



USGBC Texas Chapter Your Questions Answered

1. **Why is the USGBC Texas Chapter merger happening?**

The merger of the four Texas USGBC Chapters into one statewide Chapter will create a stronger, more efficient statewide organization. It will be better able to compete in the rapidly changing nonprofit environment and will have increased reach throughout the state. Members will benefit from enhanced offerings across multiple channels and geographies. The combined Chapter will also have significantly improved financial strength and flexibility, with the ability to deliver long-term operating performance and improvements through its increased scale and for significant synergy opportunities.

This decision was not made lightly. Serious discussions have been taking place since 2008. A formal Texas Merger Task Force, comprising representatives from each of the four chapters, has been in place for the past two years. USGBC National has long wanted states with multiple chapters to merge to single state-wide chapters and have given us full support during the transition. Several states have merged already, such as Georgia, North Carolina and Illinois. Six other states, including Florida and California, are currently looking at merging.

Texas is a large state with many different climates, political attitudes and market niches. There was concern whether one State Chapter could properly address those differences. However, over time the four original chapters in Texas have worked together, originating from our biennial gathering of state-wide members for State Advocacy Day. This has been further strengthened by the efforts of the South Central Regional Council and, more recently, with the establishment of the Texas Green Building Marketplace, an online green building market resource developed by the Central Texas-Balcones Chapter, which is now serving the entire state.

We knew from experience that when we united, we had a stronger voice in advocacy and in fundraising. As we worked together, we realized how many synergies there were, how many lessons to be learned from each other and that many duplicative efforts could be eliminated. With recent changes in economic circumstances experienced by the individual chapters the time seemed right for the four chapters to merge. By removing the local administrative burden, regions would be free to develop new programs, engage their communities and focus on service to members. Most importantly, we recognized that our differences are strengths through diversity and that we shared a single goal of fulfilling USGBC's Mission.

2. **What is the Texas Chapter going to look like?**

The Texas Chapter will unite the four existing Texas Chapters into one statewide entity. It will consist of five Regions:

- Central Texas, based in Austin
- North Texas, based in Dallas
- South Texas, based in San Antonio
- Texas Gulf Coast, based in Houston
- West Texas (previously Chihuahuan Desert), based in El Paso

Central administration will be coordinated from the Chapter's main office (location still to be determined) with local offices in each Region. The Chapter will be managed by an Executive Director, with support staff, and lead by a Board of Directors (BOD), comprising 15 voting members (3 from each region) with two alternate non-voting positions. Committees covering Finance, Member and Partner Services Committee, Governance and Communications will manage the day-to-day operations with the Executive Director.

There will be one 501c3 nonprofit corporation (Chapter) under which the Regions will operate, in a manner similar to branches in the past. Existing Branches will continue to operate under their current Regions in the immediate term. The Regions will be led by Regional Councils, comprising between 7-15 members, elected by the membership in each Region. The Regions focus will be on advocacy and community outreach.

3. How is the Texas Chapter Board of Directors (Chapter BOD) going to be selected?

The Texas Chapter Board of Directors (Chapter BOD) is comprised of 15 Directors serving two-year (2) terms with three representatives from each Region. Chapter Directors will be appointed by the Regional Councils, either from their elected Council members or, at their discretion, from members of the community who have the appropriate knowledge and experience.

4. What is the role of the statewide Board of Directors (Chapter BOD)?

The role of the statewide Board of Directors (Chapter BOD) is to set and approve the strategic direction of the USGBC Texas Chapter and oversee its fiduciary responsibilities. It is also to establish and authorize the broad policies that govern the Chapter's actions. In advancing that role, the Chapter BOD has responsibility with respect to strategic and generative plans, staff selection and oversight, policies and procedures, and decisions to ensure they are consistent with the Chapter's Vision, Mission, Values and Priority Areas.

5. What will the Texas Chapter do?

The USGBC Texas Chapter will assure a stronger, more unified voice for statewide advocacy campaigns and open up new avenues of funding through state-level grants, donors and partnerships. It will provide economic benefits by centralizing administrative tasks and creating economies of scale for many of our operational functions and expenses. Most importantly it will give local green building leaders a chance to focus on raising awareness through programs in their communities and help provide the resources to fund local initiatives.

