved thoroughfare, wiping out the convenient parking spaces and stripping the street of its pedestrian-friendly feel. By the 1980s, businesses started to be shuttered. When the department store announced its departure in late 1994, it was more than the neighborhood could handle.

"I got 15 phone calls in one day when the news hit," says Clark, who had helped preserve

a historic convent near Berry Street and opposed a highway project. "People kept asking, 'What are we going to do?'" She and others were concerned that the street would continue its downward spiral and turn into a "magnet for trouble." More than 400 people showed up at a public meeting in January 1995 to voice their concerns, including the TCU chancellor, Berry Street business and property owners, and scores of local residents. Following the meeting, a member of the city council asked Clark to chair a volunteer redevelopment effort. She accepted the role, and the Berry Street Initiative was launched.

"My experience gave me the vocabulary and enough knowledge to help the community ask the right questions like, 'What happened?' and, 'How do we fix it?'," says Clark. She credits James Kunstler's books on America's changing landscape with introducing her to smart growth and helping her to create a vision for the future of Berry Street. "Kunstler's *Geography of Nowhere* described what happened on the corridor, and his *Home from Nowhere* described how to fix it. The solution involves getting public investment to lure the private sector in to provide the economic stimulus. That's basically what has happened on Berry Street. It has taken a long time – longer than I ever imagined – but it is happening."

Clark and others involved with the Berry Street Initiative spent countless hours between 1995 and 1998 hosting and attending meetings, raising public awareness, and initiating clean-up projects. Their efforts led to a \$3 million bond issue in 1998 to fund a new design and some initial improvements along the corridor. The city hired a design firm, which worked closely with the Berry Street Initiative for more than a year, to create what Clark calls "a dynamite plan" that established detailed guidelines for new landscaping, street signs, lighting, sidewalks, and other improvements.

"The Berry Street Initiative has been the city's closest and most reliable partner as we have begun to transform Berry Street from a distressed commercial corridor into a vital

mixed-use urban village,” says Fernando Costa, planning director for the City of Fort Worth. “Linda has played an important role in bringing together property owners, business and neighborhood leaders, Texas Christian University, and various public officials to pursue this ambitious effort. She has demonstrated exceptional leadership qualities and seemingly boundless determination to accomplish her community’s goals.”

The street is returning to its pedestrian-friendly feel, with 16-foot sidewalks, on-street parallel parking, and four lanes of traffic divided by a tree-lined median. New businesses have now opened, including two national drug stores, a video store, a fast-food place, and a sit-down restaurant. In 2005, the opening of a \$47 million mixed-use development will secure the transformation of Berry Street. The privately funded project includes 31,000 square feet of retail, 245 apartments for TCU students, and a 580-space parking garage.

The CEO of the Greater Fort Worth REALTORS® Association, Sherry Matina, calls Clark “a tireless advocate of improvement. Her vision started this effort, and it’s just grown and grown and grown. She has made a lasting contribution to her community.”

While the redevelopment took much longer than Clark anticipated, she says it was worth it. “As frustrating as it has been because of the length of time, all I have to do is drive down the street and look around to see the impact we’ve had,” she says. “There’s something really tangible for me, personally, knowing I made a difference. And, as a REALTOR®, it adds

to the stability and prices of the surrounding neighborhoods. There’s no doubt it adds value.”

Other communities in Fort Worth have taken notice of the changes on Berry Street, too. “The visible difference in Linda’s neighborhood is so great that it has inspired redevelopment projects along other corridors,” says Matina. She says there are nine other corridors throughout the city that are slated to follow Berry Street’s lead. Clark’s advice to other projects is to find money to hire at least part-time paid staff to help manage the volunteer effort, which she says is hard to maintain over several years. Nonetheless, she actively encourages others in her profession to get involved with smart growth in their own communities. “Make the time and stay involved and learn about development concepts,” she suggests. “It’s so important – and we can make a difference.”

Fort Worth’s Costa, planning director seconds her suggestion. “Linda provides an excellent example of how civic-minded REALTORS® can make a big difference in the life of their communities,” says Costa. He recommends that REALTORS® get educated about smart growth, then “apply your knowledge with conviction, and don’t let minor disappointments get in the way of your success.”

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Linda Goodwin-Nichols, CRS, GRI

Vice Mayor, City of Kissimmee, Florida



Linda Goodwin-Nichols has had a lifelong slogan: “You only get out of a community what you put into it.” And she not only believes it, she lives it by getting involved – and elected.

