

# mobility™

## The Global Corporate Housing Shortage

The causes, impacts, and path forward

worldwideerc.org



WORLDWIDE ERC®

Navigating Housing Challenges

A CONVERSATION WITH KATHY CONNELLY

Preserving Mobility Program Knowledge

INVEST IN TIME AND RESOURCES TO GET IT RIGHT

Employee and Family Assistance Services

THE ROLE OF WELL-BEING IN A MOVE'S SUCCESS



aires OnPoint<sup>SM</sup>

Transferees want a choice over their mobility benefit selection. Global mobility teams want to celebrate the individual while ensuring an equitable mobility program. Aires wants to help keep everyone OnPoint.

Aires OnPoint is a points-based product that accomplishes both employee and global mobility team goals.



# GLOBAL REACH.

# PERSONAL TOUCH.

No matter how far you go, it's the people who get you there. CapRelo's worldwide relocation expertise combined with unmatched local networks enable us to deliver seamless mobility solutions. Serving 160 countries with countless local contacts, real people with real care make CapRelo the only real choice.

The logo for CapRelo, featuring the word "CapRelo" in a white, sans-serif font. A white arrow points from the top of the letter "a" to the top of the letter "r".

[caprelo.com](https://caprelo.com)



### ***The Global Corporate Housing Shortage***

BY ALEXA SCHLOSSER

The global housing shortage, exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly impacts corporate housing, causing challenges for businesses, employees, and industries.

ISSUE 3 2023

# Contents



24

### ***Navigating Housing Challenges in Employee Relocation***

BY ALEXA SCHLOSSER

A conversation with Kathy Connelly, chief operating officer of Berkshire Hathaway Home Services.

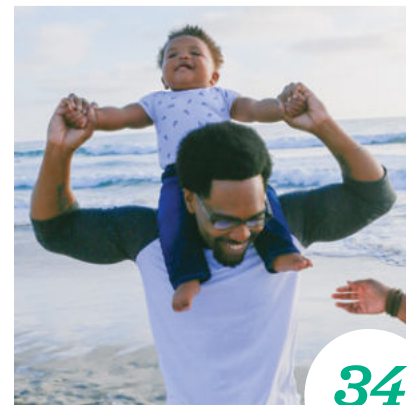


30

### ***The Importance of Preserving Mobility Program Knowledge***

BY DAVID BRADSTREET

Capturing, documenting, and sharing knowledge isn't an easy task, particularly when it comes to the complexities of global talent mobility.



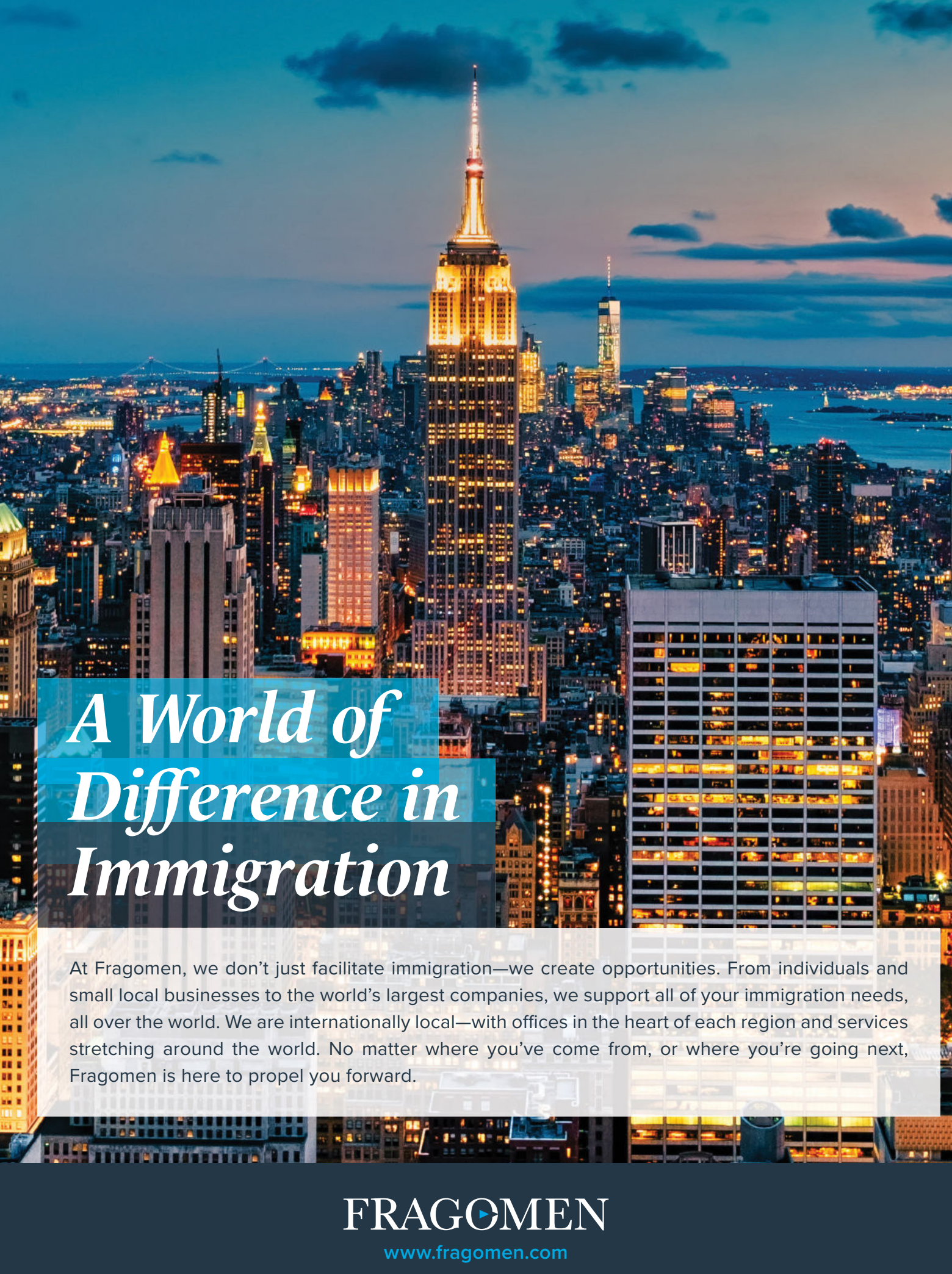
34

### ***The Evolution of Employee and Family Assistance Services***

BY LAUREN HERRING, AMY

PARRENT, AND LYNN WAGNER

The crucial role the well-being of accompanying family plays in the success of a move.



# *A World of Difference in Immigration*

At Fragomen, we don't just facilitate immigration—we create opportunities. From individuals and small local businesses to the world's largest companies, we support all of your immigration needs, all over the world. We are internationally local—with offices in the heart of each region and services stretching around the world. No matter where you've come from, or where you're going next, Fragomen is here to propel you forward.

**FRAGOMEN**

[www.fragomen.com](http://www.fragomen.com)



**42**  
**Destination Profiles**  
Singapore and São Paulo  
BY BETHANY LARRAÑAGA

**06**  
**Events Calendar**

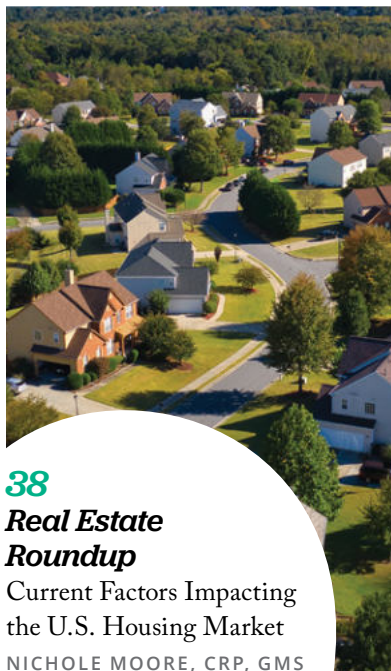
**08**  
**Perceptions**  
Reaching New Heights

**10**  
**Around the Worldwide ERC®**  
Young Professionals

**12**  
**Public Policy**  
Florida Law Illustrates Growing Complexity of Relocating International Transferees

**16**  
**The Numbers**  
Feelings About Corporate-Sponsored Moves

**41**  
**Advertiser's Index**



**38**  
**Real Estate Roundup**  
Current Factors Impacting the U.S. Housing Market  
NICHOLE MOORE, CRP, GMS

**48**  
**Mobility Matters**  
Unique Features of Global Real Estate  
BY BETHANY LARRAÑAGA

# Mobility

Issue 3 2023 | Vol. 44 No. 3

## Worldwide ERC® Editorial/Design/Media Sales

**Alexa Schlosser**  
SENIOR CONTENT MANAGER  
aschlosser@worldwideerc.org

**Lauren Liacouras**  
CONTENT MANAGER

**Bethany Larrañaga**  
SENIOR CONTENT ASSOCIATE

**Steve Biernacki**  
ART DIRECTOR

**Sky Wang**  
SALES DIRECTOR  
swang@worldwideerc.org

**Ian Allen**  
SENIOR ACCOUNT ASSOCIATE  
iallen@worldwideerc.org

## About Worldwide ERC®

Worldwide ERC® is the workforce mobility association for professionals who oversee, manage, or support U.S. domestic and international employee transfers. The organization was founded in 1964 to help members overcome the challenges of workforce mobility.

