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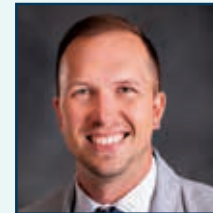
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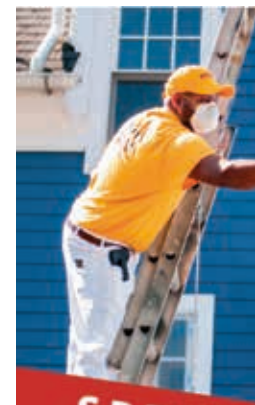
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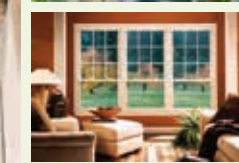
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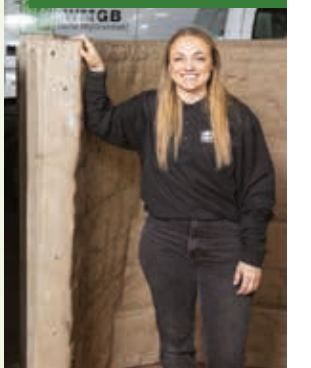
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# JIM HOCKING

SMALLEGAN REAL ESTATE



Photo by Jacob Harr with PhotoReal

Photo taken at The Ada Hotel

## BACKGROUND & GETTING STARTED

**1. How many years have you been a real estate agent?**

I started my real estate career in September of 2020, so I've been active for a little over five years. In that time, I've steadily increased both

transaction volume and price range, which has allowed me to gain experience across different property types and client needs.

**2. What inspired you to get into real estate?**

During the COVID-19 lockdown, I came across an ad for a discounted real estate licensing course. Around the same time, several friends from the music industry had already transitioned into real estate. I reached out to learn about their experiences, and those conversations helped me see it as a serious career path rather than just an experiment.

**3. How did you begin your career in real estate?**

One of those friends connected me with Mike Smallegan and the Smallegan Real Estate team. From the beginning, I approached the business with a long-term mindset and focused on learning quickly. Being part of a high-producing environment early on helped me develop strong systems, marketing habits, and transaction experience.

**4. What did you do prior to real estate?**

Before real estate, I was a full-time touring musician, playing guitar in a metal band and traveling internationally. That experience taught me discipline, resilience, and how to connect with people from different backgrounds — all skills that translate directly into client relationships and negotiations.



Photo by Caitlyn Reurink

## DISCOVERING YOUR NICHE

**1. How did you discover or develop your niche in real estate?**

I had always created real estate video content, but consistency came when I narrowed my focus to local market trends and development activity. Educational content can be difficult to make engaging, but when it relates directly to changes people can see in their own neighborhoods, it becomes more meaningful.

**2. What drew you to this specific niche?**

I've always had a personal interest in how cities evolve over time. Watching how development, infrastructure, and planning decisions shape communities naturally became part of my professional focus.

**3. What makes this niche meaningful or exciting for you?**

Development directly impacts the clients and

communities I serve. Staying informed allows me to offer more strategic guidance and help people make decisions with a longer-term perspective.

## SKILLS, EXPERTISE & STRATEGY

**1. What specialized skills or knowledge are essential for your niche?**

It requires understanding municipal processes, zoning considerations, real estate finance, construction timelines, and emerging technology trends. Just as important is the ability to simplify complex information so clients can make confident decisions.

**2. What sets your approach apart from others in the same niche?**

Consistency and depth. I make an effort to study topics thoroughly and show up regularly with clear, well-structured insights rather than reacting to headlines or short-term trends.

**3. How do you market yourself to niche-specific clients?**

I focus on making my content accessible and letting it build familiarity over time. Many clients reach out after following the insights for months or years, which creates a stronger foundation of trust from the start.

## MOTIVATION & PERSONAL INSIGHT

**1. What keeps you passionate during challenging times?**

I tend to perform well under pressure. Challenging markets or complex transactions push me to refine my systems and stay focused on delivering results.

**2. Who or what inspires your work ethic?**

My family — my kids and my fiancée. They provide perspective and motivation, and they influence how intentionally I approach both my business and my time.

**3. What is one lesson that has shaped your perspective on real estate?**

Real estate is fundamentally an advisory profession. Long-term success comes from preparation, strategy,

and trust rather than short-term sales tactics.

