CAR ADVOCACY WATCH

Protecting Property Rights • Supporting Homeownership • Strengthening Our Communities

Tuesday Newsletter Edition | November 17th, 2026

Submitted by: Bernie Flax, CEO

CAR Local Government Meeting Portal: https://www.coastalrealtors.org/local-government-meeting-portal/

Coastal Association of REALTORS® is tracking proposed and adopted policies affecting property ownership, housing, infrastructure, and real estate throughout the Lower Eastern Shore. Below are the latest developments and items being monitored.

WICOMICO COUNTY

Wicomico County Council notices: https://www.wicomicocounty.org/676/County-Council-Public-Notices

WICOMICO COUNTY — Solar Energy Zoning

Wicomico County continues reviewing proposed changes to its zoning regulations for solar-energy facilities under Legislative Bill 2026-13.

The legislation addresses development standards, landscaping, maintenance requirements, and financial guarantees associated with solar-energy projects.

CAR continues monitoring the proposal and its potential implications for agricultural land, private property rights, neighboring properties, and responsible development.

Status: Final action on the proposed legislation has not been confirmed.

SALISBURY — Infrastructure, Development, and Data Centers

Recent City Council discussions and zoning actions have raised questions concerning appropriate locations for data centers, infrastructure capacity, utility demands, and potential impacts on surrounding neighborhoods and properties.

CAR continues monitoring these discussions to better understand how proposed developments may affect property owners, housing opportunities, and the City's long-term growth.

The City has also been addressing water and sewer infrastructure improvements, which remain important to supporting both existing communities and future development.

Salisbury's next scheduled legislative session is November 23.

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PITTSVILLE — COMMUNITY ASSISTANCE

The Town of Pittsville was awarded **$60,000 through Maryland's Circuit Rider Program**, supporting local community development and revitalization efforts.

Together, the Crisfield and Pittsville awards total **$101,943** in assistance for communities within CAR's service area.

These investments help smaller municipalities access resources and technical expertise for planning and community improvements.

WICOMICO COUNTY — ELECTION RESULTS UPDATE

Additional mail-in and provisional ballot counts have changed the unofficial totals in the Wicomico County Executive election.

As of the latest published state results reviewed November 16:

- **Ernest Davis:** 18,251 votes (54.02%)
- **Julie Giordano:** 15,485 votes (45.83%)

The Maryland State Board of Elections identifies Davis as the apparent winner. Results remain unofficial until certified.

CAR continues monitoring the certification process and government leadership transitions throughout our three-county service area.

WORCESTER COUNTY

https://www.co.worcester.md.us/

WORCESTER COUNTY — Upcoming Commissioners Meeting

The Worcester County Commissioners are scheduled to meet Tuesday, November 17.

CAR continues monitoring county initiatives involving zoning, housing, development, water and sewer infrastructure, and private property rights.

The Association is also following local discussions regarding data-center development and related land-use considerations.

BERLIN —Planning Zoning and Development

Berlin's Planning Commission is scheduled to meet Wednesday, November 18, at 5:30 PM.

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CAR continues following local planning and zoning activity, including accessory dwelling units and development proposals that may affect residential property owners.

The Association is also monitoring the next steps in the redevelopment of the former processing-plant property at Heron Park, following the Town's previously announced $1.2 million sale of Parcel 57.

OCEAN CITY—Planning Zoning and Development ADU regulations advance

The Ocean City Mayor and Council continues reviewing proposed regulations governing accessory dwelling units (ADUs).

During its November 10 work session, the Council voted 5–2 to advance a revised ordinance to its first reading.

The proposed changes address the use of ADUs, rental licensing, building-height restrictions, and parking requirements.

According to subsequent local reporting, the Council removed proposed restrictions on short-term rental use and requirements to correct existing parking nonconformities from the draft being advanced.

The ordinance was scheduled for further consideration at the November 16 Council meeting. Final adoption has not yet been confirmed.

