

PLACEMAKING GRANT

St. Louis REALTORS® Channel History, Community to Celebrate Fair Housing Anniversary

December 2018

In St. Louis, Missouri, REALTORS® have a profound reminder of past prejudicial real estate practices in the Shelley House, the property at the center of the landmark Supreme Court case of *Shelley vs. Kraemer*, which gave way to the Fair Housing Act 20 years later. In recognition of the 50th anniversary of that breakthrough legislation, St. Louis REALTORS® engaged into local projects benefiting underserved communities with grants from the REALTOR® Party and Missouri REALTORS®.

“Origins of the Fair Housing Act can be traced back here in St. Louis,” notes Dawn Seabaugh, Director of Communications of the 8,000-member St. Louis REALTORS®, “and it’s crucial to note how it’s helped in strengthening our local communities. Our REALTORS® firmly believe in equal housing opportunity for all,” Seabaugh said. “This year we aligned our annual community betterment projects in celebration of the 70th Anniversary of the *Shelley vs. Kramer* case and 50th Anniversary of the Fair Housing Act,” she added. St. Louis REALTORS® sponsored ‘Rebuild Day’ in May, in which REALTORS® helped restore five homes in the community around the Shelley House; and September’s community park project, where members worked for two days to transform a vacant lot into a lush, attractive landscape complete with urban gardens, flower boxes and handicap accessible walk ways.

St. Louis REALTORS® secured permission from the adjacent church that owns the roughly 4,000-square-foot property, and partnered with Rebuilding Together STL, a local non-profit that serves low-income homeowners. St. Louis REALTORS® Foundation, the charitable arm of the association, contributed \$25,000 in funding for the project, a collaboration of member donations, a contribution from the association, and a \$5,000 grant from Missouri REALTORS®, as well as a \$3,000 REALTOR® Party Placemaking Grant. “We’re so fortunate to have the help of our members, NAR, Missouri REALTORS® and Rebuilding Together STL. It takes a great team to accomplish something as great as this park.” says Seabaugh.

The lot is close to an apartment complex for elderly residents and is connected by an alleyway to an existing urban vegetable garden that serves many needs in the area. Prior to the volunteer event, professionals leveled the ground and installed wheelchair-friendly walkways. Over the course of the two-day project, more than 50 REALTORS® and community members came together to assemble umbrellas, build a privacy fence, construct two-level accessible vegetable planters, build picnic tables and benches, and plant trees.

“We are so proud to have been able to help a struggling area of the city,” says Seabaugh. “This park enhances the vitality and attractiveness of the neighborhood, and lifts the spirits and property values for all homeowners and businesses nearby.” She notes that the effort has strengthened the REALTORS®’ relationship with the

community and the city, as well: the October 26th ribbon-cutting was attended by the city alderman, the state senator, and the U.S. congressman representing the area. “We are deeply thankful to NAR for its support,” she says. “These grant programs are fabulous and are put to very good use on the local level.”

To learn more about how St. Louis REALTORS® is working to uplift communities around the city, contact Dawn Seabaugh, Director of Communications, at 314-576-0033.

PLACEMAKING GRANT

Placemaking and Puppy Love Go Hand-in-Hand for Kenai Peninsula REALTORS®

October 2018

“People love their dogs up here!” declares Kelly Martin, Chief Executive Officer of the Kenai Peninsula Association of REALTORS® (KPAR) in Southcentral Alaska. Most of her 68 REALTORS® and many Affiliate members have dogs. Earlier this fall, partnering with the local Rotary Club and the City of Soldotna Parks and Recreation Department, the small but active association used a Placemaking Grant to help build a large pavilion in a community dog park that had been created from a formerly distressed and unsafe vacant lot.

The 3 Friends Dog Park, opened in September 2017, is a public-private partnership: a city-owned property, its development was funded by the estate of three friends, was spearheaded by the hard work of dog lover Connie Hocker, and is maintained by the city’s Parks and Recreation Department. The dedicated fenced lot features separate off-leash zones for both large and small dogs, trail, water station, toys, community bulletin board, and a pet memorial wall. A plan is in place to construct a canine agility course in 2019. But one important thing the new park was missing was a covered space to shelter owners from the elements and accommodate activities and events.

Martin, who is in her second year with the REALTORS®, explains that as she was learning about the National Association of REALTORS®’ Core Standards, and considering ways to make the association even better, she put feelers out among the members seeking ideas for increased community involvement. Using a REALTOR® Party Placemaking Grant to help complete the popular dog park was a prospect that excited everyone involved. Says 2018 KPAR President Dale Bagley, “I believe REALTORS® should be willing to give back to the community they live in and help make it a better place. There was a real need for this dog park, and I am glad the REALTORS® were able to contribute to improving Soldotna’s quality of life.”

