**Episode 7 Sustainability Final Transcript**

**Guests: Jan Green and Christopher Matos-Rogers**

**Intro**: You're listening to “Drive With NAR” powered by REALTOR® Magazine. Listen in as real estate pros talk must-have tools of the trade and share stories of inspiration. Get ready to step up your business. This episode is sponsored by the Green Resource Council, providing you with knowledge and expertise on sustainability, energy-efficiency and the future of green real estate.

**Janelle Brevard**: Hello, happy day, everyone. I'm Janelle Brevard, NAR’s chief storyteller, and welcome to the show. This show is about delving into how REALTORS® do their business. It's all about hearing firsthand from the people who day in and day out are doing the hard work to help build communities. Today we're talking about a topic that's extremely important to REALTORS® and that’s sustainability. REALTORS® have led the way around sustainability throughout the industry. In fact, NAR President Leslie Rouda Smith has called out sustainability as one of her focus areas for 2022. So now is really the perfect time to delve into this conversation. We're joined today by two REALTORS® who are helping lead the way around educating about and promoting sustainability throughout the industry. Christopher Matos-Rogers is from Atlanta. And what's interesting about Christopher is he actually has a background in Marine Biology. In fact, working closely with marine animals gave him firsthand experience with environmental issues. I think that is so cool. He is now the founder of Georgia's only sustainability-focused real estate team, the Matos-Rogers Group, Coldwell Banker, where he serves as principal and associate broker. Christopher, Welcome, welcome.

**Christopher Matos-Rogers**: Thanks, Janelle, it's great to meet you. And thank you for having me here for this topic today.

**Janelle**: Glad to have you here. And our second guest is REALTOR® Jan green. She hails from the Phoenix metro area. And what's interesting about Jan is that she's an EcoBroker with HomeSmart Elite Group. She helped to get more than 60 green features added to the Arizona regional MLS. That's awesome, Jan. And in addition to being an instructor, Jan has expanded her sustainability advocacy as President of the Sustainability Advisors Corporation, where she works closely with stakeholders in the building industry. Jan, so great to have you here as well.

**Jan Green**: Thank you, Janelle.

**Janelle**: I would love to hear from both of you in terms of how has your expertise in sustainability helped your business, Christopher?

**Christopher**: It's been the centerpiece of what we do. As you mentioned, in the beginning of the episode, you mentioned that I run Georgia’s only sustainability group. And it's named after me. And that is because for seven years I've been known as “That EV Guy,” “That Solar Guy,” “Sustainability Guy.” And so I was able to brand and hopefully try to reach a larger market versus naming it something stereotypical for the movement, but also have that identity. And so for us, sustainability has been more than half of our business on a regular basis.

**Jan**: Sustainability has been a big part of literally everything I do in real estate, and it really keeps the exciting element of it at the forefront. Because anytime I get to talk to somebody about sustainability, my energy level just goes through the roof. I've been asked to speak at different events and different functions and like the city of Scottsdale, their City Council and, and I know the sustainability manager for the City of Phoenix. And so knowing those people is a big advantage when it comes to planning events, but sustainability in general since 2008. I mean, now it's about 3% of my business in 19 years doing this, I'm pretty much 100% repeat and referral. And so I don't always get the green listings I would like. Because we're so big. We're almost 500 square miles, 4.7 million people. So I don't always get the green listing. There are 50,000 licensees in Maricopa County. So it's a lot of competition. It's great business. I love it. And I love serving on committees and volunteering and it's a lot of what I do on a daily basis.

**Janelle**: No, that's a great story. That's pretty amazing. What about the areas where you both are running your businesses? I know, Jan, you're in Arizona. Christopher, you're in Georgia. Are those areas the region's leaders in sustainability markets? Christopher, I'd like to hear from you.

**Christopher**: Yeah, that's a great question as well. A lot of people are surprised when they see sustainability and Georgia or Atlanta. As an Atlanta native, I do joke. We do like to lead from behind. We let other people kind of take the risk and start it out. But when we show up, we do it big and splashy. And we get a lot of these World's Biggest, we love to do that. You know, when we do it, we do it for real. And so we have two things. I would say the housing is more prevalent than most people realize, you know, green certification. Energy-efficiency is not something that you necessarily know by driving around a neighborhood. So people don't realize how many we have. We need sustainable or high-performance homes that check in with Earth Advantage and their green building registry, we have over 50,000 records of sustainable homes in the state of Georgia. Yes, that's a small amount compared to other states like California and some of our neighbors. But that's still a decent number. And what you can more visibly see is a rooftop solar and the growth of that.

