

# Greensboro Regional REALTORS®

## Association Policy Priorities & Positions

*Updated January 2021*



### Contents

Contents	1
2021 Local Policy Priorities	3
School Improvements	3
Promoting Broad-Based Revenue Streams	3
Diversifying and Increasing Affordable Housing Stock	3
Advocating for Fair Housing	3
COVID-19 Safety	3
Spur Local Economic Development	4
<b>Official Policy Positions</b>	4
Adequate Public Facilities Ordinances	4
Broadband Access	4

Broad-Based Revenue Streams	5
Community Safety	5
Construction and Funding of the Greensboro Loop	5
Directional Sign Ordinances	5
Economic Development	6
Fair Housing and Nondiscrimination	6
Homeowners Association (HOA) Operations	6
Housing Opportunities	6
Impact Fees on New Development	7
Infrastructure Bonds	7
Innovative Financing of Development, Redevelopment and Infrastructure Projects	7
Licensure of Landlords and/or Rental Units	7
Mineral, Oil, and Gas (MOG) Rights	7
Moratoria on New Housing and Development	7
Predatory Lending	8
Private Property Rights and Eminent Domain	8
Privatization of Government Provided Services	8
Professional Services Tax	8
Public Private Partnerships and Stakeholders	9
Quality of Life	9
Regionalism in Government Provided Services	9
Sales Tax for School Funding	9
School Construction	9
State and Federal Tax Programs	10
Stormwater Management	10
Taxes on the Transfer of Real Property	10

Teacher Salary Incentives	10
Technology in Schools	11
Transfer of Development Rights	11

# 2021 Local Policy Priorities

## School Improvements

GRRRA fully supports efforts to improve the local schools in Guilford County. The 2019 Guilford County Schools Facilities Master Plan makes it clear that greater funding is needed to improve the state of our schools. In 2020, GRRRA supported both the \$300 million school bond and the quarter cent sales tax. These measures were a first step toward improving the state of our schools, but GRRRA believes further funding is needed. GRRRA aims to support efforts to place a larger bond amount on the ballot in the 2022 primary season. Additionally, GRRRA supports efforts to responsibly pay for a bond through a quarter cent sales tax increase.

## Promoting Broad-Based Revenue Streams

In 2021, GRRRA anticipates county and city leaders will be faced with finding revenue streams for various projects and initiatives. As always, GRRRA will be advocating for responsible and broad-based revenue streams. GRRRA is willing to accept reasonable property tax increases but urges the Board of County Commissioners to seek out diversified revenue streams like sales taxes. GRRRA discourages the use of impact fees and other harmful fees that make housing less affordable.

## Diversifying and Increasing Affordable Housing Stock

REALTORS understand the necessity of housing stock to a local community. Due to COVID-19, Greensboro’s housing stock is at some of the lowest levels we’ve ever seen. GRRRA supports policies that will drive new development in and around Greensboro while encouraging urban density and affordable housing. GRRRA looks forward to partnering with Greensboro on their 10 Year Affordable Housing Plan in order to promote Smart Growth policies and the development of diverse housing types.

## Advocating for Fair Housing

GRRRA unequivocally supports fair housing policies and adheres to a strict code of ethics regarding fair housing laws. GRRRA does not tolerate fair housing violations by its members. The association will use 2021 to educate its members about the importance of promoting fair housing policies while also partnering with local officials and stakeholders to pass laws that make housing accessible to all.

## COVID-19 Safety

During the age of COVID-19, GRRRA will continue to promote safe practices and guidelines for all its members. Thankfully, GRRRA and its members have been able to conduct business safely during COVID-

19 and will continue to do so into 2021. GRRRA believes that real estate is a vital part of our local economy and serves an essential function in our community. Without real estate, many individuals would not have access to financial equity or be able to make major life changes. GRRRA will advocate against any policies that undermine GRRRA’s designation as an essential service and restrict the ability of our members to safely operate their brokerages.

### Spurring Local Economic Development

During 2021, GRRRA will prioritize any efforts to increase economic development in Greensboro and across Guilford County. By further funding our school system and instituting the necessary policies to make Greensboro a safer place to live, GRRRA believes businesses will begin to move to our area. In addition, offering incentives to businesses looking to relocate to our area will also be an excellent way to attract jobs and grow the local economy and real estate market.

