

# Local impact fees driving up housing costs

Experts suggest there are better ways for communities to raise money for infrastructure development. Builders say fees are making housing less affordable.

By Paul F. Eno *Editor*

Rhode Island's crisis in housing affordability continues into another new year, and home builders consider local development impact fees, a holdover from the state's boom times, partially responsible.

"People of average means find it difficult, if not impossible, to buy or even rent a home here. The high cost of construction is a major fac-

tor, and a major factor in the cost of construction in some Rhode Island communities is the persistence of high development impact fees," said John Marcantonio, executive director of the Rhode Island Builders Association.

"Impact fees hit the middle-income market the most by driving up prices, and that's the heart of the housing affordability crisis in our state."

Twenty communities levy impact fees on residential development. Smithfield is out in front with a whopping \$8,572.83 per single-family home. East Greenwich and Coventry are close seconds, with fees as high as \$8,100 and \$7,596, respectively. South Kingstown, at \$6,111, isn't far behind. In some towns, there may be com-

see **IMPACT FEES...**page 26

## FEATURED PRODUCTS AND SERVICES FOR FEBRUARY

*Center Section*

### There's still a chance to exhibit at the Home Show!

RIBA's 66<sup>th</sup> Annual Home Show is next month! Surveys show that visitors want to see more contractors exhibiting, and RIBA can help you do so in this dynamic annual venue.

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### RIBA holds first Networking Breakfast

RIBA held its first FREE Breakfast, New Member Orientation, Open House & Networking Event on December 17<sup>th</sup>, and they will be held on the third Thursday of each month.

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### RCWP sets goal: Get more students into the industry

As RIBA and the Residential Construction Workforce Partnership set out on job training, and to match employers with qualified workers, they also will do some heavy recruiting.

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### How will the new Jobs Bank work?

A new online Jobs Bank will feature in efforts to solve the industry's labor shortage.

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## Home Show horizons!



Nearly 50 representatives of Rhode Island's career and technical education (CTE) programs, sponsors, the media and project supervisors attend a Home Show strategy session at the New England Institute of Technology on January 7<sup>th</sup>. CTE students will build all the structural components of the Home Show's central attractions, including the Ultimate Solar Powered Treehouse. Leading the session, at left, are Louis Cotoia of Arnold Lumber Co. and Rhode Island Builders Association Membership and Education Director Cheryl Boyd. Related stories on pages 2, 7 and 8.

30,000 visitors or more expected

## RCWP, CTE schools, many sponsors, huge marketing effort to highlight Home Show

**WHEN:** Thursday-Sunday, March 31<sup>st</sup> -April 3<sup>rd</sup>

**WHERE:** Rhode Island Convention Center, Providence

**FOR MORE INFORMATION:** Contact John Marcantonio or Elizabeth Carpenter at RIBA, (401) 438-7400.

The 2016 Home Show is on the horizon, and it's still not too late to grab your exhibit space and get in on the excitement, and the thousands of possible leads for your business in 2016!

There will be plenty to attract visitors. For one thing, the Home Show will involve the state's career and technical education (CTE) students, and the Residential Construction Workforce Partnership (RCWP) in a big way.

That's the word from Louis Cotoia of Arnold Lumber Co., point man for the Rhode



**Some of the nearly 50 attendees at a Home Show planning session on January 7<sup>th</sup> hear details about the Ultimate Solar Powered Treehouse and the various other showcases to be constructed by Rhode Island career and technical students.**

Island Builders Association's Home Show Committee.

"There are four major aspects of the show this year," Mr. Cotoia reported.

These will include an Energy and Technology Showcase sponsored by National Grid and Cox Communications.

### Seven designers

An entire section of the show will be an Interior Design Showcase, with seven different interior decorators involved, each taking a room. One room will be decorated by students from the Rhode Island School of Design, and that will be "The Designer Challenge."

There will be a giant "Ultimate Solar Powered Treehouse," including two elevated structures that are fully ADA complaint and accessible. Each CTE school will build a component at their school, and

each component will be locked together at the Convention Center before the show.

A strategy session led by Mr. Cotoia brought together nearly 50 representatives of the schools, the sponsors, the media and project supervisors at the New England Institute of Technology on January 7<sup>th</sup>.

"In addition to the projects and logistics we discussed at the meeting, our intention is to bring in a huge tree as the centerpiece of the structure," Mr. Cotoia said.

The Rhode Island Nursery and Landscape Association (RINLA) will contribute to this centerpiece attraction, bringing in ponds and even beehives, all demonstrating a living ecosystem as a background to sustainable living.

"This process is evolving as we go. We have asked each involved CTE teacher to assign a student as project manager. This

*see HOME SHOW...page 24*

The Rhode Island

**builder report**

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**DEADLINES FOR THE MARCH ISSUE**

**All copy, ads and photos must be to us by**

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# RIBA welcomes our new members and thanks their sponsors!

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For membership information  
contact Cheryl Boyd or Elise Geddes  
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## LOOKING AHEAD!

◊S **Martes y Jueves/Tuesdays and Thursdays through May 26<sup>th</sup>: Ingles para Constructores / English for Contractors** - Segue Institute for Learning, 361 Cowden St., Central Falls. Dirigida a los trabajadores en la industria de la construccion para incrementar su vocabulario y mejorar la comprension de terminos, codigos y reglamentos. A program to help Spanish-speaking contractors learn English, increase their vocabulary and understand the terms of codes and regulations; and to complement their professional training. To register, contact Latino Education Coordinator Betty Bernal, [bbernal@ribuilders.org](mailto:bbernal@ribuilders.org), or call (401) 438-7400. *More information on page 14.*

◊\* **February 1<sup>st</sup>: Creative Cedar Shingle Designs** - RIBA headquarters, East Providence, 4-6 p.m. FREE for members and their employees, with a \$10 materials/registration fee. \$50 for non-members, with a \$10 materials/registration fee. You must pre-register for this class. No admittance without pre-registration and payment. To register, contact Sheila McCarthy, [smccarthy@ribuilders.org](mailto:smccarthy@ribuilders.org), or call (401) 438-7400. *Details on page 14.*

◊S **February 6<sup>th</sup>: CPR/AED/First Aid** - RIBA headquarters, East Providence, 8 a.m.-2 p.m. This class is FREE. You must pre-register for this class. For more information and to register, contact Betty Bernal, [bbernal@ribuilders.org](mailto:bbernal@ribuilders.org), or call (401) 438-7400. *THIS CLASS WILL BE TAUGHT IN SPANISH. More information on page 14.*

◊ **February 9<sup>th</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup>: 5-Hour CRLB Pre-Registration Course** - RIBA headquarters, East Providence, 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. This course is required by the Rhode Island Contractors' Registration and Licensing Board for new contractors before they register. Cost: \$250. To register for the course, contact Sheila McCarthy, [smccarthy@ribuilders.org](mailto:smccarthy@ribuilders.org), or call (401) 438-7400. *Details on page 14.*

**February 11<sup>th</sup>: Presentation on Construction Financing** - 5-7 p.m., RIBA headquarters, East Providence. Sponsored by Pawtucket Credit Union. FREE. Members and non-members are welcome. To register, visit [www.RIBUILDERS.org](http://www.RIBUILDERS.org) or contact Cheryl Boyd at (401) 438-7400 or [cboyd@ribuilders.org](mailto:cboyd@ribuilders.org). *Related story on page 10.*

◊ **February 18<sup>th</sup> and March 17<sup>th</sup>: RIBA Breakfast, New Member Orientation, Open House and Networking Event** - RIBA headquarters, East Providence, between 8 and 10 a.m. Participants may stay longer if they wish. This FREE event is held on the third Thursday of each month for new and current members who want to learn more about their member benefits and to meet the RIBA team. RSVPs are requested. To RSVP or if you or your company would like to sponsor a breakfast, please contact Cheryl Boyd at (401) 438-7400 or [cboyd@ribuilders.org](mailto:cboyd@ribuilders.org). *Related story on page 11.*

◊ **February 22<sup>nd</sup>, March 15<sup>th</sup>: 4-Hour Lead-Safe Refresher Class** - RIBA headquarters, East Providence, 7:30 a.m. to 12 p.m. FREE for members and their employees, with a \$40 materials/registration fee. \$75 for non-members, with a \$40 materials/registration fee. You must pre-register for this class. No admittance without pre-registration and payment. To register, contact Sheila McCarthy, [smccarthy@ribuilders.org](mailto:smccarthy@ribuilders.org), or call (401) 438-7400. *Details on page 14.*

◊S **February 27<sup>th</sup> and March 5<sup>th</sup>: OSHA 10-Hour Course** - 7:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. each day. Location TBA. Alternate weather date: March 12<sup>th</sup>. This course is FREE. You must pre-register for this course. For more information and to register, contact Betty Bernal, [bbernal@ribuilders.org](mailto:bbernal@ribuilders.org), or call (401) 438-7400. *THIS CLASS WILL BE TAUGHT IN SPANISH. More information on page 14.*

◊S **March 19<sup>th</sup>: 8 Hour Lead-Safe Remodeler/Renovator Course** - 7:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Location TBA. Alternate weather day: March 26<sup>th</sup>. This course is FREE. You must pre-register for this course. This course is required to obtain or renew a Lead Safe Remodeler/Renovator Certificate, which is necessary for work in all pre-1978 buildings in Rhode Island. For more information and to register, contact Betty Bernal, [bbernal@ribuilders.org](mailto:bbernal@ribuilders.org), or call (401) 438-7400. *THIS CLASS WILL BE TAUGHT IN SPANISH. More information on page 14.*

◊ **March 31<sup>st</sup>-April 2<sup>nd</sup>: RIBA Home Show** - Rhode Island Convention Center, Providence, 3 to 9 p.m. on Thursday and Friday, 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. Saturday, 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Sunday. Thursday is RIBA Member Night. Watch for your passes in the mail. *More information on page 2.*

◊S **April, dates and location TBA: Financial Literacy Seminars** - For more information and to register, contact Betty Bernal, [bbernal@ribuilders.org](mailto:bbernal@ribuilders.org), or call (401) 438-7400. *THESE CLASSES WILL BE TAUGHT IN SPANISH. More information on page 14.*

**More information, registration and payment for most RIBA events is available at [RIBUILDERS.org](http://RIBUILDERS.org).**

◊ Indicates a RIBA-sponsored event.

