

GREATER NEW BEDFORD ASSOCIATION OF REALTORS

REALTOR GAZETTE

VOLUME I, ISSUE 3

MARCH 2005

PROFESSIONAL DESIGNATIONS SET YOU APART

What do the letters after a REALTOR®'s name mean? They proudly show the designations a REALTOR® has earned to further their professional development. To earn a designation, a REALTOR® has taken coursework and demonstrated specific skills, performance and knowledge in a particular area of the real estate industry. To serve today's consumers, REALTORS® need to be strong generalists and specialists. Designations are one way practitioners develop specialized skills that help the industry thrive. Designations also help practitioners demonstrate to their clients their commitment to professional development.

One of GrNBAR's goals over the past two years has been to expand our educational offerings to our members to include the courses needed for certain professional designations. In addition to the Continuing Education classes we have offered for years, we wanted to offer a local option to Realtors® who wanted to set themselves apart from their peers by educating themselves in a certain real estate specialty.

To meet that goal in 2005, we have already offered the **Accredited Buyer Representative** elective course in January, and **GRI 102** and the **Senior Real Estate Specialist** course in February. The full **Accredited Buyer Representative** course will be held here in May, followed by **GRI 202** in June and **GRI 302** in September.

SET YOURSELF APART!

FIND OUT MORE AND REGISTER FOR PROFESSIONAL DESIGNATION COURSES AT OUR WEBSITE!

WWW.GRNBAR.ORG

SEMA MLS UPDATE

The conversion to Paragon 3 has taken place and while it has not been problem free, the problems have been fairly minor. Here are a few simple solutions that may help you if you are having trouble.

If you can't log in to the online Paragon, check the address you are using. Many members who are trying to use a saved favorite or link, have a very old address that previously worked because of a special link. With the new Paragon 3 you must use **sema.fnismls.com** (no www in front).

If you have Windows XP or any special pop-up blockers on your system, you must tell your system to treat the Paragon site as a trusted site and allow pop-ups on this site. Paragon3 uses pop-ups fairly extensively. Instructions to do this can be found under the MLS Docs button on Paragon.

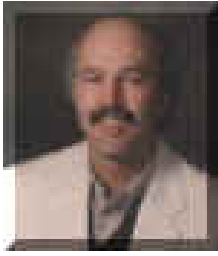
When you are working in Paragon online, the system will automatically log you off after 30 minutes if it is not aware that you are still on. The only way the system can tell if you are

still on is if a signal gets sent back to the server from you doing a search, saving a contact, maintaining a listing, etc.

Some users who are not using the Partial Save button when inputting new listings are having a problem because by the time they finish putting in the listing, the 30 minutes has passed and when they save they aren't able to because they are logged off. By using the Partial Save function at regular intervals you are sending a signal back to the server that you are actively working on the system and it extends your log on time another 30 minutes.

All these issues and many others are covered in the Paragon 3 training course that we have been offering since mid-January. If you have not yet taken the initial course, please call the office and sign up for one of the following dates: March 2nd, 10th or 22nd.

Also, here are the toll free tech support help lines you can call for help: 877-435-7657 or 877-657-4357.



Roger Canto
2005
GrNBAR President

THE PRESIDENT'S CORNER BY ROGER CANTO

Spring selling season is almost upon us and I feel we will have a banner year in 2005. Your board office and directors are ready to answer all your questions and serve your real estate needs. The Paragon MLS system is up and running with minimal problems. From my vantage point, it seems to be an upgrade from the old Voyager system. Kudos to the MLS search committee and the board staff for its hard work and making the transition so painless.

Fourteen of your directors will be attending the New England Regional Conference the first week of March. These meetings and seminars will last for two days and allow your directors access to the

latest real estate regulations, laws, and technology to help our association remain strong in this ever changing industry.

The Lenders Committee is busy putting the final touches on Lenders Nite. Like always, you never know what the committee has in mind for us Realtors that night. But I do know it will be a lot of fun.

Remember, co-operation is what Buyers and Sellers expect from Realtors in every transaction we are involved in; so act Professionally with your fellow Realtors and abide by the Code of Ethics. Have a great month!

LESSONS FROM OUR LENDER'S COMMITTEE

When the Federal Home Loan Bank Board lifted the restriction on only lending fixed rate mortgages the market exploded with different programs. One of these is the adjustable rate mortgage (ARM) which allows the borrower the choice of the frequency of rate adjustment and the index to which it is tied. One of the most popular ARMs has become the interest only, where the borrower pays the interest owed for a set period and does not pay any principle during that time.

Borrowers need to be fully educated on the risks and rewards of programs. A recent survey that the Consumer Federation of America conducted showed that the preference for ARMs was higher among the younger consumer and those with lower incomes and less education. Showing that the borrower is more likely to look at the low initial rate which allows them to stretch their resources to purchase a higher priced home without assessing the risks they may face in the future. This is part

of the reason that the delinquency and foreclosure rates for ARMs are significantly higher than for fixed rate mortgages.

Then why do borrowers not lock in to still low fixed rate mortgages but chose to subject themselves to a risk of an increase on the adjustable rate mortgage? The answer is the lure of affordability in the face of higher home prices. In February of 2005 the 10/1 ARM is on average of .25% lower than the going fixed rate and the 3/1 ARM is on average 1.00% lower and the 1/1 ARM 2.00% lower than the going fixed rates.

