

PUBLIC POLICY STATEMENTS – OMAHA AREA BOARD OF REALTORS

UNDER ALL IS THE LAND – Upon its wise utilization and widely allocated ownership depend the survival and growth of free institutions and of our civilization, REALTORS recognize that the interests of the nation and its citizens require the highest and best use of the land and the widest distribution of land ownership. They require the creation of adequate housing, the building of functioning cities, the development of productive industries and farms, and the preservation of a healthful environment.

The Omaha Area Board of Realtors is dedicated to the protection and preservation of the free enterprise system and the individual and collective rights to own real property as guaranteed by the constitution of the United States and the State of Nebraska. To that end, we offer the benefits that our knowledge of real estate, our experience, and our technical resources bring to the public in general and to the governments that serve them. Because we are concerned with a number of issues facing our members and our community, the following statements of the principles underlying our policy recommendations is provided so that the public will better understand the specific positions on current issues.

ADDITIONAL LICENSING OF RENTAL PROPERTIES – The Omaha Area Board of Realtors supports the enforcement of existing ordinances related to building codes and a complaint-based housing inspection process that focuses on health and safety issues.

Any additional licensing or mandatory inspection of single family and multi-family dwellings makes city government larger, places upward pressure on rents, and does not necessarily eliminate problem properties or problem landlords.

Some currently licensed multi-family properties are in poor condition and licensing, by itself, does not guarantee the elimination of substandard conditions. The building codes inspection process can be triggered by a single complaint. The city should focus its efforts on enforcement of existing building codes, quality of life ordinances, complaints and the penalties related to violations.

DEVELOPMENT PROCESS – We believe that by offering a less complex and more streamlined permit and review process will have a positive impact on the residential and commercial market and economic development of the community. Currently the process is detailed and time consuming which raises development costs and many times forces developers to scale back project plans, ultimately impacting buyers and businesses.

HOUSING – We believe homeownership serves as a cornerstone of our democratic system of government and deserves a preferred place in our system of values as it contributes to community responsibility; civic, economic, business and employment stability; and well being. Homeownership is vitally important to the American way of life. It benefits society as well as the communities in which homeowners reside.

We believe that the political stability and economic prosperity of the Greater Omaha Area and the State of Nebraska are dependent in large measure on the right of the individual to own real property and to

exercise and enjoy the benefits of ownership. We strongly support the full and free responsible exercise of this right and oppose actions by governments, groups or individuals that diminish or deny it.

We believe that every individual should have the opportunity to live in safe and decent housing. These objectives can best be served by a healthy residential and commercial real estate market in an economic environment that fosters an ample supply and accessible financing.

IMPORTANCE OF NEW HOUSING – We support efforts to stimulate the local construction industry because of its positive impact on the local economy. In good times, this industry provides valuable jobs for the community, not just those in construction trades, but in every related industry as well. Many times these jobs are stepping stones that allow individuals to learn a trade and eventually start businesses of their own. These are the types of benefits that are immeasurable in terms of creating job growth and providing new opportunities in our community. New construction benefits the entire community.

It is a fact that each home buyer makes significant purchases related to their property and their lifestyle within six months of their home purchase. These additional purchases included appliances, furnishings, landscaping, electronics, home décor and even automobiles. Those purchases are all part of the positive economic benefit and the multiplier-effect that has a positive impact on the entire community and benefits all citizens. The residential construction industry accounts for a large percentage of the local economy. Most of those jobs reside in the community as construction-related jobs return to full-time status, a significant portion of the additional wages that are paid are spent in the city increasing local sales tax receipts. That spending also enables residents in other areas of the community to purchase additional goods and services, pay additional taxes, and support the growth of even more jobs.

FAIR HOUSING – We subscribe to the policy of fair housing; we believe that equal opportunity in housing can best be achieved through continued leadership; observance of law; education and mutual cooperation of the real estate industry and the public through a free and open housing market. No person should have their right to rent or purchase shelter of choice abridged because of race, color, religion, sex, handicap, familial status, national origin, ancestry or marital status. Furthermore, local ordinances including land use and zoning regulations should not impede or inhibit the free and open market for real property for anyone in the above mentioned protected classes.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING – It is essential that growth management plans provide for the development of affordable housing, both owner-occupied and rental, to meet existing and forecasted housing demand. These objectives may be met through market-driven approaches that foster a wide-range of urban and rural housing choices at all price levels to suit a diverse population. We support programs that provide low cost housing and assistance to first-time home buyers. OABR supports efforts to reduce government regulation that currently account for approximately 1/3 of the cost of new residential construction rather than government funded solutions.