President of Goodwin Realty & Associates in Kissimmee, Florida, Goodwin-Nichols has volunteered for countless boards and committees during her 30-year real estate career. And for nearly eight years, she has served as an elected official on her city commission, including the past four years as vice mayor.

“Before I decided to run, I feared that decisions I would make as an elected official would hurt my business,” says Goodwin-Nichols. “That was the most incorrect thought I ever had in my life. ...Being an elected official has done nothing but enhance my real estate career.”

As an elected official in a rapidly growing community, she’s had to make plenty of tough decisions, but she’s stayed focused on helping her community grow smartly rather than haphazardly. According to City Manager Mark Durbin, “She’s always able to make the right decision. She’s a natural born leader.” He’s seen many commissioners during his 17-year tenure directing Kissimmee, and he readily summarizes her work. “She’s a thinker, a planner, and does not let emotions control decisions she makes. At the same time she’s compassionate and has pushed the city to provide services to residents who need government help.”

Kissimmee sits in the middle of Florida, within 10 miles of Disney World and surrounded by Osceola County, one of the state’s fastest growing areas. The population has more than quadrupled, from 12,500 when Goodwin-

Nichols started her business to nearly 55,000 people today. “I’ve seen a little cow town made up of large landowners, cattle ranchers, and farmers become a multi-cultural, diversified community,” she says. Tourism and construction fuel the local economy, once dominated by farming. “Growth presents its challenges – the roads are overcrowded, the schools are overcrowded, everything’s overcrowded – so you focus on making a better community.”

One of the biggest challenges she’s faced while in office is overcrowded schools. Kissimmee is located in the Sunshine State’s fastest growing school district – and its poorest. More than 70 percent of area students receive free lunches (an indicator of low family income levels). While Goodwin-Nichols says it would have been easy for elected officials to ignore the issue and let the school board tackle the challenges alone, the city commissioners knew they had to help because schools are a community issue.

After she was first elected in 1998, the city commissioners voted to build a public charter school. The commissioners actually ran it, like a school board, before turning it over to an educational foundation. More recently, the commission created Educational Benefit Districts, encouraging developers to set aside acreage for neighborhood schools built in partnership with the local school board. People who buy in the community pay a fee (similar to homeowner association dues) for the benefit of having their child at a school close to home. “It is a phenomenal way to fund new schools,” notes Goodwin-Nichols, who boasts that Osceola County has no failing schools despite many challenges. “We can’t stop growth, so we need to be creative with ways to fund schools.”

One of the biggest opportunities she’s had as city commissioner is to help shape the future of Kissimmee through annexation. She notes that a rewrite of the community’s comprehensive plan while she’s been in office has enabled city leaders to dictate what will be on the land and how it will be developed, rather than developers directing the growth.

In the late 1990s, the city inked the largest annexation in its history. The 1,200-acre parcel pushed the city limits out to a major thoroughfare, Osceola Parkway. The prime real estate was poised for rapid residential development. If not for the comprehensive plan, “more cookie-cutter developments” might have sprung up on the land, says Goodwin-Nichols. Instead, the plan called for more sustainable communities, with garage setbacks, housing variety, and more tree cover, which she says “really raised the bar on the level of houses being built in this area. We’ve really worked hard to develop what our kids and grandkids are going to enjoy.”

While she doesn’t consider herself a smart growth expert, she understands the interconnectedness of all elements within a community, and used that basic smart growth tenet to help guide her political decisions. “I don’t think smart growth is rocket science. I think you have to look at a community’s challenges and you’ve got to face them and get them under control as much as possible. As an elected official, smart growth has helped me look at the long-range vision of my community. It’s enabled me and others on the commission to forecast what the challenges are today, what they’re going to be, and how they’re going to impact quality of life, so we can solve those challenges before they cannot be solved.”

Durbin says that, as a REALTOR®, Goodwin-Nichols is highly attuned to growth issues. “She understands the ins and outs of growth because she has seen them throughout her career. Her knowledge and “big-picture thinking” have been assets to the city commission, he

says, noting that she has helped educate city planners during her tenure. “Planners tend to look at things from a textbook point of view, and she brings the real world experience.”

Term limits ended Goodwin-Nichols’ stint as city commissioner in November 2004, and Durbin says, “I’m going to miss her tremendously.” He encourages other REALTORS® to get involved and says even if they don’t want to run for office they should make their voices heard. “It’s important for REALTORS® to understand that their fortunes are tied to the fortunes of the local government. If the government is doing a good job providing services, that’s going to make a REALTOR’s® job easier.”

