

Addressing the Challenges of Dilapidated and  
Substandard Housing in Stevens County, MN

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Beyond simply providing shelter, quality housing contributes to communities' long-term neighborhood stability, economic vitality, and sustains robust tax bases. Broadly defined, dilapidated housing is any state of disrepair resulting from owner misuse or neglect. Severely dilapidated properties result in unsafe living conditions, creating public safety concerns. Dilapidated and substandard housing impacts overall neighborhood appearance, quality, and property values. In rural communities, dilapidated housing can be a barrier to redevelopment resulting in uneven development patterns of new development activity on the periphery of towns leaving the core city or township in a state of underinvestment and decline.

At the generous invitation of University of Minnesota – Morris' Center for Small Towns (CST), our team was asked to broadly examine housing challenges and opportunities in Stevens County, Minnesota of which the City of Morris is the County Seat and in which the University and CST are located. The report is being prepared with the following objectives: 1.) Identifying existing laws, policies, and economic resources available to assist local governments and city managers in these communities address the challenges of dilapidated and substandard housing; 2.) Identifying examples of existing strategies successfully undertaken by rural communities elsewhere in addressing the challenge of dilapidated and substandard housing, 3.) Exploring opportunities to create a housing inventory based on identified housing preservation best practices utilizing a community engagement model, 4.) Exploring opportunities to employ a preventative strategy aimed at identifying future properties at-risk of becoming dilapidated through the implementation of a property "early warning

system”, 5.) Making recommendations with regard to potential new strategies (ordinances, legislation, programs) applicable to Stevens County, Minnesota.

The principal request of Center for Small Towns (CST) was to produce a list of relevant resources that could be leveraged within the City of Morris and Stevens County to help address challenges related to dilapidated and substandard housing. Though the list of potential resources and funding agencies is long, the funding amounts are limited and highly competitive. These funding programs are often short-lived which limits the long-term usefulness that creating a housing resources list might provide.

Concerns related to housing quality in and around Stevens County and the City of Morris were universal across all of our interviews with public officials as well as engaged community leaders. The issue of housing quality appears to have gained a wide range of awareness and support across numerous stakeholders suggesting a present opportunity within Stevens County and the City of Morris to initiate a collaborative effort to strategically address housing-related concerns. A State of Minnesota Office of the Legislative Auditor (OLA) report from April, 2003 titled *A Best Practices Review: Preserving Housing* presents a useful framework for communities to examine their specific housing needs. The purpose of this OLA report was to conduct a comprehensive review of housing preservation best practices to help cities and counties identify the most efficient and effective strategies to address housing challenges within their community. Creating a housing inventory to determine community housing needs and providing access to housing information were identified as two key best practices.

Creating a housing inventory using a community engagement model has shown to have positive community impacts both in terms of community awareness and

community ownership of the overall quality of its housing stock. The *Small Town Planning Handbook* produced by the American Planning Association might serve as a useful guide and resource to Stevens County and City of Morris in establishing formal housing condition criteria. In addition, the West Virginia Community Development Hub has developed its Toolkit for Dilapidated Properties representing a useful framework to consider community engagement strategies.

Our team's research also yielded an "early warning system" prevention strategy aimed at identifying at-risk properties of future housing distress based on predictive financial criteria. In examining the dilapidated housing cycle, it is helpful to break it down into three stages; 1.) Psychological abandonment, 2.) Financial abandonment and 3.) Physical abandonment. It is possible to measure aspects of financial abandonment as a result of property tax delinquencies and other established data elements.

Our research team's core recommendation for Stevens County and the City of Morris involves creating and building a sustained housing inventory as an OLA identified best practice. The housing inventory should be implemented through a collaborative, community-based engagement model based on the Vacant and Dilapidated Housing Toolkit developed by West Virginia Community Development Hub. Implementing an "early warning system" to identify at-risk properties of housing distress based property tax delinquency and other city and county data in a simple and cost effective way represents an opportunity to inform the housing inventory effort and facilitate the other OLA identified best practice of distributing housing information.