## Our Purpose

We empower mobile people through meaningful connections, unbiased information, inspired ideas, and solutions.



# ***Become a Certified Relocation Professional (CRP®)***



## ***Do You Want to Earn Your CRP in 2023?***

The fall exam will be offered at hundreds of designated testing centers worldwide AND via live, online proctoring (you can take the exam at home!).

The fall 2023 examination dates are 13 November 2023 through 8 December 2023.

The Certified Relocation Professional® is a highly regarded competency-based designation program recommended for all mobility professionals primarily engaged in corporate/employee mobility within the United States.

By adding the CRP® designation to their name, recipients are recognized for:

- Demonstrating a comprehensive knowledge of the principles and practices of U.S. employee relocation across all facets of the industry
- Dedication to continuing education in this specialized field

***Visit  
[worldwideerc.org/crp-detail](https://worldwideerc.org/crp-detail)  
to learn more!***

# EVENTS Calendar

October  
2023

## Global Workforce Symposium 2023

17-20 OCTOBER

Boston, Massachusetts

[worldwideerc.org/events-conferences](http://worldwideerc.org/events-conferences)

## Recent Webinars

### Navigating the Evolving Landscape Within the Workforce Mobility Industry

Leaders from Worldwide ERC®'s compliance, immigration, North American real estate and mortgage, and tax policy forums speak about the evolving state of the workforce mobility industry and how public policy issues in the U.S. and around the world could impact the movement of employees, industry processes, and evolving technologies. During the webinar, attendees will receive updates on major industry policy initiatives, including the moving tax expense deduction reinstatement, Moving Americans Privacy Protection Act, SECURE Notarization Act, and potential regulatory changes related to immigration and sustainability.

### Expat Car Services – How to Manage Assignees' Global Transportation Needs

Ninety-nine percent of assignees will need car service in their new location. This session, presented by the CEO of ExpatRide International, Jesper Lovendahl, explains how to create and manage a global transportation plan. He discusses the challenges international assignees face in new locations, how to overcome these, and how you can manage and centralize all your global transportation expenses. The session covers transportation needs for both short and long-term assignments. Services explained during the session: airport transfer, expat car lease, car rental, daily chauffeur service, bus and coach service, and armored vehicles.

All webinars can be found at [worldwideerc.org/events-webinars](http://worldwideerc.org/events-webinars).

## Executive Committee

### CHAIR

**Anupam Singhal**

TOPIA INC., SOUTH LAKE, TEXAS, USA

### CHAIR-ELECT

**Ashli Aldrich**

NETFLIX, LOS GATOS, CALIFORNIA, USA

### VICE CHAIR - FINANCE

**Mark J. Burchell, SGMS**

STERLING LEXICON, JACKSONVILLE, FLORIDA, USA

### VICE CHAIR – SERVICE PROVIDER MEMBERSHIP

**Kathy Connelly**

BERKSHIRE HATHAWAY HOMESERVICES GEORGIA PROPERTIES, ROSWELL, GEORGIA USA

### VICE CHAIR – CORPORATE MEMBERSHIP

**Simon Mason**

WRITER RELOCATIONS®, DUBAI, UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

## Board of Directors

### Deb Convery

STRIPE, PORTLAND, OREGON, USA

### Tanya Mariottini

TWILIO INC., SEATTLE, WASHINGTON, USA

### Michelle Moore, CPA, MPA, CGMA

NEI GLOBAL RELOCATION, OMAHA, NEBRASKA, USA

### David Pascoe

CARTUS, UNITED KINGDOM

### Benny Tan

ALTAIR GLOBAL, APAC, SINGAPORE

### Eluned Wallace

THE WALT DISNEY COMPANY, UNITED KINGDOM

### Kelly West

THE MILESWEST GROUP, DENVER, COLORADO, USA

## Ex-Officio Directors

### IMMEDIATE PAST CHAIRMAN

**Tyler Reynolds**

EQUUS SOFTWARE LLC, DENVER, COLORADO, USA

### CHAIR, FOUNDATION FOR WORKFORCE MOBILITY

**Shannon Brown**

GREATER MINNEAPOLIS ST. PAUL AREA, MINNESOTA, USA

*Mobility* (ISSN 0195-8194) is published quarterly by Worldwide ERC®, 2001 K Street NW, 3rd Floor North, Washington, DC 20006, United States, 1-703-842-3400. *Mobility* examines key issues affecting the global mobility workforce for the benefit of employers and firms or individuals providing specific services to relocated employees and their families. The opinions expressed in *Mobility* are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of Worldwide ERC®. *Mobility* is printed in the United States of America. Periodical postage paid at Washington, D.C., and additional mailing offices. Worldwide ERC® members receive one annual subscription with their membership dues. Subscriptions are available to both members and nonmembers at \$48 each per year. ©2023 by Worldwide ERC®. All rights reserved. Neither all nor part of the contents published herein may be reproduced in any form without written permission from Worldwide ERC®.

## Read all about it!

ABOUT WHAT? THAT'S OUR QUESTION FOR YOU! SEND YOUR SUGGESTIONS FOR TOPICS YOU'D LIKE TO READ ABOUT IN *MOBILITY* TO [MOBILITY@WORLDWIDEERC.ORG](mailto:MOBILITY@WORLDWIDEERC.ORG).



WORLDWIDE ERC®

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to:

*Mobility*, Worldwide ERC®

2001 K Street NW, 3rd Floor North, Washington, DC 20006, United States, 1-703-842-3400



# FULL SPEED AHEAD

Stewart Title Relocation Services is committed to moving your business forward. We're the single source for all your relocation title and closing needs. Stewart has the most experienced team of relocation title professionals to manage even the most complex transactions. We offer customized services to help streamline your business and we never stop investing in solutions.

Keep your business moving forward with Stewart.



We look forward to seeing you at the Worldwide ERC® 2023 Global Workforce Symposium in Boston this October. Join us at the coffee cart located just outside of the networking lounge for gourmet coffee and a fun giveaway.

[stewart.com/mobility23](https://stewart.com/mobility23)



## Reaching New Heights

*Over the course* of this year, Worldwide ERC® has made great progress in delivering on our direction for the future. We're focused on providing enhanced benefits to our members and sponsors to help them succeed in this competitive industry, which we're accomplishing by concentrating on key areas like events, content, corporate engagement, brand enhancement, and technology upgrades. We aim to elevate Worldwide ERC to new heights and better serve our community.

Our content offerings, including *Mobility* magazine, the *Mobility Minute* e-newsletter, and our Mobility News blog, are a big part of that service. Keeping members informed about current issues affecting the mobility space, as well as sharing trends, voices from industry leaders, and innovative solutions, is a crucial role of the organization.

We know this because we asked you. Earlier this year, we distributed a content survey to gauge the value of our various content mediums and delivery mechanisms and to learn which topics you want to read about. We're using the results of that survey to inform our existing processes and focus on what you're looking for, which includes corporate mobility program practices and policies; the future of workforce mobility; workforce trends; technology; data privacy; immigration; and more.

You also told us that you prefer to read content in the newsletter and blog, for both accessibility and sustainability reasons. We listened and are responding by moving to a digital-only distribution method. As part of that change, we are working on a future content strategy that provides an enhanced reading experience, offering interactive features, multimedia content, and a broader online presence to engage our readership.

In the meantime, please enjoy this issue of the magazine, which covers several important topics, including the global



corporate housing shortage, the importance of preserving mobility program knowledge, the evolution of employee and family assistance services, and more.

We are passionate about our members and this industry, and everything we do is driven by a desire to enhance your experience and support your success in talent mobility. Together with our board leadership, dedicated committees, and staff, we look forward to achieving new milestones and creating a stronger, more vibrant Worldwide ERC community.

I look forward to seeing you at the Global Workforce Symposium in Boston on October 17-20!

**Anupam Singhal**  
Chair, Worldwide ERC®



We are passionate about our members and this industry, and everything we do is driven by a desire to enhance your experience and support your success in talent mobility.



WORLDWIDE ERC®

# *Give Worldwide ERC® membership a try today!*



As the world changes, people count on you to make things happen. Our industry demands a blend of skills and expertise like no other, from analytical to strategic to compassionate to creative.

Worldwide ERC® gives you the content you need, a community of experts, virtual events that matter, advocacy, a marketplace, and connections that propel you - and the people who count on you - to succeed!



Become part of the world's premier association of global mobility professionals. Now is the time to make your work easier, smarter, better, and more meaningful.

**Try us today.**

Visit [worldwideerc.org/membership](https://worldwideerc.org/membership) today to explore our membership types



# The State of Housing

This issue's cover story is focused on the causes and impacts of the global corporate housing shortage. So, we asked members of the Young Professionals Task Force: **What is your perspective on the current state of housing in the U.S. and globally (e.g., housing shortage, rising interest rates, etc.)? What do you think employers can do to incentivize relocation assignments in these times?**



Employers will have to revise their home sale program to keep up with the changing housing market in the United States.

I live in Cleveland, Ohio, and the real estate market here is vastly different from the markets in Los Angeles,

Phoenix, Austin, and other large metropolitan areas. Not only because Cleveland is a mid-size market compared to Los Angeles and Phoenix, but because the housing market differs across the country due to many variables. Variables like migration trends, cost of living, job growth, state government policy, and more. For example, let's take a quick two-hour drive south on Interstate 71 from Cleveland

to Columbus. Experts predict Central Ohio (Columbus) will have a 400,000-home deficit.

