

# BUILDING **WOMEN**

Strategies and solutions for women  
in the building industry

2026

A portrait of Heather Ferrier Laminack, a woman with long, wavy brown hair and bangs, smiling. She is wearing a black turtleneck top. The background is a soft, out-of-focus white.

**2026 NAHB PWB CHAIR  
HEATHER FERRIER LAMINACK  
TAKING PWB TO THE  
NEXT LEVEL**

*A publication by the National Association of Home Builders*

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# SHE DID IT HER WAY

## Meg Billings

*Owner & General Contractor, Meg & Co.*

Meg's first experience building homes was helping her parents build their family cabin on the Kenai River in Alaska. But her career as a builder was far from a foregone conclusion.

When Meg told her father she wanted to start a home-construction business, he feared it'd be too hard for her to fit into a male-dominated industry. But Meg wasn't waiting for permission. After all, she'd just taken over construction of her family's dream home with a lot of self-determination and skills gained from her manufacturing engineering degree. So, she bet her savings on it.

Today, she's a certified Master Builder who not only runs a thriving home-construction business, but also the sought-after BuildHer Leadership Summit. She admits it wasn't an easy or short journey, but says the business really took off when she realized that being different wasn't just a hinderance, but also a superpower.

"Play to your strengths," she advises those who attend the BuildHer Leadership Summit. "We raised the bar in every expectation of our business, and we saw how these changes greatly improved the experience of our clients."

**Meg Billings, building a stronger industry.**



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# Perspectives

## Purpose, Progress and Possibility

*Carrie DeWeese reflects on her time as the 2025 National PWB Chair.*

When I stepped into this role, I knew the year would be meaningful. What I didn't know was how transformative it would be. This year has been a powerful reminder that when women build homes, we build futures. As I reflect, I am struck by how clearly our mission came to life and the progress we achieved.

**Local, state and national councils are at the heart of what we do.** I visited several across the country and was reminded that *PWB is a force*. Local councils, led by volunteers, helped open doors for women in the trades. Through mentorship and relationship-building, they're working tirelessly to strengthen the pipeline of future talent.

One of my proudest achievements was **expanding our national presence**. We embraced a shared value proposition that communicates the heart of PWB: "When you join, you don't just gain a membership. You gain a community that shares knowledge, opens doors and lifts each other up." It gives every council, board and ambassador a common purpose to carry the mission forward.

**One of the year's defining moments was NAHB PWB's collaboration with SkillsUSA.** Local councils hosted demonstrations, volunteered at competitions, taught workshops and created unforgettable moments for young women stepping into their first tool belts.

**Witnessing the strength of the women leading beside me** — our executive board, staff partners and members who stepped forward — has been a privilege. We encouraged councils to lean into the concept that "iron sharpens iron" and did exactly that. PWB expanded to over 4,000 members and more than 100 local councils.

**In 2025, PWB turned 70.** We honored the women whose courage laid the foundation. They stepped into boardrooms alone and navigated job sites unwelcomed while refusing to let barriers become excuses. Because of them, women in construction are no longer the exception. Yet, our work is far from over.

### Reflection

When I look back on this past year, it's not the meetings, flights or events. It's the stories from women I encountered along way who shared how PWB has positively impacted their lives. Those moments are what drives this council.

Serving as your National PWB Chair has been the honor of my career. I leave inspired, energized and profoundly grateful for the women who build—homes, careers, communities and each other. **BW**



**Carrie DeWeese**  
2025 NAHB Professional Women in Building Council Chair

## BUILDING **WOMEN**

Chartered in 1955, the NAHB Professional Women in Building Council (PWB) consists of a network of local and state councils and national members. NAHB PWB is dedicated to promoting, enhancing and supporting home building and women in the industry.

### 2025 NAHB Professional Women in Building Leadership

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Carrie DeWeese, Chinowth & Cohen

#### Vice Chair

Heather Laminack, Ferrier Builders, Inc.

#### Immediate Past Chair

Luellen Smith, Rhino Wine Cellars & Cooling Systems

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Lisa Cortez, Cornerstone Home Lending

Tanya Cromwell, Idaho Home Design

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Andrea Eldred, Element Construction

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Monica Wheaton, ECI Software Solutions

#### Executive Officer Liaison

Greg Lane, Building Industry Association of Washington

#### 2025 NAHB PWB Subcommittee Chairs

##### Awards & Recognition

Allie Jackson, Old Castle APG

##### Membership and Communications

Andrea Eldred, Element Construction

##### Professional Development

Andi Dirkschneider Bliss, Brookline Homes, LLC

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# AdvocacyCorner

## Advocacy in Action: Protecting Housing, Workforce and Choice

*Advocacy is often discussed in broad terms—policy, legislation and regulations—but for builders and housing professionals across the country, it is deeply personal.*

By Tanya Cromwell

Advocacy determines whether a project pencils, whether a buyer can afford a home and whether our industry can meet the growing demand for housing. Through the collective efforts of NAHB and its state and local associations, advocacy turns individual challenges into coordinated action, ensuring builders have a voice where decisions are made.

From housing affordability and impact fees to workforce development and regulatory balance, NAHB advocacy is not theoretical. It delivers real, measurable results for members and the communities they serve.

### Housing Affordability: When Policy Meets Reality

Few issues illustrate the importance of advocacy more clearly than housing affordability. Builders nationwide are navigating a growing web of regulations—impact fees, energy codes, zoning restrictions and material mandates—that directly impact the final cost of a home. While many of these policies are well-intentioned, the cumulative effect can push housing out of reach for the very families policymakers aim to help.

Across the country, impact fees and utility hook-up costs are increasingly affecting housing affordability. The East Idaho Home Builders Association notes that rapidly rising fees are creating unpredictability for builders and home buyers alike. This emphasizes the importance of advocacy to ensure costs remain fair and reasonable.

State-specific policies can also have dramatic effects on housing costs. “Converting existing homes from natural gas to electric will cost on average \$40,000,” said Janelle Guthrie, a representative of the Building Industry Association of Washington (BIAW). “Building new homes under our restrictive energy codes adds \$13,000 to the cost of a new home.” Recognizing the threat to affordability and consumer choice, BIAW mobilized its members and partnered with NAHB to push back.

The result was Initiative 2066—Protecting Energy Choice in Washington. In a powerful demonstration of grassroots advocacy, more than half a million people signed the initiative over seven weeks, and nearly two million people voted for it in the 2024 election.

These examples highlight a national reality: unchecked fees and restrictive regulations threaten affordability, and NAHB advocacy provides

the voice, resources and coordination to protect both builders and homebuyers.

### Workforce Development: Building the Next Generation

Even when affordability challenges are addressed, housing cannot be built without a skilled workforce. Labor shortages remain one of the most significant barriers to meeting housing demand. That’s largely due to new home construction not keeping pace with population growth and household formation.



Workforce advocacy at the national, state and local levels has helped elevate construction training programs and apprenticeship pipelines. Many associations have developed training academies and partnerships that prepare workers for meaningful careers in residential construction. For example, in Washington, the BIAW partnered with the nationally recognized BuildStrong Academy network to create the BuildStrong Academy of Pierce County in partnership with the Home Builders Institute. Since opening in January 2025, the academy has trained 44 pre-apprentices, awarded 79 credentials, presented 136 certificates and provided graduates with an average wage of \$24.37 per hour on job placement.

These efforts illustrate how advocacy ensures builders not only have a workforce today but are preparing the next generation of skilled professionals to meet housing demand in the years ahead.

### Why NAHB Advocacy Should Matter to Members

At its core, NAHB advocacy succeeds because it connects builders at every level into a unified voice. That coordination is





especially critical when regulatory proposals emerge that could significantly increase housing costs or limit consumer options.

Beth Haynes, Director of Marketing for Regal Builders in Dover, Delaware, has seen firsthand how effective that partnership can be. Reflecting on a proposed residential fire sprinkler mandate, she described how advocacy protected both builders and buyers:

“When proposed residential fire sprinkler regulations threatened to significantly increase the cost of new homes, our state association and NAHB stepped in to help,” she recalled. “NAHB worked closely with our government affairs group to assess the impact, shape our approach and guide us through the public comment process.”

With NAHB’s support, the coalition successfully kept fire sprinklers optional rather than mandatory, which preserved affordability, flexibility and consumer choice.

This example underscores a critical truth: **Advocacy is not only about opposing regulations. It is also about engagement, which means providing data, participating in public processes and helping policymakers to better understand the real-world implications.**

Every day, builders face new zoning questions, code interpretations and regulatory proposals. Without strong advocacy

representing the industry, navigating these changes would be infinitely more difficult.

### A Collective Responsibility

The success of NAHB advocacy depends on participation. Whether through grassroots efforts, committee involvement or sharing real-world experiences, member engagement strengthens the entire federation. Programs like the Professional Women in Building (PWB) Council play a vital role in ensuring diverse voices are heard and represented in advocacy conversations.

Advocacy is not a benefit reserved for a few. It’s a responsibility shared by all who care about the future of housing. When builders engage, policy improves. When policy improves, housing becomes more attainable. And when housing is attainable, communities thrive.

