

# **Omaha Area Board of REALTORS®**

## **Introduction**

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® (OABR) 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. REALTORS® are advocates for the interests of real estate owners.

Because REALTORS® in the Omaha area are concerned with a number of issues, these statements of principle are provided to better define and explain to the public the advocacy interests of the Omaha Area Board of REALTORS®.

## **Public Policy Statements**

### **Private Property Rights**

REALTORS® are committed to the protection and preservation of private property rights. Private, individual ownership of land should be respected at all levels of government and the value of that land should not be artificially affected by government intrusion. REALTORS® believe in the free transfer of real property. The fundamental right to own property is guaranteed in the Constitution of the United States and that right should not be infringed upon, nor should property be taken by the government for a public use without just compensation. We oppose actions by governments, groups or individuals that diminish or deny it. Real estate transactions and ownership should not be unfairly burdened with taxation, costs or delays.

REALTORS® support policies which encourage property choice, economic development and adequate infrastructure in an effort to protect the quality of life that has made the Omaha area an attractive place to locate. REALTORS® also understand that cooperation between private property owners and local government is necessary to determine the best use of land, but obstacles and delays by government add to development costs and work against successful redevelopment by increasing risk to the owner. Every individual has the right to acquire real property with confidence and the certainty that its value will not be unduly diminished by unpredictable government action.

## **Property Ownership**

Homeownership serves as a cornerstone of our democratic system of government and deserves a preferred place in our system of values. Homeownership contributes to civic and community responsibility, economic and employment stability, and personal well-being. Homeownership is vitally important to the American way of life. It benefits the communities in which homeowners reside and society as a whole.

Often taken for granted, 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 an individual to own real property and to exercise and enjoy the benefits of ownership. Homeownership objectives are best served by an economic environment that fosters an ample supply of quality housing and accessible financing.

The Omaha Area Board of REALTORS® believes the right of private ownership of real property should be available to every citizen, regardless of socioeconomic background, as it is an integral part of our free enterprise system. Real property ownership offers individuals a sense of pride and community responsibility. OABR believes in the equal rights of individuals to own real property and to exercise and enjoy the benefits of ownership without undue encroachment or intrusion by government, groups or individuals.

## **Fair Housing / Equal Opportunity**

The Omaha Area Board of REALTORS® supports fair housing for all citizens and adheres to the National Association of REALTORS® Code of Ethics. OABR believes that equal opportunity in housing can best be achieved through observance of the law, public and industry education, and mutual cooperation of the real estate brokerage industry and the public in a free and open housing market.

## **Housing Standards**

REALTORS® believe that every individual should have the opportunity to live in safe and decent housing; similarly, the REALTOR® organization does not advocate for the ownership of sub-standard, unsafe housing. To the contrary, The Omaha Area Board of REALTORS® supports the timely enforcement of existing building codes – especially when related to the health and safety of local residents.

Local governments should be empowered with the ability to react quickly to any housing complaint by initiating appropriate enforcement proceedings that are supported by ample civil penalties in the case of non-compliance. The creation of additional programs, licensing or mandatory inspections of properties, in the absence of a housing complaint, serves to make local government larger, and does not provide the overall focus needed to eliminate the community's worst housing problems.

Therefore, local government should center its efforts on current building code violations and an effective enforcement process that includes deliberate civil penalties applicable to those individual property owners defiant of compliance.

The Omaha Area Board of REALTORS® believes the continuing need and the demand for safe and affordable rental housing can best be met by investors who are willing to take long term capital risks unencumbered by burdensome and unnecessary regulation imposed by government at the local, state and national levels.

### **Importance of New Housing**

The Omaha Area Board of REALTORS® supports the growth of our community through land development and new housing opportunities. The process of new housing planning and development are critical to neighborhood development that has long-term consequences including: safe environments, educational opportunities, job creation and security, transportation access, and recreational choices.

New housing growth must have adequate infrastructure, safe and structurally sound buildings, be environmentally sensitive, and be accessible and affordable to all citizens.

### **Affordable Housing**

The Omaha Area Board of REALTORS® supports the rights of all citizens to have access to quality, safe, sanitary and affordable housing. OABR urges all levels of government to adopt and integrate housing policies that are responsive to the individual and collective housing needs that are best served in an economically healthy private market.

OABR recognizes factory-built housing, manufactured housing and other types of non-stick built housing provide an alternative to traditional types of housing and expands ownership opportunities.

OABR supports laws and policies that:

- Zone adequate land for all types of housing;
- Allow growth in residential, commercial and industrial development;
- Streamline the permit and approval process and eliminate unnecessary and costly time delays; and
- Encourage innovations in development, construction techniques, building materials, and product design

OABR opposes local, state and national policies and regulations that limit or effectively prevent innovation and development that serve to meet housing needs and changing market demands.

OABR opposes local, state and national laws and policies that allow public or private impact or transfer fees on real property since these fees discourage development and add to the cost of real property acquisition.

### **Adoption of a Mandatory Fire Sprinklers / Code Adoption**

The Omaha Area Board of REALTORS® opposes the overreaching demands of government regarding mandatory residential fire sprinklers of four units and under. Fire sprinklers add a high-end expense to a homeowner including annual maintenance and inspections, and insurance rate hikes. Building codes already require fire-safe technology and adequate smoke alarms which yields a fire-safe environment for residents.