Goodwin-Nichols says being an elected official has been an invaluable experience and encourages other REALTORS® to get active and run for office. “If you’re complaining and you’re not involved, then nobody should listen to you.” She says city employees have asked for her help and she’s also brokered some properties for the county. “Everyone knows I’m a REALTOR®,” she says, noting that she has always been a REALTOR® first and then a city commissioner. “I never go to one of these meetings without getting a lead. It’s the easiest marketing in the world.”

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Brenda Ellsworth

Mayor, Ash Grove, Missouri



As mayor of Ash Grove, Missouri, REALTOR® Brenda Ellsworth saw a chance to make the most of her connections to the resources of NAR to help her community become a leader in

smart, citizen-driven planning.

As a result of her 2004 initiative, her town was selected as the first city in the U.S. to receive an extensive level of assistance from the NAR Smart Growth Program. A little more than a year later, the city of Ash Grove and the NAR Smart Growth Program were honored with an Excellence in Planning Award for “Outstanding Community Initiative” from the Missouri Chapter of the American Planning Association.

It began in the spring 2004, when Ellsworth and the Greater Springfield Board of REALTORS® requested assistance from NAR’s Smart Growth Program to initiate a program to plan for the city’s future. Ash Grove, with a population of approximately 1,500, is 20 miles from rapidly-growing Springfield and is expected to see significant growth in the near future. Ellsworth said she began the planning initiative because of the community’s desire to “maintain our character and sense of community in the face of growth. Most small-town leaders do not have the needed knowledge to make that happen and do not have the funds to hire the person that does.”

The town used the NAR assistance to hire A. Nelessen Associates, a nationally recognized planning and design firm from Belle Mead, New Jersey, to conduct visioning and planning workshops over a four-day period in Ash

Grove. More than 120 Ash Grove residents, business owners and other stakeholders attended the workshops. Participants completed visual preference surveys and questionnaires on land-use policies, and worked in teams to create maps representing their recommendations for growth. Planners from A. Nelessen Associates were assisted by volunteer planners from NAR, the city of Springfield, and the planning faculty and students from Missouri State University.

“The partnership between Ash Grove, NAR, the local REALTOR® board, and the university was so important to the success of this planning effort,” says Joe Molinaro, manager of NAR’s Smart Growth Program. “And the fact that so many citizens participated is a testament to Mayor Ellsworth’s leadership.”

Soon after the planning event, citizen working groups were formed to further pursue many of the ideas developed in the preliminary plan, and the city is currently working to incorporate the outcomes of the process into a comprehensive plan and updated land-development regulations. The preliminary plan also provided the impetus and support for the city’s two successful applications for funding from the Missouri Department of Transportation to install sidewalks and street lighting and plant trees along major roads in the city, and was the catalyst for further work with Drury University’s architecture and business schools to develop design concepts and a marketing plan for downtown.

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REALTOR® Action Guide

Getting Involved: A REALTOR®'s Action Guide

The guidance below was adapted from the Washington REALTORS®' Quality of Life Action Guide on how REALTORS® can get involved in crafting their community's comprehensive plan. However, this roadmap can be applied to getting involved with any community growth issue. For more information on the WAR Quality of Life Program see www.warealtor.com/Government/qol.asp

Action Plan

The following outlines a proposed action plan for local REALTOR® involvement in updates or re-writes of their communities' comprehensive plans. The answers to the questions asked in the 'lay of the

land' section provide a framework for local activists to get the information they need to become informed and involved. Answers to the questions may be obtained from planning staff members, planning commission members and elected officials and their staffs.

A lot of this work will be building and maintaining relationships, something that REALTORS® do every day in their work with clients.

Strategy and Tone

There are several fundamental recommendations to set the strategy and tone for local involvement.

- ▶ REALTORS® should get involved in the plan update process immediately. The goal is to get the comprehensive plan update proposal to reflect the REALTORS® policy objectives from the outset.
- ▶ Another underlying goal is to position REALTORS® as a thoughtful and positive force in getting the local plans updated in ways that avoid public conflict and controversy, and advocates who will assist in obtaining community support for the plan. Local REALTORS® should make it clear

Meetings with local officials, planning commissioners, and staff members should not be complaining sessions about what is wrong in the community and with the current plan. REALTORS® should instead offer assistance to make things better.

that they are getting involved to offer some of their insights into the community and are committed to ongoing involvement in the update process.

