

January/February 2000

## NAHB Research Center

### Funding to Enhance Quality & Affordability in Housing Will Continue as a Top Priority

When President Clinton signed the HUD-VA Appropriations legislation on October 20th, 1999, he guaranteed that funding aimed at improving the way Americans live will continue as a priority in the new millennium. Funding for the Partnership for Advancing Technology in Housing (PATH) was set at \$10 million for the upcoming year, the same level at which PATH was funded this year.

Despite earlier House action that had reduced funding to \$7.5 million, and Senate action that had deferred funding altogether, Congressional action during conference ultimately restored PATH funding to the \$10 million mark. An Industry Steering Committee is credited with helping to restore the funds, as builders, remodelers, product manufacturers and others in the housing industry successfully joined forces to educate key members of Congress about the value the PATH program brings to consumers, industry and the environment.

"The PATH program is of great importance to the residential and remodeling industry," said NAHB President Charles Ruma in a letter to Senator Christopher Bond (R-MO), Chairman of the Appropriations Subcommittee on VA, HUD and Independent Agencies. Ruma continued, "NAHB and the building industry are actively involved in the development of the program and are investing considerable resources to match public funding."

Kirk Grundahl, Executive Director of the Wood Truss Council of America, said, "This is truly a government and industry partnership that is being directed by industry from the framer up, so it has the greatest opportunity for success." PATH's goals are to:

- Reduce the monthly cost of new housing by 20 percent or more.

#### **PATH INDUSTRY STEERING COMMITTEE NAHB:**

Charlie Ruma,  
1999 NAHB  
President  
Don Martin,  
1998 NAHB  
President

**Builder  
Representatives:**  
Mark Hodges, K.  
Hovnanian  
Builders  
Roger Glunt,  
Glunt  
Development Co.  
Michael  
Chapman,  
Chapman Homes

**Building  
Product  
Manufacturers:**  
Brian Sherry, G.  
E. Appliances  
Russ Adams,  
Masonite  
Glenn Singer,  
CertainTeed

**Remodeler:**  
Bill Asdal, Asdal  
Builders

- Cut the environmental impact and energy use of new housing by 50 percent or more, and reduce energy use in at least 15 million existing homes by 30 percent or more.
- Improve the durability and reduce maintenance costs by 50 percent.
- Reduce the risk of loss of life, injury and property destruction from natural hazards by at least 10 percent, and decrease work-related illnesses and injuries in residential construction by at least 20 percent.

**Building  
Systems  
Provider:**  
Kirk Grundahl,  
WTCA

**Manufactured  
Housing  
Provider:**  
Walter Wells,  
Schult Homes

According to HUD Secretary Andrew Cuomo, "PATH creates opportunities where everyone wins—the housing industry, homeowners and the environment. The American housing and construction industries benefit because PATH's technology development and utilization process ensure that these industries will be a dynamic force far into the 21st century. The PATH initiative stimulates housing design and construction change by providing the latest information on innovative building materials, processes and systems; by showcasing innovative housing developments that can serve as models for builders and homeowners across the country; by promoting focused, cooperative housing research among industry, government and university partners; and by tackling institutional barriers to innovation—from risk and liability concerns to the lack of effective product evaluation systems."

This year's focus for PATH will include expanding field evaluations, demonstrations and national pilot projects to document the use of innovative building products and systems; a pilot project to integrate ISO 9000 practices for quality assurance into the wood framing industry (see NAHB Research Center's *HOMEBASE NEWS*, Vol. 4, Issue 6; page 19 of September/October 1999 *WOODWORDS*; and pages 8 and 17 of November 1999 *WOODWORDS* for more information about this project); a technology development initiative aimed at stimulating industry to make or improve technologies that are currently entering the marketplace, but are lacking in cost efficiency and/or market potential and challenge the industry to invest in the future by researching advanced housing technologies.

PATH's activities in the new year will also include the "Certified Carpenter" program, a joint venture between the NAHB Research Center and the Wood Truss Council of America, funded by PATH. The goal of the joint venture is to have a certification process in place by the end of 2000 which will:

- Provide a vehicle for sound framing quality assurance.
- Reduce liability due to poor construction practices for the entire industry.
- Improve construction safety.
- Reduce the permitting and on-site inspection time.
- Reduce construction cycle time.
- Improve training and framing skills.

"The development of this certification program is an important step for the future of quality in home building," said NAHB Research Center President Liza Bowles. "It promotes our efforts to harmonize the industry's approach to quality business practices for use by builders, trade

contractors and product suppliers.”

While spending on home building research and development remains disproportionately low when compared with other industries, it looks like PATH’s future in this regard is bright, and everyone will benefit.

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## PATH Steering Committee Established to Guide Housing Research Efforts

The Partnership for Advancing Technology in Housing (PATH) program is a partnership between the U.S. government and the nation’s housing industry, with initial funding of \$10 million annually dedicated to housing research. On the government side, the Office of Science and Technology Policy represents the White House interests in the program, while Congressional leadership is provided by the Veterans Administration (VA), Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and Independent Agencies Subcommittee of the House Appropriations Committee. HUD has day-to-day management responsibilities for the PATH program and has established a separate office in Washington, DC to organize the effort. A new director of the PATH program is now in place with the recent selection of Elizabeth Burdock, formerly special assistant to HUD Assistant Secretary and Federal Housing Commissioner, William Apgar.

### PROPOSED PATH MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE

A strong Industry Steering Committee has been created to provide technical direction to the program and interact directly with senior level managers within the participating agencies. The Industry Steering Committee is composed of the senior executives listed in the table to the left.

The Industry Steering Committee will be responsible for conducting strategic planning, reviewing programs and setting priorities, to assure the availability of program resources and funding, coordinate legal and public affairs functions, and provide direction to the technical team. It would also coordinate closely with the PATH Interagency Council (PIC) to make sure that the program is on the right course, at the highest levels of government and industry.

The Industry Steering Committee will provide oversight and direction to the technical teams, which would also be comprised of government and industry units. They are responsible for coordinating the technical development efforts by the private sector. The government and industry technical teams will coordinate closely on the technical activities of government and private sector labs in addressing high-priority program thrusts relating to the PATH goals.

The director of PATH industry activities will report to the PATH Industry Steering Committee and coordinate closely with the director of PATH government operations located in the PATH office in Washington, DC.

WTCA is excited that it has been asked to be involved on the PATH Steering Committee and considers it an excellent opportunity to provide a voice on behalf of its members and their

customers. "We will work hard to provide wise counsel to PATH, with the objective of guiding the development of programs that provide builders with the best economic solutions for the future of housing," says Kirk Grundahl, WTCA Executive Director.

For more information, please contact WTCA at 608/274-4849 or [wtca@woodtruss.com](mailto:wtca@woodtruss.com).

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The NAHB Research Center is the not-for-profit research arm of the National Association of Home Builders.

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