Experts suggest the \$20 billion investment itself by Intel will generate tens of thousands of new jobs across Ohio. Not only will these new jobs be Intel employees but contractors for building the two plants, housing construction workers, and infrastructure workers building new schools, parks, transportation, sewers, and more. New employees of Intel and the residual industries bringing in employees will arrive with families looking to set up camp looking to make Central Ohio home.

The current state of the housing market in the United States is a complex problem. Interest rates are currently at 7%, compared with 2.9% two years ago. The United States is suffering from a shortage of housing that could be as high as 3 million units, according to some estimates. This deficit is a direct result of the 2008 housing crash, causing home

“

The current state of the housing market in the United States is a complex problem. Interest rates are currently at 7%, compared with 2.9% two years ago.





When looking at policies, it is my belief that employers need to be careful when it comes to cost reductions and removing key benefits from their policies. Sure, it is easy to remove high-cost programs such as guaranteed buyouts to reduce costs; the problem is that when you do, it becomes more difficult to incentivize the employee to move.

builders to get knocked out of business. Add in the largest generation, millennials, coming to the age of starting a family and buying homes, and here we are. Not to mention the baby boomers are still the generation with the largest home ownership.

All these variables are causing a housing shortage, making home ownership more expensive in many markets. With the nation's housing deficit growing substantially month after month from job growth and migration trends, employers in these areas should get creative with home sale programs for their employees who are facing major trouble finding housing. I believe that the housing market will not decline significantly and will stay strong, with a high buyer demand, and the inflated housing cost is unlikely to subside anytime soon.

**GUS ARMBRUSTER**

*Business Development Manager, Armbruster Moving & Storage*



While I do think that the housing market was perhaps one of the areas of the economy that was hit the hardest by interest rate hikes, it seems to be showing signs of stabilizing. If you look at recent trends and data, it will show that

home values are no longer declining, and we are

starting to see a rise in home building activity. This is one of the largest changes in trends that we are seeing in 2023 compared to 2022. It seems that people are starting to adjust to the higher interest rates and reconsidering their requirements for higher-priced home values.

Personally, I feel there needs to be more of an understanding that when we saw interest rates go down to 2.65% in January of 2021, it was abnormal. Just as it was not normal when they hit 18.63% back in October of 1981. However, what we are seeing today is normal for your average rates.

When looking at policies, it is my belief that employers need to be careful when it comes to cost reductions and removing key benefits from their policies. Sure, it is easy to remove high-cost programs such as guaranteed buyouts to reduce costs; the problem is that when you do, it becomes more difficult to incentivize the employee to move. Now more than ever it is extremely important for those programs to stay intact so that when companies do find the right talent and they need to be relocated, the employer can get them to where they need to be efficiently. The target around relocation should ultimately be focused on the productivity of the employees. This means paying a little extra for certain specialties such as DSP services to help with utility setup, extended housing to allow them to find the right home, and other amenities, which is a very small price to pay to provide peace of mind to an employee dealing with the stressors of moving.

**JOHN VERRELLS**

*Chief Revenue Officer, Corporate Living*

## Florida Law Illustrates Growing Complexity of Relocating International Transferees

BY JAY HERSHMAN, CATHLEEN PODELL, AND PATRICK MCMANAMY



**W**ith a growing number of states passing or proposing legislation prohibiting the purchase of real estate (in some cases primary residences) by citizens of certain foreign countries, incoming transferees and the mobility professionals who support them face compliance challenges that can have a significant impact on the relocation process.

While the intent of many of these laws is to protect critical infrastructure like ports, power plants, and military bases from hostile governments, the laws have the potential to impact the ability of certain individuals to purchase property.

On 1 July, a Florida law went into effect prohibiting citizens from “foreign countries of concern,”

including those from Russia, Iran, North Korea, Cuba, Venezuela, and Syria, from purchasing real property within 10 miles of a military installation or “critical infrastructure.”

The law further prohibits foreign nationals from China from purchasing real property except in the case of one residential property up to 2 acres in size, provided it’s not located within 5 miles of a military installation. Persons or entities associated with the People’s Republic of China that owned property prior to the law going into effect may continue to own the property but must register with the Department of Economic Opportunity before the end of the year. The Florida law also requires U.S. citizens to provide an affidavit signed under penalty of perjury attesting that the buyer is



not prevented from buying the real estate due to the new law.

Further adding to the compliance risk for brokers, who will ultimately be the individuals reviewing the documentation and the affidavit, knowingly selling property in violation of the act would be considered a misdemeanor.

A lawsuit challenging the law was filed on 22 May arguing that it imposes discriminatory prohibitions on the ownership and purchase of real estate based on race, ethnicity, and national origin.

Similar laws have been passed or proposed in Virginia, North Dakota, Georgia, and Texas, among others, and the momentum behind them seems unlikely to wane before next year's legislative sessions.

“

While the intent of many of these laws is to protect critical infrastructure like ports, power plants, and military bases from hostile governments, the laws have the potential to impact the ability of certain individuals to purchase property.

These laws provide a significant burden on relocation professionals to comply with both the new laws as well as existing fair housing laws.

#### **FHFA CHANGES TO UPFRONT PRICING FOR SINGLE-FAMILY HOMES**

On a related note, fair lending focus and access to homeownership has been a frequent headline in the mortgage lending arena with both government and industry organizations taking action to support underserved communities.

In January, the Federal Housing Finance Agency (FHFA) announced several changes to the upfront pricing of loans for single-family homes financed through government-sponsored enterprises Fannie Mae (FNMA) and Freddie Mac (FHLMC) that



In addition to changes made this year to both agency and FHA loans, mortgage lenders are launching and expanding special purpose credit programs (SPCP) to address the barriers of access to credit and to make a more direct impact on communities that have been underserved.

went into effect for loan deliveries as of 1 May 2023.<sup>1</sup> The changes revise the matrices of upfront fees, or loan level price adjusters, for purchase, rate-term refinance, and cash-out refinance loans, and supports a more mission-oriented focus of the FHFA “ensuring that the regulated entities meet their mission to support the responsible broadening of access to affordable housing financing nationwide, while promoting market stability and liquidity.”<sup>2</sup>

A loan level price adjuster for loans made by borrowers with a debt-to-income ratio greater than 40% was initially postponed to 1 August 2023 but was ultimately rescinded by the FHFA after the mortgage lending community expressed concerns about the ability to practically apply the adjuster in the course of lending operations. Per FNMA Lender Letter LL-2023-01, the new pricing framework is designed to further the agency’s effort to support underserved communities, create a more level playing field for lenders, and ensure market liquidity and performance. The revised pricing grids include the base price adjusters for credit score and loan-to-value as well as additional adjusters for other loan attributes.

In February of this year, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development released Fact Sheet HUD 23-040 announcing the reduction of the mortgage insurance premium charged to

customers who finance their home via a Federal Housing Administration (FHA) loan. The fact sheet noted that the estimated savings resulting from the reduction of mortgage insurance will be approximately \$800 annually and will hopefully help “make homeownership a reality for more Americans.”<sup>3</sup>

In addition to changes made this year to both agency and FHA loans, mortgage lenders are launching and expanding special purpose credit programs (SPCP) to address the barriers of access to credit and to make a more direct impact on communities that have been underserved. In June 2022, the Mortgage Bankers Association and National Fair Housing Alliance launched a toolkit<sup>4</sup> to assist lenders in the development of an SPCP in an effort to support bringing these programs to market.

Worldwide ERC® and the Real Estate and Mortgage Forum will continue to provide updates on these topics as they develop. *m*

**Jay Hershman** is a senior partner at Ballie & Hershman and past chair of the Worldwide ERC® Real Estate and Mortgage Forum. **Cathleen Podell** is the vice chair of the Worldwide ERC® Real Estate and Mortgage Forum. **Patrick McManamy** is a partner at McManamy McLeod Heller LLC and the chair of the Worldwide ERC® Real Estate and Mortgage Forum.

1. FHFA News Release 1/19/23 “FHFA Announces Updates to the Enterprises’ Single-Family Pricing Framework”.  
2. FHFA 2022 Housing Mission Report  
3. U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Fact Sheet HUD 23-040 released 2/22/23  
4. www.spcptoolkit.com



# ***Become a Global Mobility Specialist (GMS®)***



***Stand out in the field of global mobility as a leader and an expert!***

GMS® candidates must complete six training modules on the essential components of global workforce mobility and intercultural management skills and pass a comprehensive online examination based on the materials presented in the courses.

**PRICING:**  
**Members: USD\$1,250**  
**Nonmembers: USD\$1,500**

**Visit [worldwideerc.org/gms-detail](http://worldwideerc.org/gms-detail) for more information!**

# The Numbers

## How Do Transferees Actually Feel About Corporate-Sponsored Moves?

*IMPACT Group's third edition* of the People Perspective on Relocation survey focuses on people's personal experiences during their recent corporate-sponsored moves.

# 41%

were uncomfortable or very uncomfortable sharing personal challenges related to the move with their manager/HR.

# 56%

of respondents experienced emotional or personal challenges that lasted three months or longer following the move.



# 70%

would have benefited from additional assistance to help settle in and feel at home again.

# 20%

experienced emotional challenges during or after the move that had a significant or very significant effect on their ability to focus on their new role.



Employees and families were

**4x**

more likely to consider their relocation a success if family support services were utilized.

**25%**

of respondents ranked their feelings of loneliness as high or medium before the move.

