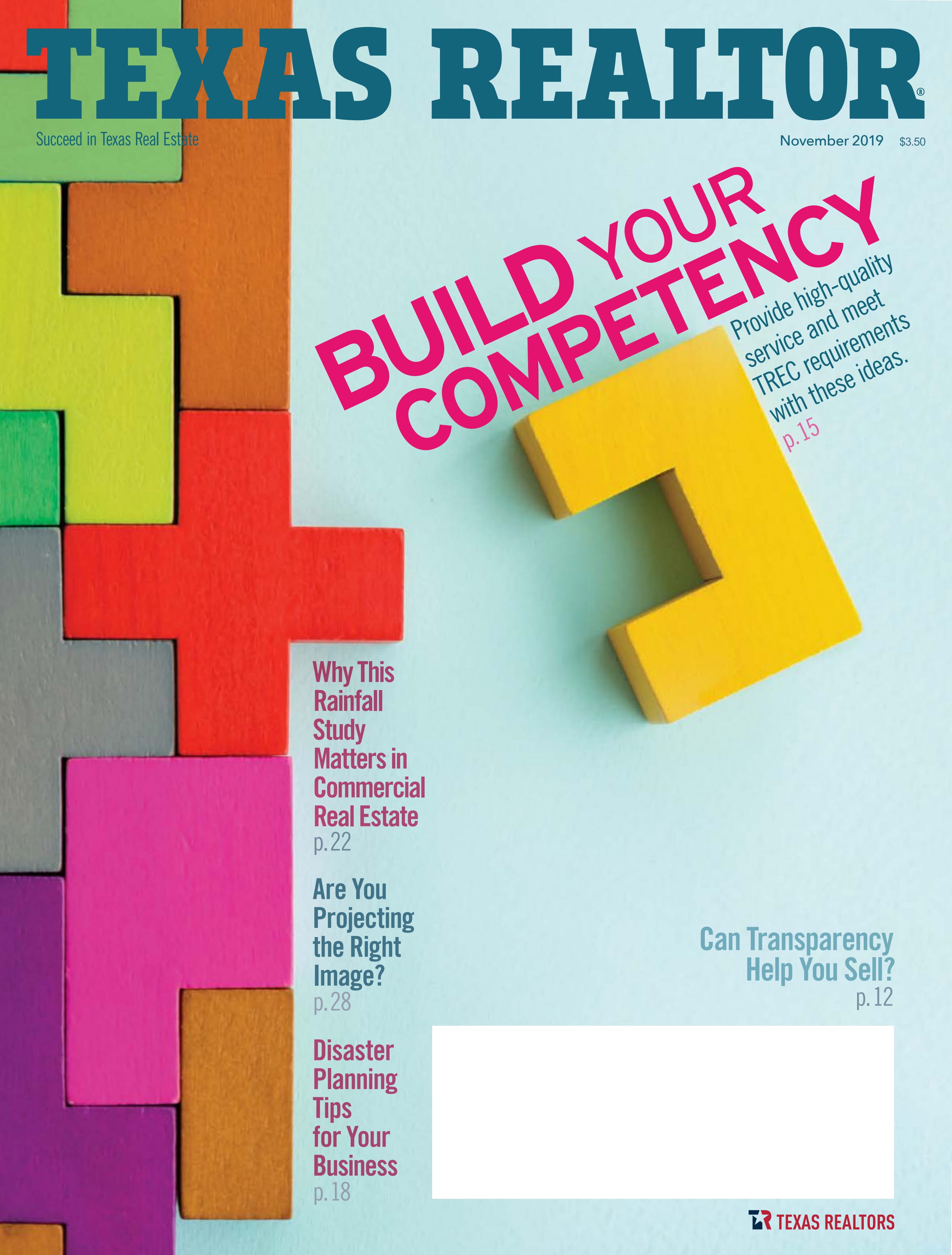

TEXAS REALTOR®

Succeed in Texas Real Estate

November 2019 $3.50

BUILD YOUR COMPETENCY

Provide high-quality service and meet TREC requirements with these ideas.
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TEXAS REALTORS


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November 2019-Volume 72-Number 9

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TEXAS REALTORS

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INSIGHTS

Chairman

“ This time of year is about reflection and giving thanks.

I'll share with you a few of the many reasons your Texas REALTORS® Leadership Team is grateful for you.

In March, we saw the highest turnout ever during REALTOR® Day at the Texas Capitol, with close to 3,000 Texas REALTORS® meeting with lawmakers under the dome. We're thankful that you came to Austin.

In May, when the 86th legislative session ended, we finished with several monumental wins, including property tax reform, school finance reform, and an end to forced annexation statewide. Your efforts on REALTOR® Day and calls for action helped make that happen. Thank you!

In September, we closed out a record-breaking 2019 fundraising year for TREPAC, so we're extremely grateful for your commitment to keeping TREPAC strong. (See page 5 for totals.)

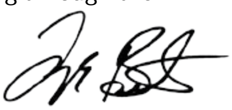
And now we're gearing up for a historic election year by supporting pro-real estate candidates earlier than ever because political campaigns have already started turning up the volume! We're thankful for engaged members who know that politics is part of the real estate business.

The TREPAC trustees, a group of Texas REALTORS® just like you, rely heavily on recommendations from local associations, as well as input from the Texas REALTORS® Political Involvement Committee, to determine which candidates deserve early support.

This early engagement lets supported candidates—and their opponents—know that Texas REALTORS® are politically active, paying attention, and willing to step up for candidates who support private property rights and the real estate industry.

We're thankful for your grassroots involvement at the local level—whether it's interviewing candidates, requesting early TREPAC support, conducting an opportunity race, or conducting a voter registration drive. Grassroots mobilization is such an important part of what we do.

On behalf of the Texas REALTORS® Leadership Team, thank you for a great 2019—now let's keep this momentum going through the 2020 elections!



Tray Bates

GRASSROOTS MOBILIZATION IS SUCH AN IMPORTANT PART OF WHAT WE DO.

GIVE RECOGNITION TO TEXAS REALTORS® MEMBERS WHO DESERVE IT MOST

Texas REALTORS® honors its 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 provide applications and nominations for these and other awards at texasrealestate.com/awards.

DECEMBER 4, 2019 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, 2020 DEADLINE

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

JANUARY 24, 2020 DEADLINE

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

TEXAS REALTORS® SMASH FUNDRAISING RECORD

Thanks to your dedication, TREPAC/The Texas Association of REALTORS® Political Action Committee had a record-breaking 2019 fundraising year, bringing in $5,743,500, with 48% of Texas REALTORS® participating.

This is the highest amount TREPAC has ever raised in a single year, and it's all because of you.

"Investing in our industry is critical now more than ever," says Deborah Spangler, 2019 TREPAC chairman. "Your investment ensures we have supporters in office at every level of government."

Members of Texas REALTORS® vet candidates and distribute TREPAC funds to those who support private-property rights and the real estate industry.

READY FOR 2020 Hundreds of REALTOR® leaders from across the state attended the "League of Their Own"-themed Texas REALTORS® 2020 TREPAC/Governmental Affairs Orientation and Board Officers Leadership Conference in October.

[A]: Mary Frances Burleson of Dallas was recognized as the REALTOR® who has made the largest lifetime contributions to TREPAC/RPAC nationwide, with $217,000 invested.

[B]: 2020 Texas REALTORS® Chairman Cindi Bulla and 2020 TREPAC Chairman Tony Lloyd welcome attendees.