## **INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT**

### **Introduction to the Problem of Dilapidated Housing in Rural Communities**

Dilapidated and substandard housing poses unique challenges to rural communities and small towns (defined herein as having populations of less than approximately 5,000). Existing housing stock in rural communities is typically older, requiring additional maintenance and repairs. In addition, older properties typically have lower market values and are often occupied by households with lower levels of income. The limited market values of these properties can make the costs of more significant repairs infeasible and lower income households who may occupy these properties often lack sufficient resources necessary to pay for improvements to the property.

The population of many rural communities is declining and the residents who remain are aging. Aging residents have different housing and service needs. Aging homeowners may experience physical limitations in their ability to maintain their properties.

The causes, impacts, and responses to the challenges of dilapidated and substandard housing are generalized across a majority of rural communities. Housing development challenges faced by rural communities do not receive the same level of attention and, more importantly, resources within the state as do their urban counterparts. Rural counties and city governments struggle with a lack of sufficient financial and human resources to effectively identify, intervene, and remedy instances of dilapidated and substandard housing.

### **Dilapidated Housing Definition and Criteria**

Assessments of what is a suitable condition for houses will vary from community to community, even from person to person. According to the staff at the Center for Small Towns, these standards vary significantly even within Stevens County. A home that would be considered uninhabitable to a family who is considering moving into the county may be considered a suitable residence to students at the University of Minnesota-Morris who are just looking for a place to rent during the school year. In other words, what is considered 'dilapidated' in layperson's terms is subjective.

It is important, however, to develop objective metrics to assess the condition of housing in order to develop a workable approach to deal with structures that have fallen into disrepair. Programs and strategies that would work to bring an older structure that was only recently abandoned back into a condition to make it marketable to home buyers are not the same as those that would be appropriate for a dwelling that has been vacant over many years and which may have also been the scene of fire, criminal activity, or other undesirable events. Communities that have surveyed their housing and developed housing plans are likely to have refined those definitions. For instance, Palm Beach County in Florida references three categories in their housing study: substandard, deteriorated, and dilapidated. Substandard residences are those that have violations of housing and building codes; deteriorated homes require significant repairs to address structural, environmental or aesthetic problems; dilapidated homes are considered to be homes with the most serious problems which are unsafe and cannot be repaired. (Palm Beach County, 2006).

Smaller communities, like those in western Minnesota, may lack formalized building codes, and do not have full-time staff to inspect properties and make judgments about the severity of the disrepair in their community's housing (Daniels, 2007). City of Morris City Manager, Blaine Hill confirmed the city currently relied on part-time staff to manage its building inspections (B. Hill, personal communication, July 8, 2013). More specific criteria may be desired by these communities in order to properly assess the condition of their housing supply and determine a course of action with criteria that can be evaluated from a visual inspection. The following criteria, adopted from *The Small Town Planning Handbook*, which is produced by the American Planners Association, may be used by communities in assessing houses (Daniels, 2007).

1. Substandard – minor violations. Defects would include cracking, peeling or missing paint; slightly damaged porches, steps with sagging or cracked boards or concrete; windows with cracked or broken panes; exterior walls that show wood that is either cracked or a small amount of rotted board, or cracked or slightly worn masonry and; a few shingles missing from the roof. These structures are typically safe for habitation, but without attention these problems could move from being an aesthetic concern to one of safety for the residents.
2. Substandard – major violations. This would include a house that has three or more of the minor defects as well as those that need work that would not be considered to be routine maintenance. The primary goal of repairing these structures is to make them safe for the occupants. Other than multiple minor violations, these dwellings would also have the following characteristics: porches with broken or missing railings and supports; major damage to the steps such as holes or missing boards that

could cause people to fall; windows with missing panes, covered by boards or badly damaged frames; exterior walls with extensive cracks and rotten boards and holes of less than one foot that do not extend to the interior of the home, or bricks that are missing and holes of less than one foot; roofs with many shingles missing and holes of less than one-half foot that do not extend to the roof surface or; bricks missing from the chimney.

