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What kind of survey  
is that? p. 10

Vote to lower property  
taxes! p. 4

# TEXAS★REALTOR

SUCCEED IN TEXAS REAL ESTATE

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2025

## UNLOCK YOUR POTENTIAL



Answer these questions to boost  
business success p. 20

Explore 38 money-saving ideas p. 24

Share what you know, watch  
your business grow p. 28



What to know about probate  
and real estate p. 14

A data-driven edge for  
commercial pros p. 18

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It's not a **BLUE** problem.  
It's a **PURPLE** Solution.

Be part of the **#PurpleSolution**  
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help TREPAC turn Texas purple.



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Share what you know, watch your business grow

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### NEW LAWS THAT MATTER TO YOU AND YOUR CLIENTS

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# CHAIRMAN'S CORNER

**JULY 4, 2025, WILL STICK IN THE MEMORY** of every Texan because of the tragic events that happened in the Hill Country and other parts of Central Texas that morning. Everyone was shocked at the amount of water that fell from the sky and the damage it created on the ground. So many precious neighbors' lives of all ages were lost and untold damage done to properties and possessions.

When tragedies like this strike, people always look for that beacon of hope to rally behind to get through the dark days. For me, that comes in the form of volunteers who jump in to help. On July 4, as has often been the case, many Texas REALTORS® led the way.

Some of our members headed to the Hill Country right away with chainsaws in hand and friends in tow. I saw fundraising efforts kick in immediately, including appeals by individual REALTORS® who raised staggering amounts.

Collectively, our state association donated money from the Texas REALTORS® Relief Fund to vetted local assistance organizations. This meant that help went out quickly to the spots where it was needed most. We worked with the national REALTORS® Relief Foundation to set up even larger sums of assistance to assist those whose housing was damaged or completely destroyed. And we coordinated with the local associations to assist in whatever ways we could.

From my background in law enforcement, I've seen how the initial volunteer response to a tragedy can taper off long before those who need us have even started to recover. For many victims of these floods, their lives will never be the same.

To try to extend our attention on the needs that still exist, we devoted a portion of our association's Board of Directors meeting on August 24 to a presentation from the REALTORS® Relief Foundation. I was pleased to see many members at that meeting get out their phones on the spot to donate. I encourage you to do the same—right now—at [rrf.realtor/donate](http://rrf.realtor/donate).

We know that this disaster won't be the last that our fellow Texans go through, but we can take some heart in also knowing that there are so many in our organization and our communities who are ready and willing to lend a hand.



## ONE MORE THING...

At the Texas REALTORS® Shaping Texas Conference, Chet Garner (aka The Daytripper) and our 2026 Chairman Jennifer Wauhob spoke about the value of a good story. Who tells the story is as important as the story itself. Do we want others writing our story for us?

Texas REALTORS® is taking our story into our own hands with a consumer ad campaign that extols the value REALTORS® bring to every transaction. I encourage you to do the same—reach out and tell your story. If you don't, someone else will! Stay in control of the narrative about the positive and rewarding experience of being a Texas REALTOR® and all the good work you do for your clients and community.

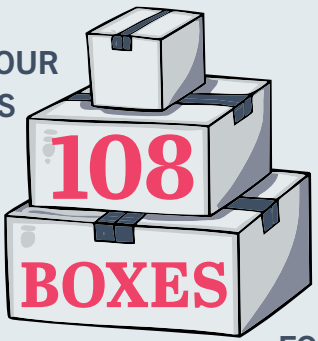
*Chet*

CHRISTY GESSLER  
2025 Chairman

# BIG PICTURE

Find research and statistics at [texasrealestate.com/research](http://texasrealestate.com/research)

IT MAY  
TAKE YOUR  
CLIENTS



TO MOVE  
OUT OF  
A 1,600  
TO 2,000  
SQUARE  
FOOT HOME

[40 small, 35 medium, 20 large, and 13 extra large]

\$14,232

MEDIAN DOWN  
PAYMENT IN TEXAS

[June 2025]

That's up 27.9% from June 2024  
but well below the nationwide  
median of \$61,500.

3 REALTORS® in the  
U.S. with at least  
16 years' experience

Made Nearly  
10x More

last year than those  
with less than 3 years'  
experience.

[Gross income of \$78,900  
compared to \$8,100]

4

## MORTGAGE RATES

[1971-2025]

30-YEAR FIXED RATE WITH 20% DOWN



5



International Homebuyers  
in Texas [April 2024 – March 2025]

- 7,500 HOMES PURCHASED
- \$4.8 BILLION TOTAL DOLLAR VOLUME
- \$420,800 MEDIAN PRICE
- TOP COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN:  
MEXICO (30%), CANADA (8%), CHINA (8%)

6)

24% of Texas  
buyers bought a  
multigenerational home

[July 2023 - June 2024]

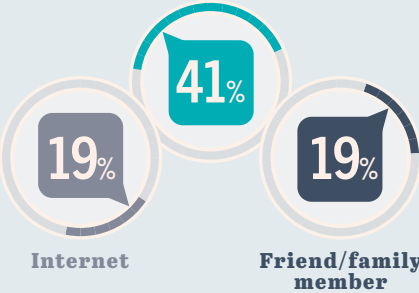
Includes adult children, adult siblings,  
parents, or grandparents

Ranked among 180 U.S. large metro areas in  
a 2025 study. Factors included affordability,  
housing inventory/demand, projected price  
appreciation, and population in 20s and 30s.

6

TOP SOURCES  
U.S. CONSUMERS TRUST  
FOR INFORMATION ON  
BUYING A HOME

REALTOR®



MARKETVIEWER IS YOUR  
EXCLUSIVE ACCESS  
TO ACCURATE REAL  
ESTATE DATA YOU CAN  
CUSTOMIZE AND SHARE



[texasrealestate.com/  
marketviewer](http://texasrealestate.com/marketviewer)

SOURCES: [1] CNET; [2] Attom Data; [3] U.NAR Member Profile; [4] Freddie Mac; [5] Texas REALTORS® International Residential Transactions Report; [6] Texas Homebuyers and Sellers Report; [7] NeighborWorks America

# INSIGHTS

## Vote to Lower Your Property Taxes



Passing Propositions 13 and 11 this November will reduce taxes for millions of Texans.

Thanks in large part to advocacy efforts by Texas REALTORS® during the 89<sup>th</sup> Texas Legislature, voters have an opportunity to pass significant property tax relief for homeowners.

**Proposition 13** would raise the homestead property tax exemption from \$100,000 to \$140,000, and **Proposition 11** would increase the homestead exemption for elderly and disabled individuals from \$10,000 to \$60,000.

If both propositions are approved, qualifying individuals will enjoy an additional \$90,000 in exemptions to the taxable value of their homestead property.

Tell everyone you know to join Texas REALTORS® in voting yes to lower property taxes. You can use the *Share This* flier on page 27 and at [texasrealestate.com/sharethis](https://texasrealestate.com/sharethis).

### TEXAS REALTORS® ENDORSES FOUR OTHER BALLOT PROPOSITIONS THAT WILL HELP TEXANS AND TEXAS REAL ESTATE.

- Proposition 9** increases the tax exemption on business personal property, such as furniture and computers. The change from a \$2,500 to a \$125,000 exemption could save your business hundreds of dollars or more a year and eliminate significant administrative burden.
- Proposition 4** allocates \$1 billion in sales tax revenue annually to the Texas Water Fund to help pay for water infrastructure projects. Securing this revenue stream now prepares Texas for future growth.
- Proposition 2** prohibits capital gains taxes on individuals, estates, and trusts, as well as the franchise tax on business trusts, which is like a capital gains tax. This proposition would further signal the state's commitment to a favorable tax environment.
- Proposition 1** establishes special funds for the state technical college system to help meet the demand for skilled workers in key sectors. Regionally responsive workforce training ensures Texans have the skills to thrive in a dynamic job market. For REALTORS®, that means more Texans earning stable, good-paying jobs—opening the door to mortgage qualification, homeownership, and stronger local housing markets.

