



2020 Biannual Advocacy Report

The Home Builders Association of Greater Austin





No one could have predicted that the first half of 2020 would take us down the path that it did. Our industry, like many industries, was profoundly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. In March, our industry experienced a shutdown in our region's largest county, which but for the adept and diligent efforts of your HBA Team (Staff and Members), along with other industry representatives and stakeholders, would have lasted for weeks if not months.

The pandemic and the challenges that came along with it have dominated 2020 thus far. The HBA is proud to serve as Your Voice during these times, as cities and counties make ongoing and dramatic changes to their operations. Our team acted quickly to make sure our members have critical information available at their fingertips through near daily eblasts and social media posts, as well as our COVID-19 information webpage, free webinars and more.

A significant portion of the HBA's resources and efforts were spent addressing the COVID-19 pandemic effects, and this issue of the HBA Advocacy Report will highlight just a few of those efforts and others of note.

We are thankful for our Members' involvement and engagement, especially during these challenging times. Without your ongoing financial support and volunteer efforts, our effectiveness would be diminished. We are pleased to present Part 1 of the 2020 HBA Advocacy Report, which is the culmination of efforts advocating for our industry so far this year.

Carrie L. Ciliberto, Esq.
Chief Executive Officer

David Glenn
Senior Director of Government Relations



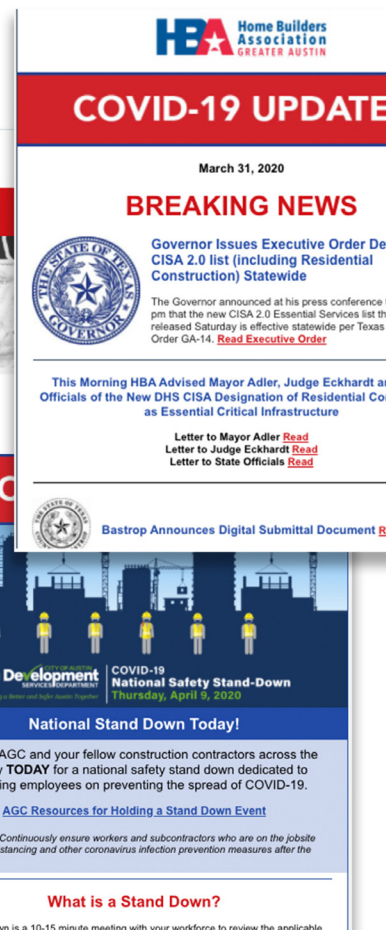
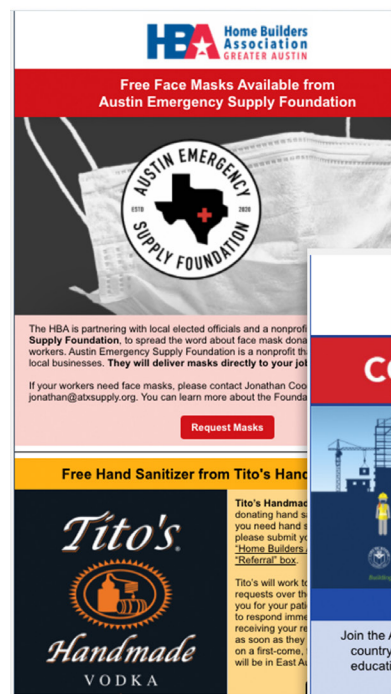
HBA's Efforts During COVID-19 Pandemic

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the HBA has worked overtime to keep our members up-to-date with the most current information available. The HBA has worked closely with local elected officials to shape safety guidelines and share best practices for jobsite safety. These and many other HBA efforts help to keep our members safe and keep construction moving forward.

The HBA provided near **daily updates, e-blasts, webinars and other resources to provide YOU with the most current and up-to-date information available.**

Given the rapidly changing regulatory landscape during the pandemic, the HBA ramped up its communications from its biweekly newsletter to a once, sometimes twice a day e-blast updates. The HBA also offered free webinars, city/county updates, and other important resources on its COVID-19 information page, including:

- ★ Critical updates from federal, state, county and city officials
- ★ Updates from city and county development service departments as they change their operations
- ★ Free webinars, including HBA's legal counsel, Congressman McCaul and other industry issues
- ★ Virtual meetings to provide updates and answer questions
- ★ Links to shelter in place orders and other key business, financial, HR and safety information
- ★ Updates from the Texas Association of Builders and the National Home Builders Association
- ★ Member access to free safety equipment and supplies (Thank you Tito's and Austin Emergency Supply Foundation)