3. Dilapidated. Any home that has three or more defects in the substandard-major category should be considered dilapidated. This is housing that does not provide a safe or healthy shelter for residents, and for which rehabilitation is not economically feasible. Other criteria that would be considered dilapidated are: tilting, sagging foundation, collapsed porch, collapsed chimney, or fire damage.

In addition to visual inspection, records that show homes without adequate indoor plumbing and those where the residents have fallen behind on their taxes could potentially be dilapidated. Homes with a non-owner occupant, particularly if the owner resides outside of the community, can be at increased risk for falling into disrepair. Owner and occupant status should be included as a part of a community's assessment of their current housing stock to flag potential problems that could develop in the future.

### **Stevens County History and Governance**

Stevens County was founded in 1862 and is located in West Central Minnesota. The county covers 575 square miles containing 5 cities and 16 townships. 5



districts have been created within Stevens County, each with its own elected commissioner. These 5 elected commissioners comprise the Stevens County Board of Commissioners as the final authoritative representative governing body for the county.

The Board is responsible for establishing policies, budgets, and taxes for Stevens County. In addition, Stevens County appoints a County Coordinator who serves as principal intermediary between the Board and other county departments, residents, and media.

Stevens County has an elected Auditor / Treasurer whose responsibilities include billing and collection of property taxes and an appointed County Assessor responsible for assessing taxable market values annually. An additional function of the County Assessor's office is to maintain an assessment on housing conditions for all homes based on a visual inspection that is updated every three years (Finzel, 2008). These county functions have been identified as possible resources to inform this project.

Other county departments of note in relation to this project include the Environmental Services / Planning & Zoning Department. This department oversees a broad array of responsibilities including the county recycling program, septic system permitting and inspections as well as agricultural oversight of feedlot and manure storage permitting and related ordinances. The Environmental Services / Planning & Zoning Department is responsible for enforcing the Stevens County Zoning Ordinance whose jurisdiction applies to all land and every building within Stevens County outside the limits of incorporated municipalities. This department also administers the Natural Resource Block Grant (NRBG) and Agricultural Best Management Practices Loan Program.

