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November 2020 \$3.50



FOR BETTER OR WORSE

Working with Divorced Sellers

p. 16



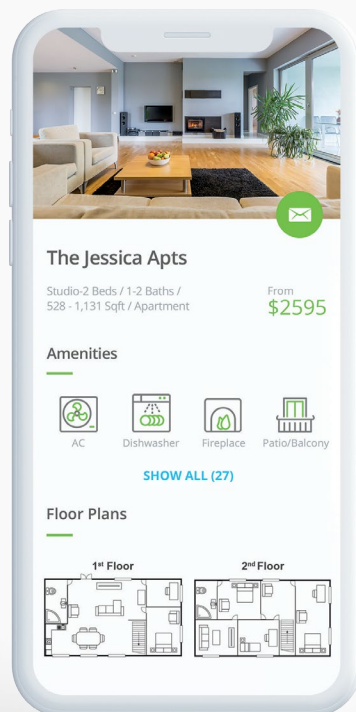
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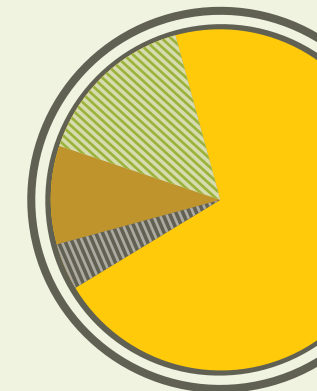
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NAHREP works to advance sustainable Hispanic homeownership through advocacy, education, and facilitation of relationships with industry stakeholders and professionals. This is part of a continuing series of profiles of multicultural allied real estate associations.



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Emotions run high and complications can arise, but you still can successfully navigate a listing with divorced sellers.

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Texas REALTORS®
ADVOCACY
During COVID-19

Even while sheltering in place, REALTORS® have been advocating to protect consumers, professionals, and the real estate industry.



ENSURE REAL ESTATE IS AN ESSENTIAL SERVICE statewide to protect real estate transactions



PROVIDE GUIDANCE for serving clients safely and responsibly



PROVIDE RECOMMENDATIONS for conducting in-person real estate license exams



SHARE INSIGHT into impacts on real estate industry and how REALTORS® have adapted to serve clients safely



REAL ESTATE PROFESSIONALS ARE ELIGIBLE FOR FEDERAL RELIEF, including small business loans and unemployment insurance



ADVISE STATE LEADERS on reopening government offices for real estate consumers



PROTECT REAL ESTATE LICENSE HOLDERS seeking renewal and applicants



EXPAND NOTARY SERVICES for real estate documents



#TREPACTogether

See Texas REALTORS® resources, updates, FAQ, and other content related to COVID-19 at texasrealestate.com/coronavirus

INSIGHTS



Chairman

Greetings, Texas REALTORS®!

Every great contribution Texas REALTORS® ever made in the way of #ShapingTexas started with a challenge or idea shared at a committee meeting. We, the members, are our own greatest asset, and we chart our own course through a member-led governance process. Many of you were just awarded coveted seats on Texas REALTORS® committees. As part of your service, I hope you will join me in sharing how easy, important, and fun it is to be involved.

Start by checking your local, state, and national association websites and calendars to see when the next meetings or events are scheduled. Most are open, meaning any REALTOR® may attend. Most association websites will also contain descriptions of committees and requisite experience, along with a list of members and contact information. Don't make the mistake I made in assuming you are not qualified or experienced enough because you are new, young, or whatever else you might think. Reach out to any current volunteer or staff member with questions about opportunities and time commitments. Many great roles require minimal time. Recruitment of new talent is our number-one job as leaders, so don't be shy about contacting us. We work for you.

The Texas REALTORS® committee process begins with a sign-up period usually open in early summer. Go to texasrealestate.com and be sure your profile is up to date and you are set to receive notifications, so you won't miss

the announcement of when the sign-up tool opens and closes. A reference letter from your local AE and/or your local president is always a plus to include with your application. The information you provide is matched with a member engagement tool that houses data on your past participation and special skills or accomplishments. Using that information, the five-member Texas REALTORS® Leadership Team meets for two or three days to place who we hope are the right people in the right seats. Every effort is made to offer first choices, but that is not always possible due to the need for geographic, diversity, and experience distribution, as well as limited committee size. Some will be asked to serve on a committee for which they did not apply. When that happens, it's because we needed you there. Participation at the local level as well as graduation from the Texas REALTORS® Leadership Program are major advantages, so don't overlook those opportunities.

Exciting news will be coming soon about mentorship opportunities. Until then, seek your own mentor. Let that person know if you have aspirations beyond committee participation. She can help you chart a path, not just to win an election, but to be an effective leader. I had such mentors, and as I wrap up my year as your chairman, I must again thank Randy Jeffers and Brooke Hunt for their early guidance, and all our past chairs for the profound wisdom and time they so generously shared.

Cindi Bulla
Cindi Bulla

nar.realtor/nar-en-espanol

NAR LAUNCHES
NAR EN ESPAÑOL WEBSITE

Spanish-speaking REALTORS® and consumers have a new resource in NAR's recently launched subsite, NAR en Español. This fully Spanish website offers content, resources, and an online space for members from the United States and partners in global markets to build relationships. You can find the site at nar.realtor/nar-en-espanol.



**KNOW AN
AWARD-WORTHY
MEMBER OR
PROGRAM?**

Texas REALTORS® honors members for their commitment to their communities and the real estate industry with a variety of awards. Several deadlines for these awards are in early December. Learn more about how to apply for an award at texasrealestate.com/awards.

December 4, 2020 Deadline

- **Texas REALTOR® Good Neighbor Award:** Recognizes a REALTOR® who's demonstrated outstanding community service related to advancing homeownership.
- **REALTOR® of the Year:** Recognizes a REALTOR® who's made outstanding contributions to the industry at local, state, and national levels.
- **Tom D. Morton Award:** Recognizes an association executive for service to members and personal and professional accomplishments.
- **Educator of the Year:** Recognizes an instructor who's made the most significant contributions to real estate education in Texas.
- **Education Programs of the Year:** Recognizes innovative programs that meet members' needs and increase the quality of professionalism in the industry. Categories are legal, marketing, short or series, and innovative.

January 10, 2021 Deadline

- **William C. Jennings Award:** Recognizes the outstanding commercial transaction of the year.

January 22, 2021 Deadline

- **Lehman Local Board Governmental Affairs Achievement Award:** Recognizes an association that's demonstrated excellence in fundraising, grassroots, and other local initiatives.

**Texas REALTORS®
Advertising Campaign**

**HOW THE ADS ARE
WORKING TO PROMOTE YOU**

**FOR A RELIABLE RESOURCE
IN REAL ESTATE,
LOOK FOR THE R.**



A recent survey of 1,000 adults across Texas shows favorable results from this year's Texas REALTORS® advertising campaign. The ads, which build on messaging from NAR's "That's Who We R" campaign, have been running online, on radio, and on billboards. A few highlights from the survey:

- 93% agreed they would benefit from a REALTOR®'s market knowledge, up 17 percentage points from a similar survey two years ago.
- 90% agreed that a REALTOR® can take care of the details of a transaction, up 16 percentage points.
- 83% believe that a REALTOR® can help negotiate the details of a transaction, up 13 percentage points.
- 78% agree that Texas REALTORS® work together to fight for property rights (a new question this year).
- 38% recalled seeing or hearing an ad from Texas REALTORS® (unaided recall). Two-thirds remembered seeing an ad when shown an example.
- 85% of those viewing the ad said it gave them a positive impression of Texas REALTORS®.

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STORE NOW OFFERS
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Members of Texas REALTORS® now qualify for free shipping on all orders on texasrealtorsstore.com. The online store offers a wide variety of Texas REALTORS®-branded products, such as umbrellas, flash drives, pens, insulated bottles, camp chairs, stickers, and more. You can also purchase personal protective equipment, including Texas REALTORS®-branded masks, hand sanitizer, and wipes.

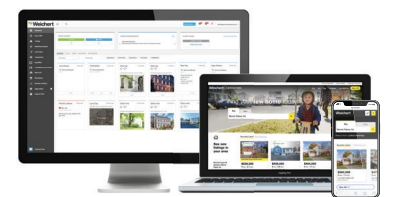


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than chasing them.**

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GROW YOUR SKILLSET WITH THESE CREDENTIALS



Designations and certifications are not just fancy letters after your name: they are proof of your commitment to professional development. They are recognized and trusted endorsements of your knowledge. They also open doors to even more specialized tools and training as well as referral networks that can give you a big boost in your field.