### **Economic Expansion and Job Growth**

The Omaha Area Board of REALTORS® believes in economic freedom and prosperity that is achieved through hard work, self-discipline and ingenuity. Economic expansion and job growth are intertwined and are both greatly assisted by supporting small businesses and agriculture, fostering entrepreneurship, reducing and simplifying taxes, allowing Nebraska companies to compete in global markets, controlling spending, balancing budgets, keeping inflation under control, and investing in new workplace technology and training to increase a higher-skilled workforce.

OABR believes that competition in a free enterprise system is the best way to meet the needs and market demands for real property. We urge local, state and national government to reduce impediments, including unfunded mandates, which prevent the private sector from meeting the needs and demands for real property more efficiently and effectively.

OABR monitors the increased budgetary pressure being exerted on county and municipal governments resulting from certain state and federal government actions, and is committed to working with elected officials, government staff, the public, and various interest groups to reduce the fiscal pressure being placed on local governments and their citizens.

OABR opposes exclusionary zoning, no-growth ordinances and moratoriums since these laws and policies limit the supply of housing, restrict economic and investment opportunities, and contribute to higher housing costs.

### **Property Taxes**

The Omaha Area Board of REALTORS® understands the importance of government programs funded through property taxes. OABR believes revenues should be equitably collected from other sources since real estate is continuously burdened with an excessive share of the cost of local and state governments.

### **Development Process / Comprehensive Plan**

The Omaha Area Board of REALTORS® supports the organized planning that assist in determining community goals and development. This type of dedication creates excellent opportunities for economic, environmental and social enrichment of our community.

OABR believes local, state and federal governments should be committed to providing the services necessary to identify, redevelop or create community sites, business growth and

neighborhoods. This action should include the comprehensive planning of transportation, utilities, land use, recreation and housing.

OABR recognizes that enterprise zones provide excellent investment and business opportunities that foster community revitalization and economic growth. Various financial incentives are offered to businesses and property owners located within the Enterprise Zone, all designed to encourage private investment, community revitalization and job creation.

### **Infrastructure Improvements**

The Omaha Area Board of REALTORS® supports financially responsible actions and coordination by local, state and federal governments to achieve and maintain the effective infrastructure needs of our community. This support includes project management for new and existing services, research of future opportunities and threats, and technological advancements and sustainability of resources.

For our economy to grow, the demands on our infrastructure must be adequately met to assist both public and private ventures. OABR supports the infrastructure needs of our community including but not limited to: interstates, highways, streets, public buildings, mass transportation, air transport facilities, water systems, waste facilities, bridges, dams, levees, waterways, sewer and utility systems, and other public and private facilities.

### **Environment**

The Omaha Area Board of REALTORS® believes in controlling pollution, maintaining air quality and protecting our state and nation's natural resources. OABR believes that our quality of life must be safeguarded by the careful balancing of housing affordability, environmental conservation, and economic progress initiatives including the support of voluntary green initiatives that will help make homes more environmentally friendly, without unreasonably raising the cost of homeownership.

OABR supports educational efforts to homeowners as to their responsibilities to identify and disclose to real estate brokers, agents, and buyers, any known environmental hazards presenting a health risk. However, provisions should be included in legislation and regulations to relieve property owners and their agents of liability when they are unknowingly involved in property transfers where potential environmental hazards may be present.

### **Energy Conservation**

The Omaha Area Board of REALTORS® encourages owners of residential and commercial properties to voluntarily investigate methods of energy conservation that are economically feasible and may assist in the conservation of energy. OABR opposes governmental regulations giving mandatory energy requirements for existing housing and mandatory energy audits or ratings for real property.

## **Flood Control**

The Omaha Area Board of REALTORS® supports proactive flood control management policies that consider the public's safety and health, protects land and home ownership, and establishes disaster and evacuation planning.

OABR believes affected residents, both immediate and potential, should be adequately informed of flood control issues and risks.

OABR supports the restoration of affected ecosystems, recreation, and private and public land and property use.

## **Membership Diversity**

The Omaha Area Board of REALTORS® believes diversity and inclusion are strategically fundamental and important to the sustainability of the real estate profession. Individual differences, life experiences, knowledge, inventiveness, innovation, uniqueness, and talent can attract the best and brightest to join our industry.

OABR embraces and encourages our members' differences in age, color, disability, ethnicity, family or marital status, gender identity, language, national origin, physical and mental ability, political affiliation, race, religion, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, veteran status, and other characteristics that make us unique.

## **Political Responsibility**

The Omaha Area Board of REALTORS® encourages its members to participate in the local, state and national political process. This activity may include voting, education and training, financial contributions, volunteer interests, and testifying before government and community boards and committees.

OABR supports candidates who fundamentally adhere to the preservation of property rights, ownership, fiscal responsibility, and the free enterprise system.

## **Real Estate Education and Licensing**

The Omaha Area Board of REALTORS® encourages and supports competency in real estate practice through continuing education and training for new licensing, certification, and periodic continuing education requirements to enhance professionalism and understanding of real estate procedures, laws and regulations.