



OCTOBER 2008

NEWS & UPDATES

Housing Opportunity Activities at NAR's Annual Conference

- **Habitat For Humanity Volunteer Build Day:** Volunteer to help build with Habitat for Humanity. In addition to building activities, you will participate in the Dedication Ceremony and presentation of the keys to the family. Wednesday, November 5. Location TBA. 8:00 AM – 3:00 PM.
- **Housing Opportunity Program Advisory Board Meeting:** Wednesday, November 5. Location - Peabody Hotel. 12:30 PM – 5:00 PM.
- **Housing Needs Committee:** Friday, November 7. Location - Peabody Hotel. 10:30 AM – 12:30 PM
- **Housing Opportunity Workshop: Selling in Today's Market: Tools to Help Clients Buy Now :** Learn what resources are available to you and your clients through the Housing Opportunity Program's strategic partners and find down-payment and closing cost assistance for your clients. Saturday, November 8. Location TBA. 11:00 AM - 12:30 PM.
- **Home From Work Trainings** - Home From Work Trainers Roundtables, November 8 at 9:00 am- 12:00 pm, Location - Rozen Plaza; Home From Work Participant Session, November 9 at 8:30am -12:00 pm, Location - Convention Center; and Home From Work Train the Trainer, November 9 at 1:00pm-5:00 pm, Location - Rozen Centre.

Help Clients Understand Today's Mortgages

Through collaborative efforts with the Center for Responsible Lending and the Federal Housing Administration, NAR has developed a series of brochures to help prospective buyers make informed decisions about mortgages and help them keep their homes in times of financial hardship. The topics covered in the series include foreclosure prevention, avoiding predatory lending, non-traditional mortgages, traditional mortgages, and FHA insured mortgages.

[Download or buy these brochures.](#)

Ambassadors for Cities Applications Available for Local Associations

EVENTS & TRAININGS

[Home From Work Trainings](#)

- October 7- Chicago, IL
- October 22- Manessee, WI
- October 25 - Norwich, CT

NAR Program Grants Deadlines

Note: Grants are available to State and Local Realtor® Associations (not individual Realtors®)

- October 3 - Housing Opportunity Fund Grant
- October 3 - Smart Growth Action Grant
- October 3 - Diversity Initiative Grant

[Employer-Assisted Housing Conference](#)

October 6 – Chicago

Housing Opportunity Advisory Board

November 5 - Orlando, FL

Home From Work Trainers Roundtables

November 8 - Orlando, FL

Home From Work Participant Session

November 9 - Orlando, FL

Home From Work Train the Trainer

November 9 - Orlando, FL

The Ambassadors for Cities program highlights successes in which local REALTOR® associations and Mayors and cities have worked together to address housing opportunity issues. The program provides models that REALTORS® and Mayors can adopt in other cities. Each year, several highly successful REALTOR® associations and cities receive the Ambassadors for Cities designation and a \$5,000 award to foster their initiatives. The application deadline for 2009 awards is December 31, 2008. Learn more or [download an application](#). Contact Wendy Penn at wpenn@realtors.org.

Employer Assisted Housing Conference: Bring Workers Home

The National Association of REALTORS® in partnership with the Chicago Association of REALTORS®, Metropolitan Planning Council, Illinois Association of REALTORS®, the National Housing Conference, and the US Chamber of Commerce, is holding this one-day conference to educate and raise awareness about employer-assisted housing (EAH). The conference, Employer-Assisted Housing : Bring Workers Home, will be held on Monday, October 6, 2008 at the Intercontinental Hotel in Chicago II. The first national conference dedicated to the topic of EAH, will provide a forum for key stakeholders to connect and explore opportunities to work together to address this critical component of workforce housing. NAR has a limited number of complimentary registrations available to this event. [Register now](#) and use EAH100608 as the Promotion Code.

Home Ownership Participation for Everyone

The HOPE (Home Ownership Participation for Everyone) Awards is a national industry awards program to recognize individuals and organizations who have made outstanding contributions to increasing minority homeownership, revitalizing communities and expanding affordable housing opportunities. The HOPE Awards is sponsored by a partnership of real estate associations. Help further the goal of creating equality in homeownership by submitting an application for the 2009 HOPE Awards or becoming a sponsor of the HOPE Awards Gala. [Read all the details](#).

Pending Home Sales Index and Existing-home Sales

The Pending Home Sales Index based on contracts signed in July, fell 3.2 percent to 86.5 from an upwardly revised reading of 89.4 in June, which had risen 5.8 percent from May. The July index remains 6.8 percent below July 2007 when it stood at 92.8. The PHSI in the Midwest rose 2.8 percent to 81.6 in July but remains 2.4 percent below a year ago. In the South the index was unchanged, holding at 93.7, but is 13.4 percent below July 2007. The index in the Northeast fell 7.5 percent to 73.6 in July and is 13.2 percent below a year ago. In the West, the index dropped 10.6 percent to 90.3 but is 6.5 percent higher than July 2007. Lawrence Yun, NAR chief economist, said home sales continue to edge up and down. "Pending home sales are oscillating month-to-month, with the long-term trend essentially flat," he said. "Overly stringent lending criteria imposed by Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac in the past month no doubt held back contract signings."

