



Cities Bulletin e-newsletter

March 17, 2025 | Issue 10

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June 25-27 — Duluth

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- For legislative questions: [Contact IGR Staff](#)
- For editorial or other Cities Bulletin questions: Contact Rachel Kats, Publications & Web Editor (651) 215-4032 or (800) 925-1122; rkats@lmc.org

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League of Minnesota Cities, 145 University Ave. W, Saint Paul, MN 55103-2044
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Lawmakers Advance Zoning Reform Bills That Limit Local Decision-Making Authority

March 17, 2025

Legislation that mandates higher density, removes parking requirements, and restricts city zoning authority for residential development continues to move through committees in the House and Senate.

During the week of March 10, The House and Senate housing committees advanced a series of bills with overwhelming committee support via bipartisan voice votes that would significantly limit local control over residential zoning and land use decisions.

While the League of Minnesota Cities continues to actively engage with lawmakers on these bills in good faith, concerns remain about local authority, resident input, implementation challenges, lack of scalability, and costs for cities and taxpayers. The League, along with other city groups, testified in opposition to the bills.

All hearings during the week of March 10 included testimony in support of zoning reform legislation from housing advocate groups, for-profit and nonprofit developers, the Minnesota Chamber of Commerce, Americans for Prosperity, the Sierra Club, AARP Minnesota, and other groups making up the Yes to Homes coalition.

Below is a summary of the bills at the time of this writing. The proposals have all advanced to their next committee stops in the [House Elections Finance and Government Operations Committee](#) and the [Senate State and Local Government Committee](#).

Zoning bills that advanced this week

Minnesota Starter Home Act

[HF 1987](#) (Rep. [Spencer Igo](#), R-Wabana Township) / [SF 2229](#) (Sen. [Lindsey Port](#), DFL-Burnsville)

The bills were heard by the [House Housing Finance and Policy Committee](#) and the [Senate Housing and Homelessness Prevention Committee](#) on March 11.

The bills would require cities to:

- Permit at least two units on any single-family zoned lot and allow accessory dwelling units on lots with single-family homes.
- Limit minimum lot sizes to one-eighth acre for duplexes and single-family homes.
- Prohibit minimum lot sizes for townhomes larger than 1,500 square feet.
- Allow at least 80% lot coverage and restrict floor area ratio and setbacks.

- Prohibits minimum parking requirements for any development.
- Require an administrative review approval process for residential developments with no more than one public meeting (not hearing).
- Ensure development complies with city infrastructure, health, safety, and general welfare standards.

During the House hearing, [Rep. Andrew Myers](#) (R-Tonka Bay) and [Rep. Wayne Johnson](#) (R-Cottage Grove) proposed amendments to scale back parts of HF 1987. Their amendments aimed to:

- Exempt cities with populations under 10,000.
- Remove the required administrative approval process.
- Extend compliance deadlines for small cities.
- Eliminate prescriptive mandates on lot sizes and setbacks.

However, the committee did not adopt any of the amendments.

More Homes, Right Places Act

[HF 2140](#) ([Rep. Larry Kraft](#), DFL-St. Louis Park) / [SF 2231](#) ([Sen. Liz Boldon](#), DFL-Rochester)

The bills were heard by the [House Housing Finance and Policy Committee hearing](#) and the [Senate Housing and Homelessness Prevention Committee](#) on March 12.