Real estate columnist, Kenneth Harney cautioned readers of the Washington Post on July 3rd, "Never focus solely on the upfront qualifying rate that gets you into the home. Ask yourself how and where you are going to come up with the 50 to 60 % higher monthly payment three years from now. If you don't have an answer, maybe interest-only isn't the game for you."

GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS

With the new **Separate Water Metering Law**, can I now charge my tenants for the water they consume? No, unfortunately under the new law you cannot charge existing tenants for their water consumption. The real estate industry has finalized an effort to legalize the right for landlords to install separate meters for water usage in residential rental units. This law, however, has specific requirements that landlords must meet to take advantage of this new law:

1. Landlords will have to install water saving devices in all apartments that are submetered: Under this new law landlords incur new responsibilities to ensure that all apartments are equipped with water saving devices. Low flush toilets, water-saving faucets and shower heads are required to be installed

by a licensed plumber and the property owner must certify to the municipality under the pains and penalties of perjury that these devices are properly installed and that the submeter is accurate and working properly.

2. All existing tenants are grandfathered from this new law and therefore can not be required to pay separately for water. This provision ensures that no tenant that is currently in any residential unit will be placed in a position where they would be required to pay both their current rent and a new charge for water. It also means that new tenants will understand this responsibility at the inception of a new tenancy and negotiate the rent they will pay with a clear understanding of the utilities they will be responsible for.

AROUND THE STATE

The Bay State housing market enjoyed its best year ever in 2004 as historically low mortgage rates, an improving job market, and rising inventory levels helped boost home buying activity to record levels across the state.

Home prices rose for an eleventh consecutive year with double-digit appreciation observed in both the detached single-family home and condo markets, an indication that housing demand continues to exceed the supply of homes in most market areas and price ranges. The 2004 sales volumes for both single family and condominiums establishes a new state record for sales in a single year.

Despite a more plentiful inventory of homes

available for sale, data from the MAR report show that housing prices continued to rise steadily across the state this past year to new record highs. In the detached single-family home market, the statewide median selling price increased 11.5 percent last year, from \$305,000 in 2003 to \$340,000 in 2004. In addition, the statewide median selling price for condominiums rose 15.1 percent, from \$225,000 a year ago to \$259,000 during 2004.

Notably, three of the top five years for home sales in Mass. have occurred since the start of this decade, yet the production of single-family homes has remained constant at approximately 13,000-14,000 units per year in that period.

IN 2004,
HOME PRICES IN
THE BAY STATE
ROSE FOR AN
ELEVENTH
CONSECUTIVE
YEAR.

ON THE NATIONAL SCENE

NAR's Public Awareness Campaign kicks off its eighth year this month with new television and radio ads featuring real people talking about their real estate experiences and touting the benefits of working with a Realtor®. New this year, the ads encourage consumers to contact a Realtor® first when it comes time to buy or sell a home or lease a commercial space.

The spots remind folks that not all agents are Realtors® and urge consumers to look for the Realtor® "R" on their agent's business card. The ads also help differentiate Realtors® from others in the real estate business by concluding with the tag line, "Ask if your agent is a Realtor®, a member of the National Association of Realtors®." "

The 2005 campaign will feature four new television commercials and four new radio spots as well as new customizable print ads, posters and Web banners for state and local associations to use. The television and radio commercials will run through the end of October as part of the \$25 million advertising campaign.

The network television and radio ads have changed the way consumers think about buying and selling real estate. A 2004 tracking study found that approximately three out of four consumers, about 71 percent, are aware of the NAR's advertising campaign. The survey also found that more consumers are likely to select a Realtor® to help them buy or sell a home. Consumers' preference for working with a Realtor® has increased from 58 percent in 2000 to 72 percent in 2004.

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Debra Bertrand - Fidelis, The Buyer's Agent

Thomas Burke - Coldwell Banker Hopps Realty Group

John Callahan - CENTURY 21 Hughes & Carey Birchwood

Donna Crowell - Jack Conway & Co.

Margot Feeney - Converse Company, Realtors

Byron Ford - Olde Dartmouth Realty

Ruth Freitas - Fidelis, The Buyer's Agent

Stacie Hallal-Moussa - Mainstay Realty Services

Judy Jennings - Prudential Linn Real Estate

Richard Kendall - Neves & Cashman Realty

Marjorie Silva - Jack Conway & Co

Lori Soares - Coldwell Banker Hayes Associates



**GREATER NEW BEDFORD
ASSOCIATION OF REALTORS**

651 Orchard Street Suite 101
New Bedford, MA 02744

Phone: 508-993-0406
Fax: 508-993-4386
E-mail: robin@grnbar.org

WE'RE ON THE WEB!

WWW.GRNBAR.ORG

YOUR VOICE FOR REAL ESTATE IN
GREATER NEW BEDFORD

MARCH 2005

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1	2 Paragon Training	3	4	5
6 New England Regional Conference	7	8	9	10 Paragon Training	11	12
13	14	15	16 CMA Course	17	18	19
20	21	22 Member Orientation	23 CMA Course	24	25	26
27	28	29 C.E. Classes	30	31		