Learn more about all 17 ballot propositions at [texasrealtorssupport.com](https://texasrealtorssupport.com). Then mark your calendars: **Early voting takes place October 20-31, and Election Day is Tuesday, November 4. Together, REALTORS® can make a difference!**

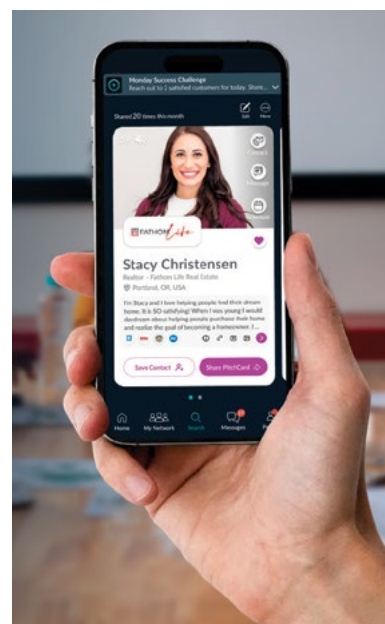
## NEW BENEFIT HELPS YOU MAKE A LASTING IMPRESSION

**Clients choose agents they trust.** And trust starts with a story. With **Pitch59**, your new Texas REALTORS® member benefit, you can create a 59-second video intro that helps show who you are, what drives you, and why clients should work with you before you even meet.

It's personal, memorable, and designed to build trust.

Not sure what to say? Pitch59's built-in scripts and teleprompter make it easy to speak with confidence. No guesswork, no stress. Your PitchCard may just become the most powerful tool to grow your business!

To create your PitchCard, visit [texasrealestate.com/pitch59](https://texasrealestate.com/pitch59) to learn more, register, and receive a 20% discount off the annual rate.



## What Members Say About Texas REALTOR® Magazine



2,414 survey responses [June 2025]

92% read the magazine

40% never miss an issue

**TEXAS REALTOR® IS...**

99% A trustworthy source of information

90% Relevant to my daily work

96% Designed in a way that's easy to read

### MOST USEFUL FORMAT

50% print only

32% print and digital

18% digital only

816 members shared opinions, story ideas, and other open-ended comments.

Editors read every response. To provide additional input, email [editor@texasrealtors.com](mailto:editor@texasrealtors.com).



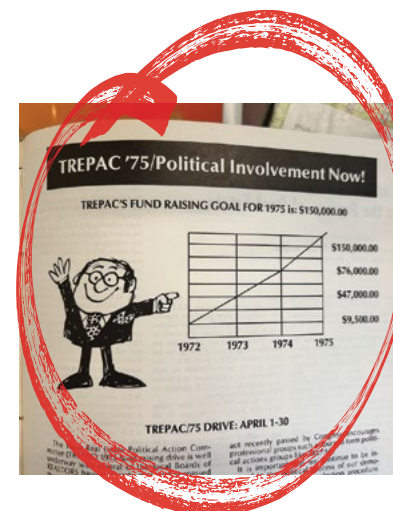
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- Opt out of the print edition
- Change your mailing address from home to business
- Sign up for email notifications for the digital edition.

You can also visit your member portal at [texasrealestate.com](https://texasrealestate.com) and look under **My Texas REALTORS® > Magazine Delivery**.

## FROM THE ARCHIVES APRIL 1975

Fifty years ago, TREPAC announced a statewide push to raise \$150,000. That goal was nearly double the previous year's total and would continue the political action committee's expansive growth from its initial year's \$9,500 invested in 1972. Adjusted for inflation, TREPAC's \$150,000 goal would be about \$916,000 in today's dollars. These days, TREPAC has reached much greater heights. The political action committee hopes to build on the momentum from the legislative wins from the 89<sup>th</sup> Texas legislative session to propel support past its \$6 million haul from 2024. TREPAC's mission is to raise and disburse funds to support candidates who champion REALTOR® issues. You can make your investment and learn more at [trepac.com](https://trepac.com).



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I certify that all information furnished on this form is true and complete. I understand that anyone who furnishes false or misleading information on this form or who omits material or information requested on the form may be subject to criminal sanctions (including fines and imprisonment) and/or civil sanctions (including civil penalties).

Generate More Leads with Stronger Calls to Action



**Why don't some prospects** take the next step after seeing your messages? You can motivate them—and gain new business—by strengthening your call to action (CTA) at the end of your marketing. Do your CTAs include these elements?

**A CLEAR REASON WHY**

A compelling CTA explains what prospects will gain by moving forward.

- “Like and subscribe to get more staging tips.”
- “Call me so we can search for your dream home.”

**A SENSE OF URGENCY**

Don't give your prospects a reason to put off making a move.

- “Sign up today so you don't miss another insight on how your market is doing.”
- “Appointments are going fast. Contact me now to be in your new home as soon as possible.”

**A SIMPLE NEXT STEP**

Make it easy for your prospects to follow your advice by keeping it simple and convenient.

- “Click here to get started!”
- “Scan this QR code to learn more.”

You know not everyone who reads your marketing materials becomes a client. Improving your conversion rates is a great way to increase business and get more out of the same effort.

Capture Contact Info and Other Text with Your Phone's Camera



**Have you ever found yourself snapping a photo** of a business card or other information you want to write down later? Skip a step by using your phone's camera to turn what it sees into usable text.

Point the camera and wait a moment for the phone to recognize that there is text in view. It might highlight the text or put brackets around it. Look for a symbol on the screen. Most icons for capturing text will have four rounded corners around them. Tap the symbol to see options like copying the text, adding it to a note, translating it, or reading it aloud (options vary depending on the phone's features).

If your phone's camera doesn't do this automatically, you can still use it to copy text. Open the Google homepage on any web browser and tap the camera symbol on the right side of the main search box to open Google Lens. (You may be prompted to download the Google app, if you don't already have it installed.) Then point your camera at the text and tap “select text” for options.

How You Can Get Your Broker Advantage



**Looking for broker-specific information in a quick, easy-to-scan format?**

**Meet the new *Broker Advantage* email newsletter.** Every Monday morning, *Broker Advantage* brings you the latest updates and helpful broker content you can use—plus important info to share with your agents.

Get form updates, FAQs on how to comply with new and existing laws, key research and market statistics, details about how advocacy benefits you and your clients, tips to get the most out of your membership in Texas REALTORS®, and more.

Haven't seen it yet? Subscribe today by messaging email@texasrealtors.com and saying you want the *Broker Advantage*.

You can also access broker content anytime at texasrealestate.com/brokers.

WHY STORYTELLING MATTERS TO YOUR BUSINESS

**Chet Garner** can tell a good story. As the creator, host, and executive producer of “*The Daytripper*” on PBS and thedaytripper.com, he explores the state seeking interesting places and the people and attractions that make it that way. Garner discussed the power of stories at the 2025 Texas REALTORS® Shaping Texas Conference in August. (See conference coverage on page 22.) You can start putting stories to work in your brokerage using his advice.

**Realize you're in the storytelling business**

We're all storytellers; some of us just don't know it yet. We tend to pigeon-hole storytelling as something you do around a campfire or on a blog post. All day long, stories are how we communicate. Stories can have a lot of power and influence in real estate. Your clients are visualizing themselves in a house or in a community. They're telling themselves a story of what it's like to live there.

**Live your stories**

The best way to get to know a place is to put boots on the ground. Where do people congregate? Where do they bring their families? Learn those stories first-hand. You can tell the story of your community by being an active part of your community. Which is more compelling: “My neighbor loves that Mexican restaurant,” or “I'm there every weekend and the cheese enchiladas are the best I've ever had.”

**Listen to your client's stories**

The quickest way to build rapport with clients and prospects is to be genuinely curious about them. Listen. Give them an opportunity to talk.

**Statistics aren't the story**

What is the *story* of the house? What is the *story* of the neighborhood? The story isn't that the house has this many square feet or there are that many units in the subdivision. Data is important but it's not the only thing. Spend a little time crafting the *narrative* of the place.

**Your clients are buying into a community**

People feel at home where they feel seen. The only way to do that is to go out and be with other people in the community. It's about getting to know neighbors and local businesses. Typically, the more you know about the place, the prouder you are to live there. People who are proud of where they live know the history, the successes, and the failures. You get out what you put in. If you only ever go to and from work and never get involved in the community, you could live anywhere. You could live in the middle of a cornfield; it wouldn't matter to you.

**Your brand should reflect what you're already doing**

Your brand should be true to you. Branding should start with a self-assessment. If you love historic homes, you should specialize in them. If you're the king or queen of the suburbs, embrace that. If I want to buy a home in Old Town Georgetown and I see you every time I'm in Old Town Georgetown, I'm likely to hire you to help me buy a home.

Photo courtesy of *The Daytripper*



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# LEGAL

## You've been sued. Now what?



You can call the Texas REALTORS® Legal Hotline at 512-480-8200 from 8 a.m.-4 p.m. Central, Monday through Friday, excluding holidays. Though hotline attorneys can't answer specific questions about the details of a particular scenario, they can provide general information about real estate law and related matters.

