

*Lancaster County Association of Realtors®
Long Range Plan 2013 – 2016*



This plan sets forth the objectives of the Lancaster County Association of Realtors® for the years 2013–2016 in support of its Mission:

"To provide visionary leadership in strengthening and promoting the Realtor® as the central figure in providing real estate services to the consuming public."



Background:

Since its inception in 1917, The Lancaster County Association of Realtors® has been deeply concerned with providing real estate buyers and sellers with knowledgeable, ethical and competent professionals.

Currently celebrating its ninety-sixth year, LCAR remains dedicated to increasing the value of the services it provides to its members.

The Association is committed to providing business support services to industry leaders and practitioners who preserve the integrity of the profession; to promoting ethical practices and professional conduct; to advocating for responsible growth and to promoting cooperation and communication within the industry.

The Association administers a professional standards program which adheres to principles of professionalism, integrity and competence, as outlined in the National Association of Realtors® Code of Ethics. This program assures the public that LCAR members believe in fair business practices, and the just rules that govern their professional conduct.

The Association's community outreach efforts have aided in the fight for fair and affordable housing. Its long-standing commitment to the Transitional Living Center, Inc., a local provider of transitional housing, has translated into more than \$350,000 in funding through the proceeds of an annual charity dinner. As an active advocate and participant within the community, LCAR continues to address housing affordability, equal opportunity in housing, economic development and smart growth issues.

The Association subscribes to the code for equal opportunity and believes that it can best be accomplished through leadership, education and mutual cooperation. Members are accepted without regard to race, color, religion, sex, handicap, familial status or national origin.

The Association is proud of its members for the quality of their input and their contributions to the objectives of the Association.

Rationale:

The Association views its Mission seriously and, in its effort to remain relevant, conducts long range planning on a three-year cycle.

The future never stops changing. What worked in the past or what is working today will not necessarily work tomorrow. Because of that, the objectives outlined in past planning cycles must be constantly evaluated against a new set of conditions. Over the next three years, there will be new

competition within the real estate industry, new technologies and a very different consumer. Traditional services will have to be reevaluated in light of their effectiveness, as well as their efficiency; and the Association must assure its role by remaining relevant and necessary to its members' business success.

Location:

Consequently, on February 19th and 20th 2013, twenty members of the Association and several staff members met at Loews Annapolis Hotel in Annapolis Maryland to evaluate the Association's Mission and to establish a set of specific objectives for the next three years.

This effort was particularly relevant in light of the fact that members continue to face the challenges of an adjusting market as the industry recovers from the recent economic crisis. Economic concerns by potential buyers, limited credit availability due to unrealistic risk aversion by major financial institutions as well as short-sale and appraisal problems are also providing major negative impacts. In addition, the media are viewed as creating unrealistic buyer concerns through negative portrayals of economic and market conditions.

Participants:

The invited participants represented a sampling of industry specialists, including appraisers, sales associates and management personnel. A total of eight firms were represented, including both independent and franchise organizations. The majority of the participants had prior LCAR committee or leadership involvement, including several with participation on the Association's affiliated specialty councils.

The following individuals participated in the retreat:

Richard Boas	David High	Matt Shuffelbottom
Kevin Brown	Mike Julian	Jeff Snyder
Doug Byler	Quentin Miller	Mark Thudium
Jamie Clinton	Lisa Naples	Tom Weik
Mary Clinton	Jeff Peters	Karen Wolf
Doug Foltz	Bob Rose	Glenn Yoder
Jeremy Ganse	Earl Shirk	

Preparation:

In preparation for the Retreat, the Steering Committee conducted four focus group sessions and the planners participated in a half-day training seminar. In addition, planners were provided with background information relative to the Association's policies, programs, services and financial condition.

The focus groups were asked the following questions:

- What are the most pressing issues facing the industry?
- What are your personal concerns?
- What can the association do for you?

The most important focus areas to emerge from these group discussions were determined to be:

- Professionalism
- The Transaction of the Future
- The MLS as a Portal
- Member Participation and Involvement

Attendees agreed to individually consider the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats which are an integral part of the Association's response to the environment in which it must function. They also agreed to review the Association's current Mission Statement prior to the retreat.

Retreat Process:

Participants reiterated their commitment to the current Mission and began considering the *Strategic Focus Areas*.

The group looked at the Association's core membership. Core members are those whose interests are central and superseding. If these members change, the character of the Association would change. They are also the members whose interests must be served by any program, product or service of the Association.

The attributes of these members include: Active Licensees or Certificate-holders functioning as "full time" professionals, who are willing to share the lessons of their experience, are adaptable to change and are willing to invest in both education and technology in furthering their professionalism.