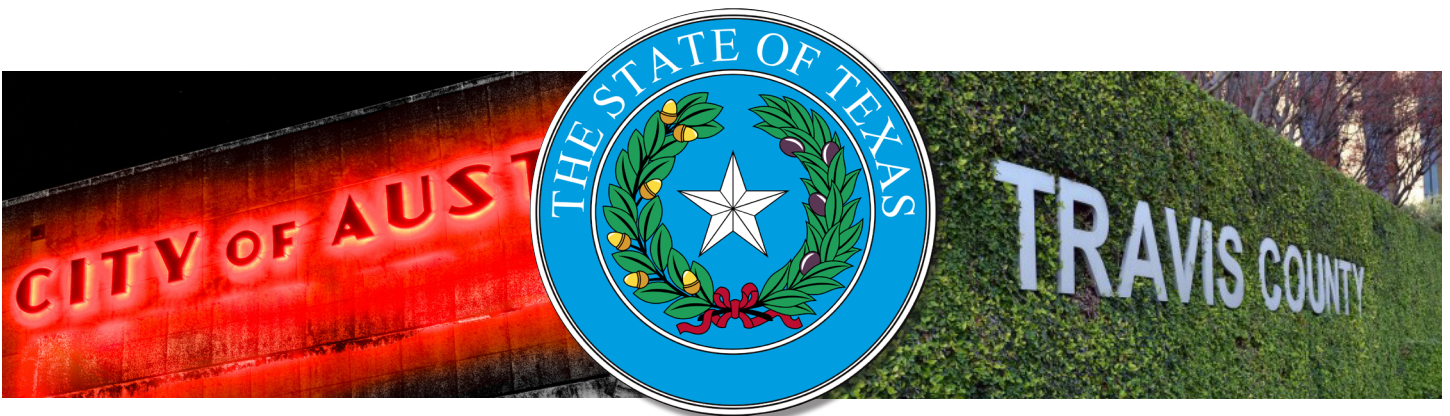


The HBA **Communicated Directly** with and Influenced National, State and Local Officials.

Throughout the pandemic, the construction industry, along with many other industries, found itself in a regulatory limbo, unsure of what was allowed and what was prohibited. Most importantly, for a brief period of time, the industry was scheduled for near total shutdown. HBA Staff and Members worked long hours to take the necessary steps and make the necessary connections and communications to reverse the shutdown and ensure the homebuilding industry was recognized as a critical essential industry that must keep working during the pandemic and beyond. The HBA, individually and in collaboration with other industry stakeholders, worked with a broad range of national, state and local officials, as well as the media and others in our community, to assert influence while providing education and best practices.

Ongoing Communications with Elected Officials, Press and Community

- ★ Signed joint letters with a broad range of industry organizations and stakeholders
- ★ Sent letters urging construction be deemed essential in Austin/Travis County as it had been nationally and other local jurisdictions
- ★ Educated officials about the negative impacts of shutting down construction
- ★ Provided form letter for members to send to elected officials



The HBA was in Regular Contact with Local Officials to Provide You with the Latest Information Directly from the Source.

- ★ Participated in regular meetings with County Judge, Mayor, public health officials and other state and local leaders
- ★ Provided education and best practices to properly address the essential and unique character of residential projects
- ★ Advocated against proposed restrictions that were untenable and/or unwise



The HBA Developed a **COVID-19 Web Page** with Important Information Specifically for Our Industry.

As the pandemic took hold in Texas, the amount of information flowing from federal, state, and local authorities was both tremendous, yet often lacking in direction or details. On a daily basis, your HBA Staff procured, reviewed, organized and distributed the information via eblasts and a unique webpage that serves as your clearing house for critical information relevant to our industry. The webpage features a vast and varied collection of important updates and resources, including:

- ★ Changes to city and county operations across our seven-county region (Bastrop, Caldwell, Hays, Lee, Travis and Williamson and parts of Burnet)
- ★ Safety guidance and documents from local jurisdictions, state, CDC, OSHA, TAB, NAHB and others
- ★ Financial and business resources from the local, state, and federal government
- ★ Links to HBA email updates and other communications
- ★ Relevant news articles about the impact of COVID-19 on the construction industry

Deployed a Survey to Better Understand the Impact of COVID-19 on the Industry Workforce

The survey targeted residential construction workers, allowing employers to anonymously report the number of COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations affecting their employees. The survey was available in English and Spanish.

