

## **CONSULTING CORPS PROMOTES THE CRE BRAND PROVIDING A RETURN ON YOUR INVESTMENT IN CRE MEMBERSHIP**

*By: John J. Hentschel CRE, MAI, FRICS  
Chairman, Consulting Corps Steering Committee*

You work hard for your money. Consequently you expect a reasonable return whenever you invest it, including on your sizeable investment in CRE membership.

Today, professionals, as well as their professional societies, must remain relevant or perish. Distinction is essential in a competitive world in which consumers have a multitude of options to satisfy their needs.

CRE's are the very best in the consulting and advisory services arena. Unfortunately merely being the best is no guarantee of success. Consumer awareness - first, about the very need for a nebulous service like counseling that is often best described through example; then about the importance of retaining quality when seeking guidance; and only thereafter about the identify of distinguished experts who excel at the craft - must be cultivated and nurtured.

Promoting consumer awareness of the CRE brand and designation through advertising is prohibitively expensive for a small albeit premier organization like CRE. Consequently alternative means to elevate awareness of the CRE brand and educate consumers about the benefits of hiring a CRE are necessary.

Since its inception CRE Consulting Corps Volunteers have provided invaluable and inexpensive guidance to a host of non-profit, academic and governmental organizations, assistance that would otherwise have been unaffordable. However, it is CRE members who derive the greatest advantage from Consulting Corps engagements.

While Consulting Corps clients universally extol the virtue of CRE and provide precious word of mouth referrals, the publicity and media coverage associated with Consulting Corps engagements is priceless. It not only promotes the CRE brand, but it also

succinctly demonstrates to the public the sometimes indescribable capabilities of CRE's and the benefits of engaging a CRE designated practitioner. For instance, the recent Consulting Corps findings concerning the redevelopment of Fort Ritchie in Maryland attracted considerable newspaper and television coverage, free media exposure that the CRE organization could not have bought at any cost.

In addition to the personal satisfaction derived from helping others, CRE volunteers for Consulting Corps panels unanimously relate that the experience not only provides challenging and extraordinary problems on which to hone counseling skills, but also a rare and memorable opportunity to collaborate with fellow CRE's thereby expanding their network of professional contacts. Furthermore, publicity from hometown media coverage about the CRE's contribution to a Consulting Corps assignment promotes the CRE's own professional practice at home.

With four assignments already completed and one more pending, 2013 was a banner year for the Consulting Corps. For 2014, the goal is for at least 6 new assignments. To accomplish this goal, we need the help of each and every CRE to identify and refer potential projects.

Virtually every state, city, county and town (in the US as well as throughout the world) has a seemingly intractable problem or stalled project that is desperately in need of a strategic solution and an action plan to implement it. For instance, this year the Consulting Corps worked with a merchants association to help devise a strategy for an underperforming site in a Chicago business district.

During 2013 academic, religious, and non-profit organizations found the services of the Consulting Corps to be particularly helpful. New Mexico State University and the Fresno State Center Community College District not only have expressed their sincere gratitude for the portfolio management advice and assistance provided by Consulting Corps experts, they have also volunteered to spread the word about CRE through presentations to their peers at state and national professional association meetings.

As a result of a CRE referral, the Consulting Corps is now preparing to help the Catholic Diocese of Charleston, S.C. evaluate the deployment and maximize the utility of its real estate resources.

Foundations and endowments, whether local or national in orientation, can be an important source of referrals and steer assignments to the Consulting Corps since they are a primary source of funding for non-profit developers and others who might need but cannot afford the help, guidance and expertise of seasoned real estate professionals.

For those public sector or non-profit clients or projects that may lack the resources to engage your professional services, perhaps the Consulting Corps might be a viable alternative to recommend.

When you volunteer for or refer a project to the Consulting Corps, you generate a sizable return on your investment in CRE membership. Therefore, during the coming year please volunteer to serve on a Consulting Corps panel that requires your expertise and/or contact representatives of your state/local government; development agencies; community and business organizations; chambers of commerce; foundations; as well as academic, religious and non-profit organizations to identify possible opportunities and make them aware of the services and merits of the CRE Consulting Corps. A simple introduction by phone, mail or e-mail accompanied by a copy of the CRE Consulting Corps brochure (which you can download directly from the CRE website) might be all that is necessary to begin the conversation.

