

PUBLIC POLICY STATEMENT

One of the most important services MIBOR offers its membership is providing representation of REALTORS® to government officials at the state and local level.

This document is a snapshot of how REALTORS® feel about major issues. This representation assures dialogue early in the policy making process and is intended for use with local elected officials throughout the metropolitan area. As such, it is written in a style that would best benefit them. References to items such as “sin” taxes, although not universally accepted, are in “their” language.

FOREWORD

America...the land of opportunity. Every American dreams of living a successful life and giving their children the chance to live an even better life than the previous generation.

Most Americans consider buying property to be the most important step towards a better life. In fact, home ownership serves as the cornerstone of our democratic system of government. It is key to civic, economic, business, and employment stability, as well as family security and well-being.

People who own and invest in real estate also play an important role in improving our communities. They provide essential places for us to live, work, learn, worship, carry on business, and pursue everyday activities. The cycle continues by sustaining local tax bases, creating new jobs and ultimately spurring economic growth. Consequently, property ownership deserves a preferred place in our system of values.

The following key policy issues outlined in this document are those which have been identified and approved by both the Board of Directors and the Public Policy Committee of the Metropolitan Indianapolis Board of REALTORS® (MIBOR). These issues have been identified because they:

- Impact local government
- Effect REALTOR®' ability to conduct business in a free market
- Impact the rights of all property owners

EDUCATION

A home represents the single largest purchase most individuals will ever make. REALTORS® know that prospective buyers look for quality public schools, safe, well-maintained neighborhoods and good roads.

In order for the economy of central Indiana to flourish, we must diversify our economy and provide a well-educated work force to attract and retain new business and industry to our communities.

We encourage a strong public/private partnership to analyze the needs of the work force into the 21st Century. We must continue to find solutions to problems that prevent improving the quality of our schools at all levels.

Quality education benefits all Hoosiers; therefore, the responsibility should not fall disproportionately on property owners to fund. We encourage state funding incentives for quality education that depend on broader-based taxation. We firmly believe in the exploration of alternative revenue sources.

ENVIRONMENT

Quality of life is one of the most important issues facing communities today. REALTORS® believe that the quality of life must be enhanced by balancing the needs for environmental conservation, economic progress, and private property rights.

We have identified the following specific issues concerning our environment.

1. Wetlands-We recognize the preservation of wetlands as an important issue and support reasonable efforts to do so. We support programs which compensate existing landowners for the loss in value of their property through wetlands declarations. We support current congressional measures including a standardized definition of wetlands, a clearly defined permitting process, a priority ranking system, and the use of mitigation banking.
2. Lead contamination-We support current efforts of the federal government to identify sources of lead poisoning and educate the public about related health hazards. We also support disclosure of lead-based hazards and encourage the inspection of homes built prior to 1978. We strongly support continued scientific research into the connection between land-based paint poisoning and public health hazards.
3. Indiana Department of Environment Management Protection-While we approve of legislation restrictions on the transfer of properties containing environmental defects, we oppose any departmental procedures and policies relating to legislation leading to long delays in the permit and inspection process at the expense of the landowner. Because demands often exceeds the funding for staff, we support amending the administrative process to ensure these procedures are implemented within a well-defined period of time.
4. Recycling-We support increased awareness programs for city-wide recycling and cost effective curb-side programs.
5. Wellfield Protection-We support the protection of the area ground water drinking supply. However, entities that influence

private property rights have the responsibility to fully inform property owners of any existing or pending regulations that would restrict their ability to use or sell their property in the future.

6. Land Conservation-Will Rogers once said, "Buy land, they ain't makin' any more." Land is the one natural resource we can definitively quantify. Land use regulations should encourage and promote the efficient use of land for development.
7. Species-We recognize the preservation of endangered species as important and support reasonable efforts to do so. We encourage programs which compensate existing land owners for the loss of value to their property by reason of the identification and/or preservation of an endangered species thereon.

HOUSING

Home ownership is the cornerstone of our democratic system of government. The opportunity to own a home has inspired all generations of Americans and helps bring individuals into the economic and social mainstream. Home ownership directly benefits society by fostering pride and participation in one's community, encouraging saving, and promoting social and political stability. Home ownership deserves a preferred place in our system of social values.

Over the last 20 years, home ownership in the United State has not exceeded 65% of the population. We must review what obstacles are preventing more Americans from owning a home.

