

NAHB Professional Women in Building (PWB) is the Federation's fastest growing council, and there's a reason why.

When the group laid out its strategic plan in the fall of 2013, the roster listed fewer than 900 members. Council leadership made it a goal to reach 1,000 members in the first year, and increase that figure by 10% each year.

"It was a lofty goal to start and we didn't know if we were going to hit it or not," said Carole Jones, CAPS, CGB, CGP, PWB chair, and licensed builder and associate broker from Bloomfield Hills, Mich. "But we far surpassed it and are still going strong."

Membership in the council has grown by 57% over the past three years – from 872 members in 2012 to 1,374 members today, according to PWB Executive Director Sheronda Carr. This year alone, the council started four new chapters, and three more are slated to launch in time for the 2016 International Builders' Show.



"PWB is seeing an organic evolution of women at the grassroots level making the necessary strides to fuel the next generation of female building professionals through industry support, professional development, and leadership training opportunities," Carr said. "Our members are not just the builder's wives anymore, but accredited, licensed and certified professionals representing all facets of the residential construction industry."

A shining example of this trend is the Denver PWB. Chris Presley, president and founder of [Epic Homes](#), and the first female president (in the 73-year history) of the [Home Builders Association of Metro Denver](#), said that establishing an avenue for women in the profession to connect and engage was a top priority for her.

Starting with just six women in October 2014, the council has now grown to 179 members, and steadily continues to increase.

"Our goal was just to get 20 to 40 members in the first year," Presley said. "We actually had to cut off registration for the kickoff event. Over 180 people RSVP'd; the initial reservation was only for 50 people."



One of the things that surprised her most, she said, was the number of people who showed up that were not members of the HBA.

"I was astounded. There must have been a real need in Denver," she said.

To that end, the council has wasted no time providing the valuable programs, activities and services that industry professionals are seeking from such an organization.

Presley said they offer members a quarterly luncheon, a monthly informal happy hour in a no-selling environment, education and professional development series, mentoring, and community service opportunities.

In general, where most professionals find PWB valuable is in the opportunities it affords to find other people, programs and projects locally that can help them reach their career goals, Jones said.

For example, Random Acts of Coffee, which is a fun and unique way to get members to meet someone new – has been wildly successful for members of the Denver PWB.



At luncheons, individuals place their name in a hat and while they're eating they're randomly matched with another member with whom they are expected to meet for coffee and chat. Presley said that it has led to a number of business relationships that may not otherwise exist.

Jones firmly believes that PWB has become the fastest growing council in the Federation because members understand the value that being involved brings to their business, and they share their thoughts and experiences with their peers, social and business networks.

The value isn't hard to see. [Findings from a recent NAHB survey](#) of women in the home building industry showed that current membership in a PWB Council correlates with higher company earnings.

The median dollar volume members expected in 2014 was \$2.9 million, about 22% higher than the \$2.4 million expected by those who had never been a council member, and about 12% higher than the \$2.6 million expected by past members of the council whose memberships expired.

The survey also provided some evidence that more women are seeking out careers with the construction industry. According to survey results, women represent about 40% of most companies' workforce. Twenty-two percent of respondents said that women make up 80% of their companies' workforce.



Anecdotally, Presley shared that one of her male peers, a division head of one of the largest home building companies in the country and one of the top five builders in Denver, said he started attending the PWB luncheons to seek out help on how to elevate women, since they've become such a large part of his organization.

"It's good feedback because it allows us to tailor our professional development and education programs and provide more coaching and training to address those skills and qualities that tend to be less common in women," Presley said, citing the confidence and willingness to ask and go after what they want in a business environment as one example.