\* Designates a course eligible for Rhode Island state-mandated continuing education credits. Contact RIBA for confirmation.

S Class will be taught in Spanish.

# President's Message



Roland J. Fiore

## RIBA partners with educators to strengthen Rhode Island

Many people don't realize how much residential construction relies on education.

No, I'm not talking about the professional contractor education that is now mandated by the state, or any other professional education contractors can use. I'm speaking about public education: its expense and, most importantly, its results.

When a community has great, affordable schools, there is normally a large demand to build and live there. When schools produce well-educated young people, our economy has a stronger future, and when we keep those young people living here in

Rhode Island, everyone wins.

This is why the Rhode Island Builders Association has dedicated itself to being a partner in education reform and why we continue to work directly with teachers and with career and technical (CTE) students to ensure their performance and growth.

It's not only the right thing to do, it's vital that it gets done.

In the years to come our collective resources and industry partnerships will make the difference. Together we'll make our future stronger and, by doing so, we'll make the value of your membership in RIBA greater than ever before.



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# RCWP and RIBA goal: Attract more young people to careers in construction

By Paul F. Eno *Editor*

We have the master plan to train workers for the residential construction industry, and ways to match them with the employers who need them. We have grant money to put the plan into action, and we have the talented people to get it done.

What we don't have: Enough young people coming into the industry.

That's the latest challenge for the Residential Construction Workforce Partnership (RCWP), with the Rhode Island Builders Association as its hub, when it comes to solving the industry's dearth of workers.

"Our mandate from the state is to help our industry solve its own labor shortages," said RIBA Executive Director John Marcantonio. "But in the process of planning our strategy and writing our successful grant application, we discovered a troubling fact."

That fact: Even with nine career and technical education (CTE) programs in Rhode Island, there are too few young people choosing construction careers to meet the industry's needs.

## Few graduates

"All nine CTE programs in the state, and that includes carpentry, HVAC, plumbing and electrical, graduated a total of 112 young people last year," reported Robert J. Baldwin of R.B. Homes, a past RIBA president and a member of the state Career and Technical Education Board of Trustees.

"Maybe half of those graduates actually entered our industry," Mr. Baldwin said.

So along with matchmaking between workers and employers, the RCWP will work to attract more students to the CTE programs.

"And it won't all be about the schools. We will work to attract and train the adult population as well," Mr. Marcantonio added.



**The Rhode Island Builders Association has made the annual Home Show a showcase for career and technical education and for construction careers, with students heavily involved in building show infrastructure. Here are students from the Providence Career & Technical Academy being recognized by Gov. Gina Raimondo in front of the student-built Design Showcase at the 2015 Home Show. Looking on, from left, are state Office of Energy Resources Commissioner Marion Gold, RIBA Vice President David A. Caldwell Jr., RIBA President Roland J. Fiore, past RIBA President Robert J. Baldwin, Secretary of State Nellie M. Gorbea, and John Bentz of the Property Advisory Group.**

"In fact it will be our mission over the next five years to take every action we need to take in order to solve the labor shortage. Recruitment is now a big part of this. Our state leaders believe in our ability to fix this problem."

The grant money to power RCWP's work comes from the Real Jobs Rhode Island (RJRI) program. Cheryl Boyd, RIBA's director of membership and education, will be the project manager, and there will be two part-time subcontractors who will work on recruiting and coordinate with all Rhode Island CTE programs.

A key aspect of the RCWP program will be an online Jobs Bank.

"The vision is that anyone in our industry who needs an employee can go online to the Jobs Bank and find that employee," Mr. Baldwin stressed. *Related story on page 8.*

Along with RIBA, the RCWP includes Youth Build Providence, Milenio Latino Institute, the Rhode Island Building Officials Association, the New England Institute of Technology, MTTI, the Providence Revolving Fund, the Rhode Island Lumber and Building Material Dealers Association, and career and technical education (CTE) schools in Coventry, Charlestown, Cranston, East Providence, Newport, Providence, Warwick and Woonsocket, along with the William M. Davies Jr. Career & Technical High School in Lincoln.

"This grant will allow our industry to really move forward in eliminating the long-running skills gap in our state," said Mr. Baldwin.

"Residential and light commercial construction will both benefit. This is a massive undertaking, and failure is not an option."

## How the Jobs Bank will work

The Jobs Bank is expected to be a major conduit between residential construction firms and the new, skilled employees they need.

**When will the Jobs Bank start?** The Jobs Bank should be up and running by March.

**Who can use it and how?** Any employer in the residential construction industry may participate in the Jobs Bank by signing up for an account online.

RIBA member companies, as potential employers, will automatically be given accounts. Each account will have a username and a password, and participating companies may post detailed job openings.

From the potential employee side, those who wish to apply

for jobs will be able to post their availability on the Jobs Bank site, along with their resumés.

**Where will the Jobs Bank be found on the 'Net?'** At [www.RCWPJOBS.com](http://www.RCWPJOBS.com), which will be up and running soon.

**How will we get the word out about the Jobs Bank?** The RCWP will publicize the Jobs Bank to companies and potential employees. This will include an outreach through suppliers and career and technical education (CTE) programs. The Jobs Bank will have a booth at the 2016 Home Show as well. *Related story on page 2.*

Contact Cheryl Boyd at RIBA for more information and to learn how to set up your Jobs Bank account, (401) 438-7400 or [cboyd@ribuilders.org](mailto:cboyd@ribuilders.org).



## BLS: over 790,000 new construction workers needed by 2024

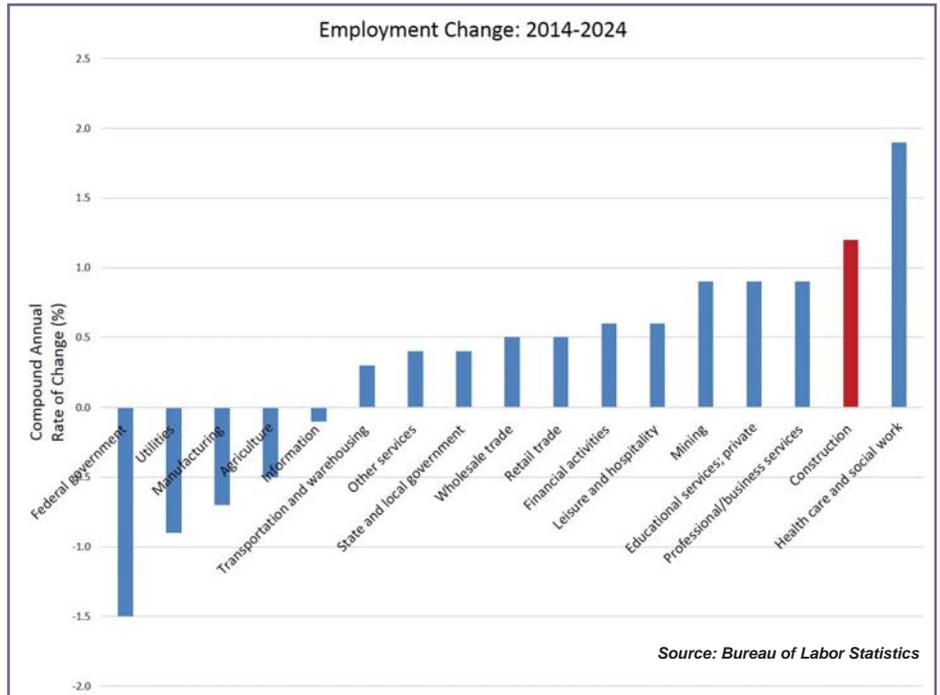
*National Association of Home Builders*

The construction industry is expected to see major employment growth over the next decade, according to new projections from the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS).

In a recent Eye on Housing blog post, National Association of Home Builders (NAHB) senior economist Robert Dietz provided an analysis of the BLS employment projections, which are designed to estimate labor-market changes. These estimates assume full employment and do not attempt to gauge cyclical or business-cycle effects.

According to the BLS, the construction sector is expected to add 790,400 jobs for the 10-year period from 2014-2024. This places the construction sector fourth among major industries.

The construction industry is expected to experience 1.2 percent compounded annual growth for jobs over the 2014-2024 period. See details at <http://EYEON-HOUSING.org/2015/12/construction-sector-a-leader-for-job-growth-over-the-next-decade/>.



## More women choose construction careers

*National Association of Home Builders*

Why is Professional Women in Building (PWB) the fastest-growing council in the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB), with growth echoed in the Rhode Island Builders Association's PWB?

In the fall of 2013, PWB listed fewer than 900 members nationally. Council leaders made it a goal to add 1,000 members, then increase that figure by 10 percent each year.

