

REALTORS® Regional Growth Policy Statement

REALTORS® Associations of the Greater Twin Cities Area

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 lofty “quality of life” status.

Studies by the Metropolitan Council indicate that the number of new housing units will not keep pace with expected population increases over the next 15-20 years resulting in an expected shortage of 60,000 housing units by 2020. Sprawl will increase as the amount of buildable land decreases. Mounting traffic congestion will add travel time to work, lessen productivity and decrease our quality of life.

Members of the REALTOR® associations throughout the greater Twin Cities area represent a broad cross section of our population and recognize the numerous challenges facing our communities as we grow in population, job opportunities and housing units. REALTOR® associations have studied regional issues, met with other stakeholders in the government and private arenas, and agreed to a series of regional growth principles.

1. Residents should be able to live where they desire as long as they can afford to do so. A recent survey commissioned by the National Association of REALTORS® and National Association of Home Builders found that 62% of respondents wanted to purchase the “best house we could in the best location possible given what we had to spend.”

This strong affirmation of choice, based on consumer wants and needs, should be recognized by government agencies and honored by builders, developers, and REALTORS® whenever the marketplace allows.

2. Regional growth planning is vital to the economic future of the Twin Cities region. Planning requires all stakeholders to look at tomorrow’s housing, jobs and transportation needs as well as dealing with short-term goals and objectives. For example, it is equally important for developers and government agencies to consider regional land use patterns and local zoning codes permitting accessory apartments, i.e. “mother-in-law” apartments, when considering future development.
3. The look and feel of our region is dependent on planning and land use decisions made by the Metropolitan Council, state and local governments, employers, developers and builders. Housing, jobs and transportation are all parts of an interlocking puzzle. Government agencies and departments, and private business must not deal with one without considering the others.

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4. Minnesota must increase transportation funding. Current funding is far below the minimum investment required to maintain and expand our existing road system, let alone add necessary improvements. An efficient transportation system, that needs to include a combination of autos, buses, light and commuter rail transit, is an essential building block in the foundation of our regional economy. To remain competitive with other metropolitan areas in America and around the world, in job creation, housing location and quality of life, an immediate infusion of resources is needed to stabilize, improve and expand our metropolitan transportation system.
5. 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 a reduction in household size, coupled with many people's 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.
6. 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.
7. 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.
8. The use of the Metropolitan Urban Services Area (MUSA) line to stage growth at the "edges" of the metropolitan area must be modified so as to not be a limiting economic factor to growth. Growth should take place throughout a new 2020 land supply plan developed by the Metropolitan Council and supported by the state legislature. Outward growth should consider the critical linkages between housing and jobs; balance development, redevelopment and environmental protection, and improve mobility through increased transportation choices.
9. The Twin Cities is nationally recognized for public/private partnerships bringing the best elements from government and the private sector together to find meaningful solutions to regional issues. These partnerships, based on incentives rather than regulation, should be utilized whenever possible to solve our housing and transportation problems.

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10. Regional growth is a complicated blend of outward movement, infill development, renovation of existing properties and brownfields cleanup. All communities in the region have an integral role to play as the Twin Cities expands and prospers. A variety of housing choices and job decisions made in one community have a ripple effect throughout the region.
11. A strong economy, healthy communities and expanding housing opportunity require regional planning and advocacy efforts. We must speak with one regional voice to effectively address housing and growth issues.

The REALTORS® Regional Growth Policy Statement is a cooperative partnership between the North Metro REALTORS® Association, Minneapolis Area Association of REALTORS®, Saint Paul Area Association of REALTORS® and the Southern Twin Cities Association of REALTORS® representing more than 20,000 members involved in all aspects of the real estate industry. REALTORS® are active members of the communities in which we live and work. Knowing our communities is a key part of our job and we are committed to community involvement – from housing options and affordability, to growth and development.

For additional information on local REALTOR® priorities, contact the North Metro REALTORS® Association Director of Public Policy at 763-757-7230.

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