13 MEMBERS HONORED FOR TREPAC EFFORTS

The Spirit of TREPAC Award recognizes Texas REALTORS® who have exhibited excellence at the local level as they participate, articulate, and communicate about TREPAC activities during the year. This year's recipients:

- **Debbie Conner**, Longview
- **Marilyn Frederick**, MetroTex
- **Dick North**, MetroTex
- **Alfonso Garcia**, Del Rio
- **Ray Rivas**, Del Rio
- **Courtney Gill**, San Antonio
- **Jennifer Stroh Viescas**, Greater El Paso
- **Samantha Plomer**, Houston
- **Tera Kiger**, Waco
- **Aaron Mullens**, Austin
- **Sunny Tracy**, Austin
- **Dave Floyd**, Austin
- **Amanda Jackson**, Greater Tyler

BUSINESS

FHA CONDOMINIUM RULE CHANGES EFFECTIVE NOW

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) reports that 84% of Federal Housing Administration (FHA)-insured condo buyers have never owned a home before. According to the National Association of REALTORS®, HUD's new FHA condominium loan policies that went into effect October 15, 2019, will help alleviate affordability restraints impacting markets across the country and result in more Americans becoming homeowners. Here is NAR's assessment of these changes.

Single Unit Approval

Under the new rule, FHA borrowers can obtain Single Unit Approval on non-FHA approved condominium properties that meet the following requirements:

- At least five units
- A limited concentration of FHA-insured units
- At least 50% owner-occupancy; and
- A maximum of 35% commercial space.

Re-Certification Requirements

HUD increased the certification period for FHA condominium properties from two to three years, with an additional six-month grace period after the certification end-date to submit re-certification materials. Condominium associations are still able to submit an updated re-certification package rather than the full certification package each time.

Commercial Space

HUD increased the commercial space allowed in an FHA-approved condominium property from 25% to 35% and will allow exceptions up to 49%. HUD has the discretion to issue mortgagee letters to change the allowable commercial space to be within 25% and 55%, if necessary.

Owner-Occupancy Requirement

FHA will require approved condominium projects to have a minimum of 50% of the units occupied by owners for most projects. For properties that are over 12 months old with less than 10% of their units in arrears, HUD may approve an owner-occupancy level as low as 35%. Under the new rule, HUD has the ability to establish a different owner-occupancy level by mortgagee letter between 30% and 75%.

FHA Concentration

FHA will only insure up to 50% of the total number of units in an approved condominium project. HUD now has the ability to establish a different FHA concentration level by mortgagee letter between 25% and 75% to allow for a quicker response to changes in the real estate market.

Single Investor Ownership

A single investor in an FHA-approved property can own up to 10% of individual units in condominium properties with more than 20 units. For properties with less than 20 units, a single investor may own no more than one unit. For single unit approval, a single investor may own no more than 10% of the units in properties with 20 or more units and no more than one unit in a property with less than 20 units.

HOW MUCH DO iBUYERS COST SELLERS?

A new study of technology-driven companies that offer to purchase homes directly from consumers—also known as iBuyers—attempts to show the true costs of this business model to sellers.

Real estate analytics firm Collateral Analytics examined about 6,000 transactions across four markets—Phoenix, Atlanta, Charlotte, and Las Vegas—to determine how much iBuyers were paying for properties compared to market value while controlling for factors such as size, age, and other variables. The median discount—how far below estimated market value purchase prices were—was between 4.5% and 6.9% for one major iBuyer and between 2% and 3.3% for another.

The direct costs (often in the form of fees) of working with an iBuyer can run from 7% to 10% of the offered price not including credits for requested repairs, according to Collateral Analytics. When those costs are combined with the discounted purchase price, the total cost of working with an iBuyer can be between 13% to 15% depending on the firm, according to Collateral Analytics.

Find the full report at collateralanalytics.com/news-research.

Facebook is the most popular social media channel for Texas REALTORS®, with 75% of REALTORS® saying they frequent the site for professional purposes. Other frequently used social media platforms include LinkedIn (58%), Instagram (36%), Twitter (24%), and Pinterest (13%).

SOURCE: *2019 Profile of Texas REALTORS® Members.* Check out the full report at texasrealestate.com/members/research/profiles/texas-realtors.

WOULD PERSONALIZATION HELP OR HURT YOUR MARKETING?

With consumers increasingly alert to issues surrounding the use of their personal information, tailoring your marketing based on personal information presents risks along with the potential for rewards. Personalized messaging may yield better results, but done poorly or mishandled, marketing personalization can cross a line and alienate customers.

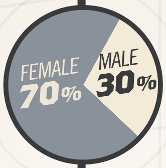
The online software comparison firm GetApp conducted a study of consumer preferences regarding marketing personalization and found:

- 91% of respondents said they feel like ads know too much personal information about them
- 62% said they've opened an email in the past year because their name was in the subject line
- 53% report that advertisements have become more relevant to their lives in the past three years
- 42% are willing to share their email with advertisers for more relevant offers, but only 23% would share their marital status and 18% would share how many children they have
- 18% say personalization has increased their personal connection with a brand, product, or service.

GetApp concludes that there are opportunities to realize benefits from marketing personalization but only if used in a way that overlaps with the value consumers perceive receiving.

Find the full report at lab.getapp.com/does-marketing-personalization-work.

2019 PROFILE OF TEXAS REALTORS®



69% Real estate is only occupation

13% Have personal assistants

81% Are very certain they will remain active as real estate professionals over the next two years

14% Are somewhat certain

15% Are veterans or spouses of veterans

51% Receive E&O insurance provided by firm

17% Are members of a real estate team

4 Median number of team members

95% Are registered to vote

83% Voted in last local election

84% Are homeowners

70% Volunteer in their communities

22% Fluent in a language other than English

AGE

MEDIAN: 52 years

- **19%** UNDER 40
- **23%** 40-49
- **29%** 50-59
- **31%** 60 & OLDER

EXPERIENCE

MEDIAN: six years

- **31%** TWO YEARS OR FEWER
- **25%** MORE THAN 15 YEARS

TYPE OF LICENSE

- **81%** SALES AGENT
- **14%** BROKER
- **7%** BROKER ASSOCIATE
- **1%** APPRAISER

PRIMARY SPECIALTY

- **72%** RESIDENTIAL BROKERAGE
- **5%** PROPERTY MANAGEMENT
- **5%** RELOCATION
- **2%** COMMERCIAL BROKERAGE

EMPLOYMENT STATUS

- **88%** INDEPENDENT CONTRACTOR
- **4%** EMPLOYEE
- **9%** OTHER

MEDIAN HOURS WORKED PER WEEK

- **40** BROKERS
- **31** SALES AGENTS

Reponses may not total 100% due to rounding or ability of respondents to choose more than one answer.

***SOURCE:** 2019 Profile of Texas REALTORS® Members.*
Check out the full report at texasrealestate.com/members/research/profiles/texas-realtors.

Photo: ©Jacob Lund - stock.adobe.com

DON'T CONFUSE THESE TWO TERMINATIONS

The *Third Party Financing Addendum* (TXR 1901) and the *Addendum Concerning Right to Terminate Due to Lender's Appraisal* (TXR 1948) contain sections that agents often confuse.

Paragraph 2B, Property Approval, of the *Third Party Financing Addendum* allows the buyer to terminate the contract if certain requirements are met and if the buyer's lender determines that the property does not satisfy the lender's underwriting requirements for the loan.

Box 3, Additional Right to Terminate, of the *Addendum Concerning Right to Terminate Due to Lender's Appraisal* if checked also allows the buyer to terminate the contract. It says that in addition to the buyer's right to terminate under Paragraph 2B of the *Third Party Financing Addendum*, the buyer may terminate the contract if certain requirements are met and if the appraised value is less than the amount filled in.