In fact, national PWB membership has grown by 57 percent over the past three years – from 872 members in 2012 to 1,374 members today, according to PWB Executive Director Sheronda Carr.

In 2015 alone, the council started four new chapters, and three more were slated to launch in time for the 2016 International Builders' Show (IBS) in January.

"PWB is seeing an organic evolution of women at the grassroots level making the see **WOMEN IN CONSTRUCTION...page 19**

# Directors busy in first session of 2016

By Paul F. Eno *Editor*

Industry concerns for the 2016 General Assembly session, a complete budget report, the recent and dynamic tie-ins between the Home Show and future construction workers all highlighted a packed January 5<sup>th</sup> session of the Rhode Island Builders Association's Board of Directors.

The meeting opened with a discussion of the state sales and use tax as it relates to contractors. Executive Director John Marcantonio then presented an itemized budget report for the past year and the year to come, with a full audit report slated for the February board meeting.

Mr. Marcantonio reported on the grant recently awarded to the Residential Construction Workforce Partnership (RCWP) by the Real Jobs Rhode Island (RJRI) program. The grant is meant to bring together potential employees with training they need and with employers in the residential construction industry, all with RIBA as the "matchmaker."

There are challenges, however, Mr. Marcantonio explained. *Related story on page 7.*

The 2016 Home Show has attracted more sponsors and will feature expanded and more unusual attractions, reported Mr. Marcantonio and Louis Cotoia of Arnold Lumber Co., a key member of the Home Show Committee.

RIBA lobbyist William G. Walsh reported on highlights of RIBA's legislative agenda on the first day of the session, and Mr. Marcantonio pointed out that mandated continuing education for contractors takes effect on March 1<sup>st</sup>.

## Membership

"We are redesigning the RIBUILDERS.org website," reported Membership and Education Director Cheryl Boyd. "And we will add two new websites."

RCWPJOBS.com will be the home of the Jobs Bank site (*Related story on page 8*) and RIBAEDUCATES.com will showcase the association's educational opportunities, including continuing education classes.

Mr. Marcantonio issued a call for board members to bring their sons and daughters to meetings so that "the next generation will get to know our industry and become familiar with how we do things."

New members are coming in, but many other members are retiring, he pointed out.

"We have to make a conscious effort to bring in younger contractors."

Mr. Marcantonio cited the work of Ms. Boyd, "who is doing a great job building relationships with members all the time. I challenge every member to give Cheryl some leads, and she will follow up."

Mr. Cotoia presented a complete report on the ongoing preparations for the 2016 Home Show. *Related stories on pages 2 and 7.*

## Coventry Lumber saves Santa Run



**Coventry Lumber owner Bill Finnegan, driving, and his "elves" head out across Coventry on December 18<sup>th</sup>.**

The Coventry Santa Run made the rounds in that community December 18<sup>th</sup>-22<sup>nd</sup> as Coventry Lumber Co. partnered with the Central Coventry and Anthony Fire Departments to bring Santa and his elves around town to spread cheer and goodwill.

The Santa Run is a 31-year tradition sponsored in the past solely by the two fire departments. That was until 2014, when it was to be cancelled because of financial issues. Coventry Lumber stepped up to take over the Santa Run that year so that it could continue. The RIBA member company has continued to pay all expenses for the event, with volunteer labor provided by the firefighters.

"We raised our children here, and the Santa Run is an event they always looked forward to," commented Coventry Lumber owner William Finnegan. "We wanted to support the fire departments and the community, and we wanted to see this traditional event continue."

# Pawtucket Credit Union to present at RIBA on construction financing

**WHEN:** Thursday, February 11<sup>th</sup>, 5-7 p.m.

**WHERE:** Rhode Island Builders Association headquarters,  
450 Veterans Memorial Pky #301, East Providence 02914

**COST:** FREE

**FOR INFORMATION AND TO REGISTER:** Contact  
Cheryl Boyd at [cboyd@ribuilders.org](mailto:cboyd@ribuilders.org), or call (401) 438-  
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- Locked-in rate at application
- Interest-only during the construction phase
- Up to 80 percent loan-to-value
- Loans up to \$1,500,000
- 1-2 family properties
- Primary or secondary homes.

Attending from Pawtucket Credit Union will be William Daw-  
son, vice president / mortgage origination; Mark McLaughlin, as-  
sistant vice president of mortgage origination; Matthew D'Agena,  
assistant vice president of business banking; and Paul Cappello,  
executive vice president, chief lending officer.

## To Our Members

**If any Supplier or Contractor Member  
is hosting an event for contractors  
or subcontractors, please be aware  
that RIBA Membership and Education  
Director Cheryl Boyd  
or another member of the RIBA team  
would love to attend to represent the  
industry and provide information  
on RIBA membership and benefits.**

**Contact Cheryl at (401) 438-7400  
or [cboyd@ribuilders.org](mailto:cboyd@ribuilders.org)**

# Caldwell builds first Fortified Home™ in New England



**The house is located at 59 Teal Dr., South Kingstown.**

A waterfront house being built by David A. Caldwell Jr. and his company, Caldwell and Johnston Inc., in South Kingstown is expected to become the first Fortified Home™ in New England.

That's the news from Jeffrey T. Rhodin, managing director of Sustainable Energy Analytics and New England's only (as yet) certified Fortified Homes evaluator.

Fortified Homes feature high resistance to storm damage, along with energy efficiency and an insurance break for homeowners.

The house, planned as a retirement residence for owners Robert and Mary Ellen Hartman, is located at 59 Teal Drive. The property fronts Green Hill Pond and Teal Pond.

Mr. Caldwell said he also is building Fortified Homes in Warwick, at Warwick Neck and Rumstick Point. The Warwick Neck project, off Catherine Court, is a renovation of a mid-century modern house, and the Rumstick Point home, on Hart Lane, is new construction.

"The Fortified Homes concept can be applied to new construction and renovations alike," Mr. Rhodin told *The Rhode Island Builder Report*. See the interview with him on page 22.

Mr. Caldwell, vice president of the Rhode Island Builders Association, is a nationally known advocate and practitioner of "green" building. He noted that the South Kingstown house is also a green home.



▲ **John Cote of J.B. Cote Construction Inc., at left, chats with Membership Services Coordinator Elise Geddes while Brian Cote, at right, networks with Bill Dawson of Pawtucket Credit Union, all during the first monthly Breakfast, New Member Orientation and Open House, held on December 17<sup>th</sup> at RIBA headquarters.**



▲ **RIBA Latino Outreach Coordinator Betty Birnal explains member benefits to Carlos Lora of G.G. Construction Inc.**

## Members, non-members meet to network, learn about RIBA

The Rhode Island Builders Association's well-used meeting room was the scene for the association's first monthly Breakfast, New Member Orientation, Open House and Networking Event, held on December 17<sup>th</sup>. Over 30 members and guests attended.

This will be a FREE monthly event, held on the third Thursday of every month between 8 and 10 a.m. The next event will take place on February 18<sup>th</sup>.

All new and current members are welcome. Members of the RIBA team will be on hand to answer questions about the many member benefits and how to use them, and to hear feedback. Participants also will meet industry peers, be able to network, and will learn about their fellow members and what they do.

Many members have never visited the RIBA offices, and this breakfast and orientation event is a great opportunity to do so and to find out how things work at your trade association. The hot buffet includes eggs, bacon, home fries, fruit, coffee and more.

Non-members are also invited to stop by and learn about membership. Participants may stay past 10 a.m. if they wish, tour the RIBA offices and meet the staff. RSVPs are requested.

To RSVP or if you or your company would like to sponsor a breakfast, please contact Cheryl Boyd at (401) 438-7400 or [cboyd@ribuilders.org](mailto:cboyd@ribuilders.org).

▲ **RIBA Education and Membership Director Cheryl Boyd, left, welcomes new member Susan D'Allesandro of Leasing Associates Inc.**



▲ **Jim McCarty of FreshLook Financial, left, meets up with Juan Mirt of Home Remodeling Engineering Corp.**

**For membership information  
contact Cheryl Boyd or Elise Geddes  
(401) 438-7400 or  
[cboyd@ribuilders.org](mailto:cboyd@ribuilders.org), [egeddes@ribuilders.org](mailto:egeddes@ribuilders.org)**

## Member Profile: Larry Gemma of Gem Plumbing and Heating Services

# It all began in Dad's garage

By Paul F. Eno *Editor*

It's been quite the ride for Larry Gemma and his brothers, from a plumbing business run out of a home garage in Providence to one of the largest family-owned companies in Rhode Island.

"I started helping my dad (Larry Gemma Sr.) when I was little, and I was working on jobsites at the age of 6 or 7," Larry recalls.

"My brothers and I grew up with this business, and it's truly in our blood!"

Larry Sr. founded the Gem Plumbing & Heating Co. in 1949 with the help of his wife, Gloria. The company's first headquarters was the family garage in Providence, and there was just one truck.

Gloria Gemma became a hero in more ways than one. She worked at home as Larry's dispatcher, all while raising nine children. Many years later, Gloria lost a long battle with breast cancer, becoming the inspiration for the Gloria Gemma Breast Cancer Resource Foundation.

In 1982, once they had all graduated from college, brothers Lawrence, Leonard, Edward and Anthony Gemma joined their dad, and they all led Gem Plumbing & Heating toward big-time success. By 1997 they had doubled their workforce to over 40 employees, were developing a huge customer base, and were taking on larger construction jobs.