ECONOMIC EXPANSION AND JOB GROWTH – We believe that growth should be encouraged as it is a stimulus to the economy, increases the tax base, provides places to live and work, and offers opportunities that would not otherwise exist. We also recognize the responsibility we have to educate

and work with local, state and federal government officials in developing responsible growth planning that is equitable and which considers the divergent needs of transportation, housing, agriculture, commercial, industrial, and environmental concerns. We also believe in the importance of a solid infrastructure to support the growing population of the Greater Omaha Area. We support growth measures that provide a variety of housing and commercial opportunities and choices. We believe that excessive growth management regulation can negatively affect property rights, distort real estate markets, and threaten affordable homeownership.

FLOOD CONTROL REGULATIONS – We support the goal of flood-plain standards. The protection of the environment and the protection of existing property owners from future flooding are important goals.

We fully support individual property owners living downstream. Those citizens need and want flood control. As real estate professionals, our members understand what it means to an individual property owner when he/she finds his/her home or business located in a flood plain. Flood insurance is very expensive to acquire, it negatively impacts marketability and reduced the overall value of the property.

Flood plain regulation needs to include a reasonable, common sense exception for granting relief; one that protects our environment and downstream property owners, and needs to allow efficient developments that wisely use the land to move forward.

In addition, flexibility needs to be an option because, in certain cases, there will be more cost-efficient means of achieving the same goals. The current standards are rigid and do not allow for common sense adjustments to be made when flood control and water quality can be accomplished at a lower cost.

ENVIRONMENT – Quality of life is one of the most important issues facing our communities today. Realtors believe that the quality of life must be enhanced by balancing the needs for environmental conservation, economic progress, and private property rights.

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN – Realtors understand that cooperation between private property owners and local government is necessary to determine the best use of land. We encourage quality development in all areas of the city.

We believe that every person has the right to acquire real property with confidence and the certainty that its value will not be unduly diminished by government action without just compensation or consent by the owner.

We believe that economic viability is the primary impetus for growth in a community. Planning and zoning policies should originate with and be advocated by the people and their elected officials. Public staff should serve all of the people.

People of different ages, life stages, incomes and lifestyles need housing. To meet demand, the market must provide a variety of housing including small and large apartments, condominiums, townhomes, senior and special needs housing, and single family residences ranging from cluster homes to estate lots. The critical factor in providing these housing opportunities is local zoning. Consumer choice is restricted by zoning that uniformly prohibits apartments, townhomes, and condominiums. In turn, developers

must respond by providing quality, innovative development types with good design consistent with community desires, and the financial community must reduce the barriers to financing these projects. Planning for the classification and use of land must adequately consider the needs of housing, agricultural, commercial and industrial growth, as well as quality of life and a healthy local economy. Land use planning should also take into account the impact of planning on housing affordability.

We support the planning required to assure that the public infrastructure for utilities and roads is designed in such a fashion that it is capable of handling the future expansion of our community.

IMPACT FEES AND INFRASTRUCTURE – Impact fees (or a development fee of some type) should be a part of a complete solution, enabling the city to make infrastructure improvements (water, sewer and streets) at a pace that keeps up with the development of new neighborhoods.

OABR favors a process where each development pays its fair share of infrastructure costs, but also a process that becomes predictable and streamlined and ends the current process of costly, lengthy negotiations with City departments.

There are still important questions looming about the funding of Omaha's infrastructure needs. Most of the funding gap is yet to be solved. A complete package of infrastructure financing tools must be put in place so that Omaha's infrastructure financing needs are met for future generations whether they choose to live in existing neighborhoods or new neighborhoods.

MEMBERSHIP – The Association values and seeks a diverse membership. There are no barriers to full participation in the organization on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, age, disability, ancestry or familial status. The Association encourages equal opportunity practices among its members.