What's the difference? In some situations, a lower appraisal might still meet the lender's underwriting requirements if, for example, the buyer is providing a higher downpayment. If the lender determines that the property satisfies its underwriting requirements, this would prevent the buyer from terminating under Paragraph 2B of the *Third Party Financing Addendum*. However, if Box 3 of the *Addendum Concerning Right to Terminate Due to Lender's Appraisal* is checked, the buyer may still have the right to terminate if the appraised value is less than the amount filled in.

Contract Closeup

The *Farm and Ranch Contract* (TXR 1701) has two sections on page 9 related to fees: a Ratification of Fee and an Agreement for Payment of Brokers' Fees.

A listing broker who has already agreed to pay a commission to a cooperating broker—in the MLS, for example—should fill out the Ratification of Fee box. This authorizes the escrow agent to pay the cooperating broker from the listing broker's fee at closing.

The seller and buyer should not sign the Agreement for Payment of Brokers' Fees if the listing broker has already agreed to pay the cooperating broker's commission elsewhere. This could bind the seller or buyer to pay additional amounts to the listing broker or the cooperating broker they didn't intend.

However, a seller and buyer could sign the Agreement for Payment of Brokers' Fees if the listing broker hasn't offered to pay a commission, like if the property wasn't listed in the MLS. Note that the agreement states either the seller or the buyer will pay the brokers.

Legal Hotline 800-873-9155

We often get asked about the option fee with a "back-up" contract. If buyers submit a backup offer and pay sellers an option fee, do the buyers get their option fee back if they never become the first contract? The answer is no. The sellers keep the option fee even when the first contract doesn't fall through. By paying the option fee with a backup contract, the buyers pay for the right to terminate the contract even during the backup period. The buyers are not entitled to a refund of the option fee simply because they chose not to exercise the termination option.

—**David Jones,** associate counsel

Legal Q&A

Who gets to pick the title company that will issue the owner policy of title insurance?

It depends. If the seller pays for both the owner policy and the lender policy of title insurance, the seller can pick the title company without violating the Real Estate Settlement Procedures Act (RESPA). However, if the buyer pays for the owner policy, the seller cannot condition the sale of the property on the buyer purchasing the owner policy from a particular title company. Rather, the buyer would get to pick the title company.

In situations where the seller pays for the owner policy and the buyer pays for the lender policy, RESPA application is less clear. At least one court has held that, where the seller paid for the owner policy and the buyer paid for the lender policy, the seller did not violate RESPA by insisting on a particular title company for the owner policy. The court explained that the seller did not require as a condition of sale that the buyer use that same title company to issue the lender policy. However, the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, the government agency that enforces RESPA, has yet to take an official position on the law's application in this scenario. Therefore, if a seller wants to avoid a possible violation of RESPA, the seller should not insist on a particular title company for the transaction unless the seller is paying for both the owner policy and the lender policy of title insurance.

Ethics Q&A

I'm working with a buyer who wants to make offers on three properties at once. She said she will terminate two of the contracts when she decides which one she wants to buy. Is this ethical?

No laws or rules prohibit your buyer from making offers on more than one property at a time. Similarly, the Code does not bar you from representing a buyer making simultaneous offers on multiple properties. If the buyer has a termination option for all three properties, she has the contractual right to terminate two—or all three—of the contracts within the termination option periods. However, there is a risk involved that you may want to communicate to the buyer. If any of the option fees are not paid within the time prescribed, it may be deemed that the buyer does not have a valid termination option. In that case, the buyer may not have the ability to terminate one or more of the contracts, which could leave the buyer contractually obligated to purchase more than one property.

DO YOU NEED PERMISSION TO POST PHOTOS OF YOUR CLIENT ON SOCIAL MEDIA?

After your buyers close, they ask you to use your phone to take a photo of them holding the keys to their new home. After you text the photo to them, you decide you want to share it on your business Facebook page. Since you took the photograph, you likely own it, but do you still need your clients' permission to post the photo?

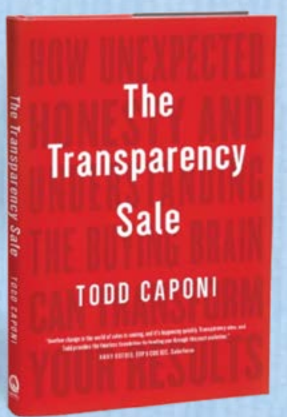
It's a good idea to get authorization from your clients to post a photo of them on social media. There are some legal causes of action that could arise if you post photos of them without permission, and the social media platform may have specific requirements you should be following.

But perhaps the most important reason you should ask their permission is so you maintain a good relationship with them after closing.

How TRANSPARENCY Can Help You Gain Clients

by Todd Caponi

Does leading with honesty and sharing your vulnerabilities really help you in sales? The author of the book *The Transparency Sale* says yes.



EDITOR'S NOTE: *This article is an edited excerpt of the book* The Transparency Sale *by Todd Caponi. Learn more about the author and the book at transparencysale.com.*

Transparency sells better than perfection. To win in this digital era, where feedback is all around us and easy to come by, we need to adjust how we sell to optimize for the way buyers buy.

My book, *The Transparency Sale,* started from a study that looked at online buying behavior. It's no surprise that we all read reviews before making a purchase (96%). However, it turns out that 82% of us go right to the negative reviews first. A product with an average review score between a 4.2-4.5 sells better than a product that is a perfect 5.0.

What does that have to do with human-to-human selling? Well … everything.

Today, anyone buying anything relies on reviews and feedback shared by strangers and often trusts those anonymously posted experiences more than the claims made by the providers of the products or services themselves. Why? It's in our inherent wiring. We require the full picture and find out all of the pros and cons before making any purchase. And the larger the purchase, the greater the demand for transparency.

Rethinking the Sales Pitch

I began experimenting with telling buyers about our products' shortcomings and sharing that some buyers found our competitors' offerings more appealing. I found that unexpected honesty and transparency shortened sales cycles dramatically. In one instance, what was normally a six-month sales cycle closed in our favor in under a month. In another, the head of e-commerce for a major fashion brand kicked his team out of the office, grabbed a folder filled with spreadsheets containing his fiscal budget, and walked me through it line by line.

Before these experiments, I had never encountered a buyer—or anyone being influenced—who was willing to show me their actual budget, much less during the first meeting. One buyer actually sold *me* on why the competitive offering I presented in the competitor's favor wasn't valuable at all, and why we were correct in our choice not to develop that same functionality.

Through this approach, I found that the relationship between buyers and sellers—or anyone who is influencing a potential buyer—was built on trust. Sellers spent less effort on unworthy opportunities from the beginning. Buyers became less likely to believe any false claims that a competitor made because transparency was established from the first conversation. And, when something went wrong once the buyer was a client, addressing issues became incredibly easy, because expectations were set properly pre-sale.

How IKEA's Rules for Sales Success Can Help You

Have you ever been to an IKEA store? IKEA, represented by its massive buildings of blue and yellow, is a furniture retailer founded in Sweden.

When you visit an IKEA, the process by which you select a piece of furniture is unorthodox. IKEA makes shoppers select their own products without assistance, find the product's box of loose pieces and load it into their cars, and assemble it themselves when they get home.

If you were IKEA's competitor, wouldn't you think it would be incredibly easy to create a better experience for your shopper? The experience is inefficient, inconvenient, and downright painful in many cases.

Well, guess what? IKEA continues to be the largest furniture retailer in the world, with 415 stores across 49 countries.

IKEA doesn't hide their flaws. Customers expect to have this experience when they go to the store, and as a result, the experience is less unpleasant. Your memory of the event might go something like this: "Remember last time we went to IKEA? I still have a scar from trying to load that couch into my hatchback. That was awful." But you'll end the story with this: "Anyway, I'm thinking about adding a cabinet. Want to go on Saturday?"

