

Minneapolis Area Association of REALTORS® Vacant and Abandoned Properties Policy Position Statement

A primary concern of the Minneapolis Area Association of REALTORS® is maintaining high quality housing stock at prices Minnesota families can afford.

Cities and neighborhoods may see increases in vacant and abandoned property from time to time. Issues that arise when properties are vacant or abandoned include blight, break-ins, property damage and declines in value. Naturally, these problems are concerning to our cities, residents and REALTORS®.

Some cities, seeking solutions, have moved towards adoption of vacant property registration ordinances. Cities target properties that are not being maintained or occupied. We support municipal efforts to enforce existing code requirements through notifications and fines for incomplete maintenance. We believe that most cities' current property maintenance codes are sufficient and can be utilized to address all property maintenance issues.

Additional registration ordinances do little to address the issue of proper care and maintenance of vacant and abandoned properties. Too often, these regulations overburden responsible owners and present barriers to prospective buyers. Excessive fees and inspection requirements are often applied too broadly and sweep up properties that are merely "currently unoccupied" rather than "abandoned and blighted." Legitimate reasons for unoccupied property do exist and include the need to temporarily relocate due to employment, military service, natural disaster, age or health care issues. REALTORS® are concerned when the unintended consequences of these additional regulations require homeowners and residents to pay exorbitant fees, disclose personal information, and have their homes invasively inspected without due cause.

Moreover, public registration and on-premise notifications of vacant properties can create a significant security risk through publication of all unoccupied buildings within a city, making those properties easy targets for squatters, thieves, and vandals. These policies are not necessary to effectively monitor vacant properties. Posting properties with on-premise notifications is not advised and should be avoided.

In the case, of forfeited (owned by government) vacant or abandoned property REALTORS® recommend disposition policies that favor expeditious and effective marketing to encourage a return to highest and best use.

REALTORS® believe the best solution to vacant abandoned properties is a return to occupied status and productive use by new owners and/or occupants. Any vacant or abandoned property ordinance should avoid inhibiting natural economic recovery in the housing marketplace. Vacant and abandoned property ordinances and policies should incentivize home and property ownership, not present barriers.

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