

A publication of Michigan Realtors®

# MICHIGANREALTOR®



*Earnest* & *money*  
**Q** **A**

**PLUS**

President's Report

Capitol Report

2025 Michigan RPAC Major Investors



BROKER SUMMIT REGISTRATION



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MICHIGANREALTOR®

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03.26

{ MARCH | TWO THOUSAND & TWENTY SIX | VOLUME TWENTY FIVE | NUMBER TWO }



## Setting the Pace for Professionalism

As we move into the busy spring market, I find myself reflecting on the foundation we laid together earlier this year. It has been several weeks since we gathered in Grand Rapids for **Achieve** in late January, but the energy and insights from those two days continue to resonate across our state.

Looking back, **Achieve** was more than just a kick-off event; it was a powerful reminder of what is possible when we step away from our daily transactions to focus on the future of our industry. The time we spent at the JW Marriott was filled with vital conversations. From the opening session with Robby Emery—it was clear that our focus this year is on "next-level" engagement.

We dove deep into the legislative landscape, exploring how our advocacy efforts at both the state and national levels protect the dream of homeownership and the stability of our markets. Our breakout sessions addressed the issues that are front-of-mind this month: navigating evolving market dynamics, mastering new technologies, and refining our leadership skills. Beyond the formal agenda, the true magic happened in the hallways and at the President's Reception at New Holland Brewing. I watched as seasoned veterans and emerging leaders exchanged ideas and forged connections that have already begun to bear fruit as we enter this busy season.

As we carry this momentum forward, I want to turn your attention to our next pivotal gathering: the Michigan Realtors® Broker Summit in Lansing.



### BROKER SUMMIT

April 21, 2026

The Lansing Center, Lansing

If **Achieve** was where we set our course, the Broker Summit is where we sharpen the tools needed to navigate the rest of the year. This summit is a dedicated space for brokers and office managers to tackle the unique complexities of firm management in today's environment.

We will be discussing topics such as risk management, recruitment and retention and the legislative updates that specifically impact the "boots on the ground" operation of a brokerage. I strongly encourage every broker in the state to join us. Our industry is moving fast, and the Broker Summit ensures that you have the clarity and foresight to lead your agents and serve your clients with confidence. All Michigan Realtors® members are invited to attend.

I don't chase flashy "themes," but I do champion a straightforward mindset that guides how we grow: **Listen, Learn, Lead.** We start by truly listening—to our members, our clients, our communities, and one another. We commit to continuous learning through events like **Achieve** and the Broker Summit, both incredible opportunities for professional development, and shared experiences. Then, armed with that insight, we lead with confidence, ethics and a unified voice.

As I look ahead to the months to come, I am often asked about my vision for our association. While I don't necessarily believe in "themes," I do believe in keeping the concept of self-improvement top of mind. We make one another better through collaboration, goal setting and accountability. This doesn't happen in a vacuum; it happens in rooms like those in Grand Rapids and our upcoming sessions in Lansing.

We make our associations better by appreciating the value of our three-way agreement. I challenge you to talk to your fellow Realtors® about the national, state and local value propositions. By finding and embracing the intersections of these three levels of our association, we can more clearly understand the vital difference between a "Realtor® Professional" and a mere real estate licensee.

The Realtor® designation is a badge of excellence and a commitment to a higher standard. Where would we all be if we moved away from supporting our professional development, our advocacy or our Code of Ethics? If we moved away from the strength of our collective voice, we would lose our seat at the table.

Thank you for your commitment to this profession and for your continued service to your communities. We have a great year ahead of us, and I am honored to walk this path with you. ●

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**March 18, 2026**

Michigan Realtors® Presents:  
**Commercial Jumpstart**  
Michigan Realtors® HQ  
Lansing  
Hybrid Event

**April 9, 2026**

Michigan Realtors® Presents:  
**Fair Housing**  
Michigan Realtors® HQ  
Virtual Event

**April 21, 2026**

**Broker Summit 2026**  
The Lansing Center  
Lansing

**September 30-October 2, 2026**

**The Convention**  
Grand Traverse Resort & Spa  
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## Lansing Gets Serious About Housing

Bipartisan and bicameral. Those are two words that the public is not used to associating with government nowadays. Believe it or not, it's a lot more common than you think, but political parties getting along doesn't make for catchy headlines. It is also those two words that are currently paving the way for some of the most significant housing proposals in years. Lansing is issuing a call to eliminate the regulations and red tape that have increased the cost of housing and stifled development throughout the state. These reforms take on local behaviors and NIMBY ("Not in My Backyard") attitudes to pave way for common sense housing solutions.