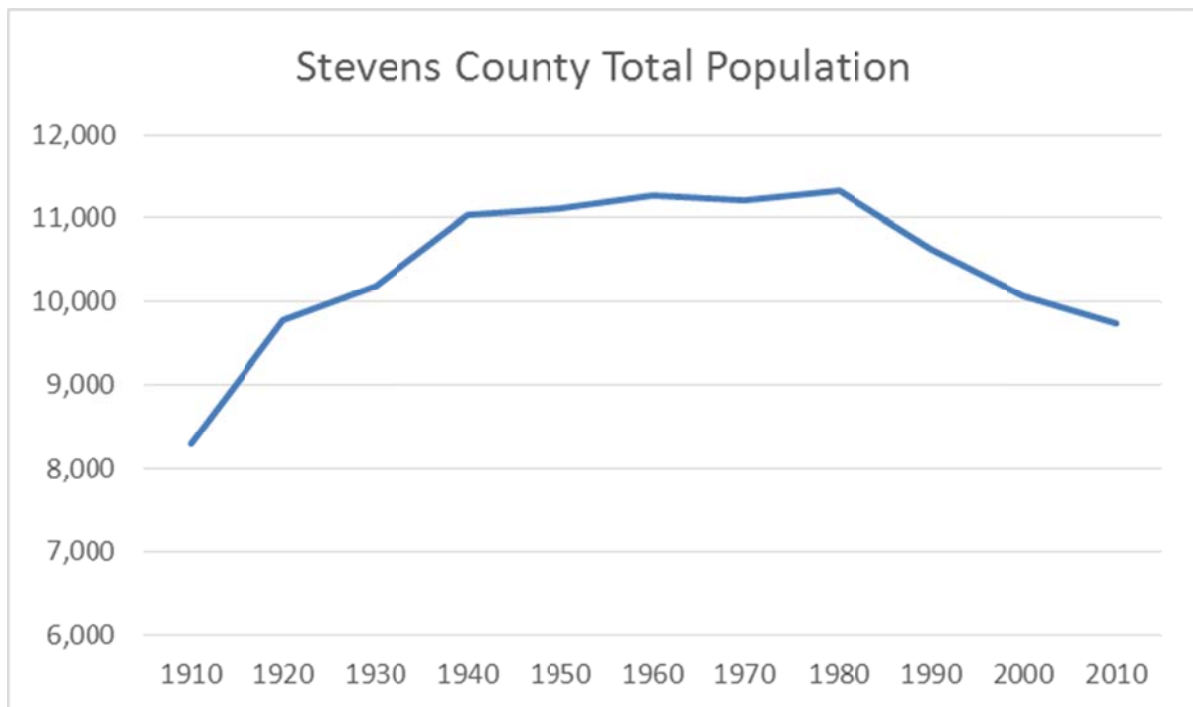
The Housing and Redevelopment Authority of Stevens County was formed in 1977 by the Stevens County Board of Commissioners with a mission to “serve the citizens of Stevens County by ensuring that all Stevens County residents have access to decent, safe, sanitary, and affordable housing; revitalizing and maintaining neighborhoods; forming effective partnerships to maximize social and economic opportunities; and providing business and economic development opportunities.” The Stevens County HRA owns a 14-unit Section 42 rental building located in Morris. The HRA also administers tenant-focused rental assistance programs such as Section 8 Rental Assistance and its Revolving Loan Fund, aimed at providing security deposit loans to tenants. In addition, the HRA administers Tax Increment Financing and Revenue Bonds for both housing and economic development. The HRA administers an Owner-Occupied Housing Repair Program to assist income qualified homeowners finance property repairs as well as the Rental Repair Program.

Stevens County also has recently added dedicated staff in building and maintaining a Geographic Information Systems (GIS) department. This department is responsible for maintaining relevant GIS data throughout the county such as parcel data and other geographic data. This technology resource is becoming a much relied upon and valuable tool for communities to produce spatial analysis and inform strategic planning and decision-making. The growing GIS capacity of Stevens County represents a valuable asset and tool to inform this project.

### **Demographic Profiles - Stevens County**

According to 2010 U.S. Census, Stevens County has a total population of 9,726 (U.S Census Bureau, 2010). This represents a 3.2% decline in population from the previous 2000 U.S. Census which reflected a total population of 10,053 for the entire

county (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000). Stevens County total population peaked at 11,322 in 1980 and has been declining consistently since then. The declining rural population of Stevens County represents a fundamental underlying structural challenge to any and all economic development in the region.