After the move,

**47%**

ranked it high or medium.

**3 out of 5**  
+  
**1 out of 5**

people said the emotional challenges of moving affected their ability to focus on work.

people said the effect was significant or very significant.



# THE GLOBAL CORPORATE HOUSING SHORTAGE

The global housing shortage, stemming from factors like the 2008 financial crisis and exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly impacts corporate housing, causing challenges for businesses, employees, and industries. Creative solutions, technology, and partnerships emerge as vital tools in addressing the shortage and adapting to the changing landscape, emphasizing the importance of flexibility and collaboration in navigating these challenges for the future of corporate housing.

By Alexa Schlosser



**A**

cross the globe, there is a housing shortage. The causes can be linked back to the 2008 financial crisis, where a shortage of land, lending, labor, and materials began, and the COVID-19 pandemic only made things worse. In the United States alone, the National Association of Realtors has reported a shortage of between 5.5 and 6.8 million units.

A global housing shortage affects potential homebuyers and renters, of course, but it also affects employee relocation efforts in the mobility space.

### **Breaking Down the Causes**

COVID-19 made the already short supply of housing worse as buyers and renters gobbled up homes at low interest rates and pandemic-related supply chain challenges inhibited new construction.

“The pandemic caused a sharp decline in corporate travel and relocation activity, which led to a decrease in the supply of corporate housing,” says Ryn Jarrett, CCHP, vice president of strategic partnerships at Travelers Haven and board member of the Corporate Housing Providers Association (CHPA). “As the economy has recovered, demand for corporate housing has rebounded, but the supply has not kept pace.”

Carrie Hartman, chief revenue officer at RESIDE Worldwide, says that, because of the



The shortage can also lead to compliance issues, as businesses may not be able to provide suitable temporary housing for their employees. This can lead to legal problems and fines.

pandemic, “a lot of construction projects were on hold for multiple years, so everything is 24 to 36 months behind schedule.”

Additionally, although the world has opened back up and corporate travel is able to return, “it has been butting up against the lack of rotational inventory, and the real estate development industry as a whole being behind by two years has created a perfect storm,” Hartman says.

The supply chain challenges of the pandemic were certainly a factor in limiting new construction, but rising land and construction costs and other regulatory hurdles have been a challenge for the corporate housing market for a while.

“Government regulations can sometimes make it difficult to build and rent corporate housing,” Jarrett says. “For example, some governments have zoning restrictions that limit the number of corporate housing units that can be built in a particular area.”

Other factors affecting the shortage include the rise of remote work, which has lessened demand for temporary housing in traditional corporate markets; the increasing cost of living, which has made it more expensive to build and rent corporate housing; and the shortage of skilled labor in the construction industry, which has made it more difficult to build new corporate housing units.

### How Does the Shortage Impact Employees and Businesses?

The impact of the corporate housing shortage on businesses and employees is significant, Jarrett says. It can make it harder to attract and retain talent, as employees may be reluctant to relocate if they can't find suitable temporary housing. “The shortage can also lead to increased costs for businesses, as they may have to pay higher rates for corporate housing or offer longer-term leases,” Jarrett says.

Craig Partin, CRP, GMS, CCHP, chief revenue officer at Suite Home and CHPA board member, is feeling the squeeze, too. “We get rent increases from properties now, on a year-over-year basis, that can be anywhere from 10-13%. It's pushing our pricing and our operating costs up,” he says.

The shortage can also lead to compliance issues, Jarrett says, as businesses may not be able to provide suitable temporary housing for their employees. This can lead to legal problems and fines.

Here are some specific examples of how business operations can be affected:

- A company that relocates its employees to a new city may have to pay higher rates for corporate housing due to the shortage.
- A company that requires temporary housing for its employees may have to offer longer-term leases due to the shortage.
- A company that has a poor reputation for providing temporary housing may have difficulty attracting and retaining talent.
- A company that does not provide suitable temporary housing for its employees may be in violation of labor laws.

For employees specifically, the corporate housing shortage can have a significant impact on those who need temporary accommodation during business travel or relocation. Here are some of the ways Jarrett says the shortage can impact employees:

- **Increased stress and anxiety:** The shortage can lead to increased stress and anxiety for employees, as they may be worried about finding suitable temporary housing. This can lead to difficulty sleeping, difficulty concentrating, and other health problems.
- **Financial hardship:** The shortage can also lead to financial hardship for employees, as they may have to pay higher rates for temporary housing



or stay in less desirable accommodations. This can put a strain on their finances and make it difficult to save for the future.

- **Impact on work-life balance:** The shortage can also impact work-life balance for employees, as they may have to spend more time and energy finding temporary housing. This can lead to burnout and make it difficult to relax and recharge.
- **Impact on relationships:** The shortage can also impact relationships for employees, as they may have to spend less time with their family and friends. This can lead to feelings of isolation and loneliness.
- **Impact on career progression:** The shortage can also impact career progression for employees, as they may be reluctant to relocate if they cannot find suitable temporary housing. This can make it difficult to advance their careers and reach their full potential.

### **The Effect on Specific Regions and Industries**

There are specific regions and cities that are particularly affected by the corporate housing shortage. These regions and cities tend to be major economic hubs with high demand for temporary housing, Jarrett says. The U.S. and

Canada are among the most highly affected due to the economy, high cost of living, and lack of new construction, but Europe and Asia are also experiencing the shortage. New York City, San Francisco, London, and Tokyo are particularly highly affected, Jarrett says.

Certain industries are also being hit harder by the corporate housing shortage than others. Tech companies, for one, are often located in high-cost areas, such as Silicon Valley and Seattle. “As a result,” Jarrett says, “there is a high demand for corporate housing in these areas, which can lead to higher prices and longer wait times.”

The health care industry is also highly affected. “Health care companies often need to relocate employees to different locations, such as hospitals and clinics. As a result, there is a high demand for corporate housing in these areas,” Jarrett says.

The construction industry is also highly affected for those same reasons.

### **Addressing the Shortage**

The mobility industry can’t do much to change the realities of the housing market, but there are ways to mitigate the impact of the shortage. There are several emerging trends and



innovative solutions in the corporate housing industry that are addressing the issue.

Co-living, for example, is a new trend in corporate housing that involves a shared housing unit with other professionals. “This is a more affordable option than traditional corporate housing, and it can also be a great way to meet new people and build relationships,” Jarrett says.

Technology is also being used to address the shortage, as well as the development of new housing models. For example, some companies are developing micro-apartments that are designed to be more affordable and efficient, Jarrett says.

A trend Hartman is seeing, which she says began in the Asia-Pacific and the Europe, Middle East, and Africa regions, is the rise of apartment hotels, or aparthotels. “A reason why short-term rentals like Airbnbs don’t always work is because there are city and county restrictions, so we’re limited to what cities we can operate,” she says. Aparthotels, however, can provide affordable and standardized corporate housing. “It’s almost like the hotel industry and the corporate housing industry are finally understanding what has

worked in Europe and Asia for so long, and it is a workable and viable solution in the U.S.”

Hartman says partnerships like these are a good sign for the industry. “Sometimes deprivation breeds innovation, and this shortage that’s happened has really expanded the palate and the appetite for these industries to cross into each other’s lanes,” she says.

Partin also believes partnerships have been key to addressing the corporate housing shortage. “Let’s say you’re a provider headquartered in New York City. If you’re in a busy period, and you don’t have enough apartments for one of your clients, you might call a competitor down the street and use one of their units on a wholesale basis,” he says. “The shortage has created, out of a negative, a bit of a positive in the sense that it’s made the industry even more partner-centric.”

### **Looking into the Future**

The future of the corporate housing market is uncertain, but it is clear that the current shortage is a major challenge and is likely to persist for the foreseeable future, Jarrett says. He believes the



market will become more competitive, specialized, and global, and businesses and individuals should be prepared to face these challenges. His advice is to be proactive, flexible, and willing to compromise.

Hartman thinks the changes the industry is seeing in response to the global corporate housing shortage—including increased flexibility and diversification—will become the new normal because it’s more sustainable. “During COVID-19,” she says, “you saw that some of the stalwarts of the corporate housing industry didn’t survive. When you have a large inventory that you can’t multipurpose, you can’t use it in a flex capacity. If the property only fits a certain profile, it becomes a large cost center that you can’t sustain.”

Corporate housing has operated the same way for a while, she says, and COVID-19 made businesses “figure out different ways to survive.”

Adapting is not only necessary but, ultimately, good for the industry in the face of unpredictable headwinds. As the housing crisis persists, innovative approaches, partnerships, and adaptability will be essential strategies to navigate these uncharted waters, emphasizing the need for

“

Hartman thinks the changes the industry is seeing in response to the global corporate housing shortage will become the new normal because it’s more sustainable.

a collaborative and forward-looking mindset to address the ongoing complexities of the corporate housing landscape. *m*

-----  
**Alexa Schlosser** is a senior content manager for Worldwide ERC®’s publications.

## **Become a Global Mobility Specialist (GMS®)**



## **Stand out in the field of global mobility as a leader and an expert!**

GMS® candidates must complete three training modules on the essential components of global workforce mobility and intercultural management skills and pass a comprehensive online examination based on the materials presented in the courses.

**Visit [worldwideerc.org/gms-detail](http://worldwideerc.org/gms-detail)  
for more information!**



A background image showing several wooden house models of varying sizes and designs, some with square cutouts for windows and doors. The models are arranged in a cluster, with some in the foreground and others in the background, creating a sense of depth. The lighting is soft, highlighting the natural grain of the wood.

