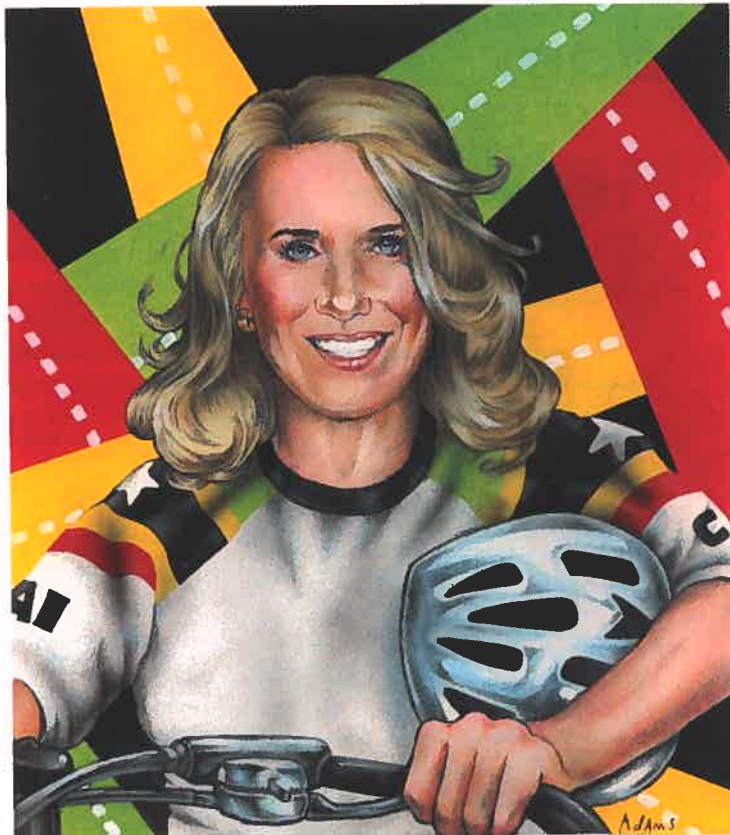


In Gear

Julie McGhee Howard, a CAI past president and fellow in CAI's College of Community Association Lawyers (CCAL), recently partnered with another past president, George Nowack, to form NowackHoward law firm in Atlanta. Howard, who has been practicing association law and working with Nowack since 1996, is a passionate advocate for associations. During Howard's term as CAI president, she spearheaded the Community Next: 2020 and Beyond initiative, tasking leaders in the field to think about how associations will change and what challenges they'll face in coming years. When she's not advising associations or advocating for them, she might be exploring an international city or her hometown by bike. —Interview by Daniel Brannigan



What do you like about association law?

I like that it's dynamic and continues to evolve. In the scheme of the law, it's still relatively young, and we continue to have the opportunity to make new laws. I've never been bored a day of my practice.

Tell me about the reasons behind creating NowackHoward.

Our former firm represents many national developers and, with the improved economy and the growth of new housing across Georgia, we were increasingly faced with legal and business conflicts. Because George and I represent the associations that these developers established, we determined that our own independent firm was the best course to serve existing clients and to ensure we could work with new clients.

Our philosophy is that legal confrontation is expensive, drains

time, and often leaves bitterness and frustration. The way to minimize these costs isn't to avoid confrontation but to be really smart about ways to make sure it never, or rarely, arises.

You teach a course to managers. Why is that important to you?

I find changes in case law, legislation, and association trends fascinating, and I enjoy sharing these with our managers. I really believe it's vital that both community association attorneys and managers continue to educate ourselves on case law and the rapidly developing legislation impacting the associations we serve.

What's the biggest legislative priority in Georgia?

I'm working with a group now on a proposed homeowners' bill of rights. Part of it will likely include language to codify fees that man-

agement companies can charge for closing disclosure letters and documents. There are several groups in Georgia aiming to undercut these fees. Establishing a fair fee for this important work is our current highest priority. We're also working to finding common ground on developer transition and reserve funding requirements.

What interests you outside of association law and volunteering for CAI?

I'm passionate about travel with my family. My husband and I have traveled with our two daughters, now 16 and 13, since they were born. Now that they are teenagers, we've started taking bike tours of each city we visit. So far, we've toured Montreal, Quebec City, Brooklyn, London, Amsterdam, and Strasbourg, France. We also did a bike tour this year of our hometown Atlanta. We all agree it's the best way to learn a city. **CG**

What's your story?

If you or someone you know in the community association world has an interesting background or a good story to tell, let us know. Send ideas and recommendations to *Common Ground*, 6402 Arlington Blvd., Suite 500, Falls Church, VA 22042. Email: commonground@caionline.org.