

Badger Institute: Applauds Evers and Republican legislators for housing bill

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MILWAUKEE — The Badger Institute applauded Gov. Tony Evers and Republican legislators for passage of a crucial housing bill that will increase supply and bring down cost while still allowing municipalities to control whether they want to grow.

“This is exactly what Wisconsin needs,” said Mike Nichols, president of the Badger Institute, a key supporter of the bill. “[Skyrocketing housing costs](#) have caused young Wisconsinites to lose faith in the American Dream, [locked](#) hard-working [middle-income](#) firefighters and teachers and [tradesmen](#) out of many communities, and [frustrated developers and planners](#) for years. Our elected officials came together to reduce regulations and just let the market work. Alleluia.”

Dubbed the “Truth in Planning” legislation, AB453 will assure that cities’ and villages’ zoning ordinances are consistent with their comprehensive plans that identify areas where houses will be allowed and that specify minimum and maximum densities.

The bill requires municipalities’ comprehensive plans to identify where and how densely residential growth will happen, by five-year increments over 20 years.

The bill has passed through both the Assembly and Senate, and the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel reported Friday morning that the governor’s communications director, Britt Cudaback, says Evers will sign it.

Finding a way to make the housing market work without counterproductive rent control or big government subsidies has been one of the Badger Institute’s primary

research and advocacy areas for the past year. See our 61-page [“Out of Reach” outline of problems and policy solutions here](#).

Under the new legislation, if someone requests the rezoning of a parcel to develop homes and a municipality’s comprehensive plan doesn’t meet the new law’s requirements, the land will automatically be rezoned to the requested classification or to the least restrictive zoning classification allowed.

Rep. Rob Brooks, the Saukville Republican who is one of the sponsors of the bill, told the Badger Institute the legislation is “significant,” “good for everybody” and a way to address the not-in-my-backyard “nimbyism going on around the state.”

Currently, Wisconsin municipalities are required periodically to produce comprehensive plans, but zoning for particular parcels does not automatically conform to those plans — meaning that when a development proposal for a parcel emerges, the rezoning process can become a nexus of delay and opposition.

The new bill empowers municipalities, said Brooks, to fulfill their vision.

“It allows them to say, ‘We want duplexes, four-families, eight-families,’ and then — because it is in the plan — they can go ahead and do it.”

The legislation does not force any municipality to allow homes. It just mandates that cities and villages plan in a transparent fashion that gives developers some certainty when they come in with a proposal.

“I really strongly believe it will provide predictability for developers on new homes in the future,” said Brad Boycks, executive director of the Wisconsin Builders Association, another key supporter. “Time is money,” and decreasing the amount of time developers have to spend appearing before regulators and redrafting plans time and time again will make housing more affordable.

“Increasing supply is the best way to bring down cost,” said Nichols. “This bill will help do that. This is a good day for Wisconsin.”

The Badger Institute is a nonpartisan, not-for-profit institute established in 1987 working to engage and energize Wisconsinites and others in discussions and timely action on key public policy issues critical to the state’s future, growth and prosperity.