

# All About Manufactured Homes

Unlike regular homes built directly on a site, manufactured homes are assembled in a factory first and then moved to a piece of land where people can live in the home. These homes are often, but not always, built on a flatbed base.

In Wisconsin, there are two definitions for a manufactured home:

1. For homes built before June 15, 1976, a manufactured home may be considered a "mobile home." This refers to a vehicle-like structure made to be towed on a highway, with rigid walls, longer than 45 feet, and used mainly for people to live in. A mobile home includes its structure, plumbing, heating, air conditioning, electrical systems, and all original appliances.
2. A manufactured home can also be a structure built to be lived in, either with or without a permanent foundation, that meets the manufactured home construction and safety standards set by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). All manufactured homes built after June 15, 1976 must be certified by HUD to have met the standards.

Despite the name and definition, manufactured homes are not particularly mobile. In old manufactured homes, there's a significant chance they may simply break apart if anyone attempts to move them.

Most people think of 'mobile home parks' as being full of, well, 'mobile' homes, but today most manufactured houses really aren't made to be moved around a lot. Trailers and RVs are one thing, but manufactured housing is made to be moved to a site, set down and lived in. In that sense, manufactured homes are more like conventional single-family homes than travel trailers. Today, the term 'mobile home' is fairly inaccurate. Actually moving a modern manufactured home can cost thousands of dollars and risks serious structural damage to the home.

- "Immobile Homes," 99% Invisible, (Produced by Emmett FitzGerald, May 15th, 2018)

Manufactured homes have a special place in the housing market, one which comes with major pros and cons. On the plus side, manufactured homes are a major source of affordable housing in the US. They can be much cheaper to build than traditional homes—sometimes costing only about a third of the price—and these savings are passed on to buyers. Manufactured homes are the largest type of affordable housing that doesn't rely on government subsidies.

However, many people who own manufactured homes don't own the land under them; they rent it instead. This combination of homeownership and tenancy can place manufactured homeowners in a vulnerable situation. Moving a manufactured home is costly, sometimes over \$5,000, which is more than many people can afford. This makes manufactured homeowners feel stuck, which can leave them open to unfair treatment by landlords who control the land. Many manufactured homeowners are, in effect, captive tenants.

In addition, local rules about where manufactured homes can be placed have led to a shortage of rental spots in many parts of the state. This shortage gives manufactured home park owners a lot of power over people who rent these spaces. Because of this, manufactured home park tenants may face unfair terms, hidden fees, or even sudden eviction.

To protect manufactured homeowners from unfair treatment, Wisconsin has created laws and regulations. Wisconsin treats certain actions by manufactured home park owners - such as hidden terms and fees and groundless evictions - as unfair business practices and has banned them under section 100.20 of the state law, effective since June 1, 1976.

See our article on [Manufactured Home Protections](#).

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