

NIMBYISM AND ZONING COMPLEXITY IN WISCONSIN **2024**

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Introduction

Housing affordability is one of the most pressing economic challenges facing Wisconsin today. According to a report by the Wisconsin Policy Forum, over 45 percent of Wisconsin renters were rent-burdened in 2022, meaning they spent more than 30 percent of their income on rent (Wisconsin Policy Forum, 2024). Figure 1 illustrates Wisconsin's price-to-income ratio over time, calculated as the state's median home price divided by its median income (U.S. Census Bureau, *Median Household Income*, n.d.; Wisconsin REALTORS® Association, n.d.). As can be seen, Wisconsin's price-to-income ratio is significantly higher than it was ten years ago. While the state does perform better than the national average in terms of its price-to-income ratio and rent burden, affordability concerns remain a significant barrier to economic opportunity and quality of life in the Badger State.

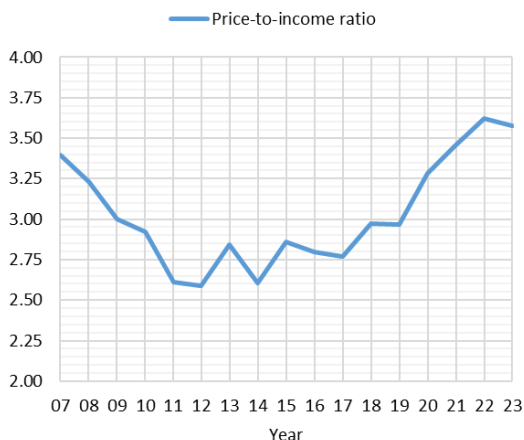


Figure 1: Price-to-income ratios, Wisconsin

This financial strain extends beyond individuals—it has broader implications for the state's economic vitality. High

housing costs limit where people can afford to live, restricting workforce mobility and discouraging businesses from expanding in Wisconsin. Young professionals and families are increasingly priced out of desirable areas, leading to longer commutes, reduced economic mobility, and even outward migration. To remain competitive and attract new residents, Wisconsin cannot afford complacency in addressing its housing challenges.

These affordability issues are not the result of market forces alone. Instead, they stem largely from flawed policy decisions at the local level. Restrictive and overly complex zoning laws have constrained housing supply, driving up costs and limiting development. While state lawmakers have recently enacted reforms, more reform is needed to meaningfully expand housing supply and improve affordability.

This essay examines the root causes of Wisconsin's housing affordability crisis by analyzing a recently assembled dataset on local housing regulations. It explores the specific policies that have contributed to rising costs and proposes targeted reforms. By addressing the state's barriers to housing development, Wisconsin policymakers can create a more competitive and affordable housing market.

Housing Supply and Affordability

Basic economics suggests that when the supply of housing increases, all else equal, home and rent prices will fall. While demand for housing may be overstimulated by policies like the

mortgage interest deduction, government-backed mortgage programs, and subsidies, economists generally agree that supply-side constraints are the dominant explanation for increasing unaffordability in the housing market. Wisconsin is failing to build enough units to satisfy demand and slow the rate of increase in housing prices. As shown in Figure 2, the number of new housing units permitted each year per 1,000 residents in Wisconsin is well below its pre-2008 peak (U.S. Census Bureau, *Building Permits Survey*, n.d.)

