

New Name a Possibility

The Omaha Area Board of REALTORS® would like you to consider changing names to a new name that is more representative of the organization. On August 7, OABR members will be asked by the Board of Directors to consider changing the board's name to one of the following three association names:

- Omaha Area REALTORS® Association (OARA)
- REALTORS® Association of Greater Omaha (RAGO)
- REALTORS® Association of Metro Omaha (RAMO)

The Board of Directors feel a name change would be beneficial, but want member input. They want a name that reflects who the organization is, and that is its members. The Omaha Area Board of REALTORS® has a board of 13 volunteer leaders, but there's more to it than that. It's an association made up of over 2,000 local members of the National Association of REALTORS®.

Proponents feel it will create a greater sense of unity among the REALTOR® population, and the name will better reflect that we are a coalition of all REALTORS®, not a smaller or select 'board'.

Not everyone agrees about the possibility of a new name for the Omaha Board of REALTORS®, though. Some think there is no need to change the name. Doing so will require editing documents, as well as changing the office signs, banners and print items.

The idea for a new name had been tossed around by members for a few years, but it wasn't until last October when Michelle Torrence suggested the name change at an Equal Opportunity Task Force Meeting that it started moving through the process. Torrence noted that many other REALTOR® organizations were designated as an association and most have moved away from using the word 'board' to be more inclusive.

Currently 86 percent of the 117 local REALTOR® organizations with over 2,000 members utilize an 'association' name. The REALTORS® Association of Lincoln changed their name in the year 2000.

HISTORY

Originally the Omaha Area Board of REALTORS® was called the Omaha Real Estate Exchange when it was founded in 1886 and later became the Omaha Real Estate Board with the 1908 advent of the national association. Not until 1966 did the National Association amend its bylaws to allow sales agents to be members of the national organization. Prior to then, the national organization was made up entirely of real estate firm owners and was called the National Association of Real Estate Boards.

The term REALTOR® was coined in 1916, but wasn't put into the local name until 1969, when it became the Omaha Board of REALTORS®. Its current name, Omaha Area Board of

REALTORS®, was adopted in 1981 when Sarpy County REALTORS® became part of the organization.

The suggestion to change the name has been raised because the term 'board' of REALTORS® is basically a vestige of a time when only company owners could be members. Now, OABR is over 2,000 REALTOR® members including brokers, salespeople, and appraisers. It is an association of people involved in all aspects of real estate.

Amendments to the bylaws must be approved by a majority vote of members present and voting.

SURVEY

A preliminary name-selection survey will be conducted from July 2 through July 23. The electronic survey will give REALTOR® members the opportunity to select the “association” name they prefer:

- Omaha Area REALTORS® Association (OARA)
- REALTORS® Association of Greater Omaha (RAGO)
- REALTORS® Association of Metro Omaha (RAMO)

The survey itself will not change the name, but will select the name to appear on the final ballot. Then, on August 7 at the Annual Picnic event, REALTOR® members will be asked to vote on renaming the organization — choosing to either (A) keep the existing name, or (B) change the name to the most popular “association” name selected by the member survey.

All REALTOR® members are eligible to vote in person (only) on the name change on August 7, 2013. The Annual Picnic will run from 11:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m., however voting will take place beginning at 9:00 a.m. and ending at 4:00 p.m. for anyone who cannot attend during the picnic hours.

The consensus of the Board of Directors is that whatever happens with this member-driven decision, the local organization will continue with its mission to advocate for all REALTORS®.