



2019 BIENNIAL ADVOCACY REPORT

July - December 2019

Home Builders Association of Greater Austin







The HBA is proud to present our second Biannual Advocacy Report. This edition covers July 2019 – December 2019 and provides a high-level overview of advocacy wins - both big and small - all of which make it easier for you to do business in central Texas.

In Fall 2019, the City of Austin kicked off a once-in-a-generation rewrite of its land development code. The HBA positioned itself to be the leading voice on housing and countless hours have been spent educating policymakers about the importance of getting the new code right. In this report, we have included a special section on the new code, where we highlight the HBA's ongoing efforts to help ensure pro-housing laws for years to come.

While many of these issues are addressed over the course of months or even years, this report will give you an update on where we are on those long-term issues.

None of these successes would be possible without an active and engaged Membership – for that, **the HBA thanks YOU** our Members, for staying involved on these important issues.

Carrie L. Ciliberto, Esq.
Chief Executive Officer

David Glenn
Director of Government Relations



Photos of the HBA Benefit Homes built by Chesmar Homes and Taylor Morrison are featured on the cover page and on page 7, respectively.

We thank these generous HBA Member Builders for their ongoing support of the HBA and our greater Austin community.

CITY & COUNTY ADVOCACY



LAND DEVELOPMENT CODE REVISION

In 2017, the HBA joined Evolve Austin, a coalition of trade associations and nonprofits who advocate for a more compact and connected Austin, per the City's Imagine Austin comprehensive plan. Evolve has over 30 members including the Austin Board of Realtors, Real Estate Council of Austin, Downtown Austin Alliance, Austin Chamber of Commerce, Environment Texas, Habitat for Humanity, Walk Austin, and the Austin Tech Alliance. Evolve Austin is chaired by Scott Turner, HBA Board Member and Chair of the HBA Infill Builders Council.

Austin's first attempt to rewrite its land development code, called CodeNEXT, ultimately failed in 2018. With new leadership in place at the Council and City Manager's office, the City has renewed its effort to rewrite the land development code. The HBA was a key player in the original CodeNEXT process and continues to be the voice of housing for the second code rewrite.

Much of our advocacy efforts at the end of 2019 were spent working on the City of Austin's land development code revision. This fall, Austin City Council took major steps towards approving a new land development code. The City's current code was put in place in the 80s and has been amended hundreds of times throughout the years, resulting in confusing and often times conflicting regulations.

In October, city staff released the initial draft of the new code, which was written using direction from a policy document issued by Council in May. Leading up to the release of the new code, the HBA was actively involved in discussions with city staff and policymakers about specific policy direction. After the first draft was released, the HBA worked closely with the Planning Commission to shape their recommendations to Council. The HBA, along with other pro-housing organizations, assembled over 300 amendments for consideration by Planning Commission.

After hundreds of hours of meetings, the Commission's recommendations included many of the HBA's priorities, including:

- Requiring partner departments like Austin Water, Austin Energy, and Austin Transportation to work more collaboratively
- More robust "missing middle" zones to allow for a wider variety of housing
- Easing regulations in the subdivision process and site plan process for smaller residential projects

Council Adopts Code on First and Second Readings... Final Vote Expected Late March

The HBA will continue to educate and advocate for pro-housing policies, and work tirelessly to protect your business



Other City of Austin **Advocacy** Efforts

AUSTIN WATER UTILITY (AWU) AND AUSTIN ENERGY (AE) EFFICIENCY MEETINGS

In our ongoing effort to improve relationships with the City and streamline development processes, we participate in "efficiency meetings," where we work together to identify and implement win-win solutions for the City and industry.

Austin Water Utility

After receiving feedback about the cost of providing multiple engineered tap plans for individual lots in a single project, AWU began a pilot study that will allow builders to submit one master tap plan for each unit on adjacent lots. As the City is moving towards a more urban buildout, AWU is exploring options that will allow structures to share water lines.

