

# INTERVIEW



**Chad Lawler, MABA**  
*Executive Director*

## Enhancing a Government Affairs Program in Madison

The Madison Area Builders Association received State and Local Issues Fund (SLIF) support in 2024 to kickstart their advocacy agenda and expand on the abilities of the association. Since the project was funded at the International Builders' Show, MABA have been working closely with AEG Policy Advisors to develop both a strategic plan and a multi-year advocacy agenda. Chad Lawler, EO of the Madison Area Builders Association, hopes that this project will not only create an actionable strategy for his membership, but for HBAs across the association. Chad gave us an update on MABA's progress and his plans for 2025.

### ***Can you talk a bit about the strategic planning process and how your members have been involved during the development?***

MABA hired AEG Consulting to assist the association in refocusing its government affairs efforts to move from good but reactive operations to highly organized, proactive, and successful operations. Between March 2024 and May 2024, MABA staff and a Government Affairs Task Force met with AEG on several occasions, including for a half-day strategic planning session on May 21st. The Task Force comprised two builders/developers, an engineer, a realtor/broker, an attorney, the state HBA executive officer, and a supplier member. NAHB Government Relations staff was also on hand to experience the strategic planning session and provide feedback/expertise. The goal was to gain diverse opinions for a holistic view of the opportunities and issues that impact all MABA members related to local government affairs. After receiving the initial draft strategic plan, the Task Force reviewed the strategic plan, providing insights

into the priorities and strategies listed. A final version was drafted by staff that added context and organization based on the Task Force recommendations. The final draft has been shared with the full Government Affairs Committee and a portion of each agenda is dedicated to review of areas of the strategic plan. The strategic plan has provided us with a clear understanding of the next steps needed to take our operations from good to great.

### ***How will the strategic plan affect your 2025 plans for your association? What are your priorities heading into the new year?***

We've already seen major changes in our plans for 2025, starting with our staffing and budget. The biggest takeaway from the consultants was the need for more staffing focused on our efforts. As such, we hired a government affairs intern and budgeted in 2025 to continue that role ongoing. We also budgeted for other government affairs initiatives to ensure we could fund the more strategic and proactive activities we are planning, including the hiring of an engineering firm to analyze all municipal fees for land development and residential construction. With the assistance of our new intern and a renewed focus on the strategies for success, we've accomplished more in the past six months than we had in the prior 2-3 years. The added support and focus are key to ensuring we are even more impactful in our work for members.

### ***What advice would you give to other HBAs working to kickstart a government affairs program?***

There are a lot of voices in all HBAs, be it staff, committee and association leaders, and members as a whole, and they all have great ideas to move the HBA forward. The two main issues tend to be a lack of capacity/support and a lack of strategic focus on what steps are needed and what activities should be prioritized. If you're not already including government affairs in your HBA strategic plan, please add this pillar to your next plan. Or better yet, consider doing a strategic planning session with a government affairs-focused firm, such as AEG. When you're able to focus on a single area within the HBA and include experts and members who are passionate and knowledgeable about a single topic area, such as government affairs, you're able to refine your efforts more than can be done with your Board of Directors during a general strategic planning session. It is worth the effort and the cost to ensure you're using your resources at its highest efficiency and effectiveness.