

Housing Opportunities Stressed in Quality of Life Campaign

The need for affordable housing opportunities was featured in an introductory presentation of the REALTOR® [Quality of Life](#) program made to the Kitsap County Planning Commission on Sept. 5. Five of the seven members of the planning commission were in attendance at the meeting, as were several local builders and State Representative Bill Eickmeyer (D), recently endorsed for re-election by the Washington Association of REALTORS®.

"The real estate and development industry and Kitsap County have had a long, contentious history," said Vivian Henderson, government affairs director, Kitsap County Association of REALTORS®. "I noticed a genuine interest in our program from the planning commission members. More importantly, I believe they appreciated the REALTOR® Quality of Life housing presentation. For the first time, I felt a reception from those members for our ideas and solutions to the threats we are facing to a healthy housing market."

After learning more about REALTOR® knowledge of communities-including such critical concerns as transportation, school construction, funding resources for recreation and open spaces, land use, growth and tax incentive proposals that encourage housing opportunities and community revitalization-the planning commission was asked to assure that REALTORS® are at the table when growth, land use and community issues are being decided. Feedback from the meeting indicated recognition of the need to address housing opportunities during upcoming Growth Management Act-required reviews of comprehensive plans and a willingness to work with REALTORS® on these issues, reported W.A.R. Director of Government Affairs Bryan Wahl.

"Housing plays a major role in accommodating quality growth in Washington," Wahl said. "Economic growth drives both the demand for workers and the corresponding demand for housing. Accessibility to housing for all income levels is absolutely necessary for quality growth of the state and its individual communities. Without available and suitably located housing, it becomes increasingly difficult for companies to attract and retain a qualified workforce."

"Housing is considered affordable when people who work in a community can obtain decent, safe housing in that community without undue financial burden and when home ownership is an achievable aspiration for a broad range of households," Wahl continued. "While government-subsidized affordable housing programs make housing accessible to low-income households, the government cannot build enough housing or spend enough money to solve the affordability gap that confronts many families in our state. The solution is to increase the supply of housing relative to demand and cause housing prices to fall."

Recognizing that sustaining and enhancing quality of life occurs through building better communities at the local level, REALTORS® recommended the following [actions](#) to increase housing opportunities:

- **Review comprehensive plans to ensure community needs and vision are appropriately addressed, goals set, quality growth planned for, and actions taken to meet the needs of a growing community.** Elements within this recommendation focus on housing, economic development, land use and performance measures.
- **Complete a detailed review of the zoning code, development regulations and permitting process to ensure regulations implement the goals of the comprehensive plan.** Within this recommendation, zoning codes should be revised to increase flexibility, performance standards emphasizing outcomes should be adopted, density allowances ensuring feasible development should be permitted, and the development review process should be consolidated and coordinated to provide certainty.
- **Prioritize capital facilities expenditures for strategic infrastructure investments that encourage quality housing opportunities and choices.** This recommendation includes the need to adopt infrastructure investments to support quality development through the capital facilities budget.
- **Provide developer incentives to encourage development,** including the reduction of fees and development costs.
- **Provide developers with site-readiness through pre-permitting for development** by conducting detailed environmental analysis at the outset.

"REALTORS® help our communities meet these challenges of growth, because we know our neighborhoods inside and out," Wahl said. "Because we understand the key selling points of a community and what makes it attractive to potential residential, commercial and industrial development, we also have the expertise necessary to make logical decisions on quality growth and land use."

This presentation on housing opportunities, as well as presentations on [economic vitality](#) and the overall [Quality of Life campaign](#), will be featured at the [Fall Business Meeting](#) in Spokane. These resources will be made available to local associations in the near future. Wahl also will deliver the presentation on housing opportunities at the W.A.R.-cosponsored [Housing Washington 2000](#) conference Sept. 25-27 in Spokane.

For more about the [Quality of Life campaign](#), read online REALTOR® articles about the [Quality of Life Principles](#) and the [Quality of Life Pledge](#). Posted 9/7/00. Archived 10/5/00 and 7/2/01.