

Ambitious Outreach Programs Yield a More Representative Board

Summary

Diversity is at the heart of the Chicago Association of REALTORS® and its 17,000 member base. Learning directly from those members and incorporating diversity into its core mission have helped C.A.R. achieve diverse representation among its leadership as well. The message of the Association's diversity has been the core of its satellite "Member Outreach" meetings in different parts of the city, providing forums for members to share their views and bolstering volunteer recruitment for C.A.R. committees.

Personal contact with potential leaders who have been recommended by their peers has also contributed to a significant rise in the number of brokers seeking to serve on the Association's board of directors. C.A.R.'s varied training program and its close cooperation with NAR provide additional incentives and preparation for emerging leaders.

In addition, aggressive efforts to create more formal relationships with other associations have led to greater responsiveness to a wide variety of community concerns and have positioned REALTORS® to capture Chicago's growing international market. Because of these concerted efforts and C.A.R.'s Board of Directors buy in, the Association's Cultural Diversity Committee is deeply involved in developing policy for the Association as a whole.



System Is Based on Geography

The Chicago Association of REALTORS® (C.A.R.) began working to diversify its leadership more than 10 years ago, earlier than most associations. "We looked at trends in the Chicago marketplace and saw that a lot of the markets were fueled by immigration and first-time buyers, and a lot of those new immigrants were becoming REALTORS®," says John Kmiecik, former President of C.A.R.. "We wanted to get a true representation of those folks among the association leadership."

The association divided up the city using the same boundaries as in the Chicago Public School system. Each member of the Board was charged with representing a particular region, and C.A.R. held satellite meetings within each of these regions, asking attendees to volunteer for committee work.

These satellite "Member Outreach" meetings continue to this day. "Some of the officers and I go out to brokers and members on the north side, the south side, the west side,

the northwest side, and the southwest side of the city,” says Nancy Suvarnamani, C.A.R.’s former President. “We listen to what our members want us to do to help them—that’s a big part of our diversity efforts.”

The Personal Tap on the Shoulder

More directly, the Association asked brokers and members in each of these regions to recommend their peers, who were then contacted personally by members of the Board. “You have to ask people,” says Kmiecik. “It’s nice to put a general call out; it’s nice to put a notice in a magazine saying, ‘We need you as leaders.’ But unless you tap somebody on the shoulder, give them a little stroking, and say, ‘We think you are a good person and here’s why we’d like you to get involved; here’s the kind of difference we think you can make,’ most people won’t come forward.”

And the approach had great success. “Every year at C.A.R., we have one new officer coming in and perhaps four to six new directors being appointed [to a 20-member Board], because they’re staggered terms,” says Kmiecik. “When you have 45 to 50 people looking to fill five or six vacancies, that’s a pretty successful program.”

Partnerships Raise Awareness

C.A.R. made arrangements to collaborate with local chapters of such organizations as the National Association of Real Estate Brokers (NAREB), the National Association of Hispanic Real Estate Professionals (NAHREP), and the Asian American Real Estate Association (AAREA). C.A.R. invites representatives of those groups to its Board meetings to make presentations and help build awareness of the issues facing different cultural groups.

These relationships are part of how C.A.R. helps its members conduct more international business. “We want Chicago to be like Florida or New York: on the map when people and businesses are deciding where to go in this country,” says Suvarnamani. “REALTORS® in our association speak 55 languages, so people can come from Mexico, European countries, Thailand—anywhere in the world—and buy property. We have an International Committee, which helps our members with international real estate law, and our partnerships with groups, like AAREA, help educate our members on how to work with people from other countries.”

Cooperation with these organizations also helps C.A.R. broaden its recruitment pool. C.A.R. actually works with local chapters in its recruitment process. C.A.R. works alongside the ethnic association chapters to recruit real estate professionals, who then have dual memberships.

Making Diversity a Permanent Institution

C.A.R. converted its Fair Housing Committee to a Cultural Diversity Committee, making diversity part of the association’s permanent, core mission. Under the chairmanship of

Alex Chaparro, for the first time the Committee wrote a business plan, describing goals, the Committee's ideal makeup, and programming. As a result of this more structured approach, says Chaparro, where "we used to have 10 to 20 people at an event, now up to 150 attend, because we provide serious information that affects the way people do business." In part, that's because the Cultural Diversity Committee is deeply involved in developing policy for the whole Association.