**Jan**: That's true in Arizona as well. One of our utility providers rents solar panels to homeowners at no cost to the homeowner, and then they'll get a $30 credit on their bill, which is kind of nice to have, and then they have no liability. And if you sell the house, it can be transferred to the next owner. So I think that's relatively small number of homeowners that have that the 95% of residential solar in Arizona is leased, which is a whole other topic of conversation. Can it delay housing sales? I think the best time to sell a house with the solar panel is the market that we've been having. Because there's not that many homes left.

**Janelle**: What about how can NAR members be more well-versed on sustainability practices and benefits? And specifically, I'd love to hear from you guys about what are some of the tools and resources that NAR has that can help them understand and promote this effort. Jan, I know you're into education and instruction. I'd love to hear from you on that.

**Jan**: No, certainly, I always tell my students in class that your best source of grassroots information about the community and green features for homes is get your NAR Green designation. I mean, immediately, that's your base of knowledge. And after that, then you go out into the community and you volunteer and you find these organizations that have those employees out there of those companies learn about products and services and how they affect a home sale and do they add value. It's so important for REALTORS® as gatekeepers of information to know what's in a home, it's ethically it's not a good idea not to have that information at hand, if you sell a house, it has those features. So I always say education is No. 1. So go to [Green.Realtor](https://green.realtor/) and start there. And then two, I heard through the grapevine, that third quarter, there's going to be a sustainability course. So I'm highly looking forward to that anticipation to see what's in it. That'll be a great add on.

**Janelle**: So for everyone listening, the course that Jan just referenced is an online course launching later this year. It's called “Intro to Sustainability and Resiliency, What REALTORS® Need to Know.” And from what we understand it's going to cover general principles of sustainability and real estate and how members can build their own businesses with this knowledge. So really good stuff coming down the pipeline with regard to sustainability.

**Christopher**: This goes back to the beginning of me getting into real estate at all. Jan and I both are great examples of that we do this ourselves, we are actively increasing the efficiency of our homes, fuel switching, decarbonizing our homes, and that is so important your turn your home into a lab, these benefits are not just because they're a hot new trend in the market that's coming in is going to be a larger growth, but you should be putting sustainability practices into your own home into your own business. Because there are a multitude of benefits. You know, this is not just for climate change, and you know, long-term sustainability of our environment. Yes, that's a big push for it. But when you actually utilize and experience these technologies of these ways of living, then you can learn about all the other myriad benefits that you have. I mean performance, there's a reason it's kind of been re-coined as high-performance. And that is because the performance is so much higher with some of these technologies, whether it's electric cars, induction cooking, heat pumps, I mean, until you actually try it out and utilize and live with these systems, you would just be blown away by all the side fringe benefits. You know, I ultimately got into this business because, as you mentioned before real estate, I worked in Marine Biology, I already drove electric vehicles, and my husband and I were looking at buying a home that would be a good candidate for solar. But that also that would hopefully be somewhat easy to add an EV charging to because we were going to need that both driving electric and there was just nobody in the Atlanta market that understood or got any of this and with us again, we lived the life we were part of the community. We knew a lot of the folks like us and we knew how big particularly electric vehicles were in Georgia and they still are.

**Janelle**: That's pretty amazing, Christopher. So for both of you, the U.S. is facing a housing supply crisis right now, as we know. How is sustainability filling the gap and is the supply gap hurting sustainability efforts, Jan?

**Jan**: I think people right now are just looking for a house, not the home with the sustainable features. So the key with that is some of the you know the affordable homes disappear some of these people are looking for alternative options. You know whether and building homes if they were looking at building what we call a frame-built, stick-built house as well, maybe they're looking at other types of constructions that that used to be when they were out priced. You know, like insulated concrete forms, things like that, that type of construction simpler and more expensive. But as frame wood became more expensive, it wasn't that hard of a leap.

**Christopher**: I would say that the movement has somewhat taken a backseat a little bit, because people are just trying to find any home, our market is starting to maybe have some of the craziness disappear. So you know, the idea of being able to do some of these things is kind of creeping back to the forefront. I will say that with builders, I haven't seen any new builders get into sustainability techniques in their homes. But the exciting thing is that the builders that were already heavily involved or doing only sustainable housing before COVID, and before this, the shortage got to the point that it's at now, they are doing better than ever, because people are thinking about it more. And I will say that I have more clients who are coming to me looking to purchase to either create one of these homes or build.

