

	<p style="text-align: center;">WASHINGTON ASSOCIATION OF REALTORS</p>
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2000 Legislative Program - Issue Paper

Quality of Life Principles

Protecting Property Rights

REALTORS® believe that private property rights are fundamental to our free-market economic system and a cornerstone upon which this nation was founded. The United States and Washington Constitutions recognize and protect the natural right to own property. *A strong economy depends upon preserving the right to freely own, use and transfer real property.*

Ensuring Economic Vitality

REALTORS® believe a strong economy with full employment for our citizens throughout the state remains the single biggest key to our quality of life. *A healthy economy sustains vibrant communities for living and working. Commercial, industrial and residential growth, in turn, sustains a healthy economy.* Economic development brings new opportunity and improved quality of life for city residents by increasing jobs, tax base, purchasing power, diversity, availability of goods and services, and offering community revitalization and improvement. An increased tax base is crucial to government's ability to deliver necessary public services, new amenities for neighborhoods, and maintain infrastructure to serve the needs of the community.

Ensuring Housing Opportunity and Choice

REALTORS® believe home ownership is the cornerstone of the American Dream and deserves a preferred place in our system of values. Home ownership contributes to community responsibility; civic, economic, business and employment stability; family security and well being. *Every citizen has the right to safe, decent and affordable housing near where they work, shop and play, and that choice in style and location is critical to increasing home ownership.* Furthermore, these objectives should be met through market-driven approaches that foster a wide-range of urban, suburban and rural housing choices at all price levels to suit a diverse population. Accommodating growth relieves pressure on housing prices and provides increased opportunities for homeownership.

Preserving the Environment

REALTORS® recognize the incredible gift that Washington's natural environment offers to our state's citizens. Furthermore, we recognize the importance of parks, open space and the environment to our quality of life and therefore the marketability of surrounding property. To maintain our region's quality of life and to protect the environment, REALTORS® support policies and programs that encourage conservation and wise use of natural resources, critical areas, and lands of historic significance through incentives and sufficient compensation. *In order to protect the environment effectively, REALTORS® believe government must accommodate quality commercial, industrial and residential growth using innovative planning techniques, while recognizing the importance of local decision-making, private property rights, and the value of a healthy economic sector and attainable homeownership opportunities.*

Building Better Communities

REALTORS® believe communities flourish best when they offer a high quality of life at a reasonable cost. Livable communities offer a variety of affordable housing choices, nearby employment opportunities, an economically viable commercial sector, good schools, low crime, quality public services, ample recreation and park areas, open space, efficient transportation systems, and the infrastructure that provides the framework to the quality of life we enjoy in our communities. *To promote livable communities, governments must accommodate quality growth through policies embracing property rights, economic vitality, housing opportunities, and the environment that sustain and enhance a community's quality of life.*

REALTORS® Quality of Life Agenda

To allow communities to plan for growth, both REALTORS® and the public are supportive of a number of measures that protect private property, provide housing opportunity and choice, ease traffic congestion, improve public safety and education, encourage a strong economic sector, protect the environment, preserve open spaces, prescribe market-driven and incentive-based approaches to accommodate quality growth and promote balanced, equitable, and fair financing of infrastructure.

Protecting Private Property Rights: *Continued strength of our economy depends on the preservation of the right to freely own, use and transfer real property.*

- **Property Rights.** Every person has the natural right to acquire real property with confidence and certainty the use and value of such property will not be reduced or eliminated by government action, without just compensation. Government shall not infringe on the right to acquire, possess and freely transfer property, and is constitutionally ordained to protect individual property rights.
- **Regulatory Takings.** When private property is adversely affected or devalued by regulations, property owners are too often not provided compensation for the loss. When government actions or regulations do not allow the owner the opportunity to develop and use property in an economically productive and profitable way, the government should be required to pay compensation for the inordinate burden levied on the property owner. If the taking of property, in whole or in part, is in the public interest, then the public should compensate the private landowners for the benefit received. Private property owners should not be required to bear the costs for public benefits. Compensation must be an integral part of any regulatory or legislative proposal to limit the use of private property for public benefit.
- **Compensation.** Compensation can take many forms, such as purchase of easement; trade; tax incentives; market value based transfer of development rights programs; cash or in-kind payment; environmental mitigation credits for prior activity of owners; density bonuses; staging of concurrency; clustering, or adjustments to restrictions on lot size, number of units, or building dimensions.
- **Accommodating Growth.** When government renders buildable land unusable, in whole or in part, government should be required to adjust projected growth targets appropriately, and development regulations as necessary, to ensure the accommodation of growth.
- **Zoning.** We support the use of planning, zoning and subdivision laws to encourage community growth and enhance property values, but not to reduce or eliminate a property's economic use or value via, for example, down-zoning.