A Three-Step Program for Diversity

In 2007, Chaparro became C.A.R.'s President, making him the first Latino President in the Association's 124-year history. He describes a three-step process for maintaining diverse members' active interest in becoming association leaders. "First, the way to engage people is to look at local and state legislation affecting housing or a given minority group," he says. "People become very passionate about these issues. When they see that their organization represents them and protects their interests, it invites them to get involved."

Second, he says, an organization needs to explain to the people it recruits that they need to develop certain skills to advance—and it needs to provide plenty of opportunities to develop and hone those skills. "People need to be mentored about what the process is, what commitment you need to have, what skills need to be developed," says Chaparro. "You need to learn about public speaking, you need practice at handling meetings—those things need to be taught, and someone needs to teach you." To provide that education C.A.R. offers both leadership retreats and on-the-job training; its staff works with Board members and committee leaders to keep them informed and prepared.

Third, he says, local organizations should follow the lead of the national association. "NAR has done phenomenal things as far as providing information on how to strengthen your Cultural Diversity or Equal Opportunity Committee," he says. "Local associations have to work with the national association to keep people's awareness alive and well, to keep communication flowing from the national to the state and local level."

When he visits members, Chaparro tells them that not only will they benefit from being involved in association leadership—by meeting a wide variety of people and learning about new trends in the industry—it is to a certain extent their duty. "We have a phenomenal industry that allows us unlimited opportunity," he says. "With that we have a responsibility to take care of our organization, to advance our profession for everyone."

"Get involved early," advises Suvarnamani. "Pay your dues. Be patient and be persistent."

To learn more, contact Ginger Downs, Chief Executive Officer, 312-214-5516, or gdowns@chicagorealtor.com.

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Knowing Your Membership Helps to Bring Down Barriers

Summary

When the Denver Board of REALTORS® (DBR) launched its Diversity Task Force to boost minority leadership participation, it realized it lacked basic information with which to shape a more inclusive approach. In partnership with NAR, the Association enlisted a research firm to survey its members and gain a better understanding of their markets and their perceptions of the Association. With supporting insights from member focus groups, DBR applied the findings to create a diversity action plan that linked leadership development with stronger community outreach and cooperation with other real estate associations. Now, six years later, minority representation in DBR's membership and elected leadership is on the rise, and new professional affiliations and direct community engagement have enhanced REALTORS®' standing in Denver's diverse neighborhoods.

Diversity Task Force Considers New Practices

Increasingly diverse markets are emerging across the United States, and leaders at the Denver Board of REALTORS® (DBR) know that Colorado is no exception. Between the 1990 and 2000 census the state saw a 73 percent increase in the number of Hispanic residents, a 67 percent increase in its Asian population, and a 24 percent increase among African Americans—all outstripping the increase in Colorado's white, non-Hispanic population. Meanwhile, the DBR membership retained essentially the same racial and ethnic composition it had a decade earlier. The leadership grew concerned. It established a Diversity Task Force to respond to Colorado's changing marketplace, which, according to the Selig Center for Economic Growth at the University of Georgia, ranks among the top 10 states for percentage increase in minority buying power and has a rate of Hispanic home ownership higher than the national average.

It was time for the oldest trade association in Colorado to develop new, more responsive business practices. The question was how.

Research Partnership with NAR Gathers Essential Information

DBR's Diversity Task Force (since renamed the Outreach Task Force) was originally led by Elisa Guida, a young, dynamic attorney from California. The task force discussed several approaches, including cultural awareness courses, leadership training, minority staff recruitment, and geographic representation for DBR elections.



When Barbara Lambert took the helm as CEO in 2001, she realized that DBR lacked the basic membership information needed to shape an effective approach to attaining diversity within the association. Lambert enlisted the active involvement and financial support of the NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF REALTORS® (NAR) to conduct a membership study to gain a better understanding of:

- The demographic makeup of DBR's membership
- Members' attitudes toward the association and its services
- The impact of demographic changes in the market on members' business practices

NAR has supported research based efforts to address diversity and inclusion issues at local associations since 1996. By 2002, when it established the partnership with DBR, NAR had already been involved in similar membership research activities in eight other major metropolitan areas. These efforts also served as a proving ground for new program ideas to increase minority representation in the profession and in professional leadership.