"It was Bob Pesce (of Consolidated Concrete Corp.), a legend in the construction community, who helped Gem Plumbing get into bigger things and start larger commercial work," Larry states.

"We happened to have a shop right next to a CVS, which Bob's people were working on. He gave us the plumbing and heating work because we were so close by. That landed us many years of work from CVS."

Bob, a pillar of the Rhode Island Builders Association and in the community, died in November.



**Larry Gemma, at left, with brothers Lenny, Eddy and Anthony.**

After that, Gem added between 20 and 50 new employees every year. Today there are about 300 employees and more than 165 trucks.

Gemma is very active in trade associations and the community, and this has brought in a number of honors, including the 2006 Constructech Award for Innovation, the 2005 Contractor of the Year Award from PHC Contractor magazine, and the 2004 Excellence in Business Award from Providence Business News.

In 2004, two years after Gloria's death, the family established the Gloria Gemma Breast Cancer Resource Foundation in her memory.

The Foundation provides help to breast cancer organizations in their fight to raise awareness of the disease and to bring help and comfort to sufferers and their families.

Within the business community, the Gemmas established the Gem Institute for Performance Excellence so they could share their knowledge and help other companies succeed, based on their own experience.

As 2016 gets under way, Gem Plumbing & Heating offers plumbing, heating and cooling services, along with drain-laying and electrical work, throughout southeastern New England, and there are several major projects in the Boston area as of this writing.

"We have met many wonderful people over the years," Larry reports. "I love being on the road talking to people."

Gemma belonged to RIBA for many years before Great Recession, and the Gemmas' interest in grooming young people for careers in the trades recently led the company to rejoin.

"Bob Baldwin (of R.B. Homes, a past RIBA president) recently approached us to help with work related to the Real Jobs Rhode Island grant." *Story on page 7.*

"I've been working with (RIBA Membership and Education Director) Cheryl Boyd on making the most of our membership in other ways too," says Larry, who serves on the board of the William M. Davies Jr. Technical High School.

"We plan to help with the jobs program, and we plan to send our people over for the tuition-free classes as RIBA too. RIBA is a great organization with great people!"

Find out more about Larry and the company at [www.gemplumbing.com](http://www.gemplumbing.com).



### **Gem Plumbing & Heating Services Inc.**

**President:** Lawrence T. Gemma Jr.

**RIBA member since:** 2015

**Focus:** HVAC and electrical services

**Serves:** Southeastern New England

**Founded:** 1949

**Based:** Lincoln, Rhode Island

# RIKB nabs PRISM Awards

R.I. Kitchen & Bath (RIKB) was recently honored with two 2015 PRISM Awards from the Builders Association of Greater Boston (BAGB).

The company won a Silver Award in the "Best Ad (Digital or Print): Builder or Associate" category. Tanya Donahue, RIKB's vice president of sales and marketing, won a Silver Award for "Most Valuable Team Player."

"The PRISM (Prestigious Results in Sales and Marketing) Awards recognize the finest projects and outstanding achievements of builders, developers, project owners, architects, land planners, marketing/advertising firms, interior designers, remodelers and other professionals in the home building industry," according to a company statement.

The award for Best Ad was brought in by RIKB's "Kitchen Mixer" advertisement. Ms. Donahue's award "acknowledged her significant experience and expertise



*Proudly displayed their two PRISM awards are the R.I. Kitchen & Bath team. From left are Kara Travisino, Prudence Stoddard, Lynne Shore, Kim Gammell, Jodi Osborn, Tanya Donahue, owner Steve St. Onge, Erin Doherty, Brittany McCall, Karleen Kingsbury, Rose Champagne and Joanne Parillo.*

as well as her impact on the organization, operations and sales efforts," the statement added.

"We are honored to receive two PRISM awards," said RIKB President Steven L. St. Onge. "Tanya has made a huge impact on

the success of our company."

Warwick-based RIKB has received many other regional and national awards.

Mr. St. Onge founded the company in 1989. Find out more at [www.RIKB.com](http://www.RIKB.com) or call (401) 463-1550.



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## Creative shingling

February 1<sup>st</sup>

This course eligible for continuing-education units

**WHEN:** Monday, February 1<sup>st</sup>, 4-6 p.m.

**WHERE:** Rhode Island Builders Association headquarters, 450 Veterans Memorial Pky #301, East Providence 02914

**COST:** FREE for members and their employees, with a \$10 materials/registration fee. \$50 for non-members, with a \$10 materials/registration fee.

**DEADLINE TO REGISTER:** One week before class

**FOR INFORMATION AND TO REGISTER:** Contact Sheila McCarthy at smccarthy@ribuilders.org, or call (401) 438-7400.

Join Mike Guertin to learn how creative cedar shingle designs can definitely set your work apart from run-of-the-mill side-walls.

From simple geometric designs to complex images, cedar shingle siding is a unique art medium. Using a few simple techniques that are easy to learn you can craft amazing freeform designs and entire scenes with cedar shingles.

This course is eligible for continuing education units (CEUs) as required by the state Contractors' Registration and Licensing Board.

## 5 Hour Pre-Registration Course

February 9<sup>th</sup>, February 23<sup>rd</sup>

New contractors only

**WHEN:** All dates, 8 a.m. to 1 p.m.

**WHERE:** Rhode Island Builders Association headquarters, 450 Veterans Memorial Pky #301, East Providence 02914

**COST:** \$250

**DEADLINE TO REGISTER:** One week before class

**FOR INFORMATION AND TO REGISTER:** Contact Sheila McCarthy at smccarthy@ribuilders.org, or call (401) 438-7400.

The Contractors' Registration and Licensing Board (CRLB) now requires five hours of education for anyone who plans to register as a new contractor in Rhode Island.

The course includes: Introduction to Construction Contracts, Introduction to Construction Codes and Standards, Introduction to Construction Regulations and Regulating Agencies, Introduction to Construction Business Principles and Practices, and Workplace Health and Safety. Pre-registration is required for admittance.

## Courses in Spanish

February, March, April

**WHAT & WHEN:** Beginning on Saturday, February 6<sup>th</sup>, with CPR/AED/First Aid, with classes in other subject areas as they are scheduled. Call for information. See page 4.

**WHERE:** Various locations as announced.

**COST:** FREE

**FOR INFORMATION AND TO REGISTER:** Contact Latino Education Coordinator Betty Bernal at bbernal@ribuilders.org, or call (401) 438-7400.

Do you have Spanish-speaking employees? Be sure they are knowledgeable and safe on the jobsite with the Rhode Island Builders Association's new Spanish-language courses.

Taking place on Tuesdays and Thursdays through May 26<sup>th</sup> is "English for Contractors" at Segue Institute for Learning, 361 Cowden St., Central Falls.

In February, CPR/AED/First Aid will be offered at RIBA headquarters in East Providence on the 6<sup>th</sup>, followed by the OSHA 10 Course on the 27<sup>th</sup>.

In March, OSHA 10 will be offered again on the 5<sup>th</sup>, with the 8 Hour Lead-Safe Remodeler/Renovator Course on the 19<sup>th</sup>. Financial Literacy Seminars will be offered in April.

All Spanish-language courses are FREE.

## Lead licensing refresher

February 22<sup>nd</sup>, March 15<sup>th</sup>

**WHEN:** Tuesday, January 19<sup>th</sup>; Thursday February 25<sup>th</sup>; Tuesday, March 15<sup>th</sup>, 7:30 a.m. to 12 p.m.

**WHERE:** Rhode Island Builders Association headquarters, 450 Veterans Memorial Pky #301, East Providence 02914

**COST:** FREE for members and their employees, with a \$40 materials/registration fee. A \$75 charge for non-members and a \$40 materials/registration fee.

**DEADLINE TO REGISTER:** One week before class.

**FOR INFORMATION AND TO REGISTER:** Contact Sheila McCarthy at smccarthy@ribuilders.org, or call (401) 438-7400.

This is a four-hour RRP refresher class with Scott Asprey of Risk & Safety Management, for contractors who have their lead renovator/remodeler certification and whose certificate is up for renewal.

Enforcement on residential jobsites is very strict, so keep your knowledge up to date!

The class will review lead-hazard controls and update attendees on any changes to state or federal regulations. You must pre-register for this class. No admittance without pre-registration and payment.

# Featured Products & Services for February 2016



**A Rhode Island Builder Report  
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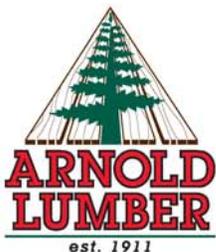
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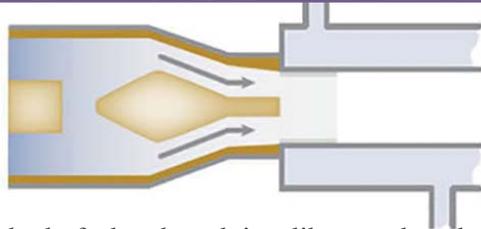
# Fall in love with these great products for February!

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KOMA products look, feel and work just like wood, and because they're factory sanded, they don't have a typical PVC sheen to them. You can also expect tenacious paint adhesion when applying a high quality, 100 percent acrylic latex paint in the field. Check out KOMA products at Coventry Lumber!

