

## Building Connecticut's Future:

### HBRA of CT's Advocacy Agenda for the 2026 General Assembly

By Jim Perras, CEO & Chief Lobbyist, Home Builders & Remodelers Association of Connecticut



As the Connecticut General Assembly convenes for the 2026 legislative session, the Home Builders & Remodelers Association of Connecticut (HBRA of CT) once again enters the Capitol with a clear

mission: to serve as the preeminent advocacy organization for the residential construction industry and to advance policies that allow our members to build the homes Connecticut desperately needs.

**Our mission is straightforward**—using effective advocacy and new knowledge to solve our members' problems—and it is guided by a broader vision of building Connecticut's economy, communities, and better lives one home at a time. Those principles shape every position we take, every coalition we join, and every bill we support or oppose. In a state facing a persistent housing shortage that is constraining workforce growth, economic competitiveness, and household stability, the stakes in this session could not be higher.

#### Expectations for the 2026 Session

The 2026 session will be defined by a familiar tension: a widely acknowledged housing shortage on one hand, and an increasingly complex regulatory and political environment on the other. Over the past several years, lawmakers have shown a growing willingness to engage on housing policy, culminating in the passage of Public Act 25-1 at the end of last year. While that legislation advanced important conversations around land use and housing production, it also means the General Assembly enters this session with a degree of land-use reform fatigue as elections loom on the horizon.

HBRA of CT understands that reality. We are not approaching 2026 with unrealistic expectations or a one-size-fits-all agenda. Instead, we are focused on pragmatic, targeted reforms that can move the needle on housing production without imposing new taxes, expanding bureaucracy, or undermining local governance. Our goal is to create a policy environment in which residential construction can thrive, investment can flow, and housing supply can better align with demand.

#### Expanding Starter Home Opportunities—With Pragmatism

One of our signature initiatives this session is legislation to encourage the production of modest, for-sale starter homes for Connecticut families. Homeownership remains the cornerstone of household wealth creation and community stability, yet for many working families, the first rung on the ownership ladder has effectively disappeared.

Our proposal is designed to restore that rung. It would create a clear statutory pathway for “starter home developments” served by sewer and water, establish predictable densities, and ensure a meaningful set-aside of deed-restricted homes affordable to households earning up to 120% of area median income. The bill also includes time-limited resale restrictions that balance affordability with the homeowner's ability to build equity over time, along with a targeted state tax credit to offset expensive off-site infrastructure costs.

At the same time, we are realistic about the political landscape. Given the passage of Public Act 25-1, we recognize that some legislators may be hesitant to revisit broader land-use reforms so soon. HBRA of CT is committed to having an honest, constructive conversation about starter home production—one that emphasizes incentives, predictability, and market feasibility rather than sweeping mandates. We believe modest land-use reforms, paired with infrastructure incentives, can expand homeownership opportunities without reopening every zoning debate in the state.

#### Building Code Adoption Reform: Stability Without Sacrificing Safety

Our second major initiative addresses an issue that quietly but profoundly affects housing costs: the frequency of building code adoption. Connecticut's current approach—characterized by frequent updates and amendments to nationally recognized model codes—adds cost, complexity, and uncertainty for builders, designers, municipal officials, and code enforcement professionals alike.

HBRA of CT is advancing legislation to establish a six-year building code adoption cycle, coupled with a temporary pause on non-essential code changes, while preserving emergency authority for matters of public health, life safety, federal compliance, and funding eligibility. This proposal does not weaken codes or compromise safety. Instead, it promotes stability, allows for better training and compliance, and reduces unnecessary cost escalation at a time when affordability is already under severe pressure.



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Importantly, this reform supports not only residential construction but also the broader construction ecosystem that underpins economic development across the state. It is a fiscally responsible way to promote housing production without new spending programs or revenue measures.

### Coalition-Driven Advocacy for a Pro-Housing Economy

HBRA of CT does not advocate in isolation. We will continue to work closely with broad, pro-business and pro-housing coalitions to advance policies that foster economic growth and housing supply. Connecticut's housing shortage is no longer just a builders' issue—it is a workforce issue, a competitiveness issue, and a cost-of-living issue affecting employers and families alike.

By aligning with business organizations, trade partners, and housing advocates where appropriate, we strengthen the case that a healthy residential construction sector is essential to Connecticut's long-term economic vitality. When housing production lags, job growth stalls, employers struggle to recruit talent, and communities lose opportunities for reinvestment.

### The First Line of Defense Against Bad Policy

Just as important as the bills we support are the proposals we oppose. HBRA of CT will remain the first line of defense against legislation that would further undermine housing affordability or the viability of residential construction. That includes renewed efforts to impose so-called mansion taxes, misguided wage theft proposals that conflate bad actors with compliant employers, rent control expansions that discourage investment, and other measures that would increase costs or inject uncertainty into the housing market.

Our role is to separate rhetoric from reality and to ensure lawmakers understand the real-world consequences of these proposals—not just for builders and remodelers, but for the families who ultimately bear the cost.

### A Call to Engagement

Advocacy is not a spectator sport. HBRA of CT's effectiveness depends on an engaged, informed membership willing to share real-world experience and build relationships with policymakers. I strongly encourage every member to get involved—join our weekly Government Affairs strategy calls, participate in Lobby Day at the Capitol, and take the time to connect with your local legislators.

When lawmakers hear directly from the professionals who design, permit, finance, and build homes in their districts, the conversation changes and Connecticut wins. ■

## Building the Pipeline: Strengthening Connecticut's Construction Workforce

The Connecticut Institute for Professional Builders & Remodelers, Inc. (CIPBR) is the 501(c)(3) workforce development and education foundation of the Home Builders & Remodelers Association of Connecticut (HBRA of CT). Through strategic partnerships and industry leadership, CIPBR is addressing one of the residential construction industry's most pressing challenges: the shortage of skilled labor.

CIPBR's mission is to advance trades education and prepare students and adults with practical, job-ready skills by fostering innovation, collaboration, and excellence across secondary education, higher education, and workforce training systems. By aligning education with real-world industry needs, CIPBR is helping to build a sustainable talent pipeline that supports housing production and economic growth across Connecticut. A key focus of CIPBR's recent work has been expanding the use of the Home Builders Institute (HBI) Core PACT pre-apprenticeship curriculum in Connecticut public high schools. Approved by the Connecticut Department of Labor, the nationally recognized curriculum introduces students to careers in residential construction while providing foundational training aligned with industry standards. Interest in the program continues to grow among school districts statewide.

At the same time, CIPBR is advancing an adult workforce development initiative in partnership with the City of Waterbury and the Northwest

Regional Workforce Investment Board to explore the creation of an HBI Academy at the former Sacred Heart High School campus. The proposed academy would provide hands-on training for young adults and career-changers and support broader workforce, housing, and economic development goals.

CIPBR extends special recognition to Chair Frank Festini and Vice Chair Bepin Mgushi for their exceptional leadership and dedication in advancing these initiatives, as well as to CIPBR Trustee Cathy Lapierre for strengthening the organization's grant readiness through recent collaborations with NAHB and McCallister Quinn.

Together, these efforts reflect CIPBR's commitment—on behalf of HBRA of Connecticut—to strengthening the residential construction workforce and ensuring Connecticut is prepared to meet its future housing needs.

### LEGISLATIVE SNAPSHOT

#### Supporting the Construction Workforce

During the 2026 legislative session, HBRA of CT is advocating for increased apprentice tax credits and new funding for schools using HBI pre-apprenticeship curriculum. Together, these initiatives help employers invest in training, broaden access to construction careers, and align workforce policy with the state's housing needs. ■