**Litigation can seem scary**, especially if it is your first time being sued. Remain calm and try not to imagine the worst. You can continue to help clients buy, sell, and lease real estate.

If you are an agent, tell your broker immediately. In most instances, your broker will contact your errors & omissions insurance provider on your behalf. However, if your broker is unable to do so right away, you should report the claim directly to the insurance company. If you are the broker, contact your E&O provider as soon as possible. Most insurance policies require that a claim be reported within a certain time period, and failure to do so could result in your claim being denied. Your insurance provider will need a copy of the lawsuit to determine coverage and next steps. If you or your broker does not have insurance coverage, it is advisable to promptly contact an attorney for help.

Once a lawsuit is filed against you, you must respond to that lawsuit within a short period of time. If the lawsuit was filed in a Texas county or district court, your answer to the lawsuit is typically due on or before 10 a.m. on the next Monday following the expiration of 20 days after the date you were served with the lawsuit. Failure to respond timely to the lawsuit can result in a default judgment against you. Do not delay!

Here are some recommendations from Lee Santos, AXA XL TX Claim Manager.

### DO share your files with insurer

If you are an agent, your broker and your insurance provider will need all of your documentation related to the transaction in question. If you are a broker, carefully review and promptly submit all relevant documentation related to the suit.

Santos says that documentation is key to defending yourself against a lawsuit. This is an excellent reminder that you should have a strong record and data retention policy in place to ensure that all pertinent information related to a transaction is retained, such as:

- A system for saving text messages and voicemails
- Following up all in-person and phone conversations with an email summarizing what was discussed
- Do not delete or destroy information, including emails, even if you do not think it is relevant.

Sharing all relevant documentation early on will help your insurer and legal counsel investigate the matter efficiently and prepare an appropriate and timely response.

Pearl Insurance is a Texas REALTORS® risk management partner. Pearl's AXA XL program closed 1,364 claims from 2003 to 2024.

### DON'T talk about the lawsuit

Your E&O provider will likely hire legal counsel to represent you. Santos recommends that you not discuss the lawsuit with anyone except your broker (if you are an agent), your insurer, and your legal counsel. Refrain from posting *anything* online. If anyone calls asking for information, say that you will not discuss the matter and, if you are represented by an attorney, refer them to your attorney.

### DO trust the process

Litigation is a collaboration between the insurer, the insured (you and/or your broker), and your legal counsel. The insurer will review the case to determine any potential liability that you and/or your broker may have and whether the situation is covered under your policy. The insurer will also develop cost estimates for settling the case versus bringing it to trial.

In some instances, the insurer may recommend a settlement, irrespective of guilt. This path can minimize costs and limit the uncertainty of trial. If a full and final settlement is agreed upon by all parties, the case is resolved. Most E&O policies require the insured (the brokerage) to pay a deductible, and the insurer will pay any amount above and beyond the deductible for covered claims, up to the limits of the policy. Your brokerage's insurance policy will state the amount of the deductible and policy limits on the declarations page of the policy.

### DON'T reach out to the other side

If you have legal counsel, you should not communicate with the opposing party or their counsel unless you have been advised to do so by your attorney. If the opposing party or their attorney contacts you, you should notify them that you have an attorney representing you and that they must contact your attorney instead.

### DO be patient

According to Santos, it commonly takes a year or longer to resolve a legal dispute when litigation has been filed. Every case is different, and what may appear to be a straightforward matter could actually involve complex legal issues. Even in the best-case scenario, resolution could take several months.

The majority of lawsuits settle without going to trial. Many times, a settlement can be reached without an admission of fault. Settlement agreements are also usually confidential and not included in the public record. Settling your case, if appropriate, could save your brokerage tens—or even hundreds—of thousands of dollars and years of effort spent fighting the case in court.

### ALERT YOUR INSURER IF SOMETHING'S OFF

Let your policy provider know early on if you have a bad feeling about a transaction that you were involved in. Doing so will put the company on alert if future issues do later arise. Your policy provider may direct you to either complete a claim form or call a designated phone number to report the claim.

## YOUR FORMS

Brokerages can provide the **Inspector Information** (TXR 2506) form with a list of licensed inspectors to educate buyer and seller clients about working with inspectors.

*Inspector Information* can help set expectations about what an inspector is likely or unlikely to find based on what an inspector can do. The form states the brokerage strongly recommends hiring an inspector to evaluate the condition of the property. It notes the provided inspector list does not include all available inspectors and that the brokerage does not recommend any one inspector. The form ends with space for clients to select whether they choose to hire an inspector.

*Inspector Information* can be used with residential, commercial, and farm & ranch properties and is one of more than 140 forms available to members of Texas REALTORS®.

## FACT OR FICTION?

**You need a real estate license to sell a cemetery plot.**



**FICTION.** You don't need a real estate license to sell a cemetery plot, but you need one to help buy or sell real property that contains a cemetery on it.

Rural properties may have family cemeteries onsite. If your seller clients find even a single grave on their property, your seller clients will need to disclose that information because a future buyer must allow access for visitation purposes.

Scan this code to learn more about transactions involving cemeteries from this December 2021 article from *Texas REALTOR®* magazine.



# WILL THAT SURVEY WORK?



**No one wants to hear** that the title company or lender’s underwriter won’t accept the survey days before closing. Agents need to understand that not just any survey can secure title insurance or satisfy the lender’s requirements for property approval.

The owners of Halo Surveying—Kiersten “Kris” Crawford, Broker/Owner and Texas REALTORS® senior instructor, and James Crawford, Registered Professional Land Surveyor — suggest asking your clients these questions.

**Do you have a survey?**

Your clients may not have a survey. Surveys are often lost or may have never been completed, especially if the property has been in the family for generations. Agents will want to find out if their clients have an existing survey to adequately complete the survey provision of the applicable purchase contract. Even with an existing survey, it’s prudent for buyer’s agents to recommend an updated/new survey. Why? Because time will have passed since the original owner purchased the property, and new problems may have arisen.

**What kind of survey is it?**

Surveys come in many types, such as boundary surveys, site plans, and topographic surveys. For your clients to secure title insurance, they’ll need a land title survey. This type of survey specifically outlines property boundaries, ownership lines, rights of way, and easements both on and around a property.

It’s possible your clients may have a boundary survey, which will not address the restrictions or Schedule B items outlined in a title commitment, which ultimately affects what will and will not be covered by a title policy.

Ask the seller to provide the survey and *T-47 Affidavit* or *T-47.1 Declaration* to help determine what type of survey it is. Surveys will be signed by a licensed surveyor and will have an official surveyor’s seal. Check out the survey’s disclaimers. A phrase such as “provided without the benefit of an abstract of title” would let you know it is not a land title survey. To avoid last-minute closing delays, agents should ask the title and lender underwriters to review the survey in advance to confirm if the survey will be acceptable, especially if the buyer wants what’s commonly called survey coverage, which is discussed further below.

**Is it up to date?**

Even the right type of survey could be unacceptable. Each

title/insurance underwriter determines what is acceptable. It’s directly related to the risk of potential claims against the insurance policy or the lender’s confidence in the collateral. Ask your client if anything has changed onsite since the survey was completed. If there have been improvements, such as a new fence installed, you will likely need a new survey.

**Is it worth getting a new survey?**

Surveying technology has improved significantly in recent years. It’s not uncommon to discover that a property is larger or smaller than originally surveyed—meaning the property may be more or less valuable than the property owner or buyer thought. A new survey may be more precise and contain more accurate and detailed information. Not ordering a new survey could be very costly. Your client could be forced to remove a newly built structure, find the property uninsurable, or be unable to use it as loan collateral. Ultimately, a missing survey could severely diminish the property’s marketability and value.

**Do you know about survey coverage?**

Survey coverage is an affordable addition to your title insurance policy and provides coverage against discrepancies, conflicts, boundary line issues, encroachments, protrusions, and overlapping improvements. It covers errors and omissions by the surveyor. Without it, your clients will pay much more to settle potential issues that arise. If clients have further questions on how the survey coverage will benefit them, direct them to speak with the escrow officer or attorney, who may put them in touch with the insurance company issuing the title policy.

**Are you paying with cash?**

It’s possible that cash buyers will be told by an escrow officer or lender that they do not need a survey. This leaves cash buyers not knowing exactly the amount of property they’re buying. They also risk facing problems surveys might catch, like encroachments or protrusions. Let your clients know the dangers of proceeding without a survey. All the TREC purchase contracts (except the condominium purchase contracts) provide that a survey may be provided by one of the parties.