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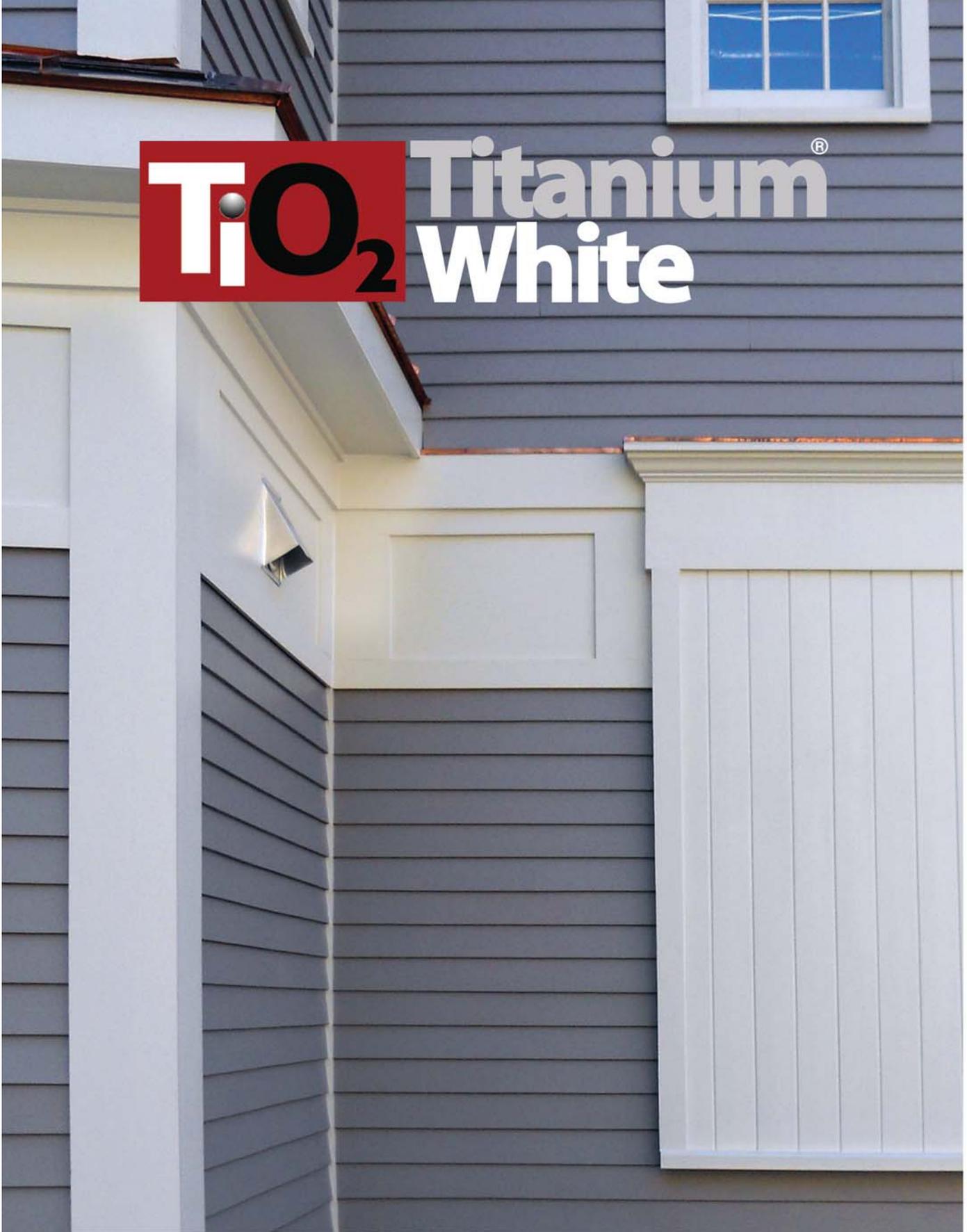
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## It was a year of 'reinventing ourselves'

By Tracey Boyajian PWB President

On December 15<sup>th</sup>, the Professional Women in Building Council (PWB) gathered for a little holiday fun at The Farmer's Daughter in South Kingstown. Martha Stewart must have been channeling her talents to us as so many gorgeous centerpieces were created!

Twenty-two of us were in attendance, and it was nice to take a few hours off from the bustle of the holiday to-do list.

### IBS 2016

While this is being written before the International Builders Show (IBS) was to take place in Las Vegas in January, one scheduled PWB event is a lecture entitled "Lessons from Leaders: Building Your Brand & Your Future."

Those of us attending the IBS have been pretty excited about this lecture because the Rhode Island Builders Association's PWB dedicated our entire year to this very theme. All our events have been directed toward branding.

We had head shots taken to update our websites and social media profiles. We reworked our LinkedIn™ profiles and resumes. And we took notes from our guest presenter on the topic of "Speaking for Success."

### Big on branding

It was a year well spent "reinventing" ourselves.

The second reason we're excited about this lecture is because we submitted our Professional Development Series on Branding to national PWB at the end of September in the hope of continuing our streak of winning scholarship awards at IBS this year. We are feeling very lucky about the coincidence, and we'll report on our success in the next magazine.

If your employees are not members of PWB, they are missing out. We are the premier professional organization that provides strategies and solutions for pro-



**The December 15<sup>th</sup> Holiday Party sponsored by the Rhode Island Builders Association's Professional Women in Building Council found Linda Bohmbach, left, and Beth Fontaine of Home HealthSmith making decorative centerpieces at The Farmer's Daughter in South Kingstown.**

fessional women in the building industry and we are always looking for new members to bring their individual and professional talents to the group. Employees of a

company affiliated with RIBA are eligible to join PWB for only \$60 per year, and I ask that you encourage them to attend a meeting and find out more.

### WOMEN IN CONSTRUCTION...from page 8

necessary strides to fuel the next generation of female building professionals through industry support, professional development, and leadership training opportunities," Ms. Carr said.

"Our members are not just builders' wives anymore, but accredited, licensed and certified professionals representing all facets of the residential construction industry."

RIBA's PWB is growing too.

"For the tiniest state in the Union, we have a very good-sized council," said PWB President Tracey Boyajian. "In fact, since last April, we added four new members, for a current total of 30."

Ms. Boyajian credits Cheryl Boyd, her predecessor as president and now RIBA's director of membership and education, for much of this success.

"All of the awards Cheryl won at last year's International Builders Show were because of her excellent recruiting of new members. We were on the brink of extinction," Ms. Boyajian continued.

"As Sheronda said, it was 'just the wives' of RIBA members who met socially. They were not women in the building industry, not women networking and building professional relationships, not women working alongside - and competing against - men. Cheryl turned PWB into what it was meant to be."

# Get involved: Now is the time!



**Steven Carlino**

They're off and running!

The General Assembly convened for its 2016 session on January 5<sup>th</sup>, and the Rhode Island Builders Association is prepared to represent your interests at the State House this year.

The first order of business for us is to gather information from our members about the difficulties you face that could be eased by legislative action. We need your war stories!

Let us know about the difficulties you have had or are having with state or local regulatory bodies or processes.

Do you have a development that can't be started or completed because the red tape has stretched out for years? Are you losing money and are your clients unable to move into their new homes because of long wait times or an unpredictable system? Do you feel stymied by anti-growth elements for no good reason?

Your experiences will help us go to the State House and show lawmakers what our industry and economy need. This is what happened to these builders, and this is why we need action to

remedy the situation.

We need your information so we can help you.

As the legislative session proceeds, RIBA will keep you informed on the issues and on what you can do to help.

We will continue to press home the issues that are critical when it comes to solving the housing crisis in our state. We will continue to deliver the message that it's housing that will bring the Rhode Island economy out of the doldrums, and that housing can't recover without a robust residential construction industry.

We will also continue our ongoing work to support career and technical education (CTE) and to get as many of those fine students as possible to choose careers in our industry. This is a top goal of the Residential Construction Workforce Partnership, to which we belong. *Story on page 7.*

To report your issues and experiences, to find out what else you can do to help, and to learn more about RIBA's legislative advocacy, contact Executive Director John Marcantonio at (401) 438-7400 or [jmarcantonio@ribuilders.org](mailto:jmarcantonio@ribuilders.org).



**Robert J. Baldwin**

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## RIBA's Legislative Committee

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**Steven Carlino, Co-Chairman**  
*Douglas Lumber, Kitchens & Home Center*

**Robert J. Baldwin, Co-Chairman**  
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**Eric Wishart**  
*Civil CADD Services Inc.*

**Gayle Wolf**  
*Government Strategies Inc.*

# Grants to fund 14 brownfields projects

Another round of projects to be funded later this year, DEM says. Development proposals sought.

By Paul F. Eno *Editor*

Fourteen redevelopment projects will be funded in Rhode Island this year thanks to \$3.7 million in matching grants under the new Brownfields Remediation and Economic Development Fund, approved by voters in 2014.

There will be more such funding available in 2016, and the Dept. of Environmental Management (DEM) said it will soon invite developers to submit proposals for a new round of grants.

The most recent grants will come from DEM, and recipients were announced by Gov. Gina Raimondo on December 23<sup>rd</sup>. The grants, intended for both site preparation and redevelopment, are being awarded to municipalities, not-for-profit organizations and private entities throughout the state.

Five site-preparation grants, ranging from \$23,760 to \$100,000, are being applied to brownfield locations that don't yet have approved cleanup plans. Grantees include the City of Pawtucket (\$100,000 and \$80,000) for 45 Division Street/School Street and Town Landing, respectively; Evolution Mill (\$23,760) for 65 Manchester Street, West Warwick; Bay Spring Realty (\$34,426)

for 90 Bay Spring Avenue, Barrington; and Lippitt Mill (\$40,000) for 825 Main Street, West Warwick.