**Janelle**: What players need to engage for sustainability in real estate to be really lasting and impactful?

**Christopher**: Yeah, this is a great question. And part of it is because you know, especially housing is so many players, and we all have to be doing it. South Face, for example, they have great data they show to show that, you know, consumers are most aware of sustainable housing. REALTORS® are just a little behind them on awareness. And then builders are way far behind both of those parties. No. 1 is that consumers need to get we have to change American consumerism, we buy for the 1%. And I don't mean the 1% of people, we buy for the 1% of events. We buy the seven-bedroom house in the burbs, because, you know, a couple days during the holidays, we're going to host all of our family. There are other ways to do that. But all year long, you're paying that property tax and heating and cooling and repairs and maintenance and the initial cost to have a seven-bedroom home. But the other part is that we have to have the supply. Builders have to really step up. Clients want these homes, but they're not out there. And you know, I use the analogy going back to electric vehicles of you know, Tesla built a car, I have a 2014 model S which is my daily driver. That car is eight years old now. It's been built for 10, the same car that they first came out with 10 years ago, that’s still the best most electric vehicles out there. And what's really important is that Tesla dedicated themselves and created a product because they knew that people would want it, they built awareness. And now people, the original manufacturers are coming up and they're finally making competent products and they're coming out like crazy. And you see, just like I mentioned with solar homes in Georgia, how they are now a greater percentage of market share EVs to I mean, they tripled during COVID as a percentage of market share the overall number of cars went down, but EVs just raced up, we need builders that basically are the Tesla of building and they need to create these homes, because people will want them and then we as REALTORS® need to understand the value proposition to be able to sell them.

**Janelle**: I like that analogy. You use “the Tesla of homebuilding.” I like that a lot. So, Jan Green, tell us your side of this, where should REALTORS® go to get an education on these types of issues?

**Jan**: First, first up, yet when I got my green designation in 2008, from EcoBroker, NAR Green wasn't in our town yet. But now REALTORS® should go to [Green.Realtor](https://green.realtor/) and find that designation, take it locally, take it online, however it's available in your area definitely do that. The other thing that I started doing immediately after getting that first designation was I went to a Home and Garden Show, right. And I kind of disobeyed the rules. I typed up a letter and had my business card attached saying I'm building a green website. And I want to know about your business. But I handed that letter out to all these vendors and stopped and talked to them. I spent an entire day at that Home and Garden Show. And then I joined the Green Chamber in Arizona and have been a member there since I think ‘09. And then U.S. Green Building Council. I went to those meetings and I listened. I was so excited. I'd go on home tours. And I was learning from professionals in the industry and hearing great content. And I think that's a great way to add to your knowledge, your expand expansion of that designation. You have to continue that education and use it or lose it.

**Christopher**: Yeah. And to add on what Jan said, I love that you created a green website, I did the same thing. And to be honest, I had vendors like I still have interest like trying to get on there and I highly vet them. But you know, I'll get random emails we'd love to be on your site. I have actually found that by being in parts of these places, being a part of the community that they are very eager and usually surprised to see a REALTOR® especially when we talk about the sustainability space. We're usually seen as “The Big Bad People” and the people who spout these mistruths and fight them. So when they see somebody who's trying to be a part of the community and help, I've always experienced big welcome arms and excitement that the REALTOR® community is trying to get on board here and understand things, you know. And going back to what I said earlier, you know, turning your home into a lab, you know, join these communities from a place to learn, to get information to be able to do a lot of these things in your house, give back, you know, so many podcasts and speakers in our business, talk about adding value and how you need to add value, not just be salesy and try to get people to, you know, take a CMA or sell a home in 30 days. Build those relationships by being a part of this community by having an invested interest again, by having these features in your own home or in your business. And then being able to just have that conversation is huge.

**Janelle**: Stay right there, everybody. We'll be right back after a word about our sponsor.

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**Janelle**: There's a conversation underway about, you know, attracting new generations of homebuyers. And I'm curious, Christopher, do you believe that more sustainable housing could help attract Millennials to homeownership? Because I know you're a Millennial, so I'd love to hear your position on that.

**Christopher**: So as a Millennial, I would love to clarify that we are not all 25 anymore. I'm 37. I'm an older Millennial, but I think we now go up to 42. And I think the youngest ones of us are, you know, in their upper 20s. So actually, we should even be talking about Gen Z. I mean, because they take it even further than we do. I mean, they either don't want to even own a car or if they want to own a car, it's got to be electric or something like that. I mean, my generation we grew up with Captain Planet, and there were other movies, you know, sustainability, we still clip our, you know, our soda can holders, you know, from all those things growing up, but Gen Z is a whole different level. Millennials are, you know, we do vote with our dollars around sustainability and corporate responsibility. But Gen Z is the next level. And they are already homeowners, right? They're in their mid-20s, the older oldest ones. So let's not forget Gen Z too. But I certainly do, and the problem is again, yes, we have an inventory shortage, we should be creating inventory. But when we do that, we should also be making sure that new construction has these features or that it's very easy to add them, sort of like being EV- or solar-ready, have you know, have the conduit in the space ready, you just got to run the wire through there greatly lowers the cost, especially in multi-family. But going back to that we got to have that “Tesla of Builders” that are just like we're doing this and we are going to do it. We've had a couple of developments that were awesome in Atlanta townhomes where they every unit had solar, I mean those things sell out, they sell way faster than even the general new construction. So you know, put these things in there, we do have builders doing it, we just don't have enough. And they're at this point also, usually not in that first-time or maybe first-move up buyer range. So we need to make sure that it doesn't remain just a luxury item.