Ensuring Economic Vitality: *Economic development is necessary to provide job opportunities, expand economic vitality, increase public revenues and enhance the standard of living and quality of life. Commercial and residential growth is the key to the economic vitality and quality of life of our communities.*

- **Job Creation and Attraction.** REALTORS® believe the recent and unprecedented period of economic expansion now being enjoyed in the state benefits all citizens. This economic prosperity has been driven by proactive policies at the state and local levels to recruit and encourage business to locate (or relocate) in Washington. REALTORS® support efforts to bring jobs to Washington and make Washington a healthy and attractive climate for businesses. REALTORS® will continue to work with state and local leaders to find solutions that sustain economic prosperity and that protect our high quality of life while addressing real concerns about accommodating

the corresponding growth with obtainable housing choices for all economic segments of society, and infrastructure funding for transportation and education.

• **Planning.** Land use decisions should take into account a vision of the economy for the future. Through an economic strategy based on market analyses that identifies current inventory, resources and needs, a community can set the stage for sustainable economic growth by planning and implementing proper zoning and development regulations, and providing the incentives, infrastructure and amenities necessary to attract economic development. Without proper planning, many local governments will fail to plan for and attract increased economic opportunities for its community. Therefore, comprehensive plans must include an economic development element that plans for and allows development in order to promote a diversified and healthy economy. Regional, economic, political, and cultural differences should be recognized and the special challenges facing distressed urban and rural communities should be acknowledged. Economic strategies should set priorities, concentrate resources on those priorities, and rely on partnerships and alliances with local communities and organizations to enhance the economic base.

• **Balancing Jobs with Housing.** Economic growth drives both the demand for workers and the corresponding demand for housing. Plans must be made to ensure a balance between jobs and housing necessary to meet the demand of a growing workforce. Localities that are attracting new jobs through their economic development efforts should correspondingly plan for affordable housing nearby to accommodate all classes of employees and service employment that will follow. The job-creating community that does not keep pace with the demand for housing creates a market dynamic that forces sharp increases in housing prices and a corresponding increase in traffic congestion – which, if not corrected, will strangle the community’s potential for sustained economic vitality.

• **Quality of Life.** The economy depends on attracting and holding key talent - people whose skills and knowledge enable them to live wherever they choose. Balanced growth, environmental preservation, livable cities and family-wage jobs are taking their place as essentials to quality of life. They are essential ingredients in any strategy for economic vitality. Planning, coordination, and certainty in decision-making help maintain the quality of life we must be capable of offering the highly-skilled workforce our economy needs. This quality of life is linked to growth, traffic congestion, business activity, affordable housing, quality education, expansion of existing businesses, and recruitment of new businesses. The low cost of living, the pristine environment, public health and safety, affordable and available housing, and a qualified workforce, balanced by the desire to accommodate economic development and enhance the high quality of life that we enjoy throughout Washington, are critical to drawing business to the state.

• **Transportation.** Transportation is a growing concern. Freight mobility is essential to ensuring businesses are able to move their goods from one location to another. The state must work to minimize gridlock, traffic congestion, long commutes and loss of productive land.

• **Infrastructure.** Public utilities and telecommunications systems provide support structures essential to the functioning of the economy. Investments in infrastructure are crucial to business expansion. In some cases, water supply, wastewater and storm water systems are critical limits to growth. Local jurisdictions need the ability to provide water, sewer and roads to support new business investment.

Financing these local public works projects is essential to support economic vitality. Telecommunications performs a central role in today’s economy and government is increasingly active in encouraging and facilitating the extension of telecommunications infrastructure. In the information age, telecommunications has joined transportation and utilities as essential infrastructure. High-capacity networks extension to rural and remote areas is essential if these regions are to share in future growth. Infrastructure investments are necessary to attract new business.