Membership Survey, Focus Groups Yield Insights into Perceived Bias

"The board was totally committed to this," Lambert says of the membership study. Under the leadership of the Diversity Task Force, DBR and NAR worked with a consultant to develop a nine-month work plan that included a research component and a process for developing recommendations based on the results. DBR and NAR each contributed about \$13,000 and significant staff resources to the effort.

In spring 2002, the research firm conducted a telephone interview survey among DBR members. In all, 200 REALTORS® selected at random from the DBR membership roster (about 2,500 members at the time) completed the 40-question survey, which took on average about 14 minutes to complete. Of the respondents, about 84 percent were nonminority and 16 percent of minority background.

Survey responses were similar across the groups on many questions—time and "other priorities" were consistently mentioned as the main obstacles to becoming involved with DBR. But some important differences emerged. Full-time, nonminority, male REALTORS® were more likely than other members to be involved in DBR and interested in serving on the board or in an elected office. Minority respondents were more likely to respond that minorities were underrepresented in the leadership of DBR. Minority and female REALTORS® expressed greater interest in leadership development programs.

The telephone survey also asked REALTORS® what they were doing to adapt to the emerging market. Most replied "nothing." At about the same time a U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development study found that African American and Hispanic rent-

ers and homebuyers faced discrimination rates of 15 to 20 percent in the Denver area. In fall 2002 the consultant to DBR and NAR conducted three focus groups designed to obtain more in-depth feedback: one group of three African American REALTORS®, another of three Hispanic REALTORS®, and the third six non-minority REALTORS®.

All minority REALTORS® in the focus groups spoke about perceived barriers to participation. These included an unwelcoming environment and bias against solo and smaller offices where they are more likely to work; meetings and classes held at a location less convenient to them; and difficulties getting elected to leadership positions within DBR.

Diversity Action Plan Focuses on Outreach, Collaboration

Based on the survey and focus group findings, the research team made a number of recommendations. DBR used the findings and recommendations to create an action plan that focused on improving membership outreach, providing leadership training, and cementing partnerships with minority REALTORS® organizations through joint programs and leadership liaisons.

Immediate Past President Derek Camunez was on the board during the survey and the creation of the action plan. "Embracing diversity really was fairly painless," Camunez says. "We went through a period of education, but there was no real opposition." He credits the relative ease of the action plan's acceptance to numerous DBR leaders and members who understood that this was the "right thing to do" in order to both create a positive perception among the public and improve members' business opportunities.

The board launched its diversity initiative through a publicity campaign, with announcements to other associations, communications to DBR members, and letters to managing brokers of real estate agencies. DBR also recognized that diversity in leadership runs parallel to the broader goal of effectively serving diverse communities. Through greater and direct involvement to help strengthen minority neighborhoods, the association gains a more complete picture of those communities, as well as a deeper understanding of the issues that frequently arise in the everyday business of many minority REALTORS®.

The result has been an array of community outreach and service projects, including partnerships with public schools offering after-school consumer education classes for at-risk students with non-English-speaking parents; support of a Habitat for Humanity home; involvement in affordable housing initiatives; and collection of school supplies for needy children. DBR has also offered a series of well-attended classes to help REALTORS® attain basic Spanish language skills.

As part of the action plan, DBR leadership encourages collaboration with other real estate associations, as all parties benefit from the increased credibility and exposure gained through more cohesive professional advocacy and community outreach efforts.

Luncheons and receptions for the members and boards of directors of associations with which DBR has liaisons are, Camunez says, “basically mixers where we can all get to know each other better. From a business perspective, it has been very beneficial to learn about other markets and their needs.”

Lambert notes that DBR recently changed its bylaws to give voting privileges to representatives of the National Association of Real Estate Brokers (Realtists) and the Colorado Association of Hispanic Real Estate Professionals who serve on DBR’s board. Soon, DBR expects to establish a liaison with an Asian real estate association.