To learn more about NAHB’s advocacy efforts, go to [www.nahb.org/advocacy](http://www.nahb.org/advocacy). **BW**



Tanya Cromwell is a designer, builder and founder of Idaho Home Design and Caddis Builders LLC and has over 30 years of expertise in the home building industry. Also, Cromwell was named the 2025 NAHB Woman of the Year and has served as an NAHB BUILD-PAC Trustee and PWB Trustee.

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## NAHB Woman of the Year

For **Natalie Mason**, success in real estate development isn't measured solely by square footage delivered or awards won, but by the people she brings along with her. As executive vice president and co-head of development at Capital Square in Glen Allen, Va., Mason has built a reputation as a strategic, results-driven leader who is equally committed to cultivating the next generation of talent, especially women entering a notoriously challenging industry.



Natalie Mason, 2025 NAHB Woman of the Year

Since joining Capital Square in 2021, Mason has emerged as a visible advocate for inclusive leadership in commercial real estate. Her mentorship extends beyond informal guidance, taking shape through deliberate programming designed to create access, confidence and connection. She regularly mentors young professionals and rising leaders through industry organizations, speaking candidly about career navigation, leadership presence and the realities of large-scale development.

Her commitment to mentorship is especially visible on job sites, where she intentionally opens doors for women to gain firsthand exposure to complex projects. Through initiatives like her "Pink Hard Hat Tour," Mason partnered with the Urban Land Institute's Women's Leadership Initiative to combine construction site tours with educational investment discussions—demystifying development while reinforcing that women belong at every table, including those traditionally dominated by men.

Mason has also created spaces where professional relationships can flourish organically. In 2024, she co-hosted Capital Conversations: Women Leading the Way, an intimate dinner held alongside the Women in Private Wealth Retreat, designed to foster meaningful dialogue among senior women executives. The event emphasized collaboration over competition, offering a forum for shared experience across disciplines—from finance to development to investor relations.

Mason leads with clarity, but also with generos-

## NAHB PWB Member of the Year

The National Association of Home Builders (NAHB) Professional Women in Building Council named **Kristal Casey**, Founder and Chief Visioneering Officer of Unicorn Service Solutions, as its 2025 PWB Member of the Year during their board meeting at the International



Kristal Casey, 2025 NAHB PWB Member of the Year

## PWB'S MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS

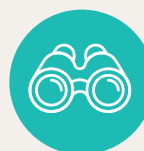
### Accomplishments in 2025:



NAHB's Professional Women in Building (PWB) Council ended the year with 101 councils and 4,180 total members. In 2025, PWB and SkillsUSA began collaborating to support students entering the construction industry

and bridge the skilled labor gap. PWB members were encouraged to contribute to this workforce development effort by mentoring students, judging student competitions and donating supplies where needed.

### Looking ahead:



PWB will continue advancing its core goals of recruitment, retention, professional development and member engagement by expanding programming and recognition opportunities. In 2026, PWB will elevate its national presence

through dynamic webinars, an energizing PWB Week and robust content and networking experiences in the PWB HQ at the International Builders' Show. At the same time, the Council Spotlight program will shine a brighter light on local councils making meaningful impacts in their communities.

ity, making time to coach teams, champion emerging voices, and build development groups that are both high-performing and inclusive. Under her leadership, Capital Square's development team has more than doubled in size, reflecting not just growth, but trust in her vision and stewardship.

In an industry focused on the long term, Natalie Mason understands that the most enduring structures aren't always made of concrete and steel. Some are built through mentorship, opportunity and the quiet work of lifting others as you rise, and those foundations are what truly sustain progress.

Builders' Show in Orlando. She is recognized for her exceptional leadership, industry innovation and inspiring commitment to service.

With more than 30 years of experience across business development, communications and community engagement, including a decade focused on development and permitting, Casey has become a transformative force in the home building sector. During her time at Unicorn Service Solutions, she has spearheaded a "human-in-the-



loop” AI plan review application that streamlines permitting and compliance for municipalities and the private sector, allowing them to accelerate housing and development projects while boosting municipal tax revenues.

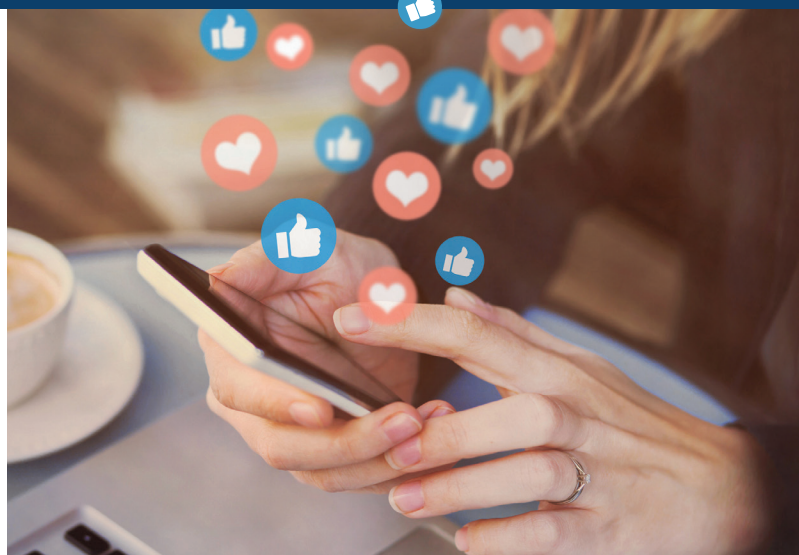
One of Casey’s passions is shaping policy and regulatory progress. She serves on multiple municipal advisory committees, championing transparency and innovation in permitting and compliance. Her regional leadership includes service within the Greater Houston Partnership, which serves hundreds of member companies and institutions across the 12-county region. Casey served on the Regional Economic Development Advisory Committee and Women on the Rise — the Partnership’s program designed for rising female leaders. She brings the same energy to her roles within the industry at both the state and local level as chair of the Texas Association of Builders’ Associates Committee and co-chair of the Greater Houston Builders Association’s Codes and Standards Committee, and she makes her voice heard nationally, too. Each year, Casey travels multiple times to Washington, D.C. to champion causes close to her heart: issues facing residential construction, possibilities for shaping Houston’s growth and opportunities for women in leadership positions.

Beyond her professional achievements, Casey is deeply committed to community service. She supports organizations such as HomeAid Houston, Elijah Rising, Mission of Yahweh and the Fort Bend Area Women’s Center, contributing to efforts ranging from combating human trafficking to expanding housing access for vulnerable families. She amplifies the visibility and impact of these causes with her unique ability to connect nonprofits with policymakers.

## Councils of the Year

This year’s Outstanding Council of the Year in the small category is the **Home Builders Association of Marion & Polk Counties’ PWB Council** and **Misti Miller**, their 2025 chair. Created in 2022, the council’s members have worked tirelessly in the intervening years to fill their schedule with purposeful, high-value events that provide professional development, educational outreach, community service and membership growth. 2025’s schedule was their most packed one yet, with a steady flow throughout the year of opportunities in each of their goal categories.

One of the standout events hosted by the council was their very own PWB Week, which they held separately from NAHB’s version for the first time since the council was chartered. Their programming was tailored specifically to their community and council



## Let’s Talk

The NAHB Professional Women in Building Network on LinkedIn continues to expand its reach. With more than 3,000 members (up 11% compared to last year), this public social media group is a place for PWB members to share business tips and advice, as well as professional development resources, tools and events related to the residential construction industry. Search for “NAHB Professional Women in Building” to find us on LinkedIn (<https://www.linkedin.com/groups/1547627>).

Build community with your fellow NAHB Professional Women in Building members by sharing photos and videos of what’s happening with your local council on the PWB Facebook Group page (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/nahbpwb>). It boasts more than 5,300 members—up by nearly 15% compared to last year.

If you plan to post on either social media PWB group page, be sure to include the hashtag #NAHBWomenInBuilding.



Marion & Polk Counties’ PWB members at their HBA’s Tour of Homes.

goals. They kicked off the week with a seminar exploring brain-based strategies to shift stress into strength, break free from the cycle of overwhelm and create space to thrive both professionally and personally. Then, they focused on service with a trip to restock a shelter for women and children the council

remodeled in 2023. The rest of the week included the council's beloved cornhole fundraising tournament, an open forum to gather feedback and, finally, some relaxation at a local vineyard.

Building on previous years' successes, the council has smashed their goals for 2025.

This year's Outstanding Council of the Year in the medium category is the **Greater Fort Worth Builders Association's PWB Council** and **Amy Burns**, their 2025 chair.

This council paired high-demand programming with a variety of meeting formats to ensure members and participants were able to truly get the most out of each of their offerings, even during the busy season. This ranged from educational programs on topics like work-life balance and financial planning to social and community-focused events like their annual Ladies who Lead Luncheon and their PWB Happy Hour series.

Of course, GFWBA's PWB also made time to give back. The week before Mother's Day, council and community members donated



Fort Worth PWB members participating in Habitat for Humanity's Women Build Day.

new and gently used designer handbags to a purse auction held by the council, where they raised \$6,800 for the Texas Association of Builders' PWB scholarship fund. They also participated in Habitat for Humanity's Women Build Day, facilitated a back-to-school backpack drive and proudly raised over \$4,000 to provide Thanksgiving meals and support to women and children in need through the Tarrant County Safe Haven organization.

