

REVIEW

Omaha Area Board of REALTORS®



A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

WELCOMING IN SUMMER!

The weather for the first quarter of the year proved to be eventful. Sometimes all four seasons could be experienced in the same week!

Much like the weather, real estate requires flexibility if you wish to survive an adjusting market. Mortgage rates occasionally dip, only to go up the next day. Grant money dissipates quickly. The soaring costs of everyday goods causes uncertainty in the market, causing many to pause and reconsider transactions; it sometimes translates to a deal falling through and a property going back on the market, or even some occasional appraisal disputes.

On a fun note, the National Association of REALTORS® commercials showed a more realistic view of real estate in a new advertising campaign. Have you noticed that the **“Right by You”** ads put the focus back on the client?

Locally, there’s a smorgasbord of committee meetings available each month. Committee participation helps to bolster your knowledge and cultivate your connections by immersing you in the industry. Getting involved with committee work helps bridge the gap to become a seasoned REALTOR®. **Committees are actively looking for new people with fresh ideas to join them!**

There has been so much political activity at the local, state, and national level. It’s an election year for local, elected officials in Omaha, including the mayor and all seven city councilmembers. There has been over 700 new legislative bills being introduced at the state level in Nebraska. The annual **NAR Legislative Meetings** are coming up the first week in June, in Washington, D.C. We meet face-to-face with elected officials to have an open conversation on how proposed bills impact the clients we represent. We advocate for affordable housing, property rights, and strive to make The American Dream of homeownership more accessible to every American.

As we head into the summer months, we start shifting into summer mode. Staying positive, continually adding to your industry knowledge, putting in the hard work, and having some fun, make all the difference while we strive for an even brighter tomorrow. It takes a mix of hard work and delight to help maintain wellbeing. To borrow a quote from a friend of mine, “When head, heart, and actions (mind, body, and spirit) line up, that’s integrity!” As REALTORS® and leaders, let’s strive to bring it all full circle for the good of ourselves and the good of those we serve.

May you always walk in the sunshine, my friend!

Jessica Sawyer,
2025 OABR President



REVIEW

OMAHA AREA BOARD OF REALTORS® 2025 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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MON
12
MAY



📍 OAK HILLS COUNTRY CLUB

🕒 8:00 AM - 5:00 PM

Register at omaharealtors.com/golf

WED
14
MAY

SMART GROWTH (#1560) & BIAS OVERRIDE (#1404R)

ATTEND ONE OR ATTEND BOTH!

📍 OABR EDUCATION CENTER

🕒 9:00AM - 12:00PM / 1:00PM - 4:00PM

Register at omaharealtors.com/smartgrowth

TUES
10
JUNE



📍 OABR EDUCATION CENTER

🕒 6:00PM - 9:00PM

Register at omaharealtors.com/finance



REALTORS® from across the region got into the (professional) groove at The Nebraska REALTORS® Association's 108th annual Convention and Expo, which debuted the 2025 theme: Get Groovy & Grow. The event grooved into the La Vista Conference Center in April with a cornucopia of committee meetings, CE classes, and networking opportunities.

2025 NRA President Susan Clark and NRA CEO Julie Joeckel kicked off the three-day extravaganza, followed by opening Keynote Speaker Elizabeth Mendenhall, the 2018 President of the National Association of REALTORS® and herself a sixth-generation REALTOR® and a brokerage owner from Columbia, Missouri, who shared the wisdom she acquired from working in the real estate industry for over 20 years in the session, "Stop Being So Nice!"

Mendenhall explained the difference between being nice and being kind. Being too nice can come across as being indecisive and unopinionated; it means the status quo goes unchallenged. Nice is inauthentic. Being kind is using your voice and being an advocate

for your clients. Kind people are innovative and take action.

She asserted that kindness required empathy, emotional regulation, perspective, and vulnerability. The best leaders possess kindness and approach their roles from a place of authenticity. It is why Mendenhall chooses to be unapologetically disruptive.

In a culture of toxic positivity, one that promotes an ineffective, overly positive attitude of denial and minimalization, which can feel invalidating, she chooses to be honest, even when it's difficult. Difficult discussions can push people to live up to their potential instead of languishing in mediocrity.

She advised checking any assumptions, getting curious, asking for feedback, and asking questions from the point of sincere interest. Discussing how one can improve – top agents speak up and share their opinions.

Mendenhall had the pleasure of hearing Condoleezza Rice speak at an event. Rice said that most people only know how to assert an opinion but don't know how to debate or defend an opinion.

Kindness is asking for what you want. When you



know your goals, you can achieve them. It's necessary to establish and enforce boundaries, stop needlessly apologizing, and stop looking for validation. Kindness is strength; loaning someone your strength rather than reminding them of their weakness.

Sharing what you love about someone and really listening to them is what kind leaders should do to help shape the next generation and grow a generation of homebuyers.

Nobu Hata, a real estate industry veteran since 1996 and a student of marketing, consumer trends, and social media in the real estate industry, led the seminar "What Consumer Data Tells You," where he propounded a new way of thinking about real estate. One key takeaway is that disruptors are vital to business, and being able to approach problems in a new, innovative way will help set you apart.

He urged attendees to think long-term when generating leads, stating that "73 percent of leads aren't ready at first contact." According to him, you need to start thinking three, five, or even ten years ahead.

Hata said how you make people feel during the biggest financial transaction of their lives matters. He posed the questions: What are you doing to build influence? How are you showing your value? Are you merely sharing data points, or are you connecting with the client by telling your story to demonstrate your wisdom and expertise?

The expert said the value proposition is watered down by bad agents in the market. He emphasized why it is crucial to be transparent about compensation and added that a lack of transparency led to some legal

woes in recent years.

Agents need to ask better questions. For example, ask a potential seller what their interest rate is. Ask a prospective client if they ever used a mortgage calculator. Ask fellow agents what marketing worked for them. Seek feedback. Ask a client what made them choose you.