Here is an overview of some of the many designations and certifications you can earn:

- **At Home with Diversity (AHWD):** This certification trains agents on diversity, fair housing, and business planning development.
- **Certified International Property Specialist (CIPS):** CIPS gives agents and brokers access to tools and resources for buying and selling international real estate.
- **Certified Real Estate Brokerage Manager (CRB):** This designation shows that you have completed advanced training for real estate business management.
- **Commitment to Excellence (C2EX):** This NAR endorsement demonstrates a continuing commitment to professionalism. Applicants receive a customized curriculum based on an assessment. C2EX also fulfills NAR's Code of Ethics requirement.
- **e-PRO:** Recipients of this online certification program learn how to utilize social media, search engine optimization, and customer relationship management systems to grow their businesses.
- **Green:** By earning the Green designation, agents demonstrate knowledge of energy-efficient homes and their merits, as well as how to improve any home's efficiency.
- **Graduate REALTOR® Institute (GRI):** Texas REALTORS® awards this prestigious state-level designation to agents who have completed advanced real estate training and coursework. Study areas include contracts to closing, marketing and business skills, and real estate brokerage.
- **Performance Management Network (PMN):** This designation from the Women's Council of REALTORS® cultivates skills in business planning, networking, and negotiating, among other skills.
- **Real Estate Negotiation Expert (RENE):** This certification shows the recipient is trained in negotiation skills. The two-day course covers handling a variety of personalities and competing objectives.
- **Short Sales and Foreclosure Resource (SFR):** This certification can be earned through a one-day course covering how to develop a short-sale package and resources for sellers, among related topics.

RESIDENTIAL

- **Accredited Buyer's Representative (ABR):** This designation from the Real Estate Buyer's Agency Council provides agents who work with buyers additional knowledge and strategies to help their clients.
- **Certified Residential Specialist (CRS):** Recipients of this prestigious designation have access to special networks and marketing tools from the Residential Real Estate Council, as well as a qualified consumer leads program.
- **Military Relocation Professional (MRP):** Earning this certification trains recipients on helping current and former military personnel find housing. Coursework covers the required military procedures, financing opportunities, and unique situations involved in serving this clientele.
- **Pricing Strategies Advisor (PSA):** Recipients learn how to better price properties, create CMAs, and work with appraisers.
- **Resort and Second-Home Property Specialist (RSPS):** The coursework teaches the specialized skills needed for investing in and managing these unique properties. Recipients receive special newsletters, webinars, and an invitation to join a private Facebook group.
- **Seniors Real Estate Specialist (SRES):** This designation tells prospects that the recipient is trained to guide homebuyers and sellers over age 50.

- **Seller Representative Specialist (SRS):** The Real Estate Business Institute awards this credential to agents who can support sellers and anticipate prospects' needs.
- **Texas Affordable Housing Specialist (TAHS):** This certification offered by Texas REALTORS® covers the topics of financing, fair housing, and affordable housing.

FARM & RANCH

- **Accredited Land Consultant (ALC):** ALC is the professional designation offered by the REALTORS® Land Institute for buying, selling, and financing land.

PROPERTY MANAGEMENT

- **Texas Residential Leasing Specialist (TRLS):** This Texas REALTORS® certification includes training on lease agreements and issues affecting property managers.
- **Texas Residential Property Manager (TRPM):** This advanced training from Texas REALTORS®, which requires completing the TRLS certification as a prerequisite, certifies knowledge of the property management specialty.

COMMERCIAL

- **Texas Accredited Commercial Specialist (TACS):** Texas REALTORS® offers this new designation to educate commercial agents on client representation, market analysis, and negotiations.

How do I decide which credential to pursue?

Ask yourself...

- Which specialties interest you?
- Would this credential help your business?
- Do you meet the experience requirements and prerequisites to take the course?
- How long does it take to complete the course?
- How much does it cost?
- When and where are they offered?

How do I get the most from my designations/certifications?

- Explain to prospects and clients in person and your marketing what your credentials mean and how they benefit them.
- Use your designation's educational resources and special perks.
- Keep revisiting your course materials. Don't forget what you've learned.
- Network with your peers. Some credentials have dedicated referral networks.

Do credentials expire?

They do not, but many require paying a fee to maintain the designation.

Can I take courses outside of my expertise?

You can take any course you meet the requirements to take.

WHAT DOES THE TERM *LATINX* MEAN?



Latinx is a gender-neutral noun or adjective to refer to a person from, or whose ancestors were from, a Spanish-speaking land or culture or from Latin America. *Latinx* is considered more gender inclusive and embraces those who do not wish to use the gendered *Latino* or *Latina*.

Merriam-Webster added the term, which originated in the early 2000s, to its dictionary in 2018.

The two most common terms to describe this community are *Latino/Latina* and *Hispanic*; they are often used interchangeably. According to an August article from the Pew Research Center, the U.S. government began using the term *Hispanic* in the 1970s, while *Latino* became popular in the 1990s.

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SOFTWOOD LUMBER PRICES INCREASED 14.9% IN AUGUST.

The National Association of Home Builders says lumber prices have increased by nearly 50% since April, the largest four-month gain since unadjusted data collection began in 1949, and the second-largest gain since seasonally adjusted data began in 1975.



WHERE TO FIND THE NEXT BIG TREND



Savvy agents and brokers are always looking for potential market trends. How do they know where to look and what to look for? Here are some tips for getting ahead of the pack.

Compare Markets. You're used to reviewing comp properties to determine price points. Why not comp markets? Make a list of your city's relevant characteristics. Which other cities nationwide have similar traits, and what's going on there?

You can even glean useful information from comparisons based on a single metric. If your prospects are worried about traffic getting worse, the behavior of residents in cities with known congestion problems could offer clues about how to better serve them.

It is a good idea to network with real estate professionals in similar markets. Check in a few times a year to compare notes.

Ask "What Will Happen in Five Years?" Agents and brokers should stay updated with what's going in their city, the real estate market, and the economy in general. Any time you read or listen to the news, ask yourself, "How will this affect real estate?" and "What will happen in five years?"

Some stories have obvious consequences: redrawn school boundaries or a major employer going out of business will change the market. Others are more subtle. Are taxes increasing? Are new neighborhoods becoming cultural hot spots?

Even national or international news may be relevant to your local real estate market. What starts in a big city or abroad today may be at your doorstep before long. Just look at rideshare apps and short-term rentals.

Go to the Source. You can learn a lot about current trends, and forecast future trends, by studying data: net population growth, year-over-year median housing prices, and elementary school enrollment, to name three. There are many publicly available databases you can review. Skim them and see what patterns stand out.

Talk to Demographics Outside of Your Own. What's visible to one group of people may be invisible or irrelevant to another. Talk with colleagues, neighbors, friends, and family in different circumstances than your own and ask what *they* are seeing—not just in the real estate market but in other facets of life. Your graduating niece may have different experiences and opinions than your retiring uncle. Your neighbor who owns a rental property may have different considerations than a cross-town friend who *lives* in a rental home.

GET THE REALTOR® PRICE AT ENTERPRISE AND NATIONAL

REALTORS® can use the online promotional code XZ65015 for discounts on rental cars at Enterprise and National. It is another benefit you receive by joining Texas REALTORS®. Enterprise and National are promoting their Complete Clean Pledge, promising to sanitize all locations, shuttles, and vehicles and implement contactless technology for transactions. To view a full list of member benefits, visit texasrealestate.com/benefits.



LOOKING FOR THE ON-RAMP FOR COMMERCIAL REAL ESTATE?



If you want to start a career in commercial real estate, sign up for courses in the new Texas Accredited Commercial Specialist program.

Texas REALTORS® developed the TACS program as a steppingstone to more advanced commercial education. TACS can help new agents, residential agents who want to switch to commercial, and less experienced commercial agents who want to sharpen their skills before seeking a higher designation.

To earn the certification, applicants must:

- Successfully complete three 30-hour commercial courses
- Work as an agent with a broker-mentor and complete two original commercial real estate transactions
- Produce two professional references
- Join a commercial information exchange.

