



## **Georgia's West Metro Board Uses HOP Grant to Showcase Ongoing Neighborhood Stabilization Work -- July 2013**

The Neighborhood Stabilization Program administered by the City of Carrollton Housing Authority had been chugging along for several years, buying up and rehabilitating abandoned and foreclosed homes, and selling them, with down payment and closing assistance, to qualified buyers. The program has been a real success, preventing and reversing blight in the West Metro region, about 50 miles from Atlanta in the foothills of the Appalachians. From the very start, it has benefited from the expertise and support of the 230-member West Metro Board of REALTORS<sup>®</sup> (WMBoR) – but you wouldn't have known it.

When 2012 WMBoR President Rett Harmon saw more than one article about the program in local newspapers with no mention of the Board's involvement, it struck a nerve. "It kind of buzzed me," he recalls. "Not because we were looking for praise, or even credit, but because we were missing an opportunity to show the community an example of the good that our industry does here."

Harmon knew what to do about it. In 2011, as President Elect, he had been to the NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF REALTORS<sup>®</sup> Leadership Summit in Chicago, and took it upon himself to learn more about the REALTOR<sup>®</sup> Party Initiative that was being launched. Back home in Georgia, he determined to make the most of the opportunities and resources being offered to local associations, and set about applying for a Housing Opportunity Grant from NAR to help WMBoR underscore its involvement in the Neighborhood Stabilization Program.

With the \$2,500 grant it received, the association was able to erect an attractive publicity booth in a prominent spot at MayFest, a popular annual Carrollton event, to promote the success of the program; it also created special signage to post outside active listings. "It was positive all-around," says Jennifer Lundy, Manager of Political Affairs of the Georgia Association of REALTORS<sup>®</sup> (GAR.) "West Metro's efforts raised the profile of the program itself, and were a great way to promote REALTOR<sup>®</sup> presence and REALTOR<sup>®</sup> value."

WMBoR also took pro-active steps last year to increase Carroll County's low voter turnout with voter registration drives, and by convincing the area's closing attorneys to register homebuyers after closings. "That takes a step out from the process, making it that much easier for folks to take the next step – and vote!" states Harmon.

At the end of August, WMBoR put a creative spin on RPAC fundraising by throwing a free concert for the community, with the support of a REALTOR<sup>®</sup> Issues Action Committee grant from GAR. A real crowd-pleaser featuring a great local band, the event raised the REALTORS<sup>®</sup> profile even more; it had the added benefit of allowing them to give back to the community and thank their members who had responded enthusiastically to an RPAC phone-a-thon fundraiser the board had conducted earlier in the summer.



Not content to keep its newfound understanding and appreciation of the REALTOR® Party Initiative to itself, WMBOR hosted a REALTOR® Party Strategic Planning event in early December, drawing attendance from 15 fellow local REALTOR® associations within the state. Presentations by Jennifer Lundy and Nick Bokone, NAR's REALTOR® Party representative, addressed topics ranging from getting your board involved, to engaging your members, to using the resources of the REALTOR® Party. "I think it was helpful for our colleagues to hear how a small association like ours is meeting its goals and enhancing its position in the community by working with these programs," says Harmon, who had created a lively video documenting WMBOR's REALTOR® Party activities throughout the year to present at this event. "People came away excited," says Lundy, "It was more than us just talking at them; Rett actually showed them the three very successful REALTOR® Party projects that WMBOR had engaged in during his term, and they saw that they could do it, too."

*To learn more about how the West Metro Board of REALTORS® went to town with the REALTOR® Party Programs, contact Jennifer Lundy, Manager of Political Affairs, Georgia Association of REALTORS®, at 678.597.4127 or [jlundy@garealtor.com](mailto:jlundy@garealtor.com).*

*See the video created by West Metro and the 2012 Board President, Rett Harmon, detailing their success for the year: <https://vimeo.com/48495908>.*