- ▶ Meetings with local officials, planning commissioners, and staff members should not be complaining sessions about what is wrong in the community and with the current plan. REALTORS® should instead offer assistance to make things better.
- ▶ Local REALTORS® should cite local examples of projects that accomplish the

objectives of the planning elements they want to see included. Examples from neighboring communities may be used if none exist in their own communities.

Get Involved Early and Often

The sooner you learn about and get involved in the process, the better off you'll be.

- ▶ Make allies of the planning staff as early as possible. Having the staff on your side and advocating for your provisions is much better than having them oppose their inclusion after the plan is put forward.
- ▶ Advise elected decision-makers as soon as possible about what you're doing and why. Keep them updated as the process and your involvement continues.
- ▶ If staff members are not receptive to your involvement, have sympathetic elected officials make proposals to them for you and encourage staff to make sure you're at the table.

Getting the Lay of the Land

You wouldn't dream of trying to sell a house without knowing its location, size, the number of bedrooms and its amenities. Educating yourself on the issues and people involved in the comprehensive plan update is just as important.

Educate yourself about the existing comprehensive plan policies.

- ▶ Do the existing policies include the policy elements supported by REALTORS®?
- ▶ If they do, how are the existing policies working and what changes might make them better?
- ▶ Which elements are not included in the existing plan?
- ▶ Is there draft language available from other communities that might work in your area?
- ▶ Are there examples in your community, or in neighboring areas, of policies that are working well and that should be encouraged?

Identify the elected officials and staff who will be involved in the update process.

- ▶ Will a county or city council committee approve the update before it goes to the full council? If so, who is the committee chair and who are its members? Which commissioner, if any, will head up the process and which are most interested in planning issues?
- ▶ Will a planning commission be involved? Who are the chair and members?
- ▶ Which local REALTORS® have good relationships with specific officials and can talk with them about the plan update?
- ▶ Which city or county department will be conducting the update? Who is the head of the department and which staff members are doing the work?
- ▶ Do any local REALTORS® have good relationships with the planning staff and can talk with them about the update?

Identify the update process and schedule

- ▶ Will there be workshops to discuss the plan?
- ▶ When will it first be brought forward for public review and comment?
- ▶ Will a planning commission or other similar body do the initial review? If so, what will their process and schedule be?
- ▶ When and where will public hearings be held?
- ▶ How and when can you and your allies and supporters make comments on the proposed plan?
- ▶ Who will you get to attend any workshops, review sessions, meetings and hearings to speak in favor of the plan elements you support?

Identify Your Allies

- ▶ Who in the local real estate community would be effective in discussing your effort with specific elected officials and staff?

- ▶ What other local groups or organizations might support your positions? Natural allies may include chambers of commerce, builders, economic development councils, rotaries and other business organizations.
- ▶ Consider less obvious allies: Are there low-income housing advocates, labor unions, neighborhood groups, parks advocates or environmentalists who may share views about elements of the comprehensive plan update?
- ▶ Who in your community has contacts with those groups and may be able to explore common ground?

Identify Potential Opponents

- ▶ Are there local neighborhood, conservation, environmental or other groups likely to be involved in the update process?
- ▶ What types of positions and actions have they taken in the past regarding land use issues?
- ▶ Have they been involved in prior comprehensive plan updates?
- ▶ Do they have good contacts with staff who will develop the plan and decision-makers who will adopt it?
- ▶ Can you find room for agreement? What issues? Can you agree to move forward on areas of agreement?

Identify Media

- ▶ What members of the local media (talk and news radio, television, newspaper) might be interested in the comprehensive plan update?
- ▶ What local REALTORS® have good relationships with them?
- ▶ What local REALTORS® will handle media inquiries?
- ▶ What local REALTORS® and allies might be available to brief editorial writers at appropriate times?

Taking Action

Attend local hearings

It is imperative that REALTORS® attend local hearings when important issues are discussed. Remember this:

- ▶ Poorly planned attendance at an important meeting could result in a missed opportunity.
- ▶ A well-orchestrated attendance by REALTORS® and homeowners in large numbers can make a strong impression on local officials.