Continuing Feedback Is Vital for Greater Inclusion and True Effectiveness

In 2001 only one member of DBR’s board of directors had a minority background. Now, of the 14 elected directors, six are Hispanic or African American. DBR membership has been growing by about 2 percent each year since 2002, and minority membership is on the rise. DBR enjoys greater involvement from African American and Hispanic members, more of whom are expressing interest in being part of the leadership structure.

“We’ve been successful in creating an environment that fosters inclusion,” Camunez says. Now the chair of Colorado’s Equal Opportunities Committee, Camunez is convinced that attention to diversity has made DBR a more effective organization. “Strengthening the public’s perception of REALTORS® is key. We are in a period of flux right now with all the new technologies, and it’s important to show the public the professionalism and value that REALTORS® bring.”

While the Denver Board of REALTORS® has achieved greater diversity among its leaders and membership in recent years, Camunez and Lambert agree that DBR faces an ongoing challenge. The next phase of DBR’s action plan will include feedback from affiliated real estate associations. “Our goal was not just outreach and collaboration,” Lambert says, “but to continue to analyze how effective these actions have been.”

To learn more, contact Barbara Lambert, Chief Executive Officer, 303-300-8485, or blambert@denverboardofrealtors.com

Academy Fosters New Way of Looking for Leaders

Summary

Rapidly changing demographics in communities throughout Maryland are reshaping the state's real estate markets and the membership base of local REALTOR® associations. As part of its commitment to identifying and cultivating leaders from diverse communities statewide, the Maryland Association of REALTORS® (MAR) established the MAR Leadership Academy, which offers a seven-month training course in such topics as leadership, team building, economics, and diversity training. Classes of up to 20 REALTORS® meet one day per month, with participants selected for broad diversity—in age, professional experience, race and ethnicity, gender, and geography. The emphasis is on personal growth, overcoming barriers, and learning from one another, with informal bonding and mentoring contributing much to the Academy's success and the forging of new networks. Recruitment was initially through word of mouth; now, local REALTOR® boards actively promote the Academy to their members and often absorb the cost of participation. As the list of applicants grows, MAR and local associations can also measure the success of outreach efforts in the growing diversity of Maryland REALTORS® and a strong record of electing qualified minority leaders at the local and state levels.



Are You Looking?

According to Maryland Association of REALTORS® (MAR) Past President JoAnne Poole, diversity in leadership begins with a willingness to see what is really going on in the marketplace. "As you travel around," she says, "you hear, 'We don't have a diverse market,' or 'We don't have problems with diversity in our leadership and membership.'" Her response: "Sure you do. Everybody does. Are you looking? A huge piece of the puzzle is that you have to look."

Poole and other MAR leaders do not have to look far to see how the changing demographics in Maryland's communities are affecting its real estate markets. In Howard County, located between Baltimore and Washington, D.C., the percentage of foreign-born residents, including from Asia, Latin America, the Middle East, and Africa, has risen from 6 percent to more than 11 percent of the county's population in just a decade.

The rapidly changing demographics in Howard County and many other Maryland communities created new challenges in the housing market and for state and local associations. The Howard County Association of REALTORS® (HCAR) Board of Directors

recognized that the first two years are crucial in a REALTOR®'s career and made it a priority to train new members. "We did actual outreach to our members to find out how to make them feel comfortable," says HCAR Executive Vice President Ramon Estrada, "and to make sure that those already serving on committees felt welcomed to move up into leadership positions."

Committed to Diversity from the Start

MAR also made a commitment to identifying and cultivating leaders from diverse communities statewide when it established the MAR Leadership Academy. Among the goals of the Academy are to broaden the pool of individuals groomed for leadership positions in their local associations and to develop and train individuals who are not already in the pipeline.

The Academy offers a seven-month leadership training course to a class of 20 or fewer REALTORS® carefully selected for diversity in age, experience, gender, geography, and race and ethnicity. Among the personal qualities the Academy looks for in applicants are:

- Motivation
- Willingness to get involved
- Openness to new ideas

The class meets one day per month, and topics include leadership, team building, visioning, economics, and diversity training. There are no quizzes or exams, nor does the program provide continuing education credits or a specific credential. Program leaders insist that the program is about personal growth—not adding initials to one's résumé. In 2007 the Academy graduated its seventh class of leaders, and interest and support for the program have grown each year.