6. What will be the Texas Chapter's relationship with USGBC National?

The Texas Chapter will continue to be committed to furthering the USGBC Mission within Texas and will seek goals that align with the strategic goals of USGBC National. Technically, the Chapter will be an aligned chapter, retaining a separate 501c3 nonprofit designation as determined by the IRS, operating under a Charter Agreement with USGBC National.

7. What is the fiscal year for the Texas Chapter?

The Texas Chapter will operate on a calendar year (January – December) for its fiscal responsibilities.

8. When will the Texas Chapter be launched?

The USGBC Texas Board of Directors (Chapter BOD) has been appointed and took over working on the transition from the Texas Merger Task Force at the beginning of October, 2015. The Texas Chapter will begin operating informally during the fourth quarter of 2015 as operating systems, websites and membership CRMs are transitioned. The legal entity (retention of one of the four 501c3s and dissolution of other three 501c3s) is planned for January 1, 2016. The five new Regional Councils (RCs), which will replace the four existing Chapters, will begin operating at the beginning of the year. Currently all elected Board Members of each Chapter will automatically transfer to the Regional Councils.

9. What are the potential revenue streams going to be?

- a. Grants
- b. General sponsorships/partnerships
- c. Event sponsorships/donations
- d. Chapter memberships
- e. National membership portion
- f. Texas Green Building Marketplace www.texasgreenbuildingmarketplace.org

10. Which existing Chapter 501c3 will be retained?

The USGBC Texas Chapter will be created by transitioning one of the four existing Texas Chapters into the statewide organization. A new entity will not be established. The other three 501c3 organizations will be dissolved. The USGBC Texas Chapter Board of Directors (Chapter BOD) and our legal counsel still have to determine, which of the entities will be retained.

11. Where will the Texas Chapter headquarters be located?

The intention is that there will be an office of the Texas Chapter in each of the five main centers – Austin, Dallas/Fort Worth, El Paso, Houston and San Antonio. The headquarters will be determined by where the Executive Director is based, finances are set up and where the 501c3 is organized. The USGBC Texas Chapter Board of Directors (Chapter BOD) still has to make a final determination.

12. What does this mean for existing Chapter members?

Individual Chapter memberships will be automatically transferred over to USGBC Texas as the existing four Chapter membership databases are merged. Our goal is to make the transition as seamless as possible so that existing Chapter members notice very little change. Annual membership renewal will continue to be on the anniversary of joining date. There will be six membership categories: Regular, National Member employee, Student, Emerging Professional, Sustaining and Community members. Dues will remain mostly unchanged and are based on USGBC National's Chapter dues format. If you are an existing member, new membership rates will apply upon renewal. Every effort has made to combine the best member benefits from all four chapters into USGBC Texas. You will still be able to develop your profile based on regional preferences. Nationally, your LEED AP accreditations will continue to be administered by GBCI.

13. What programs will be undertaken by the Texas Chapter?

The intention is that the five regions will produce programming at a local level including, but not limited to, lunch 'n learns, social events, seminars and workshops, as well as work on partnership events such as Earth Day or construction expos. Statewide programming including advocacy, conferences, webinars and other partnership events will be led by the Texas Chapter. The USGBC Texas Chapter Board of Directors (Chapter BOD) will be developing a strategic plan over the next six months.

14. Will there be a statewide green building conference?

The USGBC Texas Chapter Board of Directors (BOD) will decide this as the overall strategy and structure are established.

15. What other collaborations are being proposed?

Collaboration is at the heart of success as an organization. The Chapter will continue to nurture existing relationships such as with; numerous chapters of the ABAA, AGC, ABC, BOMA, IFMA, IMA, TSA/AIA, ULI and others; Houston Green Building Resource Center, City Sustainability Departments; Higher Education institutions such as the UT Austin Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center and Texas A&M's Energy Systems Laboratory, and the Texas Renewable Energy Industry Association (TREIA). Additionally, we will establish stronger working

relationships with entities such as the WELL Building Institute, Architecture 2030 and 2030 Districts, the Houston Advanced Research Council, and the South Central Partnership for Energy Efficiency as a Resource (SPEER) among others. The Chapter will also continue to establish and maintain support for student chapters at Texas Colleges and Universities.

