



Your Guide to Greening Your Association



At home with green



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If your local association of REALTORS® is contemplating “going green” or going greener, you’re not alone. According to a 2007 survey, nearly one-third of businesses have made efforts to green their business practices or make these practices more sustainable. The reasons, in many cases, are not altruistic. Rather, these businesses go “green” to get green. The bottom line is that going green has the potential to save you, your association, and your business a lot of money.

Some of the best examples of green business practices are outside of real estate. Take Subaru of Indiana. When the company launched operations 20 years ago, it made a conscious decision to pursue green initiatives. Since 1994, the company, which makes 800 automobiles daily, has not shipped any waste to a landfill. Going green not only reduced the company’s environmental impact, it forced the company to stop and rethink every single procedure and operation; the consequence was innovation, which resulted in competitive advantages that have left other auto manufacturers in the dust (*The Wall Street Journal*; March 23, 2009; “Greener and Cheaper”). Not too shabby.

But what’s that got to do with real estate? Consider that in the United States, homes are responsible for 21 percent of the nation’s greenhouse gas emissions. That fact, plus rising energy costs and a decision by California’s Public Utilities Commission that mandates that new housing developments are “zero net energy” by 2020, have caused consumers, homebuilders, homeowners, property managers, REALTORS®, local governments, schools, and others to focus on the energy efficiency of homes and buildings. That’s why real estate is a green issue, and that’s why the CALIFORNIA ASSOCIATION OF REALTORS® formed a Green Task Force in January 2008. That’s why your local association may want to form a green task force, too.

Step #1: Research

If your association or board is contemplating the creation of a green task force, there is no need to reinvent the wheel. In fact, C.A.R. encourages you to take a page out of the sustainability movement and **reduce** your efforts, **reuse** the efforts of the C.A.R. Green Task Force, and **recycle** and incorporate some of our findings and resources.

- 1. Research:** Learn more about sustainability and green real estate issues at <http://green.car.org>.
- 2. Read “The Green Issue”:** Why It Matters to You and Your Business” (*California Real Estate* magazine; Sept. 2008; <http://www.car.org/newsstand/crem/past-issues/september2008/>).
- 3. Contact Other Associations and Businesses:** Read “What Other Associations Are Doing” on C.A.R.’s green Web site (<http://green.car.org/greenforrealtors/localassociations/>) and network with local green businesses. Many of these efforts by local associations of REALTORS® fuse “what’s right” with “what’s good for members’ businesses and brand identity.”
- 4. Read the attached Case Studies.**

Step #2: Form Your Task Force in Six Easy Steps

- 1. Permission:** Ask your association president for permission to form a task force.*
- 2. Assessment:** Unlike step 1, this step is optional. Determine your membership's baseline awareness of green real estate issues and trends.
- 3. Recruit:** Approach the membership and recruit a manageable number of members for the task force. Recruit 13 to 16 members, or less, depending on the size of your organization.
- 4. Meet:** Convene an initial meeting.
- 5. Goals:** Establish objectives, goals at first meeting. One of the first things C.A.R.'s Green Task Force did was collaboratively craft a set of green principles. These principles were affirmational and aspirational, serving as the linchpin for its efforts. Your group may want to create its own unique principles or borrow from the following: <http://green.car.org/greenforrealtors/sellingconsumeragreenhome/224300>.
- 6. Stay Grounded:** Going green is a process. Do what you can; and don't become too lofty in your goals. Whatever you do, says Jutta Jacobs, 2009 president of the Scenic Coast Association of REALTORS® and founder of that association's green task force: "Do not preach; educate."

*Try a softer approach: The terms "green task force" or "green committee" seemed too off-putting to the Berkeley Association of REALTORS®. Instead, the group formed a "green council." Arlene Baxter, the association's then president, who launched that association's green council, believes the term "council" resulted in more participation.

Step #3: Green Your Association's Offices

When your association or office goes green, there's a good chance you will feel good. But guess what? Your wallet will feel a lot better. That's because for every \$1 you invest in energy-efficiency measures, you will increase your office's asset value by \$3.

If your office and association are looking for pure savings, consider that a 30 percent reduction in energy consumption can reduce your operating costs by \$2,500 annually for every 5,000 square feet of office space.*

Start Small: One common misconception about going green is that it means installing solar panels on the roof. Instead, there are a lot of simple low-cost steps that you can implement that will create impressive savings—something both the greens and non-greens in your office and association can appreciate.