A “delete everything” amendment, which replaces the original bill language with new language, was adopted by the committee, changing several components of the bill. Key components of the bill include:

- **Urban municipalities** (cities of the second, third, and fourth class within 1 mile of a city with more than 150,000 residents) must:
 - Upzone 75% of residential areas to allow townhomes, duplexes, triplexes by right, or any combination of development to permit an average density of one unit per 1,500 square feet.
- **Nonurban municipalities** (cities over 10,000 residents that don’t qualify as urban municipalities or first-class cities) must:
 - Upzone 50% of residential areas to allow townhomes, duplexes, triplexes by right, or any combination of development to permit an average density of one unit per 4,000 square feet.
- **First-, second-, and third-class cities** must create “commercial corridor districts” along municipal state-aid streets, allowing higher density development per acre.
- The bill would also:
 - Limit setbacks, floor area ratio, lot coverage, and minimum square footage rules in mixed-use housing zones.
 - Prohibit minimum unit sizes, construction material requirements, and local design standards beyond state building codes.
 - Eliminate minimum parking requirements for all developments.
 - Limit usage of planned unit developments and conditional use permits.

- Require an administrative approval process with no more than one public meeting (not a hearing).

Transforming Main Street Act

HF 2018 (Rep. Liish Kozlowski, DFL-Duluth) / SF 2286 (Sen. Doron Clark, DFL-Minneapolis)

The proposals were heard by the Senate Housing and Homelessness Prevention Committee on March 11, and in the House Housing Finance and Policy Committee on March 12.

The proposals would:

- Require all cities to permit multifamily and mixed-use development in any commercial zoning district, except for heavy industrial zones.
- Allow cities to require that developments authorized in the bill include commercial use on the ground floor but only if the development is replacing existing commercial or industrial structures.
- Limit city review of projects under 300 units, prohibiting consideration of traffic, noise, or nuisance concerns.
- Require first-class cities, St. Cloud, and all metro-area cities to allow multifamily buildings up to 75 feet tall in commercial districts.
- Prohibit cities from requiring egress, durability, or energy efficiency standards, and limits any setback and lot coverage requirements beyond those required for commercial buildings.
- Eliminate parking minimums for all new developments.
- Require developments to comply with city requirements regarding adequacy of existing public infrastructure and other health, safety, and general welfare standards.
- Require cities to award density bonuses for affordable housing.
- Mandate an administrative review process with no more than one public meeting (not hearing).

Preemption of municipal design standards

HF 2013 (Rep. Jim Nash, R-Waconia)

This proposal was heard by the House Housing Finance and Policy Committee on March 11.

Note: A delete everything amendment limiting the scope of the bill was offered by Rep. Nash and adopted during the committee hearing.

The bill would:

- Prohibit all cities from imposing construction material or method requirements on residential developments with four or fewer units. This includes restrictions on architectural elements, building egress, durability, energy efficiency, and light access — unless required by the State Building Code
- Exempt historic districts from the requirement and allows cities to require an egress point on the street-facing side of the structure.
- Ban interim ordinances related to aesthetic mandates

Prohibition on minimum parking requirements for development

SF 1268 (Sen. Omar Fateh, DFL-Minneapolis)

The proposal was heard by the Senate Housing and Homelessness Prevention Committee on March 13.

The bill would:

- Prohibit all cities from requiring minimum parking spaces for any new development including commercial, industrial, and residential.
- Allow cities to specify disabled parking requirements.

Your next step

Cities should contact their House and Senate legislators to share concerns about these bills, particularly if their lawmakers serve on the House Elections Finance and Government Operations Committee and the Senate State and Local Government Committee.

These bills have broad bipartisan support, and committees are likely to hear the legislation before the first and second committee deadline, which is on April 4.

[Read more news articles.](#)

Your LMC Resource

Daniel Lightfoot

IGR Representative & Federal Relations Manager

(651) 281-1295 or (800) 925-1122

dlightfoot@lmc.org

Craig Johnson

IGR Representative

(651) 281-1259 or (800) 925-1122

cjohnson@lmc.org

Changes to State Leave Mandates Debated at the Legislature

March 17, 2025

Minnesota Paid Leave and earned sick and safe time modifications were discussed by House members.

During the week of March 10, the Minnesota House of Representatives took several actions on proposed changes to the state's paid leave program and the earned sick and safe time (ESST) statute. The primary discussions took place in the [House Workforce, Labor, and Economic Development Finance and Policy Committee](#), though a priority bill for House Republicans was also brought up on the House floor.