The grant application process was extremely smooth, reports Martin, and the \$2,500 that KPAR received was presented to the city to pay for construction supplies. A significant contribution of elbow grease came from many REALTOR® volunteers and several Affiliate members who joined with members of the local Rotary Club and hardworking Parks and Rec employees over the course of three days to construct the lofty wooden structure. At a later date, they were back at it, constructing built-in benches under the new pavilion. Bagley, says Martin, was especially dedicated, reporting to the job site at 8:00 a.m. each day with his own tools, which really helped move the build along. Bagley, meanwhile, noted the impact that the temporary closure had on the park’s biggest fans: “The dog park was closed while we were working on the pavilion, and there were many sad dog faces going by in their owners’ cars as they were checking to see if the dog park had reopened yet!”

“We’re so proud of what our REALTOR® and Affiliate volunteers have been able to accomplish for the community, and we really enjoyed working alongside The City of

Soldotna Parks and Rec, Rotary Club and Connie Hocker, says Martin. “The response has been amazing. There’ve been lots of great posts on Facebook, and an article in the local paper, and we’ve even heard a local DJ talking the project up on the radio. Best of all, for me, is that I drive by the dog park just about every day, and see first hand how well appreciated it is! We’re all very grateful to NAR for making it possible.”

To learn more about how REALTORS® are improving the community of Soldotna for dogs and their humans, contact Kelly Martin, Kenai Peninsula Association of REALTORS® CEO, at 907-262-1851.

PLACEMAKING GRANT

Greater Nashville REALTORS® Put Placemaking Grant to Work for Pedestrian Plaza

September 2018

In East Nashville this past spring, a dangerous intersection was transformed with vision, elbow grease, community collaboration, and help from a REALTOR® Party Placemaking Grant. The roughly 2,300-square foot traffic island, a once-dismal, triangular concrete slab bounded on all sides by busy thoroughfares, is now a cheerful and much safer pedestrian refuge. How cheerful and safe? The nearby public library is actually using the new pedestrian plaza for small events.

In fact, the island in question is the only public space for more than a half mile in any direction, and the only pedestrian connector between the library, a public high school, residential buildings, and a church, explains Alison Hendrickson, Director of Events and Government Affairs Coordinator of the Greater Nashville REALTORS®. Rapid growth, and with it, increased vehicle traffic and congestion had been making the intersection, already notorious for its lack of infrastructure and its convoluted traffic patterns, even worse. “When the Nashville Civic Design Center (NCDC) reached out to the REALTORS® with a plan for beautification and safety improvements, we jumped right on board,” she says, noting, “We have an extremely passionate Housing Opportunity and Affordability Committee, and opportunities to foster safer pedestrian conditions in our local neighborhoods are always met with enthusiasm.”

The NCDC is a well-established non-profit organization dedicated to improving the city’s built environment and promoting public engagement in its efforts to create attractive, functional spaces. It had targeted the problematic East Nashville Gallatin Avenue triangle for a placemaking project to coincide with the annual conference of the Complete Streets Coalition taking place in Nashville in early April 2018. Greater Nashville REALTORS® received a \$3,000 Placemaking Grant to help purchase supplies; it also provided about twenty volunteers from its Housing Opportunity and Affordability Committee and Board of Directors, who each took two-hour shifts during the all-day installation event. Their big task was to help paint a light-hearted ground mural that covers the entire triangular surface, complete with directional ‘way-finding’ indicators to help pedestrians find local amenities and destinations. The mural, designed by a professional local artist, is intended to be permanent, along with some new seating; it was initially enhanced by temporary plantings, colorful overhead cords, and fresh sidewalk striping.

One of those volunteers was Brian Copeland, 2017 President of the Tennessee REALTORS®. In a compelling video produced by NCDC that captures the cheerful collaborative effort, he expresses gratitude for the programs in place that all state and local REALTOR® associations can tap into: “The National Association REALTORS® has a Placemaking Grant where we’re able to partner with great community organizations like the Nashville Civic Design Center.” Sher Powers, Copeland’s partner in paint, and current President of the Greater Nashville

REALTORS®, adds, “We’re very excited to be a part of this and we believe it’s a great addition to the community that will offer safety, seating, and social areas away from traffic.”

The installation has been a great success, and pedestrians are clearly drawn to the newly colorful and engaging site, reports Hendrickson. The response among the Greater Nashville REALTORS® membership has been wonderful, too, she says. “Lots of our members drive by every day, and we’ve been hearing about the project in every committee meeting since April! They’re so proud of what we’ve been able to help accomplish for the neighborhood. We would absolutely do this again.”

To learn more about how the Greater Nashville REALTORS® are embracing opportunities to revitalize community spaces, contact Alison Hendrickson, Director of Events and Government Affairs Coordinator, at 615-254-7516.