The coursework includes the fundamentals of commercial real estate, development topics such as leasing and management, and marketing and negotiation training. The curriculum is eligible for CE and Sales Apprentice Education requirements.

More experienced commercial agents can also earn the TACS. REALTORS® with a CCIM or SIOR designation may earn the certification with payment of the application fee. Those with five years of commercial experience can apply for the certification after successfully passing the three TACS end-of-course exams.

For more information, visit texasrealestate.com/tacs.

WE WIN IS BETTER THAN I WIN

Negotiators who add value for the other party are more successful than those who are only concerned with themselves, according to an analysis published in the *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*. The report, which looked at 28 studies on the topic, found that collaborative negotiators prioritize problem-solving to ensure everyone comes out ahead.



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BUSINESS

WHY IS THE HOUSING SUPPLY SO LOW RIGHT NOW?



It's not just your neck of the woods: homes priced between \$200,000 and \$300,000 are hard to find in most Texas markets. In August, Texas had less than two months of housing inventory for those properties, according to the Real Estate Center at Texas A&M University.

"You have people who want to buy a home and can—with job security, income level, and everything else they would need—but they can't find a home in that price range," says Real Estate Center Research Economist Luis Torres.

In fact, Texas had three months' inventory or less for any price below a half million dollars. Demand remains strong even after this summer's buying frenzy. Here, according to Torres, are the reasons why demand exceeds supply:

Homebuilders are playing catchup. Before COVID-19, homebuilders were trying to meet the demand for homes under \$300,000. Shutdowns in the construction industry have delayed new inventory.

Land prices are rising. To make a profit on more-affordable homes, homebuilders are building in cities' exurbs, where land is cheaper. But as land prices rise everywhere, there's less affordable land on which to profitably build these homes. This trend has only accelerated during COVID-19.

More Millennials have entered the market. More first-time homebuyers means more competition for affordable homes. Many Millennials have more education and job security, so they are less likely to be affected by the pandemic's economic effects.

Prospective homebuyers aren't as affected. The pandemic's economic effects are being strongly felt by renters and low-wage earners. In general, many people shopping for homes are still employed and/or working from home.

COVID-19 is creating new preferences. Many prospective homebuyers are looking farther away from cities to afford larger homes in less densely populated areas with newly prized amenities like home offices and outdoor space.

Interest rates are historically low. Homebuyers want to take advantage of this opportunity before rates rise again.

Home prices keep rising. Properties that sold in the \$200,000-\$300,000 range a few years ago might be worth more now.

"If the real estate industry continues adapting in the future as they have for COVID-19 and the pandemic ... they will be very successful. Brokers and agents are extraordinarily hearty, exceptionally pragmatic, and can handle anything that comes their way."

—STEFAN SWANEPOEL
Chairman and CEO
T3 Sixty



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SPECIALIZED EDUCATION TO WORK WITH HOMEBUYERS

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PROVIDE EXTRAORDINARY SERVICE
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ADVOCATE

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Get started at REBAC.net.





HOW PERSONAL LETTERS FROM BUYERS TO SELLERS CAN TRIGGER FAIR HOUSING CONCERNS

Buyers looking to gain an edge when making an offer for a property sometimes include a letter to the sellers with their offer. Long considered a way to add a personal touch to the financial and legal aspects of a real estate transaction, buyer letters—also called offer letters or love letters—can provide a connection between buyers and sellers. However, there’s a potential downside to that connection for both parties.

Introducing Bias

The appeal of buyer letters is that they can add emotion to the sellers’ decision of whether to accept an offer. For example, an immigrant who writes to the sellers about how excited he is to be starting a new life in this country may hope the sellers will find joy in his enthusiasm.

But the same personal details that can make a connection between the parties can also introduce prejudice against the buyers. If sellers don’t know anything about the buyers, they can’t discriminate. However, sellers who learn personal details could discriminate against buyers, even subconsciously.

Increasing Liability

Sellers who accept buyer letters could be increasing their liability under the Fair Housing Act. For example, if the sellers in the above scenario reject the buyer’s offer, he might file a fair housing complaint that he was rejected based on his national origin. If the sellers hadn’t accepted his letter, they might not have known that he was an immigrant and could not have been accused of discrimination.

The decision whether to write or accept buyer letters rests with your clients. Make sure they understand the potential rewards and risks.

The Fair Housing Act prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, familial status, or disability. Article 10 of the Code of Ethics also prohibits discrimination on the same bases as well as on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity.

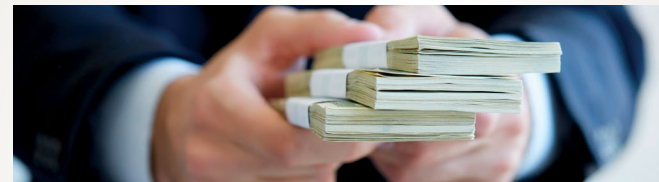
Your Forms

In the event of an incident on a managed rental, property managers may use the **Report of Incident Occurring on Property** (TXR 2215) to log the date, time, and details of specific incidents, including crimes, deaths, and personal injuries. The form includes places to notate who called which first responders and where to obtain official reports. The names of injured people, descriptions of their injuries, and where they were treated may also be listed on the form. There are additional spaces to include property damage descriptions, contact information for witnesses, and any follow-up actions that were taken. This is just one of more than 130 forms available exclusively for members of Texas REALTORS®.

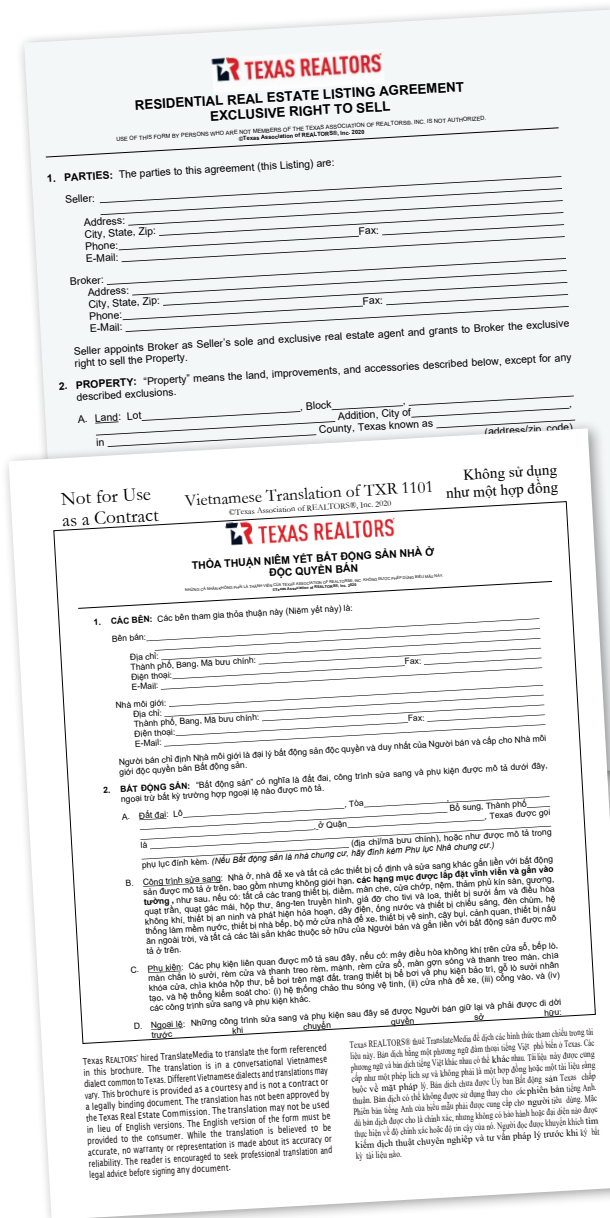


Fact or Fiction?

You must have an active real estate license to earn money for referrals.



FACT. Per TREC rules, only active license holders may earn money for referrals. If you made the referral while your license was active, then you may collect the money while your license is inactive or expired. Note that TREC rules require you to receive payment of your referral fee through your sponsoring broker if you are a sales agent.



VIETNAMESE TRANSLATIONS OF TEXAS REALTORS® FORMS

You can now provide Vietnamese-speaking clients and prospects translations of more than a dozen Texas REALTORS® and Texas Real Estate Commission forms. Though these translated documents cannot be used as official forms in a transaction, they can help Vietnamese-speaking buyers, sellers, landlords, and tenants understand what they will sign on the English documents.

