



Springfield (MO) REALTORS® Help Restore Beloved City Park to Former Glory – and Then Some – September 2015

The 2015 Community Outreach Committee of Missouri's 1,718-member Greater Springfield Board of REALTORS® (GSBOR) hit the ground running when it "took office" on the first of the year. With a mission to show that its REALTOR® members care about their community, it quickly zeroed in on a new project: to help the city's beloved 31-acre Phelps Grove Park recover from a major ice storm that had damaged much of its landscape.

GSBOR Association Executive Jessica Hickok explains that she'd learned about the new Placemaking Micro-grants distributed by the REALTOR® Party at a meeting in Washington DC last year. "I realized they were a perfect fit for what our Community Outreach team was looking to do," she says. Their application had a minor false start, she reveals, in initially framing the project as beautification work. "But when we adjusted the project so that we were creating a gathering place, not just making improvements that folks could easily drive right by, our proposal fell right in line with the intention of the NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF REALTORS® Placemaking Initiative."

The Community Outreach Committee worked closely with Springfield's Parks Department, which already had a significant recovery plan underway for Phelps Grove Park, but not all the funding it needed. The park is within the desirable Phelps Grove Park neighborhood, an established area of charming, well maintained homes that have held their value through the years. It is a mile from Missouri State University; is criss-crossed with popular walking trails; and the Springfield Art Museum is within its grounds. GSBOR's placemaking project, the installation of a patio at the intersection of a few walking paths, enhanced by two handsome stone benches and some plantings, was a relatively small piece within a huge effort, but it packed a significant punch. "This is a new feature in the lovely rose garden section of the park that provides a simple gathering spot to bring people together. We're so proud that the grant from the National Association of REALTORS® enabled GSBOR to make this contribution," says Hickok.

She fully credits the Community Outreach Committee, chaired by Ava Snyder, with all the effort involved. "They decided what they were going to do and made it happen, working with the Parks Department and its planners, contractors, and experts. It really was an ideal public-private partnership, very well coordinated, with our team working hand-in-hand with the city." GSBOR presented a check for \$2,200 at the June 2015 Parks Department Board meeting, and the project was completed the following month.

The fronts of the bench seats are inscribed "Greater Springfield Board of REALTORS®", and people are noticing, says Hickok. "Real estate here is strong, and our industry is definitely a pillar of the community. Our Community Outreach Committee works very hard to demonstrate REALTOR® investment in our neighborhoods, and the Placemaking Grant program is a great way for it to make an impact." In fact, GSBOR is so "sold" on the placemaking concept, that it has another few projects in the works: a gazebo in nearby Nixa, Missouri, and a "wayfinding" sign for the historic district over in Ozark.



To learn more about how the REALTORS® of Springfield, Missouri are creating gathering places that enhance their communities, contact Jessica Hickok, Association Executive of the Greater Springfield Board of REALTORS®, at jessica@gsbor.com or (417) 883-1226.



July 30, 2015 Springfield REALTORS® Community Outreach Committee gather to see the final project in Phelps Grove Park.



July 30, 2015 – The fronts of the benches are inscribed with “Greater Springfield Board of REALTORS®.”



July 30, 2015 – Phelps Grove Park paths to the garden.



June 12, 2015 – Community Outreach Chair, Ava Snyder and GSBOR Association Executive, Jessica Hickok and Staff Liaison, Rachael Shepherd make the check presentation to the Springfield Park Board.