



Wisconsin Affordable Housing Network Newsletter

November 2022

Wisconsin Affordable Housing Action Network Updates

Wisconsin lacks a coordinated voice on affordable housing. We want to be part of building a cross-sector advocacy and communication network across the state to focus on affordable rental and affordable owner-occupied housing. Housing issues are deep-rooted and complex with different solutions working better in different communities. We believe an effective coalition can be built upon strong local networks working to achieve housing goals at the local level. We also believe in using the energy of those efforts to inform work at a state and national level when opportunities arise.

Next Meeting

Thursday, December 1, 2022, from 9-10:00 a.m.

[Click Here to Join](#)

An agenda will be shared prior to the meeting. Follow this link to join the network: <https://www.wiscap.org/affordable-housing-advocacy>. Please share widely. We need your expertise and involvement to make good things happen!

WISCAP Visioning Sessions on Homelessness and Permanent Affordable Housing

WISCAP in partnership with [Wisconsin Coalition Against Homelessness](#), will be conducting multiple listening sessions throughout the state addressing homeless services and the need for affordable housing. We look forward to hearing from individuals experiencing homelessness and service providers on the current systems in place, potential system improvements, and how to address the lack of either permanent or transitional affordable housing options for low and extremely low-income renters. Our first listening session took place in Beloit in coordination with Community Action, Inc of Rock and Walworth Counties. (See below)

Additionally, at the Social Development Commission's annual Summit on Poverty, we were able to facilitate a discussion with some of Milwaukee's most engaged housing service providers and advocates. Furthermore, when speaking about the housing crisis in relation to the Milwaukee metro area, our conversation highlighted the conditions that foster higher disparities and steeper challenges for communities of color. We are having another session in Milwaukee on Thursday, December 15, at the Central Library (814 W Wisconsin Ave, Milwaukee). If your community would like to host a listening session and partner with WISCAP on this effort, please email WISCAP's Housing Specialist Marlo Fields at mfields@wiscap.org or 608-369-8880.

Please Join Our Upcoming Wisconsin Affordable Housing Action Network Meetings

These meetings take place the first Thursday of each month. To add these to your calendar click [here](#).

Beloit Affordable Housing Visioning Session Recap

Wisconsin is in a problematic quandary when it comes to affordable housing policy. Having two political parties that cannot collaborate on nearly any level presents huge challenges. Successful local collaborations can be developed as examples to replicate. With that aim in mind, WISCAP is partnering with the National Low Income Housing Coalition (NLIHC) and Wisconsin Coalition Against Homelessness to build an advocacy plan and infrastructure to support local and national issues as appropriate, while maintaining a readiness to help shape policy innovation on the state level. We are dedicated to system change and improvements for households struggling with stability in housing without being unduly financially burdened.

Accordingly, on October 4th WISCAP conducted an interactive listening session on homeless services and affordable housing in Beloit. The event, coordinated with Community Action Inc. of Rock and Walworth Counties (CAI), was hosted at their beautiful Eclipse Center Gymnasium.

WISCAP provided an overview of national and statewide housing shortages and what that means for Wisconsin's lowest-income earners. CAI executive director Marc Perry and Community Programs Director Elizabeth Knapp-Spooner spoke to the unique challenges facing Rock and Walworth counties and what housing services CAI provides. Additionally, we were joined by Representative Mark Spreitzer of WI-Assembly District 45 which includes Beloit, who spoke about the statewide hurdles in anti-poverty and affordable housing legislation.

The most meaningful portion of the event took place when we opened the floor to attendees. We learned that Beloit has a task force on housing, and we look forward to working with them and hopefully getting them involved in our statewide network. The night's highlight was when a woman shared with the group about her time being homeless and what not having housing can mean to a person's sense of worth; how society can cast out our most vulnerable populations, reducing them to their circumstances and life decisions. Her testimony and volunteer work with Beloit's homeless population showed the power of peer-based support services. We are happy to report that this individual is now an active participant in Janesville's homeless population and part of CAI's board!

These personal testimonies are what is needed for our movement to gather traction. Even "experts" on the statistics facing low-income renters/homeowners can sometimes become numb to the dehumanizing experience of homelessness and the cascading effects on those living through it and our society.

To learn more about our time at Beloit, and to see what Andy looks like on television click [here](#). If you think your community could benefit from this type of session, please contact Marlo Fields or Andy Heidt (mfields@wiscap.org and aheidt@wiscap.org). We are looking forward to hosting events in Central Wisconsin and Milwaukee in the next few months!

Poverty Matters Conference Summary

WISCAP hosted its annual Poverty Matters from October 18-19. The event was attended by over 240 community leaders, service providers, and other individuals from around the state, who came to learn new strategies and build stronger networks to combat poverty.

From rural housing to weatherization, there was no shortage of housing and advocacy sessions at the conference. Click [here](#) to see the session descriptions and access the presentation materials.

At the rural housing panel Wally Orzechowski, Executive Director of the [Southwestern Wisconsin Community Action Program](#) spoke about their partnership with [Cinnaire](#) to leverage USDA and LIHTC funds to manufacture the first-of-its-kind rural farmworker housing in Lafayette County. Daniel Smith, President/CEO of the [Cooperative Network](#), emphasized the need to use non-traditional housing models such as co-operative housing to pull ourselves out of the housing crisis and save rural communities.

Two plenary sessions focused on housing: HUD Midwest Regional Administrator Diane Shelly kicked off the opening session of the conference, and on day 2 attendees heard from Christopher Fay of Homestretch, a program out of Falls Church, Virginia, which empowers homeless families with children to attain permanent housing and self-sufficiency.

Three experts from [Couleecap](#), [DEHCR](#), and [National Community Action Partnership \(NCAP\)](#) spoke on the impact that Wisconsin's weatherization efforts, their efforts help lower energy costs, reduce greenhouse emissions, and most importantly, give a sense of comfort to thousands of low-income Wisconsin households.

One of the more insightful sessions was How to Engage your Elected Officials. Representative Mark Pocan's Outreach Manager, Calvin Boldebuck spoke about what congressional services are available to constituents and how to reach out to staff about a given issue. Milwaukee housing advocate Kat Klawes spoke about her advocacy work and her eight steps for successful advocacy. Finally, lobbyist Gary Goyke spoke of the importance of engaging and making essential connections with legislative staff within offices, not just elected officials.

Next year's conference will be held September 27-28 in La Crosse!

Faith Community Summit on Affordable Housing

Faith communities in Dane County are invited to a [Faith-Based Housing Summit](#) on January 31st from 8:30-2:00 pm at Orchard Ridge UCC (1501 Gilbert Rd, Madison) for a conversation about how you can be involved in creating and supporting affordable housing. Speakers include Prof Kurt Paulsen of UW Madison on the state of housing in Wisconsin, Rev. Mark Elsdon of Rooted Good & Pres House on the faith communities' call and assets they can bring to this conversation, and Don Bernards of Baker Tilly on logistics to think about as you enter work around affordable housing. There will also be a time to network and for those gathered to brainstorm actions the faith community can take together to address the need for affordable housing in Dane County.

[Register Here](#)

We want to hear from YOU

Please send us your articles, announcements, and events as they relate to affordable housing in your community. Working together we can impact permanent affordable housing in Wisconsin!

[Click Here to Join](#)