Hata has his own marketing strategy. For example, he hires a professional photographer to take a picture of his client and their family in their new home to showcase the sense of joy they feel getting their dream home, then gifts a framed copy of the photo as a closing gift. He then asks that happy client to provide a testimonial, which he uses along with their picture in his marketing materials.

Connecting to people in a meaningful way is an essential component of his job. He said, "Be pro-people always. Real estate is a people business. Your job is to prove it."



WCR HOME BUILDERS PANEL

Written by **Melissa McElroy**

Women's Council of REALTORS® hosted a Home Builders Panel at Champions Run on March 27; it provided a chance for real estate professionals to gain valuable insight from industry experts.

The panel consisted of Chad Gleckler, a builder with Hadley Homes; REALTOR® Cassie Litz of New Chapter Homes; REALTOR® Jenn Haeg of Better Homes and Gardens Real Estate and Team Lead at Homelife Realty Group; REALTOR® Monica Lang of Celebrity Homes; and Britney McCallister, of RealtyOne Group Sterling and Team Leader of Aro Real Estate Group; the moderator was Sue Laubert with Virtue Group at kWElite.

The panel provided some impactful insights. Builders often have a set pricing strategy but are reluctant to tell prospective buyers a set price since pricing is more complicated than price per square foot. Many factors go into the final price tag, like whether the lot is flat or a corner lot and if any additional modifications are required to the property. For example, if it is an acreage and a septic tank or well needs to be installed, it will increase the final cost.

According to the experts, increasing lot prices and the surging cost of installing necessary infrastructure are driving up the cost of new homes. Getting the necessary zoning permits and laying pipes and concrete can take up to 24 months. Supply chain shortages, such as the lumber shortage during the pandemic, can also drive up costs. The panel

warned that the increased costs would likely result in shrinking lot sizes and increased home prices in the future.

The panel would like REALTORS® to know this about new builds: timelines can shift. There are things outside of the builder's control, like weather-related events, which can add additional time and cost. The builder will not be able to provide an exact close date at the beginning of a project.

The panel suggested that REALTORS® take time to qualify and understand buyers' wants and needs, really understand their budgets, and their "must haves" and "must not haves." It's an essential part of educating clients for optimal outcomes. Chad Gleckler said that REALTORS® do builders a disservice when they show a \$700k home to a \$500k client.

The panel advised attendees that building codes and zoning laws constantly change, and these code changes can increase costs. One example of ordinances impacting costs was highlighted when an Omaha-area electrical code ordinance was recently proposed. Local builders estimated it would add an additional \$1,300 to the cost of a new home. Mayor Stothert vetoed the ordinance, concerned that unnecessary governmental regulations would make housing less affordable.

According to a study conducted by UNO, which was commissioned by the Welcome Home Coalition, government regulations make up about one-third of new housing costs. According to the National Association of Homebuilders, for every \$1,000 price increase of a home in the Omaha area, 435 households are priced out of the market.

According to the panel, one major misconception needs to be dispelled: buyers purchasing new builds don't need agents. The reality is clients still need REALTORS® to advocate for them. Every builder is different and offers different things, which is another reason consumers need a REALTOR® to represent their interests.

BOWLS OF HOPE Breakfast FOOD DRIVE

MAY 1 -
JUNE 25



TACO TRUCK INFORMATION

JUNE 25

✦ OABR PARKING LOT ✦

11:00AM - 1:00PM



From May 1, 2025 - June 25, 2025, OABR will be collecting boxed breakfast food donations to Heartland Hope Mission. Donation boxes and information will be located at the OABR office and large brokerages around Omaha for our members to drop off their contributions.

To wrap up the drive, we'll be hosting a Welcome to Summer Heartland Hope Mission Event.

For more information, visit omaharealtors.com/breakfastfooddrive

BENNINGTON SCHOOL BOND EARNS VOTER SUPPORT

Written by **Melissa McElroy**

It's fitting that the Bennington school mascot is a Badger, an animal known for tenacity and resilience. In April, Bennington clawed its way to the passage of a \$112 million school bond to construct a second high school – their third try for voter approval. This time the vote yielded a solid 71 percent support, unlike a 2022 attempt when two-thirds voted against the original \$153 million proposal. The second try in 2024 for a \$119 million bond failed by fewer than 200 votes.

Bennington Public Schools Superintendent Aaron Plas answered, in-depth, a few questions on the recently passed school bond.

Q After considering residents' feedback, the project was lowered by \$4 million from the 2024 bond proposal, and the new proposal will not increase

taxes. What was the process like evaluating feedback and considering costs vs. concerns?

A The District continued to gather feedback from community members through meetings and surveys. Throughout all the surveys, over 70 percent continued to tell us that they supported the need for a second high school but saw three areas for improvement. The three areas we focused on were lowering the levy impact, paying down bond debt, and increasing effective communication.

We were able to lower the levy from 4.9 cents in 2024 to zero in 2025. Over the past year, the District made several financial management decisions to help offset future levy costs, including lowering the project cost by \$4 million, increasing the reserve used for the project by \$3 million, and paying down an additional \$2 million in bond debt. Additionally, two economic factors positively impacted the levy situation, including the projected interest rate decreasing by 0.27 percent and the base-year valuation increasing by 10 percent instead of a projected 9 percent. This combination of factors has made it significantly easier for the District to meet all bond payments until multiple bonds fall off the payment schedule in 2032.

The District is continually working on paying down bond debt. We are making scheduled and



Photo Credit: omahaguide.com

accelerated principal payments that include \$13.26 million in the last two school years, and \$6 million was debt that was paid ahead of schedule. In addition, principal payments are growing each year, with \$29.8 million being paid in the next five years, \$65.9 million in the next ten years, and \$111.86 million in the next 15 years.