CAR continues monitoring the proposal and its implications for private property rights, housing opportunities, and rental regulations.

SOMERSET COUNTY

https://www.somersetmd.us/

SOMERSET COUNTY — COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT FUNDING

Somerset County continues pursuing community improvements and economic development opportunities.

The Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development announced **$41,943 in Circuit Rider Program funding for Crisfield**.

The Circuit Rider Program provides technical assistance to local governments and community organizations pursuing revitalization and development initiatives.

CAR continues monitoring land-use, infrastructure, housing affordability, and community development issues throughout Somerset County.

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MARYLAND STATEWIDE

Maryland REALTORS® continues tracking housing supply and affordability, permitting reform, private property protections, consumer protection, and brokerage-related legislation. Maryland REALTORS advocacy: https://www.mdrealtor.org/AdvocacyPriorities

NATIONAL — NAR Advocacy

At the federal level, CAR continues following National Association of REALTORS® advocacy concerning housing affordability and the National Flood Insurance Program. Its current authorization extends through December 11, 2026.

NAR Advocacy Scoop: https://www.coastalrealtors.org/advocacy-scoop-podcast-nar/

THANK YOU TO OUR RPAC INVESTORS

“We invest today so that we are prepared to advocate for the issues of tomorrow.”

I want to take a moment to personally thank all of our RPAC Major Investors and every member who invested in RPAC this year. Whether your investment was large or small, your participation matters, and I sincerely appreciate your commitment to our profession.

During the recent NAR NXT Conference in New Orleans, one of the most important messages shared during the RPAC briefing was the need to sustain RPAC through strong investor relationships.

Our focus moving forward is not simply raising more money each year. It is maintaining the relationships we have built, recognizing those who continue to invest, and helping our members understand why RPAC is so important.

We cannot wait until an issue threatens private property rights, homeownership, or our industry begin raising the funds needed to address it. By then, it may be too late.

RPAC investments help build the resources and relationships needed to engage on issues affecting REALTORS®, property owners, and our communities. The issues we will face tomorrow may not even be on our radar today. That is why continued participation and sustained investment are so important.

Our goal is to retain and strengthen the relationships we have today while encouraging future generations of REALTORS® to recognize the importance of protecting our profession.

Thank you for believing in the work we do and for helping CAR remain prepared for the challenges and opportunities ahead.

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NATIONAL ADVOCACY — ROAD TO HOUSING: FROM PASSAGE TO IMPLEMENTATION

One example of the importance of long-term advocacy is the 21st Century ROAD to Housing Act, which became law on July 11, 2026, following sustained national advocacy efforts.

The bipartisan legislation addresses some of the country's most significant housing challenges, including increasing housing supply, improving affordability, expanding financing opportunities, supporting manufactured housing, and reducing barriers to residential development.

However, passing legislation is only the beginning.

The next phase involves federal agencies developing rules, providing guidance, and determining how programs will operate. Some new grant opportunities will also depend on future congressional funding.

During the NAR NXT briefing, associations were encouraged to remain engaged as the law moves toward implementation.

For CAR, this means continuing to monitor federal housing programs, sharing information with our local government partners, identifying housing challenges throughout our three counties, and supporting efforts to improve zoning and permitting processes that may unnecessarily delay housing development.

The National Association of REALTORS® has developed resources to help members and associations understand the new law and its potential impact on housing opportunities.

Learn more: https://www.nar.realtor/advocacy/road-to-housing-act

WHY THIS MATTERS TO CAR

The ROAD to Housing Act reminds us that meaningful change does not happen overnight. It takes years of advocacy, relationship-building, research, and continued engagement.

That same commitment is what makes RPAC important.

We invest today so that we are prepared to advocate for the issues of tomorrow.

To our RPAC investors, Major Investors, volunteer leaders, and members who continue to support advocacy at the local, state, and national levels, thank you.

Your commitment helps ensure that the REALTOR® voice remains part of the conversations and decisions shaping the future of homeownership, private property rights, and our communities.