Bill to delay Minnesota Paid Leave Implementation stalls

The first bill considered was [HF 11](#), ([Rep. Dave Baker](#), R-Willmar), which would delay implementation of the Minnesota Paid Leave program by one year to Jan. 1, 2027. The bill previously passed through the workforce, labor, and economic development committee and [House Ways and Means Committee](#) before being brought to the House floor on March 10.

Facing uncertainty over whether it had the 68 needed votes for passage, the House instead approved a motion to lay the bill on the table — a parliamentary move that allows the bill to be revisited at a later date. The bill's path to final passage by the House is now in doubt and it will likely require amendments before any further legislative action.

House committee considers earned sick and safe time modifications

On March 12, the House workforce, labor, and economic development committee heard [HF 1325](#), sponsored by [Rep. Isaac Schultz](#) (R-Elmdale Township). The bill proposed multiple changes to the ESST statute, which was originally enacted in 2023. Key provisions of HF 1325, as amended, include:

- Deletion of the [effects on more generous sick and safe time policies](#) section of statute, which relates to employees covered by employer-provided sick leave policies that exceed the ESST minimum accrual requirements.
- Deletion of a provision in the [weather event exception](#) section of statute, which would eliminate a collective bargaining provision that requires public employers to negotiate ESST use during weather events, such as snow emergencies, with employees who have foreseeable work duties.
- Delay of penalties for noncompliance with ESST statute requirements until 2026.

- Narrowing of the definition of “family member.”
- Prorating of ESST hours offered by employers to newly hired employees based on their start date within a calendar year.

The League of Minnesota Cities and other public employer groups testified in support of the legislation, focusing on changes to the collective bargaining provision and employer-provided leave protections. The bill was laid over for possible inclusion in an omnibus bill.

House reviews modifications to Minnesota Paid Leave program

On March 13, the House workforce, labor, and economic development committee heard [HF 1976 \(Rep. Dave Baker, R-Willmar\)](#), which would modify the Minnesota Paid Leave program before its scheduled implementation on Jan. 1, 2026. Key provisions of the bill, as amended, include:

- Clarification of the paid leave premium structure, ensuring that employers and employees split costs equally at 50% each. Current law states employers must pay at least 50%, with employees covering up to 50%.
- Exempting elected officials from program eligibility.
- Establishing an 80-hour annual work threshold in a calendar year to qualify for the benefit, which would exempt certain short-term positions like election judges.
- Narrowing the definition of “family member.”
- Tying leave duration to employer size, allowing six weeks of leave for employees at businesses with fewer than 50 workers, while those at larger employers would qualify for 12 weeks off.

The League of Minnesota Cities and other public employer groups testified in favor of the legislation, particularly supporting paid leave premium clarification, the exemption for public officials, and the exclusion of certain short-term employees such as election judges. More than 20 individuals testified during the hearing. The bill was laid over for possible inclusion in an omnibus bill.

LMC staff take

With the House of Representatives set to begin a power-sharing agreement the week of March 17 — giving Republicans and Democrats equal control over most committees — bills seeking substantive changes to Minnesota Paid Leave and ESST now face a more difficult path forward.

House Republicans have led efforts to modify these programs, while House Democrats have opposed changes to their key legislative achievements from the previous biennium. These bills are likely to become significant components of end-of-session negotiations as legislative leaders try to reach a deal on a two-year state budget.

[Read more news articles.](#)

Your LMC Resource

Owen Wirth

Intergovernmental Relations Representative

(651) 281-1224

owirth@lmc.org

Bill Would Provide Ongoing Funding for Law Enforcement Training

March 17, 2025

If the measure is not passed, training requirements related to use of force, crisis response, conflict management, cultural diversity, and autism — enacted in 2021 — will no longer be reimbursable.