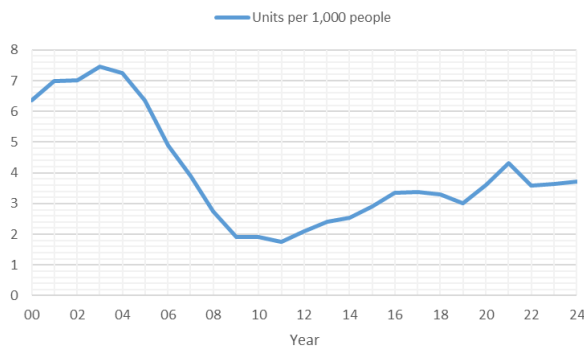


Figure 2: New housing units per 1,000 residents, Wisconsin

A recent empirical analysis of this phenomenon finds that a one percent increase in housing supply reduces average rents by 0.19 percent (Mense, 2025). The author also finds that for each new unit built, four second-hand units enter the market. This supply-side spillover effect of new units is consistent with the literature on the “filtering” process in the housing market in which new units free up and reduce the price of older units (Been, Ellen, & O’Regan, 2019). There are three primary explanations for the insufficient supply of housing that is persistent throughout most of the United States: Construction costs, geographic limitations, and government regulation. A review of the housing economics literature by Gyourko and Molloy (2015) explores the research on these three

housing supply constraints. They find that, while real housing prices increased dramatically from 1980 to 2015, real construction costs stagnated. Figure 3 displays the producer price index for residential construction in the United States, which measures the change over time in the average prices that builders and contractors pay for materials, labor, and other inputs used in housing production. As can be seen, this measure increased dramatically from 2020 to 2021 but has since leveled off (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, n.d.).

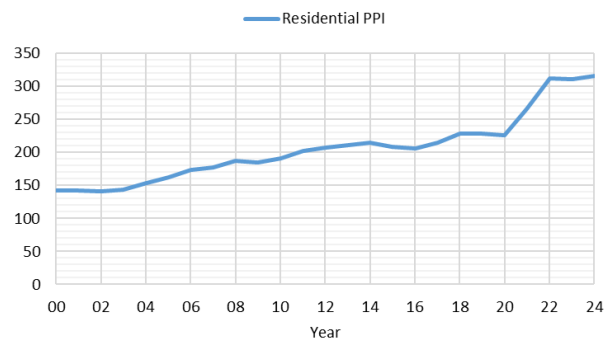


Figure 3: Residential construction producer price index, United States

Although higher construction costs may now play a bigger role in limiting housing supply, they can explain only part of the overall rise in home prices.

While the literature suggests that geographic constraints contribute to high housing prices, the impact of these limitations depends on government regulation over land use and density. If this were not the case, geographically constrained regions would likely allow for much denser development than they currently do (Glaeser & Gyourko, 2003).

Gyourko and Molloy find extensive empirical evidence showing that land use regulations significantly constrain housing supply and increase prices. For example, Glaeser, Gyourko, and Saks (2005) find that regulations account for significant portions of home prices in

highly regulated markets: 50 in San Francisco, 30 percent in Los Angeles, and 20 percent in Boston, for example.

Local governments regulate land use through zoning ordinances that dictate building types, height, density, lot size, and allowable uses. They may provide variances and conditional use permits, which allow projects to deviate from existing zoning regulations. Local governments also exhibit discretion through the development approval process. Public hearings, environmental impact assessments, and negotiations with developers often shape the outcome of housing development projects. In many cases, political considerations and community opposition often lead to projects being delayed, modified, or rejected, even if they comply with the zoning code.

While regulation directly limits housing supply, broad discretion at the hands of local governments leads to uncertainty for developers, which can increase risk and raise costs. According to a report by the Wisconsin Institute for Law and Liberty, zoning regulation and local government discretion add “approximately \$88,500 to the average cost of each new-built home in the Midwest.” The authors also surveyed Wisconsin developers and found that “the average development takes 14 months to even begin construction” with much of this delay being caused by “a tangled web of regulations where development can be stopped at every turn”(Diekemper, Koenen, & Flanders, 2022).

Given the significant impact of local government regulations on housing supply and prices, it is crucial to understand why communities impose such stringent land use controls.

NIMBYism and Zoning Complexity

Not in My Backyard (NIMBY) refers to a tendency for individuals to be in favor of or indifferent to new housing units or other forms of development in general, while opposing them in their own communities. According to a 2024 Morning Consult poll, “74 percent of respondents believe that the lack of affordable homes is a significant problem in the United States” (Torres, 2024). The same poll found that 78 percent of Americans consider it an important or top priority for Congress to pass bipartisan legislation to “increase the supply of affordable homes and help address high housing costs.” Despite this broad agreement around housing affordability, most communities around the United States impose exclusionary zoning regulations that limit housing supply.