In this column I've often referred to two different approaches to Michigan's housing crisis: 1) more regulations and 2) build more housing. This new set of proposals falls squarely into the camp of building more inventory by challenging current zoning and development norms. With the support of Michigan Realtors®, housing providers, housing advocates, planners and the business community these bills are forcing a conversation on housing and development, challenging all levels of government to make housing a priority.

Lansing is issuing a call to  
**ELIMINATE THE  
 REGULATIONS**  
 and red tape that have  
**INCREASED THE COST**  
 of housing and  
**STIFLED DEVELOPMENT**  
 throughout the state.

This is a widely circulated number, so forgive me if you've heard this before – approximately \$90,000, 23-25% of the cost of a new home, can be attributed to regulatory costs. This number comes from a study by the Michigan and National Association of Homebuilders. The \$90,000 figure looks at local, state and federal regulations and encompasses zoning, permit reviews and studies, required infrastructure, lot size and density restrictions as well as building code requirements. Every \$1000 in new home costs prices out about 2,500 buyers in Michigan. These regulations and processes are within government control and can provide more attainable housing without additional government spending or new government programs.

In February, Michigan Realtors® joined with State Representatives and Senators, Republicans and Democrats, and housing stakeholders to announce these new bills aimed at reducing these regulations. Included in the housing package are the following bills:

- **DUPLEXES BY RIGHT**

*Permitting duplexes by right in single-family residential zones within or adjacent to metropolitan statistical areas. It also provides a uniform statewide definition of duplex.*

- **SMARTER PARKING REQUIREMENTS**

*Capping mandatory parking requirements at no more than one space per dwelling unit, lowering the cost of building and preventing outdated rules that limit new housing.*

- **MODERNIZING THE PROTEST PETITION PROCESS**

*Expands the protest petition area to 300 feet and sets a 60% signature threshold to ensure broader neighborhood representation and sentiment on housing decisions. Requires a supermajority vote of the local council.*

- **SETBACK REQUIREMENTS**

*Looking at metropolitan statistical areas, defines setbacks at 15 feet from the front property line and 5 feet from the sides and rear. Still allows for exceptions for sensitive areas like wetlands and waterways.*

- **REASONABLE DWELLING SIZE**

*Caps minimum dwelling size requirements at 500 square feet. This focuses development on smaller starter homes and apartments in areas where there may not be many large parcels of land.*

To get REALTOR®  
PARTY MOBILE ALERTS,  
text "Realtor" to 30644.

- **MINIMUM LOT SIZES**

*Caps lot sizes at 1,500 square feet where there are public water and sewer. Lowering the cost of expensive large lot mandates.*

- **ACCESSORY DWELLING UNITS**

*Provides for a uniform statewide definition of accessory dwelling unit and allows them by right on parcels with single-family homes with capped setbacks of 5 feet. It would also prohibit additional parking mandates. This expands housing options for families, seniors, and students.*

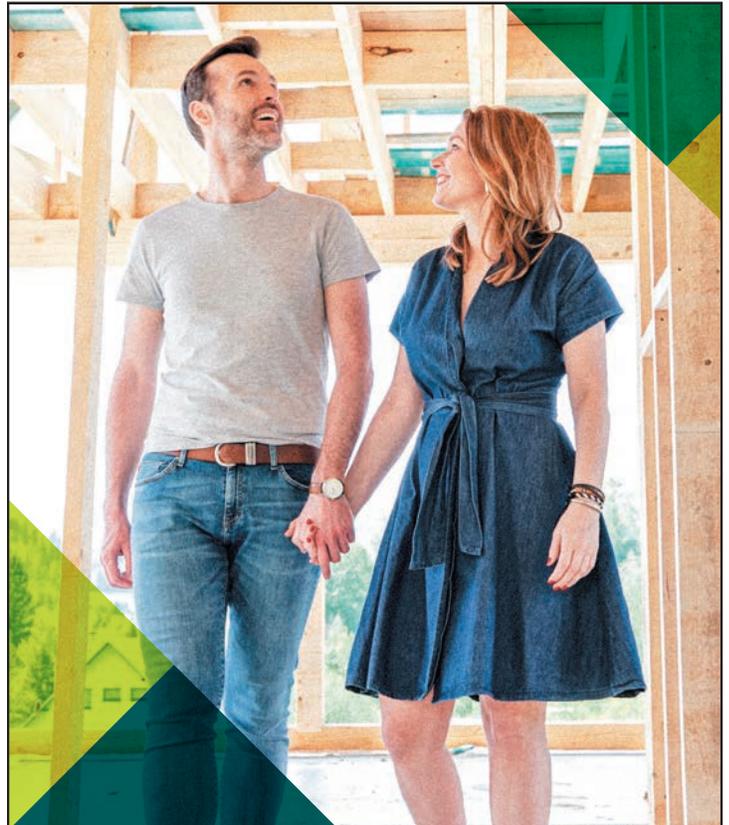
- **CLARIFYING DEVELOPMENT STUDY REQUIREMENTS**