A bill heard and laid over in the [House Public Safety Finance and Policy Committee](#) on March 11 would provide ongoing funding for the Peace Officer Training Assistance Philando Castile Memorial Training Fund.

The fund was created in 2021 as part of a bill that established new training requirements related to use of force, crisis response, conflict management, cultural diversity, and autism training. It was named after Philando Castile, who was fatally shot by police during a traffic stop. As enacted in 2021, the \$6 million in state funding to reimburse employers for officer training expires in 2026.

The measure advancing this session, [HF 1256](#), sponsored by [Rep. Paul Novotny](#) (R-Elk River), would create a base general fund appropriation of \$6 million per year for the account. Law enforcement groups and the League support the bill.

The League provided a letter of support to the committee. Knowing the state will be facing constraints in the current budget-setting cycle, the letter requests that this bill be a priority in the budget bill, which will be advanced by the public safety committee.

[Read the League's letter of support for HF 1256 \(pdf\).](#)

The Senate companion, [SF 1701](#), sponsored by [Sen. Zach Duckworth](#) (R-Lakeville), has not yet had a hearing.

Your next step

City officials are urged to ask their legislators to support this legislation as part of the omnibus public safety bill that is expected to be negotiated later in the legislative session.

[Read more news articles.](#)

Your LMC Resource

Anne Finn

IGR Director

(651) 281-1263 or (800) 925-1122

afinn@lmc.org

Special Election Creates Partisan Tie in Minnesota House

March 17, 2025

As expected, Democratic Farmer Labor (DFL) candidate David Gottfried won the March 11 special election in Roseville, restoring the 67-67 split in the Minnesota House of Representatives. The chamber will now operate under the power-sharing agreement negotiated earlier in the session.

The November 2024 election resulted in a 67-67 tie between House Republicans and Democratic Farmer Labor (DFL) members. However, the balance shifted to 67-66 in favor of Republicans after a legal challenge regarding the residency of the DFL winner in District 40B (Roseville) led to the elected candidate being deemed ineligible to serve. As a result, the legislative session began with 67 Republicans and 66 DFLers.

Additional background

On Feb. 5, Gov. Tim Walz issued a [writ of special election \(pdf\)](#), setting March 11 as the date for a special election to fill the vacant District 40B House seat. DFL candidate, David Gottfried, won the election and was sworn in on March 17, restoring the 67-67 partisan tie in House.

Prior to the special election, legislative leaders negotiated a power-sharing arrangement. Republican leader [Rep. Lisa Demuth](#) (R-Cold Spring) and DFL leader [Rep. Melissa Hortman](#) (DFL-Brooklyn Park) agreed on a plan for the remainder of the biennium.

Under the agreement, which was adopted by the full House when they convened with a quorum on Feb. 6, Republicans elected Rep. Demuth as Speaker of the House. She — or another Republican — will hold the position for the current session and next session if Republicans have a majority, or the membership of the body remains tied. During the Republican 67-66 advantage, the GOP caucus controlled House committees and held a one-seat voting edge in committee decisions.

[View the power-sharing agreement \(pdf\).](#)

Moving forward

With the House returning to a 67-67 tie, committees will now be co-chaired by both DFL and Republican members, with equal party representation on each committee. As a result, bipartisan support will be required to advance a bill out of committees. This arrangement is expected to take effect by Tuesday, March 18.

To pass a bill off the House floor, 68 votes are required, so caucus leaders will need to work together to secure bipartisan support for the budget bills that must pass before the new fiscal biennium begins on July 1. The Legislature is constitutionally required to adjourn by May 19. If a budget is not passed prior before the adjournment date, a special session will be necessary. If a budget is not enacted by July 1, the state government would not have funds to operate.

Expect the coming weeks to be busy at the Capitol as bills that may be included in omnibus packages are heard in committees and legislators work to meet agreed-upon deadlines.