The Homevoter Hypothesis, developed by economist William Fischel, may help to explain this NIMBY phenomenon. Fischel argues that homeowners view their property as a significant financial investment (Fischel, 2001). Since basic economics suggests that increases in housing supply lead to lower home prices, homeowners have a significant financial incentive to participate in local politics to block new housing developments that would reduce the value of their homes. Of course, a homeowner’s preferences regarding new housing developments in their community may not be based on their impact on property values alone. Additional research has also emphasized the role of an individual’s beliefs or preferences regarding the type of community he or she wishes to live in. (Brookman, Elmendorf, & Kalla 2024).

Mancur Olson’s *Logic of Collective Action* explains that individuals in concentrated groups, who stand to gain substantial benefits, have stronger incentives and a

greater ability to organize and advocate for policies that serve their interests (Olson, 1965). These policies often impose widespread costs on the larger population, which has weaker incentives and faces greater difficulty in mobilizing, as the per-person cost is relatively small and the group is less organized. In the case of housing, when a community debates allowing a new multi-family housing development, the homeowners most directly affected by the project have the greatest stake and motivation to oppose it, while the broader community stands to gain only marginally on an individual level. The concentrated benefits accrue to current residents and homeowners who resist new developments. The broader costs, however, fall on those who are not yet homeowners or residents of the community, who face reduced housing availability and affordability. Empirical research has found that members of a community who participate in the public approval process for new developments are indeed unrepresentative of their community overall. Research by Einstein, Palmer, and Glick (2018; 2019) shows that older residents, white residents, male residents, and homeowners are disproportionately likely to participate in development meetings. Likewise, a majority of the residents participating in these meetings do so in opposition to new housing developments.

NIMBYism is not the only source of local policies that constrain housing supply. In many cases, communities who genuinely favor more housing may inadvertently create obstacles to new development by increasing the complexity of local housing regulation. This occurs when individuals and local interest groups use the local political system to extract value from profitable development projects (Hankinson, Magazinnik, & Weissman,

2024). This extracted value may come in the form of city fees, affordable housing mandates, union labor requirements, environmental standards, historical preservation, and more. There is empirical evidence to suggest that affordable housing mandates and other forms of inclusionary zoning policies can reduce housing supply by diminishing the returns from housing development (Means, Stringham, & Lopez, 2007; Li & Guo, 2021). While such policies benefit low-income renters and buyers, they limit the ability for filtering to occur in the housing market, resulting in higher prices being passed onto market-rate buyers and renters.

Addressing Wisconsin's housing affordability problem requires understanding which local policies are constraining housing supply throughout the state.

New Developments in housing research

A recent study by Bartik, Gupta, and Milo (2024) sheds new light on local zoning regulations throughout the country. Using a large language model (LLM) to interpret local statutes and administrative documents, the authors developed an index of housing regulations at the most local levels of incorporation, including cities, towns, and subdivisions.

Prior to this dataset, the best available index of local zoning regulations was the Wharton Residential Land Use Regulation Index (WRLURI), which was developed using surveys of local officials and community representatives (Gyourko, Hartley, & Krimmel, 2019). This survey-based method has several drawbacks compared to an LLM-based approach. Surveys are prone to respondent error, whereas an LLM-based model directly interprets publicly available statutes and documentation. As a result, Bartik et al. estimate that their data has a 96 percent accuracy rate for binary variables. A

survey-based method is also susceptible to non-response bias. In other words, if a local official or community representative fails to respond to the survey, the locality they represent will be excluded from the index. As a result, the WRLURI dataset contains only 2,844 observations – with some being incomplete due to non-response – while the Bartik et al. data includes 5,794 observations. This more comprehensive dataset allows for a more complete view of housing regulations nationwide.

