



Greater Nashville Association Partners With Local Government to Bring New Life to Tired Light-Industrial Area

It's been nearly 25 years since the Nashville region last devised a thoughtful growth plan, so NashvilleNext, an ambitious three-year process to develop the next comprehensive plan, is well underway. It should come as no surprise that the REALTORS[®] of Greater Nashville (GNAR) are right there with it.

“NashvilleNext presents a chance for the whole community to come together and answer the question: ‘What do we want?’” says Don Klein, Chief Executive Officer of the 3,000-member association. GNAR has been involved in the process at many levels, including sponsorship of a speaker series that brings high-profile planning experts in to address issues faced by the city and the region. Most recently, GNAR has undertaken to implement a topic that was the focus of one of the speakers: retrofitting suburbia.

Klein explains that in April 2011, after Ellen Dunham-Jones, a nationally recognized Smart Growth authority who teaches Architecture and Urban Design at Georgia Tech, spoke about livability and healthy communities, he began talking with Rick Bernhardt, Director of Nashville's Metropolitan Planning Commission, about where to go next with the compelling message she delivered. They decided to find a way to commission Professor Dunham-Jones to conduct research on Antioch, one of the Nashville region's more challenged communities.

Antioch is an outlying suburban, light-industrial area, with a disintegrated, outdated mall and inadequate public transit. With a \$10,000 Smart Growth Action Grant from NAR, which was matched by Nashville Metropolitan Government, NashvilleNext is bringing Dunham-Jones back with a team of researchers and strategists to focus on Antioch. A steering committee is now being formed to determine goals and expectations for the project. When Dunham-Jones and her team arrive early in 2014, an advisory council composed of Antioch residents, civic leaders, and business people will assist in the research, offering an understanding that only those vested in the community can. Naturally, a number of local REALTORS[®] will be among those sharing their knowledge and insights. The University of Tennessee is now involved, as well. A team from there will help broaden the project to include other parts of Nashville.

The research teams' task will be to conduct a design review of the selected communities, and develop suggestions for retrofitting and updating existing developments and infrastructure. Key goals include low-cost intervention, minimal disruption to current residents and owners, improved walkability and transit access, improved traffic patterns and housing, and increased services at existing commercial areas.

“These are areas that will benefit greatly from this kind of attention and expertise,” says Klein. “The project will serve the current residents, of course, but goes so far beyond that in its value, as a real model for local planning. The metropolitan government is very excited about it – they've ‘got skin in the game,’ so to speak, and are looking forward to the results as much as we are. Rick's colleagues in planning departments all over the



country will be watching closely, as will the academic planning community, who follow Professor Dunham-Jones' work. So, as we figure out how to re-connect this community, and otherwise improve it, the hope is that the solutions will resonate way beyond Antioch and Nashville."

To learn more about how the Greater Nashville Association is leading the way in the region's long-range planning, contact Don Klein, Chief Executive Officer, at 615.254.7516 or dklein@gnar.org

GNAR used their Smart Growth Grant to help sponsor a speaker series for NashvilleNext

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