Looking ahead, the members of GFWBA's PWB Council are eager to keep this momentum going. They hope to learn from other PWB councils across Texas to share best practices and strengthen their programming and hope to establish a mentorship program to foster connections among members at different stages in their careers.

This year's Outstanding Council of the Year in the large category is the **Wilmington Cape Fear Home Builders Association's PWB Council** and **Cameron Moore**, their 2025 chair. The council

## Meet the 2026 Board of Trustees

The 2026 NAHB PWB Board of Trustees was recognized at the PWB board meeting during the 2026 International Builders' Show:

- Heather Laminack, Chair
  - Andi D. Bliss, Vice Chair
  - Allie J. Guzman, Second Vice Chair
  - Dianne Beaton, Trustee
  - Stacy Beers, Trustee
  - Jeanne Conger, Trustee
  - Laura Dwyer, Trustee & Membership & Communications Subcommittee Chair
  - Andrea Eldred Trustee
  - Reyna Estrada, Trustee
  - Linda Garvey, Trustee
  - Ericka Hill, Trustee
  - Jennifer Landers, Trustee
  - Cheryl Lee, Trustee
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  - Stephanie Prosser, Trustee
  - Geraldine Smith, Trustee
  - Jennifer Tennyson, Trustee
  - Renae' Turnbaugh, Trustee
  - Monica Wheaton, Trustee
- 
- Carrie DeWeese, Immediate Past Chair
  - Roseann Freitas, PWB Executive Officers Council Liaison

experienced remarkable growth in both membership and engagement in 2025. From enhancing their onboarding process with the development and launch of the PWB New Member Welcome Packet to revitalizing standout programs like their Coffee & Convos series, they have made significant strides toward their ultimate goal of fostering a connected council.

WCFHBA'S PWB successfully maintained a schedule with a whopping 14 events over the course of the year, and they even launched a monthly e-newsletter to keep members informed and



broaden the council's reach. WCFHBA PWB also rebuilt its committee infrastructure after prioritizing their board structure and developing a robust event calendar, as well as laying the groundwork to roll out Membership, Sponsorship, Youth Development and Volunteerism committees in 2026.

Perhaps the most measurable result of their efforts has been membership growth. In January of 2024, the council had 61 active members. By July of 2025, that number had grown to 106, representing a 73.8% increase in just 18 months. This growth is a testament not only to the appeal of their programming, but also to the strength of the council and its communication strategies. **BW**



Pages from the Wilmington Cape Fear PWB's New Member Welcome Packet.



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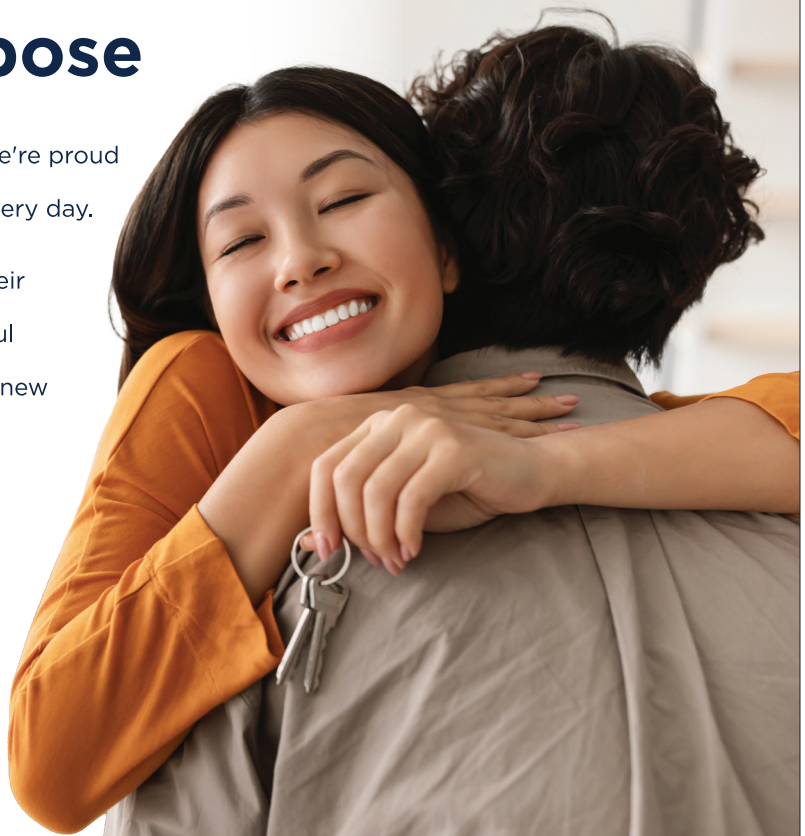
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# Minding Your Business

## Human First, Tech Forward: Dos and Don'ts of Using AI in Your Business

By Erin Hurley

Artificial intelligence is no longer a future-facing concept in the housing industry. It's already here, quietly embedded in how we market communities, manage operations and communicate with buyers. Like any powerful tool, AI can elevate our work when used intentionally or dilute it when misapplied.

Across the industry, professionals are discovering that AI isn't about replacing expertise. It's about removing friction, accelerating good thinking and creating more room for the human skills that matter most.

### How AI is Already Being Used

It has become a creative accelerator for marketing professionals. Mollie Elkman of Group Two describes it as a tool her team uses daily across a wide range of deliverables. Brainstorming concepts, outlining content, and formatting presentations are some of the tasks AI can help streamline.

"Many people in creative roles initially see AI as cheating," Elkman noted. "But when you look at it as an enhancing tool and not something that replaces your creativity, it really does support getting to the best work in the shortest amount of time."

On the customer experience side, AI often functions as a behind-the-scenes assistant. Angela McKay of O'Neil Interactive uses it to draft emails, summarize calls, outline web pages and explore alternate approaches to customer communication. AI-powered notetakers help teams capture and organize conversations so they can focus on engagement rather than transcription.

AI is also proving valuable as a thinking partner. Teams are using it to ask questions, such as: Does this make sense to a buyer? What questions would they still have? What am I missing? Used this way, AI helps teams stress-test ideas before they reach customers.



### Using AI to Support, Not Replace

When guided intentionally, AI brings two key advantages: higher-quality results and greater efficiency.

### AI's value increases when it's used to support thinking rather than replace it.

Elkman points out that AI can cut hours from tasks like brainstorming, outlining and formatting — freeing up creative energy for refinement and strategy. The result isn't generic output; it's more time to elevate the final product.

McKay emphasizes that AI's value increases when it's used to support thinking rather than replace it. Asking follow-up questions, requesting alternative approaches or prompting AI to flag

assumptions leads to stronger outcomes than accepting the first response as final.

Across roles, AI improves efficiency, clarity and consistency — particularly for teams managing high volumes of communication or content. When the fundamentals are already strong, AI helps scale them.

### The Risks When AI is Misapplied

The most common pitfall is mistaking efficiency for effort — treating AI as a shortcut instead of a tool.

"The goal is to make your work better, not replace your input," Elkman said. "It's very obvious when people use AI to replace thinking rather than enhance it."

Other risks include publishing unreviewed content, relying on AI without understanding its limitations or assuming it understands your brand, buyers or markets out of the box. AI can also introduce accuracy issues, bias or tone mismatches if not guided carefully.

From a customer perspective, automation becomes risky when it replaces empathy. While AI can support communication, it



should not handle conversations that require nuance, reassurance or emotional intelligence, especially in an industry as personal as housing.

While AI can influence research and awareness, it doesn't replace trust. Word of mouth still carries weight. Buyers may consider what AI suggests, but they act on what trusted friends, reviews and real conversations tell them.

### How to Use AI Responsibly



- Use AI as a starting point, not a final answer. Keep humans in the loop for review, editing and approval.
- Train AI tools with clear brand guidelines, tone and guardrails.
- Be transparent internally about where and how AI is being used.
- Focus AI efforts on efficiency, clarity and consistency.
- Use good prompts: provide context, audience, tone and goals.

### ✗ DON'T:

- Publish AI-generated content without review.
- Automate customer communication that requires empathy or judgment.
- Assume AI understands your buyers, markets or operations without guidance.
- Treat AI as a cost-cutting replacement for expertise.
- Ignore governance, privacy, copyright or data ownership considerations.

### Why Prompts and Oversight Matter

Prompts matter more than many people realize. Clear inputs, market context and direction on tone dramatically improve outcomes. Asking AI to cite sources, flag gaps or call out assumptions turns it from a shortcut into a true working tool.

Ultimately, humans are still the override. AI can simplify complex decisions, but buying a home is emotional. People want reassurance, clarity and real experience — and that comes from people, not platforms.

### Looking Ahead

Used intentionally, AI reduces friction and frees teams to focus on relationships, creativity and strategy. Used without guardrails, it simply adds noise.

One of the most important “dos” is simply to use it. Explore, learn and look beyond obvious writing tools. The greatest value often comes from automation that allows professionals to focus on work that requires judgment, connection and trust.

AI isn't changing the fundamentals of the housing industry. Good messaging, good follow-up and strong customer experiences still matter. AI just helps teams deliver those basics more consistently — when they lead with intention. **BW**



Erin Hurley serves as Vice President of the Western Territory at Builders Design, where she brings together people, ideas and design strategy in partnership with builders and developers.