Bartik et al. use principal component analysis to combine the various regulatory variables into just two principal components that capture the complexity of housing regulations at the local level. The first principal component (PC1) captures “regulatory complexity” which is associated with variables such as affordable housing mandates, public hearing requirements, and wait times for permit reviews. PC1 closely resembles the value extraction process described above. The second principal component (PC2) represents “exclusionary zoning” regulations which include variables such as minimum lot sizes, frontage requirements, multi-family housing restrictions, and density caps. PC2 is generally the result of NIMBY attitudes in local policymaking.

Bartik et al. produce several key insights about housing regulations in the United States. First, they find that most new housing development occurs in unincorporated areas, which are typically not subject to local zoning regulations as they exist outside of cities and towns. Second, they confirm that exclusionary zoning regulations restrict housing density and lead to higher home prices and rents. Together, these insights contribute to another conclusion of Bartik

et al. that housing regulation tends to follow a monocentric pattern: They are least stringent near city centers but become more restrictive as the distance from the city center increases.

Taken together, their results suggest that complex housing policies in cities and restrictive zoning in suburban communities lead to high housing prices in these areas. In response, new development sprawls outward into unincorporated areas. Eventually, these unincorporated areas incorporate into towns, cities, or villages – in part for the purpose of imposing zoning regulations – and the process of sprawl continues. This pattern of sprawling development has occurred in Wisconsin, just as it has throughout the rest of the United States.

Zoning in Wisconsin

Using the data collected by Bartik. et al, Wisconsin’s overall housing regulatory regime can be compared with the rest of the country. Population weights were applied to ensure state-level aggregates of regulatory variables were representative. Additionally, principal components one and two were normalized onto a zero to ten scale before population weights were applied.

Figure 4 shows each state’s aggregate zoning complexity measure, with higher values representing less zoning complexity. The average state for this measure has a value of about 6.60. As can be seen, Wisconsin is just above the middle of the pack with a value of 6.60 and a rank of 18.

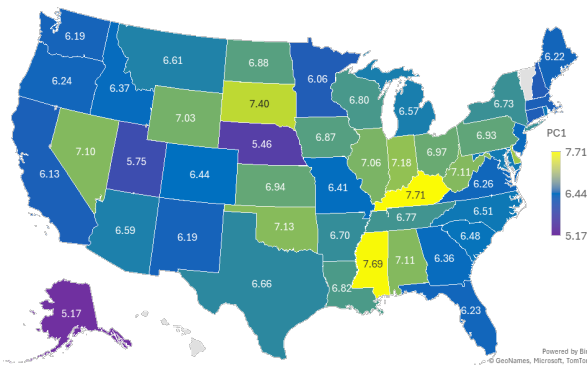


Figure 4: Zoning complexity by state

While Wisconsin may perform better than the median state on regulatory complexity overall, it performs worse on several key measures. Figure 5 compares Wisconsin to the rest of the Midwest and the US median state on three numerical measures of regulatory complexity.

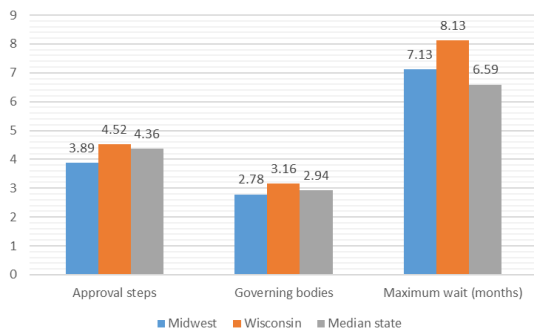


Figure 5: Measures of zoning complexity, the Midwest, Wisconsin, and the median state

On average, approval processes in Wisconsin localities involve 4.52 steps, whereas this number is 4.36 for the median state and 3.89 for the Midwest overall. Relative to the Midwest and the median state, Wisconsin's localities tend to have more distinct governing bodies or agencies that must give mandatory approval before a development project can begin. Wisconsin similarly stands out for its high maximum potential waiting time for government reviews of new multi-family housing developments. Wisconsin localities have an average waiting time of 252 days (around 8.13 months), significantly higher than that of both the Midwest overall (221 days or around 7.13 months) and the median state (204 days or around 6.59 months).

