

SEWRPC Planning Report No. 54  
A REGIONAL HOUSING PLAN FOR SOUTHEASTERN WISCONSIN: 2035

## Chapter I

# INTRODUCTION

The Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (SEWRPC) is the areawide planning agency for the seven-county Southeastern Wisconsin Region. It is charged by State law with “the function and duty of making and adopting a master plan for the physical development of the Region.” In carrying out its designated responsibilities, the Commission has proceeded with the preparation of a comprehensive, or master plan for the Region. The Region’s comprehensive plan is based upon, and coordinated by, a regional land use plan, which serves as the foundation for all other Commission plans. The current regional land use plan, with a design year of 2035, was adopted by the Regional Planning Commission in June 2006. The Region’s comprehensive plan also includes the following elements: transportation, water supply, water quality management, parks and open space, natural areas, and telecommunications.

This report documents a regional housing plan that provides an additional element of the regional comprehensive plan and further refines recommendations set forth in the regional land use plan. The regional housing plan: 1) compiles detailed data affecting the provision of housing in the Region, 2) identifies housing needs in the Region, and 3) presents a housing plan to effectively meet the current and probable future housing needs of persons of all income levels, age groups, and special needs in the Region. The design year of this plan, 2035, is the same as that of the regional land use plan.

## THE REGION

The Southeastern Wisconsin Region consists of Kenosha, Milwaukee, Ozaukee, Racine, Walworth, Washington, and Waukesha Counties. The Region has a total area of 2,689 square miles, or about 5 percent of the total area of the State. Although the Region accounts for a relatively small portion of the State, it contains about 36 percent of the total population of the State, about 36 percent of all jobs in the State, and about 37 percent of the total wealth in the State as measured by equalized property value. The Region contains 146 cities, villages, and towns in addition to the seven counties it serves, all of which participate in the work of the Commission.

## PAST HOUSING PLANNING EFFORTS

In 1968 the Commission was requested by the City of Milwaukee to “give serious and prompt consideration to establishing the initiation and execution of a housing inventory as its next major planning program.” The Commission determined that a housing study would contribute to the Commission’s function of areawide research and would:

- Facilitate the collection and analysis of a wide range of basic planning data for the Region as a whole that was not available to date

- Assist local, State, and Federal governmental agencies and interested advocacy groups in dealing with housing and housing-related problems in the Region
- Be of value to private investors who deal extensively with housing and housing-related issues on a day-to-day basis throughout the Region
- Contribute to the proper coordination of housing development with other aspects of comprehensive regional development
- Contribute to implementation of the Commission's adopted regional land use plan

The Commission responded to the City's request by creating a Technical Advisory Committee on Regional Housing Studies. The Advisory Committee included representatives from the mortgage banking community, private land development firms, home building industry, realtors and real estate appraisers, public and private housing agencies, the university community, and church groups and citizen organizations concerned with housing problems.

The initial duty of the Advisory Committee was to develop a prospectus for a regional housing study. The purpose of the prospectus was to document the need for such a study and prepare a recommended work program. The prospectus was used as the basis to obtain funding for the study. The seven counties in the Region and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) subsequently endorsed the prospectus and agreed to provide financing for the study. HUD provided two-thirds of the needed funds, and the seven counties together provided the remaining one-third.

The primary objective of the regional housing study was to assist in achieving the provision of decent, safe, and sanitary housing in a suitable environment for every resident in the Region. To this end, the study was intended to produce an additional key element of a comprehensive plan for the physical development of the Region in the form of a regional housing plan. The plan, to ensure effectiveness, was designed to be amenable to cooperative adoption and joint implementation by all levels and agencies of government concerned with housing in the Region. The plan needed to be capable of functioning as a practical guide for making both public and private development decisions related to housing in the Region on a day-to-day basis. The plan recommended a spatial distribution of low- and moderate-income housing to various urban and rural communities in the Region and was designed to promote the development of a full range of housing costs, types, and styles in the best possible living environment by directing the development of housing to well-serviced locations. Plan recommendations were divided into two basic elements, a housing allocation strategy for a recommended geographic distribution of subsidized housing and a series of housing plan recommendations for non-subsidized housing.