## Official Policy Positions

### Adequate Public Facilities Ordinances

The Greensboro Regional Realtors® Association (GRRRA) supports the use of sound planning tools and municipal cooperation in preparing for and anticipating growth challenges. Adequate Public Facilities Ordinances (APFOs) wrongly assume that stopping development will stop population growth. GRRRA opposes APFOs because they merely push development away from a certain area and often create sprawl.

School APFOs require that the school system “sign off” on any new development that would generate more students than their current capacity. This places land use and development decisions with the school board instead of elected officials of the local government, which GRRRA opposes.

Some APFOs offer the developer to pay into a mitigation fund if there is not school capacity, which is simply an impact fee in disguise.

### Broadband Access

Broadband access is necessary in modern society for individuals to achieve good economic, educational, and social outcomes. GRRRA supports state and local efforts to expand broadband access throughout rural and underserved areas in Guilford, Randolph, and Rockingham counties. Through increased funding, financial incentives, and private-public partnerships, state and local governments can expand North Carolina’s infrastructure in a way that gives even the most rural communities high-speed broadband access.

## Broad-Based Revenue Streams

GRRRA supports the use of broad-based revenue streams to ensure that the burden of paying for additional community needs are shared by all, including renters, homeowners, business, and non-resident users.

Property taxes are a fair way to spread out the financial burden of paying for community benefits, however, cost-saving measures should always be explored before decisions are made to raise property taxes.

Sales taxes, while regressive, are also a broad-based measure to ensure everyone pays, by capturing transient revenues from users. As of the publication of this document, GRRRA supports the adoption of a quarter cent sales tax increase in Guilford County.

## Community Safety

GRRRA understands the value of a safe and secure community. In order to create such a community, GRRRA knows public officials must institute laws and policies that fight against crime and make our community a better place to live. GRRRA supports law enforcement and their efforts to protect all of our current and future residents in Guilford, Randolph, and Rockingham Counties.

In the event any of these efforts are discriminatory or hurt various members of our community in a disproportionate way, GRRRA will oppose them. In no way does GRRRA endorse racial profiling or policies that discriminate against minority groups.

## Construction and Funding of the Greensboro Loop

GRRRA supports accelerated construction and funding of the Loop, including the eastern portion.

Guilford County is growing at a rapid rate and it is critical that transportation routes match this growth to promote levels of safety, quality of life, and economic development in Guilford County.

In order to expedite the construction of the parkway, GRRRA supports the concept of tolling and urges the General Assembly to approve sufficient gap funding to ensure earlier (and therefore less expensive) construction of these important projects.

## Directional Sign Ordinances

GRRRA opposes ordinances that prohibit temporary directional real estate signs. REALTORS® support ordinances that set guidelines to allow such signs.

Directional signs are vital to citizens buying or selling residential property when property is not located directly on major thoroughfares. In many cases, the consumer does not realize that properties nearby may be on the market.

Guidelines for directional signs can help preserve the aesthetics of the community. Reasonable guidelines can be set for sign size, height, location, duration of placement, and number of signs per listing or subdivision.

## Economic Development

GRRRA supports efforts to grow the local economy in Guilford County. GRRRA supports the work of the Guilford County Economic Development Alliance and applauds the efforts to grow Guilford, Randolph, and Rockingham Counties and the Triad as a region.

GRRRA supports incentives that bring business to Guilford, Rockingham, and Randolph Counties alongside reasonable tax measures in order to attract jobs and grow our county’s tax base.

## Fair Housing and Nondiscrimination

In accordance with the REALTOR® Code of Ethics, GRRRA supports Fair Housing measures which prohibit housing discrimination against any person for reasons of race, color, religion, sex, handicap, familial status, national origin, sexual orientation, or gender identity. Additionally, GRRRA strongly rejects any legislation or business practice which targets the aforementioned groups.

## Homeowners Association (HOA) Operations

GRRRA supports community improvements and maintenance often achieved through the use of neighborhood HOAs. We oppose however, excessive costs associated with the operations of these associations.

Excessive file/record change fees that can cost several hundred dollars are oftentimes arbitrary and affect not only the closing costs of the property but also the overall affordability of the property.

Private transfer fees and initial capital reserve account contributions penalize homeowners for selling, and negatively impact the affordability of the property.

