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It's time to join a chapter of the Appraisal Institute

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With the first quarter over, the commercial real estate market has continued to decline in many respects. For appraisers and appraisals, the flight to quality has commenced. Clients are now looking for the most qualified appraisers to produce quality reports to aid in their decision making process in these difficult times. They want the assurance that comes with the MAI, SRA and SRPA designations that they are hiring true professionals who are well educated. These designations are clearly the most recognized and respected professional designations in the industry.

Appraisers across the country are recognizing this trend. In 2008, membership in the Appraisal Institute grew to nearly 25,000. This represents an increase of more than 11% over the previous year, and to put that into perspective, these figures represents a larger increase in membership than the four previous years combined. State certified and trainee appraisers, as well as, students are choosing the Appraisal Institute to pursue a higher level of professionalism and to take advantage of the numerous benefits of membership. Some of these benefits are summarized below:

- *Network with the best appraisers across the country through on-line forums and local chapter meetings. (With more limited market data and a rapidly changing market, this becomes more and more important especially for appraisers working in small shops or independently). Our membership dues support advocates and lobbyists who support you at the national and state levels. The Institute helps you stay informed with respect to legislative changes.

- *Appraisal Institute member counselors and the professional practice hotline help you with any questions you may have in your day to day operations, including how to meet USPAP requirements.

- *The Appraisal Institute is marketing for you both on a local and national level.

- *Discounts on a wide range of Appraisal Institute publications.

- *Members are listed in the "Find an Appraiser" directory featured on the Institute's website home page. The directory receives an average of 30,000 visits a month from individuals and businesses seeking appraisers.

- *Members have access to promotional materials to assist with marketing needs, including logos and corporate signatures to enhance business cards, letterhead, websites and other specifically permitted pieces.

- *Members receive a discount on STDBonline (Make better and faster decisions with graphic information, mapping technology and reporting tools for use in appraisal and consulting assignments).

- *Discounts on the highest quality classroom and on-line education. The Institute provides 34 unique courses and seminars, with 60 national offerings and more than 1,000 opportunities to attend through chapters.

While the Appraisal Institutes educational offerings are open to everyone in the real estate

community, I would remind those who are not currently members that becoming an Associate Member is now less expensive than it has been in many years, and the membership pays for itself in no time at all with the reduced fees for classes and seminars.

Locally, the Mass. chapter remains very active, bringing education and networking opportunities to area real estate professionals. In March, the Chapter offered a seminar to bring residential appraisers up to speed on the new Residential Market Conditions Form. The seminar was so well attended that two additional dates were offered.

Upcoming educational and meeting events include:

*April 28th Valuation of Residential Green Buildings; and

* May 7th 7-Hour National USPAP Course.

David Cary, MAI, MRICS is the 2009 president of the Mass. Chapter of the Appraisal Institute, and managing director of Integra Realty Resources, Boston, Mass.

New England Real Estate Journal - 17 Accord Park Drive #207, Norwell MA 02061 - (781) 878-4540