IKEA has created a highly profitable business model that provides stylish furniture at very reasonable prices and has generated notable customer loyalty. IKEA wears their flaws instead of hiding them. They essentially tell the world, "Here's what we don't do, but if you're okay with that, here's what you're going to love."

The truth is, no matter what you sell, it probably isn't perfect. If you're selling technology, it will have flaws. If you're selling real estate, the home you're selling could be next door to a crazy neighbor, or maybe there will be ants in the pantry. If you're in the recruiting space, almost every candidate has a flaw on their resume. Don't be afraid of the flaws in your offerings, as exposing those flaws may be the very reason your customers engage with you, buy from you, and keep buying from you.

In short, you should:

- **Lead with your shortcomings**. Your buyer's brain is preparing for a sales pitch. Disarming their sales filter from the beginning by leading with potential showstoppers versus waiting to address them later in the sales cycle will speed sales cycles, speed qualification (or disqualification), speed trust building, and put your competitors at a disadvantage.
- **Make transparency part of your culture**. Organizations that make collecting feedback and leading with transparency a core company value will be the victors as the ease with which buyers can find feedback grows.

Steps for the Transparent Sales Technique

Ready to apply these ideas in your own business? Here's how to get started.

Step 1: Figure out where prospects go if they are looking for independent information on your business's pros and cons.

Step 2: Do your homework to understand exactly what you offer and what your competitors offer. Create a chart. How do your competitors position their unique offerings?

Step 3: Match your competitors' unique offerings up against your understanding of your client's requirements. Which differences matter? Which flaws will matter?

Step 4: Put these findings in order, from what you perceive to be least important to most important to the buyer.

Step 5: Pick a couple of those offerings from the top of the list and communicate those to the client. You could say, "To ensure we're making the best use of our time together, would it make sense to highlight a couple of the things we don't do?"

The most important takeaway is the requirement for you and your company to embrace vulnerability. My experience shows it doesn't take your power away.

TODD CAPONI *is author of the international best-selling book,* The Transparency Sale*, a top-rated keynote speaker & trainer as Principal of Sales Melon LLC, and he's also Managing Director of Chicago's VentureSCALE. Contact him through transparencysale.com.*

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Only two programs require the use of a discount card: Office Depot/Office Max and the prescription discount. If you don't have a copy of these cards, you can always access one from your mobile device at texasrealestate.com/card.

Having trouble? We're here to help.

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Save up to 12% on real estate signs with a production turnaround on most options of just three business days.

BUILD YOUR COMPETENCY IN REAL ESTATE

Texas license holders must be competent in the areas in which they provide services to clients. Find out what this means for brokers and agents and ways for you to meet competency standards required by law.

by Charles Porter

Legislation passed by the 86th Texas Legislature made clear that license holders must be knowledgeable about local market issues in the geographic area in which they work and the characteristics involved in the specific type of property being sold or leased. The Texas Real Estate Commission made corresponding changes to Section 535.2, Broker Responsibility, earlier this year which requires brokers to ensure their sponsored agents have geographic competence.

Most experienced agents understand this concept, and by adding this clarification to the law, the 86th Texas

REALTOR® CODE OF ETHICS AND COMPETENCY

Articles 2, 11, and 12 of the REALTOR® Code of Ethics offer specific guidelines and standards REALTORS® should follow to be competent in the area and specific type of real estate being considered.

Article 2 states REALTORS® will avoid exaggeration, misrepresentation, or concealment of pertinent facts related to a property or transaction. To be in compliance, a REALTOR® would have to have geographic and specific type of property competence.

Article 11 requires a REALTOR® to conform to the standards of practice and competence necessary for a specific type of property. Article 11, Standard of Practice 11-1 provides specific guidelines for REALTORS® when they provide opinions of value or price. (In Texas, license holders cannot provide an "opinion of value" but are allowed to provide estimates of price. See TREC Rule 535.17 for more.)

Article 12 requires REALTORS® to be honest and truthful in their real estate communications and present a true picture in their advertising, marketing, and other representations. To do so, a REALTOR® must be competent in the specific type of property being sold, purchased, or leased for others.

Legislature is emphasizing how important this obligation is for license holders.

The legislation also prompted the revision of TREC Rule 531.3, Competency. According to the rule, license holders must:

1. Be informed on the local market issues and conditions affecting real estate in the geographic area where a license holder provides services to a client
2. Be informed on national, state, and local issues and developments in the real estate industry
3. Exercise judgment and skill in the performance of brokerage activities
4. Be educated in the characteristics involved in the specific type of real estate being brokered for others.

How do you become competent? First, keep in mind that real estate is a three-dimensional product. You can't rely on only aerial photographs and maps to give you the "boots-on-the-ground" observations required to competently advise your client and gain a professional understanding of the marketplace.

Second, you must clearly identify the specific type of real estate being brokered. While there may seem an obvious distinction between the two most basic types of real estate brokerage—residential and commercial—there are many variations and nuances.

For example, an agent who has only performed brokerage activities for single-family home resales certainly will need training and education before representing a tenant in leasing office space in downtown Houston. Retail leasing is equally as complicated. One of the most complex and challenging areas of real estate brokerage is farm and ranch brokerage.

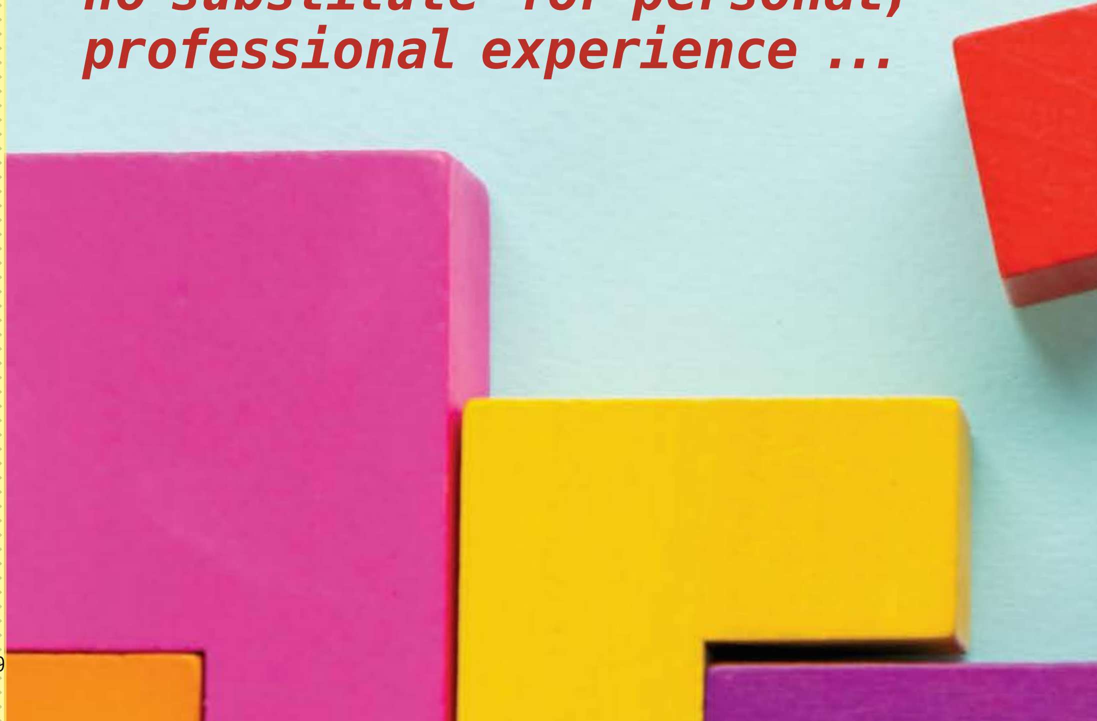
How to Build Your Competency

There are basic universal foundational practices that you can apply to build competency skills. Rely first upon the expertise of your sponsoring broker. Find a mentor who has expert competence in the type of property and its local marketplace; there is no substitute for personal, professional experience in understanding the unique characteristics and culture of any locality's real estate market.

