

## HOUSING AS A HUMAN RIGHT RESOLUTION

Whereas, in 2009 in Dane County, 2,413 individuals in families were turned away from shelter; 92 percent of those were individuals with families. 94 percent of turned-away families were rejected due to lack of shelter space or lack of funds to pay for motel vouchers; and

Whereas, in 2009, 3901 individuals stayed at least one night in a Dane County homeless shelter program; and

Whereas, these resource limitations mean families with children can only stay in shelter up to 90 days and have a 180 life-time limit; and

Whereas, in 2009, 29 percent of families and 30 percent of single women reported “the threat or fear of violence” as the reason they were seeking shelter; and

Whereas, in 2008, 776 children attending schools in Madison were homeless; and

Whereas, homelessness impacts a disproportionate number of people of color in Dane County, with 71 percent in shelters identifying as non-white (people of color) and African Americans the largest minority group; 83 percent of families, 64 percent of single women, 54 percent of single men and 48 percent of unaccompanied youth identified as non-white (people of color); and

Whereas, in the U.S., 20-40 percent of homeless youth identify as lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, transgender and/or queer (LGBTQ), while only 3-5 percent of the overall youth population identifies as LGBTQ; 44 percent of gay homeless youth are African-American and 26 percent of gay homeless youth identify as Latino; 62 percent of transgender youth homeless are African-American and 20 percent of transgender homeless youth are Latino; and LGBTQ youth are twice as likely to be the victims of sexual crimes while homeless; and

Whereas, in 2009, 69 persons in the Dane County shelter system were 62 years and older, and AARP reports that in the U.S. in 2001 18 percent of homeowners and 38 percent of renters over the age of 65 spent more than one-half of their monthly income on housing; and

Whereas, in the U.S., the National Coalition for the Homeless recorded over a thousand incidents of crimes committed against homeless individuals due to the housed offender’s bias against the victim’s housing status between 1998-2009; and in 2009 alone, 43 homeless men and women lost their lives to such violence; and

Whereas, in 2007, the Dane County Enhanced Youth Gang Prevention Task Force listed “accessible and affordable housing” as one of their prevention strategies and recognized that “stable and affordable housing is foundational to family stability and gang prevention”; and

Whereas, in 2009, the Dane County Task Force on Racial Disparities in the Criminal Justice System reported “ex-offenders returning to the community after prison face great difficulty obtaining stable housing, employment, support, and treatment” which is “instrumental in avoiding re-incarceration”; and

Whereas, in 2009, the Dane County Task Force on Poverty’s 2009 report identified “seeking housing” as one of the underlying problems for Dane County citizens in poverty; and

Whereas, Madison Gas & Electric reports the rental vacancy rate for multi-family real estate in the Madison area for the second quarter of 2011 is only 3.54 percent, which is down from 4.72 percent in 2010 and only half of what it was in 2005, which enabled owners to spike rents by 17.82 percent from May 2010 to May 2011; and

Whereas, a Dane County renter making minimum wage (\$7.25/hr. or \$15,080 annually) would, paying no more than 30 percent of their income towards rent, have to work 79 hours per week to afford rent for a one-bedroom rental unit (\$742), 93 hours for a two-bedroom (\$877) and 125 for a three-bedroom (\$1177) rental unit; and

Whereas, an affordable rent amount for a Dane County renter whose sole source of income is SSI (\$757/month or \$9,084 annually with state supplement) is \$227, which is \$515 less than the fair market rent for a one-bedroom unit; and

Whereas, an affordable rent amount for a Dane County renter whose sole source of income is W-2 (\$653/month or \$7,836 annually) is \$202, which is \$675 less than the fair market rent for a two-bedroom unit; and

Whereas, 52% of Dane County renters are unable to afford a two-bedroom unit at fair market rent; and

Whereas, federal funding for subsidized housing has plummeted in the last thirty years, from \$80 billion in 1978 to \$34 billion in 2006; and

Whereas, the CDA waiting list for the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher rent assistance program has been closed since April 1, 2003 (when it only briefly opened pursuant to a lottery system) and public housing waitlist times range from twelve months to over three years; and

Whereas, publicly subsidized redevelopment, blight elimination and gentrification can cause a net reduction in low-income housing units and displacement of low-income tenants if adequate protections for those tenants and low-income units are not put in place; and

Whereas, we are experiencing a national housing crisis due to a record number of mortgage foreclosures and an extreme shortage of affordable housing. The Madison area

is no exception with a record number of foreclosures in 2010 and over 30 percent of Dane County homes in or near foreclosure in early 2011; and

Whereas, our efforts to improve housing opportunity and tenant protection at the local level are under attack by our state legislature which seeks to preempt decades of our hard work on housing issues; and