## Housing Opportunities

GRRRA will maintain a leadership role to support safe and reliable housing choices at an affordable price. To achieve this goal, our association supports:

- The elimination of substandard housing through fair, yet aggressive enforcement of local building codes
- Local zoning classifications for all housing types.
- Expedited approval for inspection processes, simplified regulations where possible, and reduced fees to save cost in development and construction
- Incentives and zoning classifications that encourage development and redevelopment.
- Municipal, county, state, and federal incentives for development of sub-market priced housing, both non-profit and for-profit
- Usage of Community Development Block grants and HOPE grants to achieve affordable housing and workforce housing goals.
- Federal housing assistance programs like Section 8 rental housing or multi-family and single-family rental housing development tax credits- including the American Dream Tax Credit.
- Qualified Opportunity Zones and programs that encourage economic growth in underserved communities through tax incentives for investors

## Impact Fees on New Development

GRRA opposes impact fees on new development because they ultimately increase the cost of homeownership and make it unaffordable for more families. A lack of affordable housing would noticeably decrease the area’s economy and quality of life.

## Infrastructure Bonds

GRRA supports bonds as a means of enhancing financing education, roads, water systems, parks and recreation. Financing through bonds allows a community to extend the cost of improvements over a long period of time among a fair distribution of present and future users.

## Innovative Financing of Development, Redevelopment and Infrastructure Projects

GRRA supports innovative financing methods when local governments consider original development, redevelopment and infrastructure projects including:

- Tax Increment Financing (TIF) or Project Development Financing (PDF)
- Public-Private Partnerships that allow the private sector to construct and manage facility assets for public use, often saving time and money to the local or county governments

## Licensure of Landlords and/or Rental Units

GRRA opposes landlord licensure and registration of rental units with local governments.

A person’s right to own and use private property is a protected right under the U.S. Constitution. We believe existing zoning and nuisance ordinances, with proper enforcement, would remedy the need for licensing property owners who choose to rent their properties.

If municipalities have trouble obtaining accurate owner information, they should incentivize landlords to maintain contact information.

## Mineral, Oil, and Gas (MOG) Rights

GRRA supports legislation which protects landowners’ rights to the land above and below the ground, including potential minerals, oil, or gas which may be located there.

## Moratoria on New Housing and Development

GRRA opposes any moratorium on new housing and development.

The association maintains a pro-growth ideology, encouraging economic prosperity for the communities of Guilford County.

New housing and development creates a demand for more jobs and services, decreasing unemployment, and simultaneously increasing the tax base. By doing so, new housing and development pays for itself.

## Predatory Lending

GRRA supports government action to combat unfair and deceptive lending practices. Guidance documents that do not have the authority of rulemaking give little assurance to lending consumers weary of deceptive lenders. Lending plays a vital role in helping families achieve homeownership, but consumers need to make sure they are not dealing with a predatory lender. Some of the problems associated with predatory lending are:

- High interest rates and fees
- Broken promises/ Bait and Switch tactics
- Loans which start with a very low/ sub-prime rate and escalate later
- Persuasion to “flip” or refinance loans several times
- Lenders steering clients towards more expensive loans when they qualify for more affordable options

GRRA supports the federal rulemaking process to oversee unscrupulous lenders. We also oppose the pre-emption of strict state laws by the federal Office of the Comptroller of the Currency.

## Private Property Rights and Eminent Domain

The Greensboro Regional Realtors® Association supports policy that protects and enhances private property rights.

The Fifth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution protects private property rights as follows: “...nor shall private property be taken for public use, without just compensation.”

The REALTOR® community recognizes the need of government to acquire land for the public benefit but urges caution in the interpretation of ‘public use.’ As a matter of fairness, government entities should justify their actions and fairly compensate private property owners as directed by the 5<sup>th</sup> Amendment.

## Privatization of Government Provided Services

The Greensboro Regional Realtors® Association supports quality privatization of government provided services when possible. Privatized services should function at a level of quality that is equal to or better than the level of service provided by the government.

Privatization creates a competitive market for service providers, which in turn lowers prices, raises the quality of services, and decreases tax burdens. GRRA does not include schools in this context of privatization.

## Professional Services Tax

Currently, the state of NC has a very narrow taxable base but with a very high rate. Tax reform proponents argue that all goods and services fall under the ‘taxable’ umbrella, expanding the base and allowing for the reduction of the rate.

GRRA opposed any tax on professional services, which directly impacts the cost of a home. Housing affordability makes our region a great place to live.



A small sampling of professional services which could fall under this umbrella include engineers, attorneys, surveyors, contractors, landscapers, Realtors®, builders, electricians, plumbers, etc. In our industry, this could lead to additional costs of approximately 6.75% and increase the costs of new construction.