Remember, a survey is a graphic depiction of the land and its legal encumbrances and improvements based on a physical inspection and title examination. A survey provides the only way your buyer or seller will know what property is being bought and sold.



# NEW LAWS THAT MATTER TO YOU AND YOUR CLIENTS

Some new rules went into effect September 1, 2025. Others take effect January 1, 2026.

The Texas Legislature was busy in 2025, considering more than 9,800 filed bills, with 1,360 that passed during the regular session and multiple special sessions.

As always, Texas REALTORS® was actively engaged to protect the interests of property owners, real estate professionals, and small businesses. Results for the association were among the most positive of any session in recent memory, with every Texas REALTORS® priority bill passing and none of the 150-plus bills the association opposed making it to the governor’s desk.

Here are highlights of some of the changes you and your clients need to know. Find additional details at [texasrealestate.com/legalupdates](https://texasrealestate.com/legalupdates).

## LAWS THAT WENT INTO EFFECT SEPTEMBER 1, 2025

**Property owners have more authority to evict squatters (SB 1333)**

An owner of residential property or the owner’s agent can request that a sheriff or constable immediately remove a person who unlawfully entered and is occupying a dwelling on the property without the owner’s consent if all the following conditions are met:

1. The property was not open to the public when the person entered the property and is not the subject of pending litigation between the owner and the person.
2. The owner or the owner’s agent has directed the person to leave the property, and the person has not done so.
3. The person is not a current or former tenant of the owner under an oral or written lease or an immediate family member of the owner.

An owner or owner’s agent may request removal of the person by filing a complaint (see statute for written form for the complaint), made under oath or made as an unsworn declaration, to the sheriff or constable of the county in which the property is located if the conditions referenced above are met. After the sheriff or constable verifies ownership of the property, that law enforcement officer must, without delay, serve notice on the person to immediately vacate the dwelling and put the owner in possession of the dwelling.

The new law also allows criminal charges for fraudulent squatters.

**Some leases are exempt from floodplain notice requirements (SB 2349)**

For the following types of leases, the landlord is no longer required to provide written notice to prospective tenants about whether the landlord is aware that the dwelling is in a 100-year floodplain or has flooded during the past five years:

- Leases with terms of less than 30 days
- Temporary residential tenancies created by a contract for sale (leasebacks) of not greater than 90 days.

**When floodplain notice is required, there are new options**

As an alternative to a separate written document as required under the previous law, the notices may now be given to a tenant at or before execution of an applicable lease in a paragraph of the lease or as an addendum to the lease. The landlord and tenant must sign the document containing the required notice.



**Some foreign property acquisition is now prohibited (SB 17)**

This law restricts the acquisition of real property interests in Texas by certain individuals, entities, and governments associated with countries designated by the U.S. director of national intelligence as a national security threat. The Texas governor may also expand the application of the law to additional countries or entities. As of press time, the countries currently on that list are China, Iran, North Korea, and Russia.

The law applies to purchases, acquisitions, and leases of one year or more of a broad range of real property interests, including minerals, timber, groundwater, and water rights. However, purchases and leases entered into prior to September 1, 2025, are not affected.

Exceptions include U.S. citizens, lawful permanent residents, and entities they own or control—unless such entities are owned or controlled by prohibited parties. **Real estate professionals are not responsible for applying or enforcing this new law. The Texas attorney general is charged with implementing procedures enforcing this law.** Nothing in this new law changes your obligation to comply with the federal Fair Housing Act. Additionally, the REALTOR® Code of Ethics obligates REALTORS® to provide equal professional services to all consumers.

**Do-not-call rules now include text messages (SB 140)**

The basics of do-not-call rules remain unchanged. However, the rules now apply to text messages, graphic/image messages, and other types of electronic communications. In addition, breaking these rules is now automatically considered “false, misleading, or deceptive,” which can lead to costlier penalties for violations.

The law does *not* change the requirement for parties



who must register under the Texas Business Commercial Code (Sec. 302.101).

**Small businesses now have a safe harbor for cybersecurity breaches (SB 2610)**

Small businesses—defined as having fewer than 250 employees—that hold sensitive personal information are now protected from additional punitive damages for a data breach if the company had a cybersecurity protection program in place at the time of the breach. The requirements for a cybersecurity program vary depending on the size of the small business.

**Laws prohibiting bandit signs get updated (HB 3611)**

Texas law already prohibited placing signs on the right of way of a public road unless otherwise authorized by law. Now, prior to pursuing civil penalties for a first offense, a municipality must notify the owner in writing and allow an opportunity for the owner to remove the sign. No civil penalty can be assessed if the owner removes the sign within the allotted time. The specific time for removing the sign is at the discretion of the municipality issuing the notice.

Allowable civil penalties are increased to amounts not to exceed \$1,000 for a first offense, \$2,500 for a second offense, and \$5,000 for a third offense.

**Security deposit notices and intent to repair (HB 2037)**

This law establishes that a managing agent, leasing agent, or resident manager is an agent for the landlord for purposes of receiving notice and allows for notices to be sent by email if the tenant and landlord or landlord’s agent have previously communicated by email.

The law allows repairs completed pursuant to a tenant’s notice to be made by an independent company, contractor, or repairman. However, if the rental unit is in a municipality that requires a company, contractor, or repairman to be licensed, whoever performs the repair must be licensed pursuant to those requirements.

**Right to vacate following certain sex offenses or stalking (HB 47)**

The law has been updated to remove the requirement that the offense has to occur on the rental premises in order for a tenant to terminate a lease under Section 92.0161(c) of the Property Code.

**LAWS THAT GO INTO EFFECT JANUARY 1, 2026**

**Subagency will no longer be allowed (SB 1968)**

The practice of subagency confused many real estate consumers. Buyers often did not realize when they were working with a subagent of the seller’s agent.

This change gives consumers greater clarity regarding their relationship with agents. It also makes agent-client responsibilities more transparent.

Subagency will not be allowed in any type of real estate transaction (residential, commercial, land, ranch, etc.).

**You can show property to any party *without* representation, if the broker...**

1. Has not agreed, either orally or in writing, to represent the prospective buyer.
2. Is not otherwise acting as the prospective buyer’s agent at the time of the showing.
3. Does not provide opinions or advice regarding the property or real estate transactions in general.
4. Does not perform any other act of real estate brokerage activity.
5. Complies with current requirements of disclosing representation and providing the IABS prior to the showing.

If you engage in showings without representation, you *may* confirm information regarding the size, price, and terms of the property.

**You need a written agreement with prospective buyers of residential property**

The agreement must be signed prior to showing the real property, or if there is no showing, before presenting a purchase offer. It can be a full representation agreement or a showing-only agreement *without* representation *if* that is the only service being provided. All written buyer agreements must include:


1. The services to be provided
2. The termination date of the agreement
3. Whether the agreement is exclusive or non-exclusive
4. Whether the license holder represents the buyer as the buyer’s agent or does not represent the buyer as the buyer’s agent if showing real property is the only brokerage act being performed
5. The amount or rate of compensation the broker will receive and how the amount is determined
6. Conspicuous language that broker compensation is not set by law and is fully negotiable.

**For a showing-only agreement *without* representation,** the agreement may not be exclusive and may not include a termination date more than 14 days from the date the agreement is entered into.

If a showing-only agreement is entered into and the prospective buyer wants the license holder to provide any other acts of real estate brokerage, the license holder must enter into a separate representation agreement with the buyer.

**If you host an open house for a home *not* listed by your brokerage,** you must have a written agreement with anyone who views the property. The written agreement could be as simple as a non-exclusive showing agreement that attendees sign at the entry of the property.

**The evictions process has been streamlined (SB 38)**

A new law clarifies the time period required for an eviction process. It also allows the option of delivery of an eviction notice via email or electronic means. 



**GET MORE INFO!**

Scan the code or visit [texasrealestate.com/legalupdates](https://texasrealestate.com/legalupdates) to download detailed explainers for these laws.

# SELLING WITH *Sympathy*

Listings tied to probate can be complicated. With some knowledge and compassion, you can handle them with confidence.

BY ALISHA MELVIN



**y**ou're sitting across from a seller who says, "This was my father's house. I just want to get it sold." You nod—but your mind kicks into high alert. *Who actually owns the home? Has probate been filed? Can this person legally sign a listing agreement?*

When real estate and inheritance collide, it can get complicated fast. But these can also be some of the most meaningful transactions you can work on. With a little probate know-how, you can become the go-to agent for families navigating one of the most emotional sales of their lives.

