



April 19, 2024

Mayor Zeb Smathers
Town of Canton
85 Summer Street
Canton, NC 28716

Dear Mayor Smathers:

Real estate professionals and consumers depend on strong fair housing laws and practices for our communities and economy to thrive. This is why April is recognized and celebrated by Realtors® as Fair Housing Month, honoring the Fair Housing Act of 1968. Discrimination distorts the housing market and closes the door on the American dream of homeownership for qualified buyers. Across the U.S. the National Association of Realtors® (NAR) works to advance fair housing through policy, advocacy, and legal guidance.

Locally, Canopy Realtor® Association's Western Region Realtor® community celebrates Fair Housing Month by increasing knowledge and strengthening the commitment to fair housing of its members. Realtors® across Haywood County have been challenged by the Association to honor the Fair Housing Act in several ways this month.

Realtors® are Connecting:

- By attending conversations such as the National Fair Housing Alliance education session on April 4, hosted by Charlotte-Mecklenburg Community Relations, featuring keynote speaker, Joshua V. Barr Esq., Realtors® connect with our partners to learn more about upholding fair housing practices in their local communities.
- Canopy Realtor® Association is also hosting national speaker Mia Ives-Ruble, Director of the Disability Justice Initiative at American Progress on April 11 at the Canopy Building. Ives-Ruble will talk with the Realtor® community about her work advocating for disability justice and inclusion and what Realtors® can do to further the independence and dream of homeownership for those living with disabilities.

Realtors® are Learning:

- The Realtor® community has been challenged to take part in training meant to confront and check biases. Canopy Real Estate Institute is offering courses this month like NAR's certification class *"Bias Override: Overcoming Barriers to Fair Housing, NAR's Fairhaven: A Fair Housing Simulation Training*, and *NAR's At Home with Diversity Course*.

Realtors® are Volunteering:

- Haywood County area Realtors® have been challenged to once again, collect 6,000 lbs. of food for the 2024 Realtors® Care Day Food and Pet Food Drive. Donated items will support The Community Kitchen in Canton and Friends of the Haywood County Animal Shelter.

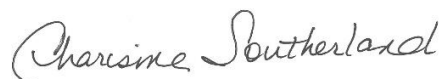
- Friday, April 19, is Realtors® Care Day, a project of Canopy Housing Foundation. More than 50 Haywood area Realtor® volunteers have pledged to spend the day supporting Haywood Habitat for Humanity with projects in the Sylvan Rd. community. Area Realtors® have been working with the local Habitat in the Sylvan Rd community since 2022.
- Haywood area Realtors® also received a \$7,500 Placemaking Grant from NAR this year, which will enable volunteers to install permanent benches in Sorrells Street Park, located in Canton, as well as work on beautification and landscape projects for the park as a part of the annual Realtors® Care Day project. The Placemaking Grant is a national funding opportunity that allows Realtors® to create new, outdoor public spaces and destinations to aid in creating new public community gathering spaces. Realtors® Care Day demonstrates the Realtor® commitment to creating safe and affordable homes and communities for all. This community-wide home repair project in Canopy's jurisdictions of Mecklenburg, Iredell and Haywood Counties, assists homeowners in need with exterior home repairs and safety modifications and has had a total impact of more than \$1.2Million over the last 15 years.

Realtors® are Nominating:

- Through the work of [Canopy Housing Foundation](#), the charitable arm of the Association, Realtors® in Haywood County are encouraged to work in partnership with a nonprofit that is addressing unmet housing needs and assist them in submitting a Community Grant application by May 31. The Foundation's Community Grants and Habitat Grants programs provide annual financial support to area nonprofits. Grants totaling \$47,200 have been distributed since 2020 benefitting organizations that address unmet housing needs in Haywood, as well as Haywood County Habitat for Humanity.
- Realtors® are also fostering the philanthropists of the future with nominations for the Youth Excellence in Service Award or YES Award, which will also be distributed by Canopy Housing Foundation. The community is encouraged to nominate a young person between the ages of 10-18 who is actively engaged in improving our communities. Nominations for both the Community Grants and YES Awards are due by May 31.

The local Realtor® community understands that Fair Housing is more than a list of do's and don'ts, rights and penalties, and mandatory continuing education. As stewards of the right to own, use, and transfer private property, fair housing protects our livelihood and business as Realtors® and depends on a free, open market that embraces equal opportunity. We hope you'll continue to support the Realtor® community as we work to improve the communities where we live, work, and play.

Respectfully,



Charisma Southerland
2024 President, Canopy Realtor® Association/Canopy Housing Foundation/Canopy MLS