



An Article Of Interest...

REALTORS® Generate Real Solutions for Families Facing Foreclosure

Stemming the rise of foreclosures is an important part of the National Association of REALTORS®' legislative agenda this week at NAR's Midyear Legislative Meetings & Trade Expo. But REALTORS® aren't just working in Washington to address the problem – they're also working with neighborhood organizations and agencies back in their communities to help families stay in their homes.

REALTORS® and others shared their experiences and insights in assisting people in all stages of foreclosure in the session, *Before, During and After Foreclosures – Real Solutions* at this week's conference. According the U.S. Census Bureau, only 2 percent of properties are in foreclosure, but foreclosures are up 60 percent nationally from one year ago.

"As the leading advocate for homeownership and housing issues, NAR believes that any family who loses its home to foreclosure is one family too many," said NAR President Dick Gaylord, a broker with RE/MAX Real Estate Specialists in Long Beach, Calif. "That's why the REALTORS® at this week's meetings are urging Congress to enact legislation that will help more people keep their homes."

Moderator Lynn M. Ross of the National Housing Conference and Center for Housing Policy outlined NHC's recommendations for addressing the foreclosure crisis, including a federally chartered and funded process to restructure loans, expanded funding for foreclosure counseling and legal assistance, and neighborhood stabilization strategies.

"Foreclosures affect not only individuals and families, but also entire communities," Ross said. "We must develop comprehensive solutions to this complex problem to steady the housing market and help borrowers and communities regain stability."

Panelist Joanna Smith-Ramani, co-chair of the Baltimore Homeownership Preservation Coalition, which is taking proactive efforts to fight foreclosures and save homes in the Baltimore area.

BHPC works with city and state government to reach out to families in need and connect them with direct service providers. Smith-Ramani reports that recent call volume is up significantly at all of Baltimore's hotlines and housing counseling agencies, indicating the extent to which people need these services.

"Preventing foreclosure is a collective effort," she said. "REALTORS® must work together with community organizations and government agencies to help families keep their homes."

Panelist and REALTORS® Donna Hurley, a member of the Prince Georges County, Md., Association of REALTORS® and a HUD-certified counselor, helps people avoid foreclosure through short sales. A short sale is a transaction in which the seller's mortgage lender agrees to accept a payoff of less than the balance due on the loan.

"People facing foreclosure don't always know about the options available to them," said Hurley, who is actively involved with the Prince Georges Homeownership Preservation Coalition. "Working with a HUD-approved counseling agency, REALTORS® can use short sales to help families who may not be able to keep their homes avoid the additional financial and emotional pain of foreclosure."

Sometimes the unthinkable happens, however, and people lose their homes to foreclosure. Some of the resources available to families in need include post-foreclosure financial and credit counseling as well as rental and financial assistance programs. "There are situations that dictate that you might not be able to keep your home. Things like loss of income, divorce – these things happen. Regardless of the situation, we encourage people to be proactive, not reactive," said Geoffrey Tate of the Greater Washington Urban League.

Homeowners who are concerned about the possibility of foreclosure can access the NAR brochure, *Learn How to Avoid Foreclosure and Keep Your Home*, online at www.realtor.org/subprime.

The National Association of REALTORS®, "The Voice for Real Estate," is America's largest trade association, representing 1.2 million members involved in all aspects of the residential and commercial real estate industries.