Figure 6 shows each state's exclusionary zoning measure, with higher values representing less exclusionary zoning. On this measure, Wisconsin is again performing slightly better than average with a value of 7.77 and a rank of 20.

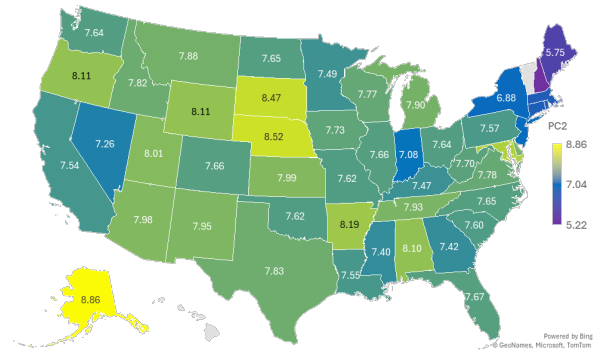


Figure 6: Exclusionary zoning by state

Again, Wisconsin outperforms the average state on this overall measure but falls short in several key indicators of exclusionary zoning. One such indicator is frontage requirements, which sets a minimum width for the front of a residential lot. Frontage requirements thus restrict the density of neighborhoods by limiting how many units can be built on a street. In Bartik et al., frontage requirements are incorporated into their overall measure of exclusionary zoning by identifying the largest frontage requirement for a single-family residential development in any district for each locality. Figure 7 shows that Wisconsin's frontage requirements tend to be higher

than those of the Midwest overall and the median state.

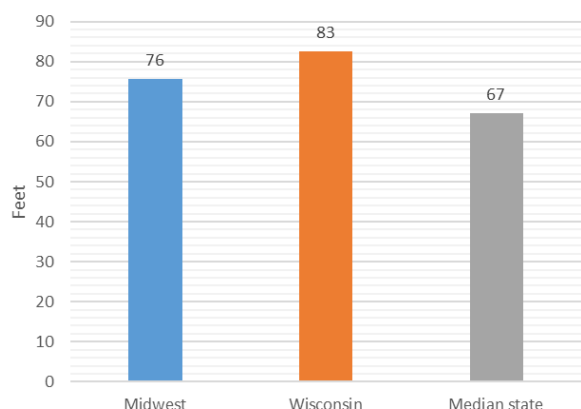


Figure 7: Frontage requirements, the Midwest, Wisconsin, and the median state

A similar type of exclusionary zoning policy is a minimum lot size requirement, which sets the minimum required area for a residential lot. Much like frontage requirements, minimum lot size requirements limit density in housing development. Bartik et al. use generative AI to determine the minimum lot size for single family homes in each residential district within a locality. Using this data, they calculate the smallest, largest, and average minimum lot size requirement across all districts of each locality. Figure 8 compares minimum lot size requirements for Wisconsin, the Midwest, and the median state.

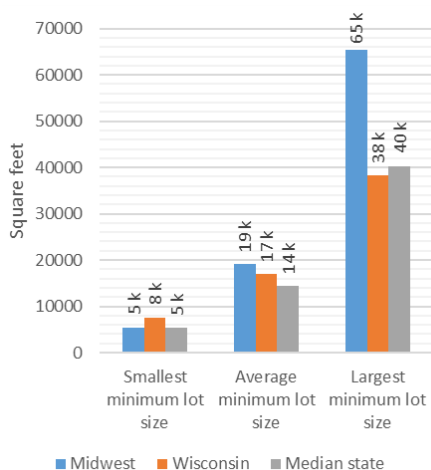


Figure 8: Minimum lot size requirements, the Midwest, Wisconsin, and the median state

Compared to the Midwest and the median state, Wisconsin performs better on its average locality's largest minimum lot size requirement. The figure shows that the largest minimum lot size requirement in a locality is lower on average in Wisconsin compared to that of the Midwest and the median state. Also, while Wisconsin's average minimum lot size requirement is lower than that of the Midwest overall, it is higher than that of the median state. However, Wisconsin performs worse than both the Midwest and the median state on its average locality's smallest minimum lot size. In other words, while Wisconsin's most restrictive minimum lot sizes tend to be lower than that of the Midwest and the median state, its least restrictive minimum lot sizes tend to be higher than those of the Midwest and the median state.