## BUSINESS GROWTH & FUTURE VISION

**1. What goals do you have for your business in the next year?**

My goal is to complete approximately 40 transactions or reach around \$15 million in sales volume while continuing to generate more inbound opportunities through consistent content and stronger relationships. I'm also focused on maintaining better balance as the business grows.

**2. What opportunities do you see emerging in your niche?**

Direct-to-consumer relationships are becoming stronger. Many clients now reach out already feeling informed and comfortable because they've followed my content over time.

**3. What advice would you give agents trying to establish their own niche?**

Choose a small number of clear content themes, stay disciplined, and be patient. Authority builds gradually, but consistency and focus create long-term recognition and trust.



Photo by Lydia Hildebrand

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# GINGER BAXTER

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## BACKGROUND & GETTING STARTED

**1. How many years have you been a real estate agent?**  
26 years

**2. What inspired you to get into real estate?**  
My dad. He knew I was hardworking and a self-starter, so he encouraged me to get into real estate.

**3. How did you begin your career in real estate?**  
My first deal was a commercial deal in Middleville. It was a bankruptcy, so working through that was an education by itself.

**4. What life events or challenges shaped your early career?**  
I had three small children and lived on a hobby farm, so I was never able to sit down or just relax.

## DISCOVERING YOUR NICHE

**1. How did you discover or develop your niche in real estate?**  
It just happened — the more I got into developing land, the more I learned, and the more I liked it. I find joy in creating housing for people.



**2. Was this niche intentional or did it evolve over time?**

It just evolved over time. You need to do all the things in real estate to be successful, and developing land and new construction helped balance out a steady income. I wanted to share that with others while I built a team.

**3. How did you determine this niche was the right fit for you?**  
I am very persistent, and I don't give up easily. I like the challenge of figuring out the different obstacles of each development, municipality, and such.

## SKILLS, EXPERTISE & STRATEGY

**1. What specialized skills or knowledge are essential for your niche?**  
Being well diversified and educated so you know what you can and can't

do to help clients get all their needs and wants.

**2. How do you stay informed about trends within your niche market?**  
I read and listen to a lot of other agents around the country. I have a business coach who also helps advise me on current trends.

**3. What sets your approach apart from others in the same niche?**  
I am very honest, and I won't tell someone something that isn't possible just to make them happy at the time or get them to sign a contract.

## MOTIVATION & PERSONAL INSIGHT

**1. What motivates you most about working in your niche?**  
Building the neighborhood for the community.

**2. Who or what inspires your work ethic?**

My father and my horse trainer Mary Luther are definitely two people who have taught me what work ethic looks like and pushed me to do it right alongside them. Both of them taught me that failing is just part of it — it's not a bad thing, just part of it. You learn the most when you fail.

**3. What is one lesson that has shaped your perspective on real estate?**  
Since I developed a team, watching my teammates succeed. It's very important to me.

## BUSINESS GROWTH & FUTURE VISION

**1. How do you plan to grow or deepen your niche expertise?**

I plan on continuing to develop land for a while yet.

**2. What opportunities do you see emerging in your niche?**  
Just more opportunities to develop land. As an agricultural girl first and foremost, I don't target active farm land to develop, so I try to stay away from being involved with those projects.

**3. What advice would you give agents trying to establish their own niche?**  
Be diligent, be consistent, come up with a plan, and be disciplined.



# JORDAN SCHAEFER

PHOTOS BY JACOB HARR  
WITH PHOTOREAL

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AT THE ADA HOTEL



## HELLO HOMES GR

### BACKGROUND & GETTING STARTED

**1. How many years have you been a real estate agent?**  
2 years

**2. What inspired you to get into real estate?**  
I purchased my first house at a young age. It wasn't the smartest decision at the time, but it taught me a lot. I gained a ton of equity, and I turned it into a rental. It really opened my eyes to the opportunities with real estate investing.

**3. How did your career in real estate begin?**  
I was burnt out from working corporate jobs and wanted the flexibility and freedom to have my own schedule. Fortunately, I knew a good broker who was willing to take me on as a new agent.

**4. What hobbies or interests do you enjoy outside of real estate?**  
Outside of real estate, my wife and I recently opened a coworking space in Cascade called The Addition. It has been so rewarding operating that and getting the opportunity to meet new people every day.

When I am not working, you can find me spending time with my kids, coaching



Photo by The MittenTog

their soccer teams, watching soccer, hockey or football, and enjoying live music. I also love to cook and travel!