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HEATHER  
FERRIER  
LAMINACK

TAKING PWB TO THE  
**NEXT  
LEVEL**

BY MINDY LEPP



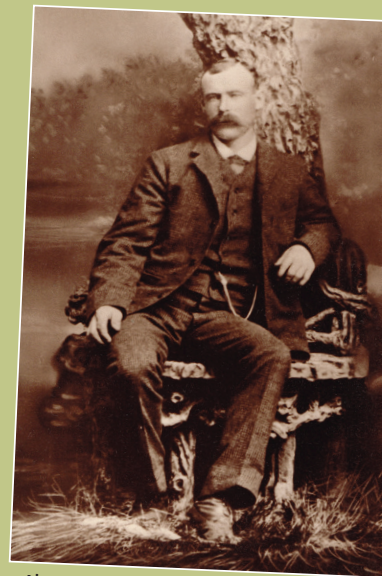
Heather Ferrier Laminack is poised to build on the legacy of Professional Women in Building and drive the council forward by expanding opportunities, strengthening connections and elevating women across the industry.

**T**here are not many people in the building industry who can say they come from a family line of builders dating back to the 1880s,

but Heather Ferrier Laminack certainly can. Her family legacy began with her great-grandfather, Alexander Ferrier, who emigrated from Scotland to work as a stone mason on the Texas State Capitol in exchange for land. Over generations, the family trade evolved from masonry into structural concrete, building bridges across Texas. That foundation eventually led Donald Ferrier, Laminack's

father, to construct an earth-sheltered home (concrete walls and roof built into the side of a hill) in the 1980s. This

was the first of many energy-efficient, high-performance homes that Ferrier Homes would become known for.



Alexander Ferrier

Like many children of business owners, Laminack grew up on job sites, following her dad from project to project. “I have been blessed to have so many people along the way mentor me, starting foremost with my father,” she said. While Laminack’s path into the industry didn’t begin with a hammer in her hand, she believes it takes all kinds of perspectives and skillsets to make it turn. “It’s an industry I’m proud to be part of, and I want others to know they belong, too. This is a driving force behind my involvement with PWB.”

She started helping in the family business at just nine years old by learning to file paperwork. That early experience later turned into cleaning job sites, working as an accounts payable clerk in high school and later serving as office manager while in college. After graduation, she stepped into the role of general manager. Now, Laminack is involved in every facet of Ferrier Homes’ operations—from sales to design to project management to accounting. She enjoys the dynamic nature of projects and the fact that no two are the same.

What ultimately cemented her passion for the industry was building her own home, which was the first LEED Platinum and NAHB NGBS Emerald-certified home in Texas. Taking on this responsibility sparked a love for designing high-performance, one-of-a-kind homes rooted in collaboration, innovation and craftsmanship.

“After working through that process, I was hooked! I loved the process and creativity that goes into bringing someone’s goals to life,” Laminack recalled. In fact, the experience of living in a home that was truly one of a kind and built to her needs and specifications helped provide a unique understanding of the power of good design and construction. “When they partner together, it creates something really beautiful that has the power to last generations,” she said.

## The Path to Professional Women in Building

Laminack’s leadership journey within NAHB began in 2016 when she was selected to serve on the inaugural NAHB Young Professionals (YP) Committee. Created to recruit, retain and engage the next generation of home builders, the committee became a powerful entry point into national leadership. For Laminack and her peers, YP fostered a sense of belonging for professionals who did not yet fit the traditional member profile. It also functioned as a leadership incubator, opening doors to broader involvement across the federation and laying the groundwork for continued service at the national level.

Just two years later, Laminack joined the Professional Women in Building (PWB) Council as an at-large member after visiting the NAHB PWB Headquarters at the International Builders’ Show in 2018. While connecting with PWB members and learning from their shared experiences, she instantly became intrigued by the network



**“Heather will be a phenomenal PWB Chair as she leads with clarity, courage and a builder’s mindset—grounded in service, fueled by action and focused on impact! Her leadership style reflects the future of PWB: strategic, inclusive and unapologetically committed to advancing women in residential construction.”**

**— Carrie DeWeese,  
Immediate Past Chair  
NAHB PWB**

of councils across the country and returned home from the trip inspired to launch her local chapter. This initiative coincided with her year serving as President of the Greater Fort Worth Builders Association.

Laminack became the first female president in the Builders Association’s 75-year history, installed by Fort Worth Mayor Betsy Price in late 2019. Chartering a Fort Worth PWB chapter was a key priority during her presidency, which coincided with the many challenges of 2020. As the industry adapted during the pandemic, she helped turn obstacles into opportunities,

launching new programs such as virtual home tours and a children’s LEGO house-building challenge, while successfully transitioning all meetings to a virtual format.

Laminack went on to help establish a statewide PWB council to support emerging local chapters across Texas, creating an additional layer of encouragement and resources for women in the industry while fostering greater engagement at the state level. During her tenure as Texas PWB Chair in 2022, she helped spearhead a statewide scholarship fund in partnership with the Texas Builders Foundation. The scholarship helped offset tuition and licensing costs for women entering the residential construction field. In its first three years, the scholarship awarded \$31,500 to 22 women.

## Prepared to Lead

Today, Laminack is honored to serve as the 2026 National PWB Chair. “I was raised to plant roots and give back to your community, and that philosophy extends to my NAHB involvement as well. Not just show up and leave, but come ready to serve and help others.”

Her past and present industry leadership extends beyond PWB and has more than equipped Laminack with the tools necessary to lead NAHB’s Professional Women in Building Council. Her previous leadership roles include:

- Greater Fort Worth Builders Association Young Professionals Co-Chair (2015)
- Inaugural NAHB Young Professionals Committee Member (2016) and YP Chair (2020)
- First female President of the Greater Fort Worth Builders Association (2019)
- NAHB Sustainability & Green Building Subcommittee Chair (2022)





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# PROFILE

- NAHB Strategic Plan Working Group (2023)
- NAHB National Area Chairman – Texas Special Voting Member (2023-2025)
- Texas Association of Builders Executive Committee Member (2022-2025)

## Continuing to Move the Needle Forward

Laminack's theme as National PWB Chair is simple, but powerful: "Leveling up." She aims to build on the strong foundation laid by past leaders while expanding opportunities for skill development, networking and industry presence.

Her key initiatives for 2026 include:

- Relaunching a quarterly PWB Book Club focused on career growth and skill-building.
- Expanding educational offerings through webinars, Shop Talks and workshops.
- Strengthening workforce development initiatives such as SkillsUSA.
- Focusing on retention by evaluating what strategies are working and where there is needed improvement.

"It's such an exciting time to be a PWB member," Laminack said. "We're focused on creating more opportunities for members to broaden their skills, networks and overall presence in the home building industry." PWB has actively focused on building education and peer-to-peer engagement and Laminack looks forward to continuing that momentum in 2026.

When asked what inspired her to pursue leadership at the national level, Laminack said, "The opportunity to continue the PWB legacy has been a great honor. We each bring a unique perspective and voice, and I hope mine helps further the movement and continue the momentum created by the leaders before me."

## Strengthening PWB's Reach

In addition to helping members progress in their professional journeys, Laminack also wants to reshape some misconceptions surrounding PWB. She emphasizes that women in the building industry don't belong solely within PWB, but rather in every facet of the industry. PWB is not a separate lane—it is a catalyst for broader inclusion and representation. It's important to mention that PWB is not only for women. In fact, many PWB members (about 17%) and supporters are men who actively champion women in the industry.

For women considering leadership roles—locally or nationally—Laminack reminds them that the mission is

**"Heather brings a rare blend of thoughtfulness, vision and a genuine commitment to advancing diversity within the residential building industry. Her ability to listen, connect and lead with purpose makes her exceptionally well prepared to guide NAHB Professional Women in Building in 2026."**

**— Luellen Smith, 2024 NAHB PWB Chair**

Laminack with her children, Wyatt (far left) and Knox (center), and her husband Travis.



Laminack being presented with the Texas Association of Builders' J.B. Sandlin Builder of the Year award.

clear: get involved. By plugging into subcommittees, working groups and task forces, members not only make an impact but naturally grow into leadership along the way. Showing up and digging into the work goes a long way. She encourages members not to sit on the sidelines, because "We need YOUR voice!"

## Staying Grounded

Laminack praises her husband Travis's support as the foundation that allows her to balance business leadership with national industry roles. Together, they have two children: Wyatt, age 12, and Knox, age 8. They, like Laminack, have grown up visiting job sites and attending builder events. She already sees sparks of interest in the building industry emerging within her sons.

Regardless of the paths they choose, she hopes her children grow up seeing women leaders in construction as the norm, not the exception. "This industry requires a significant amount of grit and determination. By seeing people work hard for what they believe in, I hope it inspires them to dig in and do the same." **BW**



Mindy Lepp is the co-founder of LEPPDESIGN, a marketing firm serving the residential construction industry as a fully outsourced marketing department. She is a past Chair of her local Professional Women in Building (PWB) chapter, a past NAHB PWB Trustee and former Chair of the NAHB PWB Education Subcommittee.







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# Introducing the Next Generation to the Home Building Industry

NAHB PWB's collaboration with SkillsUSA highlights the importance of exposing young people to residential construction early on in their educational careers.