Here are a few more practical suggestions to an agent's path to gain competence that apply to almost all real estate brokerage:

Search the MLS data available. MLS offers the finest platform for real estate data in the industry. However, most commercial, retail, new homes, office warehouse, and farm and ranch properties are not listed in MLS systems. If the property is located in an MLS jurisdiction, running comparative market analyses helps you

Rely first upon the expertise of your sponsoring broker. Find a mentor ... there is no substitute for personal, professional experience ...



build competence in a local marketplace.

Visit the county appraisal district website. Almost all 254 Texas counties have appraisal district websites offering information such as current valuation and changes over time, size of land and improvements, tax rates of the various taxing jurisdictions, and much more.

A competent agent will review the massive amount of information publicly available at the appraisal districts. Interviewing appraisers who work at the district can be very informative. Keep in mind that the business cultures of local areas are highly variable, and these cultural differences are often reflected in local official publications.

Get familiar with the real property records of the area. Not only are filed land deeds available to the public, but so are mineral leases, mineral and water deeds, and subdivision plats.

Talk to ancillary service providers. Ask title company representatives in the area for suggestions for professional consultants such as surveyors, attorneys, architects, civil and structural engineers, geotechnical engineers, and others. Follow up with these professional consultants to discover potential market information, geographical information, and myriad other pieces of information that likely are unique to the local marketplace.

Talk to other brokers and agents who are noted on sales and lease signs. Ask about the current conditions in the local marketplace. Find out if there are continuing education courses offered in the area that include information about current local conditions in the real estate industry.

Talk to Farm Services Agency representatives. If you are interested in expanding your knowledge of farm and ranch country, talk to local FSA offices. FSA offices typically have old aerial photographs sometimes as far back as the 1940s. You may also be able to learn about farm subsidies. Stop in and visit with the local farm implement dealers such as John Deere or Kubota, the feed and seed supply stores, the local lumber yards and hardware stores, and in today's volatile energy market, talk to the area's oil and gas landmen.

Conduct research on groundwater conservation districts. If providing brokerage services in an area that is a groundwater conservation district (GCD), which includes municipal areas as well as rural areas in some parts of the state, talk to the GCD general manager and staff to discuss the groundwater regulations and exemptions. A visit to the Texas Water Development Board site and the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) site provides maps of the state in which a local GCD has jurisdiction over area groundwater. Almost all GCDs now have websites as well that include contact information and rules and bylaws for review by the public. You can learn about water rights issues in the area from the TCEQ website.

Conduct a market study. A market study is a map of all neighboring tracts individually numbered with corresponding notes per tract. This helps you build a personal visual database of the marketplace.

A few days in the local marketplace will allow a you to build a profile of invaluable unique local information for you and your client. In today's modern world of text messages and emails, eye-to-eye interviews have taken center-stage significance for agents who want to gain competency in the characteristics of a specific type of real estate.

Any of the prior suggestions can be modified to fit all types of real estate. Through competence, you can better serve the public.

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HOW BROKERS CAN HELP AGENTS FOLLOW TREC RULES

Texas REALTORS® offers members the *Model Brokerage Policies and Procedures* manual for $99.99 plus tax. Free updates are included as part of your purchase. The manual provides Texas brokers with written policies and procedures as required by TREC. An upcoming revision to the manual will offer license holders practical guidelines to meet geographic competency requirements along with step-by-step methods brokers can use to ensure their sponsored agents meet competency requirements. Specifically, Chapter 3, "Establishing Competency," offers guidelines in policy setting and procedures to implement the policies established. Search "Model Brokerage Policies and Procedures Manual" on texasrealestate.com to purchase and download the guide.

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What if the Next NATURAL

Real estate firms and agents can take steps now to lessen the impact of disruption from a hurricane, flood, or other unfortunate event.

by Bridget McCrea

Chuck Poteet couldn't believe his eyes. Wading closer to the real estate office he'd spent the last 17 years growing, he could see that the building was sitting in chest-deep water. Poteet had parked a mile away and waded in, accompanied by the owner of a nearby restaurant who had suffered the same plight.

Poteet wasn't alone, nor was that real estate office his only pressing problem at the time. It was August 2017, and Hurricane Harvey had left a path of destruction across Southeast Texas that caused more than 100 deaths and an estimated $125 billion in damage.

This Wasn't in the Plan

A few months before Harvey hit, Poteet had purchased a new franchise from HomeSmart and was now the broker/owner of Houston-based HomeSmart Fine Properties. "We were going to use the Labor Day weekend to fine-tune all of our announcements and raise a new flag for HomeSmart in Houston as a new franchise owner," Poteet says.

Hurricane Harvey changed all of that, starting with about two feet of water on the street where Poteet lived. "We spent the night rescuing other families that were getting flooded, triaging them at our home because we had a garage apartment, and we were on higher ground," he recalls. "It was about everyone jumping in and helping one another."

The rising waters eventually forced an entire neighborhood evacuation. "We waded out in chest-deep water," says Poteet, who knew from the TV news that his real estate office was also in peril. In total, he and his family lost their home, the office, and three cars. Next came the cleanup, salvage, and restoration process. One immediate roadblock for the Poteets was a lack of flood insurance.

"I knew better, but we'd dropped our flood insurance because my wife had breast cancer … and we were grap-

DISASTER Threatens *Your* Business?

pling with high medical expenses at the time," says Poteet. "We had to save money somewhere, and I knew if we ever got flooded it would be a FEMA catastrophe." That's exactly what Hurricane Harvey turned out to be, but FEMA disaster relief was capped at about $33,000—not enough to rebuild a home or business—and getting that relief took time and mounds of paperwork.

The challenges didn't end there. Poteet had 12 active listings that were completely flooded and five pending deals wiped out by the storm. Five of his agents experienced flooding catastrophes of their own, and two of them lost their homes.

Lessons Learned

Poteet feels fortunate that at least no one from his family or business was injured during the storm. He also was encouraged by the way his friends, colleagues, and fellow REALTORS® rallied to preserve and rebuild.

As for what he learned from his Harvey experience, Poteet says, "The scout master kicks in." He recommends having a "go bag" prepared that includes all documents and financial records that you need, as well as important medications. He also says it's helpful to try to be mentally prepared for the aftermath—for the possibility of having to let go of properties and possessions. "You can't let it eat you up," says Poteet. "When the excavators showed up and started grab-

Houston broker Chuck Poteet's office was flooded during Hurricane Harvey in August 2017.

Photos: © trongnguyen - stock.adobe.com; smaller inset photos courtesy of Chuck Poteet

“If you have the right insurance coverages, cash reserves, and have pre-documented your claims, you can gain the competitive advantage of being the first in your industry to be back in business.”

bing our furniture, pictures, and clothing and putting it in dump trucks, that was our ‘letting go.’”

It Pays to Plan Ahead

Since 1980, the U.S. has sustained 241 weather and climate disasters where damages reached at least $1 billion, according to the World Economic Forum. In 2018 alone, 14 separate billion-dollar disaster events hit areas in the U.S.

But it doesn’t take a billion-dollar disaster to harm a real estate business. In fact, a smaller flood, localized fire, tornado, cyberattack, or other event can take a serious financial and operational toll on a company—and its owner’s and agents’ livelihoods. It may be human nature to put off preparations because nothing has happened yet, but waiting until a disaster threatens may be too late to effectively prepare.

There are steps that real estate professionals can take now to help mitigate the negative impacts of any catastrophic event.

