

**GREATER
CHATTANOOGA
REALTIST**



CLOSING WITH PURPOSE

**A REALTOR'S GUIDE
TO VOTER
REGISTRATION**

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National Association of Real Estate Brokers

The purpose of NAREB is to promote economic advancement for its members, the broader community, and the minority communities it serves. NAREB unites professionals from all recognized branches of the real estate industry— including brokerage, management, mortgage financing, appraising, land development, home building, and allied fields— to exert influence on real estate interests. While predominantly composed of African Americans, the REALTIST organization welcomes all qualified real estate practitioners committed to our vision of “Democracy in Housing.”

Greater Chattanooga Realist

Established in April of 2021, Greater Chattanooga Realist is a newly formed chapter of the National Association of Real Estate Brokers(NAREB). Our goal is to educate, empower, partner and transform our communities through service, policy changes and programs. We strive to remain laser-focused on increasing the rate of homeownership and retention in our communities. In all that we do, we will do it holistically to serve the ones that are underserved.



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Introduction

Why Civic Engagement Matters

Civic engagement is more than participating in elections—it's about building stronger communities, fostering trust, and establishing a meaningful connection with those around us. For real estate professionals, engaging civically provides a unique opportunity to enhance professional credibility while contributing positively to the neighborhoods you serve.

This guide is designed to help Realtors integrate voter registration into their client interactions. By doing so, you can strengthen relationships, demonstrate a commitment to your community, and encourage informed participation in local elections.

Chapter 1: The Importance of Civic Engagement

Professional Credibility and Community Trust

Engaging civically allows real estate professionals to:

- Build trust with clients by showing investment in the community's well-being.
- Strengthen their brand image as dependable and community-oriented.
- Gain a deeper understanding of the local population's needs.

By participating in civic activities, professionals not only enhance their reputation but also foster meaningful relationships. Community members are more likely to trust and support businesses that demonstrate care for their environment.

Civic Engagement and Community Building

Active participation in civic matters strengthens communities by:

- Promoting social justice and equal opportunities.
- Enhancing quality of life for all members.
- Fostering a sense of belonging and unity.

When Realtors lead or support initiatives like voter registration, they bridge gaps between individuals and public resources, ultimately contributing to a more equitable and prosperous community.

Chapter 2: Local Elections and Real Estate

The Intersection of Elections and Real Estate

Local elections have a profound impact on real estate markets. Decisions made by elected officials shape policies that directly influence property values, housing availability, and community development. Realtors, as key stakeholders, benefit from understanding these dynamics and educating their clients on how elections affect their neighborhoods.

Key areas where elections influence real estate include:

- **Zoning and Land Use Policies:** Determine how land is developed and used, affecting property values and neighborhood dynamics.
- **Property Taxes:** Influence affordability and attractiveness of different areas.
- **Affordable Housing Initiatives:** Address housing shortages but can reshape market dynamics.
- **Economic Development Policies:** Drive growth, attracting businesses and residents to certain areas.
- **Infrastructure Development:** Improves connectivity and raises property demand.
- **Public Safety and Services:** Affect community desirability.
- **Rent Control and Tenant Rights:** Regulate rental markets and investor opportunities.

Real-World Examples

Zoning and Land Use Policies

- In Nashville, Metro Council's zoning reforms allowed higher-density developments in areas like The Gulch. These changes boosted property values and transformed the neighborhood into a vibrant mixed-use hub.
- In Chattanooga, Southside zoning adjustments encouraged downtown growth, attracting investments but sparking debates on gentrification and displacement.

Affordable Housing Initiatives

- Under Mayor John Cooper, Nashville launched the Barnes Fund for Affordable Housing, providing grants to developers. This helped create affordable options while indirectly raising property values in surrounding areas.

Economic Development Policies

- The creation of Chattanooga's Innovation District drew tech companies and startups, increasing demand for commercial and residential properties. While this boosted property values, it also led to rising rents and reduced affordability.

Understanding these examples equips Realtors to better guide clients and contribute to informed voting in their communities.

Chapter 3: The Realtor's Role in Voter Registration

Why Realtors Are Uniquely Positioned

As trusted professionals who connect with clients during significant life changes, Realtors occupy a unique position to promote voter registration. By helping individuals moving into new communities navigate local resources, Realtors can encourage civic participation while strengthening relationships.

Key Reasons Realtors Can Make an Impact:

- **Frequent Interaction with Movers:** Clients relocating to new areas often need assistance updating their voter registration.
- **Trusted Relationships:** Realtors build trust, making clients more open to discussions about civic matters.
- **Community Knowledge:** Realtors are well-versed in local resources, including election offices and voter registration locations.
- **Relationship-Based Business:** By incorporating voter registration into the process, Realtors showcase their commitment to clients' long-term success in their new communities.

Maintaining Non-Partisan Engagement

To preserve professionalism and avoid alienating clients, Realtors should remain non-partisan when discussing voter registration. Non-partisan engagement fosters trust and ensures compliance with professional standards.

Best Practices for Non-Partisan Engagement:

- Provide Factual Information Only: Share clear, unbiased voter registration details.
- Avoid Political Symbols or Language: Maintain a neutral tone in all materials.
- Offer Equal Assistance to Everyone: Ensure resources are accessible to all clients, regardless of political affiliation.
- Respect Privacy: Never ask about voting preferences or share sensitive information.
- Partner with Local Organizations: Collaborate with non-partisan groups for training and materials.

