

Sen. Cowles: Community revitalization bill signed into law

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MADISON– Senator Robert Cowles (R-Green Bay) released the following statement after 2021 Senate Bill 518, which he authored with Representatives Dave Armstrong (R-Rice Lake) and Paul Tittl (R-Manitowoc), was signed into law today as 2021 Wisconsin Act 149:

“Regardless of what Wisconsin community you call home, I’m sure we can all find at least one local building that has been vacant and blighted for years, leaving an eyesore in downtown areas and leading to further sprawl which raises taxpayer costs as municipal services from roads to utilities to trash collection must be extended. In many cases, it may be pollutants or other harmful contaminants holding up redevelopment of those parcels, leading to continued local blight as revitalization opportunities are hindered due to cost.

“While ERTIDs have helped some local governments to encourage private pollution remediation and redevelopment efforts in the heart of their communities, these few cases do not reflect the need of localities because structural contaminants do not currently qualify for use of this unique tool. While we continue to see sprawl in efforts to address housing shortages and business expansions or relocations, we also continue to see abandoned structures filled with the hazardous building materials of yesteryear go ignored and untouched.

*“2021 Wisconsin Act 149 doesn’t solve the problems Wisconsin communities are facing as they look to promote housing and revitalize downtowns, but it is certainly part of the solution. **This legislation is a common-sense step to help benefit local communities and economies while eliminating materials harmful to human health and environmental quality from our cityscapes.** I want to thank the Wisconsin Economic Development Association and other supporters for*

helping to turn this community revitalization idea into law.”

Prior to Act 149, Environmental Remediation Tax Incremental Districts (ERTIDs) could only be used to remediate and redevelop sites with soil and water pollution on the parcel. [2021 Wisconsin Act 149](#) allows ERTIDs to be used to address in-building contaminants such as asbestos, man-made mineral fibers, toxic wood preservatives, heavy metals such as lead, and more. Expansion of the ERTID tool allows more communities to hold the property tax assessment on parcels steady while remediation and redevelopment occurs, allowing the private developer to put the saved expenses into the higher costs of addressing a contaminated parcel.