

## Government Affairs Update

By Steve Madsen, CCAR Government Affairs Consultant

Currently, CCAR Government Affairs is continuing to pursue its “6-point Strategy” to improve quality of life and opportunities for residential and commercial property sales in Clark County. That strategy includes identifying major areas of local government activities that may affect the real estate community and then pursuing tactics that will hopefully bring positive outcomes for CCAR members.

The six major areas of local government activities GA has identified include:

- Planning/Development Regulations
- Schools
- Parks
- Transportation
- Quality of Life
- Economic Development

In the area of local development regulations, Clark County is currently undergoing a major re-write of its entire development code. CCAR is providing regular and informed input on these regulations in the effort to reduce construction costs while ensuring quality construction and community integration of residential and commercial developments. All jurisdictions in Clark County will be adopting new shorelines regulation this year. These regulations will create new use restrictions in shoreline areas and will likely expand the geographic area of the shoreline designation on certain lakes, rivers and floodplains. CCAR is represented on the Shorelines Stakeholders Advisory Committee and has and will continue to provide input and receive information for interested CCAR members.

Clark County is reconvening its Quality Schools Task Force to bring together school districts, the development and real estate communities, municipal staff and others to discuss how school planning and construction issues (including imposition of impact fees) can be addressed in a cooperative forum. CCAR will have representatives on this task force providing input on the impacts of various school construction policies on the real estate market.

With the legislature likely to compromise on the expansion of uses for certain Real Estate Excise Tax (REET) funds, local jurisdictions will need to make their own policy decisions about how these funds will be spent. These some of these funds are currently dedicated for the acquisition of new parks as the county grows. CCAR will continue to try to make sure that the quality and variety of Clark County parks will not be sacrificed for expediency or lack of creativity.

Transportation issues represent some of the most expensive and complex issues of the region. A potential casino and the Columbia River Crossing Project will have major traffic ramifications for Clark County. Many roads in the county are nearly at gridlock. The Regional Transportation Commission (RTC) is the regional transportation planning

authority for Clark County. RTC is charged with adopting transportation planning policy and has substantial input on a variety of major local transportation projects. CCAR's Government Affairs Director regularly attends and provides occasional input on these issues as they may affect development and quality of life in Clark County. Local light rail may be one of the more contentious issues of the year with many people on both sides of the issue. CCAR is very interested in hearing how its members or their customers may be impacted by a local light rail system.

One of the most innovative initiatives Clark County is attempting, at the request of Commissioner Marc Boldt, is to plan for and promote the readiness of Clark County for the needs of the growing elder population. The Aging Readiness Task Force has engaged CCAR and the Building Industry Association of Clark County to develop a strategy for promoting Clark County as "elder-ready" with Realtors®, builders & remodelers with the expertise to accommodate the needs of older folks. Look forward to more information on this initiative.

With the state of the overall local economy so closely tied to local real estate market, CCAR is engaging other organizations to try to develop strategies for improvement. Identity Clark County (ICC) is a local organization made up of private, public and non-profit organizations and institutions to discuss areas of legislative concern. ICC has been instrumental in obtaining state funding for local transportation projects and taking other issues of local importance before the state legislature. The Greater Vancouver Chamber of Commerce represents a significant portion of the local business community and maintains its own government affairs committee. The Columbia River Economic Development Council promotes location in Clark County of large employers and industrial operations. CCAR will be engaging with these organizations and others throughout the year to work to improve the local economy and identify opportunities for promoting the local real estate market.

If any or all of these initiatives interests you, please feel free to contact me at [sb.madsen@hotmail.com](mailto:sb.madsen@hotmail.com) or 360 957 4578.