Here's how to spot a probate listing, ask the right questions, and close the deal legally, ethically, and compassionately.

## Spot the signals early

Many agents don't realize a property is tied to an estate until a title issue or delayed closing exposes the truth. But if you know what to listen for, you can flag probate indicators early in the listing process.

Here are the kinds of phrases that should prompt you to ask follow-up questions:

- *My mom passed away and left me the house.*
- *We're selling grandma's home.*
- *I'm handling this for my uncle's estate.*

In situations like these, you can ask:

- *Has a court appointed someone to handle the estate?*
- *Has probate been filed yet?*

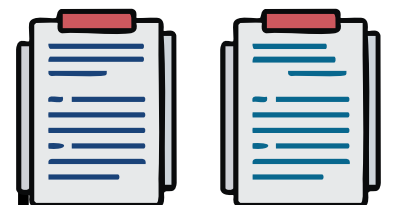
These are practical questions that can help protect your seller, your buyer, and yourself.

## Understand the documents that matter

If the property owner has passed away, the key document you need to see is proof of authority to sell. In Texas, that usually means one of the following:

- Letters testamentary (for wills that are being probated)
- Letters of administration (for estates without a will, also known as heirship determinations)
- Authority from a trust instrument
- Court order appointing a guardian or receiver.

Ask to see these documents before signing a listing agreement. If they don't exist yet, wait. Listing a property without legal authority can derail the deal—and put your license at risk. If they do exist, have your brokerage's attorney review



## Documents With Similar Sounding Names May Not Be Interchangeable

Be cautious when a seller presents an *affidavit of heirship* filed in the county records—it's not the same as a court-issued *determination of heirship*. While an affidavit might help with title in some situations, it does *not* establish legal authority to sell. When in doubt, encourage the family to consult a probate attorney to ensure the right legal process is being followed.

them to ensure they validly grant the authority to sell the property. Remember, however, that your brokerage’s attorney does not represent your client, and under TREC rules, you cannot obtain legal advice from an attorney for your client.

**Work with attorneys—  
not against them**

Probate attorneys are not deal killers. In fact, a good one can be your best partner in these transactions. To collaborate effectively, make contact and introduce yourself as early in the transaction as possible. A quick email or phone call to the attorney of record goes a long way. You can simply explain that you’re working with your client to list the estate property and want to align on timing and documents.

Ask what the court requires. In some counties, even independent executors must file notices or wait for bond approval before selling. You will want to set closing dates with court milestones. Some courts move fast; some don’t. Don’t assume probate will be finished in time to close in 30 days.

**Set realistic timelines  
and expectations**

Buyers want a fast close. Probate doesn’t always cooperate. Here’s how to keep deals from falling apart:

- Disclose delays up front. Let buyers know the estate is in probate and that timelines may depend on the court.
- Be aware of deadlines. Know when an amendment to the contract may be necessary based on court progress.
- Build in buffer time. Even if the executor has authority, third-party approvals (like Medicaid estate recovery or court confirmation) can cause hiccups.

The more you prepare your clients and buyers, the smoother your escrow will run.

**Scripts and checklists  
can save you**

Dealing with a grieving seller is delicate. Here’s a sample script to start the conversation. Make sure to put any script into the words that feel comfortable to you:

“I’m so sorry for your loss. Just so I can represent you properly, has the estate been probated or has someone been appointed by the court to handle it?”

If the person says no, respond with something like this:

“OK, no problem. You may need to speak with a probate attorney before we can move forward. I can recommend some trusted attorneys if you need a referral.”


**Create a probate property  
checklist that includes:**

- Confirmed authority to sign (executor or trustee)
- Original death certificate
- Title report for liens or heirs
- Court or attorney contact info
- Estimated timeline for probate milestones.

**Closing with compassion**

Always remember that, like other real estate transactions, this is about more than contracts—it’s about people. You may be working with a daughter who’s letting go of her childhood home or siblings who haven’t spoken since the funeral. Your knowledge of the business details is important, but your empathy is what clients will remember.

If you treat these transactions with care, patience, and professionalism, the people you work with will send referrals your way.

Estate properties require more than a strong listing strategy. They require heart, awareness of the correct processes and documents, and finesse. But if you handle them well, you won’t just close deals—you’ll help families heal, preserve legacies, and build your own lasting business reputation. 



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**WHAT YOU  
ABSOLUTELY  
MUST NOT DO  
WHEN WORKING  
WITH AN ESTATE**

Remember that TREC rules prohibit you from practicing law and providing legal advice. The rules expressly forbid giving “advice or opinions as to the legal effect of any contract forms or other such instruments which may affect the title to real estate.” You also may not provide opinions on “the status or validity of title to real estate.” It’s imperative that you consult an attorney regarding these matters rather than practice outside the scope of your real estate license.

**BUILD A  
NICHE—AND A  
REPUTATION**

Probate real estate is growing. According to the U.S. Census, more than 10,000 Americans turn 65 every day. With aging comes transition—and with transition comes real estate decisions.

Many agents avoid probate sales because they’re unsure how to handle them. But by educating yourself on how to manage these transactions, you have the opportunity to lean in. You can market your knowledge and can offer value to families by having lists of vendors who handle property cleanouts, estate sales, and moving services.

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**Business is Better as a Member**



# COMMERCIAL PROS—HERE'S YOUR DATA-DRIVEN EDGE

The Texas REALTORS® Commercial MarketViewer dashboard gives you the data you want and the insights your clients need.

BY RONNIE KOVAR

**NAVIGATING THE COMPLEXITIES OF COMMERCIAL REAL ESTATE** requires more than just experience. To serve your clients at the highest professional level, you need to provide insights backed by reliable data. Did you know you already have access to commercial market data as part of your Texas REALTORS® member benefits?

Developed exclusively for Texas REALTORS®, Commercial MarketViewer is an intuitive, interactive tool that gives you fast access to current commercial market data across all Texas metropolitan areas. Whether you're working with office, industrial, retail, or multifamily properties, this platform provides you with a powerful snapshot of local market conditions and economic indicators.

#### How You can use MarketViewer in your Commercial Business

- Get Current Data and Trends for leasing activity, vacancy rates, rent, construction pipeline data, and more.
- Export professional charts and summaries for investor briefings, marketing packages, or listing appointments.
- Skip the hours of data hunting. MarketViewer aggregates essential information, so you can focus on client strategy and deal-making.

#### Want More Help Using Marketviewer?

Texas REALTORS® will host a Commercial MarketViewer webinar series from August 2025 through April 2026 an excellent opportunity to sharpen your market knowledge and explore use cases in real time. Find dates in the Events calendar on [texasrealestate.com](https://texasrealestate.com).



#### How to Use the Texas REALTORS® Commercial MarketViewer Dashboard

- Visit [texasrealestate.com/marketviewer](https://texasrealestate.com/marketviewer) [1]
- Click the red **View Report Menu** button [2]
- Select **Commercial Dashboard** [3]