The HBA Worked Diligently to **Help Develop and Share** Jobsite Safety Information in Collaboration with Local Authorities and Other Industry Organizations.

One of the biggest challenges our industry has had to overcome during the pandemic is finding new and innovative ways to keep our workforce and community safe from a highly communicable disease. This required out-of-the-box thinking and collaboration with industry experts, government officials and healthcare professionals.

Sharing Safety Materials and Best Practices.

- ★ Worked with national, state and local officials and organizations to develop best practice safety guidelines.
- ★ Provided guidance on best practice documentation, including sample safety plans and essential worker travel letters.
- ★ Produced a safety PSA in English and Spanish with the U.S. Hispanic Contractors Association
- ★ Facilitated two national safety stand down efforts from the National Association of Home Builders and the Associated General Contractors of America.
- ★ Educated and informed the construction industry and community at large
- ★ Served as a critical conduit for public health and elected officials to disseminate information
- ★ Assisted local officials with distribution of personal protective equipment

Working on **Policy Changes** to Accommodate Today's, and Tomorrow's, Continued Unique Environment

After construction was deemed essential and builders went back to work, there were still many questions about the logistics of the development process and the appropriate and safe interaction between industry and local officials. Operating in a world of social distancing and virtual meetings requires flexibility from all parties, and the HBA worked diligently and proactively to bring people to the table to work out these issues and determine best practices. Just a few of these interactions included:

- ★ Advocating to extend permit expiration dates
- ★ Meetings with local officials to help streamline processes while maintaining maximum worker safety
- ★ Worked with cities to troubleshoot new e-filing systems and protocols

HBA Partners with the **U.S. Hispanic Contractors Association (USHCA) for Safety PSA**



Much of the workforce in the construction industry is made up of contractors and trade workers. Outreach and education to these individuals is critical to ensuring that construction can continue safely. Many of these workers are not members of the HBA, so the HBA has partnered with the U.S. Hispanic Contractors Association to connect with contractors and trade workers. The HBA's Issue Fund issued a matching funds challenge to Members in support of the USHCA's outreach efforts to their members. The HBA was proud to contribute \$3,600 to the effort. The USHCA filmed a PSA, available in English and Spanish, featuring HBA Past President Luis Jauregui urging workers to adhere to safety protocols. It aired on several television networks and was shared widely by industry associations and elected officials.

Serving on **Opening Central Texas for Business Task Force**

Travis County Judge Sarah Eckhardt and Austin Mayor Steve Adler called upon the business community to develop a plan for safely reopening central Texas businesses after Governor Abbott began lifting restrictions on businesses.

The priorities of this task force are to:

- ★ Provide feedback on how we open our economy and to initialize future policy,
- ★ Monitor and evaluate the reopening, and
- ★ Inform the program design for city and county economic recovery funds.

A number of HBA Staff and Members are working on this Task Force. Additionally, one-quarter of the Task Force Construction Subcommittee is HBA representatives; other subcommittee members include commercial builders, workforce advocates and attorneys. The Task Force provided its initial recommendations to the County and City on ways to open back up the region safely, and continues to meet and advise the County and City on realities and best practices.



Land Development Code Rewrite

The HBA has been very involved in the updating of Austin's Land Development Code. The City Council held its first public hearing and reading at the end of 2019, and its second public hearing and reading in February 2020. HBA Staff and Members served on the Evolve Austin Coalition and the American Institute of Architects Code Task Force to provide improvements to the Code. The HBA set up special meetings to show City Council that the community investment in the Code extends beyond private development. Many of the HBA's critical issues were addressed, including:

- ★ Greenfield exemption that protects projects of a certain size from the code's reduction in floor-area-ratio and impervious cover.
- ★ Preservation bonus that subdivision process, reduces minimum lot sizes, and reduces the age of a qualifying home.
- ★ Greater flexibility with housing form for multiple units.
- ★ Greater flexibility with setbacks in the urban core.
- ★ Greater flexibility with impervious cover calculations.
- ★ Greater flexibility with design standards to allow for the preservation of a heritage tree.

