

## News Release

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### **LSTAR leads trade mission to Toledo**

*Discussing the impacts of the business of real estate*

London, ON – Led by the London and St. Thomas Association of REALTORS® (LSTAR), a delegation of southwestern Ontario business, government and community leaders embarked on a trade mission to Toledo, Ohio, to engage with top-level leadership and change makers, discussing opportunities and issues facing the Great Lakes region. The visit took place at various locations across Toledo on April 25 and 26, 2019.

“Our goal was to identify the key issues impacting this entire region bordering the Great Lakes,” said John Geha, LSTAR CEO. “There are so many similar themes between Toledo, and London and St. Thomas. We’re grappling with housing affordability concerns, economic development, transportation needs, and talent recruitment retention. There’s a tremendous opportunity to strategize together, share best practices and develop collaborative approaches to addressing the issues.”

“This was such a valuable event on multiple levels,” said Bill Brennan, Director of Business Services for Lucas County, Ohio. “It was a chance to break down silos and engage in meaningful dialogue. Not only did I learn more about the trends happening with our Canadian neighbours, but I also had the opportunity to hear some new projects being implemented in Toledo and throughout the county.”

On the first day, the mission started at The University of Toledo, with meetings at the LaunchPad Incubation and the School for the Advancement of Interprofessional Education. That was followed by presentations and discussion of the region’s business leaders.

“One of the key themes that emerged from these discussions was how vital collaborative partnerships are to moving economic initiatives forward, to build strong and sustainable communities,” Geha said. “And the business of real estate is a leading economic driver in all of this, whether it’s housing, commercial real estate or community redevelopment.”

“From the discussions, it was clear there are really no borders between our cities because we’re managing very similar issues on housing, transportation and community revitalization projects,” said Earl Taylor, 2019 LSTAR President. “There’s a great deal we can learn from each other, to make a collective effort in making positive change for the entire area.”

On day two, the focus was on the opportunities and issues facing the Great Lakes region, which unite the United States and Canada. A discussion on trade, water management, housing affordability and economic development was led by several political leaders, including Karen Vecchio, Member of Parliament for Elgin-Middlesex-London; Marcy Kaptur, U.S. House of Representatives, 9<sup>th</sup> District of Ohio; Wade Kapszukiewicz, Mayor of Toledo; and Gary L. Byers, Commissioner, Lucas County Board of Commissioners.

“It was very clear that growing economic development in the global marketplace will require capitalizing on the region’s competitive assets, such as our trade opportunities, natural resources, transportation links and educational institutions,” Geha said.

Presentations were made by the following business leaders on how collaborative efforts contributed to major economic development opportunities, job creation and new housing projects: Paul Toth, Toledo-Lucas County Port Authority; Victor Abla, Local Initiatives Support Corporation; Paul Zito, Regional Growth Partnership Northwest Ohio; and Sean Dyke, St. Thomas Economic Development Corporation.

Another key focus was how corporate social responsibility and community partnerships are vital to support the health, well-being and livelihood of the neighbourhoods where people live, work, play and raise families. Presentations were shared by Don Rettig, Owens Corning Foundation and Kendra Smith, ProMedica.

Emily Ziegler, of Metroparks Toledo, gave an overview of a major riverfront transformation project and master planning process for the future Glass City Metropark, which is designed to bridge both sides of the Maumee River and be a destination for visitors. This project will – and already has begun to – spur adjacent investment in the community, supporting the Downtown Toledo master plan and development objectives of the former Marina District.

Discussion is underway for a reciprocal visit by the Toledo representatives to the London and St. Thomas region later this year, as well as identifying potential collaboration opportunities between Toledo and London and St. Thomas.

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