



Southern Maryland Association of REALTORS®

Legislative Positions

Updated 2023

Our Guiding Philosophy/Our Positions

The Southern Maryland Association of REALTORS® is guided by several core philosophies which we keep at the forefront of our advocacy efforts. We advocate for home ownership, property rights, economic growth and development, and the future of our region. Our job as an Association is to help work with elected officials to better the lives of our members, property owners, and communities.

- ▶ REALTORS® are dedicated to supporting and protecting property rights and to place home ownership within reach of all who are financially able. Stable ownership of real property positively impacts neighborhoods, communities, and Southern Maryland's economic stability.
- ▶ REALTORS® support laws and regulations which strengthen the relationship and understanding between landlords and tenants. This mutual understanding is supported with the professional guidance, advice, and service offered to both customer bases by REALTORS®.
- ▶ REALTORS® support managed growth policies which encourage a balanced supply and demand of housing opportunities, business friendly economic growth and development policies, quality educational opportunities, adequate multi-modal transportation, and a state-of-the-art communications infrastructure, while protecting the environment and quality of life that has made Southern Maryland a desirable place to live and work.
- ▶ REALTORS® are committed to the Fair Housing Act and the proposition that all persons, regardless of race, color, religion, national origin, familial status, disability, gender, sexual orientation, or socio-economic status have a right to home ownership.
- ▶ REALTORS® support broad-based general tax revenues to meet the cost of necessary government services to provide for individual and community needs which cannot be provided by individuals or private organizations.

Growth Policies and Economic Development

Economic growth and development are critical to the long-term health and vibrancy of Southern Maryland. A diversity of economic activity will create jobs and ensure the future growth of Southern Maryland. REALTORS® are committed to the proposition that economic growth can take place while simultaneously protecting property rights, balancing the needs of the environment and the integrity of a county's comprehensive plan.

- ▶ REALTORS® are committed to the preservation of property rights and believe that government laws and regulations for the downzoning, devaluing and/or taking of private property should be exercised conservatively with fair and just compensation for affected property owners.
- ▶ REALTORS® believe local county governments should fund from their existing property and income tax bases the

necessary public facilities such as schools, water and sewer, transportation and other public facilities at a rate to keep up with the growth in population.

- ▶ REALTORS® oppose impact fees, development excise taxes, and other "nuisance" taxes, which rob equity and discourage home ownership and economic growth as these costs are generally transferred to buyers and tenants.
- ▶ REALTORS® oppose sales and use taxes on real estate services or commissions.
- ▶ REALTORS® support "Live Where You Work" economic development and Smart Growth policies that encourage the growth of small businesses, attract large businesses, and the revitalization of older, densely developed areas.
- ▶ REALTORS® support the improvement and expansion of broadband and wireless communications in Southern Maryland.



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Home Ownership Matters

- ▶ REALTORS® support a concerted effort to protect and promote responsible and affordable home ownership.
- ▶ REALTORS® support home ownership because it strengthens and stabilizes our communities.
- ▶ REALTORS® support the notion that anyone who is able and willing to assume the responsibility of owning a home should have the opportunity to pursue that dream.
- ▶ REALTORS® support laws and policies that strengthen homeowner associations and condominium associations consistent with owner's rights, where they are in place, with the goal of sustaining the quality of the neighborhood and property values.
- ▶ REALTORS® support effective and comprehensive local code enforcement and administration to sustain and improve the quality of housing stock, regardless of occupant, and reduce the number of distressed housing units thus improving the quality of neighborhoods.
- ▶ REALTORS® support rental housing as an option when home ownership is not a financial option; and for short term residents, such as the military.
- ▶ REALTORS® support local housing authorities to establish responsible financial assistance programs such as housing trust funds and sweat equity programs that assist qualified first-time home buyers.
- ▶ REALTORS® oppose a regulatory environment that creates an imbalance in the supply and demand of homes.

Additional Financial Burdens

The additional costs such as property tax escrows, real estate transfer taxes and recordation fees, have a negative impact on home ownership and economic growth. High closing costs discourage housing opportunities for first-time home buyers and others from making their home in our community. Unnecessary building and zoning requirements add to the cost of affordability. As a result, Southern Maryland loses the opportunity to attract new business investment to respond to the increased demand for goods and services.

The imposition of impact fees and development excise taxes discourages new businesses from locating in Southern Maryland, existing businesses from expanding here, and inflates the cost of new housing. Impact fees and development excise taxes place the burden for funding public facilities on a small segment of the housing community; however, the entire county benefits from these improvements.

- ▶ REALTORS® oppose all efforts to impose or increase local transfer and recordation taxes to increase general county revenues and support the elimination of all taxes on the transfer of real property.

- ▶ REALTORS® oppose impact fees, development excise taxes and the concept of system development charges and any efforts to increase them.
- ▶ REALTORS® oppose imposition of narrow-focused fees and taxes such as impact fees, excise taxes, real estate transfer and recordation taxes, department-generated user fees, and other 'hidden taxes' that increase the cost of housing and reduce opportunities for home ownership.



Transportation, Education, Public Safety and the Environment

Many issues affect the everyday housing community from its value, tax structure, to overall community benefits. Some of these issues include traffic, good schools, safe neighborhoods and a healthy ecosystem. The following include basic position statements regarding these issues.

- ▶ REALTORS® support making infrastructure improvements a priority in the capital budgets of all three Southern Maryland counties. REALTORS® oppose mandated funding as a solution.
- ▶ REALTORS® urge local county officials to work with surrounding county governments to collaborate on traffic plans, congestion and safety as many of our residents use these highways to commute.
- ▶ REALTORS® support improvements and upgrades to the Thomas Johnson bridge and other local infrastructure challenges.
- ▶ REALTORS® support school funding mechanisms that provide a broad based and predictable stream of income for the sufficient operations of our school systems.
- ▶ REALTORS® oppose unfunded environmental mandates imposed by government especially down-zoning and devaluation of private property, bans on individual private septic systems, and point-of-sale mandates that require a seller of real property to perform environmental audits or retrofit real property to conform to environmental regulations in order to realize a conveyance.