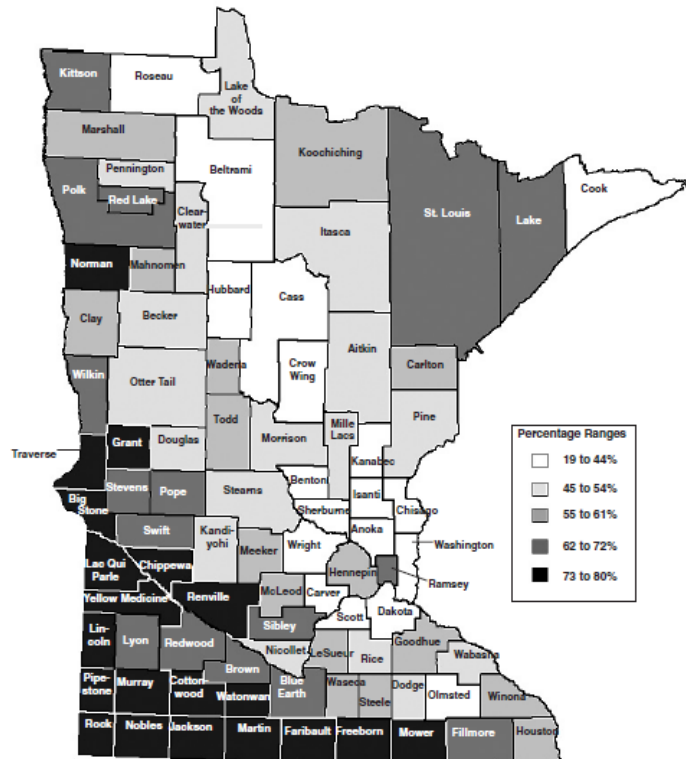
According to the U.S. Census Bureau's most recent 2007 – 2011 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Stevens County contains 4,161 total housing units. 89.9% of these units are estimated to be occupied which is comparable to the statewide average of 89.5%. Homeowner vacancy rate for Stevens County was 2.5% however which is noticeably higher than the statewide rate of 1.8% - a possible indicator that vacant and possibly abandoned properties are occurring at a higher rate proportionally within Stevens County as compared to the state as a whole (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012).

In its Best Practices Review: Preserving Housing report from 2003, the Office of the Legislative Auditor cited one underlying reason for the need to preserve housing was that “Minnesota’s housing stock is aging, and older housing requires reinvestments to keep it usable and marketable” (OLA, 2003). The problem is even greater in rural Minnesota. In Stevens County, for example, 48.8% of its housing units were built before 1960 as compared to 33.8% across the entire state (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012).

The OLA report highlights that housing that reaches 30 years of age be considered a significant milestone. It should be anticipated that properties by that time will incur significant costs related to replacement of major building systems such as furnaces and roofs. As of 2000, more than 50% of all housing units in Minnesota were over 30 years old. The accompanying map shows the highest concentrations of aging properties are located throughout the mostly rural southwest and west central regions of the state. Over 62% of housing units in Stevens County at that time were over 30 years old (OLA, 2003).