Community feedback showed patrons wanted more effective communication, particularly through direct mail. In response, we initially planned three mailers but ultimately sent five to ensure all residents had clear, accurate information about the proposal. Alongside mailers, we provided multiple ways for residents to stay informed, including community meetings, social media updates, the district website, emails, and local media coverage.

Q The Bennington High School is overcrowded. What would you wish to convey to residents who might not fully understand the impact of overcrowding on the quality of education?

A Overcrowding can impact everything from class sizes to extracurricular opportunities. When classrooms exceed ideal capacity, it becomes more challenging for teachers to keep students fully engaged. There are also only so many classrooms available for specialized classes like art, weights, FCS, or woods. As these classes fill up, students have fewer opportunities to take them.

Overcrowding also strains shared spaces like hallways and the cafeteria, which were designed to accommodate 1,150 students. As enrollment continues to grow, these areas will become increasingly congested. The same challenge applies to extracurricular activities; cuts become inevitable when more students compete for the same number of spots on a team or in programs.

Building a second high school isn't just about space and extracurricular activities; it is about maintaining a well-rounded, high-quality education that Bennington families and the community expect.



Q Better school districts lead to better home values. Investing in a new high school isn't just an investment in education but also an investment in improving property values. In your opinion, how do schools directly impact home valuations?

A In Bennington, the reputation of our schools has been a key factor in the community's growth. Many families have expressed prioritizing quality education when deciding where to live.

Q Bennington was once a small community. As it quickly grows and experiences growing pains, what, if anything, would you like to say to detractors who want to keep Bennington small?

A Bennington's growth is a testament to what makes this community great: families want to be here. While change can be challenging, growth is a reality, and we must plan accordingly to support it. Our goal is to ensure that as we grow, we continue providing a well-rounded, high-quality education while preserving the close-knit, welcoming community that makes Bennington special.

COMMITTEE FAIR: ON TAP FOR YOUR OWN SUCCESS

Written by **Melissa McElroy**

Real estate professionals mingled and milled about the banquet room of the Miracle Hill's DJ's Dugout on a warm Spring evening for "On Tap for Success," a happy hour committee fair designed to help REALTORS® and Affiliate Members select the right committee for them.

Committee chairs chatted with fairgoers and explained how getting more involved at the board by attending committee meetings helps professionals network and grow their careers. Getting in front of

other professionals consistently grows your network of contacts and sets you apart from a sea of other professionals when you're conducting business.

Omaha Area Board of REALTORS® 2025 President Jessica Sawyer said that succeeding in this industry requires you to show up for yourself and your industry. She said, "You need to build a community, not live on an island." To underscore how important getting involved in committees is to nurture professional growth, she said, "I would not be here today if it were not for committee involvement."

As part of the fun, Cindy Andrew was the lucky winner of a \$100 Focus Printing gift card.

OABR Committee Chairs came out in force to represent their committees and help attendees answer the question, which committee is right for you? Check out the Event Calendar at omaharealtors.com for meeting times, and feel free to visit the next meeting.



Governmental Affairs Committee

Monitors the actions of governmental entities, appointed officials, and elected leaders that impact private property rights and the real estate industry in the greater Omaha area. The committee makes recommendations to the Board of Directors for RPAC or other grassroots support for the campaigns of Omaha area political candidates.



Professional Development Committee

Empowers real estate professionals by providing educational and training opportunities. The committee oversees and organizes classes and workshops that offer an affordable, local route to earn certifications and designations, and includes a focus on fair housing and REALTOR® safety.



Diversity Committee

Directs an Ethnic Minority Outreach Scholarship Program to encourage and assist individuals pursuing a real estate career. The committee also promotes diversity and inclusion in the association's governance structure and leadership.



Social Events Committee

Plans and organizes networking and social experiences for members. The committee consists of REALTOR® and Affiliate members who coordinate with other committees, promote event sponsorships, and provide other networking ideas.



Young Professionals Network

Welcomes and engages all young and young-at-heart REALTOR® and Affiliate members, building the OABR Young Professionals Network to develop active participants and future leaders for the REALTOR® organization. Motivates newer and younger members to attend all association events and to volunteer at the local, state, and national levels. Coordinates with other committees while developing events that support the goal of engagement across the membership.



Affiliate Committee

Welcomes and promotes beneficial business relationships among all members. The committee organizes the annual bowling and golf events and the Think Affiliates First campaign. Motivates individual Affiliate members to support the association, attend its events, actively participate with other OABR committees to build business relationships.



Women's Council of REALTORS®

Women's Council of REALTORS® (WCR) is a network of real estate professionals that empowers women to step into leadership roles to serve the industry and community. WCR is not considered an OABR Committee but is a powerful partner that has produced a significant number of REALTOR® leaders over the years. WCR is a separate membership organization that requires membership to participate. For more information, visit wcromaha.com.

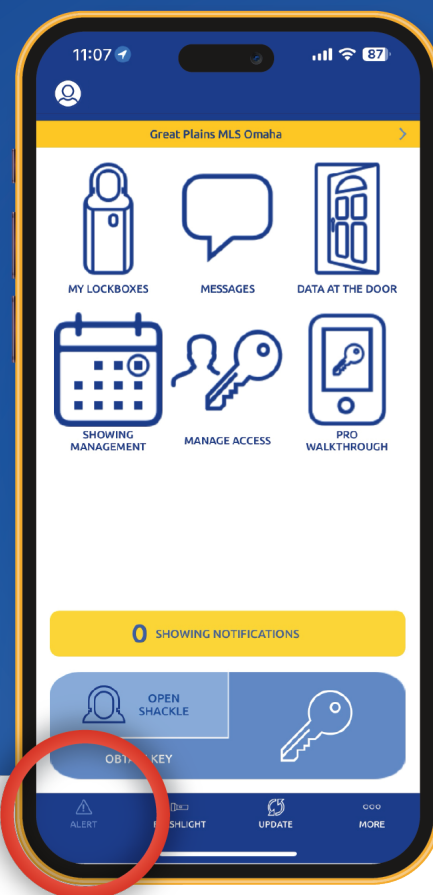
Agent Alert

SEND AN ALERT NOTIFICATION WITH YOUR SUPRA® KEY

- Another layer of protection
- Send alerts from your app or smart watch paired with a smartphone using Ekey
- No need to be at a keybox. The alert notification can be used anywhere
- Open app, press and hold alert button for three seconds to send alert
- A link to a map of the keys locations is included in a text or email

NOTE: Agent Alert feature must be enabled by the organization. Location services must be enabled for the eKEY to include location information.