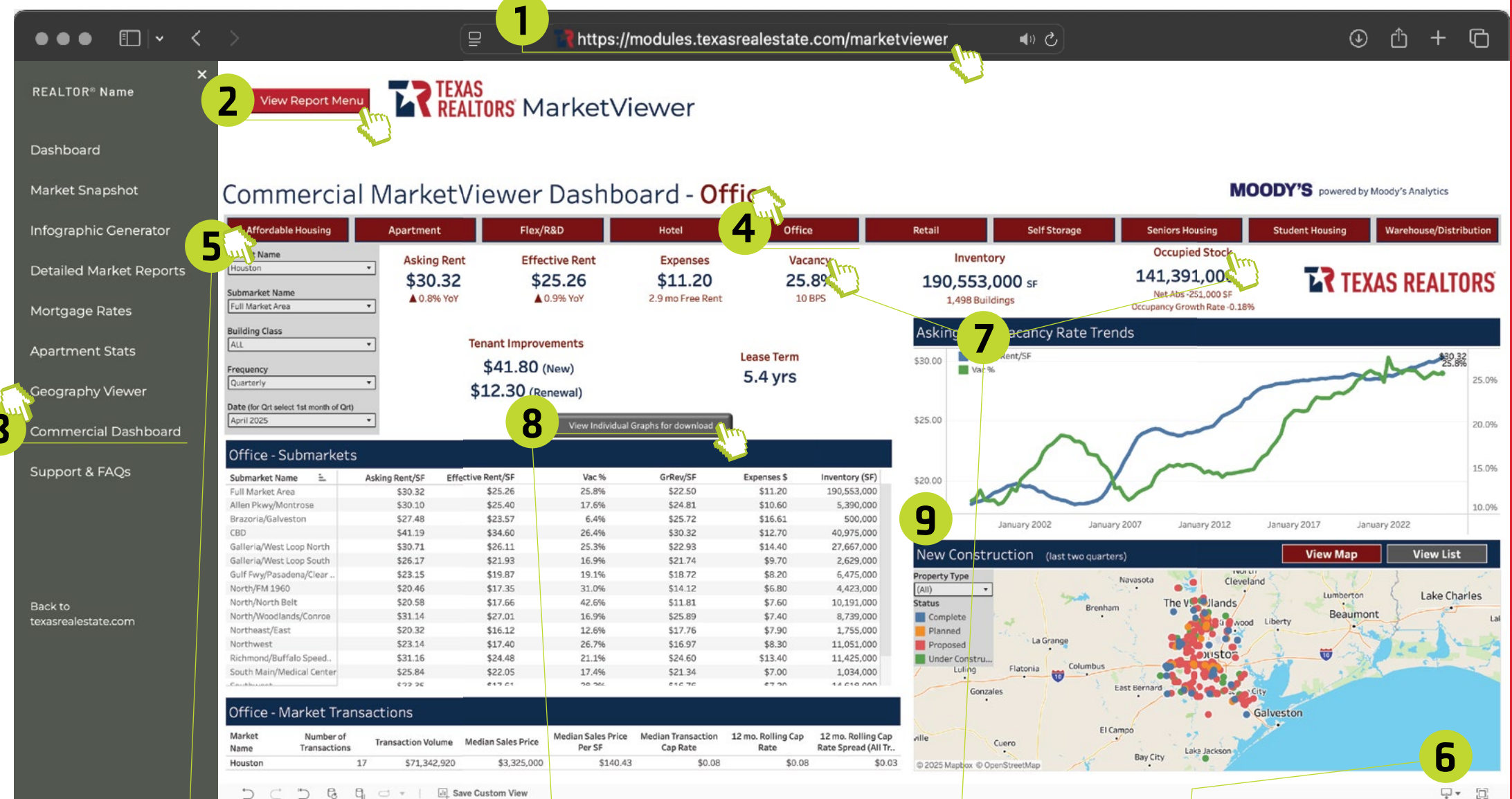
#### Example: Market Overview for Office Sector in a Submarket in Houston

Create a PDF snapshot of current leasing and vacancy trends

- At the top of the dashboard, select **Office** as your sector. [4]
- In the filters on the left, choose **Houston**, then select your desired **Submarket Name**, **Building Class**, and **Frequency**. [5]
- Click the download icon at the bottom-right to select Image, PDF, or PowerPoint. [6]

You can also hover over key metrics like **Vacancy Rate** or **Occupied Stock** to view detailed graphs of trends over time. [7]

Click the gray **View Individual Graphs** button to get all available charts of key metrics on one screen. To download an image, PDF or PowerPoint, find the download icon at the bottom-right corner of the page. [8]



#### DID YOU KNOW?

The **New Construction** [9] chart gives you the option to explore activity by map or list view. You also can filter by property type (Office, Mixed Use, Financial, Live Work, Medical/Dental) for a customized look at development trends and individual properties.

#### GET COMMERCIAL NEWS AND TIPS DELIVERED TO YOUR INBOX

Subscribe to the Texas REALTORS® Commercial Update email newsletter by sending a message to [email@texasrealtors.com](mailto:email@texasrealtors.com). You'll receive monthly newsletters with the latest commercial trends, updates to laws and regulations you need to know, marketing ideas, business tips, and more.

# Do You Run Your Business Like a Business?

More success is within your reach, but it takes analysis, planning, and execution.

By Andy Bearden



Many agents spend a lot of time working *in* their business but not much time working *on* their business, and it shows. In fact, nearly a third of REALTORS® in the U.S. made less than \$25,000 last year—and that's before expenses and taxes.

The good news is that if you're seeking higher levels of success, the path is clear: Treat your business like a business.

## Be Curious and Flexible

When I started as a residential agent, I was typical. My business was disorganized and chaotic. I would spend frantic time generating business and then get so busy that I did not have time to generate any more. It was a vicious cycle: one month up and the next month down. I was only able to move ahead when I faced my chaos head-on.

Even as an agent, you run a small business. Do you see yourself that way? You need to be curious about every facet of what you do and then be willing to adjust how you do things. Here are the major areas to explore.

## Training Is the Key That Unlocks Your Potential

Yes, you need a certain number of classes to get and stay licensed,

and TREC rules require competency across many aspects of your activities, but the training you need to grow your business goes far beyond that. Here are some questions to ask yourself.

- Where are you lacking competency?
- Do you need mentors in specific areas—or overall?
- Are there classes that will improve your sales, negotiation, marketing, technology, or other skills?
- Is there a new practice area—like farm & ranch or commercial—that you want to become competent in?

Once you identify areas where you desire growth, you can seek out mentorship, classes from your local association or Texas REALTORS®, certifications and designations, or design your own method of learning.

## Good Accounting Helps You Track, Assess, and Plan

Do you know how much income you've made this year? Are you tracking your expenses? You need a handle on your key financial activities to even know if you're making a profit. Beyond that, keeping track of your finances helps you adjust your business activities, maximize profit, and plan for the future.

- Do you have a separate business bank account?

- Do you pay your taxes on time? How can you make that happen?
- Have you talked to your accountant about business structure and whether it benefits you financially to set up an LLC for compensation?
- Are you paying your bills on time? How about quarterly tax payments?

I am not a saver, but I do pay my taxes. I figured out that creating a set-aside savings account did not work for my taxes. Instead, I pay my taxes after every closing through the IRS's Electronic Federal Tax Payment System. EFTPS drafts money directly from my business account. This is not the solution for everyone, but it works for me.

## How Can You Leverage Technology?

Are you a technology person? I am not. I still print out the agent full comps to get my brain around the suggested list price. Despite that, I know that this business is animated by ever-changing technology. Your business needs to keep up. If you can't use technology to serve clients efficiently and run your business, you need a vendor or assistant to help.

- Have you set up templates in your contracts software and other workflows?
- Is your online presence complete and consistent, including social media?
- Do you have an online system to collect reviews and testimonials?
- Do you have systems to track client activity, follow up, and meet deadlines?

## Your Operations Plan Helps You Deliver Value

During COVID, listing agents could hardly make a mistake in pricing, and effective marketing was sometimes not critical. Things have changed. You have to have an operations plan with the systems that work for every transaction. This consists of templates, checklists, and tools, but it all starts with your ability to articulate the value you bring to the transaction.

- Why should a client pick you? How do you position yourself against your competitors?
- How do you communicate your value to clients?
- Do you have a set of written standards for customer service?
- Have you created listing and buying presentations that focus on value?
- Do you have a system to manage the search process for your buyers?
- How do you ensure you don't miss any deadlines?
- Is your contract-to-close plan documented and repeatable?

## Marketing and Lead Generation Keep Your Pipeline Full

The most successful agents have a consistent marketing program. New ideas come and go, but what has never faded away is marketing to your sphere of influence and past clients. That's the place to start for every agent.

- Have you created a long-term follow-up strategy for past clients and your sphere of influence that you can execute consistently?
- Are you setting aside time every day to look for listings? (The buyers will come.)

If you have mastered all this, talk to other agents about their success buying leads, FSBO marketing, cold calling, and other strategies you can consider. But don't abandon your efforts to your sphere of influence.

When it comes to social media, you don't have to be an influencer. You can just be a real estate agent who consistently posts about your business to keep your name in front of potential customers. If you want to be an influencer, go for it, but you can have great marketing success without devoting your life to generating followers.

## Yes, Human Resources is Part of Your Business, too

Do you want to get to a much higher level of business success? Even if you're a solo agent, you have some hard personnel questions to answer.


- Should you really be the person managing the money? Are you CFO quality?
- Are you good at transaction coordination? Could you bring in someone better to help?
- Do you make a good VP of Marketing? Do you have time for it?
- Is delivering lock boxes and signs the best use of your time?
- Are you creative enough to find personalized client appreciation gifts and create events?

Also ask yourself what the things are that only you can do.

Many agents are convinced that they are the best person to handle every aspect of their business—that they have more knowledge and a bigger stake in the success. That may be right, but that overlooks the high opportunity cost to get to a level of perfection that might not be needed. Spending time doing things that others can do well means that you cannot do the things that you need to do.