[View the 2025 legislative committee deadlines.](#)

[Read more news articles.](#)

Your LMC Resource

Anne Finn

IGR Director

(651) 281-1263 or (800) 925-1122

afinn@lmc.org

Minnesota Lawmakers Consider Expanding Social Districts

March 17, 2025

Currently, only three Minnesota cities have been authorized to establish such districts.

On March 13, the [Senate Commerce and Consumer Protection Committee](#) heard [SF 1182](#), ([Sen. Aric Putnam](#), DFL-Saint Cloud), which would allow cities to issue social district licenses to any on-sale liquor license holders.

Social districts, which are common across the county, permit communities to designate public areas where alcohol can be carried and consumed — often in conjunction with events such as art shows, live music, and other activities. Currently, only three Minnesota cities (Anoka, Shakopee, and Stillwater) have been authorized to establish such districts.

The bill outlines various requirements for cities and the social district entities, addressing safety measures, public information, and regulatory processes. While the bill received strong support, some lawmakers questioned whether broad authorization is the best approach. An alternative suggestion was to require cities to seek legislative approval on a case-by-case basis.

The House companion, [HF 1372](#), sponsored by [Rep. Bernie Perryman](#) (R-St. Augusta), was heard in the [House Commerce Finance and Policy Committee](#) on March 6. During the hearing, Anoka Mayor Phil Rice shared positive feedback on the success of the Downtown Anoka Social District. Rep. Zack Stephenson (DFL-Coon Rapids), who represents the area, shared that the district has become a great success for their community but recommended delaying state-wide authorization until after a legislatively mandated report is completed at the end of the 2025.

[The latest news articles.](#)

Your LMC Resource

Pierre Willette

Senior IGR Representative

(651) 281-1207

pwillette@lmc.org

Minnesota OSHA Grant Awarded to Springfield Police Department

March 13, 2025

Guest post by Troy Walsh, LMCIT Loss Control Consultant

The City of Springfield and the Springfield Police Department recently took steps to assess their facility's liability risks and explore ways to improve safety for both officers and the community. With the help of LMCIT Loss Control, a comprehensive facility walkthrough was conducted to identify high-priority safety concerns.

Operating out of the old city hall building, the Springfield Police Department faces challenges due to limited space. However, they remain committed to enhancing officer and facility safety through continuous improvements.

To support their safety initiatives, the Springfield Police Department was awarded a 50/50 matching grant totaling approximately \$6,000 through the Minnesota OSHA Safety Grant Program. This funding will be used to enhance safety measures within the facility, including:

- Fireproof Gun Safe for Ammunition Storage – Ensuring secure and compliant ammunition storage.
- Flammable Storage Cabinet – Providing safe containment for flammable products such as gun cleaning supplies, aerosol cans, fuel cans, and paints.
- Facility Entrance and Lobby Upgrades – Improving security and accessibility for this 24/7 Public Safety Department, enhancing officer safety and visitor experience.

Congratulations to the Springfield Police Department for their proactive approach to safety and their successful grant award! These upgrades will go a long way in protecting law enforcement personnel and the community they serve.

Could Your Department Benefit from a MN OSHA Safety Grant?

The Workplace Safety and Health Safety Grant Program offers funding opportunities to help departments like yours invest in critical safety improvements. If your agency needs facility upgrades or safety equipment, consider applying for a Minnesota OSHA Safety Grant!

Your LMC Resource

Loss Control Consultants are available to assist with questions about coverages, risk management and more.

Connect with Loss Control Consultants (*choose "Loss Control" under "Department"*)

Policy Committee FAQs

Shape the League's 2026 Legislative Platform: Sign Up for 2025 Policy Committees

The League welcomes members to join in discussing issues impacting their city and cities in general, and to help shape the League's legislative policies and get involved with legislative issues. Hearing from cities around the state will be critical as the League shapes its legislative policies and priorities for the 2025 session.