BY JEANNE CONGER

When it comes to sustaining the home building industry for the long term, the data shows that the workforce is aging. In fact, the national median age of the construction labor force is 42, according to NAHB analysis of the most recent American Community Survey (ACS) data. Gen Z, whose oldest members are age 29, accounts for only 14% of the construction labor force. Millennials and Gen X make up 71% with a combined age range of 30 to 65.

Without action, an aging workforce could quickly transition into a labor shortage—and, potentially, fuel a housing shortage. A possible solution includes ramping up recruitment efforts with one of the most under-represented segments of the construction workforce: women.

The key to cultivating the future workforce is early exposure and letting teens and young adults know you don't have to swing a hammer to claim space in this field. Career paths in residential construction range from business operations to design to home building to remodeling to sales and marketing. It's a multi-billion-dollar industry and every contributor counts.

To attract the next generation, we must meet them where they are right now—in schools. The good news: This necessary work is well underway.

## NAHB PWB Teams Up With SkillsUSA

In June 2025, NAHB's Professional Women in Building Council announced its collaboration with SkillsUSA, a national nonprofit focused on empowering students to become skilled professionals, during the Spring Leadership Meeting. Through this collaboration, NAHB PWB and SkillsUSA have worked to inspire and mentor the



Members of the Home Builders Association of Greater Tulsa served as judges during the SkillsUSA TeamsWorks competition. The event consisted of framing, electrical, plumbing and masonry student competitions.

most talented individuals locally to build a robust construction workforce pipeline.

The future isn't coming. It's already being built and PWB is helping spread the word by engaging with local HBAs and SkillsUSA chapters to expose more young people—especially high school girls and college-age women—to everything the residential construction industry has to offer.



PWB members and supporters have stepped up to help engage future generations of home building professionals and promote this collaborative:

- **Carrie DeWeese**, the 2025 NAHB PWB Chair and Realtor with Chinowth & Cohen in Tulsa, Okla., shared that her local PWB council (Home Builders Association of Greater Tulsa) helped judge a SkillsUSA TeamWorks event. The event consisted of several competitions centered around showcasing electrical, framing, masonry and plumbing skills. Teams of four worked together to build a construction project over two days that demonstrated their ability to work together cohesively.
- **Chelle Travis**, executive director of SkillsUSA, was a guest on NAHB's Housing Developments podcast where she spoke with NAHB CEO Jim Tobin and COO Paul Lopez about the collaboration with NAHB PWB. During that interview, she said, "It's so important for young women to actually be able to see themselves in a job, to believe that they can do it."
- **Geraldine Smith**, owner of All Inclusive Construction & Building in Branchburg, N.J., represented her local association, Metropolitan Builders & Contractors Association of New Jersey, during a "Build My Future" event with SkillsUSA in Monroe Township, N.J. While there, Smith had the opportunity to connect with advisors, educators and industry leaders recruiting the next generation about MetroBCA's mission to inspire, educate and grow the future of the home building workforce. "I was truly impressed by the students. They are gaining far more than technical skills—they're learning how to write resumes, lead effective meetings and distinguish themselves in a competitive environment."
- **Meg Thompson**, the 2023 NAHB PWB Chair and associate broker with Keller Williams Realty Atlanta Partners, attended the SkillsUSA National Leadership & Skills Conference, which is the largest gathering of America's future skilled workforce and recognizes excellence in career and technical education. She left the event feeling inspired and said, "I am more committed than ever to help shape a stronger, more diverse future for the residential construction industry."
- **Brendalis Perez**, principal architectural designer and owner of Lis Architectural Design Services in San Antonio, Tex., volunteered as a judge for the statewide SkillsUSA student competition. First introduced to architecture as a student herself, Perez is passionate about giving back to the industry that sparked her interest and continues to shape her career. She



Sitterle Homes invests in building up the next generation of housing professionals by participating in job-shadowing programs in collaboration with local HBAs and Student Chapters across the Austin, Houston and San Antonio Tex. areas.

views community involvement as a two-way exchange, noting that it's impossible not to feel energized by the dedication of the next generation.

- **Angela Penscak**, owner of Penscak Builders and lead builder of the 2026 Operation Triage/NAHB Veteran Home, shared that introducing students to home building is essential to the industry's future. In fact, her daughter, Leah Gonzalez, a recent college graduate, serves as Penscak Builders' project manager and has quickly become a driving force behind the

firm's evolving operations in the Texas Hill Country and San Antonio areas. Bringing fresh perspective, technical fluency and a new approach to process management, Gonzalez represents the positive impact young professionals can have when given the opportunity.

- **Margo Villareal**, regional director of marketing for Sitterle Homes, a regional builder based in the Austin, Houston and San Antonio, Tex. areas, shared that her employer is a strong advocate for student chapter job-shadowing programs across multiple markets. They believe that investing in the next generation is not a short-term initiative, but rather a long-term commitment. By opening their doors to students today, they are helping cultivate the talent that will shape the industry's future.



Geraldine Smith, left, represented the Metropolitan Builders & Contractors Association of New Jersey during a local SkillsUSA event in Monroe Township, N.J. The HBA got a chance to talk with the teachers and introduce them to the association's work.

To learn more about the SkillsUSA + NAHB Professional Women in Building collaboration, go to [NAHB.org](http://NAHB.org) and search "SkillsUSA and PWB." **BW**



**Jeanne Conger** is a seasoned construction industry leader with more than 30 years of experience spanning both public and private homebuilding. She serves on multiple committees for the Texas Association of Builders and the National Association of Home Builders.

# LESSONS FROM LEADERS

## Q&A: HOW CAN TEAMS EMERGE STRONGER FROM CHALLENGING TIMES?

BY LAURA DWYER

In a business landscape defined by uncertainty, the leaders who stand out are those who can steady their teams through economic turbulence with clarity, resilience and purpose. In this Q&A, Juli Bacon, President at Bacon Building & Maintenance, Rebecca McAdoo, CEO at Garman Homes and Michelle Skeldon, a Sales & Leadership Advisor to subcontractors and manufacturers, share how effective leadership during tough financial cycles goes beyond cost-cutting or crisis management.

Simply put: It requires emotional intelligence, transparent communication and the ability to inspire confidence when the path forward isn't always clear. Their thoughtful responses shed light on the strategies, mindset shifts and real-world lessons that help leaders do more than survive challenging times, but also guide their teams to emerge stronger on the other side.

*Editor's Note: This Q&A interview has been edited for clarity and length.*

### How has your leadership style evolved during economic downturns?

**JB:** I found that my team is more comfortable when I am more present to them during economic downturns. I check in more with them, I add additional "state of the company" meetings. I am transparent and honest about acknowledging the downturn in our business, and I try to reassure them that we have a his-



Juli Bacon



Rebecca McAdoo



Michelle Skeldon

tory of making it through the difficult times. They know I will do everything in my power to protect their jobs and the company.

**RM:** At Garman Homes, we have a culture that is baked around resilience and attitude first. We literally hunt for "rock stars" who do not crumble because the music pauses. When economic challenges hit, we must pivot without panic and double down on the clarity of our mission. We keep our processes simple, stay focused on our core values and believe in setting unapologetically high standards regardless of economics.

**MS:** What's evolved most is my perspective. I don't see challenges as something happening to us. I see them as something happening for us. Every downturn I've been through has invited me to think, communicate and lead differently — without letting fear run the show.

### How do you balance honesty about challenges with maintaining morale?

**JB:** My employees have been with me for a while. I started my company during a recession, we grew through the Great Recession, and we grow stronger through each downturn. I let them know I am not managing in a vacuum and that I care about each of them. I reinforce that they are doing great work. I share positive customer feedback with them.

**RM:** Morale isn't built on optimism alone. It is built on trust and knowing which direction we are traveling. We need to be transparent without amplifying fear and to share the plan







or course of action. It is important to share context — the why — and not just the decisions made. Our people are owed this level of communication and it is something we consistently work on.

**MS:** Real morale isn't built when things are easy or when everything's going well. It's built through trust — and trust only exists when people know their leaders are being straight with them. When something hard is happening, I don't try to protect people from the truth. People already feel it.

My role as a leader is to help people orient themselves — to remind them that this moment isn't the whole story, and that while we can't always control

what's happening, we can control how we respond to it and how we move forward together.

### How do you recognize and reward employees for their contributions during difficult periods?

**JB:** After the last downturn, I gave them all increases as we were coming out of it. I continue to express my appreciation for sticking with it.

**RM:** Meaningful connections, clarity in direction and trust matter so much more. The recognition of your people should be specific and public. We call this "ringing the bell." Celebrate your people. Always.

**MS:** Genuine, personal acknowledgment has always been the baseline — in good times and hard times. It's not something I turn on when things get tough. I've always been very intentional about that, both one-on-one and in team settings. What matters most is that recognition is personal, intentional and aligned with what actually matters to the person — not just what's easiest for the leader to offer.

I've also prioritized rewarding people financially — even during difficult periods. Sometimes that meant bonuses or financial recognition coming directly from me. That said, I also recognize that not every leader or company has that flexibility, and in those cases it becomes even more important to be thoughtful and creative. There are many meaningful ways to recognize people beyond money: time off, flexibility, experiences and personal connection can all matter deeply, depending on the individual.

### How do you encourage collaboration and team spirit under stress?

**JB:** I will have company meetings and ask for their inventive ideas on how to get new business. I get them involved in reaching out to clients. I have them write blogs to encourage our clients as they, too, share in the downturn.