QUESTIONS? Contact Aimee Jensen at (402) 619-5553



NEW NAR CAMPAIGN:

RIGHT BY YOU

WRITTEN BY MELISSA MCELROY

In a culture of instant gratification, some consumers might mistakenly think they can order a home online with the click of a button the same way you might order a pizza.

Buying a home is one of the most consequential financial decisions a person will make, with many intricate facets that can and will go wrong, as anyone who has ever worked in the trenches of real estate knows.

NAR saw an opportunity to better educate the public about the essential role that REALTORS® play in advocating for clients during the entire process of buying or selling a home. NAR's new "Right by You" ads brilliantly dramatize the chaotic labor of working without a REALTOR® versus the calm confidence that the client gains working with a trusted expert.

Karen Bebart, Director of Consumer Strategy and Brand Advertising for NAR, said a cultural shift in recent years has escalated post-COVID. The DIY culture leads people to believe that they can do any project themselves without the help of a professional. They overestimate their ability to navigate the complexities and undervalue expertise across industries, including real estate.

DIY culture instilled misplaced bravado. Someone

sitting on a couch watching a DIY show might think they could easily remodel their kitchen without hiring a qualified contractor. Someone who doesn't realize everything that a REALTOR® does throughout the process and the wealth of knowledge that an expert brings to the table might not understand the value that a REALTOR® brings and how they help protect you. Communicating your value to clients is essential.

NAR enlisted Uncommon Creative Studio's help to cultivate a powerful new message. There was a concerted effort to shift away from the "That's Who We R" campaign to "Right by You," which is more consumer-focused and demonstrates why REALTORS® matter. REALTORS® are right by you or right by your side during the most important transaction you'll face, and they will do right by you during that process.

Bebart said that a lot of thought went into the new campaign ads. Uncommon Creative Studio did thorough research, leading NAR to develop a new consumer strategy and determine the key consumer impressions this latest campaign aims to overcome. They wanted to drive home the value that a REALTOR® brings – and worked to find the right approach that matters to consumers. The ads had to

break through their attention barrier, spark emotion, and be distinctive. She said that some apps and programs make the job look too easy. The client doesn't always realize the fires a savvy professional puts out behind the scenes to protect their best interests.

NAR took a different approach, using a different style of storytelling. "To tell any story effectively and resonate, we had wanted to tap into emotion. That could be joy, stress, sadness, but emotion activates the brain and helps the viewer connect with and remember a brand."

She said, "This campaign supports members, ensuring consumers know that REALTORS® are an essential, ethical partner in the real estate journey. We want consumers to seek to work with an agent who is a REALTOR-ultimately helping their business.." REALTORS® are held to the highest standards. Part of cultivating the brand is communicating the value of the trademark "R." You're not merely more than a real estate agent. You're a REALTOR®.

The new "Right By You" campaign is taking two distinct approaches. The "Don't DIY" ads use dramatic storytelling to showcase the dire circumstances that

can result when consumers overestimate their ability to traverse a complicated and often painstaking process without a REALTOR®.

The second component of the campaign is entitled "Dream Home," which highlights the potential pitfalls that can occur when consumers get so enraptured by their idealized vision of their future memories that they act impulsively without considering practical realities, realities a competent professional would help them better navigate by keeping them grounded, informed, and protected. This is especially true for first-time buyers.

"Together, these concepts create a well-rounded and well-balanced emotional narrative — speaking directly to the real experiences of first-time buyers today, making "Right by You" even more resonant. Through this dual messaging, we believe the REALTOR® brand will achieve greater relevance and relatability, with varied yet equally impactful stories."

By embracing consumer-focused ads, the message is framed in a way that is meaningful to them. The REALTOR® is presented as the great protector who shields clients from their inexperience and the often treacherous terrain of real estate.



OMAHA AREA BOARD OF REALTORS®

**JOIN A NUTURING COMMUNITY
DEDICATED TO HELPING YOUNG,
AMBITIOUS PROFESSIONALS GROW
PERSONALLY AND PROFESSIONALLY.
ALL OABR MEMBERS ARE ENCOURAGED TO
ATTEND YPN EVENTS!**

Find the next YPN Committee meeting on the OABR calendar!

MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS MONTH

WRITTEN BY MELISSA MCELROY

May is Mental Health Awareness Month, an annual campaign established in 1949 to help raise awareness about mental health. Considering that the life of a REALTOR® can be incredibly chaotic and stressful, it's not surprising that REALTORS® suffer from high rates of clinical depression and burnout. Mental Health Awareness Month presents a prime opportunity to reflect on one's own mental wellness.

One critical goal of Mental Health Awareness Month is improving mental health literacy. The CDC defines mental health literacy as "Knowing how to develop and maintain good mental health; Reducing stigma, or negative attitudes and beliefs, about mental distress and mental illness; Being aware of common mental health disorders and how they can be treated; and knowing how to get help for mental health concerns."

Psychologist Dr. Emma Topf shared her expert insights on addressing mental health concerns such as burnout.