This may be in part due to Wisconsin's statewide default standards for minimum lot sizes. According to the Wisconsin Department of Administration, Wisconsin law establishes default minimum lot sizes of 6,000 square feet in counties with populations of 40,000 or more and 7,200 square feet in counties with fewer than 40,000 residents. While these minimum lot sizes can be reduced by local ordinances for lots served by public sewer systems, the default standards may set a higher floor for lot size requirements throughout Wisconsin compared to other states (Wisconsin Legislature, n.d.).

Bartik et al. also prompted the generative AI on numerous binary variables at the place/subdivision level, with "1" indicating an affirmative response and "0" indicating a negative response. Weighing each locality's response by population, multiplying the results by 100, and finding the average for each state aggregates these binary variables to the state level.

These values thus represent the prevalence of these policies for a given state. Table 1 displays several of these state-level variables for Wisconsin, the Midwest overall, and the median state.

Item	Midwest	Wisconsin	Median state
Age restrictions	57	64	50
Accessory dwelling units	34	21	50
Affordable housing mandates	24	13	33
Permits cap	12	3	19
Public hearing requirements	20	14	26
Multi-family conversions	20	6	18

Table 1: State-level zoning variables, the Midwest, Wisconsin, and the median state

Several insights can be derived from this table. First, we can see that age restrictions on housing developments – which are intended to ensure accessible and affordable housing options are available for senior residents – are more prevalent in Wisconsin compared to the Midwest and the median state. The greater prevalence of such provisions in Wisconsin may be in part due to the higher median age of the state’s population (40 years) relative to that of the US overall (38.2 years). Affordable housing mandates are also less prevalent in Wisconsin’s localities than in the rest of the Midwest and the median state.

Accessory dwelling units (ADUs) are small, independent residential units located on the same property as a single-family home. ADUs come in a variety of forms, such as backyard cottages, converted garages, or basements. When ADUs are allowed, they enable more dense development. In many localities, ADUs do not meet local zoning requirements and are thus prohibited. As Table 1 shows, local zoning codes that legalize the development of ADUs are less prevalent in

Wisconsin relative to the Midwest and the Median state.

Some localities place caps on the number of new residential permits that can be issued annually or biannually. Other localities may have “phasing” policies, which are intended to make the development of housing units more gradual. Of course, these policies limit the supply of housing. Such policies are very uncommon in Wisconsin, despite being prevalent in the rest of the Midwest and the median state.

In many localities, public hearings must be conducted for new multi-family housing developments. As discussed previously, such requirements can create uncertainty and delay in the development process, resulting in higher costs for developers and lower supply. Such requirements are somewhat less common in Wisconsin than in the Midwest or the median state.

Some localities allow single-family homes or non-residential buildings to be converted into multi-family housing, either by-right or by special permit. Such conversions are a flexible means of increasing housing supply, particularly in cases where commercial buildings may otherwise go unused. Allowances for conversions are much less prevalent in Wisconsin than in the Midwest or the median state.

The above graphs and tables suggest several areas in which state and local policymakers in Wisconsin could pass legislation to address the state’s housing affordability crisis.

Policy Solutions

To address its housing affordability crisis, Wisconsin should build on its recent successes and look to the successes of other states for guidance.

In June 2023, Wisconsin enacted a legislative package of several laws intended to address the state's insufficient housing supply (Wisconsin Legislative Council, 2023). Most of these laws established loan programs to finance the development of new housing, the rehabilitation of existing units, or the conversion of existing commercial buildings into housing. These loan programs also included income and age requirements for developers who take advantage of them.