• **Buildable Lands.** Regulatory restrictions, environmental constraints, and community resistance have drastically decreased the supply of land available for development. This action is causing available land to be difficult to find and has driven up the cost to the point that many businesses are unable to expand or are unwilling to move into the state. A sufficient land supply is necessary to accommodate projected economic growth. Ensuring a sufficient amount of buildable land with applicable development regulations, while providing an integrated planning process with coordinated and predictable permitting procedures, will provide important incentives to encourage economic development.

• **Regulation.** To promote economic vitality, regulation must serve clear goals and must be applied in a consistent and timely manner so those regulated do not bear the added cost and delay of a burdensome process. Variations in the efficiency and predictability of regulation have become an important element in measuring competitive advantage. The challenge is to assure that government provides expedited procedures and time frames to meet the fast-tracking goal within the parameters of other regulatory requirements.

• **Tax and Fiscal Policy.** The free enterprise system is the most efficient method of producing and distributing wealth, and government power must be limited for the free market to function effectively. Free markets are based on opportunity, initiative, incentives and competition. Competition increases the quality of products at more affordable prices. Increased business investment produces more jobs, higher wages, better working conditions, and a higher standard of living for all citizens. As taxes increase, businesses and consumers have less disposable income. Business is left with less money, giving them little choice but to increase prices charged to consumers, and/or reduce the number of employees and investments in their business. This leads to a poor economy with no available jobs and the need for more government programs. Businesses need real tax relief that will improve the economic climate. Reduced taxes create economic prosperity, increased investment, new jobs, and expanding government revenues. Increased incentives are often needed for businesses making investments in economically distressed counties. Tax incentives are an effective method to encourage business to locate in areas, providing the community with economic development and job creation tools.

Providing Housing Opportunity and Choice: *Every citizen deserves the opportunity to own safe, decent and affordable housing near where they work, shop and play, and that choice in style and location is critical to increasing home ownership.*

• **Housing Choices.** REALTORS® believe that providing a range of housing choices that suit the needs and income levels of all members of a community's diverse population is paramount in ensuring the opportunity to fulfill the American Dream remains available to all citizens. We support efforts to provide citizens of all income levels the opportunity of home ownership of a style they desire and in a location close to their workplace. Local and regional consensus-based development plans should allow for a wide range of urban, suburban, and rural housing types and choices in accordance with a market analysis reflecting an area's diverse population needs and income levels.

• **Housing Availability and Affordability.** All growth management plans should provide an adequate supply of land for housing, both owner-occupied and rental, at all price levels, to meet existing and forecasted housing demand in accordance with future economic and projected population growth patterns.

• **Fair Housing and Diversity.** REALTORS® primary objective is to provide the American Dream of home-ownership to all those who aspire to achieve it. Equal opportunity in housing can best be achieved through observance of the law, through education, and through mutual cooperation of the real estate industry and the public in a free and open housing market. All people have

the right to freely choose where they will live regardless of race, color, religion, national origin, familial status, disability, or sex. Policies should promote cultural diversity and equal opportunity through a free and open housing market.

- **Planning.** Comprehensive plans should include a housing element that ensures the availability of a variety of affordable housing choices for all economic segments of the population. Communities must plan for the number of residential units necessary to accommodate projected employment growth. Economic growth drives both the demand for workers and the corresponding demand for housing. Plans must be made to ensure a balance between jobs and housing necessary to meet the demand of a growing workforce. If the demand for housing is not accommodated within the community where the jobs are located, workers move to neighboring areas and commute to their jobs. The job-creating community that does not keep pace with the demand for housing creates a market dynamic that forces sharp increases in housing prices and a corresponding increase in traffic congestion – which, if not corrected, will strangle the community’s potential for sustained economic vitality.

- **Flexibility.** Planning, zoning and subdivision laws should evolve to accommodate mixed-use development, higher densities, and changing employment and growth patterns, as determined and supported by the market. Further, planning staffs should offer developers flexibility in meeting development regulations, provided the project meets and enhances the community’s quality of life.

- **Permitting and Review.** Fair and reasonable procedures will increase the level of certainty in the development and building review and permit processes.

- **Infrastructure.** Proper land-use planning should provide for viable transportation and infrastructure systems to ensure the efficient and effective functioning of new housing developments.