Meetings will be hybrid format

As always, the League is happy to host legislative policy committee meetings both in person at the League building in St. Paul as well as online via Zoom. Members are encouraged to participate in whatever format is most comfortable and convenient.

Meeting 1

During the first meeting in July, each city official shares what issues are affecting their cities and what they would like the committee to address over the span of that year's meetings. Officials are encouraged to look at specific policies and offer suggestions to change existing policies, create new ones, and delete obsolete ones.

League intergovernmental relations (IGR) staff will also provide a legislative update on the regular legislative session and any special sessions. League staff will also go through each legislative policy and explain whether it was addressed during the previous legislative session or special sessions. Staff and committee members will then discuss potential speakers for meeting 2.

Meeting 2

At the second meeting in August, committee members will hear from guest speakers, including representatives from state agencies and interest groups, legislators, and other local officials, to learn more about the issues that the committee has decided to focus on. The committee will also further offer and review draft changes to legislative policies.

Meeting 3

During the third and final meeting in September, committee members will continue to discuss and make policy changes, and vote to approve draft legislative policies.

After the meetings

In October, the draft legislative policies will be circulated to League members for their comments. In November, the League Board of Directors will consider member comments and vote on final adoption of the League policies. The approved policies will then be published on the League's website in a document called the *2025 City Policies*. To get an idea of what to expect, you can view the *2025 Cities Policies*.

[View the 2025 City Policies \(pdf\).](#)

Sign up!

Last year, more than 150 city officials from all around the state participated in the four committees that set the legislative policies for the League's lobbying efforts. City officials that have served before and those that have never served are encouraged to sign up. Interested in signing up? Email Ted Bengtson at tbengtson@lmc.org.

Important note for members who served last year: If you have not already done so, please sign up to confirm your participation again this year, even if you served last year.

PDF versions of packets will be emailed to members in advance of each meeting.

[Sign up for a legislative policy committee.](#)

Frequently asked questions

Here are answers to some common questions for those considering participating in policy committees:

Who can be on a policy committee?

Current city officials and staff are eligible. City council members, mayors, city administrators, assistant city administrators, clerks, human resources staff, municipal elections officials, public safety staff, engineers, finance directors, economic development staff, and others have been members of the committees. Committee members can be new to their city position, have many years of experience, or be somewhere in between.

When and where are the meetings?

Here is the 2025 schedule:

[Improving Service Delivery Committee](#)

Monday mornings: *July 21, Aug. 18, Sept. 15* | 9:30 a.m.-12 p.m.

[Improving Local Economies Committee](#)

Tuesday mornings: *July 22, Aug. 19, Sept. 16* | 9:30 a.m.-12 p.m.

[Human Resources & Data Practices Committee](#)

Tuesday afternoons: *July 22, Aug. 19, Sept. 16* | 1:30-4 p.m.

[Improving Fiscal Futures Committee](#)

Wednesday mornings: *July 23, Aug. 20, Sept. 17* | 9:30 a.m.-12 p.m.

What topics does each committee address?

The topics include, but are not limited to, the following subtopics:

- Improving Service Delivery: Unfunded mandates, environmental mandates, elections, charter law, data privacy, government innovation and cooperation, and public safety.
- Improving Local Economies: Growth management, land use, boundary adjustments, housing, transportation, economic development, and telecommunications.
- Human Resources & Data Practices: Employment law, labor relations, data practices, Open Meeting Law, personnel, and pensions.
- Improving Fiscal Futures: Municipal financial management, property and other taxes, state aid programs, and financial reporting requirements.

For more information

Still have questions? Interested but not quite sure if you should sign up? Please contact League IGR Administrative Coordinator Ted Bengtson at tbengtson@lmc.org or (651) 281-1242.

We look forward to you joining us!

Your LMC Resource

Ted Bengtson

IGR Administrative Coordinator

(651) 281-1242 or (800) 925-1122

tbengtson@lmc.org