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NAR NXT 2026 — DATA CENTERS AND THEIR IMPACT ON REAL ESTATE

Insights from Dr. Lawrence Yun's Presentation in New Orleans

During the recent NAR NXT Conference in New Orleans, CAR Vice President Cameron Drew and I attended a presentation by Dr. Lawrence Yun, Chief Economist for the National Association of REALTORS®, examining the rapid growth of data centers and their potential impact on residential and commercial real estate.

With data-center development becoming an increasingly important topic across Maryland's Lower Eastern Shore, the presentation provided valuable insight into both the opportunities and concerns associated with these facilities.

What Did We Learn?..... Data Centers Are Growing Rapidly

The growing demand for artificial intelligence, online services, and digital technology is driving significant data-center development across the country.

Research presented at the conference identified approximately 1,500 data centers across 47 states, concentrated in a relatively small number of counties.

Do Data Centers Affect Home Values?

One of the more interesting findings was that counties with significant data-center development experienced approximately 95% home-price appreciation over the past decade, compared with 64% in counties without data centers.

However, this does not necessarily mean that data centers caused home values to increase.

The research emphasized that individual properties located close to these facilities may experience different impacts depending on noise, visibility, traffic, landscaping, and distance from the development.

What About Electricity and Water?

Energy consumption and water usage are among the leading concerns associated with data-center development.

Although some areas with high concentrations of data centers have experienced faster increases in electricity rates, their overall rates may still be lower than those in other communities.

Newer facilities are also exploring technologies that reduce water usage, including closed-loop cooling systems and recycled water.

Are There Economic Benefits?

Data-center development can create opportunities for commercial real estate through land sales, construction, industrial development, and related business activity.

While completed facilities generally employ relatively few permanent workers, construction activity, specialized maintenance, and local tax revenues may provide additional economic benefits.

What Does This Mean for Our Three Counties?

The most important takeaway from the presentation was that the impact of a data center depends heavily on its location and the surrounding community.

There is no single national answer to whether these facilities are beneficial or harmful to local real estate markets.

Local zoning, infrastructure capacity, electricity costs, water availability, and the proximity of residential neighborhoods must all be considered.

As data-center proposals continue to generate discussion throughout the Lower Eastern Shore, CAR believes it is important that local governments carefully evaluate both the potential economic opportunities and the concerns of neighboring property owners.

CAR Will Continue Monitoring Local Developments

The Coastal Association of REALTORS® will continue following data-center proposals in Wicomico and Worcester Counties, including Salisbury, to better understand their potential impact on private property rights, property values, infrastructure, and responsible development.