### DISCOVERING YOUR NICHE

**1. How did you discover or develop your niche in real estate?**  
My niche really came from doing the work myself first. I wasn't just selling investment properties: I was buying them, operating short-term rentals, and learning the hard lessons along the way. Once people realized I understood both sides of the equation, the niche kind of chose me.

**2. What drew you to this specific niche?**  
I like the strategy behind it. Investment properties aren't emotional purchases: They're decision-driven. I enjoy helping clients analyze numbers, reduce risk, and make smart long-term moves that fit their goals.

**3. How did you determine this niche was the right fit for you?**

Clients started coming back and referring others, specifically because of my knowledge and experience. When your clients trust you with repeat purchases and bigger decisions, that's a pretty good sign you're in the right lane.

### SKILLS, EXPERTISE & STRATEGY

**1. How do you stay informed about trends within your niche market?**  
I track local regulations, market shifts, and interest



rates, but I also pay attention to what's actually happening with bookings, pricing, and demand, because I'm actively operating properties myself and always looking for new opportunities for my clients.

**2. How do you market yourself to niche-specific clients?**  
I focus on educating clients and maintaining transparency. I share real examples, real numbers, and real outcomes. Investors don't want empty promises: They want clarity and someone they can trust. My goal is to be that person for prospective clients.

**3. What strategies have contributed most to your success?**  
Consistency and trust. I don't chase every deal. I focus on doing good work, staying available, and building long-term relationships instead of one-time transactions.

### MOTIVATION & PERSONAL INSIGHT

**1. What part of your work brings you the most fulfillment?**

Seeing clients build momentum by buying their second or third property, or realizing they can create income streams they didn't think were possible.

**2. What keeps you passionate during challenging times?**  
Remembering that real estate is a long game. Markets change, but good fundamentals and smart strategy always matter.

**3. What is one lesson that has shaped your perspective on real estate?**  
Not every deal is a good deal, and walking away can be just as valuable as closing.

### BUSINESS GROWTH & FUTURE VISION


**1. What goals do you have for your business in the next year?**  
I want to deepen my work with serious investors and continue growing my own investment portfolio alongside my clients.

**2. What challenges do you anticipate, and how will you overcome them?**  
Regulation and affordability will continue to be challenges. The answer is staying educated, being proactive, and helping clients adapt instead of reacting.


**3. What advice would you give agents trying to establish their own niche?**  
Don't force it. Follow what you're genuinely interested in and become really good at it.

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## Thank You for Attending our **Toast to the Top!**

Thank you for joining us at Noco Provisions as we celebrated and toasted the top real estate agents in Grand Rapids! We are incredibly proud of your dedication and hard work throughout the year — each of you has truly earned your place among our top producers.

The evening was filled with exceptional food and drinks, generously provided by our host and sponsor, **Noco Provisions**. They also enhanced the atmosphere with beautiful floral décor and

contributed a fun raffle prize. Guests enjoyed the opportunity to connect with fellow agents and our valued preferred partners in an intimate, private setting. Chelsea Dubay from 616 Realty said she enjoyed “mingling with top producing agents she had never met.”

We wrapped up the night with exciting raffle prizes courtesy of **Preferred Rate**, our Support Sponsor, along with Hyssop Floral Design Studio and Graze Craze.

This memorable event wouldn't have been possible without the talents of photographer **Jacob Harr** with **PhotoReal** and videographer **Brian McDonald** with **Brian McDonald Photography**.

We look forward to seeing you at our next event on Wednesday, May 6, at The Atrium at Uccello's in downtown Grand Rapids. Tickets are available now at [grrpevents.com](http://grrpevents.com)!



To sponsor a future event, email [grrproducers@n2co.com](mailto:grrproducers@n2co.com).





# 2025

## BY THE NUMBERS

HERE'S WHAT THE TOP AGENTS IN GRAND RAPIDS SOLD IN 2025



**\$4,493,856,286**  
SALES VOLUME



**10,873**  
TOTAL TRANSACTIONS



**36**  
AVERAGE TRANSACTIONS PER AGENT



**\$14,979,521**  
AVERAGE SALES VOLUME PER AGENT



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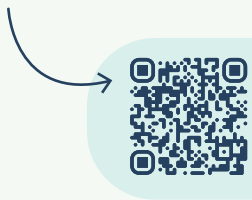
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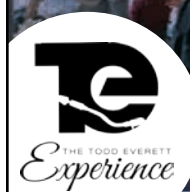
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