



Nashville REALTORS® Gather Coalition to Sponsor Ground-Breaking Housing Summit—April 2013

“When the subject is the economy, everyone wants to talk about jobs,” says Don Klein, Chief Executive Officer of the 2,800-member Greater Nashville Association of REALTORS® (GNAR.) “But the fact is, homes are where jobs go at the end of the day! Without attractive homes – not just pretty homes, but homes in safe areas with access to excellent education, good transit and other services – employers aren’t going to want to move their businesses here.”

It was this kind of big thinking that led GNAR to gather a coalition of regional partners in the housing industry last summer, to co-sponsor The Greater Nashville Housing Summit. The July 3rd breakfast event at GNAR headquarters was the first of its kind, drawing housing experts and policy makers from around the state for a forward-looking “state of the housing market” program. Kendra Cooke, 2012 President of GNAR, welcomed the gathering of about one hundred participants – including Congressman Jim Cooper and representatives from U.S. Senator Bob Corker, Congressman Marsha Blackburn, and Congressman Diane Black. Ted Fellman, Executive Director of the Tennessee Housing Development Agency provided opening remarks; Nashville Mayor Karl Dean spoke about his city, in particular; and a regional perspective was offered by Franklin Mayor Ken Moore, who is Chairman of the Middle Tennessee Mayors Caucus, representing over forty mayors across ten counties.

“It was important that this be bigger than just the city of Nashville, or one single county,” says Klein. “The issues we face encompass the entire region, and we need to be able to work together across political boundaries, to create the very best environment for all.”

Likewise, the coalition that he brought together represents every aspect of the real estate industry. According to Danny Herron, President and CEO of Habitat for Humanity of Greater Nashville, “Under Don’s leadership, we were all there at the table, coming at housing issues from every angle – building, selling, financing, policy-making, you name it. It was encouraging to meet, as we did four or five times in the planning stages, all saying ‘what can we really accomplish, working together?’”

In addition to GNAR and Habitat for Humanity of Greater Nashville, the partnership includes the Tennessee Housing Development Agency, The Housing Fund, the Nashville Mortgage Bankers Association, Affordable Housing Resources, Home Builders Association of Middle Tennessee, and the Metropolitan Development and Housing Agency of Nashville, Tennessee. Says Klein, “It wasn’t just us REALTORS® talking at everyone else; but inviting them to share their views. Coalition-building is not always easy, but, boy is it beneficial! Good ideas came out of it. And the truth is, a lot of us have been working together for years and years, caring about the same things, and are great friends.”

Beyond making sure the Nashville region has the right housing stock moving forward, the coalition was determined to demonstrate its united commitment to making the home-



buying process as ‘user-friendly’ as possible. “We also wanted to break through the negativity surrounding the industry in the media at the time,” explains Herron. “We had evidence that the market was well on its way to recovery, but needed to get that message to consumers. The Summit helped to get the word out.”

Media relations, both before and after the Summit, were funded by a Housing Opportunity Grant of \$2,500 from the NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF REALTORS®, which also covered promotion for the event, including graphics and printed materials, as well as a wealth of research information.

The Greater Nashville Housing Summit had the added value of keeping housing issues in front of the people who are making the important decisions about the region’s future, notes Klein. “Nashville Next,” a planning process that will guide the growth and development of the city and surrounding Davidson County through the next quarter-century, has a special housing component that is being informed in part by materials developed for the Summit. GNAR is co-sponsoring a series of speakers for the program. “We do our best to invest ourselves where our resources and expertise can make a real difference,” says Klein.

To learn more about how the Nashville REALTORS® are working to strengthen the environment for home ownership in the region, contact Don Klein, Chief Executive Officer of the Greater Nashville Association of REALTORS® at dklein@gnar.org or 615/254-7516.



Congressman Cooper



Participants and speakers get to know each other



From Left to Right: Don Klein, GNAR CEO; Nashville Mayor Dean; Franklin Mayor Moore; Kendra Cooke, GNAR President; and Congressman Cooper



Franklin Mayor Moore and Congressman Cooper



Nashville Mayor Dean



Congressman Cooper greets summit participants