Before you begin, you might want to determine your local association's or office's carbon footprint (www.terrapass.com/business/email.html) or detect the "amperage vampires," those appliances and devices that suck wattage. You can do so with the help of a Kill-a-Watt™ Electricity Usage Monitor. That way, you'll know how much room you have for improvement or how well you are already doing. In addition, you may want to perform an energy audit. You can conduct a basic energy audit yourself or you can hire a certified energy auditor to come in. Contact your local power provider or the California Building Performance Contractors Association to learn more and to find an auditor.

*Flex Your Power's Best Practice Guide for Commercial Office Buildings: www.fypower.org/bpg/index.html?b=offices.

Step #4: Community Outreach

Many local REALTOR® associations have formed alliances with local utilities—electric, gas, water, etc.—to help them market their existing programs. For instance, does your local water district give out low-flow shower heads that your members can distribute? Or, if your local electric company exchanges light-emitting diode holiday lights for the less-efficient incandescent bulbs, can your office serve as an exchange location?

These alliances build goodwill and help local associations position their members as green resources for homeowners and prospective home buyers. The opportunities are unlimited. Examples of successful community outreaches include:

- The Malibu Association of REALTORS® launched the “Sell a House, Plant a Tree” program, which encouraged REALTORS® to purchase a “green” closing gift in partnership with local nurseries, which agreed to offer discounts to participating REALTORS®.
- The San Luis Obispo Association of REALTORS® launched an environmental committee, which created a successful CFL campaign, “SLO REALTORS® Give Sellers the GREEN Light.”
- The Trinity County Association of REALTORS® participated in the development of a 13,000-acre community forest on public lands and in the reduction of fire fuels around local communities.

Case Studies: How Two Local Associations Went Green

Two local associations of REALTORS®—Orange County Association of REALTORS® (OCAR) and Scenic Coast—also recently formed green task forces. These groups saw a need and an opportunity to align the education of its members in such a way that it repositioned its members to address the needs of home buyers and sellers. For instance, each member of the OCAR Green Task Force became an ambassador to a city in district 32 and each was required to contact that city’s chamber of commerce, according to Joanne Frank, management team liaison to OCAR’s Green Task Force. The “ambassadors,” Frank explains, are letting the cities know that OCAR has formed a task force to learn what initiatives and projects are coming down the pike that could affect consumers.

OCAR has made the following changes to its office:

- eliminated Styrofoam™ cups and plastic water bottles;
- created a mini-green Web site to communicate to its members;
- provided filtered “piped” water and recyclable cups for tea and coffee;
- now sends directors materials electronically, thus saving paper, postage, and staff time;
- switched to eco-friendly paper goods in the restrooms;
- provided a list of “fields” to its MLS Committee, with the intent that these will be incorporated into the regional MLS to facilitate the identification of green or energy-saving features.

The Scenic Coast Association of REALTORS® established six goals at the outset and its first meeting: 1) Raise membership's awareness of five previously agreed-upon key green principles (energy efficiency/conservation, water conservation, resource conservation, livable communities, and improved air quality); 2) provide membership with tools and information regarding sustainable building and being a force for green principles and building; 3) educate the Scenic Coast Association of REALTORS®' membership of green requirements as they are mandated by the state of California; 4) promote green designations, such as the EcoBroker® and NAR Green Designation and any available and suitable designation course; 5) create a substantial information resource for green building for membership and their respective clients; and 6) incorporate the green principles into the Scenic Coast Association's daily operations.

According to Jutta Jacobs, 2009 president of the Scenic Coast Association of REALTORS®, and the task force's founder, "I am really trying to be a green person, but we also have to look at how we benefit our members. The benefit [of a task force] for the members would be for them to be able to incorporate the green principles into their practice, to further distinguish themselves by having the knowledge and awareness of green building principles so they can manage and market green properties."

Tip #1: Keep It Simple and Attainable "It's the simple stuff. Removing the Styrofoam cups and using paper, shutting off computers at night. ... If it costs too much, we are not going to do it. We don't have bottled water* in the office anymore."

-Joanne Frank, management team liaison to OCAR's Green Task Force

*The change resulted in an annual savings of \$1,800 for the association.

Tip #2: Recruit "Dark Green" Agents and Non-greens "I went to the membership last year and said, 'Who would like to be on the task force?' I did get people who are green and people who are totally not green and eager to learn. I think that is the best way to go. If we are all green, we all agree, and we preach to the choir. Being able to recruit members who in the past wouldn't even give this a thought, I think that was a very good thing to do." -Jutta Jacobs, 2009 president the Scenic Coast Association of REALTORS®

