Press Release

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MICHIGAN'S LEADERSHIP IN HOUSING ADVOCACY
2026 AWARD WINNERS ANNOUNCED

LANSING, MI - The Home Builders Association of Michigan (HBAM) recognized and celebrated the individuals and organizations whose work is shaping Michigan's housing future at their second annual Leadership in Housing Advocacy Awards Luncheon this past week in Lansing. This ceremony brought together leaders from across the state to celebrate the collaboration, innovation and advocacy strengthening Michigan's housing landscape.

"As Michigan continues to face significant housing challenges, it's important that we recognize those who are stepping forward with solutions," said Mike Tucker, 2026 Awards Committee Chair. "These awards are an opportunity not only to celebrate their accomplishments, but also to inspire others to get involved and make a difference in their own communities."

The awards ceremony covered ten different categories with the winners showing off some of the best individuals and organizations shaping Michigan's housing future.

This year's **Community Impact Award** was presented to **Habitat for Humanity Detroit**, an organization that has expanded access to safe, stable and affordable housing through construction, rehabilitation, critical repairs and homeowner education. The organization has completed more than 450 new homes and major rehabilitation projects, helping Detroit families build stability and opportunity.

The **YIMBY (Yes In My Backyard) Award** recognized **Jake Eckholm**, director of development services for the City of Muskegon, for his help turning housing needs into practical local reforms. His work on zoning modernization, infill development and public-private partnerships has opened the door to more housing types and greater use of existing land. The city reports that its 2024 zoning changes enabled more than 150 additional housing units previously restricted by local rules.

The **Workforce Development Advocate Award** honored **Jerry Johnson** for his work as a construction trades instructor at the Wilson Talent Center in Mason. His hands-on program serves approximately 48 students annually and reports student continuation and graduation rates above 98%. Through technical instruction, mentorship and industry connections, he helps equip young people with the skills and confidence to enter Michigan's building trades.

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The **Coalition of the Year Award** was awarded to the **Small-Footprint Home Development Concept**, a coalition led by Ottawa County's Department of Strategic Impact. The coalition brought together housing and community partners to create 16 publicly available home designs ranging from 440 to 1,056 square feet, reducing initial design barriers for smaller homes.

The **Emerging Advocate Award** was presented to **Brock Hyder**, owner of Aurora Renovations & Contracting in Muskegon. Since becoming a licensed residential builder in 2023, he has completed nearly 40 renovation and restoration projects, improving homes for an estimated 120 residents. His work includes accessibility upgrades for seniors and veterans, emergency repairs and active involvement in community and construction-industry organizations.

Karen Kovacs, City Manager of Marquette, received the **Local Champion of Housing Award** for her work expanding housing opportunities through collaborative leadership and community partnerships. She has played an important role in advancing local redevelopment projects, including transforming a long-vacant downtown property into mixed-use housing with attainable workforce options. Her dedication to addressing housing challenges, encouraging development and working with community stakeholders reflects the positive impact local leadership can have on housing attainability.

The **State Champion of Housing Award** honored **State Representative Kristian Grant** of Michigan's 82nd District which includes portions of Grand Rapids and Wyoming. She worked with housing stakeholders to develop the bipartisan 2026 Housing Readiness Package and has advanced legislation addressing housing planning and investment. Her sustained engagement with lawmakers, local governments and housing partners reflects a commitment to attainable housing across Michigan.

The **HBA of Jackson, Hillsdale & Lenawee,** based in Jackson, was recognized as the 2026 **Outstanding Local HBA** for its achievements advocating for the home building industry and strengthening industry partnerships. Under the leadership of Executive Officer Patrick O'Dowd, the association has expanded its membership, established a local Professional Women in Building (PWB) Council and earned national recognition for membership growth.

The **Housing Advocate of the Year Award** was presented to **Colin Herren**, owner of Greenwald & B.C. Inc. in Mount Pleasant, for his dedicated advocacy on behalf of Michigan's homebuilding industry. A former local and state HBA president and current NAHB BUILD-PAC Trustee, Colin has demonstrated leadership at every level of the association. His work championing regulatory reform and fair permitting practices continues to make an impact in communities across Michigan.

The **Lifetime Achievement Award** was presented to **Dr. Carol "Doc" Hicks**, whose work has shaped the housing and building industry in the Upper Peninsula. A professor emeritus at Northern Michigan University, he has designed more than 2,000 homes and helped Marquette County Habitat for Humanity build much of its housing. His decades of mentorship, volunteer service and HBA leadership reflect an extraordinary commitment to his community.

The Home Builders Association of Michigan is a professional trade association comprised of 15 local homebuilder associations around the state and their builder, subcontractor and supplier members. HBAM works to positively promote the building industry and impact legislative, regulatory and legal issues affecting housing attainability.

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