Follow these steps to make the most of your attendance:

- ▶ Have REALTORS® meet beforehand to agree on a strategy and message.
- ▶ Designate a spokesperson(s) to communicate the REALTOR® position.
- ▶ Develop talking points, an outline of your key messages.
- ▶ Anticipate the attendance of local media and incorporate this into your strategy. It could mean valuable “earned media time” for your message.

Stay informed

REALTORS® absolutely must stay informed about local issues. There are a number of steps you can take to stay on top of things:

- ▶ Read local newspapers
- ▶ Subscribe to and monitor local agendas and minutes. Some of this is available over the Internet.
- ▶ Attend local council and planning commission hearings.
- ▶ Develop strong relationships with local government officials and staff.
- ▶ Attend local civic events hosted by allied industry groups such as the Chamber of Commerce and Building Industry Association.
- ▶ Invite local officials to speak to your association on specific issues.

Participate in local commissions and task forces

- ▶ You can influence the debate about local issues by having REALTORS® sit on local commissions and task forces.
- ▶ If your city government has not created a commission or task force, take the initiative and suggest that one be formed.
- ▶ Participation in these forums is the best way for REALTORS® to get involved in the dialogue early and counter the influence that local government staff and opposition forces may have over elected officials.

Developing relationships with local officials

It is important to develop relationships with local officials before controversies reach their high point to ensure that you will have an open ear. Ways to develop productive legislative relationships are:

- ▶ Hosting a “meet and greet” reception for local officials at your association office.
- ▶ Host fundraisers for candidates and elected officials.
- ▶ Invite government officials to speak to your membership on particular issues.
- ▶ Have a regular presence at local government meetings.
- ▶ Place your association on local elected officials’ mailing lists.
- ▶ Place your local elected officials on the association’s mailing lists.
- ▶ Continue your relationship with officials after a decision has been made, especially if the decision was favorable.

Don't forget about staff

Government staff influences elected officials as much, if not more, than anyone else

- ▶ Staff prepares reports, studies and analyses of important issues.
- ▶ Elected officials often educate themselves by reviewing the information they receive from staff.

- ▶ REALTORS® must maintain open lines of communication with staff to ensure that it provides objective information to elected officials.
- ▶ Similarly, it is important to have open lines of communication with elected officials, in the event that staff does not share your point of view.

Identify Your Objectives

Growth issues manifest themselves in many forms – ballot measures, zoning ordinances, project approvals, or comprehensive plan updates, to name a few. Regardless of the type of situation you are facing, it is important for you to identify your objectives first, before you develop a strategy.

Determine your goals

- ▶ What do you hope to accomplish in relation to this issue? Anticipate different level scenarios.
- ▶ Be prepared to compromise and to accept something less than your ideal outcome.

Evaluate Your Resources

- ▶ What resources do you have at your disposal to achieve your goals?
- ▶ Are volunteers organized and ready to mobilize?
- ▶ How much money does your association have, and how much is it willing to spend?
- ▶ What modes of communication can you use?
- ▶ Do you need, and can you afford, to hire a professional consultant?
- ▶ What relationships do your members have with local officials?

Map out the political dynamics

- ▶ Know what the political feasibility is of achieving your goals.
- ▶ Do you have the votes and what will it take to get them?

Identify Targets

Taylor your message to the audience you need to persuade, whether:

- ▶ Policy-makers (legislators, council members, commissioners, etc.)
- ▶ Local government staff
- ▶ Planning commissioners
- ▶ Homeowners
- ▶ Voters
- ▶ All residents
- ▶ Potential contributors

Develop a message

This is the most important part of the process! Here are steps to follow:

- ▶ Determine how you want to convey your position to the target audience.
- ▶ Keep your message succinct, simple and easy to understand.
- ▶ Your message should convey the positive points of your position.
- ▶ Stick with your message.

Tactics

How will you convey your message? Consider these scenarios:

- ▶ If you need to lobby the city council on an ordinance proposal, you will need to work with staff, meet with policy-makers, attend hearings, testify, and make sure you have the votes necessary to achieve your objective.
- ▶ You may want to conduct a public education campaign, including letters to the editor of the local newspaper or maybe a town hall forum with elected leaders.
- ▶ Your tactics will depend primarily on what your target audience is and what it is that you are trying to communicate.

Build Coalitions

Allied industry groups can help you communicate your message with added resources.