She said some hurdles to maintaining mental health include overcoming stigmas or negative attitudes towards it, and a lack of public awareness about mental health disorders and how they can be treated. Another consistent hurdle is accessing resources. Some health insurance policies don't cover mental health practitioners or only cover a portion. The psychologist explained that self-care is an important part of overall wellness. Prioritizing a work-life balance is a key component of that. Scheduling down time, spending quality time with friends and family, pursuing hobbies and interests, and vacations can help recharge your batteries.

Setting boundaries in your personal and professional life to prevent burnout is essential, as well

as caring for your physical health. Getting adequate sleep, regular exercise, and eating healthy, all contribute to your overall well-being, as does practicing mindfulness. Recognizing the signs of mental health issues early enable you to better respond.

Burnout occurs when there is cycle of negative emotions and withdrawal, which happens when we have invested too much of our energy and resources (physical, emotional, financial, spiritual, cognitive/ intellectual etc.) without doing enough to restore those resources.

Dr. Topf referenced Dr. Christina Maslach's theory of burnout, which consists of three parts:

- Emotional Exhaustion: strain and depletion of emotional resources.
- Depersonalization: detached and cynical responses towards others.
- Reduced personal accomplishment (self-evaluative)- feeling like you're doing nothing.

Topf also cautioned against "hustle culture." The hustle culture becomes a vicious cycle often glorified in our culture. Some people express toxic work habits as a badge of honor and a way to "get to the top." However, the adverse long-term effects exist and often are ignored. People can get stuck in comparing themselves to others and feeling a need to overwork



DR. EMMA TOPF

themselves and often reach a point of burnout that becomes routine. Companies can also take advantage of this and frame it as having a competitive edge or reward toxic behaviors while doing little to nothing to support the well-being of their staff."

DR. TOPF SUGGESTED THE FOLLOWING TO AVOID BURNOUT



1. SETTING LIMITS AT WORK
2. ADJUSTING YOUR EXPECTATIONS FOR YOURSELF.
3. CREATING A LONG-TERM SELF-CARE SCHEDULE.
4. SEEKING MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT IF NEEDED.
5. BEING INTENTIONAL ABOUT WHAT IS ON YOUR CALENDAR.
6. SHIFT YOUR THINKING TOWARD THE IDEA THAT SELF-CARE AND RECOVERY IS NECESSARY, NOT A REWARD.

THE TRENCHES

Written by **Melissa McElroy**

Working in real estate is like being on a Japanese game show. It can be absolutely bonkers with a lot of commotion. Sometimes it's shocking. Sometimes it can be terrifying. One thing it never seems to be is boring, as the following two REALTORS® could attest. They shared their own real estate tales with me when I met them at the Nebraska REALTORS® Association's Convention.

RUH ROH RAGGY

REALTOR® Lisa Demoret remembers the listing like it was yesterday. It was a rundown shack in rural Nebraska. She wasn't sure what to expect when she entered the property, other than it was supposed to be vacant.

The first thing she noticed when she entered the dwelling was the foul stench. It smelled like a truck stop bathroom, and not one of those fancy ones off a well-lit highway, but like one of those backwoods, dilapidated ones that sells pickled pigs' feet in a jar by the register. It was a combination of sweat, despair, and feces.

The house looked like it could collapse at any moment.

That's when she saw the strange, disheveled man walk into the room. He looked like Shaggy from Scooby-Doo, but dirtier. "Dirty Shaggy" told her that he was the house sitter as she eyed his filthy pillow on the ground. He also informed her that he only flushed the toilet every other day to conserve water.

He pulled out a large butcher knife from under his pillow. "I sleep with it at night for protection," he said,

smiling. That's when he asked her if she wanted to see the cellar.

It was starting to turn into a *Criminal Minds* episode. Lisa declined and told him she had another appointment. The man followed her out. She could feel her heart pounding as she drove away.

STRESSED MEOWT

Rhonda Rogers recalls one client distinctly. The then-heavily pregnant REALTOR® noticed a pungent cat pee smell in the client's home when she met with her. Mountains of stuff was haphazardly strung about everywhere. Her client corralled dozens of cats and dogs in the garage.

While they were sitting at a table, a cat meowed at Rhonda and jumped in her lap. She petted the animal until it suddenly fell over onto the ground and laid there motionless.

Her client started to freak out. "Oh my God! Is she dead?" she cried out and started performing mouth-to-mouth on the animal to no avail. The woman picked up the lifeless cat, sobbing, carried it out to the garage, and set it on top of a crate. Rhonda was beside herself, unsure of what to even say or do at this point.

It turned out that the woman's home had been foreclosed on, and it was no longer her property to sell. The appointment may have ended suddenly, but the memory of that day will forever remain burned in Rhonda's mind.

You just never know what you might encounter when you're a REALTOR® toiling away in the trenches.



Matthew Cookson



Kara Guinto



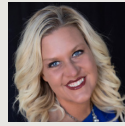
Ericka Heidvogel



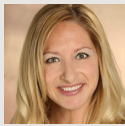
Shelley Hourigan



Don Igo



Brooke Moody



Monica Lang



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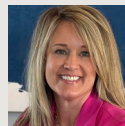
Luke Lofgren



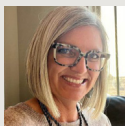
Seth Mielke



Gary Price



Karen Stansberry



Tiffany Stanton

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✓ LG Washer/Dryer	\$3,800
✓ LG Refrigerator	\$1,500
✓ Professionally Installed Blinds	\$1,800
✓ Smoothed Finished Walls	\$3,000
✓ Quality Cabinets with Hardware	\$2,500
✓ Fireplace Finish	\$1,500
✓ Shower Doors	\$1,500
✓ Oversized Deck with STEPS (where applicable)	\$1,500
✓ Seller / Lender Loan Participation	\$7,500
✓ Curb Grind at Driveway	\$3,000
✓ Ceiling Fans	\$800
✓ Towel Bars and Paper Holder	\$1,600
	\$200

Total COMPARED VALUE = \$39,400!