A strong team shouldn't only show up when things are going well. The goal is to build a team that leans in even more when things aren't easy.

**RM:** We run a training program called Garman Academy. We allocate six hours a month for training, teaching and coaching. This is all run by our employees. We alternate months of training leaders and our entire team. It is such a powerful way to come together as a company to learn from each other and challenge the status quo.

**MS:** I actually believe stress and challenge are where the magic happens if the right foundation is in place. A strong team shouldn't only show up when things are going well. The goal is to build a team that leans in even more when things aren't easy. Encouraging collaboration under stress starts with intention. That means intentional meetings, intentional conversations and a leader who shows up with energy and presence, even when it would be easier not to. It also means creating a compelling narrative — helping people understand why collaboration matters right now — and asking high-quality questions that invite people into problem-solving together, instead of carrying everything alone.

### How do you prepare your team for future growth while navigating current hardships?

**JB:** I use our past experiences and I share economic forecasts with them. I make sure they know when I start seeing upticks in business.

**RM:** Our founder, Jim Garman, always says that this is a marathon, not a sprint. We make decisions based on that mindset. Be mindful of your metrics for your people. Are they results- or habits-based? What does winning look like for them? It all stems back to knowing and understanding your people.

**MS:** I believe the best way to prepare people for future growth is through continuous skill development, especially during hard seasons. That shouldn't stop when things get difficult; it should increase.

### What's the biggest lesson you've learned about motivating employees during tough times?

**JB:** My biggest lesson learned is that being present, acknowledging the situation and being honest about where we are and where I believe

we will be in the future is important and reassuring to employees. This is where a true leader shows their grit and the reason why they are the leader.

**RM:** You need to lead earlier and louder. Motivation comes from trust, and that trust has to be earned.

**MS:** One of the biggest lessons I've learned is that motivation doesn't always come from feeling excited or energized. We're human — especially during hard seasons — and we're not going to feel motivated all the time. But we can generate motivation through commitment. **BW**



Laura Dwyer is the Business Development Leader for DuPont Performance Building Solutions. She leads the DuPont Building Knowledge Center, a global hub that provides builders with education, insights and tools to improve performance and durability in the homes they build.

**Q&A:** Women leaders share hard-earned money lessons and offer advice for the next generation.

# Financial Lessons Learned on the Job Have a Lasting Impact

BY JENNIFER LANDERS

Financial responsibility is vital to operating a successful home building business. Whether launching a company, leading at the corporate level or inheriting a family-owned firm, disciplined financial management or the lack thereof impacts longevity. In conversations with four women leaders—a retired entrepreneur, a corporate executive and a second-generation business owner—one theme emerged: well-planned financial decisions are synonymous with effective leadership.

*Editor's Note: This Q&A interview has been edited for clarity and length.*

## Learning the Cost of Every Decision

**Betsy Sheppard, Co-Founder, Gilbert & Sheppard Group (retired)**



### How did your early experiences shape your financial mindset?

I was raised with a strong foundation. Stewardship is something I learned early—that what you are given is meant to be managed responsibly. I understood that success was not just about earning, but also about managing wisely and using resources with intention.

As a younger professional, I started to consistently put money away; prioritizing saving before I spent. Even when my income was modest, I set money aside. When you start a business, uncertainty is part of the process. Having reserves gave me confidence.

### How did you approach long-term financial planning?

I did not assume that running a successful company would automatically secure retirement. I treated personal financial

planning as seriously as business planning. Hiring a financial advisor helps remove emotion from major decisions. That clarity matters, especially during strong market cycles. And when it comes to retirement, the earlier you plan, the more options you create.

### How did professional associations support your business growth?

NAHB provided relationships, credibility, education and opened doors. In this industry, relationships matter. Being involved at the association level helped establish trust. You gain from the association when you engage. Serving, volunteering and contributing help create meaningful connections.

### What financial advice would you give the younger generation?

Start early, save consistently and seek advice. Don't try to navigate everything alone, but rather surround yourself with wise counsel.



## Planning With Intention for Financial Stability

Laura Dwyer, Business Development Leader, DuPont Performance Building Solutions



### How did your understanding of financial planning evolve as you advanced into executive leadership?

I learned that you must contribute to the maximum if your company offers a 401(k) match. Otherwise, you are leaving money on the table. Early in my career, I simply contributed for 15 years thinking that would take care of my retirement. I eventually realized retirement planning requires

intention and active management. It's not going to take care of itself. Looking back, I wish I had actively started managing my portfolio sooner. You should be hands on from the start. You can hire a professional planner or do it yourself if you are passionate about it.

### What financial benefits or opportunities at the corporate level do you think women underutilize?

Companies provide more resources today than they did 20 years ago. You should fully explore the benefits your employer offers including educational sessions, 401(k) program information and financial planning resources.

### How do you approach long-term financial planning while balancing demanding leadership responsibilities?

Active participation. Leadership demands should not replace financial oversight. You cannot delegate awareness of your own future.

### How did you learn to advocate for yourself financially (i.e., compensation, benefits or retirement planning)?

Women do not ask enough for what they want compared to men. Self-advocacy is critical. That includes salary, vacation and benefits—be your own advocate. Be prepared, ask questions and negotiate confidently.

## Sustaining and Strengthening a Family Business

Andi D. Bliss, President, Brookline Homes



### What is the biggest financial challenge you faced when transitioning into a leadership position within your family business?

One of the biggest challenges was navigating expectations versus motivations—balancing the legacy that my father built with my own vision. Managing that transition required clarity around financial priorities and long-term direction

while honoring what had already been established.

bottom line, they take greater ownership. Also, to help ensure long-term sustainability, we hired an internal IT professional. Clear reporting helps us make informed short-term and long-term decisions.

### What lessons did you learn early on that helped you avoid costly financial missteps?

Planning with the end in mind is important—specifically, thinking through goals carefully and aligning strategy. Also, taking into consideration how you will get there and what achieving your goals requires. Frequent one-on-one meetings with team members are necessary. Your team can help you catch mistakes before they become detrimental.

### What best practices have helped you maintain financial stability while honoring the legacy of the business?

Open-book culture is key. Maintaining transparency around financial performance helps ensure buy-in at all levels of the organization. When people understand how decisions impact the

### What advice would you give women inheriting or transitioning into a family-owned building business?

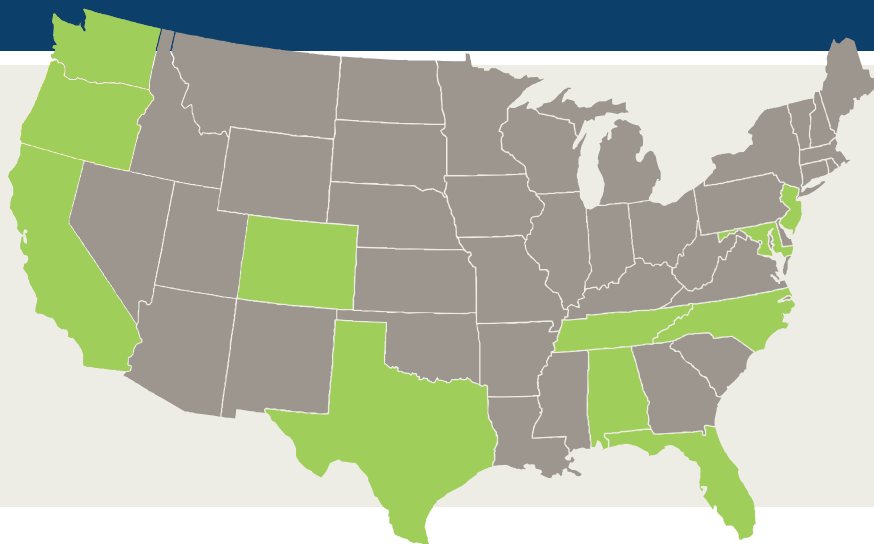
Finding your network is essential. You need support. Keep in mind that some takeovers do not succeed. Failure can happen, so don't fear it. Find your own voice and leadership style. **BW**



Jennifer Landers is the Community Director for Cresswind Georgia at Twin Lakes by Kolter Homes. She served as the 2022 Chairman of the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB) 55+ Board of Trustees. Landers is also a member of the NAHB Professional Women in Building (PWB) Council at both the local and national levels. She currently serves on the NAHB PWB Board of Trustees, as well as the Greater Atlanta PWB and the Greater Atlanta HBA Board.

# .....\PowerofPWB

## Coast to Coast



### ALABAMA

#### Baldwin County Home Builders Association

The Baldwin Girls Build Camp, created by the Baldwin County Home Builders Association's Professional Women in Building (PWB) Council, has become one of the HBA's most impactful outreach initiatives, successfully engaging middle school girls in hands-on learning and introducing them to career opportunities in the building industry. By partnering with the Baldwin County School System, the PWB Council delivered a high-quality educational experience that strengthened community ties and elevated the HBA's reputation as a proactive, workforce-focused organization. This collaboration not only expanded awareness of skilled trade pathways but also established valuable relationships that support future workforce development efforts.