- ▶ Homeowners
- ▶ Voters
- ▶ Builders
- ▶ Associations
- ▶ Local Businesses
- ▶ Chambers of Commerce
- ▶ Economic Development Councils
- ▶ Port District officials
- ▶ Schools and PTAs
- ▶ Labor Unions
- ▶ Environmentalists

Any or all of the above may share the same position as REALTORS® on housing, economic development, growth management or property-related issues. They can be enlisted in a variety of ways for a common purpose.

Adopt a strategy for achieving your goals

Here are some of your choices, depending on your goals and how you have evaluated all of the other issues mentioned above.

- ▶ Grassroots campaign, mobilizing REALTORS®, property owners and others
- ▶ Public education campaign. This might include target mailings, “earned” media (stories and opinion pieces in local news outlets) or paid media.
- ▶ Coalition building
- ▶ Lobbying city council or staff

Your ultimate strategy will depend on your goals, your target audience and how you intend to reach it. For example, if the city council is considering an ordinance, then you will want to lobby the council.

Your tactics will depend primarily on what your target audience is and what it is that you are trying to communicate.

Use Earned Media

You may find it useful to conduct a public education campaign. The best way to do this

without spending valuable resources is by using earned media:

- ▶ Editorial boards
- ▶ Letters-to-the-editor
- ▶ Opinion editorials

Set up a “Key Contact” program

REALTORS® have established a “key contact” program at the state level that can be adapted to the local level. A “key contact” is a person who is matched to a staff person or elected policy maker in their community. The “key contact” serves as a source of information for policy-makers about issues affecting the real estate industry. The Washington Association has a handbook that can help you in establishing this program.

Initial Contacts

- ▶ A team of local REALTORS® should be identified to ensure that enough committed people are available to begin and maintain the involvement process.
- ▶ Meetings should be held as quickly as possible with planning staff and commission members, as well as with elected officials and their staffs. At these meetings REALTORS® would discuss why they want to be involved, how they plan on participating, what they have to offer the process and the outcomes they hope to achieve.
- ▶ Local examples of successful development, zoning and regulations that illustrate and align with the REALTORS® specific

Getting (and Staying) Involved

Checklist for REALTORS®

- ▶ Visit www.realtor.org/smartgrowth.
- ▶ Attend a city council or county commission meeting.
- ▶ Develop an understanding of local growth issues.
- ▶ Request (or download) NAR resources to use locally.
- ▶ Approach potential coalition partners.
- ▶ Voice your support for smart growth at a public hearing.
- ▶ Write a letter to the editor of the local newspaper.
- ▶ Meet with elected officials.
- ▶ Join an RPAC committee.
- ▶ Support a candidate for office.
- ▶ Volunteer for a community organization.

- ▶ Seek an appointment to a local board.
- ▶ Run for office.

Checklist for REALTOR® Associations

- ▶ Host a smart growth strategic planning session.
- ▶ Educate your membership.
- ▶ Create volunteer resources.
- ▶ Personalize NAR materials for distribution to your membership and community leaders.
- ▶ Spread the smart growth word at the community level.
- ▶ Form relationships with a broad base of partners.
- ▶ Host a smart growth seminar for community leaders.
- ▶ Co-sponsor a planning event.

comprehensive plan update policy recommendations should be documented and provided to planning staff and officials following the initial meetings.

Ongoing Involvement

- ▶ Ongoing contact should be maintained with planners, elected officials and their staffs to advocate for specific policy recommendations and ongoing involvement.
- ▶ Local REALTORS® should be present at every meeting, workshop, discussion or hearing at which the comprehensive plan update will be discussed. Planning commission, city and county councils and commissions, and public meetings held by staff are examples of the types of meetings at which REALTORS® should maintain an ongoing presence. But remember that most decisions are made behind the scenes, so you'll want to be involved there, too.
- ▶ Whenever public comments are allowed, be they written, or oral, REALTORS® and their allies should be mobilized to provide public support for the plan updates you seek.

Staff and officials should be shown that there is widespread, vocal and sustained support for your proposals and decisions to enact them. This is particularly important because officials are much more likely to approve plan provisions if they know they are strongly supported by committed community members.

- ▶ It is critical to provide written and oral testimony for the "record" to ensure you have "standing" (the legal right to be involved and address the issues you presented) should policy decisions be (or need to be) challenged.

Finishing Up

Thank and continue to support officials who approved policies you proposed. Remain involved in the community.

Finally, think about getting REALTORS® elected and appointed to local office. Having REALTORS® appointed to planning commissions or elected to city council provides the best assurance that your voice will be heard on important issues.