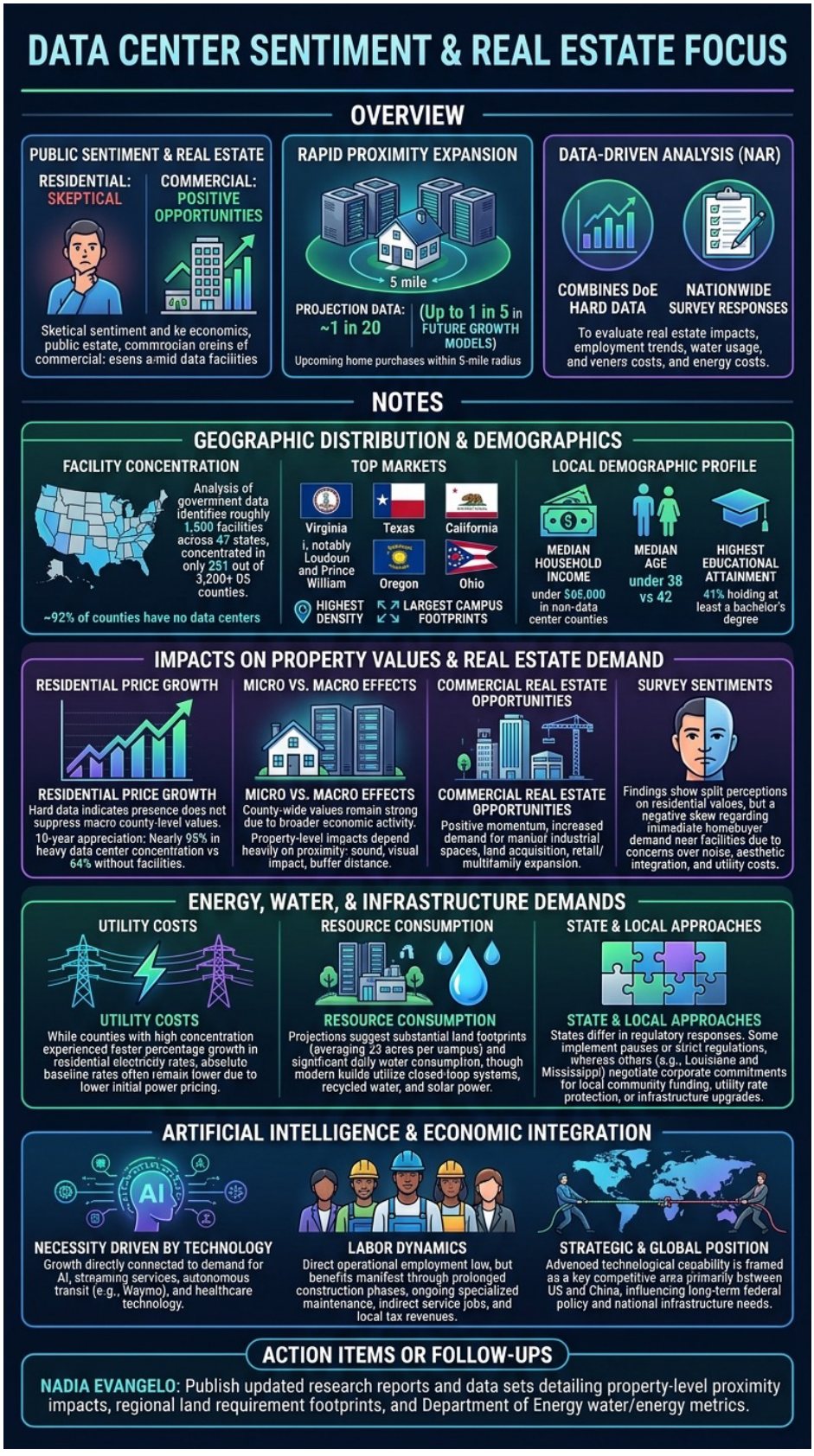
Our goal is to help ensure that decisions affecting our communities are informed by reliable research, thoughtful planning, and consideration of the interests of property owners.

Below is a Graphic on the Lecture Session

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LETTER TO MEMBERSHIP

Dear CAR Members and Advocacy Committee Volunteers,

Advocacy Watch, we will provide regular updates on issues throughout our three counties, including important state and national developments.

Please continue to use CAR's established Government Affairs email address, **advocacy@coastalrealtors.org**, for all advocacy-related questions, concerns, and communications. All correspondence sent to this address is currently being forwarded directly to me, ensuring continuity during this transition. This address will remain unchanged when our next Government Affairs Director is appointed. You may also contact me directly at **bernie@coastalrealtors.org**.

To our Advocacy Committee members, chairs, and volunteers, **thank you for the time, knowledge, and dedication you bring to our Association.** Your participation, local insight, and willingness to engage on issues affecting our communities are essential to CAR's advocacy efforts. I look forward to continuing our work together and encourage you to share issues or concerns that deserve the Association's attention.

Advocacy has never been the responsibility of one individual. It is a longstanding commitment of our Association, supported by our leadership, committees, staff, and members. Together, we will continue protecting the interests of REALTORS® and property owners while helping strengthen the communities we serve.

Thank you for your continued support, involvement, and commitment to our profession.

Bernie Flax, CEO