Preserving the Environment: *In order to protect the environment effectively, REALTORS® believe government must accommodate quality commercial and residential growth using innovative planning techniques, while recognizing the importance of local decision-making, private property rights, and the value of a healthy economic sector and obtainable homeownership opportunities.*

- **Private Property Rights.** When land-use, environmental and natural resource regulations reduce or eliminate a property’s economic use or value, property owners should be fairly compensated at fair market value.

- **Preservation the Environment.** REALTORS® market quality of life and livable communities in the housing market and share the importance of preserving the environment. We know that many homebuyers consider community aesthetics as well as amenities when making home-buying decisions. We appreciate the value of open space, parks, and public lands. We support the preservation of sensitive lands respecting private property rights and ensuring lands are fairly compensated and are not preserved through “takings.” We believe lands purchased for open space or other preservation should always be compensated at fair market value. We believe that those who benefit from open space – the general public—should fund its purchase.

- **Land Use Planning.** Comprehensive land-use planning should recognize the importance of and interrelationship between environmental protection, economic development, safe and efficient transportation systems, intergovernmental cooperation, and affordable housing for all members of the public. Governments should pursue environmental protection, natural resource and land use regulations and laws that accommodate growth needs of communities.

- **Open Space Preservation.** Incentive-based programs or general public funding – as opposed to regulatory programs – should be used to encourage the preservation of open space. Acquisition of property or rights for open space should be from willing property owners. Reasonable and fair land dedications for public use should occur only when delineated or established in zoning ordinances and development regulations.

- **Wetlands.** Policies should establish procedures to ensure fairness and accountability in determining what types of wetlands are regulated. Priority should be given to preserving high-value wetlands and to encourage the use of wetlands mitigation banking and other market-driven mitigation activities.

- **Endangered Species Act.** Congress should amend the Endangered Species Act to recognize socioeconomic impacts in designating and recovering endangered species, provide safeguards to protect private property rights and use incentives to encourage species protection, as opposed to restrictions and penalties that force compliance.

Building Better Communities: *To promote essential livable community elements, governments must accommodate quality growth through policies embracing property rights, economic vitality, housing opportunities, and the environment that sustain and enhance a community's quality of life.*

- **Planning.** Communities should plan in advance to meet the demand and need for housing, business, schools, public safety, fire protection, parks, sewer and water, and transportation systems. A major barrier to development of land in urban areas are high land costs, overwhelming development regulations and complicated decision making processes. It is important to ensure buildable land capacity sufficient to accommodate the projected population and economic growth will be available for development in a competitive market, while ensuring affordable housing choices for all economic segments of the population. Accurate buildable land inventories, market analyses and preferences, and availability of sufficient land capacity is critical to planning for the accommodation of growth. Public lands, open space, recreational lands, critical areas, and land restricted by other development conditions should be excluded from the computations of buildable land to accommodate for population projections, employment, and housing. Development regulations must promote adequate densities, and provide flexible performance standards which emphasize outcomes, while ensuring certainty and predictability for the developer. In order to provide certainty, and save time and money, development regulations should avoid duplication and redundancy and should be consistent with other land use regulations.

- **In-Fill Development and Community Revitalization.** REALTORS® believe the revitalization of our cities and policies which promote in-fill development are central to addressing the problem commonly referred to as "sprawl". Revitalizing older neighborhoods and encouraging in-fill development are sound public policy which utilizes already existing infrastructure. Officials at all levels of government should cooperate and collaborate to alleviate obstacles inherent in efforts to achieve such revitalization. Every effort should be made to address the concerns of existing residents with concerns about the impact of planned in-fill development to maintain and enhance their quality of life.

- **Economic Development.** Communities should seek public and private resources to improve decaying infrastructure and improvement of urban, suburban and rural core areas. Procedures should increase the level of certainty and efficiency in the development and building permit and review processes. Finally, communities should consider financial incentives for the redevelopment of decaying and blighted urban, suburban and rural properties to stimulate growth and improve economic vitality. Planning for sustainable economic vitality should include market analyses to determine what the market will support.

• **Housing.** Each jurisdiction determines the availability and use of land to develop, and in doing so, controls the housing supply relative to demand, which in turn, affects the housing prices. Extensive regulatory and permit procedures also drive up housing costs. Many jurisdictions are failing to plan for, and therefore, are not enabling the development of sufficient residential units to accommodate demand. Housing availability and affordability is crucial to economic vitality because the lack of it exacerbates transportation gridlock, adversely affects employee performance and, causes key workers and even companies not to locate in specific regions. Efforts to reduce barriers to ensure housing affordability is increasingly recognized as an essential part of a successful economic strategy.

