

Realtor® president passionate about affordable housing, racial equity



On January 27, the Canopy Realtor® Association installed David Kennedy as 2021 president of the Association, Canopy MLS and the **Canopy Housing Foundation**. The Association has more than 13,000 members and Canopy MLS has more than 20,000 subscribers. A Realtor® since 2007, Kennedy has served on the Canopy Realtor® Association Board of Directors since 2015. In the Q&A below, he shares his commitment to affordable housing, racial equity and Realtor® leadership.

Q. What are several initiatives you would like to see occur during your leadership year?

A. 1. Increased inventory (homes for sale). 2. More affordable homes for median-income residents. 3. Incentives to own. In short — more affordable inventory and more ownership. Charlotte needs roughly 34,000 affordable housing units. Realtors® and builders need to do our part to increase the affordable supply of homes so residents can have an economic base to build wealth and enable upward mobility.

Q. You are a leader who seems comfortable with challenging topics, including racial equity, diversity and inclusion. Where does your perspective and awareness come from?

A. I have a diverse set of friends, some of whom send me books to read. I am open and willing to learn, which also means I am not afraid to be wrong and subsequently corrected. I find that for the most part disenfranchised individuals do not want revenge for the oppression they

have endured as much as they just want the oppression to end. As a white, heterosexual, cisgendered male, I am not discriminated against, but that does not mean that others are as fortunate. It is not enough for me to sit on the sidelines and allow others to suffer. We live in a free society, but I don't see that as freedom to do whatever I want, but rather, freedom to do what is right.

Q. What role do you think Realtors® play in creating a vibrant community that offers economic equity, diverse representation and inclusion for all?

A. Since Realtors® are a diverse set of people and often leaders in divergent communities, they can serve as a linchpin for unification. Leaders should possess self-awareness to ensure their impact is not domineering. I recently re-read the story of Jesus healing the bleeding woman, and the crowd surrounding Jesus made me think of well-intentioned people unknowingly preventing those with the greatest need from getting help. Realtors® do a decent job of pressing toward goals with good

intentions, and we have a conscience for those in need.

Q. Can you tell us one key thought you want the community to know about the Realtor® profession?

A. The 21st century Realtor® is building a legacy of community support, whether it be in the form of unique contributions by individual Realtors®, collective efforts through their firms or Association-wide collaboration via the Canopy Housing Foundation. I want the community to know that through our foundation Realtors® have returned more than \$630,000 through our grant and award programs since their formal inception in 2007. In addition, our annual Realtors® Care Day, when we address critical house repairs for homeowners in need, has had a cumulative impact of more than \$1 million since 2009. As leaders, Realtors® believe in investing in our community to create a region where all housing needs are met.

Building access to home ownership

Today's Realtor® is part of a legacy that has long provided support to every aspect of the community. Through their unique contributions, collective efforts, and collaborative partnerships, the local Realtor® community and its **Canopy Housing Foundation** are building a stronger community...one initiative at a time.

How?

- By returning nearly \$350,000 in grant funding to community nonprofits that are engaged in meeting housing needs of the most fragile in our community.
- By actively assisting in making exterior repairs to the homes of those who have the greatest need through community service projects like Realtors® Care Day. Since 2009, this project has returned an estimated value of \$1 million to our local neighborhoods.
- By annually providing financial support to area Habitat organizations. Since 2009 Realtors® have distributed more than \$250,000 in support to eight area Habitat organizations.
- By engaging in education that certifies Realtors® to be Workforce Housing Specialists, who are trained to work with first-time buyers, single-buyers and buyers who are essential to the local workforce. These workers often serve as the backbone of our community in roles such as police officers, firefighters, teachers, nurses, retail workers, food service workers and more. Realtors® with the Workforce Housing Specialist certification understand the challenges of purchasing in the affordable price range and are able to navigate the various complexities that could be barriers to homeownership.
- By working in partnership with the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Community Relations Committee to uphold the standards of the Fair Housing Act, which protects the consumer from discrimination whether renting, buying or securing financing. Our own Realtor® Code of Ethics affirms our commitment to providing equal professional service without regard to the race, color, religion, gender, disability, national origin, sexual orientation or gender identity of any prospective client, customer or residents of any community.
- By taking an active lead in the formulation of a Five-Year Affordable Housing Study conducted by the Childress Klein School of Real Estate at UNC-Charlotte. As a result of contributing funding, housing data, and the expertise of leaders in the real estate industry, the Realtor® community is part of a local consortium that is working to raise awareness of the affordable housing issue with the ultimate goal of identifying solutions.

The goal?

Realtors® are committed to building a community where all residents have access to build wealth through homeownership. Realtors® care about addressing the entire continuum from homelessness to homeownership. We believe one of our most important roles as Realtors® is to raise awareness and funding for unmet housing needs in our community. We achieve this through our Canopy Housing Foundation's many programs and services that support initiatives directly addressing the issue of safe, sustainable and affordable housing.



Learn more about the ways that Realtors® are actively addressing affordable housing at canopyhousingfoundation.org.

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