10 Ways to Green Your Association's Business Practices

- 1. Use ENERGY STAR Office Equipment:** According to ENERGY STAR, its qualified office and imaging products use 30 percent to 75 percent less electricity than standard equipment. These include computers, monitors, copiers, fax machines, and printers.
- 2. Install CFL and/or LED Light Bulbs:** ENERGY STAR-qualified compact fluorescent bulbs (CFLs) use about 75 percent less energy than standard incandescent bulbs and last up to 10 times longer. You'll notice the savings immediately. Screw-in light-emitting diode (LED) bulbs are not yet mainstream, but are available. These bulbs will eventually replace CFLs, which contain small amounts of mercury and require special disposal and precautions if broken. LED bulbs will make an even larger dent in your electricity bill than CFL bulbs, but make a considerably larger dent in your wallet (approximately \$19.95 for one bulb) and will until they become more widely adopted.
- 3. Turn Off the Computers:** According to *The Wall Street Journal*, "American businesses could save \$1.72 billion each year merely by getting more employees to shut off their computers at night or allow the machines to enter an energy-saving mode."
- 4. Install Motion Sensors:** Motion sensor light switches and timers automatically shut off lights when offices are not in use.
- 5. Use RELAY®:** You can reduce paper use, storage requirements, and litigation risk with RELAY®, an electronic transaction management platform developed by a C.A.R. subsidiary. RELAY® gives you the ability to conduct an entirely paperless transaction. Visit www.rebt.com to learn more.

- 6. Install Low-flow Toilets in the Company Bathroom:** Low-flow toilets use 20 percent less water than standard toilets. Better yet, dual-flush toilets use 0.8 gallons/flush/number one button; 1.6 gallons/flush/number two button. Or another option that the NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF REALTORS® has installed in the men's restrooms of its Washington, D.C., offices is waterless urinals.
- 7. All-in-One Models Versus Fax Machines:** If your office still has a fax machine, a scanner, a copier, consider the savings—400 kilowatt-hours of electricity per year (\$44/year, depending on location and utility provider)—by upgrading to an all-in-one product. While you're at it, set your printer's default to print double-sided mode.
- 8. Replace Old Computers:** Who doesn't love more RAM and a better operating system? Dell now makes a computer that releases less toxins and energy. Its OptiPlex Energy Smart computer meets ENERGY STAR standards.
- 9. Install Energy-efficient Windows:** Energy-efficient windows are designed to protect the inside environment from the outside by using special glass and framing.
- 10. Use Natural Resources for Energy:** You've done all of the above, including caulking your windows with low VOC caulk? Then you are ready for the crown jewel of green buildings: solar panels and/or wind turbines. Can it be done? Ask San Francisco's Green Key Real Estate and Santa Barbara's CENTURY 21 A Hart Realty, Inc.

More Resources

Business.gov: If you want to look outside real estate for your guide to going green, this official site of the U.S. government provides 10 steps and an array of links and guides, including the *Small Business Guide to Energy Efficiency*.

*Flex Your Power's Best Practice Guide for Commercial Office Buildings:
www.fypower.org/bpg/index.html?b=offices.

Green Office Guide: a comprehensive 44-page booklet and/or pdf produced by *Sustainable Industries*, provides everything you need to know about making your office and business more sustainable: www.sustainableindustries.com/resources.

How to Green Your Small Business: www.ehow.com/how_4901172_green-small-business.html

Appendices

Green Essentials: Who

Build It Green (www.builditgreen.org): A professional, non-profit membership organization whose stated mission is to promote healthy, energy- and resource-efficient buildings in California, Build It Green developed the GreenPoint Rated system to evaluate and certify green homes in California. Its Web site is one-stop shopping for extensive information on its own and other certification systems, incentives for green building, case studies and marketing reports on residential green building, and information on an assortment of green building products. The Web site also hosts a database of green building professionals, which includes everything from architects to green home stagers.

California Home Energy Efficiency Rating Services (CHEERS®) (www.cheers.org): This non-profit group was approved in 1999 by the California

Energy Commission as the first home energy rating provider under the Home Energy Rating System Regulations. CHEERS® trains and certifies Home Energy Efficiency Raters, and CHEERS® created and maintains an Internet Rating Registry of CHEERS® Certified Raters and energy analysts.

EcoBroker® (www.ecobroker.com): EcoBroker® provides educational training focused on green building for real estate agents nationwide. Its Web site also lists green properties and hosts a searchable database of green brokers.

Green Globes (www.greenglobes.com): Green Globes provides a green building assessment tool similar to LEED®. In the early days of green building, Green Globes and LEED® were neck and neck, competing to become “the” green building standard. LEED® appears to have won out, but Green Globes is still attractive due to its lower price-point and long-time inclusion of existing buildings. It’s beneficial to know what Green Globes is and how it relates to green building.