The group also discussed the Association's core competencies, which include program management, administration of the National Association's

Code of Ethics, MLS oversight, real estate education, government affairs capabilities and communications capacities.

There was consensus that both newly licensed sales associates and experienced agents need to continuously enhance their skills and review the practical tools in order to be more successful and to facilitate the cooperative transaction. There is also a need for continual training on the appropriate use of standard forms, and a belief that common courtesies and ethics awareness training would be beneficial for many members.

The group agreed that the Association's "broad aspiration" is to support the members, and the industry, by promoting value to the consumer with integrity and trust. This effort includes an awareness of events, projects, proposed regulations and market conditions within the community which impact real estate.

It was determined that the Association's primary focus should be within Lancaster County but with an "outreach" to both surrounding Realtor® organizations and other local trade associations.

A major concern shared by the participants dealt with a general feeling of frustration with the overall level of professionalism in cooperative transactions. These concerns extended to both the procedural and transactional aspects of a transaction. Training, coaching and mentoring were seen as potential remedies; but the group recognized the primary role and responsibility of the brokerage company in addressing these issues.

Increasing the level of professionalism was inextricably tied to raising the consumer's awareness of the importance of using Realtors® and a better understanding of the consumer's expectations of service. Accurate, readily available and easily understandable market statistics were seen as integral to the process.

The continuous evolution of technology, social media and web based consumer sites which impact the real estate transaction and can directly affect the success of the members, was discussed at length.

Developments in the areas of electronic documents, electronic signatures, transaction platforms, automated valuation models and "scalability" of the MLS reinforced the need for continuous efforts to analyze and evaluate various options and be prepared to offer training, as appropriate.

The difficulty in evaluating these services remains in determining which are appropriate for the Association to provide and which are legitimate "points of differentiation" among the member firms. The group remained committed

to the principle that the Association must be sensitive to this reality in order to be faithful to its mission.

Translating these *Strategic Focus Areas* into *Strategic Priorities* became the focus during the second day of discussion. Because of time constraints, they were conceptualized in general terms, with the understanding that specific strategies, programs of work and *Success Indicators* would be developed by the committees and task forces assigned to the respective areas.

Following is a Statement of the Association's Mission and the *Strategic Priorities* developed by the group:

Mission:

- ☞ To provide visionary leadership in strengthening and promoting the Realtor® as the central figure in providing real estate services to the consuming public,
- ☞ To proactively provide business support services to those active industry leaders and real estate practitioners who, through their performance, preserve the integrity of the profession and enhance the image of LCAR,
- ☞ To promote & uphold ethical practice and professional conduct within the real estate community,
- ☞ To advocate responsible growth, protect property rights, foster a quality environment and promote quality-of-life issues through involvement with government, public policy and community affairs,
- ☞ To promote cooperation and communication among the members, and an awareness of the real estate profession to the community.

Objectives:

- ☞ Establish a cost effective coaching "program" as an introduction to the coaching process for Realtors®. Operate the program on a cost recovery basis under the direction of a steering committee responsible for selecting instructors, developing policies and establishing costs.
- ☞ Develop a social media program for consumer education including Questions to Ask, What to Expect and Why Choose a Realtor® Oversight should be vested in either the Professional Development Committee or a newly created group. Existing consumer facing sites with appropriate links as well as new portals should be utilized.

- ✧ Develop additional statistical reports and improve "on-demand" statistics in flexmls™ to allow reporting on additional parameters such as school districts, zip codes, etc. Revise the CMA function to more accurately reflect the affect of seller assistance on real estate values.
- ✧ Establish an annual membership requirement of one 2.5 hour non-credit class covering such basics as agency, antitrust regulations, agreements of sale, cooperative transactions, professional courtesies, etc. Oversight should be vested in either the Professional Development Committee or a newly created group. A new Committee could have dual responsibility for Consumer Education and "Member Certification".
- ✧ Initiate discussions with all of the surrounding multiple listing services to evaluate the feasibility of a truly regional multiple listing service including universal lockbox access through either a common code or "loaner" program.
- ✧ Initiate discussions with all of the surrounding Realtor® associations and other local trade associations to discuss the possibility of shared programs and services.
- ✧ Develop an annual "open house" marketing program to drive consumer traffic to the Association's Open House website. Consider either an external or internal campaign utilizing available channels and templates to assist members in promoting the site.
- ✧ Evaluate social media and available technologies including webinars, videos, etc. as the primary internal communications vehicles for the Association.
- ✧ Monitor and evaluate, on an on-going basis, document management and transaction management systems for potential application within the multiple listing service.

