



REALTOR® Association Housing Opportunity Policy

The REALTOR® Association Housing Opportunity Policy is a cooperative partnership among four local real estate trade associations: North Metro REALTORS® Association, Minneapolis Area Association of REALTORS®, Saint Paul Area Association of REALTORS® and Southern Twin Cities Association of REALTORS® representing 20,000 members involved in all aspects of the real estate industry. REALTORS® are active members of the communities where they live and work, and are committed to community involvement—from housing options and affordability to regional growth and transportation.

The greater Twin Cities metropolitan region, an area including thirteen counties in central Minnesota and western Wisconsin, is consistently rated in national studies as one of the best places to live and work in America. At the same time, our region faces mounting challenges to our quality of life status.

Members of the REALTOR® associations throughout the greater Twin Cities area represent a broad cross section of our population and recognize the many challenges facing our communities and our region as we seek ways to improve housing affordability for all our residents.

REALTORS® promote investment in home ownership, which is, for many residents, the main vehicle for creating financial stability.

REALTORS® recognize that home ownership encourages individual responsibility and contributes to livable communities.

REALTORS® realize that affordable rental housing not only addresses a need for individuals and families, but also serves as a transition to home ownership for many residents.

Twin City area REALTORS® understand we are competing on a global level, as homebuyers compare the quality of life not between one city and another, but between the Twin Cities region and other regional centers. REALTORS® are the front line salespeople in the challenge to provide quality of life for residents in our region.

With the variety of housing options and high quality of life in our region, increasing housing opportunity is essential to our region's future.





Twin City area REALTOR® associations have studied issues related to housing affordability, met with other stakeholders in the government and private arenas, and agreed to a series of housing affordability principles.

- Demographic trends, housing studies, and citizen input tell us loud and clear that our communities need a variety of life cycle housing choices, housing units per acre and price options. Aging baby boomers, an increase in single heads of households, and changes in household size, coupled with many peoples' desire to live closer to work and family, all point us in this direction. The political will must be found to create life cycle housing throughout the Twin Cities region.

- Building life cycle housing often results in greater housing density and housing diversity. Life cycle housing means communities must support creation of housing units, both rental and for purchase, that are affordable for low and median income buyers and for the move-up market in order to free up existing affordable housing units for first time buyers.

Regulatory barriers and fees increase housing costs and reduce housing choices and affordability. Minimum lot sizes, setback requirements, open space dedications, energy efficiency standards, zoning requirements and permit fees, to name a few, all increase housing costs without providing more housing units. Model zoning ordinances should be developed to use as templates to increase housing affordability.

- New and relocating businesses could benefit by building in communities where there is available workforce housing and access to public transportation. Businesses could benefit by investigating employer-assisted housing programs whenever feasible.

- The definition of housing affordability is based on the percentage of household income a person is required to pay for housing. Efforts must be made to develop consistent and agreed upon standard of housing affordability throughout the region.

- The preservation and rehabilitation of existing housing stock should be promoted when this option makes financial sense.





- Rising land costs have increased the price of housing. Ways must be found to increase the supply of available land for development.
- Property tax reforms approved in 2001 must be preserved. Policies must be coordinated to ensure a positive and viable connection between regional growth, housing affordability and transportation.

Where Do We Go From Here?

REALTORS® are part of the solution to the housing affordability needs in the Twin Cities region. REALTORS® have taken the first step by working together on this policy statement. The second step is to educate members of the four Twin Cities area REALTOR® associations about current housing affordability issues and to present options to local and regional decision makers. Accountability can be assured when REALTORS® join their neighbors, elected officials, and business leaders in pursuit of housing affordability solutions. The result will strengthen the quality of life so cherished throughout our region.

November 20, 2003

References and Background Reports

[NAR Housing Opportunity Program](#)

[United Way Housing Programs](#)

[Builders Association of the Twin Cities](#)

[Metropolitan Council - Mayor's Regional Housing Task Force Report](#)

[Metropolitan Council](#)

[Minneapolis Regional Chamber of Commerce](#)

