



Marin Association of REALTORS® Housing Turnover Index Proves Worthy of NAR Game Changer Grant

The lobbying strategy of the Marin Association of REALTORS® (MAR) reflects Benjamin Franklin's advice that "an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure." Four years ago, MAR initiated a proactive lobbying campaign to advocate fair and equitable alternatives to onerous point-of-sale retrofit mandates. The focus of the campaign was the launch of a computer program that graphically shows how many decades it takes for local housing inventories to completely change hands. The site is www.MarinHousingTurnoverIndex.com

Visual Impact

The Index demonstrates that it takes as much as 70 years for local housing stock to switch ownership. "That stark number reinforces MAR's message that policy mandates with point-of-sale retrofit triggers simply take too long to work", says Edward Segal, Chief Executive Officer and Governmental Affairs Director of the 1,400-member organization.

"The housing turnover index shows there is urgent need for lawmakers to implement speedier, more effective solutions to address sewer lateral and other environmental-related issues," he says. "Every alternative program that is adopted is one less lobbying campaign we have to wage to defeat or repeal a future point-of-sale retrofit trigger," Segal says.

He is quick to praise past MAR President Kay Moore and Sunshine Marketing of Sausalito, CA for working with MAR to develop and launch the Index. "This was a true collaborative effort," he says.

Proof the Index Works

"The Index *works*," Segal continues. "California Assembly member Jared Huffman credits it with helping him to develop legislation that provided new ways for sanitary agencies and homeowners to finance lateral repairs." Huffman's bill was signed into law by Governor Jerry Brown last year. Segal notes that MAR has been using the Housing Turnover Index in all its interviews with candidates and officials who seek their endorsement. "It's a compelling visual tool. Every candidate who sees it quickly agrees with our point of view."

The Power of the Index

The proactive political lobbying is now having a clear practical effect. In March, 2012, San Rafael, California's Las Gallinas Valley Sanitary District created a low-interest loan program to help property owners finance repairs of their sewer laterals. It is apparently the first such program in California under the provisions of Huffman's legislation. "Ironically, this is the same agency that proposed a point-of-sale ordinance several years ago. Now they are helping to lead the charge in adopting more effective and equitable alternatives. It just goes to show what a powerful tool the Index can be." Segal hopes that the new law and the district's new loan program will serve as models on a national level.



Pilot Project Launched

A recent grant from the NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF REALTORS® Issues Mobilization Committee to the California Association of REALTORS® recognizes this potential. The state organization will use the grant to launch a pilot program to help other local REALTOR® organizations in California to customize the MAR index for their own housing markets, using their own data.

Grant Helps MAR Take Index to Next Level

A \$7,000 Game Changer grant from NAR is helping MAR to take the power of the Housing Turnover Index in its own county to the next level, by funding its conversion to a mobile application for smart phones and tablets. Game Changer grants are awarded to Associations whose innovative ideas or projects may have implications beyond their own geographic area, but are not within the scope of the My REALTOR® Party programs. MAR's new index is scheduled to launch this fall.

Segal says they will use the new Index more aggressively in their candidate interviews and regular visits with local officials. "We are thrilled to have this recognition of the Index from the National Association, and the resources to expand its use so significantly," says Segal. "So far, we're only able to view it on our desk tops and lap-top computers. As mobile application, we'll be able to call it up instantly, wherever we are, and share its message with colleagues, friends, neighbors – and public officials."

The new mobile application will be more visually appealing, and carry the existing interactive features forward. What's more, it will enable those who view the Housing Turnover Index on their smart phones to contact their local officials to register their opinions – on that same phone, with the touch of a screen button. "It will effectively empower citizens to be mobile lobbyists," Segal points out. "We will have created a proactive, highly mobile, 'political inoculation campaign,' and that can be a very effective force."