1. Affordability-We support governmental efforts to develop a comprehensive housing policy. We also support those programs alleviating homelessness, promoting low-income housing and assisting first-time home buyers.
2. Rent control-We support state restrictions on local government rent control ordinances.
3. Landlord/Tenant Regulation-We believe current landlord/tenant regulations are sufficient to maintain air and equitable treatment for all parties. Additional regulations could increase the cost of rental housing to the tenant.
4. Rental housing-We support the building of new affordable rental housing, while preserving current buildings through renovation and restoration. Citizens of low and moderate income levels need affordable housing. To meet this demand, we call on all levels of government to assist the private sector by removing disincentives to financing, production, and improvement of affordable rental housing.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

REALTORS® realize that, no matter where laws are enacted, they are implemented at the local level. We discourage government commissions and boards from usurping private property rights for any extended period of time.

We encourage state government to review how local government is funded in Indiana, and to act responsibly when mandating local government activity. By doing so, state government can ensure that local entities will be able to meet the financial obligations of compliance.

Over the past few years, federal funding has become virtually non-existent and state funding reduced dramatically. This trend has necessitated a creative revenue replacement agenda. We oppose delaying local government's share of "sin" taxes and disproportionately raising state fees.

While we understand that local government needs the ability to negotiate contracts in private, public input should be a priority prior to enactment.

1. Sign Restrictions-While recognizing that business signs are a vital marketing tool as well as a right protected by the First Amendment, REALTORS® encourage sign regulations that ensure a safe and attractive environment.
2. Local Government Data Sharing-We expect government to provide open, complete and equal access to all forms of government information as required by law. We encourage all units of government to make all electronic data available by a variety of means. If a third-party vendor is used to provide electronic data, that service should be subject to control by the Indiana Utility Regulatory Commission.

PLANNING AND ZONING

REALTORS® recognize that cooperation between private property owners and local governments is important to determine the highest value and best use of land.

Attempts to protect aquifers, natural areas, historic properties and open space may have a positive effect on the environment in a community. Every individual, however, should have the right to acquire real property with confidence and certainty that its value will not unduly diminish by governmental action-at any level-without just compensation or consent by the owner.

We maintain that land use planning must fully consider the growth needs of housing, agriculture, commerce and industry since all are vital to a healthy, local economy and a positive standard of living.

1. Comprehensive Planning-In order to meet the future needs of infrastructure and public services, we encourage a strong public/private partnership in drafting and reviewing comprehensive plans reflecting true life styles while encouraging future economic development. We encourage those municipalities that have not adopted a cumula-

tive capital improvement budget to do so. This step will allow for planned saving to meet infrastructure needs and other future general maintenance repair needs.

2. Zoning-Zoning ordinances should be drafted to minimize the need for obtaining a variance. We believe a timely review of current zoning ordinances is necessary to ensure accuracy and realistic land usage. We also encourage all governmental units to review their permitting procedures and verify that they are efficient and expedient.
3. Township Planning and Zoning-We believe that the planning and re-zoning process deserves the fullest opportunity for citizen involvement and input. However, we do not believe that any additional layer to the process would accomplish that goal. We encourage all local units to review their processes to ensure that they are timely, cost effective and encourage citizen participation.
4. Nonconforming Use-We support the enforcement of current zoning ordinances. We encourage local units of government to establish a time period before which prior zoning use violations are grandfathered.
5. Impact Fees-Equitable impact fees to fund infrastructure necessitated by new growth should not deter additional growth and development, nor encourage inflated property values. We support legislation that would allow local units of government to assess fees on new development in an equitable manner.
6. Regional Planning-We recognize the need for improved, effective infrastructure in central Indiana. We support a regional approach in the community to economic development, planning, infrastructure, mass transportation, business climate, and work force to ensure quality growth.

TAXATION

REALTORS® favor a tax structure which maintains and encourages competitive, healthy growth.

1. Property Tax-Historically, property owners in Indiana have borne an undue share of tax in this state. Therefore, we support the Indiana Association of REALTORS® proposal to consider the reform of property taxes in Indiana.
2. Reassessment-We support a thorough examination of the current reassessment method. We believe the current system is inconsistent and inherently unfair. We support a thorough study of fair market value assessment to be implemented in Indiana.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

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