Existing-home sales were down in August following a healthy gain in July as tight mortgage credit curtailed activity, NAR says. Sales rose in the Midwest and South but fell in the Northeast and West. Nationally, existing-home sales, including single-family, townhome, and condo, declined 2.2 percent to a seasonally adjusted annual rate of 4.91 million units from an upwardly revised pace of 5.02 million in July. "Sales reflect higher interest rates before the government takeover of Freddie Mac and Fannie Mae," says NAR Chief Economist Lawrence Yun. "The sudden drop in mortgage interest rates over the past couple weeks is improving housing affordability. With higher loan limits and a beefing up of the FHA program, all the mechanisms have been falling into place to increase mortgage availability."

[Read all the latest housing indicators.](#)

LEGISLATIVE NEWS & UPDATES

[NAR Responds to the Current Credit Crisis](#)

NAR supports the overall concept of restoring liquidity and stability to the financial system to prevent a freeze in the flow of credit into the mortgage market. The current crisis is not limited to Wall Street, and our members are contacting us daily to indicate how the situation is impacting them, and their neighbors on Main Street. As this situation continues to evolve, NAR continues to urge Congress and the involved federal agencies to act quickly in order to bring much needed stability to our nation's real estate market and economy. Read [NAR's Statement](#) on Actions to Stabilize the Secondary Mortgage Market.

Federal Government Acts to Protect the Mission of the GSEs and Stabilize the Financial Markets

The Federal Housing Finance Agency (FHFA), the federal regulator who oversaw Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, is now in charge of restoring their financial health. Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac play a crucial role to the U.S. economy and to making fair and affordable mortgage loans available for home owners and home buyers. NAR will work with the Administration and Congress to assure that there will continue to be a robust secondary mortgage market in good times and in bad. [Read more.](#)

- [Government Takes Over Fannie and Freddie](#), By Lawrence Yun, Chief Economist
- [Michelle Singletary's opine on what this will mean for homeowners long-term](#)

Veterans Construction and Extension Act of 2008 Passes House

The House of Representatives passed H.R. 6832, the Veterans Construction and Extension Act of 2008 on September 11, which would benefit veterans across America who are homeowners as well as those who aspire to homeownership. [Read the three provisions](#) in the legislation that are critical to help veterans during the current housing turmoil as well as testimony by Anthony Agurs, a veteran and a REALTOR®.

HUD Announces Revised Downpayment and Maximum Mortgage Requirements

On September 12, 2008, the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) released Mortgagee Letter 2008-23 outlining new downpayment and maximum mortgage requirements as found in the Housing and Economic Recovery Act of 2008 (HERA). Also, the mortgage letter states that closing costs may not be used to help meet the minimum 3.5 percent downpayment requirement. Read the [three new requirements](#) and additional details.

House Passes Energy Legislation with Affordable Housing Provisions

On September 17, 2008, the House passed the Green Resources for Energy Efficiency Act (the GREEN Act, H.R. 6078) as part of the Comprehensive American Energy Security and Consumer Protection Act (H.R. 6889). There are two provisions affecting affordable housing: it provides incentives to financial institutions to finance energy efficient homes affordable to low-income families and it promotes energy efficient and location efficient mortgages; and ensures nonprofit affordable housing developers have the capacity to build green. The legislation would also establish a revolving loan fund for states and tribes to help homeowners and apartment building owners improve energy efficiency, including through renewable energy. This bill builds on lessons learned through the Enterprise Green Communities® initiative, which provides financial incentives and technical assistance to affordable housing developers around the country that build smart, environmentally sustainable homes for families with low incomes.

HOUSING SOLUTIONS SPOTLIGHT

San Diego, CA

Everyday Heroes, created by the San Diego Association of Realtors® Ambassadors Foundation and the San Diego Police Officer's Association, helps San Diego police officers become homeowners. The goal of the [Everyday Heroes](#) program is to provide qualifying police officers with funds to buy down their mortgage interest rate, potentially saving them hundreds of dollars on their monthly mortgage. This program was designated an Ambassador City by the National Association of Realtors® and the U.S. Conference of Mayors .

HOUSING INITIATIVE IN THE NEWS

Five Cities Bringing New Life to Abandoned Sites

In today's dismal market, cities are struggling to bring new life to abandoned, often foreclosed, structures that have cast dark shadows on neighborhoods. Cities are struggling under the burden of lost revenue, blight, and crime, especially as foreclosures add an unprecedented number of vacant properties to the community. But some governments are working with the real estate community to turn around abandoned sites—and offering incentives to entice developers to enter these troubled and neglected neighborhoods. [Read more on this incentive.](#)

If you would like more information about the Housing Opportunity Program please contact us at housingopportunity@realtors.org.

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF REALTORS®

Housing Opportunities Program

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