

## As Housing Economy Stills Suffers, NJBMDA Is More Important Than Ever

By Darren DiMedio, NJBMDA president, manager, DuBell Lumber Co.



**Darren DiMedio**

**A**s president of the New Jersey Building Materials Dealers Association (NJBMDA), one of my prime responsibilities is to stay abreast of industry news. I have to admit this is often the hardest part of the job.

It's not that I don't have the time to read the news coverage affecting our industry. It's the fact that the content of what I'm reading is so hard to swallow.

On my desk now is an article with the following headline: "Home Foreclosures are Expected to Jump 20 Percent in New Jersey." In my trash can is another clipping with this headline: "Research Shows Recovery is Still a Ways Off in U.S. Housing Market."

I realize there are some politicians out there who sit and analyze spreadsheets that claim a turnaround for our economy. But the reality is that we are simply not seeing it. Many of our members are struggling for survival after three tumultuous years that have seen the demand for building materials plummet.

We can't sit back and expect the market to miraculously improve because someone says it has already done so. At NJBMDA, we recognize that one of the most critical ways to navigate through this painful recession is by staying informed of the most current data and statistics in our industry and for the economy as a whole. As such, the NJBMDA is doing everything possible to provide its members with the resources they need.

Through the information provided by our Association, our members have been able to gauge the winds of the recession with as much clarity as possible. This has helped these businesses right-size staff, limit inventory, renegotiate rent and other fixed costs and identify cost savings wherever possible. I am pleased that through the aggressive efforts of our Board of Directors and management team, we have been able to keep our members in position to brave this ongoing storm.

Unfortunately, as these articles on my desk tell me, we are not out of the woods yet. The NJBMDA is more important than at any other time in our 126-year history. Our members need a trusted source that is advocating for them. To that end, the NJBMDA has redoubled its efforts in 2011 to provide its members with the latest information about the trends in building and real estate in New Jersey.

We kicked off 2011 with four roundtable sessions across the region. The turnout at each of these sessions was amazing. The

large majority of our membership attended these working dinners to discuss what we see occurring in our industry. Members generously shared their ideas and opinions, working collectively to identify practical solutions that can help them have a strong 2011.

To me, these roundtables showed the enormous spirit of the NJBMDA and its members. While we are all in the same industry and are considered to be competitors, our members eagerly work together to find shared solutions to complex problems and ensure our mutual success. I believe these candid roundtable discussions have helped to build and reinforce lasting professional relationships that will allow our members to continually lean on each other as trusted resources in the mutual struggle to triumph over this brutal economy.

This relationship building will continue throughout 2011, as the NJBMDA has a robust schedule of networking events planned, from golf tournaments to fishing outings, in which our members can continue the valuable conversations they began at these roundtables discussions.

And all eyes are focused on our annual meeting in November, to which we will invite leading real estate forecasters to identify the challenges and opportunities that 2012 is expected to bring.

The NJBMDA continues to refine and enhance how we communicate with our members. We now offer a Bulletin that comes out every two weeks, either via email or fax, depending on member preference. The bulletin is a critical link between the association and our members and is filled with the latest news affecting building material dealers in New Jersey. Another trusted resource is our website, [www.njbmda.org](http://www.njbmda.org), which is constantly updated with new information, resources and events.

In addition, we retain one of the top government affairs agencies in New Jersey, whose job it is to keep our members up to date on all legislation in Trenton that could possibly affect their bottom lines. Our government affairs team, armed with NJBMDA members willing to drop everything to provide testimony on relevant bills, is an incredible asset that further underscores the value of membership in NJBMDA.

In the upcoming months and years, we will continually strive to underscore the value of membership in the NJBMDA. In the difficult days ahead, we urge our members to rely on us, to volunteer for our boards and committees and to face this ongoing recession as a spirited unified front.

Our goal over the past 126 years has been to serve our members and demonstrate the value inherent in an NJBMDA membership. We're determined to maintain that focus for the next 126 years—no matter what news may come across our desks. ■