Austin Energy (AE) efficiency meetings

Similar to Austin Water Utility and Development Services Department, AE has created a small project process, with the hopes of clearing the backlog for design on smaller projects. They have made some improvements to their customer service interface, including adding an escalation link in employee signature lines when there is disagreement between AE and the customer. They are reviewing regulations related to public use easements to allow for more flexibility in running utility lines on smaller lots.

ATLAS 14

After the federal government published Atlas 14, indicating higher quantities of rainfall in central Texas, the City of Austin made changes to its floodplain regulations. The HBA worked with the Watershed Protection Department for over a year to ensure that the new regulations did not unduly restrict development. One important tweak to the City's regulations included changing the McMansion tent to allow for houses to be built taller, ensuring that struc-

tures are out of the floodplain. Another important change will allow for administrative approvals for redevelopment that reduces flood risk.

AUSTIN FIRE DEPARTMENT (AFD)

The HBA supported AFD's budget request for additional engineers and reviewers to help clear the building backlog of residential sprinkler plans. AFD was ultimately awarded those positions. The HBA continues to work with AFD on the International Wildland Urban Interface Code. To date, the HBA has negotiated reductions in the strict construction method requirements that would have negatively impacted affordability. The IWUIC is expected to go to Council after the new land development code is adopted.

TREE REVIEWS

Recently, the HBA heard that the City of Austin has been requiring tree reviews for interior remodels. The HBA has worked with the Community Tree Preservation and the Residential Review to come to an agreement that going forward, for interior remodels, a tree review will not be required.



HBA RECEIVES \$20,000 GRANT FROM NAHB'S STATE & LOCAL ISSUES FUND

One of the many resources that the NAHB offers local HBAs is a State & Local Issues Fund (SLIF) grant. This grant can be used to help HBAs engage in specific local issues. The HBA applied for and was awarded a grant to help cover the cost of Evolve Austin and HBA efforts surrounding the City of Austin land development code revision. Funds were tight and competition for grants was fierce, but HBA staff successfully defended the application via phone and in person before the SLIF Committee.



BASTROP

BASTROP BUILDING BLOCK

In November, the City of Bastrop adopted their new land development code called the Bastrop Building Block. In the months leading up to adoption, the HBA submitted formal comments on the code and criteria manuals. The HBA also participated in a number of town halls and round table discussions with city staff and Council. The HBA was able to work directly with the consultant responsible for editing and writing the code to provide feedback before the final draft was completed.

KYLE

NO TO INCREASED INSPECTION FEES

The HBA testified against the City's increase in inspection fees. Although the fees were ultimately adopted, the HBA is in discussions with city staff to find ways to improve their inspection payment system and potentially allow for an escrow accounts to streamline the payment process.



ROUND ROCK

NEW ROAD PROJECTS

The HBA and the Austin Contractors and Engineers Association met with Council Members to discuss changes to the City's roadway design. The new designs require substantially thicker roads, adding costs to projects in the City.

LEANDER



 **HBA Home** Built by Taylor Morrison

The HBA worked with the City's planning department to allow for more flexibility in garage design on smaller lots. Builders in Leander can now build three car garages on 50' lots. Prior to the change, three car garages were limited to 60' wide lots or larger.

Shortly before the end of 2019, the Council directed staff to address concerns about street tree requirements in the right of way. Currently, a builder must plant trees every 30 feet. Council directed staff to remove the requirement outright. The direction was given in December and staff is expected to present an ordinance change to Council in early 2020.

In November, the City proposed increasing parkland dedication requirements from 3.5 acres per 100 units to 4.5 acres per 100 units. After analyzing the change, the HBA educated the

Council on the financial impact that would have on a typical project. Ultimately, the item was pulled from the agenda saving one project over \$1 million.

*"Day in and day out, our **nationally recognized advocacy team** serves as your voice on issues that affect your business. We will continue to advocate and educate cities and counties on the economic value of residential construction in central Texas."*

— Hank Smith, HBA Board VP of Government Relations

WILLIAMSON COUNTY

The HBA serves as an appointed member of the County's Subdivision Ordinance Task Force.

