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- *2012 Builder Outlook*



John A. Courson

President / CEO
Home Builders Institute

John A. Courson became president and CEO of Home Builders Institute (HBI), the workforce development arm of the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB), on January 1, 2012. He has been president and CEO of the Mortgage Bankers Association (MBA) and headed three mortgage companies in Texas and California, where he chaired the California Housing Finance Agency. Courson also has participated in international housing initiatives led by the White House and the U.S. Treasury Department.

Builder and Developer: What are your plans and goals for the HBI for 2012?

John A. Courson: First of all, I'm extremely grateful to have inherited an organization that is strong, effective and productive. The HBI's leadership has built a formidable enterprise and I look forward to providing a clear runway to help HBI reach even greater heights. My goals include continuing to raise the visibility of HBI and highlight its important work, especially related to our nation's economic circumstances. HBI truly encompasses key elements that form the cornerstone for rebuilding the U.S. economy: housing, workforce and most importantly, jobs.

2012 will find HBI seeking opportunities to expand its workforce training programs to serve new populations who can become productive members of the home building industry. I also want to cultivate enhanced resources for HBI, including new sources of funding through foundations, partnerships and private capital support.

B&D: What direction do you think the housing

market is going?

JC: I believe we have seen the bottom of the housing market decline, and we're experiencing some indicators of the first steps of improvement. Recovery varies by region and state with states such as Arizona, California, Florida and Nevada experiencing a slower pace. Fewer borrowers are becoming delinquent on mortgage payments and if this trend continues, we'll see a decline in loans going into foreclosure.

The multifamily housing market is strong and provides housing alternatives in the current market environment. It is clear that recovery in the housing sector is directly linked to jobs. With better career opportunities, people will become more engaged in housing. As part of this recovery, we need to rebuild consumer confidence to stimulate interest in entering or moving up in the housing market.

B&D: How can builders and developers promote the industry as an enriching career path?

JC: Builders and developers can show young people a path to careers in residential construction in many ways. This industry ultimately provides an opportunity to create, build and deliver an asset that brings values to cities and neighborhoods.

Builders and developers can help the next generation by participating in the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB) Student Chapters program, which is administered by HBI. Nationwide, we have nearly 4,000 students in 150 chapters who are student members through their schools, — high schools, career and technical schools, community colleges or undergraduate programs. These students represent the home building workforce of tomorrow. NAHB Student Chapters are affiliated with local Home Builder Associations (HBAs), and NAHB members can interact with

students, host them at building sites and even provide internship opportunities.

Building industry representatives also can volunteer to be mentoring coaches with the HBI Construction-Coaching Opportunities to Reach Employment (C-CORE program). Volunteers are matched with young people, ages 13 to 18 and engage in activities that help mentees learn about residential construction careers and guide them towards a more productive, purposeful life.

B&D: What needs to be done to create more jobs in the home building industry?

JC: Home building offers diverse job opportunities. Currently, the focus is on rehabilitation and restoration of foreclosed homes and REO housing stock, weatherization updates, remodeling existing homes based on consumers postponing home purchases and making needed improvements to older homes and multifamily projects.

The key to job creation in the home building sector is a return to a growing economic landscape. Current indicators suggest an improving market, which demands a trained and skilled workforce. Workers who moved to other industries will return to residential construction, but new entrants with appropriate skills sets will be needed to fill the expected demand for housing. New skill sets also are necessary to keep pace with energy-efficient building technologies.

HBI is working diligently to fill this gap, so when economic growth accelerates, the U.S. will have skilled workers to build and remodel homes. By providing hands-on training, creating standards-based curriculum and encouraging young people to appreciate and embrace residential construction careers, HBI will help propel growth within the sector.