#### Association of Home Builders of Greater Birmingham

The Association of Home Builders of Greater Birmingham's PWB Council partnered with the HBA's Young Professionals and dedicated volunteers to renovate the gym bathrooms of an underfunded private school, transforming long neglected spaces into clean, welcoming facilities the community can truly be proud of. The heartfelt reactions from parents and students were tears, smiles and overwhelming gratitude, underscoring the impact of the work and giving the school renewed confidence when hosting visiting teams. This project was a powerful reminder that meaningful change happens when people unite with compassion, purpose and a shared commitment to lifting others up.

#### Celebrating Professional Women in Building Week

##### GREATER BIRMINGHAM ASSOCIATION OF HOME BUILDERS

The GBAHB's Professional Women in Building Council partnered with their Young Professionals Council for a back to school project of renovating the gym bathrooms at Jefferson Christian Academy.



### COLORADO

#### Home Builders Association of Metro Denver

The Home Builders Association of Metro Denver's PWB Council marked its 10th anniversary with a memorable celebration featuring founder Chris Presley and recognition of the inaugural board and past chairpersons. The event drew more than one hundred women, many of whom joined as new members.

Complementing the milestone event, the council also hosted a series of Empowerment Lunches, where distinguished builders and state representatives shared their journeys and contributions to advancing women in the industry, offering attendees valuable insights and strengthening the sense of community and support.





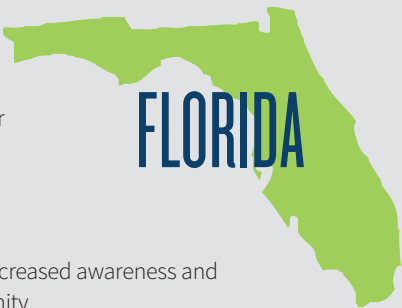
**Welcome New PWB Member!**

Laura Kerbyson, Director of Marketing  
(561) 361-8700, [WymanLegalSolutions.com](mailto:WymanLegalSolutions.com)

- 40 years in marketing and computer science; 9 years as a dual department chair (professor) in design and computer science
- 5 years experience working with broker on Hilton Head Island (we flipped 140 homes in the foreclosure market)
- An original hire to help build Hard Rock Park, a \$600 million dollar theme park that was built in 2007 and opened in 2008 in South Carolina
- Originally hired to do marketing, advertising and web site but was looped into the design side quickly. The Eagles opened the park for us and one of our greatest engineering feats was to build the Led Zepplin Roller Coaster which was filled with sand so that it was totally quiet while theme park attendees heard "Whole Lotta Love" through the onboard speakers in the headset. Company licensed song from Led Zepplin; worked with the band to build coaster so that the song is timed to design of the coaster. It is in Vietnam today, original design built in a game engine.
- Has renovated 3 homes (in 3 different states) that I've owned including a complete renovation on my condo in Atlanta in Palm Beach County and 175-year-old Victorian in Ohio.
- Grew up around this business - Her dad was an electrical and mechanical engineer who headed up engineering for 40 years for Henry & Kaiser for Kaiser Aluminum and Steel.

Gold Coast Builders Association (GCBA)

The Gold Coast Builders Association’s PWB Council strengthened member engagement this year by developing new marketing materials, including a trifold brochure, a poster and a Welcome New Member flyer that energized current members and encouraged them to share the value of PWB with others. This renewed enthusiasm has significantly increased awareness and reinforced PWB as a welcoming, supportive community.



Suncoast Builders Association

Suncoast Builders Association PWB members played a hands-on role in organizing donations, coordinating logistics and delivering supplies for the Stuff the Backpack initiative. The council delivered over 1,000 backpacks to the Boys & Girls Clubs of Sarasota, DeSoto and Manatee Counties, making a direct impact on local youth and families.

Through partnerships with local organizations and volunteer-driven efforts, the council created opportunities for members to give back while strengthening relationships within the community and across the association.



Building Industry Association of the Bay Area

The partnership between the Building Industry Association of the Bay Area’s PWB Council and the Girl Scouts of Northern California began as an introduction to The House That She Built Patch Program and quickly grew into a hands-on learning experience that taught foundational building and design concepts. Through two workshops—one focused on envisioning a multipurpose room for their San Jose headquarters and another on designing a scaled multipurpose building for a campsite—Girl Scouts explored creativity, problem solving and technical skills while presenting their ideas and learning from one another. The collaboration strengthened their understanding of design and built confidence, reinforcing an empowering message: girls belong in building, design and every space they choose to pursue.



Frederick County Building Industry Association

Frederick County Building Industry Association’s PWB launched its annual The House That She Built program with their local public library. Over 35 participants, both boys and girls, discussed career pathways in the skilled trades and engaged in hands-on activities, including an engineering contest to build the tallest structure. The parent feedback was overwhelmingly positive. The council celebrates its 5th anniversary in 2026.





## NEW JERSEY

### Metropolitan Builders and Contractors Association of New Jersey and the Shore Builders Association of Central New Jersey

For two consecutive years The Metropolitan Builders and Contractors Association of New Jersey (Metro) and the Shore Builders Association of Central New Jersey's PWB Councils have

partnered to host panel discussions at the New Jersey Builders Association Atlantic City Builders Convention. These programs have drawn enthusiastic crowds, many of whom were surprised to learn that organizations like the PWB Councils exist to support women in construction. Hearing attendees express both relief and excitement as they discovered a welcoming community and realizing how much representation matters was a powerful reminder of the impact local councils make. Together, these efforts reflect both councils' ongoing commitment to outreach, mentorship and continuous improvement, proving that when they blend tradition with innovation, they continue to grow stronger and more influential every year.

## TENNESSEE

### West Tennessee Home Builders Association

The West Tennessee Home Builders' PWB Council's goal for 2026 is to recognize and build up other women who truly understand the unique rewards and challenges of working in this industry and to promote professional growth. When they launched their first Build & Brew event on February 5th, the morning buzzed with meaningful conversation and collaboration over coffee, which underscored the hunger for authentic connections within the industry.



students an immersive, hands-on introduction to careers in residential construction. Created in 2022 in response to New Hanover County's Economic Mobility Report, the CLDA has rapidly expanded from 88 students to nearly 1,800, offering full day experiences on real job sites. The CFPWB hosted one of these career days at an active construction site, where students rotated through interactive zones focused on blueprint reading, interior design, MEPs and vendor engagement. More than 20 CFPWB member companies volunteered to make the event possible, and feedback from teachers, students and Chamber staff affirmed its strong impact on inspiring the future workforce.

## NORTH CAROLINA

### Cape Fear Home Builders Association

The Wilmington - Cape Fear PWB Council (CFPWB) partnered with the Wilmington Chamber's Career Leadership Development Academy (CLDA) to address the growing need for skilled workers by giving seventh-grade







### Home Builders Association of Marion & Polk Counties

The PWB Summer Build Camp, launched in July 2023 by the Home Builders Association of Marion & Polk Counties' PWB Council in partnership with the local Career Technical Education Center, has quickly become a powerful annual initiative introducing students in grades 7–10 to the fundamentals of construction before they are eligible for the high school program. Built through close collaboration with school staff, generous vendor support and skilled contractor volunteers, the camp offers hands-on learning in blueprint reading, electrical work, tool safety and project construction. In its first year, students built three Zen Dens for the host school's counseling department, and in subsequent years have expanded to building chicken coops as participation and volunteer engagement continues to grow. By establishing this camp as a yearly tradition, the council is sparking early interest in the trades and helping shape the next generation of building professionals.



TEXAS

### Greater Fort Worth Builders Association

Greater Fort Worth Builders Association's PWB Council participated in Habitat for Humanity's Women Build Day, uniting with women in the larger community to lend a hand in an effort to give back to those in need.



### Building Industry Association of Clark County

The Building Industry Association of Clark County's PWB Council created the Pink Hard Hat Awards to recognize women in the industry who are making major contributions to their company and the building industry. These women are celebrated as role models for other women looking to get into construction, either through the trades or other positions to support and enhance residential building. The Pink Hard Hat Awards is the largest fundraising effort by Clark County PWB to provide scholarships to local trade schools to assist those who may not otherwise be able to receive training.

### Building Industry Association of Whatcom County

The Building Industry Association of Whatcom County's PWB Council engaged with the community through Girl Scout Badge Events, where they introduced girls to construction and craftsmanship through hands-on experiences. In partnership with a local troop, they built and donated a playhouse and opened the day with a reading of *The House That She Built*, celebrating women in the industry and inspiring future builders. The girls were also guided through woodworking exercises where they created pencil boxes or crafted small animals and shapes using hand tools, sparking creativity and confidence through meaningful, skill-building projects.



## PWB Supports Scholarships and Grants for Students, Building Professionals

The National Association of Home Builders (NAHB) Professional Women in Building (PWB) Council represents women across the home building industry. PWB is committed to providing opportunities and financial assistance to those seeking to further their education and training in housing industry related programs through their partnership with the National Housing Endowment (NHE).

To that end, two scholarship programs and a leadership grant are available annually to qualified applicants.

### Strategies for Success Scholarship

The Strategies for Success Scholarship provides financial support to qualified students interested in advancing their education in housing industry-related programs.

Deborah Ferland, an NAHB PWB past national president, and Austin Ferland initiated the scholarship in 2001.