There are also nine grants for remediation and redevelopment, ranging from \$150,000 to \$712,000. These include South Street Landing (\$496,650) for 350 Eddy Street, 11 and 15 Point Street, and 342 Eddy Street, all in Providence; 65 Blackstone Pawtucket (\$295,456) for 59, 65 and 70 Blackstone Avenue, Pawtucket; Bristol Industrial Park (\$427,737) for 500 Wood Street, Bristol; Parcel 12 (\$175,036) for 5 Exchange Street, Providence; the Ronald McDonald House (\$150,000) for 152 Dudley Street, Providence; East Pointe (Ocean State Steel)(\$240,000) for 300 Bourne Avenue, East Providence; ONE New Builders/Paragon Mills (\$425,000) for 31-39 Manton Avenue, Providence; Phillipsdale (\$500,000) for 310 Bourne Avenue, East Providence; and the Westerly Higher Education and Job Skills Center (\$712,000) for 17 Canal Street, Westerly.

“DEM plans an additional request for proposals in 2016 and continues to work with its partners to expand efforts to invest in underutilized sites across the state and ready them for reuse,” a statement from the agency said.

DEM estimates that Rhode Island has between 10,000 to 12,000 brownfields sites, “many of which occupy desirable commercial and industrial space within the state’s urban corridor.”

For more information, visit [www.DEM.ri.gov](http://www.DEM.ri.gov).

## RIBOA slates 2016 education expo

**WHEN:** Friday, February 26<sup>th</sup>, with registration at 8 a.m. and the Expo from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

**WHERE:** New England Institute of Technology, East Greenwich Campus, One New England Tech Blvd., East Greenwich, RI 02818

**COST:** FREE for contractors and students

**DEADLINE TO REGISTER:** February 19<sup>th</sup>

**FOR INFORMATION & TO REGISTER:** Visit [RIBOA.net](http://RIBOA.net)

It's the 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Expo and Education Fair, sponsored by the Rhode Island Building Officials Association (RIBOA), and there's a great lineup of educational events.

Rhode Island Builders Association members Mike Guertin of Michael R. Guertin Inc. will speak, along with Rob Sherwood of the Conservation Services Group. Structural engineer David Grandpre will offer a third program.

Courses qualify for continuing-education credits from the Contractors Registration Board and Licensing Board for registration renewals only.

In addition, there will be vendor booths, code-book ordering and door prizes at the conclusion. Lunch is available.

## NAHB hails GAO slapdown of EPA on WOTUS rule

By Paul F. Eno *Editor*

The Obama administration broke the law when it used social media to urge the general public to support the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA's) controversial rule defining “Waters of the United States” or the WOTUS Rule, according to the Government Accountability Office (GAO), which released that opinion on December 14<sup>th</sup>.

The National Association of Home Builders (NAHB) hailed the move.

“Using social media to engage in outright propaganda to push its case reveals just how far the administration will go to push its activist environmental agenda. (The) GAO report shows how important it is for Congress to act now to overturn this water rule and force EPA to go back to the drawing board and engage in the proper rulemaking process,” said NAHB Chairman Tom Woods.

EPA's social media blitz included Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and even Thunderclap to battle opposition to WOTUS, which the agency hailed as a landmark in protecting drinking-water sources.

The rule extends federal jurisdiction over virtually every body of standing water in the country, down to a few square yards, even if they are temporary or seasonal.

# Jeffrey T. Rhodin

## Managing Director, Sustainable Energy Analytics

*Jeffrey T. Rhodin, a resident of Lexington, Mass., founded Sustainable Energy Analytics in 2008. He is a Residential Energy Services Network (RESNET) certified Home Energy Rating System (HERS) rater, Building Performance Institute (BPI) Building Analyst, ENERGY STAR® and IndoorAir® Plus Partner, and Lean Sigma Black Belt business-improvement professional. He holds a degree in operations research and industrial engineering from Cornell University's College of Engineering. Sustainable Energy Analytics helps homeowners and builders reduce energy consumption "within tight budgets."*



As a matter of fact, a key aspect here is that many of these features are already required by code, but many times they are not applied consistently. Many builders already use these practices, and the additional work required to fulfill the Bronze Fortified Home requirement is relatively small.

**THE BUILDER:** Still, it sounds as though much of this surpasses the FEMA standards. It certainly would for the Gold certification.

**RHODIN:** Yes. First of all, the Fortified Home certification verifies that what is required has actually been done and been done well. And there are several features that are above code but, with the exception of the opening-protection standards, they're not especially expensive.

**THE BUILDER: What is the Fortified Home™ Concept?**

**RHODIN:** It's a certification sponsored by the insurance industry to help homeowners build houses to better withstand the catastrophic weather events that are becoming more frequent.

There are Gold, Silver and Bronze Fortified Home certifications. The Bronze certification focuses on making sure a house's roofing system is sound and functions as one unit. The Silver level includes all the Bronze requirements, then adds "opening protection." That means all the openings, like windows and doors, must meet impact-resistance standards.

The Gold level includes the Bronze and Silver requirements, but it adds features that structurally tie the house together from the roof right down to the foundation. This all must be designed and verified by a structural engineer.

**THE BUILDER: Does the structural engineer have to have any special training?**

**RHODIN:** No. The concept is called a "verified continuous load path."

The roof rafters are attached to the walls using hurricane clips and straps. Then there's reinforced bracing for gables and walls, and the walls are structurally tied to the floor systems. It goes all the way down to the foundation, where the framing is bolted right to the foundation.

**THE BUILDER: This almost harks back to the way 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century builders in rugged coastal areas like Cape Cod, Maine and Nova Scotia secured their own houses.**

**RHODIN:** These methods are absolutely rooted in tradition and old, proven practices.

**THE BUILDER: Let's get specific about what Fortified Home standards exceed the code.**

**RHODIN:** At the Bronze level, you're required to use ring shank nails on the sub-roof, and that might exceed the code in some areas.

In addition, the nailing pattern is denser, and you have to tape or seal all the seams in the roof system. Most sub-roofs are four-by-eight sheets, and the Fortified Home standards require that the seams be taped or that you put an ice-and-water shield across the entire roof, a fully-adhered membrane.

There are options you can use, but the goal is that the sub-roof becomes a secondary drainage plane. Also at the Bronze level, the shingles must meet the highest standard.

At the Silver level, the impact-resistant windows can have either impact-resistant glass or there can be a hurricane-shutter system, of which there are many kinds. Also the garage door must be impact-resistant. That's all above code.

Gable walls have to be reinforced and braced appropriately, but that can be a matter of adding a few two-by-fours to hold the top plates and connect them to adjacent joists. It's not difficult to do.

At the Gold level, we have the structural engineer designing and verifying, as I mentioned. Also at that level, the opening protection, in addition to the impact-resistance, must meet pressure-testing requirements.

**THE BUILDER: How new is this concept to the market, and the New England market in particular?**

*see INTERVIEW, next page...*

## **INTERVIEW...from previous page**

**RHODIN:** The concept has gone through several iterations nationally, and it originated about 2005. But it's new to New England. I'm the first Fortified Homes evaluator in New England.

(State Building Commissioner) Jack Leyden and the Rhode Island Building Code Standards Committee have been very interested in the concept for at least two years. I believe that nearly all of them have gone through the associate training.\*

The first Fortified Home to be certified in New England is being built in South Kingstown by Dave Caldwell, vice president of the Rhode Island Builders Association. *Story on page 10.*

### **THE BUILDER: How much does the Fortified Home concept add to the cost of a new home?**

**RHODIN:** Oh, it's minor at the Bronze level. The certification fees and any increase in building material costs at that level would probably be about \$1,000. About half of that consists of the fees to get the actual certification.

At the Silver level, you have some real added expense. Impact-resistant windows can be double the cost of normal windows. So if your budget for windows is \$15,000 to \$20,000, you might add an additional \$15,000 to \$20,000 or more. The Gold level might bring an additional \$10,000 to \$15,000 on top of that.

### **THE BUILDER: For builders and homeowners alike, the question might arise about appraisals. Appraisers are still coming to grips with "green" building and energy-saving features. Have they expressed an opinion on Fortified Homes?**

**RHODIN:** That's an interesting question. My understanding is that one of the first things the program did was approach appraisers, and they weren't interested.

This is all still in the fledgling stages, still getting its first exposure. People like Dave Caldwell are showing leadership roles here.

### **THE BUILDER: Can older homes be retrofitted? If so, how expensive would that be?**

**RHODIN:** Yes. The Fortified Homes certification is for all homes, and it makes no distinction between new and existing homes.

Verification becomes the challenge, though. It's very easy to verify an existing home at the Bronze level. In fact if someone is replacing their roof, they should seriously consider going for a Bronze certification. This would involve just a minor increase in costs.

In fact I'm Bronze-certifying an existing home that belongs to someone your members might know: Pamela Rubinoff of the Coastal Resources Center at the University of Rhode Island. I'm certifying that one and Dave Caldwell's new construction in South Kingstown within the next few weeks (as of January 6<sup>th</sup>).

These are both prototype houses for this program. We've been learning the process, the costs and how to get it done. Then we can roll it out to a lot of people this year.

Beyond the Bronze level on an existing house, though, verifica-

tion is difficult because everything is closed up, so you'd have to rip the house up, and most people won't want to do that. That's not to say it can't be done, but it's much more difficult. But for existing homes, Bronze is very doable and advisable.

