

# Five principles of Quality of Life: aim is to build better communities

The Manitoba Real Estate Board has adopted the Quality of Life project, a highly-successful community-oriented program first introduced in Washington state by local REALTORS®.

“It’s a principle,” said Lorne Weiss, MREA’s political action committee chairman. “It changes our focus.”

The principles of Quality of Life are:

- Insuring economic vitality.
- Providing housing opportunities.
- Preserving the environment.
- Protecting property owners.
- Building better communities.

“REALTORS are committed to improving our Quality of Life by supporting quality growth that encourages economic vitality, provides housing opportunities and builds better communities with good schools and safe neighbourhoods,” is the mission statement of the Quality of Life project.

“Quality of Life is a benchmark that we will use to judge our initiatives,” Weiss said. “We will judge the positive or negative impact an initiative will have on Manitoba.”

The first initiative being guided by the Quality of Life principles involves helping eight-year-old Hannah Taylor’s Ladybug Foundation in support of the Homeless. The youngster has raised over \$50,000 for the homeless in Manitoba.

“That’s the type of social action we want to take,” said Weiss. “Something of benefit to the quality of life in the community.”

The Quality of Life program has also been accepted by the Winnipeg Real Estate

Board. The real estate boards in Thompson, Brandon and Portage la Prairie are also expected to give their approval to Quality of Life. The program will be administered under the leadership of MREA.

Weiss said the adoption of Quality of Life brings about a dramatic change in organized real estate.

“We will also actually be taking an active role in the political process by using Quality of Life to support and evaluate elected officials.

“That is not to say we will not be impartial. We will be supporting the candidates in the coming civic byelections (June 22) and the expected federal election, regardless of party, based upon who supports Quality of Life and its five underlying principles.”

The Washington Association of REALTORS® has already judged politicians under Quality of Life. Politicians sign on to the principles and then are issued report cards on their compliance during their term in office.

The Washington project provides public policy makers with the research and public preferences they need to make decisions about the state’s future, Cheryl Ferrier, a past-president of the Washington Association of REALTORS®, wrote in *The Herald*, an Everett, Washington-based newspaper.

In Washington, REALTORS® were able to persuade policy makers that the state’s Growth Management Act should also include economic growth as well as land use. “Now economic growth won’t be an afterthought,” Mike Flynn, the association’s vice-president, told *The Herald*.

But, Quality of Life isn’t just about judging politicians and their performance. The program redefines organized pursuit of policy and programs and how Quality of Life affects the community.

“We talk every day with people who hope to build a life for themselves and their children ... We understand what makes a community — not just homes — attractive and desirable. People want safe streets, jobs that pay well, and roads that take them where they need to go without delay,” said Ferrier.

“We are not just REALTORS®,” commented Weiss. “We are neighbours. Our children attend the same schools, play the same sports, and we go to the same places of worship as our neighbours. Our interests are not at odds with those of our neighbours.”

Some of the issues the five principles will guide include urban growth, defining urban sprawl, economic policies to make Manitoba more attractive to investors and new immigrants, and public safety, added Weiss.

“We want to take the different approach of determining how these issues will affect the community, rather than through a narrow real estate industry approach.

“By serving our community, we will be serving our industry. We won’t back away from issues that serve our industry, but will undertake them only on the broader sense that they serve the community.

“By adapting the principles of Quality of Life, we are proving our commitment is broader than the real estate industry,” Weiss explained.

“We will, along with the British Columbia Real Estate Association — the other Canadian association which is committed to Quality of Life — be adapting the Washington experience to Canada,” Weiss added. “Although our political systems are different, we only need to make little changes to the Washington program.”

Quality of Life is also expected to build partnerships within the community. Weiss says both the MREA and the WREB recognized the value of partnerships in pursuing a common cause when they adopted a policy on eliminating education funding from property taxes.

“Our experience with the school tax system taught us that strategic alliances increased our strength,” he said.

The lobby effort to change the province’s system of funding education has been joined by such diverse groups as farmers, rural residents, urban dwellers, and the business community and others who are all concerned with the high level of school taxes on property, Weiss added.

The chairman of the MREA PAC said the response from the real estate association’s membership has been overwhelming. “Even the members who don’t typically join committees have said they want to volunteer — both residential and commercial REALTORS®.”

Improving the quality of life in Manitoba will take time. MREA expects the program to take about two or three years to set up