The 1975 plan recommended a geographic distribution of publicly subsidized housing intended to abate the physical housing need identified by the plan. The strategy allocated 17,840 subsidized housing units to 49 housing analysis areas according to three parameters that were equally weighted: the existing need in the area for publicly assisted housing, the area's suitability for receiving such housing, and the area's past performance providing such housing. The largest percentages of subsidized housing units were allocated to the urban centers of the Region under this allocation strategy. About 36 percent of the units were assigned to the Cities of Kenosha, Milwaukee, and Racine. Recommendations regarding priority households for receiving subsidized housing funds and the role of local, State, and Federal government agencies in the dispersal of these funds were set forth in the plan to facilitate creation of the subsidized housing units.

The plan also set forth recommendations for non-subsidized housing designed to abate economic, institutional, and social constraints to the provision of housing in the Region. Recommendations focusing on economic constraints were related to the cost of construction and the costs of occupying a home (rent or mortgage, taxes, utilities, and maintenance). Recommendations related to institutional constraints to housing focused on the property tax structure and local land use controls, such as zoning and subdivision ordinances, which could limit or prohibit certain types of housing. Recommendations related to social constraints to housing focused on local,

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State, and Federal government programs to process complaints of housing discrimination and programs to abate community opposition to housing developed for low- and moderate-income households.

The study was prepared and documented in SEWRPC Planning Report No. 20, *A Regional Housing Plan for Southeastern Wisconsin*, which was published in 1975. SEWRPC also undertook a regional housing program between 1969 and 1981. The housing program resulted in preparation of the regional housing plan and an ongoing housing outreach program. SEWRPC was not able to undertake the work necessary to revise and extend the regional housing plan or continue the housing outreach program because of the elimination of Federal housing planning funds administered by HUD in the early 1980's. SEWRPC managers discussed using a portion of its funding provided for the land use and transportation planning program for housing planning activities with Federal and State transportation program managers, with no success, over the next two decades.

In response to several recent requests, SEWRPC explored once again with Federal and State transportation program managers the feasibility of conducting housing planning work under the umbrella of SEWRPC's responsibility as the Federally-recognized metropolitan planning organization for transportation planning. In a reversal from historic positions, an agreement was reached that housing planning activities would be eligible for inclusion in the land use and transportation work program of the Commission. As a result, SEWRPC undertook the planning work, documented in this report, to identify housing needs in the Region and develop a plan to effectively meet the current and probable future housing needs of persons of all income levels, age groups, and special needs in the Region.

## **SCOPE OF THE YEAR 2035 REGIONAL HOUSING PLAN**

This new regional housing plan addresses housing needs in a manner considered to be appropriate from an areawide planning perspective in response to recent requests and encouragement from local governments in the Region and the housing advocacy community. The focus of the plan is providing a variety of housing options throughout the Region, including affordable housing for residents of all income levels, age groups, and special needs. Several major work efforts have been undertaken during preparation of the plan to this end. Generally, the first phase of the planning effort focused on defining the housing problem in the Region; articulating a regional housing vision; defining affordable housing; developing objectives, principles, and standards; and determining sub-regional housing analysis areas. The sub-regional analysis areas were based on clusters of existing and future housing and job locations, and were used for data collection and analyses. The second phase focused on conducting inventories and analyses. The third phase of the planning effort focused on preparing a recommended housing plan based on existing and projected housing needs in the Region and the housing analysis areas.

### **Housing Objectives, Principles, and Standards**

A definition of the housing problem in the Region is presented in Chapter II of this report. The definition of the problem provided the framework for data collection and analysis activities undertaken during the planning process. A housing vision that states the desired future for housing in the Region is also presented in Chapter II. The vision was developed through a review of the objectives, principles, and standards articulated in the first regional housing plan and through consideration of the housing problems identified as part of this new regional housing plan. Objectives are the long-range goals of the housing plan. The principles are the underlying tenets supporting the objectives. The standards are the criteria used to determine if plan objectives will be met through implementation of plan recommendations. Updated housing objectives, principles, and standards prepared as part of this planning effort are set forth in Chapter II.

