

2020-2021 ABOR PUBLIC POLICY AGENDA

DRAFT

ABOR's 2020 Public Policy Agenda will be used to advocate for REALTOR-friendly issues at City Hall and beyond. Please read through this draft and provide any comments or feedback you have at abor.com/engage or email advocacy@abor.com with any questions. We appreciate your input!

ABOR MISSION STATEMENT

At the Austin Board of REALTORS®, we build connections that strengthen the careers of our members and improve the lives of Central Texas families. We connect our members to unparalleled opportunities for training and professional development, while also strengthening the industry's connection to the highest standards of ethical behavior. We connect homeowners and REALTORS® to the legislative process, speaking up for the place we all call home.

The Preamble to the REALTOR® Code of Ethics

“Under all is the land. Upon its wise utilization and widely allocated ownership depend the survival and growth of free institutions and of our civilization. REALTORS® should recognize that the interests of the nation and its citizens require the highest and best use of the land and the widest distribution of land ownership. They require the creation of adequate housing, the building of functioning cities, the development of productive industries and farms, and the preservation of a healthful environment.”

Public Policy Issue Areas for 2020

HOUSING

The lack of housing affordability in Austin has reached a crisis level. Austin does not have the diverse housing stock needed to enable people of different means and at different stages of life to have choices about where to live.

LAND USE

Despite setbacks in the update process, Austin's need for a refreshed Land Development Code has not changed. Austin still needs a code that allows the City to dynamically plan for growth and access better tools to manage the challenges that come along with it.

PROPERTY RIGHTS

Protecting homeownership and the innate rights that come with this achievement are basic tenets of our commitment to REALTORS® and all Central Texas homeowners.

PROPERTY TAXES

Soaring property taxes have become a major driver of the affordability crisis in Austin. Fiscal measures to get property taxes under control at the state and local level is an absolutely necessary part of the picture.

PUBLIC EDUCATION

Well-supported neighborhood schools greatly enhance neighborhood desirability and build community.

PUBLIC SAFETY

The safety of a community is a primary factor in determining both quality of life and property value.

RENTAL REGISTRATION

Rental registration ordinances infringe on a property owner's ability to conduct business without government interference. In addition, these regulations are often duplicative, ineffective, and intrusive to property owners and tenants.

TRANSPORTATION

As the population in Central Texas grows, the Austin area faces serious mobility challenges. Providing adequate mobility is absolutely critical for maintaining a healthy real estate market and to help sustain our region's growth.

WATER

As meteorologists have noted, the climate of Central Texas is characterized by long periods of drought punctuated with occasional flooding. Expecting and planning for these opposing conditions is the true challenge of water management in Central Texas.

ENERGY

Without access to adequate, reliable and reasonable priced energy, the economic prosperity of its residents are threatened.

GOVERNANCE

The internal processes that define how local governmental bodies function drives how they approach the critical matters that come down to local discretion. Transparency and accountability must be consistently maintained, and all stakeholders must have a voice in the process.

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DRAFT

HOUSING: DIVERSITY OF HOUSING STOCK

WHAT'S THE ISSUE?

Austin does not have the diverse housing stock needed to enable people of different means and at different stages of life to have choices about where to live. In order to support a healthy diverse population within the city, it is imperative to have a diversity of housing options so people of all backgrounds, lifestyles, and incomes can choose where and how to live.

WHY SHOULD REALTORS® CARE?

The path to more inclusive communities is to create conditions that allow for abundant housing options for all residents, both those living here today and those who strive to make the Austin area their home tomorrow. It is good for our regional economy when workers of all incomes can afford to live near their jobs. A broader variety of housing options, ranging from accessory dwelling units to duplexes and multiplexes to townhouses, would provide a robust menu of housing choices that are compatible with nearby single-family dwellings and support vibrant corridors and activity centers. As a community, we must ensure that the homes we create for the people who work, live and play in our region are both affordable and accessible to essential services. This includes supplementing increases in our housing supply with incentives from many levels to support housing for lower-income and vulnerable populations that will not naturally be provided in the market.

