



JEFFREY HICKS

Apollo Associates Realty

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Real Estate Leader Jeffrey Hicks Wants To See Homeownership Opportunities Expand

The president of the National Association of Real Estate Brokers spoke with ESTATENVY about the real estate industry, current trends and the changes he'd like to see.

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Jeffrey Hicks might be a bit embarrassed to say he's only ever lived in his native Atlanta, Georgia, but there's no denying the real estate professional is proud to call the city home and that he works hard to serve its home ownership-seeking community. As the current president of the [National Association of Real Estate Brokers](#) (NAREB), Hicks helps lead the organization in its goals of advocacy and professional development. "NAREB was founded in 1947 to expand equal and fair opportunities for all Americans," Hicks said. Hicks is also an associate broker at Atlanta-based [Apollo Associates Realty](#). Hicks' late father, who was a purchaser and developer of real estate, did business and was good friends with the owner of Apollo. He introduced his son to the owner and Hicks began to work there in 1995, marking his entrance into the real estate industry. Immediately after joining Apollo, Hicks joined his local NAREB chapter.

NAREB members are called “realists,” an umbrella term meant to encompass all of its member professionals who work within the real estate industry. “Our number one goal is always to increase leadership engagement,” Hicks said of NAREB. “Our association believes that our members are most important, so we focus on developing ways we can help them personally and professionally and providing them with more exposure and resources to better service their clients. So membership engagement is number one. The second thing is professional development. Real estate agents are constantly in training and they’re constantly looking to expand the diversity of their skill set, so our association puts a lot of energy into training members in not only brokerage and sales but also in property management. We have members that are pursuing appraisal careers, development careers and transitioning from residential to commercial real estate. So professional development is another key area.” When asked what he would change about the real estate industry, Hicks pointed towards policy. “It would be more on the policy side of real estate in terms of working with legislators at the state, local, and federal levels in terms of expanding homeownership opportunities for more people,” he said. “I’ve been focused on homeownership opportunities in black communities, and those have been limited oftentimes by credit access challenges and restrictions.” The biggest change he has seen in the real estate industry since he began is the way consumers shop for and buy houses. “Technology has changed the industry,” he said, adding that consumers now have access to so much information and different technologies such as real estate websites. He added that “some of those technology companies are entering the real estate business in terms of marketing and selling homes and dealing directly with the consumer. So I would say the biggest change is just recognizing that the buying public is evolving in terms of how they source, identify and purchase real estate, and observing how sellers are marketing and selling real estate. And that’s a challenge if you’re a ‘realist,’ because our goal is to remain a central part of the transaction. Technology has a way of allowing the consumer to exchange real estate without a real estate professional being a part of the transaction. That is probably one of the major changes I’ve seen happen or taking place as we speak.” What excites Hicks most about the future of the real estate industry is the “re-transformation of urban centers” across the United States. “One of the things that is very exciting is seeing how the urban cores across America are growing,” Hicks said. “As I look at cities across the country, whether it’s Atlanta, where I’m located—the transformation taking place here around transit or in development—or whether that’s in Charlotte, North Carolina, in Nashville, Tennessee, Washington, DC—just seeing how there is a re-transformation of urban centers across the country. That’s very exciting for me, because my business has been concentrated in urban areas. It’s refreshing to see that America is recognizing that having a different lifestyle within the city, being close to amenities, hospitals, schools, restaurants and grocery stores and getting back and forth to those different locations through different transportation options that are there within the city versus in the suburbs. That is probably one of the most exciting transformations I see taking place in real estate.” He sees more people migrating to the city in part for a lifestyle change, and also noted that “younger consumers don’t seem to desire the larger homes,” such as estates in the 4,000 to 5,000 square feet range, “but they seem to be very happy living in smaller and modern spaces where there’s good design, and good floor plan design, so they see the city itself as their home.” Hicks plans to continue his involvement with NAREB after his presidency ends in late-July 2019, having been “exposed to a lot of opportunities to talk with legislators, especially congressional leaders, as it relates to promoting fair and equal housing in this country. I plan to continue to promote what we stand for—which is democracy in

housing—and to be a leader in that space. Those are my plans.”