### **Inventory and Analyses**

Reliable housing and planning data, collected on a uniform, areawide basis, are essential to the preparation of an accurate and useful Region-wide housing plan. Analyses of the information provided by the inventories are required to gain an understanding of the existing situation, the trends of change in that situation, and the factors influencing these trends. Particularly important among the analytical relationships established are those that link residents, of all income levels, age groups, and special needs, to a variety of affordable housing options. The second phase in the planning process was to conduct a number of inventories and analyses related to new housing

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development, the balance between jobs and housing, housing discrimination, the availability of housing accessible to persons with disabilities and the elderly, and the existing subsidized housing stock. These analyses were then used to develop the recommended housing plan for the Region.

### ***New Housing Development***

Inventories and analyses related to the development of new housing in the Region were conducted, with a focus on market-based housing provided by the private sector, typically without assistance from government programs that require the provision of subsidized housing units. Market based housing is still the main source of affordable housing in the Region, even though no subsidies are attached to such housing. The following analyses were conducted:

- The density and housing stock characteristics of the Region and its sub-areas are heavily influenced by community policies and regulations that impact housing. Zoning and subdivision ordinances were reviewed to identify community policies regarding residential densities, housing structure types, and housing unit sizes.
- An analysis was undertaken regarding housing development costs, based on land, building, site improvement, and regulatory costs. Recommended standards for new single- and multi-family residential densities and home sizes that would be affordable to moderate- and low-income households were developed. The recommended standards were compared to zoning ordinance requirements to identify those communities where affordable housing could be accommodated under current regulations. Community comprehensive plans were also analyzed to determine areas identified for new housing at densities that would accommodate affordable housing.
- An analysis of the cost of providing community services to various residential development types was also conducted. The analysis addresses a common perception that higher density multi-family housing carries a substantially higher community cost burden, borne by property taxes, than lower density single-family development.

### ***Jobs/Housing Balance Analyses***

Regional and sub-regional economic, demographic, and housing stock inventory data were used, in part, to conduct these analyses. The jobs/housing balance analyses include the following aspects relative to this topic:

- Demographic and employment profiles have been prepared for each housing analysis sub-area. The profiles include an analysis of the types of jobs and their typical wages and commuting patterns in each sub-area.
- An analysis has been undertaken relative to the relationship between market housing costs and incomes in each sub-regional area. Housing affordability ratios comparing typical incomes for various job categories and housing costs within each sub-area were developed in an effort to illustrate housing affordability issues. The cost of transportation to work was included as part of the analysis.
- An analysis of the existing affordable housing stock within each sub-area has been undertaken. The analysis includes a comparison of affordable housing stock to housing needs and income data for each sub-area to determine the relationship between affordable housing supply and current and projected demand as evidenced in part by those individuals employed within each sub-area.
- An analysis was undertaken to determine the extent to which a lack of affordable housing in a given sub-area may impact economic development efforts and the possible economic benefits of developing new affordable housing in a given sub-area. Conversely, the need for additional economic development and workforce education in sub-areas that have affordable housing but lack employment opportunities has been documented.

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### ***Housing Discrimination Analyses***

Federal and State housing laws make housing discrimination illegal against any individual in a protected class.<sup>1</sup> These laws also address a wide range of unlawful housing acts ranging from refusing to rent, sell, insure, construct, or finance housing to printing, publishing, or displaying advertisements or notice that indicate a preference affecting a protected class. Analyses relating to housing discrimination include the following:

- Based on available data from several sources, the extent of reported housing discrimination activities in the Region has been ascertained. This information is intended to inform and educate local officials and members of the general public about the amount of illegal housing discrimination activity and to reinforce the intent of housing discrimination laws. Information considered during the analysis included: demographic data, mortgage and rehabilitation lending practices by race and ethnic group, availability of accessible housing stock for persons with disabilities, the results of fair housing testing, occupancy requirements that limit housing for families with children or group homes such as community based residential facilities, and geographic patterns related to Federal government housing vouchers and assisted living facilities.
- An analysis was undertaken regarding the extent to which local land use controls may operate to discriminate against various sub-groups of the Region's population. The analysis is based, in part, on an inventory of local land use regulations in the Region such as zoning and subdivision regulations, and housing structure type mix policies. Land use controls and enforcement policies were analyzed to determine if they have a disparate impact on the availability of housing within various communities in the Region. The analysis included a review of which communities in the Region have taken actions to implement the recommendations set forth in the 1975 regional housing plan and which communities have not. Legal requirements regarding the furthering of fair housing practices for communities receiving various Federal funds, such as Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds, were also reviewed as part of this analysis.

### ***Accessible Housing Analyses***

An analysis was undertaken to compare the number of accessible dwelling units and the housing needs of persons with disabilities and the elderly. Construction practices intended to increase the number of new accessible housing units, such as universal design and visitability, were also analyzed. An additional analysis was undertaken to determine if there is an adequate supply of accessible housing units for individuals with special needs that are not necessarily physical disabilities.

### ***Subsidized Housing Stock Analyses***

Inventory data, including the number and distribution of existing subsidized housing units of various types, were used, in part, to conduct these analyses. The analyses include the following aspects relative to this topic:

- An analysis regarding the historical perspective of past decisions and actions regarding the location, type, and amount of subsidized housing units in the Region and sub-areas. Conclusions have been drawn regarding the impacts of those decisions and what lessons have been learned from the location of various types of subsidized units.
- An analysis regarding problems with extending the life of existing subsidized housing, including the phasing out of voucher payments, significant amounts of deferred building maintenance, changes in building management or ownership, and the general aging and deterioration of existing subsidized housing stock.

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<sup>1</sup> Protected classes under Federal law include race, color, sex, national origin/ancestry, religion, disability/handicap, and familial status. Additional protected classes under the Wisconsin Open Housing Law include age, marital status, lawful source of income, and sexual orientation.

### ***Review of Best Housing Practices***

Best housing practices in the Region, State of Wisconsin, and the Nation were reviewed and documented. The review focuses on fair-share programs, land use control practices, community development programs, “green” or “sustainable” building practices, urban design and neighborhood safety, non-profit organization practices, and case studies of successful efforts to promote affordable housing in the Region. Housing programs that have not been successful are also described.

### **Housing Recommendations**

Housing recommendations focus on addressing all aspects of the regional housing problem. The recommendations are intended primarily for local and State officials to address activities aimed at 1) improving the provision of affordable and market-rate housing; 2) strengthening the Region’s stock of subsidized housing; 3) reducing housing discrimination; 4) providing an adequate number of units accessible to persons with disabilities and the elderly; and 5) a recommended monitoring system. A set of recommendations was developed by the Advisory Committee for public review and eventual adoption by the Regional Planning Commission.

### **Socio-Economic Impact Analysis**

A socio-economic impact analysis was performed on the preliminary regional housing plan to assess the social and economic impacts of the preliminary plan on the Region, particularly on the Region’s minority and low-income populations. These populations were identified early in the planning process. Data collection and analyses, such as the job/housing balance analyses, contributing to the socio-economic impact analysis were conducted throughout the planning process. The findings of the socio-economic impact analysis were considered by the Regional Housing Plan Advisory Committee before its approval of this regional housing plan.

## **ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE**

The 29-member Regional Housing Plan Advisory Committee, identified on the inside front cover of this report, had the primary responsibility for guiding the preparation of the regional housing plan. The committee consists of members appointed by the Regional Planning Commission from groups representing housing advocacy organizations; local, county, State, and Federal government agencies; housing production professionals; and research and policy organizations and institutions. In addition, the Commission’s Environmental Justice Task Force (EJTF), the roster of which is set forth in Figure I-1, monitored the work of the Advisory Committee to ensure that Federal environmental justice and related requirements were met as preparation of the housing plan progressed. To this end, the EJTF was given an opportunity to review all materials produced during preparation of the plan. All comments, suggestions, and recommendations made by the EJTF were reported to the Advisory Committee for their consideration.