ABoR POSITION

Our association supports measures that help ensure a balance of housing types available throughout Central Texas in order to provide homes for all members of the community. These measures include supporting:

- Policies that encourage a wide variety of housing options available to all Central Texans.
- The adoption of a new land development code and map that allows for a broader range of housing types across the City.
- Land use changes that:
 - Promote a rich and diverse supply of housing, including accessory dwelling units, duplexes, multiplexes, and townhouses, particularly around activity corridors and centers that can be well-served by transit.
 - Enhance opportunities for missing middle housing (2 to 10 dwelling units) in “transition areas” around centers and corridors that are of similar building form and scale of surrounding homes.
 - The development of medium-scale housing where appropriate.
- Site plan regulations and design guidelines that encourage housing diversity, instead of creating barriers. For example, regulations requiring an individual water meter for each dwelling unit and prescriptive design guidelines regulating the placement of garages act as barriers to housing, reducing housing capacity, and drive up housing costs.
- The implementation of the Austin Strategic Housing Blueprint.
- The efficient and effective implementation of approved affordable housing bonds.
- Policies that support public schools by enhancing housing supply and options available to Central Texan families around neighborhood schools.

HOUSING: EASING REGULATORY OBSTACLES TO AFFORDABILITY

WHAT'S THE ISSUE?

ABoR recognizes that while many dimensions of housing affordability are beyond the direct influence of local governments, there are quantifiable direct and indirect costs associated with certain regulations.

Local policies and land use regulations often act as barriers to housing supply by making developable land much more costly than it is inherently. These regulations include zoning restrictions, unnecessary building and code requirements, overreaching utility requirements, off-street parking requirements, arbitrary or antiquated preservation regulations, residential conversion restrictions, high development review fees, and unnecessarily slow permitting processes.

WHY SHOULD REALTORS® CARE?

Local governmental entities have the greatest opportunity to find innovative solutions to reduce barriers to housing supply. Without action, excessive local barriers will drive up housing costs, undermining affordable housing at most income levels, and resulting in declines in homeownership.

ABoR POSITIONS

The costs associated with city regulations can influence affordability and must be carefully weighed with an eye toward their cumulative impact on the cost of housing. Regulations with such impact should be streamlined and closely tied to a clear public purpose. In general, ABoR supports:

- Removing unnecessary regulatory barriers that increase the cost of housing or create other barriers to the market's ability to meet regional needs.
- Easing regulations and simplifying processes for homeowners wishing to expand, remodel, or improve their properties, particularly for those wishing to age-in-place.
- Regulations that would allow some level of administrative variances for building regulations to help maximize the shared community values of housing and other public benefits such as tree preservation and flood mitigation.
- Replacing the existing minimum parking requirement of two parking spots per dwelling unit in single-family zoning with a one parking spot minimum.
- Reforms to streamline and expedite residential permitting, especially for small-scale projects.
- Reforms to the development permitting process, which includes application intake, processing, and inspections.
- Relax regulations on affordable housing products (including cooperatives and Accessory Dwelling Units)

HOUSING: HOMELESSNESS

WHAT'S THE ISSUE?

The issue of homelessness has been identified as the City Council's top priority according to the *Austin Strategic Direction 2023*. The number of people experiencing homelessness in Austin continues to rise.

WHY SHOULD REALTORS® CARE?

REALTORS® have a unique perspective to offer as they are on the ground daily across our community, often driving potential Austinites around in their cars. REALTORS® are struggling to consistently communicate the status of the current homelessness situation to their clients. They have difficulty understanding what is legal or illegal based on the complexity of current regulations. Central Texas REALTORS® believe the only way for the community to have a shared understanding and commitment is to have rules in place that are consistent and easily digestible.

ABoR POSITIONS

ABoR is committed to preserving a high quality of life in Central Texas, providing housing for all in our community, and addressing the implications of our region's rapid growth. Our goal is to support a clean, safe, and healthy living environment for all Austinites. In general, ABoR supports:

- Implementing solutions that are based on careful study of best- (and worst-) practices in other cities, data- driven analysis, and thoughtful, measurable steps aimed at making homelessness in our community rare, brief, and non-recurring.
- Creative financing options to help individuals experiencing homelessness.
- Efforts to address homelessness in Austin and believes careful attention should be paid to many aspects of potential solutions, including:
 - Increasing access to housing focused shelters and permanent affordable housing;
 - Protecting all Austinites' access to public health services and resources throughout the city;
 - The right and expectation of all residents to public safety resources and protection; and,
 - The economic impact of homelessness on businesses across the city, potential loss of property values (residential and commercial), and loss of tourism and convention opportunities and revenues.
- Providing clear direction, definition, and intent for any regulations related to camping and obstructing the pedestrian right-of-way so that our dedicated public safety officials have clear authority to ensure public safety for all individuals.
- Consistent city-wide policies on camping and obstructing the pedestrian right-of-way.
- Applying all regulations related to camping and obstructing the pedestrian right-of-way to City facilities.

HOUSING: HOUSING SUPPLY

WHAT'S THE ISSUE?

The lack of housing affordability in Austin has reached a crisis level. This crisis is pushing our workforce and diversity further away from the metro center to areas that are often lacking services and increase transportation costs. Austin's housing supply has not kept pace with its own population growth.

Housing supply has a direct bearing on the cost of housing and Austin does not have the abundance and variety of homes needed. If not addressed, a limited supply of housing will continue to drive up housing costs and soon the only people who will be able to live in Austin will be the extremely wealthy and those in affordable housing.

WHY SHOULD REALTORS® CARE?

One driving factor of Austin's housing affordability crisis is a significant imbalance between supply and demand, which has led to higher prices for homes that spend less time on the market. The constrained housing inventory in the Austin area has a direct impact on affordability.

ABoR POSITIONS

Increasing the supply and variety of housing is the only way to ensure a well-balanced market that fits the diverse needs of Austin's residents. ABoR opposes any form of rental regulation, including rent control measures or rent stabilization laws on both residential and commercial properties. Rent control measures do nothing to address residential construction deterrents like imprudent local zoning measures and high land costs and instead have been shown by economist to reduce the quantity and quality of available housing, while discouraging new construction, encouraging eviction without just cause, increasing rent for unprotected. ABoR supports various measures aimed at increasing our housing supply in order to allow for homes that serve all members of our community, accommodate new populations, and help current residents find what they want. These measures include supporting:

- The implementation of the Austin Strategic Housing Blueprint (ASHB).
- The adoption of a new land development code and map that allows for a housing capacity equivalent to at least three times the ASHB goal of 135,000 new housing units.
- Land use changes aimed at increasing the supply of housing to ensure a well-balanced market that fits the diverse needs of Austin's citizens, including:
 - Reducing the minimum lot size and width;
 - Allowing two residential unit by-right in all residential zones; and
 - Reducing the impact of compatibility standards on development.
- Best practices for evaluating under-utilized public land and buildings for redevelopment.
- Policies that support public schools by enhancing housing supply and options available to Central Texan families around neighborhood schools.

LAND USE: LAND DEVELOPMENT CODE

WHAT'S THE ISSUE?

Despite setbacks in the update process, Austin's need for a refreshed Land Development Code has not changed. Austin still needs a code that allows the City to dynamically plan for growth and access better tools to manage the challenges that come along with it.

Development patterns caused by the current Land Development Code complicate efforts to provide infrastructure needed by an ever fast-growing city and impede building a functional multi-mode transit system, forcing continuing urban sprawl and the increasing the time and cost of mass commuting.

WHY SHOULD REALTORS® CARE?

The region's growing population requires an abundance of housing choices that are well-situated with respect to transit, retail, and employment centers. Providing these choices requires taking a careful look at land development in the urban core, which already has access to employment, and activity centers, and outlying areas, to incentivize development with good access to transit and other services.

ABoR POSITIONS

Unless strong measures are taken, current growth patterns will impact quality of life and solidify the trend of Austin becoming an enclave for the wealthy surrounded by distant suburbs. For these reasons, ABoR is strongly supportive of the refreshed land development code process. The result must be a cleaner, trimmer code that allows for more types of housing in more places. The code should align and support the adopted Austin Strategic Mobility Plan and the implementation of the Austin Strategic Housing Blueprint. It should streamline code requirements by adopting a clear prioritization of values, such as affordability, flooding/detention, greenspace, etc.