### **THE BUILDER: How does a builder get certified to do Fortified Homes?**

**RHODIN:** Builders don't get certified. They can go through a training course, but it's not an accreditation. The course is actually meant for the Fortified Homes evaluators, who must already have a great deal of experience in verification processes at over 250 houses. So this would be more like a home inspector or a HERS rater.

Builders can go through the course to learn about and understand the Fortified Homes standards, but they certainly can't evaluate and certify their own projects. Naturally there has to be a third party to do that.

As interest in the program grows, we will certainly schedule trainings and information sessions.

### **THE BUILDER: How does an evaluation work?**

**RHODIN:** We have to schedule two to three site visits during construction, but usually two are enough.

The first is when the house is being framed and the windows are in, and another is at the end of the construction for final verification.

I take a lot of pictures. The builder has to have a lot of documentation and also has to take pictures. It's a very cooperative effort, and all voluntary. It's knowing what to do and doing it right the first time.

Fortified Homes certifications are, unfortunately, based on other people's misfortunes. The insurance industry has spent a great deal of time and research to find out what people can do to make their homes stronger in very cost-effective ways.

When you see the devastation these storms wreak when they come through, we're talking about saving lives.

*For more information on the Fortified Homes program, visit the Institute for Business and Home Safety (IBHS) at <http://DISASTERSAFETY.org/>, or contact Mr. Rhodin at (718) 652-8282 or visit [www.SEA.us.com](http://www.SEA.us.com) and see the contact form.*

\* This refers to the Fortified-Wise Associate training, which began to be offered in Rhode Island last April. From the program literature comes this description:

"The FORTIFIED-Wise Associate demonstrates a solid understanding of FORTIFIED building principles, construction practices, and verification requirements. It is ideal for anyone newer to FORTIFIED Home™ and IBHS, including but not limited to, building and code officials, product manufacturers, insurance professionals, students, real estate professionals, and associates. Fee includes the cost of the one-day training class, the *FORTIFIED-Wise Manual*, the FORTIFIED-Wise Associate exam (minimum score to pass exam is 85 percent) and listing in the *FORTIFIED Home™ Provider Directory*."



## HOME SHOW...from page 2

will help get the students involved and help draw them into our industry, something our Residential Construction Workforce Partnership is trying to accomplish.”

*Related story on page 7.*

In addition, the CTE schools are being encouraged to ally with local supplier members when it comes to obtaining building materials, he added.

National Grid is the umbrella sponsor for the entire show.

There will be cooking demonstrations once again, with the kitchen supplied by Unilock®.

Mr. Cotoia called for volunteer help from RIBA members, especially before and after the Home Show.

“There will be many components involved here, and we will only have two and a half days to assemble it all, then disassemble it all after the show. By noon on Monday, April 4<sup>th</sup>, everything has to be out of that building,” he said.

The treehouse will then be donated to the Boys and Girls Club of Providence, ac-



**Members of the Rhode Island Builders Association's Home Show Committee meet at RIBA headquarters on December 17<sup>th</sup>. The subject: the seven uniquely designed rooms of the planned Interior Design Showcase.**

ording to Mr. Cotoia.

The Home Show Committee itself met at RIBA headquarters on December 17<sup>th</sup> to discuss logistics.

For more information and to help with the Home Show or the CTE effort, contact Cheryl Boyd at RIBA, (401) 438-7400 or [cboyd@ribuilders.org](mailto:cboyd@ribuilders.org).



**I urge members to take this final opportunity to exhibit at the 2016 Home Show!**  
-Executive Director John Marcantonio

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Local officials need to be aware that when they fiddle with impact fees, that has a direct bearing on home prices. -Economist Elliott Eisenberg

### ***IMPACT FEES...from page 1***

plex impact-fee formulae based on many factors, including school enrollment, sewers and/or a home's or subdivision's location.

"I build mostly from North Kingstown south to Westerly," said Ronald J. Smith of Ron Smith Homes LLC. "I'd say North Kingstown's impact fee is reasonable, at around \$1,200. South Kingstown's is outrageous, at over \$6,000. Exeter's is \$5,000. Westerly's is \$0."

In Mr. Smith's opinion, one primary reason for impact fees – supporting schools as new families move into town – no longer exists in most areas because, overall, Rhode Island's school populations have been declining for years.

"Impact fees should be done away with because schools are losing children, and new homes are having little or no impact. South Kingstown's student numbers are falling by roughly 100 a year," he said.

Robert E. DeBlois of DeBlois Building Co. stressed that impact fees raise the cost of construction and, therefore, home prices.

"How can anyone say they don't raise prices? In housing, impact fees are a cost just like any other, no different than lumber or concrete. It has to be borne by the builder, the home buyer or a combination thereof," Mr. DeBlois commented.

"The only time a builder would absorb the fee is if putting it into the home price makes it too expensive compared with other homes in the area, and that's not happening in Rhode Island."

### ***Paying the price***

An official study of impact fees by our neighbor, the State of Connecticut, found that, even when a builder absorbs impact fees, the home buyer and the housing market still pay a high price.

"As (our) analysis shows, developers are more likely to absorb the fees and not pass them along to home buyers in suburbs around larger cities," concluded a study by the Connecticut General Assembly's nonpartisan Office of Legislative Research, written by Principal Analyst John G. Rappa.

"Here, developers are more likely to compete against each other and sellers of existing comparable homes. Since the fees cut into their profit margins, developers may concentrate on building higher-priced homes, reduce home quality and size, or build only in those towns that impose no fees. Consequently, the supply of affordable housing could shrink, homebuyers could pay more for less housing, and residential development could accelerate in other towns," the report continued.

### ***A little history***

As originally conceived, impact fees are imposed on new homes to pay for all or part of the costs associated with public services and municipal infrastructure, including schools and capital improvements, the new residents will use.

Impact fees aren't a new idea. The first ones were imposed in Hinsdale, Ill., in 1947. By the 1980s, impact fees enacted by local jurisdictions had become widespread, and they survived court challenges in Florida and California.

In Rhode Island, impact fees levied by municipalities became common in the 1990s, and often were used to raise general revenue as well as to maintain and expand infrastructure. In 2000, prompted largely by RIBA concerns about uneven impact fees, lawmakers passed the Rhode Island Development Impact Fee Act, which spelled out statewide criteria for the municipal levies.

From that point on, fee amounts had to be "reasonably related to or reasonably attributable to the development's share of the cost of infrastructure improvements made necessary by the development..." The law also stated that "impact fees imposed must not exceed a proportionate share of the costs incurred or to be incurred by the governmental entity in accommodating the development."

According to the law, municipalities must be able to justify their fees by stipulating what impact a new home or homes will have, then be able to prove it. Additionally, funds raised through impact fees are supposed to be kept in an account separate from a municipality's general fund.

This obligation for municipalities to justify their impact fees led to several court challenges. In one example, RIBA successfully sued the Town of Lincoln over its "open space fee" and won a \$250,000 settlement in 2006. The funds were distributed to contractors who had paid the fee.

Meanwhile, there was a widespread suspicion among builders and developers that impact fees, even if they were justified by municipal numbers, were being used to stop or slow growth.

As the economy slumped from 2008 onward, and the housing market along with it, RIBA advocated for a state-mandated moratorium on impact fees, meant to reflect plummeting building-permit numbers. The most recent move came during the 2015 General Assembly session, when legislation was introduced to suspend local impact fees for three years or until single-family building permits once again exceeded 1,500 statewide.

The bill was unsuccessful.

### ***Falling student populations***

One of the primary justifications for impact fees is the cost of schools. However, a 2013 study conducted by The Center for Global and Regional Economic Studies at Bryant University found that student numbers have been steadily declining in the state.

"In Rhode Island, from 2003 to 2013, 26 out of 39 cities and towns lost population. From 2003 to 2011, K-12 enrollment declined in 34 out of 36 regular and regional school districts in Rhode Island," said Dr. Edinaldo Tebaldi, a co-author of the

*see FEES, next page...*

## ***FEES...from previous page***

study, *The Economic Impact of School-Age Population Loss on Rhode Island's Economy*.

According to the National Center for Education Statistics, Rhode Island is one of only 11 states where a continued decline in overall school enrollment (grades K-12) is expected through 2025.

## ***Do impact fees help communities or hurt home buyers?***

Little or no formal academic research has been done on the effect of impact fees as they relate specifically to Rhode Island. Dr. Farhad Atash, professor of planning at the University of Rhode Island since 1985, told *The Rhode Island Builder Report* that, "To the best of my knowledge, none of our planning faculty have studied the effect of municipal impacts fees in Rhode Island."

Before they adopt impact fees, however, Rhode Island municipalities will hire consulting firms that produce costly and, very often, off-the-shelf studies of their own. These essentially tell city or town councils how much money they can raise through the fees, and how to keep it legal, without citing the disadvantages of impact fees when it comes to the housing market or home buyers.

## ***Housing economist weighs in***

There are several national studies that do point out these drawbacks. That's because impact fees have become a hot-button issue around the country.

"We're trying to combat the (municipal) notion that the cost of providing public services to housing exceeds the tax benefits, which is one reason why cities feel the need to raise impact fees to builders," said nationally known housing economist Elliott Eisenberg.

"Local officials need to be aware that when they fiddle with impact fees, that has a direct bearing on home prices."