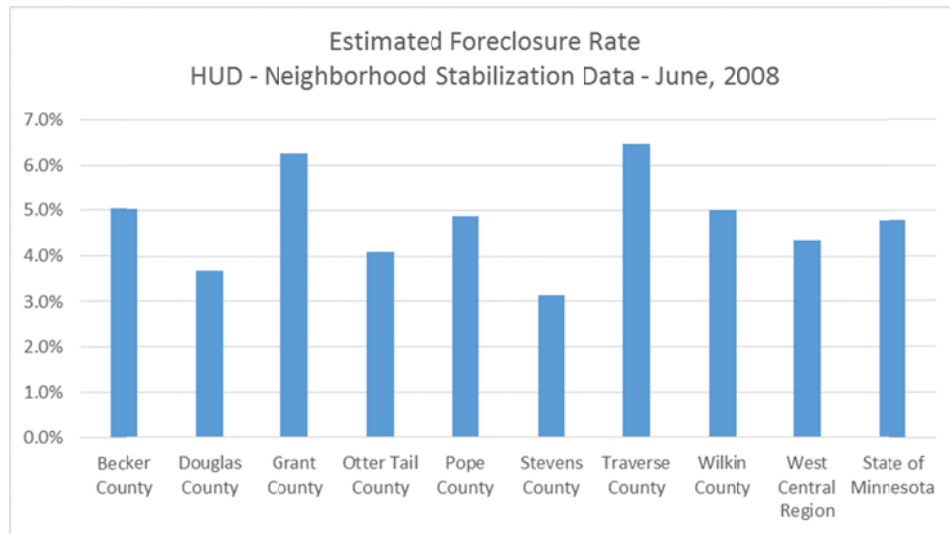


Percentage of Owner-Occupied Housing at Least 30 Years Old, 2000



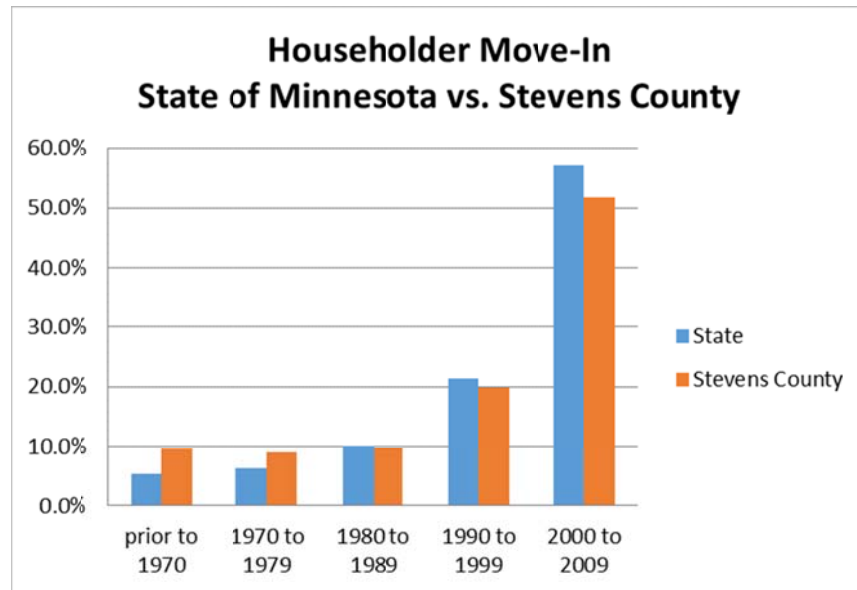
SOURCE: Office of the Legislative Auditor, analysis of U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Summary File 3: [http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/DatasetMainPageServlet?\\_ds\\_name=DEC\\_2000\\_SF3\\_U&\\_program=DEC&\\_lang=en](http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/DatasetMainPageServlet?_ds_name=DEC_2000_SF3_U&_program=DEC&_lang=en); accessed December 19, 2002.

Older housing stock typically has lower market values and is often occupied by households with lower incomes who may lack the financial capacity to make necessary improvements. In Stevens County, 39.6% of owner-occupied housing units have market values at or below \$100,000 compared to 14.8% statewide. Median household income for Stevens County is 6.2% lower than the statewide median. In Stevens County, 26.1% of households have annual incomes at or below \$25,000 compared to 14.4% of total households statewide (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012). Providing direct financial assistance and access to housing information are common ways government assists in housing preservation when private investment is insufficient on its own (OLA, 2003).



Foreclosure estimates produced by HUD during the peak foreclosure activity offer more favorable perspective on the general overall housing health of Stevens County in relation to the surrounding area and statewide. HUD produced its Neighborhood Stabilization Data foreclosure estimates over an 18-month period ending June, 2008. HUD analyzed foreclosure starts as reported by Mortgage Bankers Association National Delinquency Survey, incorporating additional data from federal agencies as diverse as the Federal Reserve and United States Postal Service, and aggregating its estimates at the state, county, and census tract level.

Foreclosure rate is a percentage derived from the number of foreclosures divided by the total number of mortgages. It is interesting to observe that Stevens County estimated foreclosure rate during this time was 3.1%. This is demonstrably better than surrounding counties. The West Central Region rate cumulatively was 4.4% with the statewide average at 4.8%.