We must meet the challenge of housing our rapidly growing population by embracing creative ways to increase the abundance and variety of housing. To this end, ABoR supports Council taking specific, timely steps to update the land development code and bring it into alignment with community values and needs. In addition, ABoR supports a Land Development Code that:

- Protects property rights, removing regulatory obstacles, and advocating for maximum flexibility for homeowner's entitlements;
- Supports a rich and diverse supply of housing, particularly around corridors that are well-served by transit;
- Embraces development that meets smart growth principles;
- Promotes a streamlined and predictable development review process; and
- Increases geographically distributed workforce housing options for all residents.

LAND USE: PERMITTING

WHAT'S THE ISSUE?

Local permitting processes can add costs and uncertainty in the effort to increase housing supply and also to homeowners wishing to develop, expand, remodel or improve their properties. Unnecessarily long permitting processes not only hinder existing homeowners but also restrict housing supply responsiveness to demand. Lengthy permitting processes also introduce inefficiencies for city planners and reviewers whose time could be more effectively spent on other essential tasks. In addition, many localities' permitting processes do not fully leverage new technology to achieve greater speed, reliability, and efficiency.

WHY SHOULD REALTORS® CARE?

Austin's permitting process can appear arbitrary, complicated, expensive, confusing, and unnecessarily lengthy for many homeowners who wish to make improvements to their property. Revising and improving our permitting process, including providing the resources and staffing support that permitting needs, is necessary to achieve the streamlined and responsive development permitting process that Austin deserves.

ABoR POSITIONS

ABoR urges the City of Austin to continue reforming its development permitting process, which includes application intake, processing, and inspections, to the extent possible now, and also parallel with updating the land development code. In general, ABoR supports:

- Reforms to streamline and expedite residential permitting, especially for small-scale projects like replacing windows, exterior doors, and minor bathroom remodels.
- Streamlining or shortening permitting processes and timelines for all types of properties.
- The allocation of adequate resources to conduct development review in a timely and effective manner.
- Implementing metrics to help monitor and evaluate progress of improvements.
- Implementing a retrospective review process to regularly reassess existing regulations to identify opportunities for modify, strengthen, or eliminate regulations in order to achieve the City's goals while minimizing regulatory burden.
- Policies designed to ensure acceptable timelines for the subdivision application process.

PROPERTY RIGHTS

WHAT'S THE ISSUE?

Protecting homeownership and the innate rights that come with this achievement are basic tenets of our commitment to our 13,000+ REALTOR® members and all Central Texas homeowners.

WHY SHOULD REALTORS® CARE?

As the leading advocates for homeownership, and the innate rights that come with this achievement, REALTORS® are uniquely positioned to ensure fair treatment of property owners. Mandate-based programs often have unintended consequences, including negative impacts on affordability and other undesirable outcomes.

ABoR POSITIONS

Our association understands the need for legitimate regulations on properties; however, any legislation should seek to provide an appropriate balance between private-property rights and community standards or public benefits. In general, ABoR:

- Opposes any regulations that would significantly reduce a homeowner's existing entitlements or that would infringe on existing property rights by restricting a homeowner's ability to develop, expand, remodel or improve their properties.
- Supports the creation of incentive-based programs designed to achieve desired public outcomes in lieu of mandates, whenever possible.

PROPERTY TAXES

WHAT'S THE ISSUE?

Soaring property taxes have become a major driver of the affordability crisis in Austin. The steep rise has affected both homeowners, who enjoy some protections under state law, and renters, who are not insulated from rising tax bills. Fiscal measures to get property taxes under control at the state and local level is an absolutely necessary part of the picture.

WHY SHOULD REALTORS® CARE?

Mounting pressures on affordability are resulting in fewer housing choices for Central Texans, and property taxes are a significant driver of these pressures.

A growing number of households in Austin are being forced to make difficult decisions due in part to escalating tax bills. While property tax bills are tied to ever growing market values they are also significantly impacted by the combination of individual tax rates from a overlapping entities that rely on property taxes to fund their daily operations adds.

Keeping property taxes in check at that the state and local level is a key advocacy priority for Central Texas REALTORS® and we advocate for the use of tools that keep property taxes in check – like fiscal responsibility and homestead exemptions.