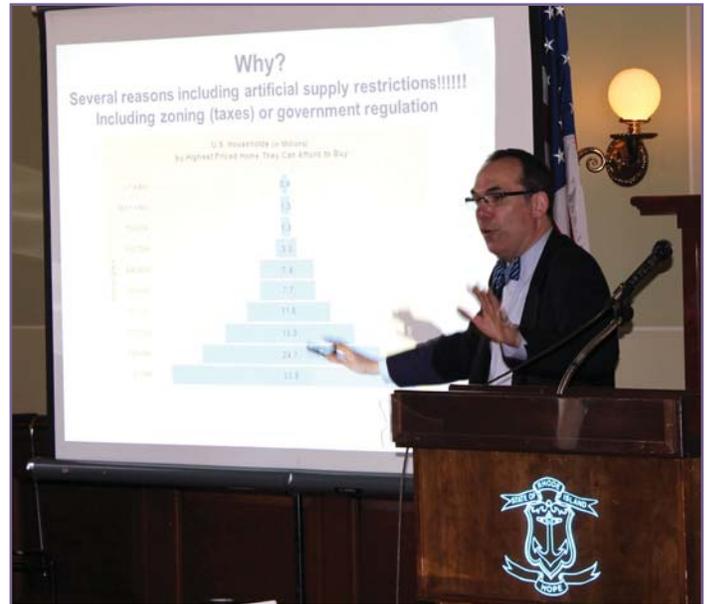
Dr. Eisenberg admits that impact fees as funding sources for local infrastructure can sometimes work, but only in and around major, newer metropolitan centers such as southern Maryland or northern Virginia, near Washington, D.C., where new developments often contain hundreds of homes. No such metropolitan centers exist in Rhode Island.

## ***Impact fee case study:***

### ***An area similar to Rhode Island***

While Dr. Eisenberg has not made a specific study of impact fees in the Ocean State, he is familiar with land-use issues here. He addressed lawmakers on these issues at the State House on Feb. 26, 2014.

He has, however, formally studied impact fees in other states where development patterns are similar to Rhode Island's: They do not have major metropolitan centers but are nonetheless suburbanized. One of these was conducted in 2007 in highly suburban Utah County, Utah, in the north-central part of that state, adjacent to Provo and not far from Salt Lake City.



***Housing economist Elliott Eisenberg is familiar with land-use issues in Rhode Island. Here he addresses lawmakers at the State House on February 26, 2014.***

Dr. Eisenberg found that residential development there was far more beneficial to the local economy than it was a drain on it. Then-proposed impact fees there would "only hurt affordability and further chill the cooling housing market," he said.

Dr. Eisenberg's numbers: The estimated impact of building 3,974 new, single-family homes and 819 multi-family homes was worth \$627.6 million in local income, \$111.2 million in taxes and other revenue, and 14,945 local jobs. The estimated annually recurring benefit was an additional \$129.4 million in local income, \$24 million in taxes and other revenue, and 3,285 local jobs.

These benefits were calculated assuming an average price of \$235,233 for a new single-family home, about \$8,000 less than the current median home price in Rhode Island as estimated by the Zillow.com real estate database.

## ***Krugman: Over-regulation hurts affordability***

In an August 2014 editorial in the *New York Times*, economist Paul Krugman argued that people are leaving the Northeast because government over-regulation is driving up housing costs.

"...High housing prices in slow-growing states...owe a lot to policies that sharply limit construction. Limits on building height in the cities, zoning that blocks denser development in the suburbs and other policies constrict housing on both coasts; meanwhile, looser regulation in the South has kept the supply of housing elastic and the cost of living low," Dr. Krugman wrote.

"So conservative complaints about excess regulation and intrusive government aren't entirely wrong..."

## ***A better way to finance infrastructure***

A study by the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB), see *FEE SURVEY*, next page...

### **FEE SURVEY...from previous page**

An *Overview of Special Purpose Taxing Districts*, released in 2015, found there are far better ways than impact fees to finance community infrastructure.

“As communities look at ways to finance new infrastructure, it is all too easy for them to bump the impact fees on new residential developments back up to pre-recession levels for roads, schools, water, sewer and so on,” the study said. “But impact fees are an imperfect tool for financing infrastructure. Because you can’t spend them until they accumulate, they rise and fall with the pace of construction, and they unfairly burden new development to address a broader community need.”

Impact fees “are often based on flawed assumptions about costs of growth, and (they are) improperly spent. It’s worth noting that relying on them during the sustained construction boom that preceded the recession did not help build a way out of the overall infrastructure challenge,” the study continued.

The study explained the benefits of “special purpose taxing districts,” overlay districts that occupy a specific land area.

Special fees and/or taxes are collected only within the district “to pay for the public improvements that are benefiting the landowners within the special district...and existing municipal residents who are outside the special district boundaries (do not pay)....”

As a result, “special districts are much more transparent and

easily understood than impact fees. More importantly, special districts provide a more efficient form of financing because infrastructure improvements can be delivered in advance of growth....”

The report is available online at <http://NAHBNOW.com/2015/01/nahb-releases-report-on-alternatives-to-impact-fees-2/>.

### ***Rhode Island covers the bases***

When it comes to impact fees, Rhode Island’s aren’t the highest among states. But the impact-fee pattern in the state is wildly uneven, and it covers the bases when it comes to items to charge for.

A national impact fee survey, conducted in 2012 by Chicago-based Duncan Associates, zoning and land-use planning consultants, found that Rhode Island communities assign impact fees to just about everything the law allows, one of only six states to do so. The infrastructure categories include roads, water, storm water, sewer systems, parks and recreation, fire departments, police, libraries, solid waste and schools.

Asked by *The Rhode Island Builder Report* if municipal impact fees are still relevant in Rhode Island, given the slow-growth or no-growth of new housing and the drawbacks of impact fees, Jared Rhodes, chief of the Statewide Planning Program, stated:

“Yes, impact fees are still relevant, as they provide a mechanism for ensuring those who reap the benefits of development assume the associated burdens placed on the cities and towns as a result.”

Pressed on the necessity of impact fees in light of declining school populations in most communities, Mr. Rhodes said:

“Each community represents a unique situation and needs to be analyzed individually....”

However, a municipal building official, who asked not to be named, disagreed.

“There is such a variety of different impact fees out there, I can see that it affects construction. To get the economy moving, I’d say it would be a good thing to eliminate them or at least cut them in half, to get construction activity going again.

### ***Cumbersome and expensive***

Because Rhode Island consists of many concentrated, older urban and sub-urban areas, Warwick Mayor Scott Avedesian may have summed up the issue when City Councilman Steven B. Merolla was calling for impact fees in that city a few years back.

“If you’re trying to redevelop an older city like Warwick, the way to do so isn’t by making the process more cumbersome or more expensive.”

Watch *The Rhode Island Builder Report* for information as the issue develops 

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## RHODE ISLAND'S UNEVEN IMPACT FEES

	HAS IMPACT FEES PER DWELLING UNIT	FEE RATIONALE
BARRINGTON	No, but impact fees have been discussed for the town's Affordable Housing Trust Fund.	
BRISTOL	YES	Water pollution control
BURRILLVILLE	No	
CHARLESTOWN	YES, \$1,427	Schools and infrastructure
COVENTRY	YES, \$7,596	Capital facilities development, schools
CRANSTON	YES, \$593.46 in eastern Cranston, \$1389.50 in western Cranston	Capital facilities development
CUMBERLAND	YES, \$3,139.76 and up	Capital facilities development, schools
EAST GREENWICH	YES, up to \$8,100. Varies by zone.	Recreation, open space, schools
EAST PROVIDENCE	NO	
EXETER	YES, averages \$5,000	Schools and capital facilities
FOSTER	Has a "land dedication fee" for subdivisions, varies.	Open space and recreation
GLOCESTER	NO	
HOPKINTON	YES, \$1,500 and up	Schools and capital facilities
JAMESTOWN	NO	
JOHNSTON	YES, varies	Water pollution control
LINCOLN	YES, but currently suspended for reconsideration	
LITTLE COMPTON	NO	
MIDDLETOWN	YES, \$6,520 plus public works fees. Town Council will consider fee revisions this year.	Capital facilities development, schools
NARRAGANSETT	NO, but they have been discussed	
NEWPORT	NO, but they have been discussed.	
NEW SHOREHAM	NO	
NORTH KINGSTOWN	YES, \$1,286 for parks, \$96 for library	
NORTH PROVIDENCE	YES, \$2,000	Capital facilities development, schools
NORTH SMITHFIELD	NO	
PORTSMOUTH	YES, \$3,190 per bedroom	Capital facilities development, schools
RICHMOND	YES, \$2,400 per lot	Capital facilities development, schools
SCITUATE	NO	
SMITHFIELD	YES, \$8,572.83	Capital facilities development, schools
SOUTH KINGSTOWN	YES, averages \$6,111	Schools, open space, infrastructure
TIVERTON	YES, \$3,500	Capital facilities development, schools
WARREN	NO	
WARWICK	NO	
WEST GREENWICH	Has a "land dedication fee" for subdivisions, \$2,500 per lot.	Open space and recreation
WEST WARWICK	YES, varies	Capital facilities development, sewers
WESTERLY	NO	
WOONSOCKET	NO	

SOURCE: LOCAL PLANNING OFFICES. THIS INFORMATION IS SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT NOTICE. ACCURACY OF THIS CHART IS NOT GUARANTEED. CORRECTIONS SHOULD BE REPORTED TO PAUL F. ENO AT [BUILDER@NEWRIVERPRESS.COM](mailto:builder@newriverpress.com).

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