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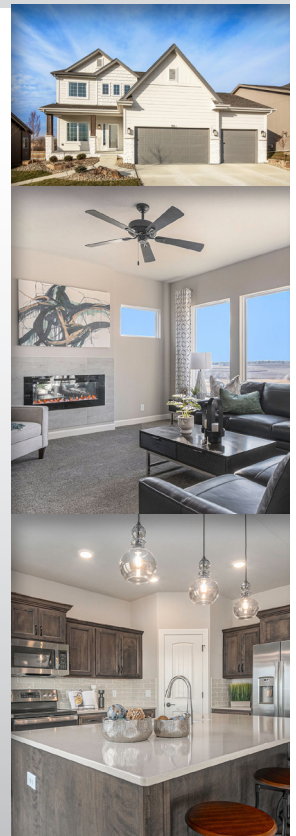
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OMAHA RANKED #1 HOUSING MARKET

Written by **Melissa McElroy**

With the numbers crunched and the data carefully evaluated, U.S. News & World Report ranked Omaha as the country's number one hottest U.S. housing market – beating out larger cities such as Austin, Texas, and Denver, Colorado.

Omaha earned a metropolitan statistical area (MSA) score of 76.2. The analysis weighed a wide array of data points on a scale of 1-100, based on data from January 2025. Positive job growth, a lower unemployment rate, a robust economy, and a lower cost of living compared to the rest of the country secured Omaha the top spot and makes Omaha enticing to developers and homebuilders.

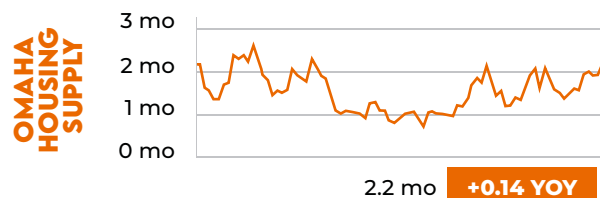
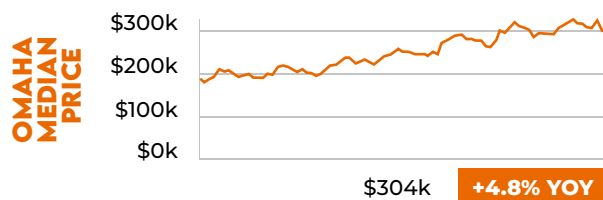
2025 OABR President Jessica Sawyer, who was interviewed by U.S. News & World Report for the article, said, "I think we've caught up with our frenzy of new construction builds after two years of putting something new up, and now we have more inventory and spec homes hitting the market."

Omaha was also named the top city to move to by Forbes in 2024, with a perfect score of 100, based on Omaha's affordability, strong job market, low crime rate, and high quality of life, putting Omaha firmly on the map with an enviable housing market.

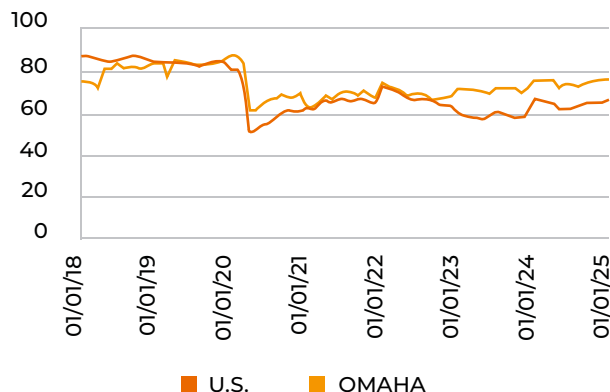
HMI RANK (JAN 2025)

RANK	MSA	HMI
1	Omaha-Council Bluffs, NE-IA	76.2
2	Austin-Round Rock, TX	72.3
3	Houston-The Woodlands-Sugar Land, TX	72.1
4	Charleston-North Charleston, SC	71.6
5	Denver-Aurora-Lakewood, CO	71.5
6	St. Louis, MO-IL	71.1
7	Columbia, SC	70.9
8 (TIE)	Greeley, CO	70.3
8 (TIE)	Greenville-Anderson-Mauldin, SC	70.3
9	San Antonio-New Braunfels, TX	69.9

OVERALL HOUSING MARKET INDEX RANK



OMAHA HMI HISTORY



MEMBERSHIP REPORT

February Activity	MO	YTD
New REALTOR® Members	26	71
Resignations	5	119
Membership (As of April 1)	2025	2024
Designated REALTORS®	192	213
REALTOR®	2985	3096
REALTOR® Emeritus	93	80
TOTAL REALTORS®	3270	3389
Institute Affiliate	79	74
Affiliate Members	132	146
Key-Only Affiliates	119	128

Full membership report at OmahaREALTORS.com/membership-report

DESIGNATIONS

Accredited Buyer's Representative (ABR®)

- Lisa Bliss, RE/MAX Results
- Trac Burkhardt, Better Homes and Gardens
- Emma Lockard, Nebraska Realty

CERTIFICATIONS

At Home With Diversity® (AHWD)

- Emma Lockard, Nebraska Realty

Home Finance Resource (HFR)

- Angela Kuester, Don Peterson & Associates

Military Relocation Professional (MRP)

- Casey Hupton, BHHS Ambassador Real Estate

Pricing Strategy Advisor (PSA)

- Trac Burkhardt, Better Homes and Gardens
- Angela Kuester, Don Peterson & Associates
- Henry McCallum, Prime Home Realty

PERSONALS

Our Condolences

- To Cliff Pawol Jr., Pawol Appraisal Services, on the passing of his father, Cliff Pawol Sr.
- To Denise Mecseji, GPRMLS, on the passing of her grandmother

JULIAN CORTES

DIVERSITY SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENT

Where did you grow up (if not from the Omaha area, what were the circumstances that brought you to Omaha and how long have you lived here)?