Many agents do not delegate because of fear. But if you think you can't afford to delegate, consider that your insistence on handling the \$10-an-hour tasks may take away time to focus on the activities that will bring in many thousands of dollars.

Selling real estate can be an expensive hobby or a lucrative business. Take some time to take a hard look at your business at every level. If this all seems overwhelming, create two or three things in each area that you can do over the next 90 days to make a difference. Do not be afraid to take a critical look at yourself and what you bring to the table as well as where you may be an obstacle to your own success.

Of course, you cannot change the course of your business in a short amount of time. The key is to start to move in the right direction today! 



**ANDY BEARDEN** started selling new homes and managing new-home salespeople in the 1990s. His career journey includes selling residential real estate, working in the corporate office of an independent firm, joining a commercial team, serving as a team leader for a large franchise, and starting his own independent brokerage which merged into a national franchise. His broad experience has enabled him to work with hundreds of agents to grow and ultimately thrive in the business.

# 2025 SHAPING TEXAS CONFERENCE HIGHLIGHTS

**THE 2025 TEXAS REALTORS® SHAPING TEXAS CONFERENCE** brought together thousands of REALTORS® from all over Texas to discuss the real estate issues, connect with colleagues, and conduct association business. The event equipped members with actionable insights and tools to better showcase their value as real estate professionals. Below are a few of the many highlights.



- The Texas REALTORS® Board of Directors took action on two items:
- Passed a motion to amend the bylaws to provide better representation on the Executive Board and Board of Directors when local associations merged.
  - Passed \$10 Legal Fund and \$30 Issues Mobilization/Political Advocacy Fund (IM/PAF) assessments. Both amounts are unchanged from last year.

**2026 SHAPING TEXAS CONFERENCE**  
**AUGUST 26-30 ■ SAN ANTONIO**



The Daytripper Chet Garner headlined the Opening Session, sharing stories from traveling across Texas and encouraging REALTORS® to embrace their stories.



Many thanks to the Houston Association of REALTORS® for sponsoring the Welcome Reception.



Kirk Weisler shared leadership and workplace expertise at the Texas REALTORS® Leadership Program breakfast.



Texas REALTORS® and the Mexican Association of Real Estate Professionals (AMPI) renewed their memorandum of understanding, pledging to work together on mutually agreed goals.



Member of the REALTORS® Land Institute met with association officers.



Participants in the Texas REALTORS®/REACH Labs Innovation Showcase pitched their startup ideas before a live audience vote.



Hundreds of members rocked out at the TREPAC event at White Oak Music Hall.



U.S. Sen. John Cornyn discussed federal policy issues at the Public Policy and Governmental Affairs Forum.



Banners expressing support for victims of the July floods signed by conference attendees were presented to the affected local associations at the Board of Directors Meeting.



Jennifer Wauhob was installed as 2026 Chairman of Texas REALTORS®. She said, "It's time we reclaim our narrative—explain what we do and talk about how we care about something bigger than ourselves."



NAR President-Elect Kevin Brown installed the 2026 Regional Vice Presidents at the Installation Gala.



The 2026 Leadership Team: Immediate Past Chairman Christy Gessler, Chairman-Elect Tony Lloyd, Chairman Jennifer Wauhob, Secretary/Treasurer Deborah Spangler, and CEO Mike Barnett



# SAVE ME THE MONEY!

How REALTORS® optimize their business budgets for marketing, lead generation, networking, and more.

BY PATEE FRANKS



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Growing a real estate business requires hard work—and, of course, money for resources. If you’re not careful, business expenses can get out of hand. Do you make a habit of tracking your spending? “You should know where your money is going and whether it’s working,” Mellissa Cruz, an agent with eXp Realty, Dallas, says. “If an expense doesn’t give you a clear return on investment, reconsider it.”

With a little planning and creativity, you can make your budget go further. *Texas REALTOR®* magazine asked members to share their dollar-stretching strategies that keep their real estate businesses thriving.

### Leverage Available Marketing Tools

Building a strong brand involves finding ways to stand out from the competition and showcase your value. While paid advertising is one way to promote your services, the cost may not be sustainable. Before spending money on ads, Angela White, an agent with Fathom Realty, McKinney, increased the visibility of her listings with Facebook Marketplace, TikTok, and Instagram. She also started with free and low-cost website options that were provided through her brokerage. “Over time, I invested more, but in the beginning, ‘good enough’ was more than enough to get noticed online.”

To create professional-looking marketing content, White leans on design platforms like Canva for graphics and CapCut for video editing. She even enlists her friend, an aspiring photographer, for free photography.

### Find the Deals

For Myssie Cardenas-Barajas, an agent with Marcus Phipps Real Estate, Harlingen, obtaining marketing supplies often means thinking *way* outside the box. For instance, during local elections, she follows the candidates in her area. “Since the sign restrictions mandate that political signs be picked up within a certain number of days, I offer to pick up the signs for those who lost.” She has been able to get hundreds of 4x8 plywood sign frames and thousands of wire yard signs every year at no cost to use for open house directional signs. “They are great for rural farms and ranches that span the course of a few blocks. It’s nice to have repetitive signage along the frontage for exposure.” She also shares the signs with new agents and colleagues to have as backup in case theirs blow away or get stolen.

Cardenas-Barajas has also reached out to home warranty and title companies for marketing materials to repurpose, like informative evergreen die-cut door hangers with slits that fit her business card.

David Tanner, an agent with Fathom Realty, McKinney, takes advantage of rebrandable marketing content from his broker, MLS, and local, state, and national REALTOR® associations. “The association provides us with a plethora of information to share with clients.” He creates open house packets that include information regarding the subject property, local market activity, and information sheets.

Although not everything can be found for free, there are plenty of deals to be had. For example, the ODP Business Solutions program, a benefits partner of Texas REALTORS®, offers savings on in-store and online purchases at Office Depot. Tanner uses the discount for most of his printing supplies, card holders, flyer holders, snacks, and items for open houses or meeting potential clients.

### Reach Out Organically

It’s important to continually attract new clients; however, that doesn’t mean you need to rely on buying leads. Cruz learned the hard way that buying leads rarely beats building relationships. “Referrals, local partnerships, and consistent content creation, while time-consuming, are a necessity,” she says.

“When you pay for leads, you don’t know the quality, and there’s no guarantee they will close,” says Haley Sutter, an agent with Horton Neely, REALTORS®, Amarillo. She suggests using services that charge a referral fee upon closing instead of paying up front.

To expand your circle, consider joining clubs or groups that align with your interests. “As a volunteer Cub Scout leader, I discovered that some of the best networking happens around campfires and community service projects,” says Kenneth Zarella, Broker at Revilo Real Estate, Houston. Leading a den allowed him to connect with dozens of families in his community, many of whom he might never have met through traditional business channels. “I built trust by consistently showing up, helping organize events, and supporting the kids,” Zarella says. Over time, parents began asking what he does professionally. One connection turned into a partnership with a custom homebuilder.

Carol Smiley Pope, Broker at Niche Real Estate, Waco, recommends hosting a happy hour at a local coffee shop. “This not only supports a nearby business but also increases your chances of connecting with their clientele,” she says.

Similarly, Diana Reed, an agent at The Schrader Group, eXp, San Antonio, suggests partnering with local businesses or cross-promoting with lenders, stagers, and inspectors.

### Ask Yourself: Do I Need That?

Saving money comes down to making smart choices. Combat impulse spending by waiting a day before purchasing items you don’t need right away. Reed evaluates whether a major purchase is nice or necessary, and then does research to see if that resource can be found for free or at a lower cost.



Mellissa Cruz



Angela White



Myssie Cardenas-Barajas



David Tanner



Haley Sutter



Kenneth Zarella



Carol Smiley Pope



Diana Reed



Raymond Bailey

“Don’t drive a fancy sports car that sucks up all your commissions,” says Cardenas-Barajas. “Take those car payments and invest it in property instead.”

Where Else Can You Cut Costs?

Raymond Bailey, an agent with The Cao Realty Group, North Richland Hills, emphasizes the importance of protesting your property tax. Since lowering your appraised value directly reduces your annual tax bill, the savings compound year after year. “As REALTORS®, we should treat this as a critical part of financial health for ourselves and our clients,” he says. “Don’t just clip coupons; clip your tax bill. It’s the smartest money move most people never make.”

Do you offer staging services? Consider maintaining an in-house staging inventory. For Pope, it is an investment that paid for itself within two years.

Don’t Forget Your Taxes!