"We made sure that the planning committee itself was diverse," says Mary Antoun, CEO of MAR. "Like all communities, diverse communities have their own network. When you make an effort to reach out and include people—and they believe in it, are active in it, and can spread the work among those they know—this is worthwhile."

Participating in the Leadership Academy builds confidence as well as the skills to lead. According to Poole, it also helps overcome barriers. "In some cases," she says, "people have been made to feel that it's okay to work with buyers and sellers but that it's not okay to be in a position of leading people in an organization."

The bonding and informal mentoring that occur among classmates are additional keys to the Academy's success. In a typical class, about a quarter have been licensed fewer than five years, while a similar percent have been in the business between 15 and 20 years. Classmates quickly appreciate how much they can learn from one another.

A Strategic Approach Ensures Recruitment Success

Initially, word of mouth spread the news about the Leadership Academy among existing networks. Favorable comments from the first graduating class helped attract people to the second class. Local boards, as well, promote the Academy to their members enthusiastically. "Most of the interest in attending the Leadership Academy comes through our local associations," Antoun says, "and they have done a good job of reaching out to minority groups."

Many local boards not only promote the Academy but also back up their commitment with financial support. The cost per individual to attend the Leadership Academy (\$650 in 2006) is often absorbed by local associations (the state association subsidizes some programmatic costs), and these subsidies have helped the Academy recruit a diverse class.

"I think that local associations should take a closer look at *all* of their minority populations and *all* of their members," says Poole, a founder of the Academy. "Don't wait to see the credentials. Seek people out. Let them know about the opportunities that exist. Many people are leaders in other venues and bring with them leadership skills from their experiences that you may not be aware of."

Vision Becomes Reality

MAR measures the success of its diversity efforts by the growing diversity in its membership, the long list of applicants to the Leadership Academy, and the Association's track of record of electing qualified minority leaders at the local and now state levels. When Poole became the first minority person elected state president, she said, "For Maryland, the time was right, the community was ready, and our leadership was ready."

Current MAR President Ilene Kessler, who chaired the Committee that developed the curriculum, says, "We must be passionate about diversity. We are all learning, and we must keep diversity in our minds, especially those of us in leadership positions."

To learn more, contact Mary Antoun, Chief Executive Officer, 800-638-5425, or mary.antoun@mdrealtor.org

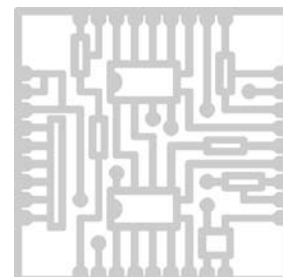
Professionalism and Diversity: Keys to Better Business

Summary

The Santa Clara County Association of REALTORS® (SCCAOR) serves an area that has seen a dramatic growth in the number of real estate agents in recent years, including many for whom English is a second language. The Association has responded with an innovative partnering and mentoring program, allowing it to seize the opportunity to diversify its leadership and more widely entrench the professional ethics and standards of REALTORS®.

For four years SCCAOR has provided seed money and organizational expertise to help establish or support associations of local minority real estate professionals, whose leaders operate closely with SCCAOR. With a grant from NAR, SCCAOR also encourages members of affiliate associations to enroll in train-the-trainer programs, further fostering both professional ethics and leadership recruitment.

With a revitalized Equal Opportunities Committee charged with making SCCAOR's board more reflective of its membership, the Association launched a "one-on-one" campaign—much of it carried out through scheduled informal discussions—to educate new members, identify potential leaders, and ensure that all layers of leadership endorse and communicate a clear and consistent message about the benefits and responsibilities of serving the profession.



Populating Silicon Valley with Affiliates

Even in the age of the Internet, home buyers still need to appreciate the value added by a real estate professional—in particular, a REALTOR® with professional standards and ethics. This is a firmly held belief of Edwin P. Resuello, broker-owner of Silicon Valley Homes and Past President of the Santa Clara County Association of REALTORS® (SCCAOR, pronounced "score").

