



ROBERT HOFFMAN REALTY INC.

Here to help.

**Testimony to the House of Representatives
Committee on Small Business
May 8, 2019
c/o Robert Hoffman, Albert Lea MN**

Introduction

I own a small business everyone has heard of. There is a Robert Hoffman Realty in almost every city in every state. They are not all named Robert Hoffman Realty and most of them are not real estate brokerages: but they are in every city in America.

We are all familiar with Jensen Excavating. We have all heard of a Mrs. Gerry's Salads. We have all driven by the new Shipp's Pro Power Wash building, had our hair cut at JC Salon, been saved by Jim Kelley at Kelley Plumbing, bought flowers from Addie's floral, bought our watch from Fishers Jewelers and we've all eaten at Grandma's Café. You see all of these, like my small business, are in every town. There is a Robert Hoffman Realty in almost every city.

It turns out we are not very creative with the names of our company's, I think we're too busy running them to hire a proper creative team. Each of the businesses I just mentioned are actually from my home town of Albert Lea and each of them could impress you with their stories today as well.

My name is a Robert Hoffman and I just run a small real estate brokerage and property management firm in Albert Lea Minnesota, so small of a Brokerage its name is just Robert Hoffman Realty, but I don't even own it. My wife Angie actually owns the 51% controlling share of our S-Corp so yes; my wife Angie owns Robert Hoffman and Robert Hoffman Realty too.

Our Story

Right after college I got a real estate license in 2004 and have 15 years of real estate experience. Angie recently left her job as the Advertising Director at the Albert Lea Tribune to work at our Brokerage full time as our CFO (which includes painting, rent collections and many other various glorified duties of any small business CFO.) Angie worked at the Tribune for 11 years but these last few years have been good for our small business and we work together now building what is shaping out to be a very fair small business for us.

We have been married 514 weeks today and will celebrate our 10-year wedding anniversary on July 1st. We met 11 years ago during the first day of a local Leadership Class when we were sitting next to one another and in small talk Angie accidentally gave away my surprise 30th birthday party coming up that Saturday night. She had no idea it was my surprise party; and I just figured out I fell in love. (Surprise!) We are each licensed in real estate now and licensed in Minnesota and Iowa. We currently own and manage 80 residential & commercial units and specialize in Residential, Rental & Commercial Real Estate Sales and Management in Southern Minnesota. Primarily in Albert Lea Minnesota where we are each from.



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We actually also manage a former Wal Mart building in Jim Hagedorn's hometown of Blue Earth, Minnesota that we leased to the farm supply and department store company Bomgaars after Wal Mart decided to close its Blue Earth Location. We actually did the same in our hometown of Albert Lea; a former, vacant, Wal Mart sat empty waiting for its lease to run out and as soon as it did Bomgaars moved into that location and breathe a very needed fresh new breath back into our small town.

Our Wal Mart in Albert Lea actually sat empty for over 10 years before we were hired to first manage the building then to market it for lease. It took many calls to fill it, but we found an amazing fit for our community with a new Bomgaars store. In Blue Earth it was a different story! It took only one phone call and just a few weeks in Jim's Blue Earth. You start to feel pretty good about moving vacant Wal Mart buildings after you get your one first one under your belt. The problem is you've sold most of them in your region after 1 or 2.

Our Small Towns are the Home Town of Small Business

Robert Hoffman Realty is just a small business in a small town like many others, but I think I can help tell the story of many small businesses by just turning the spot light on my home town of Albert Lea in Southern Minnesota for a moment. Our small town of Albert Lea has less than 20,000 people in it but has many of the same small business stories as anywhere in the US.

I cannot overemphasize how every little bit helps. Renovations downtown led to many successful new businesses, including my own, and our Water Shed taking a shot at cleaning up a lake is bringing all eyes on Albert Lea's lakes this weekend, as we host our State Governor's Fishing Opener and have many new people visiting our community and the new tax cuts have greatly helped our small business. Our small business has benefited greatly from the tax cuts and our employees benefited from our company's breaks.

There have been burdens; and every little bit hurts too. The Affordable Care Act caused insurance prices to skyrocket in our area and, being small business owners, we were no longer able to afford health insurance. Fortunately, we've been able to find alternative coverage through a Health Share program, but we are one on-site accident away from losing a lot of what we've built.

Conclusion

Many have given their all to see their small business succeed. We never chose to have kids, work came first. This is only the second time we've traveled in the 10 years we've been married traveled. We are doing fair but not without a hell of a lot of effort. Again, every little bit helps. Our Robert Hoffman Realty company moto is actually; "here to help." It's actually from Isiah 6:8.

To close, I'd like to share a story. It's not my own, but it has stuck with my since I heard it. A small business owner is stuck down in a hole yelling for help. A Government Regulator walks up to the hole and tells him he'll pass a new law to help and walks away. The small business owner is still stuck in the hole yelling for help and an Inspector walks up. The Inspector says he'll put in new processes so this never happens again and walks away. Ready to give up the small business owner all of a sudden has another small business owner jump in the hole with him. He says; "you're crazy, now we're both down here together!" The other small business owner says "yes, but I've been down before. I know the way out. I'm here to help."

-Robert Hoffman, Albert Lea Minnesota