



## Home Builders Association (HBA) of Greater Cleveland

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### **WHITE PAPER ON IMPORTANCE OF RESIDENTIAL CONSTRUCTION DURING STATE OF EMERGENCY 3.19.20**

#### **Background**

The HBA represents 400 member companies who are industry professionals that are committed to building and remodeling homes.

Due to the ever-evolving situation surrounding COVID-19, below is an emergency action plan that we recommend that local jurisdictions adopt to ensure that construction projects on behalf of citizens in your community are not unnecessarily delayed. Ohio Lt. Governor Jon Husted has encouraged local government offices to remain open.

Additionally, the Ohio Board of Building Standards, and the Ohio Department of Commerce, is urging local building departments to continue permit processing utilizing remote services whenever possible.

#### **State of Emergency**

Some local jurisdictions have declared a state of emergency and others are considering declaring a state of emergency. We request the following to accompany all Declaration of Emergency OR Sheltering in Place decisions:

- Permit approval extensions for permits expiring between March 1 and, at minimum, June 29, 2020.
- Allow work to continue on preliminary design approvals, with post-construction final approvals, including the Certificates of Occupancy, once the state of emergency restriction is lifted.
- Consider construction activity to be considered an “essential service” during the declaration of emergency or sheltering in place decision.
- Financial institutions, including title and escrow operations, also to be considered essential services.

## **Permits**

For jurisdictions with online submission, we ask that you ensure permitting offices have a designated point of contact, even if the local staff are working remotely or not available face-to-face. For jurisdictions without online submission, we request a physical no-contact permit drop off so staff can process permits remotely. We also request emergency adoption of an online permit portal system.

## **Hearings**

Implement a remote hearing process for subdivision plats and plan reviews, until the State of Emergency is lifted.

## **Inspections**

Establish a formal on-site, no contact protocol. This can be achieved in several ways, including the following:

- Inspectors calling the project site contact from their vehicle and doing an inspection with no one else on-site and a phone debrief after inspection.
- Video or delayed, ex post facto, inspections. These can be live and/or builder recorded video of the various stages of construction, which could then be used in real-time or in a post-construction permitting process for compliance.
- Contract with third-party inspection services, and licensed engineers/architects, if the local government can't provide these services during this crisis.

## **Advocacy**

The HBA's home builders, developers, and remodelers are capable of reinvigorating the Northeast Ohio economy expediently, once the pandemic is over. However, for this to be accomplished, contractors need to have approved permits in hand. We request that local governments delay implementation of any new regulations in this current time of emergency and uncertainty.

## **Conclusion**

The HBA understands that the situation is ever-changing. However, chief among these requests is that construction and financial institutions be allowed to continue their work as "essential services," especially if "shelter in place orders" emerge. We ask that local governments keep permitting and inspection avenues open.

Thank you for your consideration of these critical recommendations. Please do not hesitate to reach out to us with any questions or comments.