**Jan**: So agree with you, Chris. We're in Tempe, Arizona, right here next door to Phoenix. ASU has the first sustainability degree in the country. And now they have a master's program. So we're seeing Gen Z and what's the youngest generation under that? We're seeing them come out just eager and educated. And you know, I have to be honest, I'm a grandma and a great-grandma. So in my generation of Baby Boomers, you know, I'm, I'm pleased to be helping them too, but it's really exciting to help the younger generations and they know I know this stuff, and they just light up. They get so excited. And I love talking shop with them and walking a house and saying look up at that wall, there's a knee wall right there and that might have a gap in insulation, what room is above that? What room are you going to use that for? To be aware of that that might be a hotter room in your house. And so they get excited and they love it. And it's great speaking with them.

**Janelle**: That's pretty amazing. We like to end each episode with what we call an “in the trenches” moment. It's really a time where you share a transaction that might have been particularly thorny or something you had to maneuver your way out of. I'd love to hear you're in the trenches moment. Jan, how about you go first?

**Jan**: One of the city officials with a huge, vast, extensive, extended knowledge base on Green construction, and I was selling his investment property for him. The buyer of that property was just not having it with me because I kept rejecting the appraiser twice. I had to reject an appraiser because that appraiser would call me and I would ask him: How do you value solar panels? And he couldn't answer, “um, with paired sales?” Well, paired sales is like any other appraisal, you have to have some kind of knowledge base to know how to add value for on solar panels. And neither appraiser did that. Well, the buyer's agent complained and went to the Department of Real Estate and complained about me and I said, “Go for it. Because I'm not picking an appraiser. I'm giving you a list of appraisers from the from the Appraisal Institute website that you've taken all four days of education.” And he was just not having it. Well, finally, they canceled the sale. Well, then another buyer stepped in and knew the seller and knew the value of those features and paid cash. So there was no appraisal. But I wanted to prove that point. I wanted to get an appraisal in there for this for this expert seller who knew all the details and had picked me because I'm saying we're gonna get value for those own solar panels. It was encouraging and defeating at the same time, but I did follow all the rules I should have to try to get that value. Anyway, it was an exercise in futility with that buyer.

**Christopher**: Yeah. So you know, when you're in the moment, of course, these are always such bad moments. But I always like to focus on how do we come out of it? And what do we learn from it. And my other niche beyond Green is with mid-century modern homes. So I do get a lot of sellers and buyers too, that are looking to transact these properties. And earlier this year, I actually had a client, she lives up in Boston, but she was wanting to sell a mid-century modern 90 minutes outside of Atlanta. So we're very far, that's like way beyond my typical service area, and about 15 minutes from Alabama. So it was a drive. But it was a really cool house. The story was amazing. You know, her father had built it. But that's not the challenging part. The challenge was that this was small town, you know, and I'm a big city guy. And I showed up in my Tesla. It was it got it got to be known, you know, in my, and it was so interesting, because my photographer I use as an ex-architect, and she got into photography after the recession and everything. And so like, we were celebrities in this town, like you'll, you know, “they're here and the architect photographer,” and “was that, you know, that's your Tesla.” It was just really interesting. I mean, for to have kind of that celebrity because we were selling, you know, a very well-known home in town. So it was a big buzz. There were a lot of agents in town that were negative, you know, I had people come and they were like, trying to beat me down on price. You know, before we were even listed. We had people that straight up said the house would not sell and that they would deal with the seller, you know, once we took it off the market. One gentleman was like, “Oh, you're trying to get an Atlanta price out here,” and I’m like, “No, you know, this might be pushing your market, but this is far from an Atlanta price.” But ultimately, we, you know, sold the house quick with over-list, which is not something that really happens out there. We didn't just have some person from the big city come down there and buy this this house in the country, it actually ended up going to somebody local. So it was really exciting to see that it was able to stay with somebody who had loved it as a child and curious about it and then bought this house and that they were able to keep it you know, in the area. It was an interesting transaction. And I'm glad that we did it.

**Janelle**: That's a great story. And you both have shared so much wonderful information. I want to thank you truly for joining me today, Jan Green, Christopher Matos-Rogers.

**Christopher**: Thank you.

**Jan**: Thank you, Janelle.

**Janelle**: Thank you both for being here. And that's it for this episode. Thanks, everyone.

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