



St Louis Association Responds to Ferguson Violence and Unrest With Innovative Fair Housing Campaign -- March 2015

As the nation was riveted by the protests and violence that followed the Ferguson shooting last summer, relief for the riot-torn suburb of St Louis came from the local professional organization that best understands and is most vested in the concept of community. The St. Louis Association of REALTORS® (SLAR) answered the call of its neighbors, brokers, and agents with food drives and deliveries of basic supplies for the citizens of Ferguson, in a massive aid effort that lasted for three weeks. That was just the beginning.

"Our hearts broke as we watched events unravel," says Dawn Kennedy, CEO of the 6,600-member association. "In response to our membership's feelings of helplessness and despair, we sought to replace fear with information." She explains that SLAR's strategic plan affirms its role as a community resource and a source for all real estate information, with an emphasis on community presence and involvement. Accordingly, with support from a \$5,000 Diversity Grant from the NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF REALTORS®, SLAR launched a widespread educational campaign to create dialogue about the need for fair housing practices.

The centerpiece of the effort is a compelling brochure for SLAR members, their clients, homeowners, and other stakeholders, spelling out the importance of integrated communities, maintaining home values in a crisis, and fostering fair housing in the St. Louis metropolitan area. In January, SLAR held a standing-room-only town hall forum called "STL 20/20: Perfect Vision," the first in a series of four planned for the year. Focused on how the crisis in Ferguson would impact St. Louis and its housing market, this first event featured a panel of professionals from other non-profit organizations dedicated to diversity, stable communities, and homeownership. They discussed fair housing laws and resources; local programs that promote a better St. Louis; how to avoid inadvertent steering; and how to navigate difficult client conversations regarding race, discrimination, and racial residential segregation. Kennedy reveals that the next event in the series will revolve around Spanish Lake, a local community devastated by white flight.

Meanwhile, 2014 President Elizabeth Braznell appointed a Ferguson Task Force, which drew up four core tenets by which SLAR and the community it serves will be strengthened:

1. Diversity in REALTOR® leadership: understanding that leadership starts at home
2. Diversity in community leadership: making the most of opportunities for the association to identify, assist, and promote diverse leadership in St. Louis communities
3. Diverse neighborhoods: a healthy, safe, and sound goal of community-building



- 4. Neighborhood revitalization and land use policies that invite and sustain diversity: SLAR plans to support Ferguson through various Placemaking Grants from the REALTOR® Party

These principles were adopted by NAR as the theme for Fair Housing Month this April. "What the St. Louis Association is doing exemplifies the REALTOR® commitment to fair housing," says Fred Underwood, NAR's Diversity Director. His sentiments are echoed by 2015 SLAR President Janet Judd, herself a testament to the SLAR diversity commitment, as the association's first Latina president. She states, "SLAR has many aspirational goals, and we must balance them with sensitivity to all perspectives, but I am confident we will be successful."

"St. Louis has a sad history of legislative actions and other systemic issues that encouraged racial isolationism," adds Kennedy. The St. Louis Association of REALTORS®, she notes, has a clear understanding of its role in the history of the metro area, as well as its ongoing responsibility moving forward. "We cannot erase the past, but we can change the future," she promises, as her association works toward a more racially integrated, more mutually understanding and supportive city.

To learn more about how the REALTORS® of St. Louis are leading diversity efforts, locally and nationally, contact Dawn Kennedy, Chief Executive Officer of the St. Louis Association of REALTORS®, at dkennedy@stlrealtors.com or 314.576.0033.

STL 20/20: Perfect Vision
The Ferguson Impact

FRIDAY
JANUARY 9TH 2015

St. Louis Association of REALTORS® | 12777 Olive Blvd. | St. Louis, MO 63141
10:00am — Noon

Register Today at www.stlrealtors.com/FergusonImpact

Join us at the Association as we discuss the recent events in Ferguson and how it will impact St. Louis and the housing market. Professionals from non-profit organizations throughout the area with missions that focus on diversity, stable communities, and homeownership will educate you on programs in the area that promote a better St. Louis. You will also learn how to navigate the difficult conversations you may face with your clients as it pertains to race, discrimination, and racial residential segregation in St. Louis.

Topics:

- Programs available to create stable and diverse neighborhoods.
- Why steering your clients or encouraging white flight will only have negative effects on the St. Louis community in the long term.
- An overview on Fair Housing Laws and Fair Housing Resources.
- How to have the difficult conversation of race and discrimination with your clients.

Featuring:

- **Chris Krehmeyer**, President and CEO of Beyond Housing
- **Will Jordan**, Executive Director of the Metropolitan St. Louis Equal Housing and Opportunity Council
- **Don Brinker**, Homeownership Manager of Missouri Housing Development Commission
- **Reena Hajat Carroll**, *Facilitator*, Executive Director of Diversity Awareness Partnership

We Believe

Unity • Fair Housing • Diversity • Inclusion • Ferguson • Justice • Stability • Urban Equality • Reconciliation

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