The task force is charged with reviewing the County's subdivision regulations on an ongoing basis. In the second half of 2019, the County adopted regulations to bring them into compliance with HB 3167. The new regulations also simplified drainage calculations for new projects.

The task force continues its work in 2020 and will work collaboratively to remove barriers to housing in Williamson County.



HBA HomePAC

HomePAC is the HBA’s autonomous Political Action Committee (PAC) administered by a Board of Trustees. The Board is comprised of an outstanding group of industry leaders selected to make decisions on how and when to focus the industry’s political resources to ensure a favorable housing and political environment for builders in the Greater Austin area.

HomePAC’s purpose is to raise money and then contribute to issue and candidate campaigns supportive of the housing industry. With increasing rules and regulations being imposed by all levels of government, the HBA needs the political clout to make a difference in the election process. In addition to focusing on political campaigns, the HomePAC also researches voting records, conducts polling, and analyzes local and state initiatives. Together with the HBA’s Government Relations Staff, it serves as a well-recognized, respected political force in the region.

HOME PAC GOALS

- ★ Identify housing-minded local elected officials and candidates for local office.
- ★ Participate in local, regional and statewide ballot measures and issues campaigns that are consistent with the HBA’s mission and values.
- ★ Review the political landscape and thoughtfully allocate resources to key

Texas has two uniform elections a year in May and November. There were several critical elections for city council races in the HBA’s 30-city jurisdiction last Fall. For the November 2019 elections, HomePAC engaged in five cities.

Jurisdiction	Position	Candidate	Results
Buda	City Council P1 AL	Lee Urbanovsky	✓
Buda	Single Member District C	Jeffrey Morales	X
Georgetown	City Council D1	Alex Fuller	X (in runoff)
Kyle	City Council D1	Dex Ellison	✓
Kyle	City Council P3	Robert Rizo	✓
Pflugerville	City Council Place 1	Doug Weiss	✓
Pflugerville	Mayor	Brad Marshall	X
San Marcos	City Council P1	Mark Gleason	X
San Marcos	City Council P2	Lisa Marie Coppoletta	X

Other News



Judge Bill Gravel, Williamson County

Elected Officials at HBA President's Installation

The HBA was proud to host city council members and county commissioners from several communities at the President's Installation. **Williamson County Judge Bill Gravel** took a few moments at the beginning of the program to express his appreciation for the partnership between the HBA and the County. The Installation provided an excellent opportunity for HBA leadership to interact



HBA Members Step Up at the State and National Level

At the end of 2019, HBA Board President **Becky Collins** (United Development Funding) concluded her term as President. At the TAB Fall Board meetings, she stepped up to serve as the TAB Area 6 Caucus Chair. The Area 6 Caucus includes the HBA and other central Texas Home Builder associations.

Scott Turner (Turner Residential), Board member and Chair of the HBA Infill Builders Council recently stepped up to serve as a National Director, representing the HBA at the federal level with the NAHB.

At the end of 2019, **Bill Meyer** (Newland Communities) finished his term as Chair of TAB's Developers Council and has now moved over to the state association's Government Relations Committee.

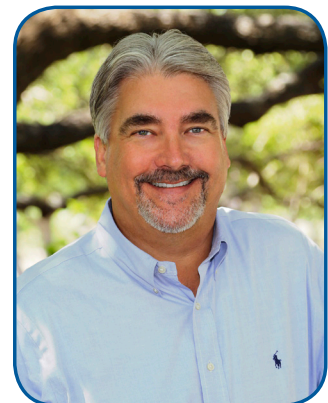
We thank these individuals for volunteering their time for these new roles, and the HBA is excited to continue to have its interests well represented at the state and federal levels.



Becky Collins
United Development Funding



Scott Turner
Turner Residential



Bill Meyer
Newland Communities

HBA ADVOCACY COMMITTEES AND COUNCILS

THE HBA HAS A NUMBER OF **COMMITTEES** THAT ARE FOCUSED ON **ADVOCACY** AND **GOVERNMENT RELATIONS**. EACH OF THESE COMMITTEES ADDRESS A UNIQUE SUBSET OF ISSUES FACING THE HOME BUILDING INDUSTRY.