### Requirements:

- Applicants must be enrolled as full-time students at the start of the fall semester with at least one full academic year of coursework remaining after the scholarship is received.
- Applicants must be pursuing an education in a housing-related field (e.g., construction management, construction technology, civil engineering, architecture, design, trade specialties) at a two- or four-year college, university or vocational program.
- High school seniors are not eligible.
- Applicants must submit a completed application with two letters of recommendation by the application deadline.
- Preference will be given to applicants who are unable to afford a college education without financial assistance.
- Preference will also be given to NAHB student chapter members.
- Scholarship recipients must maintain a minimum GPA of 2.5 (on a 4-point GPA scale) for all courses and a GPA of 3.0 (on a 4-point



“Being selected as a 2024 Strategies for Success Scholarship recipient has been an incredible opportunity. It has provided me with invaluable resources and support, helping me grow both personally and professionally. This recognition has reinforced my commitment to making a meaningful impact in my field, and I am truly grateful for the encouragement and investment in my future.”

**ZYKEREYES BENNETT**  
Georgia State University  
B.B.A. Real Estate  
Class of 2024

GPA scale) for core curriculum courses. If a scholarship recipient's GPA falls below the minimum GPA requirement, NAHB PWB's Strategies for Success Scholarship Selection Working Group reserves the right to cease further funding of the scholarship.

### Building Hope Scholarship

The Building Hope Scholarship provides financial support to



qualified students who are seeking education in building industry-related subjects.

In 1955, Hope S. Bettilyon, former president of the NAHB Women's Auxiliary, now called the NAHB Professional Women in Building Council, established this scholarship.

Local PWB councils are encouraged to promote the Building Hope Scholarship to students in their communities.

#### Requirements:

- Applicants must be enrolled full-time or part-time at the start of the fall semester at a college, university or trade school. Applicants must have at least one course or trade-related program remaining after receiving the scholarship.
- Applicants must be pursuing an education in a building-related field or vocational/trade program.
- Applicants must submit a completed application with letters of recommendation by the application deadline.
- Awards are given for tuition and school/program fees only. The award will be paid by NHE directly to the institution.
- Scholarship recipients may be required to provide verification of enrollment prior to award disbursement.

#### Leadership Grant

The Professional Women in Building Leadership Grant provides financial support to qualified applicants to help defray cost associated with professional development opportunities including housing and building related certifications, designations and licensing fees, travel expenses to NAHB's Spring Leadership Meeting in Washington, D.C. in June, expenses related to career development and other building related programs.

#### Requirements:

- Applicants must be PWB members in good standing.
- Preference may be given to PWB members who have served in PWB leadership roles at the local and/or national levels (i.e., local council chair/vice chair, NAHB PWB subcommittee chair/vice chair, etc.).
- If applicable, proof of course/program registration and/or attendance may be required before award disbursement.

[apply.nationalhousingendowment.org](https://apply.nationalhousingendowment.org)

“Being selected as a recipient of the 2024 Building Hope Scholarship is both an honor and profound encouragement as I transition careers from healthcare to a new chapter in construction and development.

This scholarship has been instrumental in supporting my journey — and has allowed me to attend professional development events that fuel my passion for sustainable housing while also easing the financial burden so I can focus fully on my studies.”

**ELIZABETH MONDO**

University of Denver

MS Real Estate & the Built Environment

Class of 2024

## How to Give

The generosity of council members, individuals and corporations supports the scholarship fund. Scan the QR code to learn how to contribute.



## Establish a PWB Council That Attracts Members — and Keeps Them Coming Back

Building a local Professional Women in Building (PWB) council from the ground up takes a village: dedicated members who volunteer for council leadership roles and executive officers (in collaboration with HBA staff) that are willing to provide the necessary support to ensure the council is chartered.

Keep in mind that every council's path to becoming chartered is different—as well as their journey to growing and sustaining a loyal membership base. For some, it's an unexpected success right away, while others have to put in a bit more groundwork to pique interest, secure new members and develop event programming that sticks.

No matter the local council, the mission remains the same: promoting industry professionalism, supporting fellow PWB members and advocating for the advancement of women within home building.

Here, two executive officers share what's worked for sustaining and growing their PWB councils:



### Kerry Brunn

**Executive Officer, Home Builders & Remodelers Association – Fairfield County (Conn.)**



Kerry Brunn

Brunn has spent her career championing collaboration, community engagement and strategic growth within home building. One of her most impactful initiatives has been the development and ongoing support of their PWB council. The idea for the council emerged as Fairfield County saw a rising number of women in leadership roles joining the HBRA.

"It became clear there was an opportunity to formalize support, professional development and

visibility for women across all sectors of the industry," she said. With strong encouragement from HBRA leadership, the council launched in early 2018 with the goal of fostering professional

**"As the industry continues to evolve, the council will remain focused on empowering women, fostering professional excellence and contributing to the long-term strength of the HBRA of Fairfield County."**

**—Kerry Brunn**

development, mentorship and meaningful visibility for women in the field.

The council's early days had some challenges. Awareness was limited, members' schedules were already demanding and the council needed a clear mission that aligned with the broader HBRA goals. The council eventually overcame these hurdles thanks to clear intentions and consistent communication. Also, events were thoughtfully curated to attract existing and prospective members looking to excel. "Sustaining [member] engagement begins with purposeful programming that delivers clear value," Brunn said. This included professional education,



networking opportunities and community engagement.

Since being chartered eight years ago, this now includes peer networking and mentorship groups, as well as participating in hands-on charitable opportunities. "The council has helped elevate the HBRA's philanthropic presence through partnerships with organizations such as Circle of Care and The Children's Connection," Brunn said. These efforts have connected the HBRA more deeply to local families, establishing its members as pillars of the community.

Today, Brunn is confident that HBRA's PWB will continue to break down barriers and cultivate collaboration. Her goals include expanding mentorship opportunities, increasing women's representation in leadership roles, enhancing educational offerings and deepening community outreach. "As the industry continues to evolve, the council will remain focused on empowering women, fostering professional excellence and contributing to the long-term strength of the HBRA of Fairfield County," she said.

## Ted Leighty

**Executive Officer, Colorado Association of Home Builders (CAHB)**



Ted Leighty

Amplifying women working in residential construction was vital to starting the CAHB PWB Council in 2021. "Women working in the construction industry are a growing force—whether working in the trades, serving in leadership roles or owning and operating companies," Leighty said. Despite making notable strides in achieving better representation, women still remain underrepresented in the field. That's why creating a safe space for them to connect was imperative.

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- Peer Plan Reviews



During its charter year, CAHB PWB experienced rapid growth. “The overwhelming support and meteoric growth highlighted just how hungry women were for meaningful, relevant content and connection,” he recalled. The council’s immediate success required their leadership team to quickly scale programming, leadership involvement and event logistics to keep pace with demand.

Prioritizing engagement has been a foundational pillar for this PWB. Giving members a reason to consistently show up has meant establishing an inviting and supportive culture. “Creating frequent, low-pressure opportunities for members to connect—mixers, small

group meetings, roundtables and collaborative events that make it easy to build real relationships” have been mainstays, Leighty noted.

For CAHB PWB, creating networking experiences where every attendee feels welcomed means going beyond simply gathering people in a room every month with no real agenda. Their leadership team is intentional about structuring their events so attendees have ample opportunities to make new professional connections through icebreakers, facilitated discussions and interactive experiences.

Taking this approach has become a vital part of how CAHB promotes the industry, strengthens member engagement and provides value to its membership base.

Executive officers working closely with their PWBs to figure out ways to ramp up membership and engagement must foster a welcoming environment where women feel seen, heard and valued. “Consistency, authenticity and a sense of belonging will keep members coming back—and bringing others with them.”

**“Women working in the construction industry are a growing force—whether working in the trades, serving in leadership roles or owning and operating companies.”**  
—Ted Leighty

**Interested in starting a local PWB council?**

Email [crichards@nahb.org](mailto:crichards@nahb.org) to receive materials and to set up a call to get started.

## Events of Note

### **NAHB Spring Leadership Meeting and Legislative Conference (June 9-13, 2026)**

Occurring in Washington, D.C., at the Grand Hyatt Washington. Learn more at <https://www.nahb.org/education-and-events/meetings/future-nahb-leadership-meetings>.

### **NAHB Association Management Conference (Aug. 25-27, 2026)**

The premier professional development conference for HBA Executive Officers (EOs and CEOs) and staff taking place in St. Louis, Missouri. For more details, go to: [https://www.nahbclassic.org/showpage\\_details.aspx?showPageID=62927](https://www.nahbclassic.org/showpage_details.aspx?showPageID=62927). *ionable steps t*

### **NAHB PWB Week (Sept. 14-18, 2026)**

Go to [nahb.org/pwbweek](http://nahb.org/pwbweek) to view the toolkit and gain access to tools and resources that can be utilized year-round.

### **NAHB Fall Leadership Meeting (Oct. 6-8, 2026)**

Taking place in Detroit, Mich., at the Detroit Marriott at the Renaissance Center and the Huntington Place Convention Center. Learn more at [nahb.org/subsites/fall-leadership-meeting](http://nahb.org/subsites/fall-leadership-meeting).

### **International Builders' Show (Jan. 30-Feb. 4, 2027)**

The largest annual light construction show in the world returns to Las Vegas. Registration opens on September 1. For more details, go to [buildersshow.com](http://buildersshow.com).

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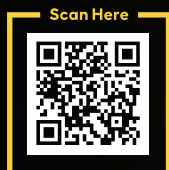
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