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**Advocacy Digest | January 20, 2020**

**Brad Boycks, Executive Director**

**Uniform Dwelling Code Council Meets for First Time Since December 2018**

In December 2019, the Uniform Dwelling Code Council (UDC Council) reconvened for the first time since December 2018 and the first time since Governor Tony Evers took office. The council’s first order of business was to elect a chair and vice chair for the next two years and unanimously reelected two WBA members; Mike Coello and Mary Schroeder respectively.

During the meeting, staff from the Department of Safety and Professional Services (DSPS) were also reminded of webpage that allows anyone to suggest a code change for consideration by the UDC Council. This will ensure that at the next meeting, the council will have the opportunity to review any comments that have come in from December 2018 – December 2019 which will hopefully result in a longer, in-person meeting.

Other than the reelection of Coello and Schroeder to again lead the UDC Council, the council did not take up any other matters that would change the current one- and two-family building code. In a conversation after the council meeting, Chair Coello indicated his desire have an in-person meeting of the council during the first quarter of 2020 to address several issues that have been previously discussed which include: concrete foundation inspection and code issues, tweaks to the current deck code, and changes to the code related to stairways and elevated areas.

**Session Likely to End March 2020**

All signs are pointing to both houses of the legislature wrapping up their legislative session by the end of March 2020 according to statements by State Senate Majority Leader Scott Fitzgerald.

At a recent event, Speaker Robin Vos’ chief of staff stated the state assembly was looking to possibly adjourn sometime in February of this year. In past years under Vos’ leadership, the assembly has wanted to conclude their floor period in February, but the last few sessions have extended into March.

Whether it is February or March, there are only a few days remaining to get some additional items completed before things wrap up on the 2019-2020 session of the Wisconsin Legislature.

**Don’t miss the inaugural “Trends in Housing Conference” on March 5**

On March 5, WBA will be holding its first ever “Trends in Housing Conference” conference at the Ingleside Hotel in Pewaukee.

Early bird pricing for members ($65) and nonmembers ($75) is now open at [wisbuild.org/wba-events/2020/housing](https://www.wisbuild.org/wba-events/2020/housing).

Agenda:

* 9:00 AM - Check-In & Continental Breakfast
* 10:00 AM - Workforce Housing Shortage, Kurt Paulsen; UW Dept. of planning and Landscape Architecture
* 11:00 AM - Trends in Energy Efficiency & Smart Home Technology, Joe Nagan; Focus on Energy (1.5 credits - free for WBA members)
* 12:30 PM - Lunch
* 1:30 PM – Wisconsin Workforce & Economic Outlook, Dennis Winters; WI Dept. of Workforce Development
* 2:30 PM - Housing Outlook Forecast, Robert Dietz; Chief Economist, NAHB
* 3:30 PM - Cocktail Hour

Please sign up today for this brand new offering from WBA and generously sponsored by the [Federal Home Loan Bank of Chicago](https://www.fhlbc.com/).

**From NAHB: Housing Starts Finish 2019 Strong**

Total housing starts increased 16.9% in December to a seasonally adjusted annual rate of 1.61 million units, according to a report from the U.S. Housing and Urban Development and Commerce Department. This is a 13-year high for housing starts.

The December reading of 1.61 million starts is the number of housing units builders would begin if they kept this pace for the next 12 months. Within this overall number, single-family starts increased 11.2% to a 1.06 million seasonally adjusted annual rate. The multifamily sector, which includes apartment buildings and condos, increased 29.8% to a 553,000 pace.

Total housing starts for 2019 were 1.29 million, a 3.2% gain over the 1.25 total from 2018. Single-family starts in 2019 totaled 888,200, up 1.4% from the previous year. Multifamily starts in 2019 totaled 401,600, up 7.3% from the previous year.

“The solid housing production numbers are in line with strong builder sentiment, supported by a low supply of existing homes, low mortgage rates and a strong labor market,” said NAHB Chairman Greg Ugalde.

“The year ended on a high note with solid gains in single-family and multifamily production,” said Danushka Nanayakkara-Skillington, NAHB’s Assistant Vice President of Forecasting and Analysis. “And while the December estimates will likely be revised down, the trend moving forward is still positive.”

On a regional and year-to-date basis, combined single-family and multifamily starts in December are 3% higher in the Northeast and 8.6% higher in the South. Starts are down 0.8% in the Midwest and 4.7% in the West.

Overall permits, which are a harbinger of future housing production, decreased 3.9% to a 1.42 million units annualized rate in December. Single-family permits decreased 0.5% to a 916,000 rate while multifamily permits also fell 9.6% to a 500,000 pace.

Looking at regional permit data on a year-to-date basis, permits are 13.4% higher in the Northeast, 0.1% higher in the Midwest, 5.1% in the South and 0.1% higher in the West.

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