# NAVIGATING HOUSING CHALLENGES IN EMPLOYEE RELOCATION

A conversation with Kathy Connelly,  
chief operating officer of Berkshire  
Hathaway Home Services.

Interview by Alexa Schlosser

**A**s the world grapples with the complexities of the modern job market, an increasing number of companies are finding themselves in the position of relocating their employees to different regions or states. This process is fraught with challenges, particularly in the realm of finding suitable housing options for these relocating individuals. To shed light on this issue, we spoke with Kathy Connelly, the chief operating officer of Berkshire Hathaway Home Services.

### **What are some common obstacles companies encounter when finding suitable housing options for their relocating employees? Are there any unique obstacles right now?**

Inventory continues to be a challenge across the country. At certain price points, it is common for a buyer to experience multiple offers, often paying above list price. Often buyers are waiving or limiting property inspections, which could result in the purchase of “unknowns” and could be problematic when the transferee is transferred in the future. Costly repairs, a decline in the property value, disclosures, etc., could be an issue on the resale. Also, some states have due diligence periods that require nonrefundable fees; others have option money. In these states, the transferee may experience a loss if they don’t perform to the contract. Other states require refundable earnest money, but the seller may choose a qualified buyer offer that has fewer or no contingencies preventing an accepted offer.

Although unit sales fell, home prices have held firm in most parts of the country. One-third of homes sold above the list price in the last month. The increased interest rate negatively impacts the purchasing power of relocating employees. A home buyer purchasing a home at \$410,200 (median price for single-family) translates to a mortgage payment of \$2,135. The limited supply and increased interest rates have forced some to

consider rental options. Many people are living in their homes longer—we used to see five to seven years on average in a property, and that has now moved to 10-13 years, which further perpetuates low inventory.

Demand and limited supply have significantly impacted rental prices. From February 2021 to February 2023, rents grew by 18.47%, a \$302 average price increase. Since the beginning of the pandemic, renters have been seeking more space and flexibility, leading to a surge in demand for single-family homes and apartments in suburban and rural areas. As developers work to improve inventory in the multifamily space with improved availability of apartments, we expect rents to normalize in the multifamily space, but rates will continue to increase for single-family options.

### **How do factors like housing availability, affordability, and quality impact the relocation process for employees?**

With interest rates more than double a couple years ago, low inventory as well as hybrid/remote work options, we are seeing the reluctance for some to even consider relocation. Those who do opt to relocate may have a challenging experience and often find themselves making multiple offers, settling for less than optimum choices and potentially paying over list price. This all has a direct impact on relocation volume and the cost of relocation. Clients often provide benefits that will be directly impacted. Higher home prices may trigger a mortgage interest differential benefit, higher closing cost reimbursement, increased cost for van lines (fuel price), increased time/cost for house hunting trips and temporary housing, as well as increased prices for airfares. The transferee may pay multiple rental application fees that may or may not be reimbursable—multiple offers are also common for rentals. There are also miscellaneous fees, such as credit cards fees being passed along to consumers, increased restaurant prices, etc.

**Are there any specific geographic locations or regions that pose unique challenges when it comes to finding suitable housing for relocating employees?**



**We expect rents to normalize in the multifamily space, but rates will continue to increase for single-family options.**



Year over year, unit sales have declined 18.9%, and although inventory has increased to 3.1 months, it is still well below the normal market inventory of six months. We are not seeing a significant improvement in choices or prices of desirable properties. There are fewer institutional investors competing for inventory than in the past couple of years. No income tax states are experiencing a significant influx of newcomers. States like Texas, Florida, and even Tennessee are benefiting from an exodus from higher-cost markets. The NAR housing shortage tracker identifies the lowest inventory markets. Several of these markets are also considered high-cost areas in general.

Sales varied among the four major U.S. regions, with the Northeast experiencing gains, the Midwest holding steady, and the South and West posting decreases. All four regions recorded year-over-year sales declines.

- Northeast: Existing-home sales rose 2% month over month to an annual rate of 510,000 but are down 21.5% from a year ago. Median price: \$475,300, up 4.9% from the prior year.
- Midwest: Sales were unchanged from a month ago at an annual rate of 990,000, falling 19.5% from one year ago. Median price: \$311,800, up 2.1% from June 2022.
- South: Sales decreased 5.4% from May to an annual rate of 1.91 million, a decrease of 16.2%

compared to the previous year. Median price: \$366,600, down 1.2% from a year ago.

- West: Sales fell 5.1% from the previous month to an annual rate of 750,000, down 22.7% from a year ago. Median price: \$606,500, down 3.4% from June 2022.

**Are there any innovative solutions or technologies in the real estate industry that can assist companies in streamlining the process of relocating employees?**

During COVID-19, the industry relied heavily on technology for property showings. Tools like Zoom, FaceTime, and other similar technology are available to narrow choices. The challenge is the market is moving fast with multiple offers in the typical transferee price range, and the competition makes many of these tools less desirable. More information is available to view online, but real estate is a huge financial investment, and most people want to see the community for themselves. Virtual inspections for things like household goods is proving to be a valuable tool. ChatGPT is proving an interesting solution for writing property descriptions but needs review and tweaking to avoid fair housing and other potential violations. *m*

# Easier relocation starts with a strong partnership

Relocating is a big deal to your employees, so we strive to make every step of the mortgage process easier with our exclusive online benefits and a dedicated team to help them every step of the way. This level of care is why Chase relocation has consistently scored higher than the industry in average satisfaction over the last seven years in Trippel's annual Nationwide Relocating Employee Survey.<sup>1</sup>



Learn all the ways we're here  
for your employees and you:  
[chase.com/relocation](https://chase.com/relocation) | 1-833-422-7013



MAKE MORE OF WHAT'S YOURS<sup>®</sup>



<sup>1</sup>2022 Nationwide Relocating Employee Survey conducted by Trippel Survey & Research, LLC<sup>®</sup>.  
All home lending products are subject to credit and property approval. Rates, program terms and conditions are subject to change without notice. Not all products are available in all states or for all amounts. Other restrictions and limitations apply.  
Home lending products provided by JPMorgan Chase Bank, N.A. Member FDIC  
©2023 JPMorgan Chase & Co. BC1122-887228 0323





# THE IMPORTANCE OF PRESERVING MOBILITY PROGRAM KNOWLEDGE

Capturing, documenting, and sharing knowledge isn't an easy task, particularly when it comes to the complexities of global talent mobility. But investing time and resources to get it right can make a meaningful difference to business success.

By David Bradstreet





**T**he accelerated pace of change we continue to witness brings plenty of both opportunities and risks for today's business leaders. One of those risks is the speed with which many organizations can lose critical institutional knowledge—a dynamic that is altogether too easy in the face of rapidly advancing technology, shifts in strategic priorities, mergers, acquisitions, or changes in leadership and other key personnel as people relocate, move on to new jobs, or retire. Organizations have long grappled with figuring out how knowledge and skills aren't just in the heads or hands of a few but translated into policies

and procedures that can be easily replicated and passed on for the good of the whole company. The faster things move and change, though, the shorter the shelf life of those practices and disciplines seems to be, and it can be tempting to deprioritize the efforts needed to keep them going.

For services that are typically outsourced—in full or in part—the challenge is even more difficult, as institutional knowledge is held by both internal and external stakeholders. This is one of many ways where the importance and value of mutually respectful relationships and regular practice of information sharing between partners becomes highly evident.

With global mobility growing increasingly more complex while simultaneously becoming more deeply integrated into overall business strategy and operations, it's more important than ever to be proactive about retaining program knowledge. Before we get into how to capture it, let's consider some of the important reasons why it's worthwhile.

### **Preserving History Saves Valuable Resources**

None of us want to think about another global event that could upend the world the way COVID-19 did, but it's essential we preserve the lessons learned from it and build on that knowledge for future readiness. Understanding the role mobility teams played in initially helping to identify the locations and ensure the safety of all personnel, then tracking global assignees, business travelers, and remote workers, including what types of work they engaged in for how long and in which locations, was critical to business continuity and global compliance. Much of this remains an ongoing challenge today as we continue to navigate the evolving landscape, but preserving the playbooks—and how they developed and changed over time—will certainly help organizations be on a much stronger footing for whatever disruptions may come next.

As we've seen with the recent changes in the housing market, sometimes, what's old is new again. Your company may have approaches or policies in place that addressed things like loss on sale or negative equity that you have not had to use in decades. Having a good handle on what triggered

their use, guidelines around who received what level of benefit and why, and how it was treated from a tax perspective will all be very useful, helping you avoid having to reinvent the wheel. Even if you choose to make significant updates, starting with a solid foundation will help save you time and money.

### **Documenting Mobility Program Knowledge Fosters Greater Inter-Company Collaboration**

Greater connections continue to be made between talent mobility and other areas of the business. From helping recruitment assess candidates and align skills and cultural capabilities with needs to tracking movement and job responsibilities to providing greater levels of family support, mobility teams have a lot of important information to share. As one HR generalist put it, “Mobility knows things I don’t.”

