



WPAR, RCBR and OCAR form HGAR

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A merger vote by three Hudson Valley, New York Realtor groups will create one of the largest Realtor associations in the nation, with a membership of close to 10,000.

Members of the Westchester Putnam Association of Realtors (WPAR), the Rockland County Board of Realtors (RCBR) and the Orange County Association of Realtors (OCAR) have voted in favor of the merger that will create the new Hudson Gateway Association of Realtors (HGAR) on January 1, 2012.

As part of the merger agreement, the Orange and Rockland groups will dissolve into the Westchester Putnam Association, which will seek approval from the National Association of Realtor (NAR) to change the name to the Hudson Gateway Association of Realtors.

"Across the country, the real estate industry has experienced many years of recession and the Lower Hudson Valley has not been immune to these market conditions," said Gil Mercurio, WPAR CEO. "As a result, all three of these associations have lost membership, which in turn, affects our revenue and may limit our ability to provide the full array of services that our members expect and deserve."

The merger will now allow WPAR, RCBR and OCAR to combine their resources and consolidate operations and help stabilize member dues while continuing to offer first-rate services.

"I'm very happy with the merger vote based on all the work we did to bring it to this point," said Bill Thorne, president of the Rockland County Board of Realtors. "This combined organization will become more powerful in legislative matters in New York state as well as the national level."

OCAR president Ron Garafalo said, "Without a merger, OCAR members would have faced a dues increase and loss of some services. This is a very positive measure."

The new HGAR will maintain its White Plains headquarters with additional offices in Goshen, Putnam County and in either West Nyack or Pearl River in Rockland County. Beginning in 2012, WPAR deputy CEO Richard Haggerty will take over the reins of the new HGAR. Current CEO Gil Mercurio will be retiring from his position, but will stay on as a consultant for the next year.

"This is a momentous event in our history as an Association, and am I looking forward to working with the Rockland and Orange County Realtors groups as we head into the future of real estate in the Hudson Valley," said Haggerty.

The new group will initially operate two multiple listing services until the end of its contractual agreements. The ultimate goal will be to merge the WPAR's Empire Access Multiple Listing Service and the Greater Hudson Valley Multiple Listing Service.

The Westchester Putnam Association of REALTORS® Inc, is a not-for-profit trade association representing more than 6,700 real estate professionals doing business in Westchester County and the surrounding region. It's predecessor organizations, the Westchester County Board of Realtors, Inc. and Putnam County Association of REALTORS®, Inc., were founded in 1916 and 1932

respectively. The Association owns and operates the Empire Access Multiple Listing Service that provides a real estate MLS database for the Bronx, Westchester, Putnam and Dutchess Counties, New York.

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