The housing plan developed and approved by the Regional Housing Plan Advisory Committee was forwarded to the Regional Planning Commission for consideration. The plan was adopted by the Commission as an element of the comprehensive plan for the Region.

## **PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT**

The Commission provided a wide range of opportunities for members of the general public to become engaged in the preparation of the regional housing plan. Several public participation methods were used to achieve this goal. They included newsletters, news releases, the SEWRPC website, public informational meetings and hearings, meetings with interested groups, Advisory Committee meetings, and Environmental Justice Task Force meetings.

A series of newsletters was issued to a wide audience during the planning process, including elected officials, technical and appointed planning and housing officials, minority and low-income groups, advocacy groups, print and broadcast media, and residents of the Region who indicated an interest in housing issues. The newsletters provided updates on plan progress and information regarding public meetings. A portion of the SEWRPC website, at [www.sewrpc.org/SEWRPC/Housing.htm](http://www.sewrpc.org/SEWRPC/Housing.htm), was also dedicated to the regional housing plan and provided:

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**Figure I-1**

**SEWRPC ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE TASK FORCE**

Adelene Greene, Chair.....Commissioner, Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission;  
Director of Workforce Development, Kenosha County  
Ella Dunbar ..... Program Services Manager, Social Development Commission, Milwaukee  
Ness Flores..... Attorney, Flores & Reyes Law Offices  
Nancy Holmlund.....President, Racine Interfaith Coalition  
Darryl Johnson.....Executive Director, Riverworks Development Corporation  
Jedd Lapid..... Development Officer, Greater Milwaukee Foundation  
N. Lynnette McNeely..... Attorney, Law Offices of Thomas J. Awen; NAACP  
Brian Peters..... Housing Policy Advocate, Independence *First*  
Guadalupe “Wally” Rendon.....Member Education/Outreach Representative, Racine Educator’s  
Credit Union; former Racine Police Officer  
Yolanda Santos Adams .....Director, League of United Latin American Citizens  
Jackie Schellinger .....Indian Community School  
Theresa Schuerman..... Walworth County Bilingual Migrant Worker Outreach  
Willie Wade ..... Alderman, City of Milwaukee

- Background information regarding the plan.
- Notification of Advisory Committee meetings.
- Advisory Committee meeting materials such as agendas, minutes, and presentations.
- Summary materials, including newsletters.
- Draft chapters of the plan report.
- Contact information.
- A means to submit comments regarding the regional housing plan.
- A record of public comments regarding the regional housing plan.

Public informational meetings were also held during the planning process, which coincided with the release of newsletters and covered the same topics. News releases, advertisements, direct mailings, and the website were used to publicize the meetings. Commission staff also provided briefings and presentations regarding the regional housing plan to interested groups, including government agencies and housing advocacy groups, upon request. The Commission actively conducted outreach to provide information to, and receive comments from, low-income and minority groups and organizations. A list of organizations is maintained by SEWRPC for the purpose of facilitating such outreach and was consulted during efforts to publicize regional housing plan public meetings.

## **SCHEME OF PRESENTATION**

The findings and recommendations of the year 2035 regional housing plan are documented in this report. Following this introductory chapter, objectives, principles, and standards are presented in Chapter II. Chapter III includes a review of existing plans and programs that impact housing in the Region. Chapters IV through X present inventory data and analyses regarding existing housing, new housing development, housing discrimination and fair housing practices, demographic and economic characteristics, job/housing balance, accessible housing, and subsidized housing. Chapter XI includes a review of best housing practices. Housing recommendations that address each aspect of the identified regional housing problem and constitute the regional housing plan are presented in Chapter XII. Chapter XIII provides an overall summary of major findings and plan recommendations.

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