Whereas, the U.S. has ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD), which requires the government to eliminate all racially discriminatory effects of government laws and rules; and

Whereas, the City of Madison and Dane County, as recipients of federal funds for housing and development, has an obligation to affirmatively further fair housing; and

Whereas, Dane County has made it illegal to discriminate against people in housing based on race, gender, age, color, religion, national origin or ancestry, marital status, family status, mental illness, physical condition, appearance, lawful source of income, student status, arrest record or conviction record, sexual orientation, less than honorable discharge, political beliefs and social security number disclosure and the City of Madison has further protections in place based on someone's status of domestic partnership; gender identity; genetic identity; citizenship status; status as a victim of domestic abuse, sexual assault, or stalking; and

Whereas, studies have documented the perception of discrimination among Latinos. In a 2008 Pew Hispanic Center survey, one in seven Latinos nationwide said they had trouble in the previous year finding or keeping a job because of their ethnicity. One in ten reported the same about finding or keeping housing; and

Whereas, the Southern Poverty Law Center found that among Latinos surveyed, 70 percent said they have experienced racism in finding housing. Another 20 percent were "unsure"; and

Whereas, immigrants are more likely to face barriers to enforcing their housing rights including language barriers, cultural mistrust, fear of government agencies, fear of retaliation, lack of familiarity with applicable laws, and lack of familiarity with judicial and administrative procedures for enforcing their rights; and

Whereas, unstable housing causes children to suffer from slowed development, emotional problems, and underachievement in education; and

Whereas, the Commission on People with Disabilities has identified increased development of accessible housing as a priority; and

Whereas, studies have shown that the most important piece of a person getting stabilized from struggles with employment, addiction, mental health issues, and physical health is by having stable long-term housing as a first step; and

Whereas, unemployment and poverty are systematic problems, and individuals should not be blamed for the lack of income or stability to maintain housing; and

Whereas, in 2006, the Dane County Homeless Services Consortium developed a Community Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness in Dane County; and

Whereas, the U.S. has ratified the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), giving it the force of law, which protects individuals from discrimination based on property and economic status; and

Whereas, the UN Human Rights Committee has asked our government to take “adequate and adequately implemented” measures to remedy the human rights abuse of having a 12 percent African-American population though African Americans make up 50 percent of all homeless in the U.S.; and

Whereas, the United States has signed onto the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which provides that “Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including ... housing ...”; and

Whereas, the human right to housing includes legal security of tenure, availability of services and infrastructure, affordability, habitability, accessibility, location, and cultural adequacy; and

Whereas, we join the efforts of Washington D.C., Cook County, IL, Minneapolis, New York City and Los Angeles to recognize and progressively realize the human right to housing at the local level.

Therefore be it resolved that housing be recognized as a human right and that all people who desire a place of shelter and stable long-term housing be prioritized by the City and County to have this basic need met both temporarily and permanently.

Be it further resolved that the City of Madison and Dane County recommit and will affirmatively act on the goals in their comprehensive plans that call for the availability of safe, decent, sanitary and distinctive housing for all residents as well as the objectives and policies that accompany that goal.

Be it further resolved that the City of Madison and Dane County also recommit and will affirmatively work on the goals and objectives in the Community Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness in Dane County.

Be it further resolved that the City of Madison Housing Committee and Dane County provide an annual report by July 1 of each year that tracks and assesses the affordable and accessible housing needs in Dane County by community.

Be it further resolved that the City of Madison Housing Committee along with the County Health and Human Needs Committee create a plan with recommendations by July 1, 2012 for strategies to provide those housing units and shelter beds in those communities at appropriate affordability levels, including ensuring that enough accessible housing is available.

Be it further resolved that the City of Madison and Dane County explore creative uses of the public (ex. TIF, the Affordable Housing Trust Fund, federal, state and local government funds) and private dollars to provide a variety of increased affordable housing, accessible housing and shelter beds, as identified in the plan above and achieve a one-to-one replacement of affordable housing removed from the community and ensure relocation costs or the right to return for those displaced.

Be it further resolved that the City of Madison and Dane County create plans to affirmatively further fair housing as required by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

Be it further resolved that the joint City of Madison and Dane County Committee review the issues and solutions generated by the Peoples Affordable Housing Vision participants and implement those policy changes as appropriate and that the final recommendations of that group be used as a platform for change.

Be it finally resolved that the City of Madison Housing Committee and Dane County Health and Human Needs committee recommend policies to prevent foreclosures, evictions, utility shut-offs and criminalization of homelessness, to help stabilize people in their housing and remove barriers to prevent people from creating their own shelter.