Another key amendment passed on second reading calls for a better defined, more transparent process to update the City's various criteria manuals. The amendment would require an interdepartmental committee review of all criteria manual changes to ensure they do not conflict with other City rules. Unfortunately, the votes taken were nullified by a lawsuit, but as a result of much hard work in the first half of 2020, the Fall 2020 draft Code is expected to address many of the HBA's critical issues.



Changes to Tree Review Requirements

The HBA learned that the City was requiring tree reviews for interior remodels. The HBA worked with the Community Tree Preservation and the Residential Review departments regarding realities, practicalities, and best practices. As a result, tree reviews are no longer required for an interior remodel.

Input on Changes to Resource Recovery

The HBA provided feedback to the City's Resource Recovery department on proposed changes to their Construction and Demolition ordinance.



Street Impact Fees

In 2017, the City began developing street impact fees, which are designed to offset the impact of new development on the road system. In early 2020, the City published its report of key road projects and fee calculations. The HBA has opened discussion with city staff and will begin discussions at the Council level in July.

The HBA hosted city staff at the May Advocacy Forum. Via webinar, city staff walked through the proposed capital improvement plan, service areas, and proposed street impact fees.



“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 across our six-county region and, in partnership with TAB, at the state level.”

— Joe Fowler, 2020 HBA Board President & JF Homes



KYLE

Changes to Design Guidelines

The City proposed dramatic changes to their style guidelines which regulate the aesthetics of a home, lot layout, garage orientation and other design elements. The changes would essentially force every new development to use alley-loaded or swing-loaded garages.

The HBA worked with an engineer to study the impact on density and affordability. The results of the study found that projects could experience up to 30% reduction in density and tens of thousands of dollars in additional cost that will ultimately be passed down to the buyer.

The HBA presented its findings to the City Council who Council decided not to act on the issue. Discussions with the City on this issue are ongoing.



“The HBA’s advocacy team works on behalf of our Members on a wide range of issues, including code rewrites, fees, building materials, development standards, and much more. A single win in the policy arena can save builders thousands of dollars on every home they build.”

— John Jones, HBA Board
VP of Membership & Scott Felder Homes



LEANDER

Street Trees

Restrictive street tree requirements add cost to a project with little measurable benefit. Street trees can also damage infrastructure like roads and walkways. The developer and engineer should determine the appropriateness of street trees on a given project. The HBA worked with City Council to amend the street tree ordinance, making it optional instead of mandatory.

PFLUGERVILLE

Potential Moratorium

During the COVID-19 pandemic, some cities were considering dramatic measures to halt construction. The City of Pflugerville had an item on a city council agenda that called for a moratorium on all development. However, pandemics are not included in the state statute that governs moratoriums. The HBA reached out to the City Council to explain the legal issues with the proposal and it was ultimately pulled from the agenda.

TRAVIS COUNTY

Changes to transportation impact analysis requirements

County staff proposed dramatic changes to the transportation impact analysis submittal processes, adding time and cost to the process. The HBA partnered with other industry organizations to provide feedback on the changes. The HBA is urging the County to adopt a more streamlined process that is consistent with City of Austin processes. This is an ongoing effort that will be escalated to the County Commissioners Court.



During the last legislative session in 2019, the Texas Legislature passed House Bill 3167, which was designed to speed up approval processes at the city and county. As the new legislation was implemented, some developers experienced delays as cities and counties found ways around the new legislation. It has become clear that the legislation needs to be tweaked so that it better solves the problems it was intended to solve.

TAB assembled a statewide task force to study the bill. The HBA provided feedback on the implementation on the bill as well as suggestions on ways to improve the bill in the 2021 legislative session.

The HBA has also provided feedback on HB 3167 to the author of the bill, Representative Tom Oliverson. HBA members provided Rep. Oliverson with a detailed walkthrough of the development process so that the Representative can better understand the challenges facing our Members.

Home Builders Association of Greater Austin



What is the HBA HomePAC?

Home PAC 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.

Home PAC's purpose is to raise money as well as 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.

The goals of the HomePAC are to:

- ★ **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 races**



Issues Fund

Home Builders Association of Greater Austin

The Issues Fund is a non-political fund that focuses on unique and specific issues that require financial support. The Issues Fund has been used to support (or oppose) a wide variety of issues, including bond elections, lawsuit litigation, coalition building, or hiring consultants. The Issues Fund does not directly support any political expenditures or campaign contributions. The Issues Fund is a critical tool in the HBA's tool belt to support policies that are pro-housing and defend against policies that seek to limit a builder's ability to put homes on the ground. Consider contributing to the Issues Fund -- please contact an HBA staff member today!