Vietnamese is the third most widely used language in Texas, behind English and Spanish.

Note: While translations of most forms below are available now, the *One to Four Family Residential Contract (Resale)* translation may be delayed based on potential changes to that form by TREC.

- Residential Real Estate Listing Agreement, Exclusive Right to Sell
- Residential Real Estate Listing Agreement, Exclusive Right to Lease
- Seller’s Disclosure Notice
- Intermediary Relationship Notice
- One to Four Family Residential Contract (Resale)
- Notice of Buyer’s Termination of Contract
- Release of Earnest Money
- Addendum for Seller’s Disclosure of Information on Lead-Based Paint and Lead-Based Paint Hazards as Required by Federal Law
- Authorization to Obtain Consumer Report
- Residential Lease
- Residential Lease Application
- Notice Terminating Right of Occupancy
- Information About Brokerage Services
- Consumer Protection Notice
- Protect Your Family From Lead in Your Home Pamphlet (EPA Form)

You can download the translations of the forms from [texasrealestate.com/realtorforms](https://www.texasrealestate.com/realtorforms). Spanish translations of many forms are also available. Only members of Texas REALTORS® may use these translations of forms.

NEW REQUIREMENT FOR LICENSE RENEWAL STARTS IN 2021

Texas Real Estate Commission adds contracts to CE hours.

Starting February 1, 2021, brokers and most sales agents will be required to complete at least 3 hours of contract-related coursework as part of the 18 hours of CE required to renew a license.

There is one exception: Sales agents renewing their licenses for the first time and subject to Sales Apprentice Education (SAE) requirements do not need to meet this requirement until their next license renewal term.

To search for courses that meet this requirement, go to [texasrealestate.com/findacourse](https://www.texasrealestate.com/findacourse) and choose *Contracts courses (TREC-Compliant)* in the *Group* field.

You can see if courses you’ve already completed qualify for this requirement at [trec.texas.gov](https://www.trec.texas.gov)—put your name in the *License Holder Search* and look at your education history.



WHAT IF SOMEONE ISN'T FOLLOWING SAFETY GUIDELINES?



Business practices have changed during the coronavirus pandemic. What was normal last year may pose health risks now. What should you do if someone involved in your transaction does not follow the recommended protocol?

Before you meet, know the recommended guidelines.

- Texas REALTORS® suggests all brokerages follow the state's minimum standard health protocols: [texasrealestate.com/coronavirus](https://www.texasrealestate.com/coronavirus)
- The Texas Department of State Health Services recommends maintaining social distancing and avoiding groups larger than 10, among other actions: dshs.texas.gov/coronavirus/opentexas.aspx
- Gov. Greg Abbott has issued several coronavirus executive orders, such as requiring masks in many situations. Law enforcement can warn first-time violators and fine repeat offenders: gov.texas.gov/coronavirus-executive-orders
- Check for any city and county-specific orders as well. These may not be enforceable.

Communicating with clients or associated business professionals beforehand can help set expectations for the appointment and establish how to meet everyone's needs under current conditions. Go over the guidelines and agree on protocol for any in-person business. Discuss virtual options and alternatives.

When you meet, be mindful of your safety. Pay attention to social distancing. If someone is not following guidelines, ask that person to follow the recommended steps. If at any point you feel unsafe, cancel the meeting and reschedule. You can also make different arrangements that do not require physical interaction.

After you meet, consider your options if you felt your safety was put at risk.

- If the offending party is another REALTOR®, you can contact that member's brokerage. Texas REALTORS® offers an ombudsman program to help resolve disputes. You can file an ethics complaint if these strategies don't work.
- If the offending party is a client, consider terminating your representation agreement with the client if you cannot come to an agreement about what happened and how to move forward. Make sure to treat all parties fairly and apply the same standards uniformly so you do not violate fair housing laws.
- If the offending party is another professional, you can contact that person's supervisor. If that doesn't work, another avenue may be submitting a complaint with their professional organization or licensing body. You could also choose to not do business with them in the future.

Taking careful actions before, during, and after interactions can help you protect yourself and your family, while also ensuring the health and safety of your clients, customers, and fellow Texans.

Contract Closeup

NO SIGNATURE REQUIRED: SELLER'S DISCLOSURE NOTICE

Your sellers may be required by law to fill out a seller's disclosure, but buyers are not required to sign the disclosure. Even though the Texas REALTORS® *Seller's Disclosure Notice* (TXR 1406) and the TREC *Seller's Disclosure Notice* (TREC OP-H) provide places for a buyer to sign on the last page, a buyer does not have to sign or initial at all.

The lines for the buyer are there, however, because obtaining a buyer's signature is one way for a seller—and the seller's agent—to prove that the buyer received a copy of the seller's disclosure. And, for that reason, some brokerages make it office policy for listing agents to attempt to get buyers' signatures. Keep in mind that a buyer's signature indicates nothing except that the buyer acknowledges receiving the disclosure.

Whether buyers sign or do not sign your seller's disclosure, it's a good idea to note in the transaction file when the buyer was given the disclosure notice.



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I certify that all information furnished on this form is true and complete. I understand that anyone who furnishes false or misleading information on this form or who omits material or information requested on the form may be subject to criminal sanctions (including fines and imprisonment) and/or civil sanctions (including civil penalties).

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FOR BETTER OR WORSE

Working with Divorced Sellers

by Lee Nelson

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Carlene Johnson has learned through helping divorcing couples sell their homes that there are always three stories to every divorce case. “There is one spouse’s story, the other spouse’s story, and the truth is somewhere in the middle,” says Johnson, owner of CJ Services Realty powered by United Real Estate – Houston, and a Certified Divorce Real Estate Expert (CDRE) through the Ilumni Institute.

Each party sets their perception of what transpired. Their perception is just that—their perception. You as the third, neutral party accept and listen to both sides. Neutrality is one of the biggest components of working with divorcing couples, she emphasizes. “The lives they have been building are crumbling,” Johnson says. “That property is a stronghold. Many times, it is everything to them and the kids.”

Being an agent to divorcing or already divorced couples can be rewarding and uplifting, but it also might involve twists and turns you didn’t expect.

IT’S NOT FOR THE FAINT OF HEART

For many years, Laurel Starks has served as a court-appointed agent for some of the nastiest divorce cases. They include incarcerations, restraining orders, suicides, and attempted murders.

“It’s messy, and it’s sad,” says Starks, founder of Ilumni Institute (formerly the Divorce Real Estate Institute) in Rancho Cucamonga, California. She also leads the Starks Realty Group of Keller Williams and authored the book, *The House Matters*. “I even had a case where the husband assaulted the wife’s attorney,” Starks says. “This is what you get when you work in this field of divorce real estate.”

But not every divorce case brings such horror or pain. You end up helping people during some of the worst days of their lives. Decisions get complicated. Emotions can run high. But in the end, you help people move on to the next chapters of their lives.

Starks’s organization specializes in divorce real estate training and issues the CDRE designation. Agents, divorce attorneys, and judges from across the country are being educated about the complicated real estate components of divorce.

The emotions of a failed marriage can involve anger, fear, sadness, numbness, and elation. As an agent helping a splitting couple, you learn to understand you will be met with fight, flight, or freeze responses, says Starks.

“We must recognize the magnitude that the sale of the house has on a family, and acknowledge the trembling fear that drives much of the emotion we face with our clients,” she emphasizes. “Don’t overwhelm them with a laundry list of stuff to do and think you’ve done your job. We give them baby steps.”

STAY NEUTRAL THROUGHOUT THE PROCESS

Starks preaches in her classes that you cannot take sides in the divorce, even though it’s tempting to do so. Often, one person in the couple will be nicer, more cordial, and more respectful.

Starks did end up being misled by the supposed victim in one divorce case. The woman told her the husband always controlled the money and hid it from her. She said the husband was abusive to her and the children. “She was trembling and in tears,” Starks says. “I felt so horrible for her.” But later on, she found out the woman turned out to have made up the stories.

“You might be dealing with narcissistic personalities, substance abuse, restraining orders, and more,” she states. “But you remain neutral. You can’t become the advocate for one side, or you’ve lost it.”