The more sophisticated and detailed that information capture is, the more opportunity there is to share it across the business. For example, how can the mobility team support internship programs, diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) goals, or business travel policy? Can their immigration expertise help other business leaders decide what locations their teams can best recruit from and for which roles? What mobility survey data might help the business improve the employee experience or foster stronger cultural awareness in other areas? There are plenty of opportunities for cross-functional knowledge sharing. And speaking of capturing and sharing data, global mobility teams and their service partners are also well-versed in personal data protection, privacy, and security best practices and can help guide the business to arrive at the right formula for blending knowledge transfer and global compliance.

### **Clear Documentation Protects Against Knowledge Erosion and Leads to Better Decision-Making**

For a variety of reasons, people change jobs and companies, and you don’t want core knowledge about your program moving along with them. The better the talent mobility strategy is documented and the more people who are in the know, the less risk you have of losing key insights around

what policy decisions were made and why. In fact, understanding the “why” behind assignment and policy decisions is just as important as the “what,” but that information runs the risk of being much more likely to fall in the camp of what’s inside people’s heads versus written down and documented.

Anyone who has ever been through a global mobility RFP process or brought in new partners to provide mobility support understands the importance of having all stakeholders—both internal and external—in agreement on the goals of the mobility program. Organizations continue to grapple with how to bring greater flexibility and choice into their policies while controlling their costs, but the best recommendations can only be made when the total picture is clear: including relocation drivers and objectives, locations, employee demographics, length/types of assignments, number or tiers of desired support, budget, and company culture. The same is true at the implementation stage when onboarding a new partner; everything must be fully and clearly documented so all parties know not just what is behind each policy offering for all types of moves but how moves are initiated and supported, which benefits are available to each moving employee and family member, and what shaped the decisions.

So, it’s clear that detailing and preserving institutional global mobility knowledge is important, but how do you accomplish it? Following a few basic steps will help:

1. **Define the most important things to capture and preserve.** One of the best ways to start is to identify which things you want most, if not all, people on the team to be able to know. For most organizations, that list will involve a blend of the many different types of knowledge that exist, including tacit, procedural, implicit, explicit, and cultural. When it comes to mobility, this exercise can get tricky pretty fast, as it involves and crosses over so many areas of highly detailed and specific expertise, such as tax, immigration, accounting, and payroll. Going back to the points made above, it’s probably best to start by focusing on company culture, program goals, and number or tiers of support, which employees they apply



Employees and partners are much more likely to contribute to knowledge-sharing efforts if the process for contributing is relatively easy.

to, and why. Relocation service partners can and should play a vital role in this process, as, ideally, they are already sharing and reporting on not just key program metrics but broader market trends and industry best practices that have the potential to drive current changes or shape future policy revisions. When HR and global mobility teams are equipped with that information, it's much easier to explain to or connect the dots for other stakeholders about why mobility changes may be needed or costs may be fluctuating. It also provides a roadmap for future program and budget discussions, helping companies anticipate what changes to be prepared for and understand how similar factors were addressed in the past.

2. **Foster a culture of knowledge sharing.** For the effort to succeed, it's important to have the motivation of multiple stakeholders to commit to it, but appointing a few ambassadors or champions to lead knowledge preservation and sharing efforts can help the team stay organized and on track. As noted above, organizations that outsource all or part of their mobility program will want to ensure buy-in from internal team members as well as designated representatives from their relocation management company and other service partners. Demonstrating and regularly reinforcing the value of the efforts is a good

way to help the team stay inspired. Promote continuous learning and improvement by rewarding those who regularly engage in knowledge sharing, either through internal companywide platforms, such as town halls or intranets, or both internally and externally as part of regular performance assessments.

3. **Keep it as simple as possible.** Once you've determined what essential information you want to ensure you capture, you'll need to decide how and where to store and share it. Employees and partners are much more likely to contribute to knowledge-sharing efforts if the process for contributing is relatively easy. Relocation portals or platforms that integrate with the company's HRIS can be a huge time saver in gathering and capturing essential details, as can your program or partner surveys and annual business reviews. While simplicity and ease of access are the ultimate goals, it's also important to understand that people learn and retain knowledge in different ways, and variety keeps it interesting and engaging. Choose a platform that allows you to incorporate documents, audiovisual recordings, fact sheets or best practice top tips, Q&As and infographics, or other visuals that support multilayered learning.

Whether we're fully conscious of it or not, it's human nature to experience some level of fear that our jobs may be at risk if we share too much of our own knowledge and expertise. On the contrary, though, when other areas of the business have full visibility into the extent of the skills and expertise that go into developing and executing a competitive global mobility program, it can only contribute to the continued elevation of the value mobility brings to the businesses' overall strategy and success. Building knowledge preservation and sharing practices within your organization is by no means an easy task, but it's an important one. Investing time and resources to ensure it is done well will pay dividends down the road for you, your team, your service partners, and your mobile talent. *m*

---

**David Bradstreet** is the director of business development with Sterling Lexicon and can be reached at [david.bradstreet@sterlinglexicon.com](mailto:david.bradstreet@sterlinglexicon.com).

A photograph of a man with glasses and a beard carrying a baby on his shoulders at a beach. The man is smiling and looking down at the baby. The baby is wearing a white shirt with a blue pattern and blue pants. The background shows the ocean and a cloudy sky.

## From Afterthought to All-Star: **The Evolution of Employee and Family Assistance Services**

As companies recognize the crucial role that the well-being of both the transferring employee and any accompanying family plays in the success of a move, this still-often-overlooked perk has transformed into a dynamic catalyst for both personal and professional growth.

By Lauren Herring, Amy Parrent, and Lynn Wagner

**F**rom providing a mere helping hand to an empowering support system, the scope of the once limited “spouse assistance” benefit has shifted dramatically. As companies recognize the crucial role that the well-being of both the transferring employee and any accompanying family plays in the success of a move, this still-often-overlooked perk has transformed into a dynamic catalyst for both personal and professional growth. Support experiences that evoke more confidence to face challenges and relieve pressure and anxiety about the move tell the tale of how employee and family assistance should move from an afterthought to an all-star in the world of corporate relocation.

Historically, organizations have viewed corporate relocation as a “work event,” with the goal of getting an employee from A to B as quickly and cheaply as possible. The traditionally labeled “spouse assistance” policy emerged in the 1980s and was job-search assistance for accompanying spouses and, more recently, partners. However, that was typically offered more selectively, and often for the spouses and partners who requested, or even demanded, additional support.

Over the last number of years, we’ve heard a lot of talk about the employee experience throughout the industry, but most policies stayed relatively unchanged in this area, and budgets continue to be limited.

In today’s tight labor market, and with a post-pandemic focus on well-being and sustainability, business leaders now see relocation in a new light. Rather than a work event, a move is increasingly seen as a life event that impacts every aspect of an employee’s personal and professional life. We are, after all, human beings first, and employees second. This has prompted a new look at how the relocation industry can support both employees on the move and their families.

“Spouse assistance” has now evolved to “employee and family assistance,” and this evolution allows companies to proactively support the well-being of the whole household and, by extension, set the employee up for greater success in the new role.

### **Historical Perspective: Spouse/Partner Assistance in Relocation**

In the early days, spouse assistance services primarily focused on job-search support for “trailing” spouses. The idea was to help the spouse (back in those days, rarely did partners receive benefits) find employment in the new location. This benefit boosted offer acceptance rates for dual-career families, especially because it served to bridge the financial deficit they experienced when one partner had to leave a job, sacrificing career status and a paycheck so the other could relocate. This benefit also improves employee engagement and retention following the move because the family can continue to rely on two incomes and both partners are more engaged in the new city.

While this approach was well-intentioned, it had its limitations. By virtue of the months-long coaching relationships that were established, those providing the job search support often learned of broader needs and challenges faced by relocating families but were limited in service scope to address them. Those limits became increasingly evident as relocating populations grew more diverse and complex. Consider the family with intergenerational caregiving responsibilities or an employee with neurodiversity working to establish new and meaningful connections. It’s now apparent that all families—regardless of dual-career status—and even singles, too, were dealing with challenges with settling into the new location: finding new resources, creating new routines, managing the stress of the move, and building social connections. These emerged as crucial factors impacting the overall well-being of employees and their families during relocation. As a result, the industry now recognizes a need for more comprehensive integration support beyond job-search assistance.

### **Current State: Undervalued, Underutilized, and Misrepresented**

Despite a historic talent shortage and the growing recognition of the need for holistic well-being support during relocation, the industry’s response has been inconsistent. There is limited awareness of solutions that already exist in the ecosystem of providers. As a result, the focus often remains on

traditional job-search support, while other crucial aspects of well-being have been overlooked.

This lack of awareness is further evident in the lagging policies surrounding employee and family assistance services. The wording and provisions within relocation policies have not kept up with the evolving needs of employees and their families. Best practice today is not to offer “spouse/partner assistance” but rather “employee and family assistance.”

Finally, even when policy wording and intent are updated, there are inconsistencies in access to the services. Whether a policy includes the services as a standard provision or among “flex” options in a core/flex structure, often people pass them over not understanding how it could support them because—even within the mobility industry—these services are not well-communicated or understood.

For this reason, Pfizer, an early adopter of adding support services into their policies, has made the offering core for most moves. Michael Washbourn, senior manager and global mobility lead at Pfizer, says that “people often don’t even recognize the various needs they have when it comes to settling into a new location. It’s not unusual for our colleagues to tell us the service was invaluable, and until they moved, they didn’t know how necessary it was.”