All May elections were moved to November 2020 due to concerns about COVID-19. The HomePAC issued their endorsements before the election was postponed. Texas has two uniform elections a year in May and November. Austin's elections are in November, but many other key cities have theirs in May. The HomePAC interviewed 20 candidates across six cities to determine where to place its support. The HomePAC Trustees identified the following key cities and elections to engage in. For the 2020 May election, the cities were Round Rock, Cedar Park, Georgetown, Taylor and Liberty Hill.

THE HOMEPAC TRUSTEES VOTED TO MAKE THE FOLLOWING ENDORSEMENTS :

| City | Endorsement | Candidate Name | Place |
|--------------|-------------|----------------------|-------------------------|
| Cedar Park | X | Corbin Van Arsdale | Mayor |
| Cedar Park | | Jim Richardson | Mayor |
| Cedar Park | X | Mel Kirkland | Place 2 |
| Cedar Park | | Bob Cornelius | Place 2 |
| Cedar Park | X | Eric Boyce | Place 4 |
| Cedar Park | | Jim Penniman-Morin | Place 4 |
| Cedar Park | | Dorin Chavez | Place 6 |
| Cedar Park | X | Heather Jefts | Place 6 |
| | | | |
| Round Rock | X | Craig Morgan | Mayor |
| Round Rock | X | Michelle Ly | Place 1 |
| Round Rock | | Tina Steiner | Place 1 |
| Round Rock | | Will Peckham | Place 4 |
| Round Rock | X | Frank Ortega | Place 4 |
| | | | |
| Georgetown | | Larry Brundidge | Mayor |
| Georgetown | | Jonathan Dade | Mayor |
| Georgetown | X | Joshua Schroeder | Mayor |
| Georgetown | X | Shawn Hood | District 2 |
| Georgetown | | Jason Wirth | District 2 |
| Georgetown | | Lisa King | District 2 |
| Georgetown | X | Rachael Jonrowe | District 6 |
| Georgetown | | Michael Walton | District 6 |
| | | | |
| Taylor | X | Dwayne Ariola | Council Member at Large |
| Taylor | | Christopher Gonzales | Council Member at Large |
| | | | |
| Liberty Hill | X | Rick Hall | Mayor |
| Liberty Hill | | Liz Branigan | Mayor |

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.

HBA'S 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. GRC Members meet monthly and are directly involved with the HBA's advocacy efforts.

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.

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 lunchtime 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



“In our rapidly changing regulatory environment, our advocacy team makes sure that the HBA and our Members have a seat at the table as critical policy decisions are being made at city hall and the capitol.”

— Chad Durham, HBA President-Elect & David Weekley Homes



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.

February

This Forum featured an esteemed panelist of builders, developers, and policy experts to discuss House Bill 3167, the “shot clock bill.” The bill was designed to improve application approval times, but not all cities and counties are complying with the spirit of the law, resulting in additional delays to the approval process. The panel discussed real world experiences using the new legislation and offered up suggestions to improve the bill in the upcoming 2021 legislative session.

March

The HBA invited central Texas city and county planners to a biannual roundtable discussion about growth, upcoming rule changes, long term planning, permitting and building statistics, and other issues facing homebuilders 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 to common issues.

May

The HBA hosted the City of Austin’s Transportation Department, who presented on the recently published report on the City’s proposed street impact fees. The virtual Forum included a detailed overview of the report, including fee amounts, service areas, and next steps for the street impact fee adoption process. The Forum concluded with a Q&A session with the Transportation Department.

TEXAS GAS SERVICE STAKEHOLDER MEETINGS

The HBA’s quarterly stakeholder meetings with Texas Gas Service continued in 2020. These sponsored meetings are designed to open a dialogue between builders and the private utility to improve builder/utility service for homebuyers. Texas Gas Services brought representatives from all aspects of the development and installation process to field questions from builders.

As a result of the recent meetings, Texas Gas Services has created an “issues tag” working on that will improve communication at the job site. This tag will identify TGS technicians and indicate if there is an issue on the job site that prohibits the technician from installing the gas line. Texas Gas Service also gave an update on improved communication efforts and rebates for installing gas appliances in new homes.



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