

PLANNING FOR HOUSING IN SOUTHEASTERN WISCONSIN

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Decent and affordable housing helps people live more secure lives. The Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (SEWRPC) has completed a preliminary housing plan for our seven-county Region to help improve housing in the Region. Draft plan chapters and additional information about the plan are available on the SEWRPC website at www.sewrpc.org/SEWRPC/housing.htm, or by calling (262) 547-6721.

Carrying out the plan would help provide decent housing for all residents of the Region, including housing affordable to low-income residents and persons with disabilities. Housing near job centers would become more affordable to the people holding those jobs, and help broaden lower-cost housing options in cities and villages throughout the Region.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

The preliminary plan recommends that local governments review their comprehensive plans and zoning ordinances, and change the plans and ordinances if necessary, to provide for the development of affordable housing. Communities throughout the Region that provide sewer service should designate areas for multi-family housing at a density of at least 10 housing units (apartments) per acre, and allow two-bedroom apartments to be 800 square feet or smaller. This would provide market-rate (non-subsidized) housing for households with incomes between 50 and 80 percent of the Region median income (\$26,940 to \$43,104 per year). New single-family homes on lots of 10,000 square feet or smaller, with home sizes of 1,100 to 1,200 square feet, would provide for the development of market-rate housing affordable to households with incomes between 80 and 135 percent of the Region median income (\$43,104 to \$72,737).

SUBSIDIZED HOUSING

Housing subsidized by the government or housing developed by non-profit or faith-based organizations would likely be necessary to provide decent and affordable housing for households with incomes less than 50 percent of the Region's median income (less than \$26,940). This is particularly true of housing for families that would require two or more bedrooms. Over 187,000 households, or 24 percent of households in the Region, have incomes of 50 percent or less than the Region's median income. In 2011, there were 45,676 subsidized housing units and housing vouchers in the Region, or about 25 percent of the potential need.



The preliminary plan recommends additional Federal funding for housing vouchers. It also recommends that State law be changed to recognize housing vouchers as a lawful source of income to help provide housing for lower-income households.

FAIR HOUSING/OPPORTUNITY

The concentration of minority and low-income populations in the Region's central cities (Kenosha, Milwaukee, and Racine) has been a continuing challenge with several negative effects. These include decreased access to jobs in outlying areas for central city residents in need of employment. Many more minority households have low incomes compared to non-minority households, which limits housing choices.

Additional lower- and/or moderate-cost housing is recommended by the preliminary plan in communities with sanitary sewer service throughout the Region. This would increase housing opportunities for minority and low-income households near major employment centers outside central cities. It would also provide opportunities for minority and low-income households to live in areas with better schools and safer neighborhoods.

JOB/HOUSING BALANCE

Several communities outside the central cities of Kenosha, Milwaukee, and Racine currently have industrial and commercial job centers, or have adopted comprehensive plans that propose industrial and commercial growth. The housing plan found that many of these communities have not designated enough areas for the development of lower-cost housing (multi-family housing) and/or moderate-cost housing (smaller single-family homes on modest-sized lots) to provide housing for the workers at these jobs in their communities.

The preliminary plan recommends that communities with sewer service change their plans and/or zoning ordinances to allow additional multi-family and modest single-family housing if they have more low- and moderate-wage jobs than apartments and moderate-cost homes.

ACCESSIBLE HOUSING

It is estimated that there are up to 61,640 multi-family housing units in the Region constructed since 1991 that may be accessible to persons with disabilities, due to Federal and State fair housing laws. These laws require newer multi-family housing to be accessible to persons in wheelchairs by providing features such as zero-step entrances and wider doorways and halls. In 2010, about 169,000 households in the Region reported a member with a disability, which shows

a large need for additional accessible housing. Housing affordability is also a concern to persons with disabilities, whose annual average income is about half the income of a person without a disability.

Preliminary plan recommendations call for additional multi-family housing to help persons with disabilities obtain housing that would be both accessible and more affordable.

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PROJECTED JOB/HOUSING IMBALANCES IN SEWERED COMMUNITIES IN THE SOUTHEASTERN WISCONSIN REGION: 2035