Alexis Wilkins, a sales manager at AmCap Insurance’s New Orleans location, says real estate professionals not only have to think about themselves but also their clients when preparing for, dealing with, and recovering from such events. “An approaching storm can impact a buyer’s ability to secure insurance coverage, and can delay closings,” says Wilkins. “Also, flood insurance coverage requires a 30-day wait (unless it’s for a pending closing), so it’s not something you can go out and get when a storm is coming.”

Wilkins says real estate brokers and agents should maintain good contact information for one another—and for their buyers and sellers—in case you need to communicate with them outside of the office and without the company’s computers. “Also have your insurance policy details, numbers, and providers’ contact information handy, so that you can report claims when the storm or other event has passed.”

For agents and brokers who want to prepare before disasters strike, Wilkins points to NOAA’s Hurricane Preparedness page and the Insurance Institute for Business & Home Safety’s disastersafety.org site as two good resources. You can find advice to assemble a basic disaster supplies list, instructions on developing plans by specific risk, and resources for how to recover from a disaster.

How Quickly Can You Get Going Again?

Cate Steane, president at Make it Happen Preparedness Services, says those real estate companies that take steps in advance to protect their people and business investments will be able to reopen faster and serve their clients and their communities. “Protecting your people means providing them with emergency preparedness training and ensuring that they have a family emergency plan,” Steane explains. “A good approach is to offer an emergency supplies kit to any employee who brings in a completed family emergency plan.”

Steane says brokers should also be sure that they have insurance coverage for the types of disasters that occur in their areas. Some events, like flooding, are not covered by standard business policies and need to be purchased separately. Anyone who is renting his or her real estate office—and who thinks that its contents are not worth the considerable cost of flood insurance—should remember these two things:

- High premiums reflect the fact that actuaries have assessed an area and determined it has a high risk. “Expensive insurance means that people who study this for a living think it is likely that you will suffer this loss,” says Steane, who points to the Red Cross Ready Rating site as a good disaster preparedness resource for businesses.

LOCAL REALTOR® ASSOCIATIONS ARE AFFECTED BY DISASTERS, TOO

The Beaumont Board of REALTORS® (BBOR) and many of its members know full well the impact that catastrophic events can have on their personal and work lives. According to Kathy Burkhalter, association executive for the 600-member board, the Beaumont area was impacted by Hurricane Rita in 2005, Hurricane Harvey in 2017, and Tropical Storm Imelda in September this year. “We’ve been fortunate in that our association office was never touched by water, wind, or other destructive force,” says Burkhalter, “but we’re always prepared for what could happen.”

For example, she says staff took pictures of the interior and exterior of the building before the hurricanes, just in case they were needed for insurance purposes. The association has a small fire safe for keeping important documents, photos, and other records. “If we have to evacuate, we can just grab and go,” says Burkhalter. The office server and backup discs are taken offsite if evacuating the office, and staff members now use laptops that they can take home rather than desktops that they were using when Rita hit in 2005.

BBOR maintains a hard copy of its member roster in case of a

- While it's helpful to have coverage for your office contents and tenant improvements, Steane considers business interruption insurance, or BII, the most important coverage for a company during a flood or other disaster. "This coverage will make the biggest difference in your company's ability to recover after a disaster, because it replaces your lost income and pays the cost of renting and furnishing alternative space while you are displaced," she says.

According to FEMA, 90% of small companies that do not resume operations within five days after a disaster fail within a year. While it's not clear if that statistic directly applies to real estate firms, Steane says real estate professionals should place an urgency on recovering quickly to resume business operations. "If you have the right insurance coverages, cash reserves, and have pre-documented your claims, you can gain the competitive advantage of being the first in your industry to be back in business," she says.

Poteet knows firsthand that business continuity is not the same thing as physically remediating and rebuilding business and personal structures. As he reflects on the devastating impact of Hurricane Harvey on his community and continues to rebuild his real estate practice, Poteet says the experience taught him that everyone is on his or her own timeline when it comes to moving on with their lives and work.

"I can go through our neighborhoods today and physically see what stage people are at in the process," says Poteet, who is about 95% finished rebuilding his family home. "I have neighbors that are still stuck back in the grieving stage, with their houses still sitting there almost the same as they were back in 2017. It just takes time."

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ONLINE RESOURCES

ready.gov/recovering-disaster

nhc.noaa.gov/prepare/ready.php

disastersafety.org

readyrating.org

fema.gov

texasrealestate.com/relief

power outage or Wi-Fi connectivity issue. Finally, Burkhalter says her own disaster recovery kit includes blank association checks, just in case staff members or other entities needed to be paid and she can't make it back to the building. That's exactly what happened after Hurricane Rita, when staff couldn't get to the office for more than 10 days and again with Hurricane Harvey, when employees couldn't get there for seven days. (BBOR's disaster-situation policies provide authority for the association executive to act in this manner during emergency situations.)

Thinking back over those experiences, Burkhalter recommends local associations dealing with a disaster reach out to their members and to the state association, Texas REALTORS®, to spread the word about support requests or who can offer help. For example, she says the Texas REALTORS® Relief Fund has provided financial assistance all over the state for property owners after hurricanes and other disasters. "Tell Texas REALTORS® that you're in an emergency-disaster situation," says Burkhalter. "And even if you're not impacted tremendously, remember to help your sister associations out."

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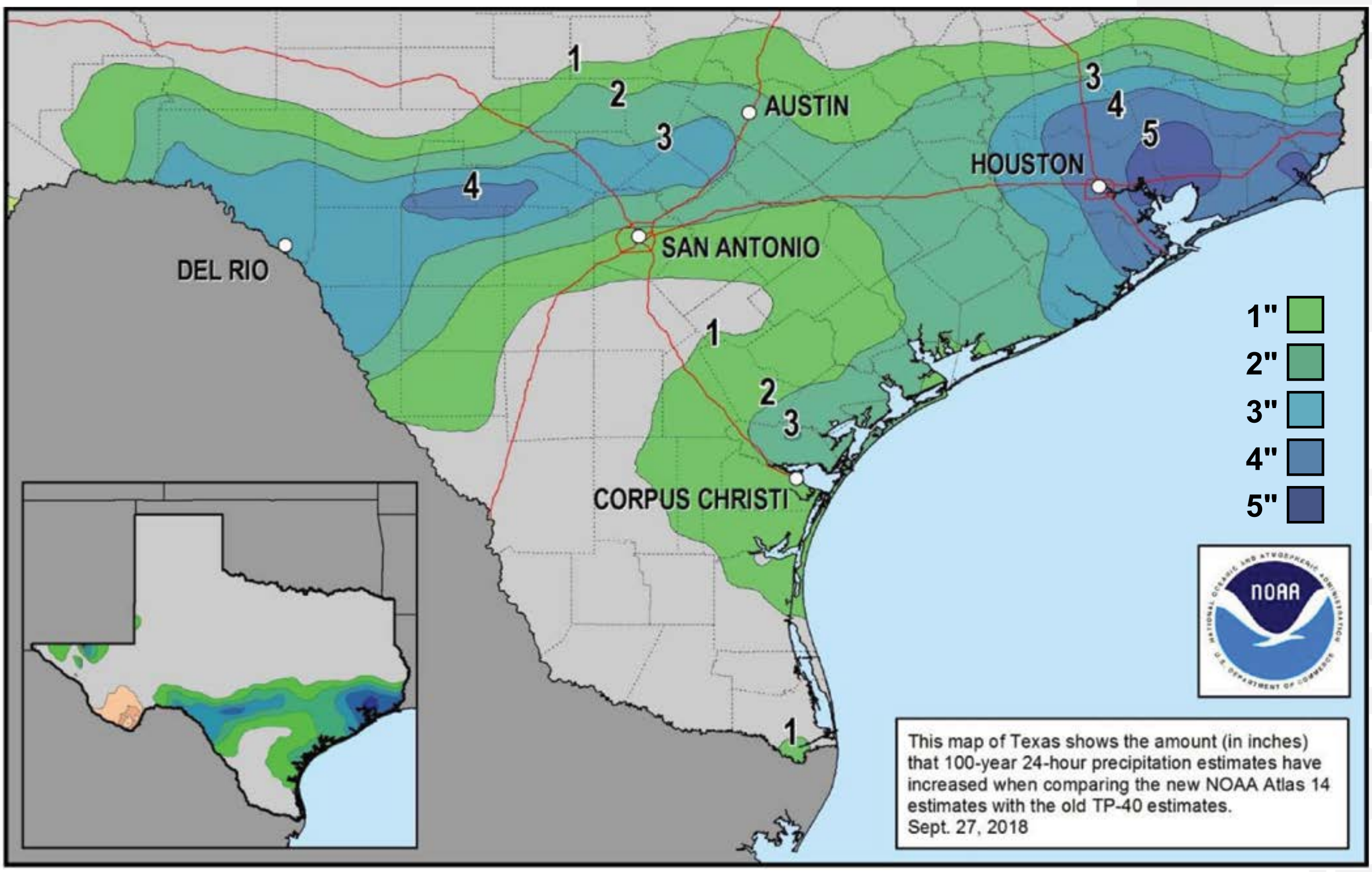
HOW A NEW RAINFALL STUDY AFFECTS TEXAS COMMERCIAL REAL ESTATE