For 20-year real estate veteran Theresa Bastian, broker/owner of Let’s Move Austin who recently earned the CDRE certification, working with divorced couples is somewhat personal. She went through her own high-conflict divorce. Nothing rattles, scares, or embarrasses her that a client might tell her.

“That’s the benefit of having lived through it myself,” says Bastian. “I’ve learned to reframe the situation for the couples and show them the things they can look forward to once the house is sold.”

GETTING SPECIAL TRAINING COMES IN HANDY FOR MANY SITUATIONS

Bastian dealt with a couple who had already been divorced by the time she was brought in. The woman had never removed her name from the home’s title even though her ex-husband owned the house. She had full custody of the children.

At some point, he stopped paying the mortgage and child support. Her credit became negatively impacted, and they both faced having a foreclosure on their credit reports. That mark could be damaging for seven years, affecting activities like trying to buy another home, renting, and other financial transactions.

“They both agreed to put it on the market. There wasn’t a lot of goodwill on his part to get along on anything. I just kept pointing to the needs of the children to provide a framework of steps to follow.”

The half-remodeled home fell into disrepair because he had run out of steam and money. But Bastian kept emphasizing to him that by selling the property, there would be money to pay the back child support. She also pointed out that avoiding foreclosure had tangible benefits for him, too, and

would allow him to start fresh again.

It all ended up with things settled and the house sold.

“It’s just not my place to judge. There are a lot of accusations being thrown around in a divorce,” Bastian says. “From where I sit, there are no sides. It’s about selling the house and helping both of them move forward.”

Johnson worked with a couple in which one party was designated as the seller and the other one wasn’t on the title.

“I made sure both of them signed off on all documents even though the other person wasn’t on the title,” she says.

One party wouldn’t speak to Johnson at first. That person was still in the home and wasn’t motivated to communicate.

“I would reach out initially, but they requested that I don’t call anymore and only send emails,” she says.

But there was no response to the emails. She couldn’t show the home because the individual in the home wouldn’t authorize any showings even when not in the home.

continued on the next page...

Decisions get complicated. Emotions can run high. But in the end, you help people move on to the next chapters of their lives.

So, Johnson called one day and left a message saying she was going to be at the home to pick up the keys. She insisted that she was going to speak with that person. She sent a text when she showed up at the house.

“That person actually was there, and we had a conversation. Finally, the person realized I was a neutral third party,” she adds. “I just kept coming back to where we all wanted to be. I’d say to them both, ‘I understand what you are saying, but let’s move forward.’”

The home eventually received an acceptable offer, and it went smoothly after that. It took a lot of perseverance for a few months. Both parties began to understand that she was there for both of them.

When they are in court, divorcing couples may feel like the judge isn’t listening to them or even that their own lawyers aren’t listening to them.

“They feel it’s an uphill battle. But I’m on both of their sides. I want what’s best for the home and for both of them,” she says.

PANDEMIC MIGHT CAUSE JUMP IN DIVORCES

About 40% to 50% of married couples in the United States divorce, according to the American Psychological Association, and the divorce rate for subsequent marriages is even higher. When those divorcing couples need or want to sell the family home, Starks says, 50% of those divorce listings fail to sell with the first agent hired. Many agents just don’t understand how to handle the volatility, emotions, and complications that can happen.

For couples who were already on shaky ground before being quarantined together, a jump in the number of divorces could happen this year. “COVID has shone a spotlight onto the strengths and weaknesses of marriage,” she says. “The family law community is expecting a surge in filings as courts begin to open up more.”

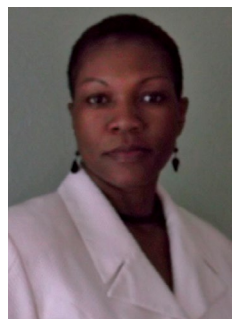
She talks with many family and divorce attorneys throughout the country. They believe that the extra pressures of losing jobs or wages plus staying home all day and all night with the kids can push people over the edge. Their regular routines—which sometimes included ignoring the marital problems—have gone into a tailspin.

“With the pandemic, couples who were on the edge of disaster might decide that sticking it out any longer would be harmful for themselves, their kids, and their lives,” Johnson says. ★

LEE NELSON is a freelance journalist from the Chicago area.

A number of organizations offer designations and courses for real estate professionals who want to learn about working with divorced clients. You can search terms like *real estate divorce designation* and *real estate divorce course* to find options.

Carlene Johnson
CJ Services Realty
powered by United Real
Estate – Houston



Theresa Bastian
Let’s Move Austin



TIPS FOR AGENTS WHO WANT TO WORK ON THE SPLITS

Be tenacious

It’s more than empathy, says Theresa Bastian, broker/owner of Let’s Move Austin. “Tenacity will make you really committed to go the extra mile. Working with divorcing couples can be twice as much work as a regular home sale.” But don’t let negativity of the couple be contagious.

Be trustworthy

Make sure to stay open and communicative with both parties, emphasizes Laurel Starks, founder of the Illumi Institute (formerly the Divorce Real Estate Institute). If you send an email to one, you have to send it to the other one. Don’t take sides even though that might be hard.

Be steady

“You have to be firm, and don’t use words like ‘I think’ or ‘I believe,’” says Carlene Johnson, owner of CJ Services Realty powered by United Real Estate – Houston. “Any indication that you are unsure will sometimes be used against you.”

Be aware of your correspondence to their attorneys

Don’t send all your communications to their lawyers, because lawyers cost them money, and some of your clients don’t have any money, Starks says. Make sure the important information that should be put before an attorney is sent, but don’t send everything without consideration.

Be conscious of your own welfare

When you are stepping into the middle of litigation or an emotional setting, you are stepping into a real estate war zone, Starks says. “It’s purposeful work, but you must be very comfortable to be in conflict. That is my work. I take a lot of spa days. Good self-care is important, too.”

Be able to walk away

The first time Johnson stopped working for a divorcing couple, she felt both failure and relief but realized, “You have to draw the line. Some people will never listen to or respect you no matter what you do or say. In those instances, I can’t be effective.”



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Some Sales Aren't as Straightforward as You Think

Why every REALTOR® needs to know what FIRPTA is and how it works.

by Arturo Machado

On the surface, the Foreign Investment in Real Property Tax Act (FIRPTA) seems straightforward enough: Foreign people must pay a 10% or 15% tax when they sell a piece of U.S. real estate.

As always, though, the devil is in the details. And there are a lot of details, exceptions, and complicating factors. Take this one brief excerpt from the Internal Revenue Code related to FIRPTA, for example:

“If a domestic corporation which is or has been a United States real property holding corporation (as defined in section 897(c)(2)) during the applicable period specified in section 897(c)(1)(A)(ii) distributes property to a foreign person in a transaction to which section 302 or part II of subchapter C applies, such corporation shall deduct and withhold under subsection (a) a tax equal to 15 percent of the amount realized by the foreign shareholder.”

If you think that was fun reading, there are 2,500 more words and 352 sets of parentheses in Section 1445 of the Code.

But before your eyes glaze over, you should know that real estate transactions with some level of foreign involvement are quite common in Texas—so common that the TREC residential contracts and Texas REALTORS® commercial contracts contain paragraphs related to FIRPTA. Sooner or later, you are likely to work on a deal subject to FIRPTA.

Eight percent of all homes sold by foreign sellers in the

Whether the seller is considered a U.S. person or a foreign person is critically important, and it's not as simple as having a taxpayer identification number or a Social Security number.

U.S. from April 2018 to March 2019 were sold in Texas, according to NAR. Texas accounted for 10% of all homes purchased in the U.S. by international homebuyers during that same time frame. That's 18,310 homes that will eventually be sold again, triggering FIRPTA questions.

And that's just one year of sales. Combine those data points with the existing stock of foreign-owned Texas homes plus the billions of dollars of foreign-owned commercial properties across the state, and the magnitude of FIRPTA-impacted deals becomes clearer.

If you get nothing else from this article, hold on to these points:

1. The parties in the transaction need help on FIRPTA-affected deals from CPAs and attorneys experienced with FIRPTA. Period. Mistakes can be quite expensive, and there are countless ways to get it wrong if you don't have the necessary expertise.
2. Whether the seller is considered a U.S. person or a foreign person is critically important, and it's not as simple as having a taxpayer identification number or a Social Security number.
3. The amount of FIRPTA withholding is dependent on a variety of factors, as exemptions and reductions can apply in certain circumstances. This is one area where qualified CPA and attorney help is especially important.
4. The buyer, not the seller, is responsible for acting as the withholding agent and making sure the IRS is paid the appropriate amount of tax.