In fact, Resuello's interest in upholding professional standards was what drew him into a leadership position in SCCAOR, where he found still other opportunities to be of service. Resuello is adamant that real estate professionals of all backgrounds do best when they support an organized trade association, and to this end he has helped SCCAOR affiliates proliferate throughout Silicon Valley.

SCCAOR has over 10,000 members and continues to grow rapidly. In 2005 about 200 new members joined SCCAOR each month. There has been an influx of people from the high-tech industry who have switched over to real estate; also people who

think real estate can be a part-time job, and many people for whom English is a second language. This last group provides SCCAOR with a great opportunity to find potential leaders and diversify leadership in the association.

Cross-Pollination Strengthens SCCAOR, Cultivates Diverse Leadership

Nearly everyone can benefit from mentoring, in which well-established, successful professionals share their experiences and advice with those newer to the field. SCCAOR's innovative approach to mentoring, however, forms a web of relationships that will foster a demographically balanced leadership in its association. Since 2003 SCCAOR has provided seed money and organizational expertise to help establish or support a variety of associations for real estate professionals with minority background.¹

Why foster organizations that appear to be competing with SCCAOR for membership? Resuello explains it this way: "I am passionate about professional standards and about organized real estate. The two go hand in hand. These associations help foster professional ethics, provide role models for each of the demographics represented in our expanding membership, and demonstrate how to earn a great living and abide by the ethical standards that the public deserves. What's good for our clients is basically what keeps us in business."

Leaders of the new associations operate closely with SCCAOR. One or two leaders from the associations are part of SCCAOR's Equal Opportunities Committee (EOC). The chairs of all SCCAOR committees, including EOC, meet monthly.² The presidents of all the associations, including SCCAOR, hold a Roundtable meeting twice yearly.³ This cross-pollination helps spread the word about professional standards and also cultivates new leadership for positions of greater and greater responsibility.

With the help of a grant from the NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF REALTORS®, SCCAOR encourages members of the new associations to go through "train-the-trainer" programs for three courses: At Home with Diversity; Arbitration; and Contracts. This reaps a double benefit, as the new trainers increase their knowledge in these areas and as others who take courses from the new trainers see that they are taking leadership roles in SCCAOR.

Coffee Dates and Buy-In Heighten Effectiveness

Mentoring takes time and attention. In 2003 SCCAOR's nineteen-member board contained only two REALTORS® with minority background—one Hispanic and one Filipino-American (Resuello). But English was a second language for about 40 percent of SCCAOR's incoming members. Association President Michael Donohoe, Resuello, and others set about changing the leadership of the association to reflect the demographics of its newer members. Resuello headed up a revitalized Equal Opportunities Committee and began his "one-on-one" campaign to educate new members and find potential leaders. It's a relatively straightforward strategy that could work in other REALTOR® associations:

1. Find out “who is out there.” Real estate is about knowing what’s new, who’s doing what, and how well they’re doing. Apply this to identifying potential leaders. See which of the new members is outspoken or eager to get involved, successful in his or her own business.

2. Focus on individuals. Resuello finds that his most productive method is the one-on-one “coffee date”—a half hour’s informal discussion away from the office over a protein shake—and he arranged coffee dates about once every week or so. An important criterion for him is whether the person he’s considering for a leadership position is “passionate for organization.” Running a 10,000-member association such as SCCAOR is no small feat.

3. Get “buy-in.” Develop a message that is clear and that has the support of the association’s leaders. Then make sure that all levels of leadership “buy in” to the goals set forth in the association’s strategic plan. The association’s tasks and goals for each year should blend well with the latest strategic plan.

4. Speak with one voice. Have all layers of the leadership—board members, committee chairs, subcommittee chairs, and task force leaders—stay “on message.” Be clear about the responsibilities and benefits of taking an active role in running the association.

What’s in It for Me?

Mentoring is apt to be most effective when it relates to “the bottom line.” For a busy real estate professional trying to earn a living and maintain a family life, what are the benefits of volunteering for association work? “That’s one of the two questions I hear all the time,” Resuello says. His answer makes perfect business sense. When you are around like-minded, organization-oriented volunteers with a variety of backgrounds and areas of expertise, you learn a lot. It could be about how to run your business more efficiently, how to manage property, how to use technology, or how to manage your finances. Learning translates into earning.