### **Beyond ROI: Return on Experience**

To further contextualize this strategic shift from optional spousal assistance to core support through a life event, consider organizations’ duty of care obligations. The pandemic created a new focus and urgency to support employees through a relocation life event. Organizations focused on winning and retaining talent are now reframing their duty of care responsibilities to address their employees’ well-being.

Employee well-being goes beyond traditional return on investment (ROI) considerations and aligns with employers’ responsibility to support their employees’ overall health and happiness. By providing comprehensive well-being support during relocation, organizations can meet their duty of care obligations and create an inclusive and equitable workplace culture, while also boosting productivity, engagement, and retention.

Lynn Greenberg, CEO of Pivt, points out that a recent study by Virgin Pulse found that 71% of survey respondents say that they can clearly see an ROI of their well-being efforts and 59% plan to add to their health and well-being programs in the next year. “If we have learned anything through the pandemic, it’s that life affects work and work affects life,” she says. “The companies that want to attract and retain the best talent are leaning into this and finding new and more ways to support employees and their partners/spouses.”

As organizations strive to meet diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging initiatives, providing holistic well-being support ensures that all employees, including unaccompanied employees and those from diverse households, are equally supported during the relocation process.

### **Implementing Effective Solutions**

To address these challenges, organizations need to implement several key solutions. First, policy updates are necessary to incorporate holistic well-being support as a core component of relocation policies. Making this support core doesn’t need to break the relocation bank either. Tessa Boone, talent mobility manager at Ford Motor Company, says, “Employee and family support services are a low-cost way to add significant value to our relocation policy. The success of the international assignment for our employees is heavily dependent on the successful integration and overall well-being of the family in the new location.”

Partnering with well-being experts can also be instrumental in delivering effective support during relocation. These experts can provide guidance, counseling, and coaching to both employees and their families, addressing various aspects of well-being, including integrating into the new community, finding resources in the new location, managing stress during the change, and making new social connections.

Another critical component to successfully implementing these services is transferees getting proper access to the services. Because the benefit is less well known, not urgently required, and usually assumed as something for the spouse or partner, it is often glossed over, or perhaps a note is made to circle back around to it later, but later never comes.

This service is designed to be preventative in nature, while also making the whole experience better from beginning to end.

### Looking Forward

The evolution of spouse/partner assistance in the relocation industry has transformed from traditional job-search support for the accompanying spouse/partner into a core benefit of comprehensive well-being support. Organizations need to update their relocation policies and service

processes to address the changing needs of relocating populations. By embracing holistic well-being support, organizations can fulfill their duty of care obligations, meet diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives, and create a supportive and inclusive work environment. *m*

-----  
**Lauren Herring, SGMS-T, SCR**P, is the CEO of IMPACT Group. **Amy Parrent, GMS-T, GRP**, is the head of global mobility at Vanguard. **Lynn Wagner, CRP, GMS-T**, is the president at REA.

## Case Study: Vanguard's Shifting Perspective

By Amy Parrent

As part of a broader initiative to refresh the mobility policies through the lenses of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) and wellness, Vanguard is evaluating how to better support the well-being of its transferees, beginning with the spousal assistance benefit. Up until recently, we simply benchmarked the policy and were always confident that they fell right in line with what other companies offered.

Indeed, according to Mercer's 2023 WIAPP survey, 51% of companies have formal spousal support, either through a one-time cash allowance or ongoing payments over the course of the assignment. The type of support varies but often includes career counseling, job search assistance, resume prep, work permit, or continuing education for the accompanying partner.

However, organizations fail to recognize the huge disconnect that exists between companies who offer these services versus the transferees who actually utilize them. In Vanguard's case, only around 20% of transferees were taking advantage of this service. However, the general level of satisfaction among those who did take advantage of them was overwhelmingly positive.

In trying to understand the reason for this disconnect, I believe that policies in general tend to treat this benefit as an afterthought and tend to focus on monetary threshold limits as opposed to the value and impact these services can have on transferee's and their family's well-being. I've recognized that instead of focusing on what you get, the policy should articulate what you get out of it.

In Vanguard's case, this will not entail a major policy transformation. We're simply rebranding, refocusing, and re-prioritizing the benefit:

- Instead of listing the benefit at the end of the policy, list it at the beginning.
- In core-flex policies, move this to a core benefit.
- Instead of limiting this to partner support, highlight multiple resources for helping manage well-being for the entire transferring family, including such resources as offered by the Impact Group, REA Coaching, PIVT, Living Abroad, and other wellness resources offered by Vanguard Total Rewards.
- Instead of reacting to an employee's off-chance request, promote this early and often.



# Current Factors Impacting the U.S. Housing Market

Content provided by the Relocation Directors Council

BY NICHOLE MOORE, CRP, GMS

*In this special section*, the Relocation Directors Council (RDC) reviews the market transition move from the post-COVID-19 recovery and the major factors impacting the U.S. housing market today. In the June 2023 edition of the Keeping Current Matters Monthly Market Report, Steve Harvey concedes that the market “is causing some confusion” and urges us, as real estate professionals, to step up to alleviate the subsequent uncertainty for the consumer as quickly and clearly as possible.







Headlines reaching consumers today talk inconsistently about mortgage rates, dropping home values, supply challenges, and affordability issues. Sellers may be reluctant to move out of their historically low mortgage rates, while buyers are facing higher mortgage payments with rate uncertainty. We need to be prepared to educate consumers and help them understand that today's real estate market no longer reflects the market deviation experienced from mid-2020 into mid-2022.

The Biden administration is moving to reduce the stimulus programs implemented during the pandemic, allowing markets to adjust from the historically low interest rates to combat the impact of inflation in the U.S. markets.

The low interest rates spurred a housing market from mid-2020 to mid-2022 that was unlike anything the United States has experienced before. Comparing the market today to two years of exceptional results provides a skewed perspective of the housing market. We need to move to looking at the housing market over a longer historic period or to looking at the housing market month over month in the short term to have data that supports what is being seen in individual markets.

Looking at housing statistics on a month-over-month basis versus a year-over-year perspective will provide us with data that can paint a clearer picture of today's market. The National Association of Realtors May 2023 housing snapshot for existing home sales gives us a month-over-month increase of 0.2%, while the year-over-year sales are down 20.4%. Inventory remains tight with a national increase of 0.4% over 2022 to three months. Five months of inventory is considered a balanced market.

Zillow reported that home values fell year-over-year in 22 major markets and then goes on to report that the same markets are seeing strong home value growth on a monthly basis, suggesting that some major markets may have already seen the prices bottom out. Keeping Current Matters reported in the July 2023 Market Report an improvement in active listings compared to 2022 in the South, the



**As we move into the back half of 2023, we may be reaching a level of stability that increases consumer confidence in the housing market.**

Midwest, and the West regions. The Northeast was only region to show a decline in listings for the same period.

According to Freddie Mac, mortgage rates moved from a low of 3.11% in January 2022 and peaked at 7.08% in November 2022, a trend that corresponds to weakening home sales and reduced housing affordability. Today the rate sits just below the November 2022 peak at 6.81%.

Though higher interest rates and low inventory create affordability challenges, buyers continue to come to the market. Buyers will buy lower-priced homes as they determine how they will get into their first home or their next home. The sale of lower-priced homes will drive the median price of homes down. The median price of homes is simply the middle home price of a list of sold homes. Half the homes sold for less than the median price, and the other half of homes sold for higher than the median price. The median home price is not an indication of loss of value or price appreciation; it is simply the home value in the middle.

According to Redfin, 37.5% of homes sold above list price in May 2023, down 21.5% year-over-year from May 2022. Homes selling above list price likely received multiple offers. A high or growing percentage of homes selling above list price indicates that the housing market is competitive and bidding wars are common. The housing market is no longer moving at that frantic pace, but move-in ready homes with curb appeal in a desirable location are still selling briskly with plenty of competition.

If we look at homes sold above list price, we should also look at homes with price drops. In the two-year period prior to mid-year 2020, the percentage of homes experiencing price drops was between 9.6% and 18.1%, with small fluctuations month over month. Shift our time period to the two-year, frenzied market period ending in May 2022, and price drops were less common. Price declines occurred in between 6.3% and 10.8% of homes with small fluctuations month over month. Redfin data indicates that the sale-to-list ratio was above 100% for 18 months in a row starting in March 2021.

In time, individuals will experience life changes or circumstances that move them into the housing market. The birth of children, the dream job, and retirement are a few examples. Be prepared as consumers come to the market having done a great deal of research of their own. They are experiencing lingering uncertainty and confusion as they try to make sense of the information they gathered and the media headlines. They will be looking for a trusted adviser and an industry professional for validation that they are making the right decision.

Buyers will come to terms with the interest rate changes, the limited inventory, and the subsequent price rebound. They will adjust their perspective from wondering if they can afford to buy a home to figuring out how they will make the numbers work knowing that housing is a necessary expense; owning a home remains an important mechanism to building wealth.

Sellers, too, will face challenges when making a move. Though they will realize the equity they have built with home ownership through monthly payments and appreciation, they will also face limited options as they plan their next move.

As we move into the back half of 2023, we may be reaching a level of stability that increases consumer confidence in the housing market. It will be important that we can help them sort through the details. As industry professionals, we must be ready to orient newcomers to our local market, position them to understand the benefits and challenges they face locally, and help them make decisions with confidence. *m*

**Nichole Moore, CRP, GMS**, is the director of relocation and referrals with Berkshire Hathaway Home Services C. Dan Joyner, Realtors.