*Limits repeat and unnecessary studies during site plan review, sets a 60-day timeline for site plan approval and requires approval if the plan meets zoning, planning and state and federal requirements.*

The bills as introduced are not tie-barred together (a tie-bar requires them all to pass to become law), each will have to stand on its own merit when passing the legislature. Many of these changes have been made in other states, some have even been adopted by municipalities in Michigan. The revolutionary change is the modernization of Michigan's old Zoning Enabling Act to allow for development that meets the needs of our population and real estate market.

The bills are deferential to local control where appropriate and intentionally acknowledge density where it already exists by limiting the changes to metropolitan statistical areas. Metropolitan statistical areas are federally designated areas consisting of counties surrounding an urban core with a population of at least 50,000 residents.

The House bills are beginning the legislative process in the Regulatory Reform Committee, where they have already received a few hearings. The Senate bills will soon have hearings within their committee structure. The work across party lines to make housing a focus is a refreshing break from the tensions created by divided control in the legislature. Michigan Realtors® remains optimistic that these bills will be signed into law before the end of the year. ●



## Financing for forever homes.

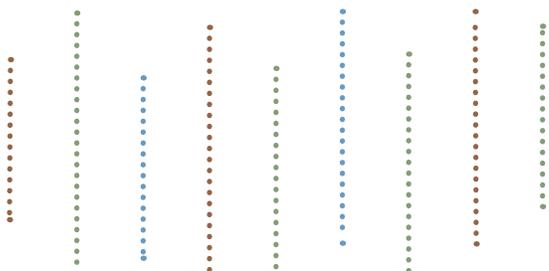
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Paula Arndt  
2019



Luke Bouman  
2025



Brenda Brosnan  
2025



Randy Caltrider  
2018



Dan Coffey  
2013



Kathleen Coon  
2023



Chris J. Courtney  
2014



James Cristbrook  
2025



Matthew Davis  
2019



Heather Davis  
2019



Debra DeAngelo  
2022



Ted Edginton  
2017



Ronald Ellison  
2025



Stuart Elsea  
2012



Debra Floor  
2023



Maureen Francis  
2021



Yoshiko Fujimori  
2017



Karen Greenwood  
2018



Carol Griffith  
2018



Stephen Grilley  
2023



Fred Hetherwick  
2025



Shawn Huston  
2025



James Iodice  
2020



Daniel Jaqua  
2021



Alan Jeffries  
2022



Carol Frick Jones  
2006



Tammy Kerr  
2020



Laurie Koelling  
2025



Caron Koteles Riha  
2025



Todd Lands  
2025



David Ledebuhr  
2019



Richard Linnell  
2025



Jane Lowell  
2025



George Lucas  
2023



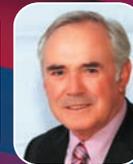
Meagan Luce  
2025



Bill Martin  
2008



Rodney Martin  
2021



Gordon McCann  
2015



John Meeseman  
2019



John Meyer  
2025



William Milliken  
2018



Alex Milsteyn  
2023



John North  
2019



E'toile O'Rear-Libbett  
2025



Mark Oegema  
2025



Thomas Paarlberg  
2020



Ann Peterson  
2022



Kimberly Pontius  
2020



Nanci J. Rands  
2012



Rick J. Reardon  
2017



Julie Rietberg  
2023



Natalie Rowe  
2025



Gary Scheitler  
2025



Cathy Sherman Bittnick  
2018



Sara Storch-Lipnitz  
2017



Johnna Struck  
2018



Gene Szpeinski  
2025



Brenda Lee Szlachta  
2020



Jeffrey Thornton  
2023



Rebecca Williamson  
2019



Kathleen Wilson  
2019



Jeff Young  
2020



Debbie Zalewski  
2020

## LEVEL II



Mark Baker  
2012



Robert M. Campau  
2025



Chris Dean  
2015



Ryan Eashoo  
2019



Dan Elsea  
2010



Beth M. Foley  
2012



John G. McArdle  
2014



Michel M. Metzner  
2017



Gary J. Reggish  
2014



Robert E. Taylor  
2012



Furhad Waquad  
2010



Dale Zahn  
2025

## LEVEL III



Pat Vredevoogd Combs  
2006

## LEVEL IV



Teri Spiro  
2008

Year denotes entry into RPAC Hall of Fame with a lifetime investment total of at least \$25,000.

