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When Building Your Land Business Get to Know the “Heartbeat”

By Jason Walter
Guest Contributor
Founder, Carolina Land Realty – Greenville, SC

I began my career working with a commercial land fund. We went all over the country looking for commercial tracts that were too large for one developer to handle. We would buy



the whole tract and sell off smaller tracts to different developers. This introduced me to people from all over the country and allowed me to work with hundreds of brokers, but I was dealing with corporations. After working for the commercial land fund, I went to work for a company, headquartered in Australia with a US base in Orlando, named Heritage Green. This was where I began working directly with landowners and I have not looked back.

To me landowners are the “Heartbeat of America.” I always jokingly say that land owners love their property more than their children. The American land owner is typically a person

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who was born on the property and has worked with that land their entire life. The attachment they have with their property is very emotional. This is why you can't be successful in the rural land business without having lots of patience and understanding of these owners.

My team spends the majority of everyday meeting with landowners and it is never in a boardroom. We have ridden on bobcats, tractors, boats, trucks, planes, horses, golf carts, mules, and even one time a landowner toured us on his property in the shovel part of a track hoe. It seems that I have had more dinners and lunches at land owners houses than my own. I have met with women whose husbands had passed as recently as the day before. I have met with landowners who lived in shacks with no plumbing and took joy in their expressions when I told them their land was worth millions. This is why I tell people I really don't have a job. It is too much fun to be considered work!

In 2006, I began Carolina Land Realty. We focus on various types of land throughout the Carolinas. Even though sometimes it doesn't feel like work there is a very detailed and structured method to this madness. We use detailed mapping systems that allow us to target exactly the type of property we are looking for in a certain area. Here is an example. We began working through Greenville County, SC in January of 2008. Three of our agents were assigned this county and there were around 1600 land owners that met our criteria of what we were targeting. These 3 guys contacted all 1600 land owners in a 10-month period. Of course we received numerous listings by contacting that many land owners but the heart of our business is building relationships with these 1600 people. Our company wants to be there for these land owners at whatever time it is appropriate or necessary to sell. This might be immediately or it might be 10 years down the road.

We also, work just as hard at finding buyers for this land. The avenues that have worked best for us are the internet, our signs, and the other land owners. Many landowners that we speak with about selling their property aren't interested in selling but are looking to buy. We have seen the interest in our rural land skyrocket since the beginning of December 2008 and it seems to pick up each day of 2009. This isn't just our company. I recently spoke with a representative of a very large timber company. He said interest from people looking to buy some of their land has increased significantly since December of 2008 and they are very excited about 2009.

Even though 97% of our country is designated rural land, the rural land brokerage business is a very small industry. There are even fewer brokers who are successful at it. The bottom line with being successful in the land business is you have to understand the American Land owner and you have to develop relationships with as many as you can. To me this is a dream business and it amazes me at how few people are in it. I guess I am just one of the lucky ones.

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Jason Walter, founder of Carolina Land Realty, has extensive experience in both commercial and residential land development. In the past 7 years alone he has headed acquisitions for land development projects totaling more than \$300 Million in 31 different states. Prior to Carolina Land Realty's inception, he served as Vice President of Business Development for RealtiCorp, a South Carolina based commercial land developer.

After noticing increasingly sizable gaps in the services provided by traditional Land Development and Brokerage firms, Mr. Walter was inspired to start Carolina Land Realty. His vision was to utilize state-of-the-art Geographical Information Systems (GIS) to pinpoint optimal land tracts, and then conduct comprehensive research to determine the land's best use. By providing commercial and residential development services, along with general brokerage, Carolina Land Realty has been uniquely positioned as a leader in the local market.

Mr. Walter is an active member of the Urban Land Institute, the Realtors Land Institute, and the Board of Realtors for Western North Carolina, Greenville, and Upstate South Carolina. He holds a B.S. and a Masters degree from Clemson University. When taking the increasingly rare break from his work, you may be able to find him watching football at his Alma Mater or fishing at one of his favorite spots throughout the region. He can be reached through his website: <http://www.carolinalandrealty.com/>

Russell Ward is the **ONLY** person in the country training real estate investors how to control or buy country land at half-price. He is a full-time vacant land investor who has been involved in more than 600 land transactions ranging from .25 acre to 500 acres totaling over \$9,000,000. He has authored, ***Vacant Land Guide – How to Buy Vacant Land at Wholesale Prices***. This guide is the first and only of its type on the market today. He resides in Orange Park, FL a suburb of Jacksonville, FL.

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