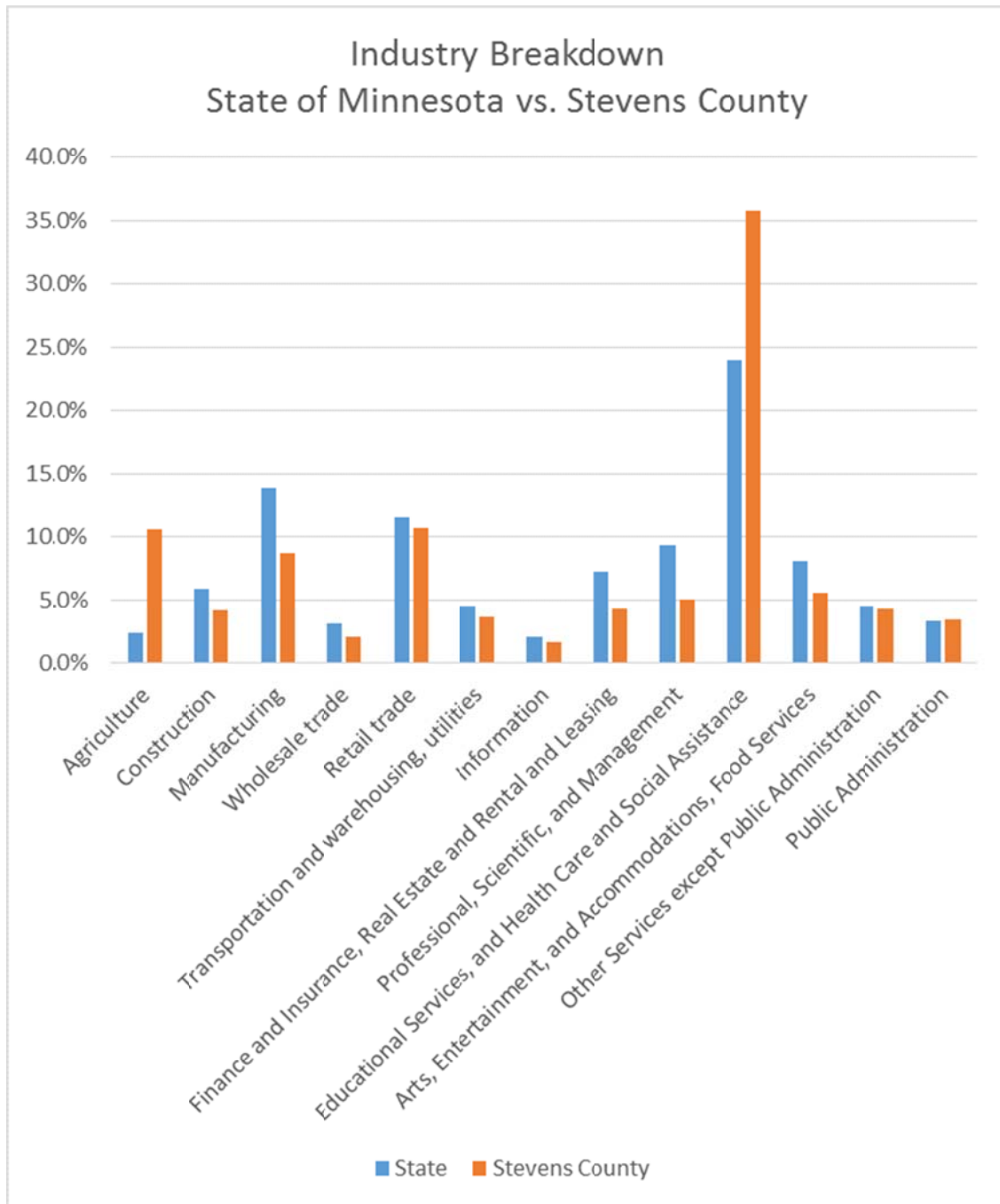
In Stevens County, 18.5% of its households moved into their current homes before 1980 - over 30 years ago - compared to 11.5% across the entire state (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012). This corroborates both the advancing age of its housing stock as well as its homeowners. An aging homeowner population has been cited as a contributing factor resulting in dilapidated housing due to physical limitations of an aging homeowner population in making needed repairs.