I was born and raised in South Omaha, where I lived all my life before moving to Bellevue four years ago.

What Brokerage do you work for and are you a member of any other organizations in your community or networking groups?

I'm with the Better Homes and Garden Real Estate; I'm not a part of other organizations or networking groups but am actively looking and open to join more.

What did you do before you became a REALTOR®?

I was a T-Mobile manager for over three years, which I really enjoyed. I also graduated from the University of Nebraska Omaha with a degree in Business Administration and Marketing.

When did you get your real estate license and what inspired you to become a REALTOR®?

I was blessed to receive my real estate license in January of this year, after many years of thinking about it. I wanted to become a REALTOR® because I've always been fascinated with real estate, but I really knew I wanted to do it when my family had to go through the homebuying process, and I was able to find the perfect first home for my family with the help of a REALTOR®.

What is the most rewarding part of your job as a REALTOR®?

Working with our REALTOR® made me see how important they are. Although I'm still pretty new, I already see how rewarding it is to be able to help someone and make them feel as comfortable and confident during such an important time in their life.

What else would you like us to know about you?

Other fun facts about me: I'm bilingual and speak English and Spanish. I have five siblings and a dog. Family is very important to me and the reason I want to succeed and try my best in everything I do. I really appreciate all opportunities, especially for the OABR Ethnic Minority Outreach Scholarship, which has been an immense help financially. They're always super helpful and welcoming with any questions I've had.



Learn more about the Diversity Scholarship Committee at omaharealtors.com/diversity



SPRING IN YOUR STEP

There's a shift in energy every Spring. As the weather gets warmer, there's a feeling of levity as we inch closer to the sweltering summer months.

WCR is also bringing the heat with some exciting events and so many great opportunities to meet like-minded professionals and network! Meeting in-person and going to events helps you get the most out of your WCR membership. It's always great to be able to put a name to a face.

For anyone who is not yet a WCR member, who would like to learn more, I invite you to attend an upcoming event. It is a warm, inclusive environment where everyone is welcome.

We've had some really amazing functions this Spring. In March we had a Builder's Panel, a lunch panel where local builders discussed the market. It was so eye-opening hearing about the housing market from the market experts and learning interesting facts about new builds.

In April, we had our annual Spring Extravaganza, always eagerly anticipated by members, which featured music trivia and a costume contest! It's an event that I look forward to every year! There's so many great events coming up, like our annual Golf Event. Stay tuned for more details. Go to wcromaha.com for more information.

Quick shout out to our sponsors, who make our events possible, as well as to the volunteers who help organize everything. We're excited to support our charity focus for the year, The 50 Mile March Foundation, an amazing organization that significantly impacts the lives of veterans.

The next 50 Mile March is scheduled for August 23-24. Local heroes will come together to walk from our State Capitol to Omaha to raise awareness and fund for our veterans.

On the national level, there's a couple of important dates to mark on the calendar. The Midyear Meeting will be June 3-5 in Washington, D.C. There's a Network 360° Leadership Conference in Chicago, Illinois, August 6-8, 2025. The National Conference is slated for November 12-16 in Houston, Texas. I always enjoy meeting leaders from across the country and hearing fresh perspectives.

With so many great things to look forward to, it's sure to be an amazing summer. We're excited for all that's ahead this season—see you at our next event.

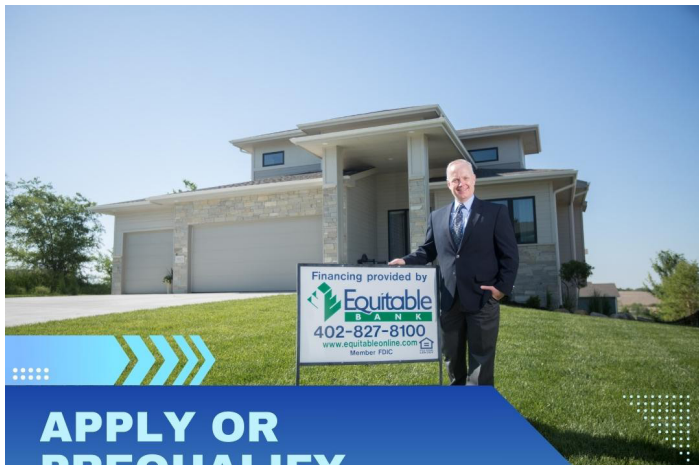
Wishing you a wonderful and prosperous season!
TRAC BURKHARDT
2025 President

REALTORS® Make the Market

Omaha Area Residential Snapshot

MARCH 31	2025	2024	%
NUMBER ON MARKET	1,941	1,905	+1.9% ▲
NUMBER UNDER CONTRACT (MONTHS)	1,211	1,184	+2.3% ▲
NUMBER OF SALES CLOSED (YEAR TO DATE)	833	916	-9.1% ▼
EXISTING SALE PRICE (MEDIAN YEAR TO DATE)	\$280,000	\$280,000	0.0%
NEW SALES PRICE (MEDIAN YEAR TO DATE)	\$425,000	\$432,955	-1.8% ▼

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PAST PRESIDENT'S CORNER

MEGAN BENGSTON 2022 PRESIDENT

To think, Megan Bengston almost went into public relations. Fortunately, for the real estate industry, when the Communications Major reached her junior year at UNL, someone randomly suggested, "You should be a REALTOR®!" It was the precise words that she needed to hear at the right time. The stars aligned.

After talking to different brokerages, the then-college student accepted an entry-level, unlicensed assistant position. She eventually earned her real estate license in 2005. The rest was history.

As her career progressed, she

became involved in different organizations, like WCR. Bengston has a passion for collaborating towards common goals and has served on many OABR committees. The top producer sees value in pooling people's knowledge and talents. WCR and OABR helped bolster her leadership skills.

