******

**Advocacy Digest | June 27, 2023**

**Brad Boycks, Executive Director**

**Workforce Housing Bills Signed into Law by Governor Evers**

On June 22 Governor Evers signed into law five pieces of legislation that WBA has been working on for over a year to help with the development and building of more workforce housing options in Wisconsin.

The bills that make up the workforce housing package that are now law are:

* **Assembly Bill 264 (AB 264),** now [2023 Wisconsin Act 14](https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/2023/related/acts/14.pdf), relating to residential housing infrastructure revolving loan fund and revolving loan program
* **Assembly Bill 265 (AB 265),** now [2023 Wisconsin Act 15](https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/2023/related/acts/15.pdf), relating to a main street housing rehabilitation revolving loan fund and loan program
* **Assembly Bill 266 (AB 266),** now [2023 Wisconsin Act 16](https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/2023/related/acts/16.pdf), relating to judicial review of local governmental decisions related to certain land development, local approval of residential housing development, and amendment of zoning ordinances
* **Assembly Bill 267 (AB 267),** now [2023 Wisconsin Act 17](https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/2023/related/acts/17.pdf), relating to housing rehabilitation loans awarded by the Wisconsin Housing and Economic Development Authority
* **Assembly Bill 268 (AB 268),** now [2023 Wisconsin Act 18](https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/2023/related/acts/18.pdf), relating to commercial-to-housing conversion revolving loan fund and loan program

For the past several months, we had been working with Senate Housing, Rural Issues, and Forestry Chair Quinn and Vice-Chair Jagler, Assembly Housing and Real Estate Chair Brooks, the Wisconsin Realtors Association, the Wisconsin League of Municipalities, the Wisconsin Towns Association, and the Wisconsin Counties Association on these policy items.

AB 264, AB 265, and AB 268 all create zero interest loans to create more workforce, single family homes, workforce multifamily housing, and senior housing, and requires municipalities to show changes that they have implemented to reduce the cost of housing in the projects being considered for a zero-interest loan from WHEDA. Those cost saving items include “voluntarily revising zoning ordinances, subdivision regulations, or other land development regulations to increase development density, expedite approvals, reduce impact, water connection, and inspection fees, or reduce parking, building, or other development costs with respect to the development of residential housing supported by the project.”

WBA believes that AB 264 will be beneficial to spur the additional development and construction of single-family workforce homes. When we have surveyed our membership over the past several years asking them what can be done to bring down the cost of workforce housing, we have learned the main costs drivers can be traced to the cost of residential infrastructure and the requirements passed by local units of government (impact fees and minimum lot sizes to name a few).

AB 264 addresses both of these issues by requiring a local unit of government to work with a developer to find ways to make changes on the local level to voluntary reduce the cost of housing and provide a zero-interest loan at an amount that does not exceed 20 percent of the total cost of the project including land.

AB 266 will help streamline the approval process for residential housing and also assure that only a simple majority is required to rezone land and establishes that only those that have an owner interest in the property that is subject to approval or will sustain damages and has provided a statement or has testified at a previous public meeting, may seek review of the land use proposal.

AB 267 is a follow up to 2021 Act 221, which created a loan program for the remodeling of existing workforce homes administered by the Wisconsin Housing and Economic Development Authority (WHEDA). AB 267 makes some changes to the homes that may qualify for these loans in addition to including work done for the remove of asbestos and the repair or replacement of interior walls, ceilings, or floors.

AB 268 establishes a zero-interest loan program that can be used for the remodeling or demolition of vacant commercial buildings that can then be used for workforce multifamily housing or senior housing.

In addition to these bills being signed into law the legislature’s budget writing committee, the Joint Committee on Finance, also included provisions to fund these bills that will be administered by WHEDA. AB 267/Act 17 will receive $50 million, AB 264/Act 14 will receive $275 million, AB 265/Act 15 will receive $100 million, and AB 268/Act 18 will receive $100 million.

It is hard to remember a bigger week for housing advocacy in the State of Wisconsin than what has occurred recently with the passage, signing, and funding of these workforce housing bills.