## Public Private Partnerships and Stakeholders

As an association composed of local real estate experts, GRRRA willingly offers its expertise to local elected officials when they need additional information regarding our industry. GRRRA is the largest trade association in the city of Greensboro and we look forward to opportunities to participate in the local government process as well as participate in private sector initiatives.

## Quality of Life

With a large membership in the city of Greensboro, GRRRA acknowledges the importance of making the city a great place to work and live so that it can attract more people to our community. Continued support of parks, recreation, and events not only make Greensboro a fun place to live, but also serves as an economic driver. Utilizing smart growth and smart design principles, the city can ensure to meet the popular demands of walkability, high density, and mixed-use development.

## Regionalism in Government Provided Services

GRRRA supports efficient regional approaches to providing local government services in order to reduce the taxpayer burden and increase the quality of services. State incentives for local governments participating in consolidation efforts, could greatly aid this process. GRRRA is particularly invested in the regional work of the Carolina Core and groups that engage the Triad as a whole.

## Sales Tax for School Funding

GRRRA supports a reasonable local option sales tax to finance school capital projects. Such a tax should not apply to food and medicine. A sales tax fairly distributes the cost of capital projects among all users. Research shows that a sales tax would generate greater revenue for capital projects than other types of taxes.

## School Construction

GRRRA supports quality classroom facilities for every student in Guilford County.

Guilford County is growing at a high rate, and Guilford County schools must match this growth to promote the quality of life and the future of its citizens. Funding should come from means that distribute the cost fairly among all citizens, not just homeowners.

The current single-prime construction bidding process for new public school projects is time consuming and provides little ownership or supervision of projects. We support measures for streamlining the bidding and construction process to provide more efficient school construction.

GRRA supports public-private partnerships for school construction in the currently inefficient process. The county or school system can purchase the asset at the end of a lease if there is still need in that area, or can simply terminate the lease and build in another location which may need it.

### State and Federal Tax Programs

To ensure the continued growth and prosperity of our community, GRRA strongly supports fair tax programs to promote growth across multiple levels of government. Bonds, when implemented properly, can bring to life projects that would otherwise not occur. The Mortgage Interest Deduction (MID) and Property Tax Deductions greatly incentive homeownership, creating a stable tax base of citizens invested in their community’s future. 1031 Exchanges have directly led to increased development, especially in the downtown area. GRRA opposes any repeal of the 1031 Like-Kind Exchange.

### Stormwater Management

Stormwater run-off is a leading cause of water quality degradation in Guilford County. Federal and state regulations require on-site controls for managing stormwater run-off. GRRA supports reasonable, scientifically based remedies toward reducing run-off.

GRRA supports broad-based funding of stormwater utility programs, with timely completion of projects and excellent service.

GRRA urges municipalities to assist or provide incentives for homeowners associations to coordinate stormwater management efforts with their municipality, county, or professional stormwater management consultants.

GRRA supports municipal, state, and county efforts to continue educational efforts with homeowners associations to help achieve compliance with state and federal standards.

### Taxes on the Transfer of Real Property

GRRA opposes land transfer taxes and any other new taxes that discriminate against real estate transactions. The state’s current property tax means that an additional local tax would lead to a double taxation.

Transfer taxes target only one class of the population and increase the cost of homeownership, making it especially unaffordable for families.

A lack of affordable housing already exists in Guilford County and placing additional barriers to homeownership would simply compound an existing problem.

### Teacher Salary Incentives

GRRA supports strong teacher salaries and incentives to properly compete with other districts in North Carolina and across the United States.

Competitive salaries and incentives can help recruit and retain high quality teachers to Guilford County, thus promoting quality of life and the future of its citizens.

Funding should come from means that distribute the cost fairly among all citizens, not just homeowners.

## Technology in Schools

GRRA supports technology availability and training in area schools. Use of technology enhances student mastery of critical skills and prepares students for further education or the workforce. Technology bonds and incentives for corporations who donate technological tools will greatly improve the level of technology in schools.

## Transfer of Development Rights

GRRA opposes the use of Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) programs. TDR programs allow the transferring of the right to develop rural or farm land (sending zone) to an area where development is more desired (receiving zone) and infrastructure exists.

TDR program falsely assumes that the two location zones will offer the same development yields for the developer. Most often the collection zone land is not nearly as valuable or desirable and therefore the developer cannot make the deal work. A builder has no assurance that a project planned on the “sending property” will be approved for the receiving zone.

The farmer or landowner from the sending zone relinquishes all future development rights for the property at any density. Future heirs may not want to conduct farming operations on the property and it raises problematic questions of future use and potential value.