ABoR POSITIONS

Central Texas REALTORS® support measures designed to resolve escalating property taxes both at the state and local level. These measures include supporting:

- Measures to improve the school finance system at the state level and reduce the burden of property taxes levied by Independent School Districts.
- Increasing local homestead exemptions to the maximum amount allowed under state law.
- Alternative financing options for public priorities, such as tax increment financing, partnerships with private and non-profit groups, and fully leveraging outside funds.
- The adoption of governmental budgets that are based on sound fiscal policies, effectively and efficiently provides services to residents, responsibly allocates funding to reserve funds, and do not significantly impact property taxes.

PUBLIC EDUCATION: LOCAL SCHOOL DISTRICTS

WHAT'S THE ISSUE?

Well-supported neighborhood schools greatly enhance neighborhood desirability and build community, whereas struggling schools present difficult choices for families.

WHY SHOULD REALTORS® CARE?

Stronger partnerships and deeper REALTOR® engagement in local schools is beneficial for schools, neighborhoods, and helps build the professional brand and reputation of members. Part of being a partner to public schools means working with school districts to not only explore innovative mechanisms to secure needed resources but also to help develop modernized workforce programs.

ABoR POSITIONS

ABoR believes that strong schools build strong communities, and we strive to work closely with Central Texas school districts to identify areas of collaboration and opportunities to educate ABoR members about area schools and the programs they offer. In addition, ABoR aims to advance awareness of issues facing central Texas school districts, such as school finance, enrollment challenges, and family-student supports, such as after school programs and family readiness. In general, ABoR supports:

- Exploring innovative funding mechanisms to support our Central Texas schools.
- Developing a real estate career launch program within AISD.
- Partnering with Central Texas school districts where possible.

PUBLIC EDUCATION: SCHOOL FINANCE SYSTEM

WHAT'S THE ISSUE?

Continued reforms to the State's School Finance System are needed to ensure our local schools are properly funded and equipped in educating our future workforce.

WHY SHOULD REALTORS® CARE?

Part of being a partner to public schools means advocating for the resources and support schools need to succeed in an increasingly difficult regulatory environment. This includes addressing the state's responsibility to fund public education, which up to now has stripped far too many resources away from Central Texas students and teachers.

ABoR POSITIONS

ABoR is speaking up on behalf of Central Texas homeowners who have been disproportionately impacted by the state's broken school finance system and the Texas Legislature's inadequate funding of public schools. As a result of a sustained lack of political will to make hard decisions, the Legislature has become reliant on an unreasonable levy from taxpayers in several Central Texas school districts.

Our Texas Legislature needs to continue efforts to reform the system to fund public education adequately and truly end the reliance on recapture, which has effectively become a localized state property tax. Providing meaningful tax relief involves addressing our state's crippled school finance system and the Texas Legislature must consider a holistic solution. In general, ABoR, supports:

- Reforms to the school finance system by the Texas Legislature, including increased state funding of public education in our state.
- Reforms to HB 3 to address the unintended consequences from the law that have led to a lack of clarity in school funding for some districts and has also resulted in unanticipated increases or decreases in funding for individual school districts.

PUBLIC SAFETY

WHAT'S THE ISSUE?

The safety of a community is a primary factor in determining both quality of life and property value. Austin and the greater Central Texas region have been fortunate to be distinguished as having a comparatively low crime rate and a widespread perception of safety in most neighborhoods. Maintaining this distinction is important to our industry.

WHY SHOULD REALTORS® CARE?

Upholding Austin's reputation for being a safe city means maintaining a strong investment in police, fire, and emergency services that grows at pace with our growing metropolitan region.

ABoR POSITIONS

A growing gap between public safety staffing needs and actual funded positions has resulted in reductions to community policing time and response times for AFD and EMS, and, in some communities, has compelled agencies to divert resources away from important priorities. As a community, we must take this growing gap seriously and seek real solutions that adequately staff public safety agencies while also funding other important needs. In general, ABoR supports:

- Response time goals that are set based on national standards for APD, AFD, and EMS.
- Efforts to fill existing vacancies in APD, AFD, and EMS.
- Funding public safety agencies to achieve staffing levels that ensure quick response times to calls for service.
- Adequate resources to allow police departments to meet community engagement time goals and adequately staff investigative units.
- Providing certified crisis intervention training, that incorporates all best practice elements, to all public safety officials.
- Efforts to ensure adequate resources are available so that certified officers are available to respond to mental health-related calls when needed.
- Implementing measures to track and review crisis intervention incidents to improve outcomes.
- The creation of interlocal agreements, including automatic aid agreements, aimed at improving emergency services for residents by reducing response times to emergency incidents and improving Insurance Services Office (ISO) ratings to help lower homeowners insurance costs.