Find out what Atlas 14 is and its impact on future property development, plus potential questions for your development land teams.

by Mark Ramseur



This map of Texas shows the amount (in inches) that 100-year 24-hour precipitation estimates have increased when comparing the new NOAA Atlas 14 estimates with the old TP-40 estimates. Sept. 27, 2018

Graphic courtesy of NOAA

Atlas 14 is the nationwide study of rainfall intensities, led by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) with additional input from other federal, state, and local entities. Historical rainfall data was collected from 3,900 water gauges and is beneficial in understanding rainfall events and flood risk. Atlas 14 assigns the statistical probable occurrence of 100-year storms and other rainfall frequency events.

Atlas 14 is segmented into various regions, with Texas denoted as Volume 11. Texas rainfall data is now available through 2017, and includes data from Hurricane Harvey. The Texas/Volume 11 data, which was released in October 2018, clearly displays an increase in rainfall across a band from Del Rio to Austin over to Houston, as well as Corpus Christi and San Antonio. Central Texas and East Texas are the areas with the most increase in rainfall. The northern part of the state was not affected.

Local governments throughout the impacted areas are currently updating their regulations to address this new data and the new risk it presents. The following is a summary of changes currently underway in the Austin, San Antonio, and Houston areas.

Impact to Central Texas/Austin

With the new study data, a 100-year storm for Austin more closely resembles the previously estimated 500-year storm. Austin's 100-year storm data increased from approximately 10.2 inches in a 24-hour period to nearly 13 inches (an approximate 30% increase).

While approximately 4,000 buildings were located in the previous 100-year floodplain, that number increased to about 7,200 due to the increased size of floodplain areas in the Atlas 14 study (an 80% increase).

"Our understanding of flood risk in Central Texas has changed," says Division Manager for the City of Austin, Watershed Protection Department, Watershed Engineering Division Kevin Shunk. "Homeowners, renters, and the real estate community need to understand how Atlas 14 may affect their lives and business. The City of Austin is proposing new floodplain management regulations to protect our community from the impacts of flooding."

Atlas 14 has revealed more homes and business at risk of flooding than previously realized, which impacts the ability to develop, remodel, or redevelop property. The need for and cost of flood insurance is likely to increase once FEMA maps are updated accordingly. In addition, floodplains will need to be restudied. The City of Austin has created a website, atxfloodpro.com, which allows the review of properties and potential Atlas 14 impact.

In response to the Atlas 14 findings, the City of Austin is developing and implementing a three-step process to handle the latest data changes:

- **Step 1: Land development code amendments** include reclassifying the current 500-year floodplain lines as the 100-year floodplain to limit construction of new buildings in areas of known flood risk; creating a redevelopment exception for those who are redeveloping a property in a floodplain area in Austin; expanding the Colorado River exception, since the Colorado River watershed for the Austin area was not impacted by the new study data; and increasing the freeboard or finished floor elevation requirements from one foot to two feet.
- **Step 2: Drainage criteria manual revisions** will update the requirements for the design of appropriately sized stormwater infrastructure, such as storm drainpipes, inlets, ditches, and detention ponds. These updates, which are used primarily by engineers, are in addition to the first round of land development code ordinance revisions.
- **Step 3: Floodplain study and mapping updates** will take two to three years to complete and will provide maps and data to FEMA for flood insurance map updates.

The City of Austin's projected timeline for these changes are expected to be as follows:

- **Summer 2019:** Provide updated draft ordinance for the land development changes.
- **October to December 2019:** Public hearings at boards and commissions and City Council to approve the draft ordinance.
- **Summer 2019:** Start Drainage Criteria Manual updates.
- **2019 End of Year:** Pass new rules and ordinance changes for the previous steps.
- **2019 to 2021:** Remap Austin floodplains.
- **2022**: Update FEMA map.

Other Central Texas entities are following a similar plan of action in response to Atlas 14.

Impact for San Antonio and Houston

"It is important to utilize the best available data for floodplain management," says Jacob Powell, storm water engineering manager, floodplain management department for the City of San Antonio. "San Antonio was able to strengthen its already high design standards by translating the Atlas 14 data into a usable format for engineers while maintaining continuity in the development process."

In April 2019, San Antonio adopted new drainage rules/criteria, which include five precipitation zones across the city ranging

Atlas 14 assigns the statistical probable occurrence of 100-year storms and other rainfall frequency events.

from 11.15 inches to 12.87 inches. Overall implementation has gone smoothly, and there is no grandfathering to the old data. Designs created using the old data may be accepted only if there is no impact downstream; the design would be deemed out of compliance but would be approved. San Antonio is also open to review special conditions on a case-by-case basis (especially relating to phased projects), and is currently updating the FEMA maps to reflect the new data.

Houston had the largest impact of any area in Texas, with an increase of more than five inches in the 24-hour 100-year rainfall in some areas. The entire Houston area is updating development codes in response to Atlas 14. For example:

- The City of Houston, Harris County, and Fort Bend County are updating their design storm intensities and depths to Atlas 14.
- The City of Houston, Harris County, and Montgomery County, like Austin, are using the 500-year event data as the new 100-year data until the FEMA maps are updated.
- The City of Houston will follow Harris County's lead and expects to have three regional zones of rainfall depths to be used in watershed studies. Additionally, new more stringent criteria were added for the design of storm sewer systems. New rules were adopted in July 2019.
- Smaller cities and area communities are following the same general processes as the counties.

So far, notable implications in Houston include increased precipitation depths, which cause an increase in runoff rates that result in increased detention rates. Previously constructed outfall systems—the way water is discharged from a detention pond back into the existing system such as a storm sewer pipe, channel, or stream—are often found to be inadequate to serve the drainage areas for which they were designed. This in turn requires additional mitigation to be provided or supplemental capacity to be added. There is also an increase in storm sewer sizing, along with about a 10% increase in supply costs. Like Austin, Houston has increased the freeboard—the difference between the 100-year flood elevation and the finish floor elevation of a structure—to two feet, which impacts design in relation to Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) grading requirements and other compliance. With Houston's flat terrain, the freeboard increase is a significant design challenge to overcome. Also, areas of Houston are now requiring the mitigation of the 500-year floodplain and not just 100-year floodplain, which increases the cost, time, and study of projects.

