

# Greater



The Chapel Hill Board of Realtors has changed its name to Greater Chapel Hill Association of Realtors. With the new logo, above, are Ray Parrish, graphic designer, left; Kim Dawson, incoming president; Desiree Goldman, community director; and Sue Millager, executive officer.

# Growing market spurs name change for board of Realtors

**BY EDDY LANDRETH**

CORRESPONDENT

CHAPEL HILL — A group of local Realtors decided a board by any name was not the same, at least not an accurate depiction of its growth and diversity of membership.

So the Chapel Hill Board of Realtors has become the Greater Chapel Hill Association of Realtors, complete with a new logo and an ever-growing membership that stretches into multiple counties and towns in the Triangle.

"Since 2000 our membership has grown from 386 to 676," said Desiree Goldman, secretary for the association and one of the people who helped to guide the board through the process. "Our market has grown where many of the local Chapel Hill Realtors are covering a larger geographic area to serve their clients. This stretches from the east Durham, north Hillsborough, south Chatham and west Efland, Mebane.

"Many agents also sell properties in Wake County. We have increased the number of companies as members in the Hillsborough and Chatham areas. Looking at these facts, this year the board decided to see if we could come up with a name change that represented our growth while still maintaining our traditional focus in Chapel Hill."

Among other things, Realtor boards across the state provide opportunities for continuing education for their members.

"We hold our members to a higher

code of ethics," Goldman said. "It's a higher level of professionalism. The association's job is to create opportunities for membership to enhance their professionalism through continuing education that will make them better Realtors."

Anyone can take a course and a test to earn a real estate license, but to become a Realtor one must join a board or association. At one time, that membership had to be in the county or city in which one sold real estate. Vic Knight, a Realtor from Hillsborough, has been in the real estate business for close to 25 years. He's a former president of the state association, and he said the rules changed in the early 1990s to allow individuals and real estate companies more flexibility.

"In North Carolina, we do our jurisdiction by county," Knight said. "So Orange County, prior to that time frame, was the Chapel Hill board. That covered all of Orange County. Your only choice was the Chapel Hill board. Because of situations like we have in the Triangle, where we have three boards [Raleigh, Durham and Chapel Hill], large companies were doing business across the Triangle and the three boards. So the big companies, not just here but across the country, put pressure on the national association to change the rules. We came up with a term called 'board of choice.'"

After that, a Realtor in Hillsborough

or Chatham County could join the Chapel Hill board or the Durham board, or even the Raleigh-Wake County board. Around this time, the board in Pittsboro ceased to exist, so many of the real estate agents in Chatham County joined the Chapel Hill board.

Chapel Hill is not unique. Raleigh, Durham and other boards across the state became associations for similar reasons.

"The board decided to see if we could come up with a name change that represented our growth while still maintaining our traditional focus in Chapel Hill," Goldman said. "This would seem like an easy task, but it is not so simple. First we had to find a name the board approved. We all felt it was important to keep Chapel Hill as the focal point. We wanted to express the larger geographic area without a laundry list of cities, which is how we came up with 'greater,' and we wanted to better represent the true nature of our membership by switching from Board of Realtors to 'association.'"

Once the board agreed, the Chapel Hill board had to have the membership vote on the change.

"Then we had to present it to the Durham Association, Raleigh Association and the North Carolina Association of Realtors for approval," Goldman said. "Any one group could have said no and stopped the progress. Thankfully, they all approved."

The association does more than pro-

mote education. From its office on Legion Road it disseminates valuable, timely information to its members.

"We're doing a bi-monthly bulletin that has anything to do with legislative affairs, anything that has to do with ordinance changes," Goldman said. "Our members are more knowledgeable. The downtown redevelopment, you can think of that as just business, but it affects the residential real estate market, too."

So the name of this 50-year-old Chapel Hill institution has caught up with its 21st-century membership, Knight said.

"Now that the name of the board gives a better representation that the members in and around Chapel Hill encompass an area much larger than just the city limits of Chapel Hill," Knight said. "There are also Realtors who live and work in Hillsborough who don't belong to the Chapel Hill board. They belong to the Durham board, but that was their choice."

Kara Hart, president of the association, said that she hopes this move will encourage more people from outside Chapel Hill to join.

"We wanted our name to represent the areas we represent as well as try to encourage the agents from Hillsborough and Pittsboro to join our association," Hart said.

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