

Make Existing Homes More Accessible

Invest in Converting Wisconsin's Existing Housing Stock

Building more accessible homes for the future is important. But Wisconsin also needs to address the homes that are already here.

More than 57% of Wisconsin's single-family housing was built before 1980, according to WILN's policy paper.

Much of Wisconsin's existing housing stock was therefore constructed long before accessibility became a significant consideration in residential design.

For people with disabilities looking to buy a home, that can limit the number of properties capable of meeting their accessibility needs.

WILN believes Wisconsin should create incentives to convert inaccessible existing homes into accessible housing.

The Problem

Wisconsin cannot solve its accessible housing shortage through new construction alone.

Older homes make up a significant portion of the state's existing housing supply.

Many were built with features that can create barriers for people with mobility disabilities, and modifying an existing home to meet an individual's accessibility needs can require substantial work.

That can narrow housing options for people with disabilities who want to become homeowners.

A prospective homebuyer may find a house that works for their budget, family, job and community—but not for their accessibility needs.

Without resources to address those barriers, otherwise viable homes may remain out of reach.

WILN's Solution

Create a state program that incentivizes the conversion of inaccessible homes into accessible housing.

WILN is calling on Wisconsin to invest in adapting its existing housing stock so more homes can meet the needs of people with disabilities.

A state incentive program could encourage accessibility improvements to existing homes and expand the number of properties available to people who need accessible housing.

The goal is straightforward:

Don't rely exclusively on building accessible housing in the future. Make more of the housing Wisconsin already has accessible today.

Why it Matters

Accessible housing is also about choice.

People with disabilities should have opportunities to participate in homeownership and choose homes based on the same considerations as everyone else—including affordability, neighborhood, family, employment and proximity to community resources.

A limited supply of accessible homes can restrict those choices before the homebuying process even begins.

Converting more of Wisconsin's existing housing stock could expand the number and variety of homes available to people with disabilities.

It would also complement efforts to establish accessibility and visitability standards for new construction.

Together, the two approaches address both sides of Wisconsin's housing supply:

**Build more accessible homes for tomorrow.
Make more of today's homes accessible too.**

The Ask

WILN calls on Wisconsin policymakers to:

Create a state program that incentivizes the conversion of inaccessible existing housing into accessible housing, expanding homeownership opportunities for people with disabilities.

THE BOTTOM LINE

Wisconsin already has millions of homes that will remain part of our communities for decades. Expanding accessible housing means improving the homes we already have—not only the homes we have yet to build.