



Talking Points: Real Estate as an Essential Service during COVID-19

Texas REALTORS® and local REALTOR® associations across the state are working with cities and counties to ensure real estate is included as an essential service if communities are instructed to shelter in place.

Housing is one of the key social determinants of health, and the ability to help Texans secure housing will help us make it through this unprecedented situation. Texans cannot shelter in place if they do not have shelter, so now we must work to ensure real estate transactions can continue to be conducted and closed.

Texas REALTORS® is compiling information and updates at texasrealestate.com/coronavirus, including a list of [cities and counties with shelter-in-place orders](#).

REALTORS® are community leaders

- As leaders in our Texas communities, REALTORS® are committed to supporting the health and safety of our fellow Texans. We urge all members of Texas REALTORS® to adhere to the guidance of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention as well as city and county shelter-in-place orders.
- We encourage REALTORS® to identify solutions and protocols in your daily practices that best serve clients while demonstrating care for the health and well-being of the greater public welfare to reduce the risk of exposure to and spread of COVID-19.

Why should real estate be considered an essential service?

- Each March, around 400,000 to 460,000 homes across the U.S. would be in pending status. If real estate services are not designated as an essential service, Americans currently caught in the middle of a transaction would have no clear path on what happens with their pending legal contracts, financial commitments or—most importantly—where they will be sheltering.
- On March 28, the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) [issued an advisory list](#) for state and local governments of essential critical infrastructure workers that includes real estate and related government services as essential under the *Other Community- or Government-Based Operations and Essential Functions* section. This list specifically includes “Staff at government offices who perform title search, notary, and recording services in support of mortgage and real estate services and transactions” and “Residential and commercial real estate services, including settlement services.”



- All services involved in facilitating a real estate transaction must remain functional during these unprecedented times, including mortgage, title, insurance, appraisal and government recorder services.
- Shelter is a fundamental human need and is essential to our survival, whether by rented or owned property. Particularly during this time, when sheltering in place helps us combat the spread of coronavirus and protect the most vulnerable among us, its importance becomes even more paramount.
- Texas REALTORS® recognizes the critical nature of real estate as an essential service. The housing industry has been called on to provide unprecedented support for our economy, including providing economic stimulus for households impacted by the crisis.
- With interest rates at or near all-time lows, the volume of mortgage refinancing has increased sharply, allowing families to reduce their monthly payments and provide additional disposable income to families in need. In addition, many consumers in recent months have taken advantage of low rates to purchase homes.

What's happening at the state level?

Texas REALTORS® has been working with Gov. Greg Abbott's office, along with industry partners, to ensure that real estate and related public services, such as county clerks and title search information, can continue under any forthcoming gubernatorial orders.

- On March 20, [Texas REALTORS® delivered a letter to the governor's office asking for his consideration of the real estate industry in any further shutdowns.](#)
- On March 24, Texas REALTORS® sent letters to the following officials:
 - [Renee Couch, president of Texas Association of Counties](#)
 - [Chuck Statler, president of County Judges and Commissioners Association of Texas](#)
 - [Eddie Daffern, president of Texas Municipal League](#)
- In addition, Texas REALTORS® is working with a wide variety of housing and business organizations to seek clarity from the governor.

What's happening in my community?

Local REALTOR® associations are working closely with city and county officials to ensure real estate is included in any local orders to shelter in place. Consult your local REALTOR® association, city, and/or county for the latest information regarding your area.

Who may I contact for more information?



For questions for Texas REALTORS® (the state association), please contact Jaime Lee, director of advocacy communications, at jlee@texasrealtors.com or 512.370.2152.