

Courthouse Visit Basics

The following is a very basic outline contributed by the Snohomish County/Camano Association of REALTORS® (SCCAR). County officials appreciate your interest and concern that is exhibited when you take the time out of your day to visit with them. Face-to-face visits with local government leaders are a great opportunity for REALTORS® to present and educate policy makers on REALTOR® issues.

1. First pick a date for the visits. Historically, SCCAR usually chooses a date that coincides with their Executive Board meeting in order to help them participate.
2. Call the public officials' offices you will be visiting to make the appointments for the visits.
3. Identify a range of discussion topics to consider and send them out to the members, requesting their input.
4. You will want to scale down the number of topics to 3-4. It is recommended that at least one of those topics be a thank you for the official's prior cooperation on certain issues (if pertinent).
5. Meet with the local government affairs committee to hone the topics and develop talking points for the REALTORS® to help cue them during the visits. Cue cards can then be developed for each of the 3 or 4 topics selected. This puts the REALTORS® at ease in the conversation with their county officials, and helps to keep the conversation flowing and directed.
6. On the day of the courthouse visits, what SCCAR calls their "Hill Day" - REALTORS® should meet to discuss the talking points. Also, you can decide who will speak on what issue. Remind REALTORS® that they don't have to be an expert and to be themselves and explain how the issues affect their business and the quality of life in the area.
7. These visits are relationship-building. Since our council members run by district, try to match our members to the appropriate council member. Four to six members per council member is the ideal size of the group for the visit.
8. Make up packets for the day, including an agenda, the talking point cue cards, directions to the policy makers' offices and any other relevant material for the day.
9. Bring enough Quality of Life printed materials to leave with each one of the visits, so that the officials have something to read and look at after you leave.
10. It's wise to end by asking what you can do for them, how can you be helpful. You know you've been successful when the answer is, "We'd like to hear from you more often!"
11. If you have time, it is great to conduct a "de-briefing" session with the REALTORS® back at your office. This is not only great learning for all, it helps you to be aware of any issues you need to follow up on. Providing lunch during a debriefing encourages members to stay and offer comments about what went right, and what we should work better the next time.
12. Write a thank you note to each of the policy makers you visited expressing your willingness to help them with information and support on the issues you discussed.

REALTORS® appreciate Courthouse Visits...

"I appreciate your time and effort today in making our Snohomish County Hill Day a success. I thought our meetings were well received by both the County Council and the County Executive. Our legislative effectiveness depends on knowledgeable REALTORS® who stay involved. Your participation showed our strength and unity. You made us look good. You have my sincere thanks. I am sure our visits today will pay dividends down the road."
George Nickle, 2004 SCCAR President