RENTAL REGISTRATION

WHAT'S THE ISSUE?

A large and growing number of cities around the U.S. and in Texas have adopted, or are seeking to adopt, ordinances requiring property owners of rental properties (including single family homes, duplexes, and condo units) to register their properties annually by submitting a registration application, a non-refundable fee, and an annual inspection checklist for each dwelling unit. Rental registration programs often also require the city to conduct a comprehensive inspection every three to five years.

Cities argue rental registration ordinances are necessary to for identifying, deterring, and remedying code violations and threatening conditions. However, cities in Central Texas, like Austin, already have code enforcement divisions whose sole purpose is to identify, deter, and remedy major code violations.

Cities with rental registration programs include at least 20 Texas cities such as Houston, Dallas, Fort Worth, and Arlington, and many U.S. cities such as Seattle, Sacramento, Philadelphia, Boston, Raleigh, Los Angeles, and Minneapolis.

WHY SHOULD REALTORS® CARE?

REALTORS® have a vested interest in protecting Austin's neighborhoods, property owners and tenants, while preserving affordable housing. A rental registration program would affect all rental property owners and tenants. A mandatory rental registration program along these lines would impose costs and administrative burdens on property owners that could affect marketability and affordability. The annual fees and regular property inspections associated with a rental registration program would be widely distributed across all rental property owners but would not necessarily improve compliance among the small group of landlords responsible for the majority of infractions.

ABoR POSITIONS

ABoR opposes any mandatory, blanket program or regulations requiring rental properties to register with a government entity. Rental registration ordinances infringe on a property owner's ability to conduct business without government interference. In addition, these regulations are often duplicative, ineffective, and intrusive to property owners and tenants.

Our association believes cities should use existing tools at their disposal to address nuisance properties, crack down on bad actors, and protect the health and safety of tenants, property owners, and community members.

Austin needs real solutions that make the best use of resources currently available to address dangerous properties and safety issues associated with overcrowding. ABoR supports:

- Alternative approaches that target repeat code offenders and protect the rights of compliant property owners.
- Efforts to take punitive action on repeat code violators.

TRANSPORTATION

WHAT'S THE ISSUE?

As the population in Central Texas grows, the Austin area faces serious mobility challenges. Providing adequate mobility is absolutely critical for maintaining a healthy real estate market and to help sustain our region's growth.

WHY SHOULD REALTORS® CARE?

ABoR advocates for a regional approach to improving, sustaining, and expanding mobility in Central Texas in order to relieve traffic congestion now and meet the future needs of a rapidly growing population. This includes working with other local governments and organizations to coordinate responses to shared mobility challenges. It also means emphasizing the need to grow our transit routes to coincide with our regional growth.

ABoR POSITIONS

ABoR is committed to improving our regional transportation planning and infrastructure. We encourage local officials to perform a cost-benefit evaluation of all proposed mobility projects, including identifying the specific, quantifiable costs and/or benefits of each proposed project in view of the costs of construction and ongoing maintenance and operation, prior to supporting a specific project. In general, ABoR supports:

- Strategic addition of roadway capacity to improve travel efficiency in our region.
- Efforts to improve signal light synchronization and adopt innovative adaptive traffic signals.
- Measures to move more people around Central Texas by investing in cost effective public transportation, including the vision laid out by Project Connect.
- Policies aimed to implement the Austin Strategic Mobility Plan, including measures to:
 - Reduce the amount of time Central Texans spend traveling between home, work, school, and other activities;
 - Lower the costs Central Texans spend traveling in Austin by providing affordable travel options;
 - Protect Central Texans by lowering the risk of travel related injury and promoting public health; and
 - Promote economic growth for individuals and the city through strategic investments in transportation networks that meet the needs of the 21st century
- Reasonable Travel Demand Management (TDM) regulations aimed at improving mobility by reducing the number of vehicles traveling during peak congestion hours.
- Efforts to enhance regional-level research and planning on transportation, housing and land use issues, and economic development activities.

