

Lancaster County Association of Realtors® Long Range Plan 2020 – 2023



This plan sets forth the objectives of the Lancaster County Association of Realtors® for the years 2020–2023 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 102nd 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 \$530,000 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 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 considering 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, from October 16th–18th twenty-four members of the Association and several staff members met at the Bethlehem Hotel in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania to evaluate the Association's Mission and to establish a set of specific objectives for the next three years.

This effort was particularly relevant because members continue to face the challenges of "disintermediation". For real estate, that's the word that asks the question: In these digital days, do a property seller and a buyer really need an agent to connect and mediate the selling of a property?

When you can upload a property to a portal, and that portal will alert buyers to new listings that meet their criteria, what is the true value a real estate agent adds to the transaction?

Economic concerns of potential buyers and reasonable credit availability by major financial institutions as well as appraisal problems in a frequently shrinking market are providing potentially major impacts.

In addition, competition for fewer properties at many price points, is creating unrealistic seller expectations and, in some instances, "buyer fatigue" through buyers' failures to successfully compete in a "bidding" process.

Participants:

The invited participants represented a sampling of industry specialists, including appraisers, sales associates and management personnel. A total of 11 firms were represented, including both independent and franchise organizations. Many 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:

Rebekah Bailey	Doug Foltz	Ferne Silberman
Greg Bardell	Quentin Miller	Doug Snavely
Tom Blefko	Renee Mitchell-	Mike Stoltzfus
Richard Boas, Jr.	Treier	Cal Yoder
Doug Byler	Melanie Musser	Glenn Yoder
Jamie Clinton	Jeff Peters	Joe Younger
Brian Davison	Nancy Sarley	Brad Zimmerman

Preparation:

In preparation for the Retreat, the Steering Committee conducted six focus group sessions including Owners/Managers, "seasoned" Practitioners and "new- to-business" Practitioners. Additionally, the members participated in a half-day training seminar where 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

Retreat Process:

Participants discussed the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats which form an integral part of the Association's response to the environment in which it must function. They also reviewed the Association's current Mission Statement prior to the retreat.

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, Real Estate Education, Government Affairs capabilities and communications capacities.

There was consensus that both newly licensed and experienced sales associates need to continuously enhance their skills and review the practical tools which will enable them to be more successful and to facilitate a 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 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 service expectations. In addition, accurate, understandable market statistics which are both readily available and reliability reproducible, are 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 each respective area.

Following is a Revised 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, while fostering cooperation and communication among the members,
- ✚ 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.

Strategic Priorities:

- ✚ Establish a Technology Committee with a focus on Communications to work with the Communications Committee and the Leadership to develop additional social media channels for all the Association's communications – both internal and external, including video capacity.
- ✚ Develop a public facing social media package explaining and reinforcing the "Value Proposition" of using a Realtor®.
- ✚ Empanel a Task Force of Owners/Managers to review and update the Association's Code-of-Conduct.
- ✚ Create an Owners/Managers Council to meet periodically to review and discuss issues affecting the Real Estate Industry including trends, market statistics, data security, industry disruptors/innovators, diminishing financial viability of traditional brokerage, iBuyers, Class action lawsuits, etc.
- ✚ Empanel a Task Force of Commercial/Industrial practitioners to assess the opportunity to develop an income producing property.

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