Questions to Ask About Potential Effects on Property and Development Sites

Now that you have a basic understanding of what government agencies are doing to respond to this new data, what do you need to do when evaluating a development opportunity in and around the areas impacted by Atlas 14?

The impact of Atlas 14 needs to be studied during the early stages of a development opportunity. It is important to consider the following and perhaps ask your team the following:

- Is the due diligence/development team aware of Atlas 14?
- Is there an existing floodplain on the property?
- With Atlas 14, will all or part of the property be considered to be located in a floodplain?
- Where is the project's drainage outfall?
- Can the drainage outfall handle post-Atlas 14 rainfall events?
- Is the project phased? If so, how does the phasing impact the overall drainage of the project?
- Have the freeboard requirements increased and if so, how will the extra freeboard impact the grading/ADA and lot grading?
- For a phased project, should an updated flood study be conducted?
- Are you doing redevelopment? If so, is the redevelopment in or near a floodplain? If yes, meet with the city or other permitting entity to get clarification on their specific compliance.
- Should flood insurance be evaluated now while the property is not in a floodplain or later when the FEMA maps are updated?
- If you have a portfolio of properties, how will Atlas 14 impact each? Has value been eroded and risk increased?

The data from Atlas 14 will expand areas with high potential for flooding and thus limit development. This increases risk for developing in these areas. With proper understanding and preparation, future land development transactions can be completed successfully and in a timely way, while also allowing for safe development.

MARK RAMSEUR *is a managing principal for Pape-Dawson Engineers, Inc., a Texas consulting, engineering, surveying, and environmental planning firm. Find a webinar he presented on this topic by searching "atlas 14" on texasrealestate.com.*

SALES MEETINGS THAT SIZZLE

Your 10-step plan for meetings that agents want to attend.

by Larry Kendall

Photo: © fizkes - stock.adobe.com

Your sales meeting is the culture point of your office or company. Have excellent sales meetings and attendance soars. Your community gets bigger, stronger, and more connected. Retention and recruiting improve. Momentum, rising market share, and profitability follow.

How do you create great sales meetings? Here's a simple 10-step template that helps you plan for a one-hour meeting that sizzles.

Focus on ROI

Make sure your people feel that they're getting a return on their investment of time. Make the meeting memorable. When associates stay afterward and talk about what they learned or are repeating it the next day, you know you've made a difference for them.

Achieve Goals to Create Energy

A great sales meeting accomplishes as many of the following goals as possible: connection, information, education, inspiration, motivation, and celebration. If you're achieving these goals, your people will be drawn to your meetings to get their energy fix. They love the energy, learning, and being part of a community. Playing upbeat music before and after the meeting adds to the energy.

Appeal to the Four Personality Types

Power People want takeaways—something they can use today in their business.

Party People want to know that they'll get to talk.

Peace People want reassurance that the company and the market are safe and OK.

Perfection People want to see some numbers, so make sure you provide market statistics. Also, have a printed agenda for your meetings. Everyone will benefit, not just perfection people.

Start on Time—With a Video (5 minutes)

Some people will be late no matter what you do, so start with a five-minute inspirational video. The perfection people will appreciate starting on time. The party people will get there by the time the video is over and feel they made the meeting without being embarrassed for being late.

Welcome Everyone and Lead a Group Activity (5 minutes)

One example is to ask attendees to turn to the person next to them and share what they are grateful for. Or ask them to get into groups of four or five and share the best deal they know about in the market. Party people—the largest group of associates—love this exercise because they get to talk.

Find Something to Celebrate (2-5 minutes)

Party people love this because it's fun. Peace people love it because it means all is OK.

Make Announcements (20 minutes)

This is the information stage of the meeting, with property pitches and information from builders. Have market data for your perfection people. Format this section, so you have control of the time. Do not hand your meetings over to outsiders such as lenders, title officers, or builders. If you have a new home neighborhood to announce, make sure the builder knows the time constraints. Unfortunately, too many sales meetings stop right here and become only information meetings. When that happens, energy starts to leak out of the room, and people stop coming.

Present the Main Program (20-25 minutes)

This should be the primary reason your people are showing up. The program needs to provide a takeaway—something they can use today! Your best programs often come from your people sharing how they do something. The takeaway needs to be consistent with your culture and vision. If resources are required for your people to execute the takeaway, you need to have the resources teed up at the meeting. Avoid telling people that they will be getting the tools they need in the next few days or weeks. They are motivated to act now! Keep the momentum going.

Finish With High Energy

If you need to present negative information, cover it earlier in the meeting. Always strive to finish on a high positive note.

End on Time

No one likes meetings that run over their scheduled time. People gradually drift away. Respect your people's time. Control the agenda. Follow these 10 points, and your meetings will benefit your agents and your company!

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QUESTIONS TO ASK BEFORE A HOME INSPECTION

Whether you've had a home inspection done before or this is your first time, there are a few basics buyers should be familiar with. Here are five common questions and answers to help clarify the process.

WHO PAYS FOR IT?
The buyer chooses the inspector, pays the inspector directly for the inspection, and the inspection report generated belongs to the buyer. Get recommendations for a home inspector from friends, family, and your REALTOR®, and make sure whoever you chose is licensed by the Texas Real Estate Commission.

WHAT DOES AN INSPECTOR DO?
The inspector will go through the property and make note of any damage, need for repairs, or maintenance issues, and then give you a copy of the completed report based on those findings. It's important to know that there could be defects a home inspector will not find and wouldn't be expected to find if the defects are in areas with limited or no access. For example, your inspector may recommend getting a structural engineer for a closer look at the foundation.

WHEN SHOULD I GET AN INSPECTION?
Your REALTOR® will discuss including a termination-option period in your contract to purchase the home. This is an amount of time during which you can conduct inspections, negotiate with the seller for repairs, and still have the option to terminate the contract.

WHERE SHOULD I BE DURING THE INSPECTION?
You don't have to be at the property during the inspection, but it can help you better understand the process and get to know the property. Ask your inspector if you can be there to observe and ask questions during the inspection.

WHY SHOULD I HAVE THIS DONE?
Buying a home is probably the largest investment you will ever make, so you want to know as much as you can up front. A home inspector will point out items that need regular maintenance and identify any problems.

After your inspection is complete, talk with your REALTOR® to determine if there are any issues you want to ask the seller to address before you move forward.

A REALTOR® has experience with the homebuying process and will make recommendations that are right for you.

TAKE 5

IS THAT THE IMAGE YOU MEANT TO PROJECT?

People form opinions about you based on all kinds of cues. If you're not careful, you may unintentionally create an impression you'd rather not make.

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WATCH YOUR SOCIAL MEDIA INTERACTIONS

If you wouldn't say or show it to every prospect and client, you may not want to put it on Facebook or Twitter. Pointed comments, heated debates, and potentially offensive photos can cause people to rule you out before they ever give you a chance.

STAY ORGANIZED

Fumbling around never looks good, regardless of whether you use the newest technology or more traditional tools. Make sure you know how to quickly find what you need and share it with the appropriate parties.

MAKE YOUR MARKETING MATCH

If you personally project an upscale appearance but your marketing materials reflect a downhome style, you're sending mixed signals.

DON'T CONFUSE STYLE WITH APPEARANCE

Clients may not care if you wear jeans and boots. Depending on your locale and specialty, they may even expect it. But there's a difference between casual and sloppy. The same holds true for your vehicle and personal grooming.

LOOK AT THE WHOLE PICTURE

Broken links on your website, faded signs, misspellings in a property description—seemingly small issues can add up to cast you in a negative light.

FINALLY
say yes to success.

If you want to be productive, the right tools make the difference.

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