DEVELOPERS COUNCIL (DC)

The Developers Council advocates and educates for land development issues affecting HBA Members, and policies that influence them such as annexation, HOAs, platting, infrastructure development, impact fees, engineering and more. Most of the DC's work is focused in the communities surrounding Austin, including both cities and counties. The DC meets quarterly and is free to join, but its membership is limited to certain types of Builder and Associate Members.

GOVERNMENT RELATIONS COMMITTEE (GRC)

The Government Relations Committee is a select committee of Association Member builders, developers, engineers, land use attorneys and others who serve as the "strike force" of the HBA. The GRC helps develop and implement the HBA's policy positions on current and potential issues. The GRC meets monthly and are directly involved with the HBA's advocacy efforts.

INFILL BUILDERS COUNCIL (IBC)

The Infill Builders Council advocates and educates on infill issues affecting HBA Members, such as affordability and sustainability, and the codes and policies that influence them. The IBC focuses primarily on issues in the City of Austin, where Members work directly with city departments such as Development Services Department, Austin Water Department, Austin Energy and others, to help improve the development process. The IBC is very involved with the rewrite of Austin's land development code. The IBC meets quarterly, is free to join and open to all HBA Members.

VOLUME BUILDERS COUNCIL (VBC)

Volume Builders Council is comprised of Builder Members who construct 100+ units in the Austin-MSA. The VBC holds quarterly, roundtable discussions between construction managers and building officials from across central Texas. At these meetings, the VBC discuss new code adoptions, best practices across cities, and other issues that builders might be experiencing in the field. This group also mobilizes for various issues in the area to push for positive regulatory changes that benefit our entire industry. The VBC is free to join, but its membership is limited to certain types of Builder and Associate Members.



ADVOCACY FORUM

The Advocacy Forum is a monthly program that is open to all HBA Members. Each Forum features speakers such as city and county officials, elected officials, state agency representatives, and other public sector and private sector professionals who are involved with the development process. The Advocacy Forum facilitates a dialogue between home builders and the cities and counties in which they build. In the second half of 2019, the HBA held four Advocacy Forums on a variety of interesting topics.



JULY

In July, the HBA hosted the City of San Marcos planning department to discuss the **action plan created by the City's Affordable Housing Task Force**.

The plan includes initiatives that will reduce barriers to housing, such as streamlining permitting processes, accommodating growth through appropriate zoning, and finding ways to incentivize homeownership.

SEPTEMBER

For the September Advocacy Forum, the Austin Fire Department provided an overview and Q&A session on the City's **proposed International Wildland Urban Interface Code**.

The proposed code includes new construction standards and land development regulations and builders were able to get a better understanding about how the code would affect their projects at the Forum.

OCTOBER

In October of 2019, the HBA invited central Texas city and county planners to a roundtable discussion about **growth, upcoming rule changes, long term planning, permitting and building statistics, and other issues facing home builders and cities**.

The Forum created an opportunity not only for builders to interact with city and county planners, but also for those planners to interact with their peers in a context that supports the sharing of ideas and finding solutions for common issues.

NOVEMBER

In November, the HBA held an Advocacy Forum to discuss the **City of Austin's proposed land development code**. The first draft of the code had just been released a few weeks prior and the HBA's experts provided a first-look analysis at the new code. The City's code rewrite will have a lasting impact on how the City will grow in the years to come and it is critical that our members stay informed about the code revision.



"Advocacy. Advocacy. Advocacy. We must continually cultivate our relationships with elected officials, cities, and municipalities to ensure the HBA can successfully affect pro-housing and housing affordability legislation. To do this is no simple task, which is why we need YOUR donations to the HBA HomePAC and Issues Fund. Without these crucial financial resources, we simply cannot impact the political landscape in a meaningful way."

— **Joe Fowler, HBA Board President**



ad·vo·ca·cy

Noun - The act of speaking on the behalf of
or in support of another person, place, or thing.