The most significant law included in this legislative package is 2023 Wisconsin Act 16 because it directly addresses the root cause of Wisconsin's insufficient housing supply. The law establishes a state-wide policy of "development by-right" – also known as "by-right zoning" – which requires that a local government must approve any development proposal that complies with its established zoning regulations.

Act 16 also reforms the judicial review process to help prevent costly delays and cancellations in the development process by limiting who can challenge approvals. Before this law, any taxpayer could challenge local land use approvals through certiorari review, potentially delaying or obstructing residential developments even if they were not directly affected by the decision. After the reform, individuals must demonstrate that they would sustain actual damages that are personal and distinct from damages to the public generally in order to pose a challenge. Act 16 will help to limit the housing supply constraints caused by overly complex and discretionary zoning regulations.

Act 16 will also make it easier for localities to reduce or eliminate exclusionary zoning

policies. While the law does not alter existing zoning ordinances, it does modify the process for how changes in local zoning can be made. Previously, if at least 50 percent of affected landowners objected to a change to a zoning ordinance that increases density, a supermajority – three-fourths – vote of the relevant governing entity in favor of the change was required. Act 16 reduces this supermajority requirement to just a simple majority. On the other hand, the vote requirement for a change that decreases density – two-thirds – has not been changed. In other words, the law has now made "up-zoning" easier relative to "down-zoning" when the opposite was true prior to its passage.

It is key to note that, although Act 16 was passed in the Summer of 2023, it was not set to take effect until January 1, 2025. Thus, the effect that this law will have on Wisconsin's housing supply is yet to be seen. While Act 16 may reduce the severity of zoning complexity by limiting arbitrary discretion in the housing development process, many policies contributing to zoning complexity remain unaffected by the establishment of by-right zoning. Furthermore, since Act 16 does not alter existing zoning regulations, it has little immediate impact on any of the previously discussed exclusionary zoning policies.

Wisconsin could further reduce the costly burden of its slow review process by expanding access to third-party reviews of building applications. While cities may elect to allow third-party reviews, they may also refuse to do so. Several states – such as Florida, New Jersey, Tennessee, and Texas – have passed laws to require cities to allow third party reviews (Furth, Hamilton, & Gardner, 2024). In the case of New Jersey and Texas, cities are only

required to accept third party reviews when their own delays are excessive. A Wisconsin law with these same conditions could reduce wait times in cases where cities fail to meet their codified maximum wait times. However, such a law would not directly impact these maximum wait times as the allowance for third party reviews would only come into effect when these deadlines have passed. Thus, to most effectively streamline the approval process, Wisconsin should pass a law to ensure that third-party reviews are always allowed, rather than only after deadlines have already passed.

A recently introduced bill in the Montana Senate known as the Creating the Private Property Protection Act, aims to dramatically overhaul Montana's zoning statewide by establishing sweeping protections for private property rights (Ambarian, 2025). The bill would significantly limit the authority of local governments to enact zoning restrictions, mandating that such regulations serve a "compelling governmental interest in public health and safety." Additionally, it would grant property owners the legal standing to challenge zoning rules that exceed these narrowly defined purposes. If passed, this law would eliminate exclusionary zoning practices – such as minimum lot sizes, multifamily housing restrictions, historic preservation requirements, and other such regulations – throughout Montana as they are unlikely to satisfy the stringent public health and safety standards. While such a radical zoning reform policy would undoubtedly allow for greater housing development, it may risk creating negative pushback to zoning reform. If the law passes, it will make for an insightful test case of a truly free-market housing paradigm. However, even if the law works well in a frontier state

like Montana, it is unclear whether it would be feasible in Wisconsin.

Rather than eliminating zoning completely, Wisconsin could take the more pragmatic approach of directly addressing the policies that contribute most to its housing shortage. The Mercatus Center at George Mason University publishes an annual brief providing a "menu of options" for housing reform based on successful state and local endeavors nationwide (Furth, Hamilton, & Gardner, 2024). Wisconsin can build on the progress of Act 16 by looking to reforms that have been implemented in other states.