While you need to watch your spending, you should also be putting money aside for taxes. “If you don’t have a good CPA helping you minimize your tax liability and set everything up correctly, get one today,” says Sutter. She sets aside 20% of every paycheck for taxes, keeping it in a high-yield savings account throughout the year to earn interest. Additionally, she allocates another 20% to a savings account and 10% for fun. “Last year, I used the fun fund to buy a new car in cash. Everything else goes into my business for marketing and advertising.”

And of course, research and work with a tax professional on what you can deduct. “Track every expense for marketing, mileage, subscriptions, and anything else that is tax-deductible,” says Reed.

**PATEE FRANKS** is Digital Marketing Specialist for Texas REALTORS®.

REALTOR® advertising in all forms, including social media, web content, and promotions, must comply with all applicable laws and rules. A REALTOR® recommendation of a specific product or service in this article should not be construed as an endorsement by the author, *Texas REALTOR®* magazine, or the association.

21 ADDITIONAL WALLET-FRIENDLY STRATEGIES:



1. Volunteer at industry and local community events for networking opportunities.

2. Produce your own headshots with AI or with help from a friend.

3. Create a Substack account as another way to gain attention through sharing real estate-related content and blog posts.

4. Use cashback credit cards for business expenses. Pay off monthly to avoid interest.

5. Take advantage of your membership discounts. Texas REALTORS®, the National Association of REALTORS®, and your local association provide ways to save on education, car rentals, hotels, prescriptions, and various business solutions. Visit [texasreal-estate.com/benefits](https://texasreal-estate.com/benefits), [nar.realtor/benefits](https://nar.realtor/benefits), and your local association’s website.

6. Do a no-spend challenge for a set period, where you commit to not spending money on non-essential items.

7. Get a quote from a current vendor’s competitor to see if you can get a lower price.

8. Negotiate vendor contracts to lower fees and get better terms, such as with your internet provider, cleaning company, printer, photographer, or stager.

9. Get general information about contracts, agency relationships, or real estate laws through the Texas REALTORS® Legal Hotline.
10. Switch from physical paper business cards to QR codes.

11. Use MarketViewer to create infographics and other content to use on social media and in your emails ([texasrealestate.com/marketviewer](https://texasrealestate.com/marketviewer)).

12. Audit paid accounts and subscriptions annually to eliminate any you no longer need.

13. Shop for office or staging items from sales, garage sales, thrift stores, social media groups, friends, and colleagues.

14. Expand your reach by creating your own podcast, short-form videos, and web content. Use no- or low-cost tools to create them.

15. Regularly maintain auto, air conditioning, and software systems to reduce repair costs.

16. Develop evergreen marketing content that can be reused and repurposed.

17. Instead of costly budgeting tools, use Google Docs or open-source programs like LibreOffice to keep track of transactions and expenses.

18. Buy a refurbished laptop or tablet, instead of new.

19. Sharpen your communication, negotiation, and digital marketing skills with free webinars and YouTube videos.

20. Leverage forums like Reddit, Nextdoor, and LinkedIn for lead generation.

21. Search Creative Commons, Pexels, and Unsplash for stock photos and videos.

SHARE THIS

Content you can provide to prospects, clients, and other real estate professionals..  
Download a PDF of this page at [texasrealestate.com/sharethis](https://texasrealestate.com/sharethis).

WANT LOWER PROPERTY TAXES? VOTE!

Thanks in large part to advocacy by Texas REALTORS® at the Texas Legislature, you have the chance to vote for significant property tax relief later this year. Along with other propositions on the November ballot, here are several state constitutional amendments REALTORS® support—and how you will benefit if they pass:

**SUPPORT PROPOSITION 13**  
**Increase the Homestead Property Tax Exemption**  
“The constitutional amendment to increase the amount of the exemption of residential homesteads from ad valorem taxation by a school district from \$100,000 to \$140,000.”  
Offers homeowners substantial property tax relief without harming school district funding.

**SUPPORT PROPOSITION 11**  
**Property Tax Relief for Elderly, Disabled Homeowners**  
“The constitutional amendment authorizing the legislature to increase the amount of the exemption from ad valorem taxation by a school district of the market value of the residence homestead of a person who is elderly or disabled.”  
Increasing the exemption from \$10,000 to \$60,000—for a total of \$200,000—will help vulnerable homeowners pay less property tax and stay in their homes.

**SUPPORT PROPOSITION 9**  
**A higher tax exemption for business personal property**  
“The constitutional amendment to authorize the legislature to exempt from ad valorem taxation a portion of the market value of tangible property a person owns that is held or used for the production of income.”  
Increasing this exemption from \$2,500 to \$125,000 will spur business investment, offer tax relief to, and ease administrative burdens on small businesses.

- Texas REALTORS® also SUPPORTS:**
- Proposition 1: Establishing special funds for a state technical college system to ensure Texas has a skilled workforce in key sectors.
  - Proposition 2: Adds an amendment to the state constitution to prohibit state-level capital gains taxes on individuals, estates, and trusts, including a franchise tax on business trusts.
  - Proposition 4: Allocates significant funding to the Texas Water Fund for the next 20 years, to ensure the state can meet its growing water needs.



Early voting takes place October 20-31  
Election Day is November 4  
Visit [texasrealtorssupport.com](https://texasrealtorssupport.com) to learn more!

**VOTE TO MAKE YOUR VOICE HEARD AND LOWER YOUR PROPERTY TAXES!**

# THE CLOSING

## Share What You Know, Watch Your Business Grow

Whether buying, selling, investing, or leasing, people want to know how the current real estate market will impact them. Finding the right expert to guide them is key. Use these techniques to position yourself as an authority.

### LEAD WITH THE STATS

There is a lot of data out there. It's up to you to analyze and communicate the information and trends correctly. This is where MarketViewer—the powerful data tool exclusively for Texas REALTORS®—comes in handy. You can pull the latest residential, farm & ranch, land, and commercial real estate statistics and zoom in not just by city, but also by ZIP code and many neighborhoods.

### MAKE IT EASY TO VISUALIZE

Do you have tips for first-time buyers or for a company looking for a warehouse in the current market? Graphic tools like Adobe Express and Canva provide user-friendly templates for turning your advice into visually appealing social media posts, videos, listing presentations, and email newsletters. You can also create infographics directly from MarketViewer.

### BE WELL ARMED

No one expects you to have all the data memorized, but being prepared for answering your clients' questions will help you demonstrate your value. Download the Texas REALTORS® Share

This fliers ([texasrealestate.com/sharethis](https://texasrealestate.com/sharethis)) and create your own branded fact sheets and FAQs to have information ready.

### EARN THE RIGHT TO PUT GRI (OR ANOTHER DESIGNATION) AFTER YOUR NAME

The Graduate, REALTOR® Institute (GRI) designation is a nationally accredited program that helps you stand out from your competition. It equips you with a deeper understanding of contracts, legal and regulatory issues, negotiations, and more. Other designations are available for commercial real estate, leasing, affordable housing, and many others.

### HIGHLIGHT YOUR WINS

Looking for powerful email and social media content to gain new clients? Leverage your certificates, designations, awards, positive reviews, and testimonials. And don't forget to call attention to the number of new listings you've acquired, the latest home that sold the fastest, and other real estate-related accomplishments.

Remember that email and social media are considered advertisements and must comply with all applicable laws and rules. Also, be aware that your local MLS rules control how, if, or when sales prices can be used in advertising; make sure to review and follow these guidelines before including sold property data in your advertising.

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# YOU GET IT

140+ forms for residential, commercial, property management, farm & ranch, representation, and other situations.

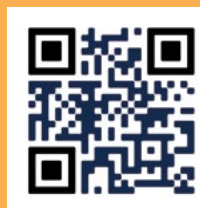
Use them in commercial, residential, property management, farm & ranch, client representation, and dozens of other situations.

You also get zipForm, the Texas REALTORS® Legal Hotline, MarketViewer, discounts on products and services, and unparalleled advocacy to fight for what's best for REALTORS® and consumers.

All this and more for less than \$160 in dues.



## Business is Better as a Member





# Someone, somehow, convinced others we should be known as the *Lone Star State.*

Gazing at the night sky from your new land is a pleasure that never gets old. You see, when buying rural property, you're not just purchasing the land, but also the views around it — the hills, the trees, the heavens above. And to ensure you get everything you want, Capital Farm Credit is here for you. We can help you navigate the process of buying rural property, because rural lending is all we do. You could say, we know the value of every acre out there. Which is helpful because we want you to be happy living under stars like these. **To learn more, visit [CapitalFarmCredit.com](http://CapitalFarmCredit.com).**



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