

State & Local Issues

GHBA is hard at work monitoring issues at both the City of Houston and at the state level. Find out what's happening, and how you can be involved.



going to introduce a comprehensive energy bill early in the session.

Local Regulatory Power/Authority

Local regulatory authority is an issue that has come up over the last several sessions and will come up again. This issue is one that can have a serious impact on the residential construction industry. Some legislators have been focused on a county only having the authority to regulate infrastructure, i.e. minimum standards for water, sewer and drainage, and inspections. Other groups are focused on regulatory powers, land use controls, municipal utility district approval, and ordinance making ability.

Total Maximum Daily Load

Total Maximum Daily Load relates to the water quality of streams and bayous and is required by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. The Texas Commission on Environmental Quality is the agency that designs all of the local programs and is also responsible for enforcement.

Survey Pinning

In certain situations, subdivision plat language states that property corners are pinned/staked at the time the plat is recorded. In many cases and jurisdictions, the lots are only paper lots and are not developed at the time the lots are recorded at the county. It is unnecessary to require lots be pinned/staked prior to development of the lots.

LOCAL ISSUES

GHBA is working with the City of Houston on several issues. First are the proposed amendments to Chapter 42, which should come to a head in the first quarter of 2009. Action on Chapter 9 was successfully postponed until the second quarter of 2009. And Historic Preservation is likely to move in the first quarter of 2009.



Article by Adam Aschmann, GHBA's director of government affairs. If you have questions about this article or would like to get involved on the Government Affairs Committee, call (281) 970-8970, ext. 140. The next meeting will be held Wednesday, January 28 at 3 p.m. at the GHBA offices.

THE 81ST SESSION: WHAT TO EXPECT IN 2009

The 81st Session of the Texas State Legislature begins on January 13, 2009, and this is going to be quite an interesting session. In the Texas House, the Republicans hold the majority, but with a narrow margin of just 76-74. And in the Texas Senate, the Republicans hold a 19 to 12 majority, with GHBA HOME-PAC supported candidate Joan Huffman winning the Senate District 17 runoff.

We expect several issues to come up this session, and both GHBA and TAB are already hard at work on them. Following is an overview of what the industry is facing in the coming session.

TRCC Sunset Review Process

The TRCC has gone through the Sunset review process, and the Sunset Commission has issued a positive recommendation in favor of keeping the agency, with the SIRP (state-sponsored inspection and dispute resolution process) remaining mandatory. GHBA and TAB have been very focused on this issue for over a year, and will continue to work with the legislature to try and improve the agency.

The Texas Residential Construction

Commission has been extremely successful in its first six years. The agency has received complaints totaling only 0.33% of all houses built in the state of Texas since its inception in 2003 – that's only one-third of 1%.

As a homebuilding community, we always need to look forward and be willing to improve the systems in place. We are prepared to take whatever steps necessary to improve the TRCC, however, the data shows that our industry is already doing an incredible job of living up to its end of the bargain and helping people attain the American dream.

Building Codes

The building code requirements and the codes themselves have come under scrutiny. One piece of this discussion will revolve around the fact that the TRCCA requires that all unincorporated areas of the state abide by the codes of the county seat. The rules that the TRCC uses also say that the county seat amendments are included in that requirement.

Green and energy efficient building will also be a focus this session. Senator Kip Averitt, chairman of the Natural Resources Committee, is on the record as saying he is

Additionally, Harris County Street Acceptance has come up again and it looks like the county is going to make a change. The Developers Council will meet on January 7 at 1:30 p.m. to discuss the issue.

If you would like to be involved, please contact the GHBA Government Affairs Department.

EMPOWER YOURSELF WITH HOME-PAC

Yes, it is that time of year again – time to renew your GHBA HOME-PAC membership. If you are not a political action committee member already, now is the time to lend your support. As evidenced by this article, 2009 is a big year because of the legislative session. But that’s not all. We also have several major local races, including seven open seats in the City of Houston, which has a major impact on the rest of the region as well.

Empower yourself, your success depends on it! Now is the time to contribute – whatever you can – every penny will count and will impact the advancement of the residential construction industry.

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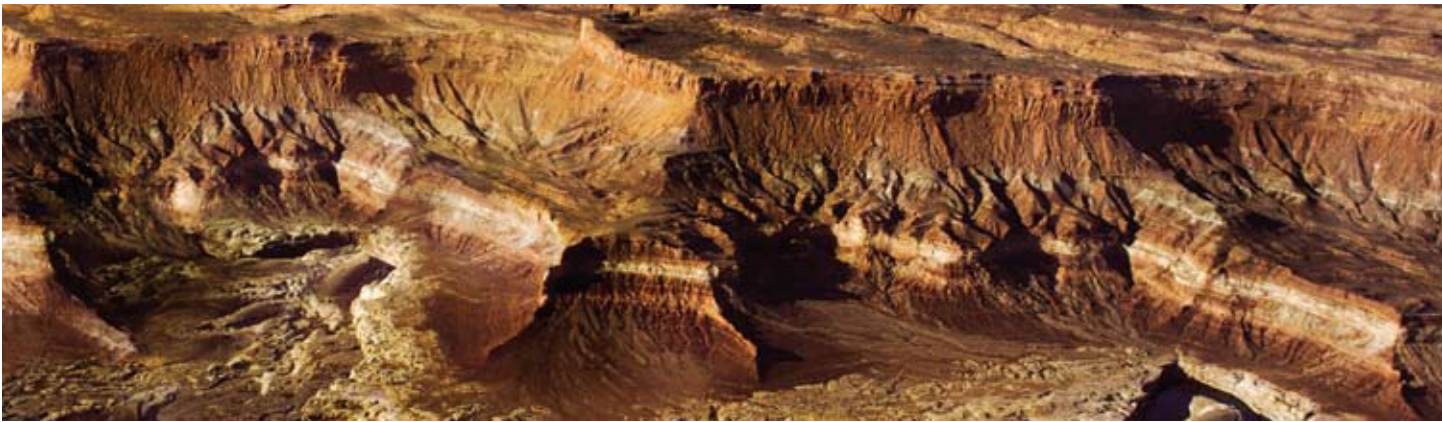


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