# Advertisers' Index

Aires .....	Inside Front Cover
Arpin Group Inc. ....	46-47
BAL .....	Back Cover
CapRelo .....	01
Fragomen .....	03
JP Morgan Chase .....	28-29
Stewart Title Relocation Services .....	07
WR Immigration .....	Inside Back Cover



## Give Worldwide ERC® membership a try today!

As the world changes, people count on you to make things happen. Our industry demands a blend of skills and expertise like no other, from analytical to strategic to compassionate to creative.

Worldwide ERC® gives you the content you need, a community of experts, virtual events that matter, advocacy, a marketplace, and connections that propel you - and the people who count on you - to succeed!

Become part of the world's premier association of global mobility professionals. Now is the time to make your work easier, smarter, better, and more meaningful.

**Try us today.**

Visit [worldwideerc.org/membership](http://worldwideerc.org/membership) today to explore our membership types

## Snapshot

# Singapore

BY BETHANY LARRAÑAGA

**Located in Southeast Asia**, tropical Singapore is a vibrant city-state boasting green urban development, high quality of life, and a thriving job market. The island's business landscape has been ranked a top global competitor for the past several years and excels in international trade, pharmaceuticals, and professional services such as finance and consultancy.

Home to over 1.5 million expats, obtaining a work visa (known as an Employment Pass) requires strict adherence to the country's employment laws. Employers are required to handle Singaporean Pass applications, making moving without a job offer difficult.



**Snapshot**



**São Paulo**



For new residents, Singapore hosts a dazzling array of different districts, each offering a unique view into the island's mosaic-like culture. Arts and culture enthusiasts will feel right at home with a visit to the Bras Basah Bugis arts district, and history buffs can explore and learn in Kataong-Joo Chiat, Chinatown, and Little India.

Singapore's efficient Mass Rapid Transit (MRT) and bus system is ranked second in Asia and fourth in

the world for safety and environmental impact, serving an estimated 3 million riders daily. The SBS Transit Mobile application makes planning travel easy, with real time public transportation updates. Prefer to take advantage of the weather? Bring your bicycle onboard the train or bus and map your journey across a number of beautiful, well-connected bike paths spread across the city.

---

## São Paulo

The beating heart of Brazil's economic landscape, São Paulo hosts an array of domestic and multinational companies like Google, Volkswagen, and Unilever. With industries ranging from technology and agriculture to manufacturing, the city's gross domestic product is the largest in the Southern Hemisphere and presents a highly competitive job market.

Work visas can be swiftly obtained through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, usually being processed within five business days of application approval. Brazilian work visas are also among the most affordable, averaging US\$100 per application.

For such a bustling city, housing is pleasantly accessible in São Paulo—apartment blocks (or *prédios*) are increasingly being developed in the city center, with many accommodations coming fully furnished. For families, condominiums equipped with exercise facilities and outdoor spaces are also available, and houses can be found in the city suburbs.

Across the city are opportunities to immerse oneself in entertainment, art, and cuisine. Dive into the avid sports scene—primarily centered around the city's three first league soccer teams—or visit the renowned Museu de Arte de São Paulo to get a taste of Brazilian lifestyle and culture. Due to the influx of cultures brought by its economic scene, food enthusiasts will find a diverse and stunning array of authentic and fusion cuisine from the finest dining facilities to local neighborhood eateries.



## Beyond Borders: Cracking the Mobility Code

### The Blueprint for Seamless Global Relocations

BY MICHAEL HUGHES, VP GLOBAL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

Discover how a holistic viewpoint, stakeholder collaboration, data-driven decision-making, and leveraging technology bridge the gap to successful relocations. Gain insights into the core drivers behind Arpin International Group's business success.

By understanding the interconnectedness of various aspects such as real estate, immigration, compensation and benefits, and the actual moving process, Arpin ensures that all elements work seamlessly together. This holistic viewpoint enables us to deliver exceptional relocation experiences.

Building stakeholder support is crucial in the global mobility landscape. The active involvement in industry committees and associations showcases a commitment to be a driving force in industry trends. Identify the organizations that matter to you, improve competencies, and allow you to stand shoulder to shoulder with the leaders in your environment; this will allow you to affect change.

In an era driven by data, analytics and integrated systems help make informed decisions. We have a globally integrated database that provides real-time access to critical data points, empowering the

ability to optimize supply chains, analyze customer needs and concerns, and monitor and improve relationships with supply chain teams. The key here is real-time. Not only is the source of the data important in assessing the quality, but the timeliness of the data as well – make sure that you are making decisions that are based on relevant data.

Arpin International Group's core values of integration and innovation drive our business success. We understand our position in the mobility process and consistently strive to outperform expectations. It's important to see where you stand in the grand scheme of things, understand your interconnected relations, know what those partners need, and find ways to deliver it better. The importance of technology in bridging the gap and fostering collaboration in the global mobility space cannot be overestimated, and integration is the key.

**Get started today by contacting Michael Hughes, VP Global Business Development.**

 [mhughes@arpinintl.com](mailto:mhughes@arpinintl.com)

 +1 718 427 0438

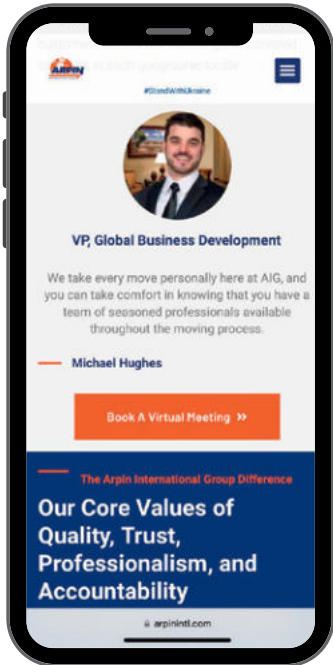


**Arpin International Group, Inc.**  
99 James P. Murphy Hwy.  
West Warwick, RI 02893

 [www.arpinintl.com](http://www.arpinintl.com)



We encourage collaboration.



## Customized full-service moving solutions, because customer happiness is our #1 priority.

**Arpin International Group, Inc.** is an industry leader in providing **fully customized** household goods moving and storage solutions. We specialize in global moving for corporate, private residential, government, and military customers and are a preferred supplier of relocation management companies since we are truly independent and not owned by an RMC.

With **offices** throughout North America, Europe, Asia, and the Middle East, Arpin provides a seamless moving experience and the highest quality services to its customers worldwide.

Our core competences include **innovative solutions that allow instant quoting, booking and virtual surveying, storage options, excellent global partner network coverage, extraordinary dedication to the customer happiness, and ESG.**

# Mobility Matters

## Unique Features of Global Real Estate

*All around the world, homes have adapted to meet the needs of local customs and environments. Find out what makes real estate unique across the globe.*



1

Bathing is a major part of Japanese culture as an accepted form of relaxation and rejuvenation from the stressors of everyday life. Bathrooms across the country are equipped with a wide selection of features, from temperature-controlled flooring to automated controls for filling and maintaining a warm bath. Modern buildings also include separate temperature controls for bathrooms and settings for drying clothes indoors.

Source: [realestate-tokyo.com](http://realestate-tokyo.com)



2

1 Located in New Mexico, United States, Arroyo Park is one of the nation's first green communities. The 54-acre development features 35 sustainably crafted homes with features such as passive solar heating, water conservation materials, and walls crafted from regional pumice volcanic rock. Each home is built to lessen the impact of residents on the environment.

Source:

[greencommunities.com](http://greencommunities.com)



3

3 Historic buildings spanning Italy's long history serve as homes for local residents. In Rome, grand buildings once used as palaces have been converted into apartment residences. Charming *cortii* dapple the rolling hills, recognizable from classic paintings and postcards. Out in the countryside, *casali* stand solidly alone, overlooking agricultural land. For the modern family, *villete*, or free-standing houses, can be found in the suburbs.

Source:

[lifeinitaly.com](http://lifeinitaly.com)



4

4 Scandinavian architecture comprises large windows, natural wood, and minimalist design. This style of home rose to popularity in the 1950s and remains a classic aesthetic choice aiming to blend in with the natural environments across the region. Residents of Sweden, Norway, and Denmark, as well as Nordic neighbors Finland and Iceland, have embraced the use of natural lighting and local materials to lessen the environmental impact of building properties.

Source: [homeedit.com](http://homeedit.com)



4



5

5 Zimbabwe's architectural scene is comprised of an array of global influences, but none settle into the local landscape as quaintly as Rhodesian houses. These veranda-style homes are designed to accommodate the local climate, with wrap-around porches protecting windows from the harsh sunlight and low ceilings allowing rooms to stay cool from the heat.

Source:

[panticarchitects.com](http://panticarchitects.com)



# A Global Law Firm for an Innovative World

Featuring

# WRapid™

Built on a Salesforce platform, WRapid™ and WRapid™ Global is an Enterprise Resource Planning software for business immigration. It is now the leader in the field of Immigration Management Systems.

[www.wolfsdorf.com](http://www.wolfsdorf.com) | 1-800-VISA-LAW | [visalaw@wolfsdorf.com](mailto:visalaw@wolfsdorf.com)

# Thinking beyond the borders of other immigration systems.

Cobalt®, our award-winning case management technology, is a single platform for everyone involved in the immigration process, streamlining communications, delivering information in real time to facilitate data analysis, and sharing the most comprehensive multi-media knowledge bank in immigration. Learn more at [BAL.COM](https://www.bal.com)