• **Infrastructure.** Roads, water and sewer systems provide the backbone to the quality of life in our communities, and the framework for future growth and economic development. Sufficient funding of roads, water and sewer systems is an essential investment to attract economic development for sustainable growth of communities. Planning and constructing infrastructure in a timely manner to keep pace with the current and future demand for housing and commercial development is a necessity. Infrastructure project priorities must be set through the capital facilities plan, and the utilities and transportation elements of each comprehensive plan. Tax revenues collected from growth related projects (infrastructure, home construction, and economic development) should be dedicated specifically to finance infrastructure necessary to accommodate growth.

• **Concurrency.** REALTORS® support requirements for adequate infrastructure and public facilities to be in place, or planned to be in place, in order for development to occur. However, REALTORS® oppose moratoriums on growth when facilities are not in place. Moratoriums directly contradict the goal of the Growth Management Act to accommodate growth. Rather, REALTORS® believe concurrency requirements should trigger adequate funding of state and local infrastructure by prioritizing sites in the Capital Facilities Budget that would not meet the specified level-of-service.

• **Performance Measures.** Comprehensive plan elements, such as land use, housing and economic development, should include specified, definable goals. Performance measures should be established to gauge how jurisdictions are accommodating growth, and if each jurisdiction is achieving its goals. Establishing performance measures will provide a process to ensure accountability in planning through baseline indicators that track the achievement of desired goals (such as housing units built to accommodate projected growth) and determine what adjustments are necessary to ensure jurisdictions are accommodating growth, as provided in the Growth Management Act.

• **Review and Evaluation Process.** Comprehensive plans and development regulations should continually monitor land supply and densities to ensure sufficient land (with applicable development regulations) is available for development to accommodate growth. The review and evaluation program should annually collect data to determine the quantity of buildable land available for residential and employment-based activities. A clear process is necessary to adjust urban growth boundaries as necessary to ensure sufficient buildable land is provided to accommodate residential and employment growth projections. Further, an effective process will be needed to allocate and re-allocate projected growth on a continual basis, based on market factors and available land. For instance, when buildable land is re-designated as a critical or sensitive area, or otherwise determined not available for development, growth must still be accommodated; therefore, provisions are necessary to ensure re-allocation of projected population targets to surrounding areas.

• **Implement Fair and Reasonable Public Fiscal Measures.** To adequately support the infrastructure needs of communities resulting from growth, governments at all levels should cooperate in the adoption of balanced, fair, equitable and incentive-based approaches to finance and pay for

the development, expansion and maintenance of roads, schools, water and sewer facilities. Revenue and financing mechanisms established to pay for necessary infrastructure costs should be fairly allocated and shared by those segments of the population served by improvements.

• **Re-directing Revenues to Targeted Purposes.** REALTORS® recognize the need for local governments to raise revenue to fund critical infrastructure needs. We believe existing state and local revenue streams should be examined closely to determine if they could be modified or redistributed to provide additional resources to localities. Further, we believe local governments need to focus on ways to maximize existing revenues and minimize expenditures through improved efficiency, consolidation of programs, regional cooperation, and privatization. For instance, sales tax revenues principally benefiting the state do not adequately reward local governments for their job creation efforts, nor provide local governments most in need of attracting economic development with sufficient funds to provide the incentives needed. We firmly believe the state's tax structure should re-directing revenues to targeted purposes is the best long-term approach to addressing the infrastructure funding needs of many local governments.

• **Regional Cooperation.** REALTORS® encourage local governments throughout Washington to work together in regional efforts to save costs and eliminate the duplication of services. The legislature should continue to develop and implement incentives for local governments to band together in regional cooperative efforts to provide services to citizens at a lower cost, and to enhance the region's opportunities for future economic development. We recognize that local governments are competitors in many areas, including economic development, and as such there is occasionally a disincentive to cooperate in a regional manner to assist neighboring jurisdictions to improve infrastructure and public services. Therefore, we support fair, regional tax-base sharing and value added financing mechanisms.

• **Cooperative Planning.** State incentives should provide tools to local governments to encourage collaborative and regional cooperative planning as long as it supplements local planning and does not create another layer of government.