If you want to dive deeper, here are additional details and complications that can arise.

The Basics: What FIRPTA is and How it Works

FIRPTA imposes a tax on capital gains derived by foreign people from the disposition of U.S. real property interests. Withholding

of the funds is required at the time of sale, and the payment must be remitted to the IRS within 20 days following closing.

The job of making sure the IRS gets its money within 20 days falls to the buyer in most cases. The title company normally facilitates this function, but this does not imply the buyer has escaped the obligation to act as withholding agent.

In most cases, the buyer must complete IRS Forms 8288 and 8288-A, where they will enter the amount subject to 10% or 15% withholding.

The 10% withholding rate applies to properties sold above \$300,000 but less than \$1 million that the buyer intends to occupy as a primary residence. That same property will incur 15% withholding if the buyer does not intend to occupy it as a primary residence, regardless of the sales price. There is an exception to withholding in cases where the buyer intends to occupy the property as a primary residence and the sales price is \$300,000 or less.

Who is Deemed a Foreign Person or a U.S. person?

Since the buyer acts in the capacity of the withholding agent, it is imperative that buyers exercise utmost due diligence on this question, recognizing that a seller's U.S. or foreign status is not always obvious.

It also isn't always simple. The IRS defines a foreign seller as a non-resident alien individual, a foreign corporation not treated as a domestic corporation, or a foreign partnership, trust, or estate. If the seller holds U.S. citizenship or a permanent resident card, that person is typically exempt from FIRPTA withholding.

Having an international tax identification number (ITIN) has no bearing on whether the seller is a foreign person or U.S. person. The IRS issues ITINs to help individuals comply with U.S. tax laws and to provide a means to efficiently process tax returns and payments for those ineligible for Social Security numbers. "They are issued regardless of immigration status, because both resident and nonresident aliens may have a U.S. filing or reporting requirement under the Internal Revenue Code. ITINs do not serve any purpose other than federal tax reporting," to quote directly from the IRS.

For an individual who is neither a U.S. citizen nor a permanent resident, there is a different way to determine this status. This alternative is known as the substantial presence test. That's IRS lingo for addressing where the person in question spends time, regardless of citizenship status.

Here's how it works: The seller is considered a United States resident and subject to U.S. taxes if that person meets the substantial presence test for the calendar year. Sellers will be considered substantially present in the U.S. if they are physically present in the U.S. on at least:

- 31 days during the current year, and
- 183 days during the three-year period that includes the current year and the two years immediately before that (counting all the days present in the current year, and one-third of the days present in the first year before the current year, and one-sixth of the days present in the second year before the current year.)

Got that? If the calculation outlined above indicates the seller is not a foreign person, the buyer should file what is commonly known as a FIRPTA affidavit attesting to the seller's non-foreign status.

Your ability to build strong relationships with buyers and sellers could easily lead them to expect you to resolve FIRPTA questions. But don't fall into the trap of providing tax or legal advice. The time to prepare for a FIRPTA transaction is before one comes your way.

Clearly, questions of substantial presence—and FIRPTA overall—can be tricky. That's probably why the Texas Real Estate Commission says:

“A prudent broker will have a list of CPAs or attorneys who are familiar with FIRPTA to provide to a seller with a foreign status. The CPA or attorney can guide the seller and advise them regarding their tax obligations under this law. A license holder should NOT take it upon themselves to determine whether or not the seller has a tax obligation under FIRPTA.”

TREC adds that the buyer should take care to ensure that this question is resolved before closing. “It is not the title company's job to take care of these issues for the seller or the buyer,” according to TREC's 2020-2021 Legal Update.

Common FIRPTA Situations and Common Mistakes

One problematic scenario that pops up often involves a seller that is a limited liability corporation (LLC) with a single member.

The common mistake here is assuming that the seller is a U.S. person, exempt from FIRPTA withholding, simply because the LLC was formed in the U.S. However, if that U.S.-based LLC has only one member, then you must determine whether that person is a U.S. person or foreign person. The same rules outlined above apply. It's about the status of the LLC's single member, not the location of the LLC.

The lone exception is when the LLC's single member had previously made a tax election to be treated as a corporation.

That situation is the proverbial tip of the iceberg when it comes to challenging FIRPTA scenarios. Other frequent issues include:

- The property is being sold at a loss, which has no bearing on whether FIRPTA withholding should be applied and definitely does not exempt the transaction.
- A foreign seller sells the property to a foreign buyer. This, too, does not exempt the transaction. Also be aware that both parties must have taxpayer identification numbers to complete the sale.

So long as the buyer has no actual knowledge that the seller is making a false statement with regard to status, or has not received any notice to the contrary, the buyer can rely on the FIRPTA Affidavit signed at closing and will not be subject to any taxes or penalties.

Mitigating the Tax Obligation

Withholding can often be reduced or eliminated with proper planning and with help from a document known as a withholding certificate. The seller can use this document to show that the underlying tax liability from the sale of real property will be less than the amount of FIRPTA withholding. Supporting documentation must be included to support this claim.

But beware: The seller must apply for a withholding certificate using IRS Form 8288-B *before or on the date of closing*. If the withholding certificate is received prior to the sale, the buyer can rely on the withholding certificate for zero or reduced withholding. If, however, the withholding certificate is not approved at the time of the transaction, the IRS permits the buyer to place the withholding in escrow until the IRS responds by either approving the seller's withholding certificate or denying it. It's a good idea to have an attorney act as the withholding agent, with authority over the escrow funds, while the IRS reviews the application. If the IRS approves the withholding certificate, the buyer should then remit the amount placed in escrow back to the seller. If the application is denied, the buyer must remit the full amount to the IRS.

How to Become Better Prepared

Your ability to build strong relationships with buyers and sellers could easily lead them to expect you to resolve FIRPTA

questions. But don't fall into the trap of providing tax or legal advice. The time to prepare for a FIRPTA transaction is before one comes your way. As TREC recommends, brokers and agents should get to know CPAs and attorneys who have a significant portfolio of FIRPTA experience. Expert help can help you avoid leaving buyers with a heavy IRS obligation they didn't see coming. ★

ARTURO MACHADO, CPA, is a shareholder and leader of the international practice group at Sol Schwartz & Associates in San Antonio, where he works on approximately 25-30 FIRPTA transactions annually and provides tax consulting and compliance services. He has more than 18 years of accounting experience with a particular concentration in international tax. Machado is a frequent speaker in the U.S. and Mexico and has participated in numerous tax forums on inbound and outbound tax issues to consider when doing business domestically and abroad.

HOW DO YOU COMPARE?

See how you are similar to or different from your peers.

There's no such thing as a typical REALTOR®. The demographics and professional backgrounds of members vary—and the way REALTORS® work differs, too. But there are percentages and medians and such. Here are some of those statistics from the 2020 *Profile of Texas REALTORS® Members*.