WATER

WHAT'S THE ISSUE?

As meteorologists have noted, the climate of Central Texas is characterized by long periods of drought punctuated with occasional flooding. Climate change indicates a trend toward higher average temperatures in the long-term, making conservation all the more important. Expecting and planning for these opposing conditions is the true challenge of water management in Central Texas.

WHY SHOULD REALTORS® CARE?

With the Austin metropolitan area consistently ranking among the top in the country in population growth, current drinking water supply and infrastructure in Central Texas may not be adequate to meet the needs of our rapidly expanding community. Ensuring a durable water supply for the long term is key to maintaining our quality of life and the stability of our local economy. ABoR also recognizes that the challenges facing Central Texas extend beyond water supply issues to questions around how to manage floodwater and ensure a high degree of water quality throughout the region.

ABoR POSITIONS

ABoR maintains that quality of life is one of the main drivers of economic development in Central Texas, and the threat of low to no water supply is a potential deterrent to our future growth. As our water supply diminishes, so does our quality of life and the stability of our local economy. In general, ABoR:

- Encourages local officials to be deeply involved in the research and implementation of projects that would add to our current water resources.
- Supports efforts to build and reinforce existing water infrastructure.
- Supports efforts to educate the public on the importance of conserving and protecting the quality and availability of our local water supply.
- Support evolving conservation initiatives like the expanded use of collected rainwater and greywater.
- Supports the development of plans for addressing the pressing challenges of water loss due to evaporation in reservoirs and managing water loss through existing and newly installed water infrastructure.
- Supports efforts to find alternative sources of water to supplement our current supply long-term.
- Support the implementation of Austin's Water Forward plan.

ENERGY

WHAT'S THE ISSUE?

Without access to adequate, reliable and reasonably priced energy, the economic prosperity of Texas and its citizens is threatened. Through conservation and sustainable building practices, we as an industry can help bring down these exorbitant costs.

WHY SHOULD REALTORS® CARE?

Studies show consumers consider energy efficiency an important factor when buying a home. While energy efficiency is not the only green building feature consumers focus on, it is an important aspect when determining a consumer's ability to afford a home.

Consumer awareness of green building continues to rise. "Green" is defined in a variety of ways, and those definitions are changing constantly. Regardless of the many ways green is classified, REALTORS® are aware of its impact on the real estate industry.

ABoR POSITIONS

Because of the important role rising energy costs play in homeownership, ABoR supports:

- Efforts to keep energy rates as low as possible.
- Energy conservation efforts.
- Standardized disclosures of energy efficiency in residential homes.

GOVERNANCE

WHAT'S THE ISSUE?

The internal processes that define how local governmental bodies function drives how they approach the critical matters that come down to local discretion. Transparency and accountability must be consistently maintained, and all stakeholders must have a voice in the process.

WHY SHOULD REALTORS® CARE?

ABoR strives to be a strong force for positive change in improving not only what policies are adopted but how they are decided upon.

ABoR POSITIONS

Our association supports measures that increase transparency and accountability in our local governments. In general, ABoR supports:

- A data-driven analysis of policy decisions that includes careful evaluation of the potential impacts of a proposed policy prior to Council consideration, including the impact on REALTOR® businesses, the real estate profession, and current and future homeowners.
- An open and transparent process in all aspects of policymaking and implementation. Openness and transparency in policymaking means:
 - That decisions are discussed in a forum that is accessible to the community at large, including residents unavailable during weekday working hours; and
 - Necessary information is readily available for residents to be effective participants in the deliberations of their local government.
- The adoption of innovative technologies to boost opportunities for engagement.
- Legislation that would require neighborhood planning groups, and other quasi-governmental entities that have a part in the decision-making process about people's property, to be more transparent, accessible to the public, and comply with the Texas Open Meetings Act.
- Efforts to make neighborhood planning groups more accessible and inclusive to all neighbors, including renters.
- Legislation that would revise requirements for citizen-initiated petitions in Austin to better align with requirements from peer cities in Texas.