

YEAR 2035 REGIONAL HOUSING PLAN FOR SOUTHEASTERN WISCONSIN



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INTRODUCTION

The Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (SEWRPC) is preparing a regional housing plan for southeastern Wisconsin. Information has been gathered and analyzed on the need for affordable housing, including subsidized housing; the balance between jobs and housing; the availability of housing accessible to persons with disabilities and the elderly; and housing discrimination (fair housing). Major plan findings are summarized in this brochure.

Public input is being sought at meetings in November and December 2011 to assist in developing plan recommendations. A preliminary housing plan is expected to be completed in Spring 2012. An additional public comment period and meetings to present and obtain comment on plan recommendations and the findings of a related socio-economic impact analysis will be held, most likely in Fall 2012. Meeting schedules and other information is available on the SEWRPC website: www.sewrpc.org/SEWRPC/housing.htm, or by calling (262) 547-6721.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

A household is considered to have a high housing cost burden if monthly housing costs exceed 30 percent of household income. About 36 percent of households in the Region have a high housing cost burden, including about 15 percent of households that spend more than 50 percent of their monthly income on housing. Over 65 percent of households with a high housing cost burden earned less than the median household income of \$50,453 in 2010.

The planning work has determined that smaller homes (1,100 to 1,200 square feet) on lots of 10,000 square feet or less would help to provide affordable housing to households that earn 80 percent or more of the median income (moderate-income or above). Multi-family housing is essential to provide housing for households that earn between 50 and 80 percent of the median income (considered low-income households). Subsidized housing, or housing developed by non-profit or faith-based organizations, would likely be necessary to provide housing for households that earn less than 50 percent of the median household income.

SUBSIDIZED HOUSING

The Section 8 voucher program currently provides housing vouchers to 13,061 low-income households in the Region, although the demand greatly exceeds the supply. Other programs that help provide housing include Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) and Home Investment Partnership (HOME) programs, Tax Increment Financing (TIF) districts, the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) program, and Housing Trust Funds established by the City and County of Milwaukee. The City of Milwaukee Housing Trust Fund has recommended that the City and Milwaukee County Trust Funds be combined, and eventually expanded to a new Housing Trust Fund of Southeastern Wisconsin (HTF-SW) that would include other municipalities, counties, and possibly the entire seven-county Region.



JOB-HOUSING BALANCE

The land use plan maps adopted as part of community comprehensive plans were analyzed to determine the potential number and type of jobs and housing units that could be accommodated in the Region. The expected job/housing balance analysis was limited to areas planned by local governments to be provided with sanitary sewer service by 2035, since such areas will accommodate the majority of jobs and higher-density residential areas.

Many suburban communities have adopted comprehensive plans that would accommodate a higher percentage of lower wage jobs than lower cost housing, and/or a higher percentage of moderate wage jobs than moderate cost housing. Additional multi-family housing and modest sized single-family homes on small to modest size lots may help to correct anticipated job/housing imbalances in these communities.

Data indicate that the Cities of Kenosha, Milwaukee, and Racine have adequate amounts of lower-cost housing, but housing costs are still too high for lower-income households. Affordable housing strategies in these areas should include economic and workforce development components to help reduce high housing cost burdens.

Improved transit service would help provide links between affordable housing and jobs, particularly for households without access to a car. In 2010, about 41 percent of major employers were accessible by local or rapid transit service. Many major employment centers that are not currently served by public transit would become accessible by public transit under the recommended 2035 regional transportation system plan.

ACCESSIBLE HOUSING

According to 2010 Census data, about 169,000 households, or about 21 percent of households in the Region, include at least one person with a disability. Because the incidence of disability increases as people age, this percentage is likely to increase in the next 20 to 30 years as the “baby boom” generation enters the 65 years and older age group.

Federal and State fair housing laws require multi-family buildings built after 1991 and 1993, respectively, to be accessible to persons with a mobility disability (that is, accessible to persons in wheelchairs). It was estimated that up to 61,640 multi-family housing units in the Region may be accessible to persons with mobility disabilities. A comparison of the number of households reporting a member with a disability to the probable amount of accessible housing indicates a need for additional accessible housing. Federal and State accessibility requirements do not address the housing accessibility needs of persons with disabilities that are not physical in nature, with limited exceptions. Many of the persons reporting a disability may have a disability other than, or in addition to, a mobility disability, which may require a greater level of accessible design features or other services than required by fair housing laws.

FAIR HOUSING

There are a number of Federal and State laws that protect persons against discrimination in housing and related transactions. Despite fair housing laws, minority groups live in concentrated, and often separate, areas within the Region. In 2010, about 86 percent of the Region's African American population, and about 74 percent of the Region's total minority population, lived in Milwaukee County.

Construction of additional multi-family housing and smaller lot and home size requirements for single-family homes in suburban areas would help increase the supply of housing that would be more affordable to low- and moderate-income households, including minority households. Housing is a critical element that contributes to expanded social and economic opportunity for individuals and families. Ensuring equal access to housing that is linked to high performing schools, sustainable employment, transportation infrastructure, and childcare is essential for securing an economically viable and sustainable Southeastern Wisconsin Region.

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