LICENSE

Agent	82%
Broker	13%
Broker Associate	6%
Appraiser	1%



SPECIALTY

Residential	72%
Property Management	5%
Commercial	3%
Relocation	3%

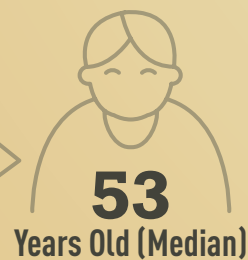
BROKERAGE FIRMS

Independent Company	55%
Franchise	40%

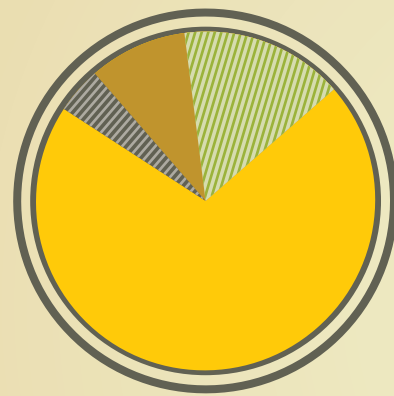
47% have 1 office location

62%
FEMALE

36%
MALE



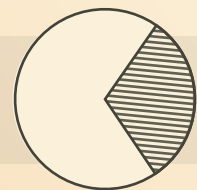
70% White	10% Black/African American
15% Hispanic/Latino	5% Asian/Pacific Islander



17% have at least one personal assistant



69%
Licensed



31%
Unlicensed

26% Are Members of a Real Estate Team



97% Plan to Stay in the Industry During the Next 2 Years



73%

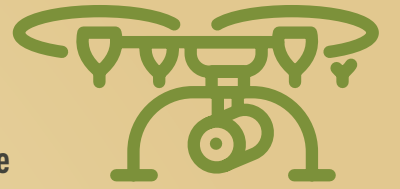
Real Estate is Only Occupation

4 Years

Median Experience of Sales Agents

36%

Use Drones or Hire Drone Operators



AGENT COMPENSATION

- 31% Fixed Commission Split Under 100%
- 27% Capped Commission Split
- 21% Graduated Commission Split
- 12% 100% Commission
- 2% Commission Plus Share of Profits
- 1% Salary Only
- 1% Share of Profits Only



\$585 of Texas REALTORS® are Spent Annually on Professional Development (Median)

55% of Agents Receive E&O Insurance From Brokerage

\$120,500 GROSS MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME

83% of Texas REALTORS® are Homeowners



96% of Texas REALTORS® are Registered to Vote



73% of Texas REALTORS® are Volunteer in Community



14% of Texas REALTORS® are Veterans



9% of Texas REALTORS® Spent at Least \$1,000/Year Advertising Themselves on Social Media



40% spent \$0

SOCIAL MEDIA USE (PROFESSIONALLY)

80% Facebook	43% Instagram
62% LinkedIn	22% Twitter

AGENTS
ANNUAL MEDIAN GROSS INCOME

\$39,090

AGENTS
ANNUAL REAL ESTATE BUSINESS EXPENSES (MEDIAN)

\$5,290



BROKERS
\$104,760

\$23,850

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF HISPANIC REAL ESTATE PROFESSIONALS **nahrep**

This is the third in a series of profiles of the multicultural allied real estate associations in Texas.



Rachel Bruno
NAHREP National
Advocacy Committee
Regional Director

Founded in 1999, the National Association of Hispanic Real Estate Professionals is the largest Hispanic business association in the U.S. NAHREP works to advance sustainable Hispanic homeownership through advocacy, education, and facilitation of relationships with industry stakeholders and professionals.

“Above all else, NAHREP is an economic mobility organization that believes in building wealth for the Latino community through homeownership,” says NAHREP National Advocacy Committee Regional Director Rachel Bruno.

According to NAHREP’s 2019 *State of Hispanic Homeownership Report*,

Latinos comprise 18.3% of the U.S. population, or 59.9 million people. The report says the Hispanic homeownership rate in 2019 was 47.5%, and the number of Hispanic owner households was 8,156,000.

NAHREP counts more than 40,000 members in 48 states. The association welcomes anyone who has a passion for advancing its mission. However, NAHREP membership offers the greatest value to real estate industry professionals, such as agents, brokers, mortgage loan originators, title agents, closing attorneys, appraisers, and homebuilders.

Networking is an essential part of the organization. “NAHREP is a family, and our members often describe the networks they form through the organization as invaluable to building their businesses,” says Bruno.

NAHREP educates its members on real estate best practices, empowering them to serve Hispanic homebuyers and sellers at the

TEXAS REALTORS® DIVERSITY COMMITTEE

The Texas REALTORS® Diversity Committee supports activities that encourage diversity, equity, and inclusion in member involvement and leadership opportunities.

The committee works with local associations through education, sponsorship, and communication endeavors. Visit texasrealestate.com/inclusion.

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF HISPANIC REAL ESTATE PROFESSIONALS

- **Founded:** 1999
- **Mission:** To advance sustainable Hispanic homeownership
- **Membership:** More than 40,000 members in 48 states
- **Local chapters in Texas:** 9
- **Website:** nahrep.org

highest standards, Bruno says. To do this, NAHREP hosts more than 400 events a year. Local chapters also host events tailored to local issues. In August, NAHREP Houston hosted a Hack to the Future three-day virtual conference discussing cybercrime, fraud, and hacking.

Bruno says the coronavirus pandemic has been the biggest challenge for NAHREP and its members. The association has approached the situation as an opportunity to identify what is and isn’t working among its business practices.

“NAHREP has doubled down in producing high-quality digital educational content, created innovative new event tools, and taken an even more proactive approach to our advocacy efforts, because now is the time that our members need us the most,” she says.

The association stays active politically. Bruno says NAHREP advocates on the issues of credit access, housing inventory shortages, and immigration reform. NAHREP has revamped its governmental affairs efforts, launched a National Advocacy Committee, and has begun using a grassroots advocacy strategy at the local level.

NAHREP’s business model allows for rapid growth and expansion through chapter networks. “Over the last two years, we’ve dramatically increased our chapter footprint, with chapters launching in new states and markets around the country,” she says. ★

CHAPTER	WEBSITE	PRESIDENT	CONTACT INFORMATION
Austin	nahrepaustin.org	Michael Palucha	austin@nahrep.org
Dallas	nahrepdallas.org	Lisa Almaguer	dallas@nahrep.org
El Paso	nahrepelpaso.org	Oscar Alvarado	elpaso@nahrep.org
Fort Worth	nahrepfortworth.org	Nikki Skalsky	fortworth@nahrep.org
Houston	nahrepgreaterhouston.org	Danny Garcia	houston@nahrep.org
Katy/West Houston	nahrepkaty.org	Claudia Pastor	katy@nahrep.org
North Houston	nahrepnorthhouston.org	Teri Bonnel	northhouston@nahrep.org
Plano/Garland	nahrepplanogarland.org	Diana Sifuentes	planogarland@nahrep.org
San Antonio	nahrepsanantonio.org	Dahlia Garcia	sanantonio@nahrep.org

The phone number to reach all local chapters is 877-2NAHREP.



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DID YOU KNOW? REALTORS® GIVE BACK TO THEIR COMMUNITIES

REALTORS® work in your area every day, helping you and others achieve real estate goals. Whether the transaction involves residential property, land, commercial property, or rental property, REALTORS® are trusted professionals you can count on.

But REALTOR® associations, brokerages, and individual agents also work in your community to make positive change.

VOLUNTEERING MORE THAN MONEY

REALTORS® know that making a difference sometimes takes more than writing a check. That’s why they not only donate money but also their time to countless initiatives, such as:

- Habitat for Humanity builds
- Blood drives for area hospitals
- Food drives for food pantries
- Disaster relief during hurricanes and floods
- Meal delivery for first responders during the pandemic
- Backpacks and supplies for low-income students
- Clothing drives for homeless and women’s shelters
- Toy drives during the winter holidays.

These are only a few examples of how REALTORS® are improving the city you live in.

100 YEARS OF POSITIVE CHANGE

During its centennial festivities, Texas REALTORS® celebrated hundreds of members across Texas who give back to their communities in myriad ways. See all the winners of the Acts of Kindness Award at texasrealestate.com/100.

YOUR REALTOR® HELPS YOU ACHIEVE YOUR REAL ESTATE DREAMS AND MAKES YOUR COMMUNITY A BETTER PLACE.