16. What are Regional Councils (RC)?

With the creation of the statewide entity, the four current chapters will be replaced by five Regions. These Regions will be governed by a Regional Council (RC) comprising between 7-15 members elected by Chapter members within that Region. Each year a portion of the RC will be up for election, as has always been the case, in order to ensure staggered terms.

17. What will the Regional Councils (RC) do?

The Regional Councils (RC) - will develop and implement advocacy and community outreach initiatives in their Regions to further the Mission of USGBC as a whole and accelerate the adoption of green building practices. RCs will actively collaborate with other RCs in the state and support the statewide Chapter's efforts. They will also appoint three members to the Chapter BOD, either from its elected Council or from within the community as appropriate.

18. How are the Regions going to operate?

- a. Financially – From a financial perspective, a majority of the Chapter's operating expenses will be at the State-level. This includes staffing, advocacy, communications, education, infrastructure, membership development and services. Responsibility for regional programs and events will remain with each region. The annual budgeting process will include several components: programming budgets submitted by each region, fundraising and membership estimates compiled by the Chapter's Member and Partner Services Committee, operational budgets created by the Chapter staff and the Chapter's Finance Committee. The Finance Committee will work with leaders from each Regional Council, Chapter BOD, and Staff to create a comprehensive budget.

Approved expenses for Regional events and initiatives will be paid using Chapter issued debit cards and tracked by the Regional Treasurer. To accommodate unexpected opportunities, each region (along with approval of Chapter ED or Treasurer) will have some flexibility within the budgeted amounts for outside sponsorships, programs or specific outreach.

- b. Program-wise – To meet the needs of the regional green building market and membership, the individual Regional Councils (RCs) will create a schedule of events and programs. This may include: seminars, live education events, building tours, networking events, awards programs, or collaborative programs that help build awareness of green building in their region. High-profile regional events, or Signature Events, will be promoted across the entire Chapter. Consideration is being given to a statewide green building conference either on its own or in partnership with a pre-existing event (earliest Q1 of 2017).

19. How are sponsorships going to work between state level sponsors and regional or local sponsors for specific programs or initiatives?

Companies and organizations will have a number of opportunities to engage with USGBC Texas and its Regions. A significant portion of the Chapter's operating budget will come from Membership dues and Corporate/Organizational support. The latter will include funding for annual operations and administrative services for all five Regions, while sponsorships will go for specific events and initiatives. Partnerships will provide entities with promotion across the entire State and funds will be used to best support strategic development of the green building market in Texas. Sponsoring regional programs and initiatives will also allow a company to focus marketing efforts in a specific region or subject area.

20. How will the Texas Chapter interact with and benefit from USGBC National and its resources?

USGBC Texas will be an independent 501c3 nonprofit Chapter aligned through a charter with USGBC National, as the current Texas Chapters are operated. The Chapter will continue to support the goals and major initiatives of USGBC and follow the appropriate criteria to remain as a Chapter in good standing. The Chapter will continue to serve as a USGBC Education Partner, engage in USGBC advocacy and program initiatives, and will promote USGBC National Membership, for which a percentage of the dues will go to support the Chapter's efforts.

21. How will the merger be promoted to:

a. Potential sponsors:

A sponsor benefit packet has been developed, combining the best from the existing Chapters programs. Sponsors will have the opportunity to continue their already established relationships and event support within each Region. They will also be presented with the option to explore new Texas market opportunities. The merger allows USGBC Texas to expand exposure for sponsors to communities, professionals and projects throughout the entire State of Texas.

b. Membership:

A merger announcement will be released in October to all current chapter members and partners outlining the positive aspects for USGBC's Mission. Members will then receive regular updates regarding progress as well as information from their regions regarding any changes. Work has begun on a holding website page for the USGBC Texas Chapter (www.usgbctexas.org), which will include links to the four current websites and regular updates will be posted. In the meantime, this FAQ will be added to the existing websites to answer any immediate questions and address any concerns. If a member has an unanswered question, please ED@usgbctexas.org or call 214-293-2996 for assistance.

c. Affiliated partner organizations:

Through personal outreach by the Chapter Board of Directors and Regional Council Members, e-mail communication and targeted events.

d. National:

News items will be submitted to USGBC National's Communications Department for distribution through its internal and external channels and an announcement will be sent out to National Member Companies in Texas.

e. Media:

Press release will be prepared. One-on-one interviews will be arranged with key media in each of the five major areas.