- Level II indicates a lifetime investment of at least \$50,000.
- Level III indicates a lifetime investment of at least \$75,000.
- Level IV indicates a lifetime investment of at least \$100,000.

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# LEGAL HOTLINE UPDATE

## Let's Talk About EMD's



Spring is in the air (kind of). The birds are singing. The bees are buzzing and, to no surprise, so is the Michigan Realtors® Legal Hotline! The Legal Hotline has been busier than ever fielding member questions on evergreen legal topics and, of course, the occasional wild scenario or two. To kick off the busy spring season of real estate,

your Legal Hotline attorneys thought it would be fun to review some questions on one of the most frequently asked topics at the Legal Hotline – earnest money deposits. Ok, ok...maybe it won't be “fun,” but it will be informative! So, sit back, relax and continue reading if you have a hankering for knowledge on earnest money deposits.

**Q Is an earnest money deposit (EMD) required to have a legally binding contract to purchase real property?**

**A** No. An earnest money deposit is not required to have a binding purchase agreement, although it is rare to see a purchase agreement without one. Remember that the purpose of an EMD is not to establish a binding contract; it's to establish damages in the event of the buyer's default. Often, when a buyer breaches a contract to purchase real property, the seller's actual damages can be hard to prove. An EMD helps to establish a minimum damage amount, regardless of whether seller suffered any actual damages.

**Q My seller entered into a purchase agreement that contains a clause that says that the earnest money deposit will become non-refundable if the closing does not occur by the date specified in the purchase agreement. The closing date has passed, but the buyer is disputing the release of the money. Since the contract says that the deposit is non-refundable, can the money be released to the seller?**

**A** No. If there is a dispute between the buyer and the seller over the EMD (and if the deposit is being held by a real estate broker), the Michigan Occupational Code says that a broker cannot release those funds to either party either: 1) the parties sign an agreement where they agree, in writing, as to who is entitled to the EMD; or 2) there's a court order that says who is entitled to the EMD. The fact that one party's claim to the deposit is clearly wrong does not make a difference.

**Q I am the listing agent. One week after a purchase agreement was signed, the buyer sent an email stating that he was backing out of the deal. The buyer is demanding that the sellers authorize the release of the buyer's EMD and claims that the sellers cannot sell their home to anyone else until the parties sign a mutual release. Is this true?**

**A** No. If the first buyer has terminated the purchase agreement, the sellers are free to relist and sell their home to someone else. The sellers' dispute with the first buyer over the earnest money does not need to be resolved before the home is sold. Note, however, that if there is any possibility that the first contract is still valid (meaning that the buyer could argue that the sale should still go through) then the seller should speak to legal counsel before entering into a new purchase agreement with a new buyer.

**Q Can the parties agree that the broker will not deposit the earnest money check until after a certain event takes place (for example, until after an inspection period has come and gone)?**

**A** Yes, but in that case the buyer should wait to deliver the check until **AFTER** that event takes place. Remember that the MI Occupational Code requires a salesperson to deliver an earnest money check to their broker **upon receipt**. And the broker, once they receive the check, must deposit it within **two banking days** of there being a binding purchase agreement in place. So, if the parties agree that the check won't be deposited until some later date, then the buyer must also wait to hand over the check until that later date. Because once a real estate licensee receives the check, their hands are tied by the Occupational Code.



...sit back, relax and continue reading if you have a **hankering for knowledge** on **earnest money deposits.**



**Q** What are a Realtor's® responsibilities when a title company or other entity is to act as escrow agent and hold the earnest money deposit?

**A** If a purchase agreement provides that a title company shall hold the deposit, a licensee in possession of that check must deliver it to the title company within two banking days after the licensee receives notice that an offer to purchase has been accepted by all parties.

**Q** What if an earnest money deposit check bounces?

**A** A Realtor's® role as an escrow agent is a neutral role and, therefore, the Realtor® should notify both parties if the buyers' earnest money check bounces.

### A Note from the MR Legal Team

There is lots of fun (again, "fun") in store for Michigan Realtors® members this year. We invite you join us for another round of "Michigan Realtors® Presents," a free legal continuing education opportunity available to all members. Upcoming education tracks include: "*Michigan Realtors® Presents: Commercial Jumpstart*" on March 18, 2026, and "*Michigan Realtors® Presents: Focus on Fair Housing*" on April 9, 2026. Keep an eye out on your Michigan Realtors® e-news for details on how to register. We hope to see you there!

And, as always, keep those calls coming to the Legal Hotline. We love your questions – even the wacky ones. **Michigan Realtors® Legal hotline: 1-800-522-2820.** ●



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