



## **Northern Kentucky REALTORS® Offer New Park Benches for Walking Trail—November 2014**

Celebrating its 100th anniversary this year, the Northern Kentucky Association of REALTORS® (NKAR) is by no means resting on its laurels. But it was the notion of a well-deserved rest that prompted the 835-member association to seek a Placemaking Micro-Grant from the NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF REALTORS® earlier this year, shortly after its first annual members' Health Fair. The two resulting park benches that will soon invite passersby to stop and take a load off will be a welcome addition to a popular walking/bike trail in Boone County, and reinforce the branding of the REALTORS® as active and caring members of their community.

NKAR President Mike Spicer explains that the Health Fair was a new benefit for members this spring, with a five-mile walk-a-thon as its featured centerpiece; all proceeds went to the association's charitable foundation. "This is one of those great ideas born from clear necessity," he says. "Our building is at one end of a wonderful, two-year-old 2.5-mile walking/bike trail along the Aero Parkway. Eventually, the trail will continue as a 22-mile multi-modal loop, all the way around the local airport, and this initial stretch was ideal for our walk-a-thon. During the event, which ran the length of the existing trail and back again, there was a lot of huffing and puffing among our participating members and affiliates. It became apparent that some benches along the trail would be a very good idea!"

Janie Wilson, NKAR's Chief Executive Officer, learned about NAR's Placemaking Initiative at a leadership retreat for local associations shortly after the Health Fair, and started exploring opportunities to make the trail more hospitable. The county was thrilled to have the REALTORS® support: when Wilson received the diagram of the walking/bike path from the county planning office as she prepared NKAR's application for a Placemaking Micro-Grant, she noticed that it actually showed as many as eight proposed park benches. "There hadn't been funding for any at all, so we were helping to bring the ideal vision closer to reality," she says.

The [Placemaking Micro-Grants](#) that NAR makes in amounts from \$500 to \$2,500 are intended to promote small, inexpensive, and incremental projects that will somehow enhance a community. NKAR received a grant of \$1,800, which it supplemented with funds of its own to provide the \$2,116 total necessary for the purchase of two park benches to ease the way along the Aero Parkway Walking/Bike Trail. A prominent REALTOR® logo, or simply the word 'REALTOR®,' will be cut out from the center of the blue metal benches, for high-visibility branding. "We decided it would be too much to try to squeeze 'Northern Kentucky Association of REALTORS®' on them," laughs Wilson, "but seriously, the REALTOR® logo is so recognizable, and in the context of the large REALTOR® logo on our building anchoring one end of the trail, it really reinforces the brand."

Wilson notes that the online grant application process was simple and easy. "The most burdensome part, for me, was getting the information we needed from the county. After we had applied for the grant, NAR followed up with a phone call, which was a really nice



touch. Speaking with them allowed us to give them a better feel for the situation and what we hoped to accomplish." The Placemaking Micro-Grants are administered on a rolling basis, and NKAR received word of its grant within about 72 hours.

The existing segment of trail traverses a wide open space that will be zoned for industrial and commercial development, says Wilson, so NKAR is considering a future community service project that will involve landscaping the areas around the benches. It's also thinking of ways to use Placemaking Micro-Grants to improve other neighborhoods in the seven counties it serves. Meanwhile, patrons of the Aero Parkway Walking/Bike Trail can be grateful to the REALTORS® for these two new points of "R&R."

*To learn more about how the REALTORS® of Northern Kentucky are improving their region's assets along with their members' health, contact Janie Wilson, NKAR's Chief Executive Officer, at [jwilson@nkar.com](mailto:jwilson@nkar.com) or 859-344-8400.*



NAR President Steve Brown presents Placemaking Micro-Grant check to NKAR leaders