

CITY OF MADISON PRESENTATION – AFFORDABLE HOUSING AND EQUITY
by Sheray Wallace and Southwest Madison Partners and Neighbors – January 2017

1. Introductions and Opening Remarks – Sheray Wallace

- a. We want to share what is happening in southwest Madison – stories and patterns
- b. We support the City addressing the big need for more affordable housing as a priority.
- c. We ask that the City (and others) look at other ways to do more to stabilize families in housing by changing policies and practices in several areas. That's our focus today.

2. Context - Mike Bruce with Helene Nelson & Sheray Wallace

- a. Families are “churning” in and out of homelessness and housing instability, often invisible to the homeless service system. This is due to market conditions combined with laws favorable to landlords and other factors. Even very good low income tenants can lose housing through no fault of their own and have trouble getting new housing.
- b. Re-entering new housing is nearly impossible for people with any “complicating” factors who lose housing. “Complicating factors” include having children, having disabilities, race, section 8 status, etc. as well as past financial/credit/housing/legal problems – common for many of our neighbors.
- c. Addressing housing instability is essential for children, the families, neighborhoods and our City to thrive in safety and well-being. It's a key platform for overcoming racial disparities in many areas of community life.
- d. Local and county government policies & practices can help or hinder vulnerable families.

3. Orchard Village (new private landlord) - Stories

- a. April – with Mike Bruce
- b. Angela – with Sheray Wallace
- c. Maddie – with Mike Bruce
- d. Some common themes and stumbling blocks in re-housing families – Mike Bruce

4. Recommendations

- a. See housing as an equity issue & priority. Foster fair housing in “real world” conditions.
- b. Conduct a collaborative review of Section 8 and other CDA policies and practices and related opportunities. *How would policy and practice change if we set a priority goal of sustaining families in housing or expediting their rapid re-housing to the extent possible?*
- c. Identify some “low hanging fruit” where simple policy changes will eliminate some of the barriers faced by struggling families.

5. Find new ways to encourage and assist landlords to work with tenants, including very low income tenants, fairly and positively. Consider how the City ordinance enforcement and policy practices can be consistently more helpful.

EXAMPLES – OPPORTUNITIES TO PROMOTE HOUSING STABILITY AS A PRIORITY
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- 1) Problem solve with families on Section 8 when their leases are non-renewed. Recognize the difficulty of finding new housing, and the one-time costs families face in the process.
 - a. Be flexible about timing to locate new housing in this market.
 - b. Don't insist on full payment of utility bills, etc. (if MGE will be flexible, allow the families the right to work out payment plans themselves).
 - c. Be available and responsive to families in this crisis situation; exercise available discretion that's available to solve problems.
 - d. Look for policy tweaks to help families "fit" into available housing, for example, rules on children sharing bedrooms
 - e. Continue to increase flexible funds to prevent evictions and assist with one-time re-housing costs.
- 2) Make it easier for families to get into and keep housing by changing policies and using reasonable discretion in public housing and other affordable housing that can be leveraged by City guidance (e.g. projects built with tax credits).
 - a. Analyze non-renewal and eviction cases to look for patterns and assess alternative approaches.
 - b. Review detailed policy input from housing case managers in homeless service agencies, JFF workers, Legal Action of WI and others re: screening and property management.
 - c. Look for low hanging fruit – possible examples:
- 3) Look at different ways to keep families in housing and families intact when one family member (youth or adult) is accused/convicted of a crime or other "disruptive" behaviors.
 - a. Currently when a youth or parent gets in trouble, housing for the whole family is threatened (section 8, police, public housing and private landlord policies and practices). Police and others encourage evictions/nonrenewals even before arrests. Look at best practices for how "systems" work together for good outcomes and second/third chances with supports needed to succeed.
 - b. Look for low hanging fruit to change property management guidelines that may be too demanding or address problems that could be solved other ways. Possible example- landlords saying kids can't play outdoors and if they do, asking families to leave.
- 4) Look at initiatives to promote "fair housing" and better understanding by landlords and tenants of their rights, and "prevention" or "early intervention" approaches.
- 5) Look for ways beyond building large new affordable housing projects to create affordability at a greater scale for low income individuals and families given the market.