



August 15, 2024

The Honorable Mike Kelly
Chair
Tax Team on Community Development
House Committee on Ways & Means
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Claudia Tenney
Vice Chair
Tax Team on Community Development
House Committee on Ways & Means
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Kelly and Vice Chair Tenney:

On behalf of the 1.5 million members of the National Association of REALTORS®, I write to share our acute concern about the lack of availability and affordability of housing in our Nation and to recommend specific tax reform ideas to alleviate this plight that are within the purview of the Tax Team on Community Development.

Based on various studies, the United States faces a critical shortage of as many as 7 million homes. Over the past several years, America's supply problem has worsened, and housing has grown increasingly expensive and out of reach for more and more Americans. As champions serving at the front of the housing cause, REALTORS® can attest that most areas of the Nation are in a housing crisis.

According to NAR's most recent Housing Affordability Index, the ability of typical families to afford to purchase a median-price home has continued to decline throughout the Nation. The latest index, for May 2024, was 93.1, compared with 99.6 one year ago. An index below 100 means that a family with a median income had less than the income required to afford a median-priced home.

A June 2024 study by the Joint Center for Housing Studies of Harvard University concluded that the U.S. home price index is 47 percent higher than it was in 2020, with the median sales price of homes at about five times the median household income. In the rental market, meanwhile, rents are up 26 percent since 2020 and are rising in most markets. Also, the number of people experiencing homelessness reached a record high in 2023.

Obviously, there is no one simple "magic bullet" solution to our housing crisis. Rather, policymakers at the national, state, and local levels must pursue changes in different areas to increase the affordability and availability of homes. NAR believes Congress can begin to turn around the housing crisis by including in the Internal Revenue Code various measures designed to improve the supply of homes and facilitate increased homeownership possibilities for Americans.


More specific to the topic of housing needs as part of community development in America, we believe that the following legislative proposals deserve the Work Group’s study and consideration:

- The bipartisan **Affordable Housing Credit Improvement Act** (H.R. 3238) would encourage investment in creating and preserving affordable housing by expanding the low-income housing tax credit (LIHTC).
- The bipartisan **Neighborhood Homes Investment Act** (H.R. 3940) would attract private investment for building and rehabilitating owner-occupied homes by offering tax credits that create a pathway to neighborhood stability through sustainable homeownership. Providing this powerful incentive to build and rehabilitate homes for low- and moderate-income homeowners can fill the gap in areas where it is often more expensive to develop or rehabilitate than appraisal values will support.
- The bipartisan **Workforce Housing Tax Credit Act** (H.R. 6686) would create a workforce housing tax credit, similar to the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit, which would be allocated by state Housing Finance Agencies and targeted to “middle-income” families, who earn too much to qualify for low-income affordable housing and not enough to afford housing near where they work without assistance.
- The bipartisan **Revitalizing Downtowns and Main Streets Act** (H.R. 9002) would encourage the development of new housing units by incentivizing the conversion of under-used commercial buildings to residential properties with a tax credit for qualified property conversion expenditures. Many commercial properties can be adapted to better suit the needs of the new economy and of communities and to create job opportunities, including adding multifamily and affordable housing as well as mixed-use spaces.
- The bipartisan **More Homes on the Market Act** (H.R. 1321) would alleviate the home sale inflation tax and incentivize more longer-term owners to sell their homes by increasing the maximum amount of capital gains a homeowner can exclude on the sale of a principal residence and annually adjusting it for future inflation.

In addition, we believe it is imperative, as part of tax reform, to preserve and even strengthen 1031 like-kind exchanges. Section 1031, which has been a critical part of the Internal Revenue Code since 1921, has been instrumental in creating more rental housing units for the families of American workers. The majority of properties exchanged are held by small investors, and in 89% of the exchanges, clients invested significant additional capital into the property, creating jobs and increasing economic growth. Like-kind exchanges accelerate economic growth by preventing properties from languishing. They put real estate into the hands of new owners with the time, resources, and desire to restore and improve them, which invigorates the economy and creates jobs. NAR strongly believes this provision must be maintained.

NAR is committed to working with the Tax Team on Community Development and with the full Ways and Means Committee to create new and innovative ways that our Federal tax law can help ensure the American Dream of homeownership remains within reach for millions who are presently at risk of not attaining it. The tax reform discussions that the Congress has already begun and that will continue into next year represent an ideal time to take the first steps to

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turning around the housing crisis.

Sincerely,

Kevin M. Sears

2024 President, National Association of REALTORS®

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