



Revamping Our BIA Membership Structure to Better Support Our Association

At a January Strategic Planning meeting of the BIA's Board of Trustees, a common theme kept jumping to the forefront. The association was of high value to many members of the construction industry in central Ohio, but its reach could be deeper.

Surveys of the membership confirmed that within many organizations, many employees were unaware of all the offerings of the BIA and opportunities for engagement were being missed.

Moreover, the overall membership structure of the organization seemed a mystery to some.

BIA President Jim Lipnos viewed this as a challenge that, when combined with the associations revamp of the Parade of Homes, needed to be addressed to guide the BIA more effectively through the new decade.

Lipnos led multiple meetings of the BIA's Executive Committee and Board of Trustees to tackle the issue.

"We looked at some minor modifications, but like any of our businesses, sometimes you start with minor and end up in tear down and rebuild mode," said Lipnos.

The goal of the effort was two-fold; find ways to increase engagement from companies within the residential construction industry and to streamline and modernize the association's dues and membership structure of the association.

"Obviously, whenever you look at broad changes, there are difficult discussions that need to be made. We looked at the structures of other regions and it became pretty clear that in many ways, we were out of step with the markets that we view as our peers," said Lipnos.

An area the BIA's leadership identified as in need of addressing was the individual nature of membership within the BIA.

"In our current structure, I am a member of the BIA, but Homewood is not. We are going to begin tying that membership to the company and allow more individual participation from within all of our member companies," said Lipnos.

For member companies, that will be mean

relevant industry communications targeted to more employees, the opportunity to attend events, participate in committee and councils and engage in networking opportunities with colleagues.

BIA Associate Vice-President Jeff Miller said the shift to company memberships will help companies maximize the association's value. "I think a lot of people within our companies are unaware of all of the things the BIA does and this change will allow more interaction between our teams and the BIA and, more importantly, Associates and their peers or Associates and Builders."

Also accompanying this shift in membership philosophy will be a revamp of the BIA's Committee and Council Structure.

"Groups like our Builders & Developers Council and Sales & Marketing Council have been a huge component of our organizational success for many years and those will continue on, but we have to look at new ways to engage our membership on a regular basis. Maybe that includes regular in-person meetings and maybe it's less frequent and remote. We need to adapt and realize that what was relevant in the past may not apply today," said Lipnos.

BIA Executive Director Jon Melchi said the goal for the interest groups is to be member-driven. "We want groups that meet the growing needs of our membership and to make sure the mission for those groups is clear and focused."

The change in membership structure will also change dues assessments and the timing of renewals for members.

The BIA has historically collected dues on a rolling basis throughout the calendar year, meaning a primary member might have a renewal date in one month and affiliate members in another.

In 2021, this will shift to one annual renewal period for all member companies, which will be effective July 1.

"We will be applying credits to organizations that have already paid beyond that date," said Melchi.

Lipnos noted that a membership survey showed a desire for a streamlining of the process. The shift in the renewal period will allow BIA staff to focus on member

engagement.

"We have some members getting ten membership invoices in a year," said Melchi.

Melchi also mentioned the biggest change that members will notice is dues categories. For associates, their company's dues will be based upon the number of employees that the organization has.

"Given the expanded opportunities for companies, this structure made sense," said Miller.

For Builder members, the association will be classifying dues categories based upon the company's primary business.

"The current structure lumps all of our Builder types into one category and bases dues upon sales volumes. What we learned from other markets was a growing trend of segmenting for sale builders, for rent builders, remodelers and developers," said Melchi.

Moving forward, Builders will see their dues based upon activity in the prior year, with for-sale builders seeing their dues based on the number of units sold, for-rent builders based upon units certified for occupancy and developers based upon revenue generated from lot sales. Remodelers will pay a flat fee.

Lipnos added that many markets base dues upon permits pulled, but BIA leadership opted to go another route.

"We wanted our dues to be based upon activity that has actually occurred and not activity that will occur in the future."

Melchi added that none of the changes to the membership structure will impact the organization's relationship with OHBA, NAHB or NAHB National Councils.

Lipnos concluded, "The BIA is an essential asset for our company, and I say that not just as the current President and long-time Board member. I say that as someone who benefited greatly from the organization when I came to central Ohio and continues to do so today. It was important to make sure that we are structured to continue to support our industry and this revamp is a major step to doing so." ■