

HOUSING NEEDS IN MILWAUKEE

Community & Client Needs

In addition to the funding, planning and capacity-building needs of organizations, four main housing needs which were of general concern to several organizations and which cut across several different geographic areas and/or clientele groups were mentioned, often by both housing and social service providers. These four needs are described below.

Concern about the housing implications of W-2, welfare reform, currently taking place in Wisconsin.

The concerns raised in relationship to this varied depending on the focus of the organization. Shelter care providers and those trying to prevent homelessness were concerned because they noted increasing numbers of families seeking shelter or at the brink of homelessness. Those involved in mental health issues noted an increased need to counsel individuals and families who were doubling and tripling up because of the stresses associated with many people living together in a small space. Neighborhood organizations were concerned because they were seeing increasing numbers of large female-headed families (with more than three children) forced to live in unsafe housing because they only received \$600 per month for their W-2 work regardless of the size of their family. The local apartment managers association was concerned about an increase in evictions which is related to the uncertainty of income for W-2 participants.

Need for affordable rental units for large families needing three or more bedrooms.

This issue was mentioned by those trying to help homeless families find housing and also in relationship to W-2 participants trying to find safe, affordable housing for their families.

Need for safe and supportive neighborhood based transitional housing for single women leaving drug and alcohol treatment and/or criminal incarceration.

Currently space in this type of transitional housing is very limited in Milwaukee. Treatment programs are typically relatively short and women often need the support of others in a healthy, safe environment so that they are not tempted to return to previous dangerous and destructive situations. In addition, these women sometimes are trying to regain custody of their children. Safe, supportive housing helps show child-welfare caseworkers that they are able to provide a good, stable home for their children and increases the chance they will regain custody of their children.

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Much inner-city neighborhood stabilization work remains to be done

Many neighborhood organizations are involved in neighborhood stabilization efforts. These efforts take three forms. First, many organizations administer grants from the City to help low-income homeowners address deferred maintenance and code compliance issues. Second, many neighborhood organizations are aggressive in getting absentee landlords to perform building upkeep and maintain building appearance. Finally, a number of organizations work with City officials to determine which buildings in their neighborhood should be demolished and which buildings can be saved and rehabilitated. In some cases, these organizations take on these substantial rehabilitation projects to make deficient housing habitable.