Since most housing policy is determined at the local level, Wisconsin can pass legislation to set statewide standards. Such standards would preserve the ability for communities to shape their zoning policy according to their preferences while preventing overly complex or restrictive regulations that limit housing supply and drive up home and rent prices.

Some cities in Wisconsin – such as Madison, Oconomowoc, and La Crosse – have passed laws allowing for the development of ADUs without the need for a conditional use permit. However, laws that technically allow for the development of ADUs do not necessarily enable enough of them to be produced, as many have conditions that limit the feasibility of ADU development. For example, Madison's ADU law previously required the owner of the property to inhabit either the primary residence or the ADU. Such restrictions limit ADU development and thus housing supply (City of Madison, 2024). While Madison's owner-occupancy requirement was removed in 2024, La Crosse, Oconomowoc, and other Wisconsin cities with by-right ADU laws maintain such

requirements (City of Oconomowoc, 2024; Mentzel, 2024). Fourteen states have passed laws to allow ADUs state-wide, preventing localities from banning them. Several of these states – such as California, Washington, Oregon, Montana, and Arizona – allow for ADUs by-right, ban owner-occupancy requirements, and prohibit or limit parking requirements (Hamilton & Houseal, 2024). Wisconsin should join these states and pass a state-wide, by-right ADU law without unnecessary barriers that limit ADU development.

While there is little precedent for statewide measures to address the issue of minimum lot sizes in other states, some cities – such as Houston, Texas and Spokane, Washington – have passed citywide laws to set caps on minimum lot sizes. Houston, for example, reduced its minimum lot size requirements citywide from 5,000 square feet to 3,500 square feet in 2013. Since then, the city has experienced a surge in small-lot development, resulting in the construction of nearly 80,000 homes that would have been prohibited without the reform (Mei, 2022). Since Wisconsin has existing statewide minimum lot size standards, it could address this issue at the state level by reducing or eliminating these standards for all lots served by public sewer systems. While doing so would not necessarily reduce minimum lot sizes everywhere – as many such requirements are set at the local level to be higher or lower than the statewide standards – removing an unnecessarily high default could lead to modest improvements in some localities.

Since multi-family conversions are much less prevalent in Wisconsin than in other states, expanding this development option could help to boost the state's

housing supply. A law could be passed to allow by-right the conversion of commercial buildings to multi-family homes state-wide. It would be more politically challenging to pass a law to allow the conversion of single-family homes into multi-family homes statewide. However, Wisconsin could follow in the footsteps of Oregon, which passed a law in 2019 that requires all localities with populations greater than 10,000 to allow the development of duplexes on lots zoned for single-family homes. The law also requires that localities with populations greater than 25,000 allow “missing middle” housing – duplexes, triplexes, fourplexes, cottage clusters, and townhouses – in all areas zoned for residential development (City of Eugene, 2020).

Implementing the above reforms would enable Wisconsin to alleviate its most pressing housing supply constraints and improve affordability.

Conclusion

Wisconsin's housing affordability problem directly results from supply constraints driven by restrictive and overly complex local regulations. While construction costs and geographic limitations play a role, empirical research consistently shows that excessive zoning complexity and exclusionary policies are the primary barriers to housing development. Wisconsin performs worse than the average state in several important areas of zoning regulation.

Act 16 represents a step in the right direction by reducing local government discretion and enabling more up-zoning, but further action is necessary. Wisconsin should look to successful reforms in other states to guide its next steps. Policies such as state-wide legalization of ADUs,

streamlining the development approval process, reducing restrictive minimum lot size requirements, and enabling more multi-family conversions would enable higher-density development where it is needed most.

By addressing its self-imposed housing supply constraints, Wisconsin can improve housing affordability throughout the state. Doing so will unlock new economic opportunities, attract workers and families, and foster long-term economic growth.

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