

MONTANA ASSOCIATION OF REALTORS®

Board of Directors Report

Local Association Market Conditions & Activities

May 2026 | Prepared by Michelle Haverstick, Central Regional Ambassador

This report summarizes current market conditions, notable activities, and fundraising initiatives across Montana's eight local REALTOR® associations. Data reflects available statistics through Q1 2026.

STATEWIDE CONTEXT

Several conditions are affecting all Montana associations uniformly and warrant board awareness:

- **Property Tax Reform:** HB 231 and SB 542, signed May 2025, restructure residential property taxation through a graduated rate system phased in over 2025–26. An estimated 80% of Montana primary residences will see reduced tax bills. The 2026 second-home tax, applying higher rates to non-primary residences and short-term rentals, is already influencing buyer behavior in resort and amenity markets.
- **Mortgage Rates:** Rates stabilized in the mid-6% range through 2025 and into 2026 after peaking near 8% in late 2023. Meaningful rate relief remains tied to macroeconomic conditions; a further dip would likely unlock substantial pent-up demand statewide.
- **Affordability Persistence:** Montana's average home value has risen approximately 66% since 2019. Statewide median price as of late 2025 was approximately \$530,700. Affordability constraints are most acute in Gallatin and Flathead counties but are present in every market.
- **Property Tax Cap Initiatives:** Three ballot initiatives seeking to cap property tax increases are circulating for potential November 2026 placement. Local governments and REALTOR® associations are monitoring closely, as passage could affect school funding, services, and housing development.

AT-A-GLANCE SUMMARY

Association	Members	Median Price	YOY	Key Condition
SW Montana / Gallatin (SWMSTAR)	1,500+	\$800,000	-0.5%	High-cost equilibrium; affordability crisis
Helena (HAR)	500+	~\$525,000	-6.2%	Inventory growing; prices easing
Great Falls (GFAR)	300+	~\$420,000	+modest	Most affordable major market; stable
Rocky Mountain / Butte (RMAR)	~150+	Below state median	Modest +	Affordable market; community-focused

LOCAL ASSOCIATION REPORTS

Southwest Montana Association of REALTORS®

- **Market:** Gallatin County's median single-family home price held at approximately \$800,000 in 2025 — the highest in the state and double the 2019 median of \$400,000. Sales volume has stabilized around 1,051–1,089 annually for three consecutive years, representing the lowest volume since 2012. Days on market rose sharply from 25 to 61 year-over-year. The market is in what economists from the University of Montana Bureau of Business and Economic Research describe as a “frustrating equilibrium.”
- **Affecting the Market:** An affordability gap requiring roughly \$181,000 in household income to afford the median-priced home (versus a county median income of ~\$101,000) is the defining challenge. Out-of-state in-migration has slowed from its pandemic peak. Multi-family absorption has been slower than projected. Wildfire risk, short-term rental regulation, and the new second-home tax are active issues for resort-adjacent submarkets.
- **Association Activity:** SWMTAR presented the 2026 Gallatin Valley Housing Report in late April 2026 in partnership with UM's Bureau of Business and Economic Research. The report drew policymakers, practitioners, and press. Association President Mark Corner publicly called for collaborative approaches to affordable housing involving city, county, state, and land trusts.
- **Fundraising / Community:** The Southwest Montana Realtor Foundation is holding a Sporting Clay event on May 14th along with a Gold Tournament August 13th. Affordable housing advocacy remains the association's most active public policy focus.

Helena Association of REALTORS® (HAR)

- **Market:** Helena's median home price sits at approximately \$525,000 as of late 2025, down from peak levels. March 2026 data shows a 6.2% year-over-year price decline to a median of \$389,000, with homes selling in 44 days — nearly half the 70 days recorded a year prior. Sales volume increased to 40 in March 2026, up from 21 the same month in 2025. Inventory is growing, with more than 200 homes on market in Lewis & Clark County.
- **Affecting the Market:** Helena benefits from its role as the state capital and has a more stable employment base than resort-driven markets. The pandemic-driven price spike (+66% statewide) elevated Helena's cost base well beyond traditional affordability levels. Buyers and sellers are both adjusting to the new normal. Property tax reform is especially relevant here given the concentration of government employees and renters.
- **Association Activity:** HAR has 500+ members. Their annual awards luncheon is being held on May 12th.
- **Fundraising / Community:** No specific fundraising initiative identified for this cycle.

Great Falls Association of REALTORS® (GFAR)

- **Market:** Great Falls remains Montana's most affordable major market. Median listing price was approximately \$420,000 as of late 2025. March 2026 data shows 161 homes sold, up 151% year-over-year, with a median sale price of \$357,500 and homes moving in approximately 74.5 days. Sale-to-list ratio is near parity at 98.56%. GFAR's service area is traditionally characterized by steady, modest appreciation rather than boom/bust cycles.
- **Affecting the Market:** Military presence at Malmstrom Air Force Base provides a stabilizing demand floor. Limited economic diversification and a smaller job market temper both price growth and migration. High mortgage rates have constrained volume, as they have statewide, but Great Falls has not experienced the sharp corrections visible in higher-priced markets.
- **Association Activity:** GFAR announced a formal partnership with NARPM Montana (National Association of Residential Property Managers) in March 2026 — a notable step connecting property management professionals with REALTOR® resources and network. The association serves 300+ members.
- **Fundraising / Community:** GFAR owns and maintains the Great Falls REALTORS® Flag Project, a non-profit corporation responsible for fundraising and maintenance of the "Big Flag" at Overlook Park in Great Falls. This is an ongoing community-visible initiative.

Rocky Mountain Association of REALTORS® (RMAR)

- **Market:** Butte/Silver Bow County is Montana's most affordable market among established communities. Home values remain well below the statewide median, though pandemic-era appreciation was felt here as well. The market is characterized by modest transaction volume and stable, moderate pricing.
- **Affecting the Market:** Healthcare and public sector employment provide baseline stability. The market has not experienced the high-volatility swings of resort and university-driven markets. Property tax reform is broadly positive for the working-class homeowner base RMAR primarily serves.
- **Association Activity:** RMAR provides housing market statistics, homeownership education, member training, and community engagement through food drives, fundraisers, road cleanups, and local events. The association emphasizes community volunteerism as a core organizational value.
- **Fundraising / Community:** RMAR participates in ongoing local charitable activities including food drives and community service events in the Butte and Anaconda areas.

ITEMS FOR BOARD CONSIDERATION

- **Second-Home Tax (2026):** The new property tax structure taking effect on 2026 bills will create notable friction in resort-adjacent markets (Big Sky).
- **Ballot Initiative Watch:** Three property tax cap initiatives (modeled loosely on California's Proposition 13) are circulating for the November 2026 ballot. If any qualify, the implications for housing supply, school funding, and commercial real estate will require an active response. Great Falls city leadership has already expressed concern about revenue impacts.
- **GFAR / NARPM Partnership:** GFAR's new formal affiliation with NARPM Montana represents a model for associations seeking to serve property management professionals. Worth monitoring for member value and potential replication.