By following these practices, Realtors can empower clients without risking the integrity of their business relationships.

Chapter 4: Practical Steps for Integrating Voter Registration

Making Voter Registration Part of the Home buying Process

Integrating voter registration into your services as a Realtor can be simple, impactful, and beneficial for clients. By proactively providing resources and reminders, you help ensure your clients are prepared to engage with their new community.

Practical Methods to Encourage Voter Registration

1. Include a Voter Registration Packet
 - Prepare a packet with voter registration forms, links to online registration, and instructions.
 - Provide this alongside other documents during the closing process.
2. Discuss Voter Registration During Document Review
 - Highlight voter registration as part of settling into a new home.
 - Explain the importance of updating voter registration information to reflect the new address.
3. Create a "New Homeowner Checklist"
 - Add voter registration as a key step in your checklist.
 - Ensure the checklist emphasizes its importance for participating in local elections.

4. Offer a Community Guide

- Include information on local polling places, election offices, and online voter registration.
- Pair this with other neighborhood resources like schools, utilities, and parks.

Providing Voter Registration Cards at Closing

One of the most straightforward ways to assist clients is to have voter registration cards readily available at every closing. This ensures clients can act immediately on your advice without needing to search for forms or resources.

Why Updating Voter Registration Is Essential

When clients move, ensuring their voter registration is updated helps them:

1. Vote in the Correct District: Each address corresponds to specific representatives and ballot measures.
2. Avoid Delays or Issues: Advanced updates prevent complications on election day.
3. Receive Important Voting Information: Timely reminders and absentee ballot notices are sent to registered addresses.

By incorporating these steps into your routine, you position yourself as a Realtor who not only sells homes but also invests in building informed and engaged communities.

Chapter 5: Tools and Resources

Empowering Clients with the Right Information

Providing clients with reliable tools and resources ensures they can confidently engage in civic participation. As a Realtor, you can offer a curated list of materials to simplify the voter registration process and educate clients about local elections.

Essential Resources for Voter Registration

- Online Tools
 - GoVoteTN.com: A comprehensive resource for Tennessee voters, offering voter registration, polling locations, and election dates.
 - Vote411.org: A national tool providing personalized election information.
- Voter Guides
 - Provide non-partisan voter guides that detail upcoming elections, ballot measures, and candidate platforms.
 - TNVoterGuides.com: A trusted local resource for Tennessee voters to access detailed information on elections and candidates.
- Local Election Offices
 - Share contact details and locations of local election commissions where clients can register in person or ask questions.
- Training and Support
 - Participate in voter registration drive trainings offered by the Tennessee Secretary of State or National Voter Registration Day to enhance your knowledge and effectiveness in assisting clients.

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Chapter 6: Measuring Impact

Tracking Your Voter Registration Efforts

To ensure your voter registration initiatives are successful and continuously improving, it's important to track and measure their impact. This allows you to gauge the effectiveness of your efforts, identify areas for improvement, and set goals for future engagement.

Methods for Tracking Voter Registration Impact

- Voluntary Surveys
 - After closing, include a short, voluntary survey asking clients if they registered to vote through your assistance. This helps you gauge how many clients utilized the resources you provided.
- Follow-Up Emails
 - Send follow-up emails to check in with clients and inquire whether the voter registration materials were helpful. This feedback allows you to improve your materials and processes for future clients.
- Track Registration Links
 - If you provide a link to online voter registration, use a unique, trackable URL (such as a Bit.ly link) to monitor how many clients clicked on the link and registered.

Identifying Trends and Improving Outreach

By analyzing the data gathered from surveys, emails, and link tracking, you can identify patterns and trends in your outreach efforts. Use this information to:

- **Identify High-Performing Strategies:** Recognize which communication methods or resources lead to higher registration rates.
- **Refine Your Approach:** Adjust your materials or outreach strategies based on client feedback and performance data.

Setting Goals and Measuring Growth

To increase the impact of your voter registration efforts over time, it's helpful to set measurable goals, such as:

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- Increasing the number of clients registered each quarter.
- Expanding the number of new homeowners you engage with regarding voter registration.
- Tracking improvements in community engagement and participation in local elections.

Review your progress regularly to ensure you're meeting your goals and identify areas where you can improve your outreach or communication.

By measuring the success of your voter registration efforts, you ensure that you're not only serving your clients but also contributing to stronger, more engaged communities.

Conclusion

Recap and Key Takeaways

As a Realtor, integrating voter registration into your practice not only benefits your clients but also strengthens your relationship with the community. By educating yourself on the impact of local elections, embracing non-partisan engagement, and providing practical resources, you empower individuals to become active participants in their new communities.

Here's a quick recap of the key steps to take:

1. Understand the Importance of Civic Engagement: Recognize how elections influence real estate and community development.
2. Promote Voter Registration: Use simple methods like providing registration packets, including voter registration in closing documents and offering community guides.
3. Use Tools and Resources: Leverage local election websites, voter guides, and training to assist clients.
4. Measure Impact: Track your registration efforts, identify trends, and adjust your strategies to improve engagement.

By implementing these practices, you position yourself as a trusted community partner, fostering civic participation and community growth through every transaction.

Final Thoughts

Voter registration is more than just a formality, it's an opportunity for Realtors to be agents of change, ensuring that the communities you serve are informed, engaged, and empowered. As you continue to build relationships with your clients, consider voter registration as an integral part of your service, a small but impactful way to make a difference.

For any questions or additional guidance, feel free to reach out:

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