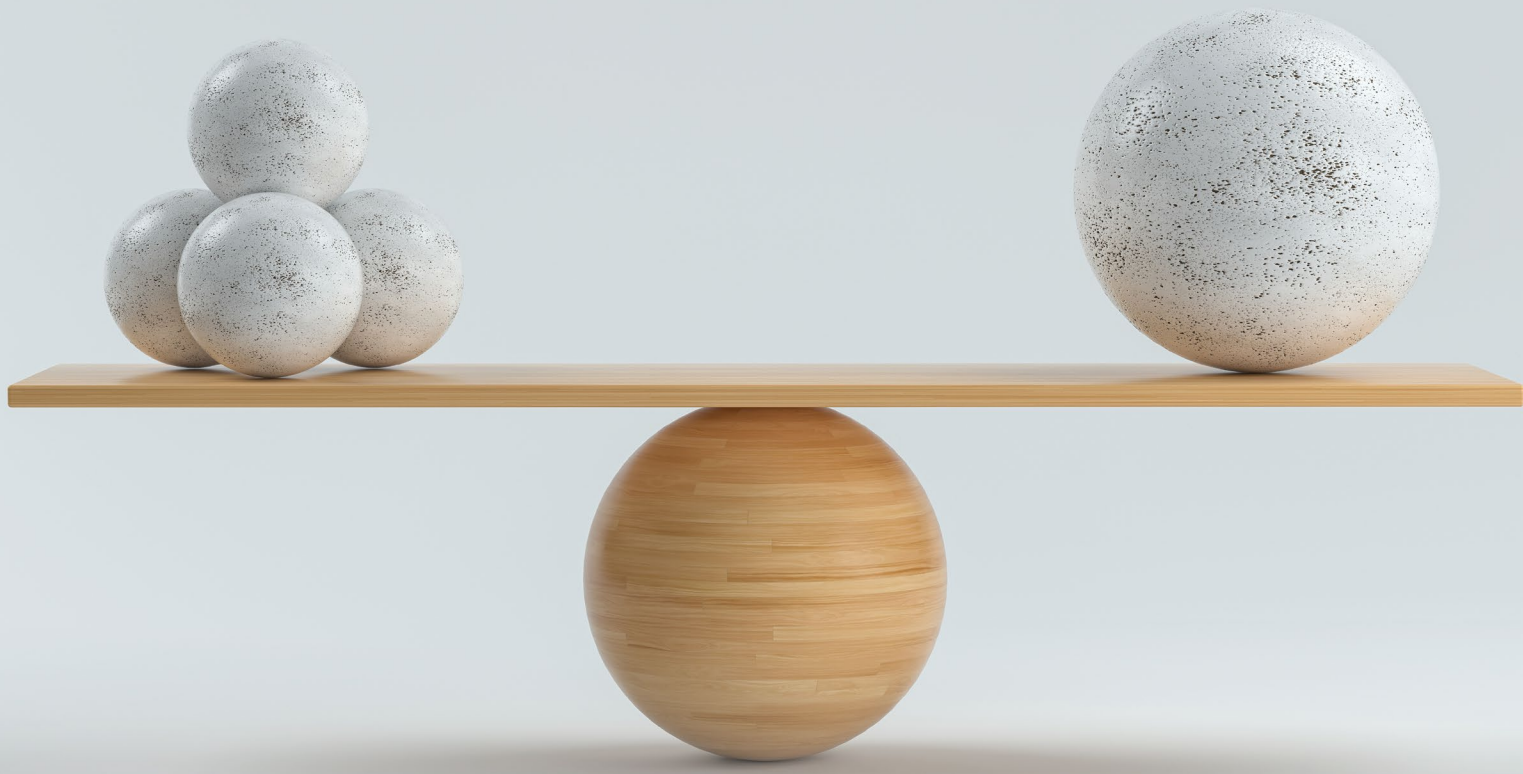
TAKE 5

Image © fotogestoeber - stock.adobe.com

MAINTAINING WORK-LIFE BALANCE

Real estate isn't a 9-to-5 job. Between evening and weekend showings, 24/7 client communications, staying active on social media, and ongoing education, it's easy to let your career take over your life.

You will be happier and more successful if you can maintain a healthy work-life balance. Here are five strategies to consider to help you thrive on and off the clock.



BLOCK OFF IMPORTANT TIMES

You wouldn't interrupt a listing appointment, would you? Treat your personal obligations with the same respect. Block off important times and don't answer emails, calls, or texts during them. Using an automatic reply or do-not-disturb setting can help set expectations. Consider adopting a nightly curfew for all work communications.

COMMIT TO WORK OR PLAY

If you are working, work. Do not waste time. If you are relaxing, relax. Spend time with family or friends. Do your best to not think about work. Feeling unable to disconnect undermines work-life balance.

CREATE WORKSPACES

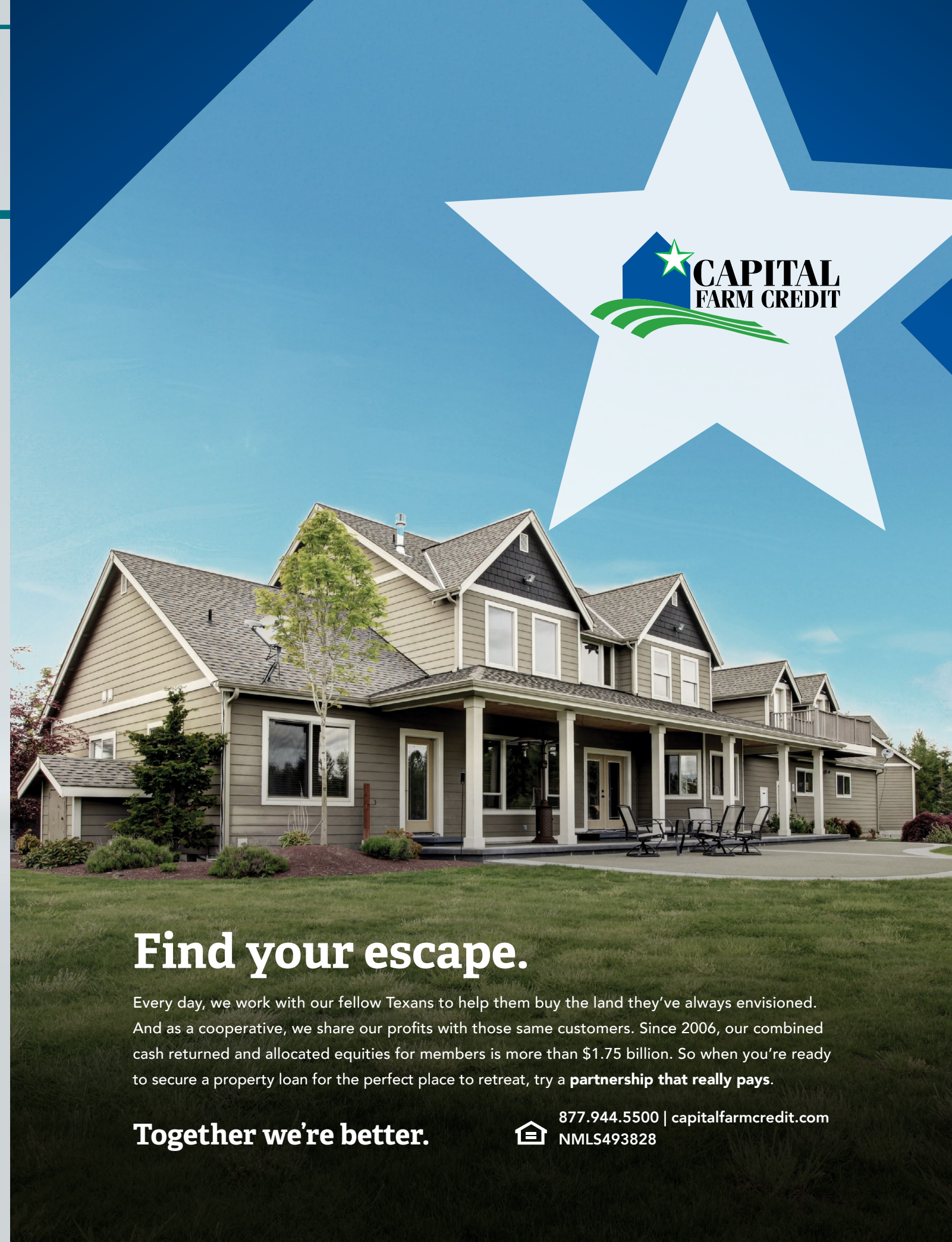
Whether working at home or in the office, set up dedicated workspaces where you can be productive. Do not work in places that have other established uses, such as a kitchen table or couch. Having a place to do work—and a routine of working hard in that place—will help keep you focused.

PAY YOURSELF BACK

If you worked over the weekend, make time for yourself during the week. If you attended a child's school event during the day, work later the next day.

OVERALL BALANCE IS THE GOAL

You may not achieve work-life balance on a daily, weekly, or even monthly basis. Some busy times may last for weeks. Other times may be very light. Remember that balance is about handling your various obligations in a sustainable way over the long term.



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Every day, we work with our fellow Texans to help them buy the land they've always envisioned. And as a cooperative, we share our profits with those same customers. Since 2006, our combined cash returned and allocated equities for members is more than \$1.75 billion. So when you're ready to secure a property loan for the perfect place to retreat, try a **partnership that really pays.**

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