She's a firm believer in education. "It's important to get involved and always be learning, and don't be afraid to ask questions." Knowledge is power. Bengston follows her own advice and has earned designations. Continually brushing up on industry knowledge makes her even more of an asset to her clients. Providing exceptional service to clients is what drives her.

It's surprising that the 2022 President was once intimidated by OABR. She said, "I remember thinking it was this big, scary

organization." The industry leader has demonstrated her leadership skills in numerous roles over the years, including being the 2013 WCR Omaha Chapter President, as well as a member of the Nebraska REALTORS® Association Board of Directors. She continues to embrace new challenges and encourage others on their career paths.



Differences Between Residential & Commercial Property Inspections

What Sets Commercial Inspections Apart?

Commercial property inspections differ significantly from residential ones and require specialized expertise. Inspectors must understand complex systems, regulations, and structural requirements.

Capital Expenses & Maintenance Planning

Buyers need details about HVAC systems, water heaters, and roofing components to budget for future expenses. Commercial properties often require advanced assessments to determine potential repair or replacement costs.

Safety & Compliance Standards

Commercial buildings must meet stricter safety codes. Features like emergency exit lighting, smoke detectors, exit signs, and fire ex-

tinguishers should be serviced annually. Electrical systems over 400 amps should be inspected by licensed electricians, who use specialized safety equipment.

Roofing & Structural Concerns

Flat roofs, such as EPDM or rolled asphalt, are common in commercial properties. Inspections focus on drainage issues, structural support, and signs of material wear or deterioration. Addressing these issues early can prevent costly repairs.

Plumbing & ADA Compliance

In Omaha, PEX plumbing is prohibited in commercial properties. Inspections also evaluate compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), including marked parking spaces, foam protection on pipes, and grab bars in restrooms.

Parking Lot & Exterior Checks

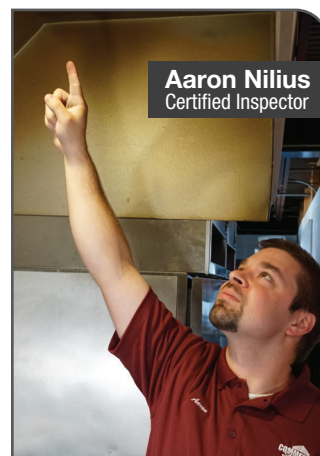
Parking lot striping, curb stops, and signage are assessed for visibility and wear. Gas meters in areas prone to vehicle impact should have protective concrete bollards.

HVAC Systems

Package HVAC units are common in commercial buildings. These combined heating and cooling systems are installed outdoors, eliminating the need for metal flues. Inspectors assess the age, efficiency, and condition of these units.

Commercial Kitchens & Grease Management

Cooking appliances in commercial kitchens, such as ovens, gas cooktops, and fryers, often require fire suppression systems and exhaust hoods. Fire suppression uses chemical agents to control flames. Grease traps are inspected to prevent drain blockages, as regular cleaning is essential.



Aaron Nilius
Certified Inspector

Why It Matters

Understanding these differences helps buyers and agents evaluate inspector qualifications and make informed decisions. To learn more about the commercial property inspection process or its impact on buying and selling commercial properties, contact us today!



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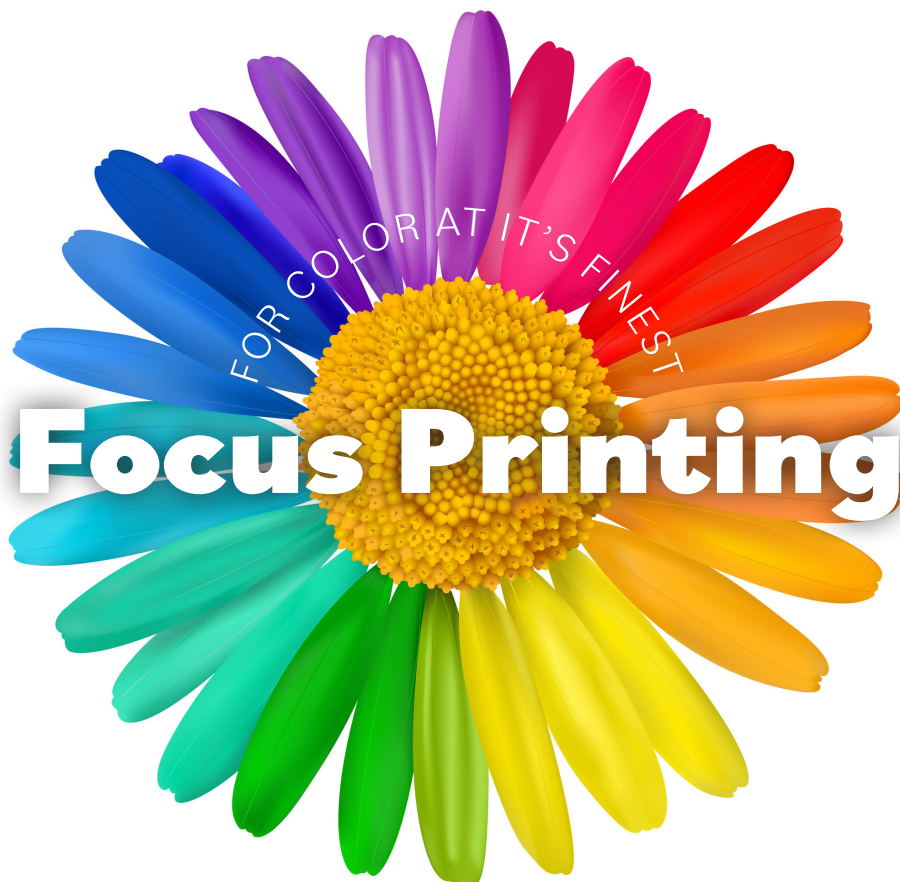
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