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For REALTOR® Associations

CONDUCTING HOUSING SYMPOSIUMS / SUMMITS

BACKGROUND

A Housing Summit is a meeting, typically no more than a day in length, organized to address a particular issue or situation. They may focus on the lack of locally affordable housing, or the homeless or potentially homeless. They may address financing options, local and federal assistance programs, or workforce housing issues. Summits sometimes serve as platforms for the release of important research findings and proposed solutions to address issues revealed by the research. Summits, unlike Housing Fairs, look to solve particular problems and frequently conclude with a report, a plan for follow-up, and “action items” assigned to individuals or organizations. Housing Summit attendees often include elected or other governmental officials with the authority to implement the specifics of the agreed-upon plan, along with industry leaders.

A Housing Symposium is a meeting addressed by speakers or panels who explain and/or debate matters relating to some aspect of community planning or housing. Typically they are explorations meant to present differing views on pre-set topics like “What is the best way to make more affordable housing available in our community?” Symposia can be open to the public or closed to all but an invited group.

Most people want to help their communities, to be asked for their involvement. Symposia or summits are a good way to tap those inclinations and advance affordable housing in your area. Invite individuals who have the interest and the resources to contribute meaningfully to your event.

SUGGESTIONS

- State a well-defined goal for the session. What is it that you hope to accomplish by the day’s end? It could be as basic as increasing the foundational knowledge of public officials on housing issues, which will help lay the ground for future lobbying.
- Once you have established your goal, create a focused agenda to make the best use of the time of those who have agreed to participate.
- If you’re inviting elected officials, the best time to hold the event is at the beginning of an election year.
- Housing is an important issue so interest is likely to be high, but scheduling can be difficult so begin planning and announce your date months in advance.

CONDUCTING HOUSING SYMPOSIUMS / SUMMITS *(continued)*

- Limit the event to one day and provide lunch and refreshments so you can keep participants as long as possible.
- It is better to have more panels with fewer participants so everyone has a chance to contribute.
- Give participants something they can share with their own membership, even if it's just a well-crafted document summarizing the meeting and the action items that came out of it.
- Follow up with participants, both individually and collectively, and do so more than once to continue the dialogue. Use email, message boards, or Facebook to further that communication. The follow up can include a request for action (like a letter or petition), sending out new statistics, announcing upcoming events, etc.

LEARN MORE

2009 Governor's Housing Summit

This site lists speakers and organizations that presented at the Summit, as well as links to many of the presentations, in PDF format.

Tennessee Housing Development Agency
www.thda.org/govsummit/cover.html

UP CLOSE

CENTRAL INDIANA HOUSING SUMMIT

In 2009, the Metropolitan Indianapolis Board of REALTORS® conducted its eighth annual housing summit. Focusing on three key themes (mass transit, green technology and sustainability, and government consolidation) the summit sought to bring “community stakeholders and industry opinion leaders together for an engaging look at the hottest issues facing our housing market.” Architects, local government officials, and some 500 REALTORS® attended the four-hour long summit.

Learn more at:
www.housingsummit.com

Affordable Housing Summit

Information on this 2005 Summit is unusually detailed, including presentations, reports, summaries, and a listing of next steps.

Broward Housing Partnership
www.browardhousingpartnership.org/index.php?submenu=Initiatives&src=gendocs&link=AffordableHousingSummit

Hudson Valley Housing Summit

A July 2009 news article describes the Summit and its focus on foreclosure. This was the 3rd *Patterns for Progress Housing the Hudson Valley* conference.

New York Division of Housing and Community Renewal
newyork.realestaterama.com/2009/07/27/hudson-valley-housing-summit-focuses-on-foreclosure-ID0769.html