And the second question he often hears? “How can I get to six figures this year?” Resuello sets out three actions. Tip One: Find a mentor among the top three agents in your company and do what he or she says without question. Tip Two: Get involved in an association committee. Tip Three: Don’t stop learning about the real estate business. “These activities pay off a hundred fold. I’m tracking two people this year to see how well they do.”

To learn more, contact Edwin Resuello, Past President, 408-223-3388, or edwin@resuello.com. Santa Clara County Association of REALTORS®, 408-445-8500.

Santa Clara County Association of REALTORS®

¹The Santa Clara County Association of REALTORS® provided \$1,500 to \$2,500 in seed money to establish several organizations, including:

- FAREPA - Filipino American Real Estate Professional Association
- HARA - Hispanic Association of REALTORS® and Affiliates
- COIAR - Council of Indo-American REALTORS®
- VAREPA - Vietnamese American Real Estate Professional Association

SCCAOR also sponsors events offered by the following associations:

- AREAA - Asian Real Estate Association of America
- NAHREP - National Association of Hispanic Real Estate Professionals
- WCR - Women's Council of REALTORS®
- CREA - Chinese Real Estate Association

Because start-up associations need more than seed money, SCCAOR has also:

- provided sample bylaws
- publicized membership drives
- helped with website templates and maintenance instructions
- provided education on Parliamentary Procedures & Roberts Rules of Order for conducting meetings
- set up seminars for leadership training
- introduced the association's executive officers to key media contacts and politicians
- taught budgeting procedures and forecasting.

²Outreach and liaison reports fill much of the agenda for the monthly meetings of SCCAOR's Equal Opportunities Committee under the direction of 2006 chair, Marica Saliba. Committee members focus on the activities of the nine associations SCCAOR has founded or supported, including the Asian Real Estate Association of America (AREAA), in which Saliba is a member. Often two or more associations will co-sponsor an event, such as a housing fair or luncheon. Members keep the committee apprised of the number of minority association members who have also joined SCCAOR.

³The Minority Association Roundtable is a more formal way for SCCAOR leadership to meet with the presidents of these associations. Topics listed on a recent agenda include insurance, membership, political activities, professional standards, reporting requirements, and SCCAOR support. The roundtable also focuses on areas of collaboration and concern.

State Study Yields Outreach, Leadership Courses at the Local Level

Summary

According to recent census estimates, Texas is a “majority minority” state. More than half of its residents are African American, Asian, or Hispanic, or come from other non-European backgrounds. By 2010 these minority residents are likely to comprise the majority of first-time homebuyers; in 2005 first-time homebuyers bought 42 percent of homes purchased in Texas. Despite a large and growing real estate market among this “majority minority” population, few Hispanic and other minority REALTORS® had risen to leadership positions within the 80,000-member Texas Association of REALTORS® (TAR). Association CEO Benny McMahan and other TAR leaders wanted to know why.

So they conducted a study involving TAR leaders and African American, Asian, and Hispanic REALTORS®. The study, which received support from the NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF REALTORS®, recommended a variety of actions to increase diversity in TAR’s leadership. As a result, TAR has developed a leadership course for local associations and engages in outreach activities to Hispanic communities.

Research Helps to Define Issues and Clarify Perceptions

Some TAR leaders thought that the low level of minority participation in leadership at the state level had little to do with TAR’s practices, since TAR’s offices are usually filled by REALTORS® who developed leadership skills at the local level. Others questioned whether minority members were on a level playing field with colleagues.

“I hadn’t experienced barriers at TAR,” said Charles McMillan, an African American who served as TAR’s President in 1998 and became President-Elect at the national level in 2008. “We needed to know whether that was true for all potential leaders. Benny did the courageous thing and conducted a study.”

With support from the NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF REALTORS® (NAR), TAR commissioned Erlich Transcultural Consultants to conduct a research project in 2002. The objectives were to:

- Identify issues, motivations, and barriers concerning Hispanic and other minority involvement in TAR

- Assess what NAR and TAR could do to attract more minorities to take on leadership responsibilities
- Reveal possible candidates for movement into leadership positions.

