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Real estate coalition formed to get construction jobs back

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Jobs from September 2007 to September 2008. An overbuilt housing inventory has been slow to burn off, and that's left the industry's local employment outlook bleak.

But as hard they are to find, there are jobs out there, and attorney Ron Weaver has a plan to find them.

Weaver, of **Stearns Weaver Miller Weissler Alhadeff & Sitterson, P.A.** has joined 30 other business and government leaders to create **Real Estate Lives**, a nonprofit coalition planning to counsel, retrain and even find jobs for employment victims of the housing collapse.

"This is our way of saying thank you for 13 years of taking care of us and our families; now it's our turn to take care of you and your families to help you get back on your feet," said Weaver, chairman of the effort.

Help in abundance

Real Estate Lives is focusing its attention between now and the end of the year on accumulating details on companies in the real estate industry that are hiring both locally and nationally, creating a database it can use to help place the right person in the right job.

"We've already found about 70 jobs, and we're recruiting more and more every day," Weaver said. That includes opportunities at the **University of South Florida**, a half-dozen engineering positions around the region, and some labor positions with construction projects in Charlotte, N.C., and Dallas.

Finding jobs hasn't been easy, however, and only about one in 10 companies contacted even have any available, Weaver said.

"We'd like to have more jobs in our reservoir before we take in too many resumes," Weaver said. "Our first focus is to accumulate as many jobs as possible."

Other local practitioners joining Weaver's effort include Elaine Kennedy of **GVA Advantis Real Estate Services** in Tampa. She is helping to mine for available jobs. Pam Winchester with **Focus Real Estate Services** is handling requests and offers of social services, and Brenda Dohring of **The Dohring Group** in Tampa is building the coalition's Web site at realestatelives.org.

Other help is coming from groups including the National Association of Industrial and Office Properties, Commercial Real Estate Women, **League of Women Voters**, **Hillsborough Community College**, **United Way** Tampa Bay, and the Tampa Bay Workforce Board Alliance.

Meeting for the motivated

There is room for more in the business community to join the coalition, Weaver said. A meeting is planned for Jan. 7 at 10 a.m. at the **Greater Tampa Association of Realtors** office, 2918 W. Kennedy Blvd., Tampa.

"We have that whole large auditorium that seats about 200 people, so we're expecting a lot of people to come if they are motivated to help," Weaver said.

Those seeking more details on Real Estate Lives can contact Weaver at rweaver@swmwas.com.