Green Resource Council (www.greenresourcecouncil.org): This group administers the NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF REALTORS®’ Green Designation, which addresses: defining “green”; green communities; green homes and buildings; green buyers and sellers; and how agents can green their real estate practices. To earn the designation, members must complete a 12-hour core course and a six-hour elective in either residential real estate, commercial real estate, or property management. The total cost is \$295. Classes are available in live lecture and online formats.

The ReUse People (www.thereusepeople.org): A non-profit organization serving all of California, The ReUse People provides environmentally responsible demolition services, and sells reusable building materials to homeowners and contractors.

U.S. Green Building Council (www.usgbc.org): The USGBC is the non-profit organization that created the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED®) Green Building Rating System™. While LEED® currently exists only for new, large residential buildings, it’s useful for any real estate professional to have a working knowledge of LEED® criteria.

Green Essentials: A Definition of Terms

Carbon Footprint: Carbon footprint refers to the overall carbon emissions created by a building, including both its construction (what materials were used, how they were produced, and their sources of origin) and its operation (how much energy does the building use on average).

Carbon Neutral: A claim made by some companies and developers to describe a building or product whose net carbon emissions are zero. This is very difficult to achieve and truly possible only if something doesn’t emit any carbon at all or soaks up as much as it emits. However, there are an increasing number of carbon neutral claims out there, so much so that the Federal Trade Commission recently launched an investigation of such claims and is currently revising its Green Marketing Guidelines to limit the use of the term.

Carbon Offsets: Carbon offsets allow people to pay money to fund a forestry project, renewable energy project, or research into renewable energy technology in order to offset their carbon emissions. Although sometimes positive, carbon offsets have come under fire for allowing people to essentially pay their way out of environmental responsibility.

ENERGY STAR: Created by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the ENERGY STAR program certifies everything from household appliances to entire homes as being energy efficient. The program’s Web site (www.energystar.gov) also hosts a wealth of information on various energy-saving methods and products and a number of educational resources.

Green Washing: Selling or marketing something as green when it’s not. For instance, advertising your green real estate business while driving clients to listings in a Hummer.

Off-gassing: The emission of chemicals from building materials, furniture, textiles, bedding, or other products in the home. Many of these emissions are health hazards and have been linked to asthma and some cancers. Avoid off-gassing by avoiding products that contain toxins such as formaldehyde.

Photovoltaic (PV) Panels: Panels that can be fitted to a roof or a post in the ground, which convert visible light into direct current (DC). Once connected to the power grid, they can provide no-cost solar energy for decades. While the up-front costs of PV systems are still high, federal, state, and local incentives and rebates, as well as drastically reduced energy prices, help the systems pay for themselves more quickly.

Sustainable Forestry Products: Wood products certified according to standards set by the Forest Stewardship Council (www.fscus.org) or the Rainforest Alliance's SmartWood program (www.rainforest-alliance.org) come from responsibly managed forests, where biodiversity is conserved and local communities are supported.

Sustainability: The dictionary definition of sustainability is "A state or process that can be maintained indefinitely." In reference to building or business, it's an approach that evaluates environmental, social, and financial factors equally.

Resources

- **California's Green Building Directory:** www.greenbuildings.dgs.ca.gov/default.asp
- **Flex Your Power:** California's statewide energy efficiency marketing and outreach campaign: www.fypower.org/.
- **Go Solar, California!:** Find out more about rebates, tax credits, and incentives for solar energy systems in California: <http://www.gosolarcalifornia.ca.gov/>.
- **Green California:** This site is Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger's official "green

site," and is a resource for building codes, green legislation, and developments: www.green.ca.gov/default.htm.

- **Green Incentives:** The Database of State Incentives for Renewable Energy (DSIRE) offers an invaluable map of federal, state, and municipal incentives for both renewable energy use and energy efficiency: <http://www.dsireusa.org/>.
- **Natural Resources Defense Council's Greening Advisor:** This site provides a soup to nuts guide to enlisting staff to creating sustainability reports: <http://www.nrdc.org/enterprise/greeningadvisor/>.

Green Office Supplies

- **Planet Green** provides a resource to major distributors of green office supplies: <http://planetgreen.discovery.com/go-green/green-work/green-work-stuff-resources.html>.
- **The Green Office** is a retailer of green office supplies, from paper to break room furniture: <http://www.thegreenoffice.com>.

Further Readings

Greening Your Office: From Cupboard to Corporation, An A-Z Guide by Jon Clift and Amanda Cuthbert

True Green at Work: 100 Ways You Can Make the Environment Your Business by Kim Mckay, Jenny Bonnin, Tim Wallace

The Green Book: The Everyday Guide to Saving the Planet One Simple Step at a Time by Elizabeth Rogers and Thomas M. Kostigen.

The Green Guide for Business: The Ultimate Environment Handbook for Businesses of All Sizes by Chris Goodall