Research involved individual interviews with four minority REALTORS®, including McMillan, and extensive discussions with two focus groups—one consisting of Hispanic REALTORS®, the other of TAR leaders.

Interviews, Focus Groups Identify Areas Needing Improvement

Feedback from the interviews and focus groups found unanimous agreement on the need to increase diversity in TAR's leadership. Many thought that the current lack of minority leaders reflected a lack of minority members in TAR. Most of the REALTORS® surveyed thought that a personal invitation from an established leader or active member was important—a first step in the mentoring process vital to identifying and encouraging new leaders.

Respondents were divided as to whether there was a “good old boys” mentality within TAR leadership. Those who thought that there was not such a club pointed to the leadership roles played by current minority REALTORS® such as McMillan. The majority expressed opinions that newer and minority REALTORS® are focused on making ends meet and don't have time for, or interest in, leadership activities in the association. Other scenarios emerged, in which minority REALTORS® who had become involved in leadership activities in TAR felt “turned off” because of the type of assignments they received, or “burned-out” due to initial over-involvement.

Study Recommends Recruitment and Development Strategies

Erlch Transcultural Consultants concluded that TAR's leaders would benefit from training in cultural diversity and the entire organization needed a range of activities to bring more minorities into the profession and encourage minority REALTORS® to take on leadership roles at the state and local levels. The research team suggested that TAR promote careers in real estate at job fairs, in schools, and in advertising campaigns in diverse markets. Recruitment activities should include a strong statement of TAR's commitment to increasing minority membership and promotion of qualified minority leaders. Further, TAR should highlight and promote minority REALTORS® who are current or past leaders at the state and local level.

Noting that minority REALTORS® said they attached particular value to personal interactions, researchers proposed that TAR leaders identify and mentor those with potential leadership qualities. The mentoring process should incorporate on-going dialogue to prevent “burn-out” among new leaders, they said. They recommended developing a guide to help TAR leaders motivate leadership candidates, as well as marketing materials that describe the responsibilities of becoming a leader and the personal and professional benefits of leadership.

Researchers recommended that TAR establish a “personal development” plan for potential leaders with assignments these leaders would enjoy and find meaningful. Scholarships, loan programs, and new models for compensation could be considered as ways to help relieve economic burdens on beginning REALTORS®, particularly members of minority groups.

Leadership Training Benefits Diverse REALTORS®, Communities

In response to the 2002 study, TAR developed a leadership course which made its debut in 2005 and is offered at REALTOR® associations across Texas. Local associations encourage minority members to attend, but the course is open to all REALTORS®.

“Because TAR draws its leaders from the local associations, we recognized the need to improve the situation at that level,” McMahan says. “Historically broker/owners rose to the top of REALTOR® associations because they had the entrepreneurial skills gained in running a business. Now more and more of TAR’s members are sales people who want to rise in the association, but don’t have those business skills. The leadership course teaches them what they need.”

During his 17 years as CEO of the association, McMahan has seen a shift in emphasis from concerns exclusive to the real estate community, such as licensing requirements, to broader and more consumer-oriented areas of public policy, such as property taxes. TAR’s leadership course fits with this shift because it imparts skills that can be applied to the betterment of communities of all cultural backgrounds. “Not everyone will wind up being president of their REALTOR® associations,” he says, “but they might be president of a civic organization or the PTA. That’s a service to our community as well.”

Outreach Generates Broader Hispanic Participation in TAR

The association has also increased outreach to the Hispanic community. TAR has forged stronger ties with the National Association of Hispanic Real Estate Professionals (NAHREP), helping to establish some chapters in the state and supporting other chapters with funding, instructors, and materials. Working with NAHREP, the Association offers real estate seminars and homebuyer fairs and has translated real estate documents into Spanish.

Sharing activities at the professional level encourages closer relationships at a personal level. McMahan has noticed that more NAHREP members and leaders are increasingly comfortable working within the TAR framework. “About 90 percent of NAHREP members are also members of TAR. Over the past few years, Hispanic attendance at TAR meetings has quadrupled.”

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