An aging homeowner population in rural communities presents some advantages as well, however. On a national level, mortgage-free homeownership is typically far more common in rural communities than urban communities. The Housing Assistance Council (HAC), a nationally-focused non-profit corporation based in Washington D.C. that promotes development of low-income housing to improve housing conditions for the rural poor published its 2012 report, *"Taking Stock: Rural People, Poverty, and Housing in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century."* According to this HAC report, "42 percent of homeowners in rural and small town America own their homes free and clear of mortgage debt, compared to roughly 27 percent of suburban and urban homeowners" and that these "higher levels of

mortgage-free homeownership are not insignificant statistics” (Housing Assistance Council, 2012).

Housing Assistance Council cites demographics and age factors as a key component influencing the more favorable mortgage status of rural homeowners. Mortgage debt typically declines over time resulting, ultimately, in higher rates of homeownership. Housing Assistance Council’s report states that on a national level “over three-quarters of rural homeowners age 65 and over own their own homes free and clear” (Housing Assistance Council, 2012).

Due in part as a result of the longer occupancy term of Stevens County residents, U.S. Census Bureau’s 2007 – 2011 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates – Housing Characteristics reveals that 49.8% of owner-occupied housing units in Stevens County do not have a mortgage compared to only 29.2% owner-occupied housing units statewide (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012). This finding seems to indicate that Stevens County homeowners may have equity in their homes to possibly secure repair and rehabilitation loan proceeds if such resources could be identified and made available to applicable homeowners.



Examining employment labor by industry sector in Stevens County as compared to the rest of the state indicates the most heavily weighted job sectors as occurring within the Agriculture and Educational and Health Care service industries. Given its rural location the abundance of agricultural-related jobs is to be expected. The

University of Minnesota – Morris campus coupled with an aging resident population would seem to explain the job concentration within the Educational and Health Care services sector.

The City of Morris in many respects should be considered on its own, separate and apart from county-wide trends. Despite a declining population across the entire county, the City of Morris population actually grew, adding 218 residents from 2000 to 2010 census. This represents a 4.3% population increase during that time. Morris' total population as of 2010 was 5,286 accounting for over 54% of the total population within Stevens County (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010).

Of Stevens County's 4,161 total housing units, 2,199 (52.9%) are located within the City of Morris. Most significantly, approximately 42% of housing units in the City of Morris are rental (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012). The proportion of rental housing units to ownership housing units in Morris is much higher than that of the county as a whole.

Overall, property deficiencies are more likely to occur in rental units than owner-occupied units. Results from the Morris-based COPC Partnership report from 2008, *Housing Costs and Employment*, indicated that in the City of Morris “non-homestead houses are older, smaller, of lower quality, and less valuable” (Finzel, 2008). Rental units of properties occupied by either the property owner or on-site management staff demonstrated better overall property condition than rental units where ownership or management did not maintain physical occupancy (OLA, 2003).

### **Stakeholder Analysis**

In order for the challenges of dilapidated housing to be addressed effectively in Stevens County everyone will need to be at the table and committed to creating a housing inventory through a community engagement strategy that sheds light on what

housing resources should be targeted by the local players. Certainly there is a role for the following organizations (and others that may be identified later) to play an active role in this process. The initial list of key organizations are: the West Central Initiative, Stevens County HRA, City of Morris officials, University of Minnesota – Morris faculty and students, West Central Minnesota Community Action, the greater Stevens County city and township leadership, local media, and interested citizen housing activists.

Our research has uncovered examples of how communities can be made stronger by tackling dilapidated and substandard housing and searching for solutions to improve these rundown properties. Certainly there is an increasing challenge of shrinking funding resources from the state and federal level but if the key stakeholders are united in addressing this issue we believe that the chances for success are improved considerably.

## **OVERVIEW OF RESOURCES, POLICIES, AND LAWS**

The primary request of Center for Small Towns (CST) was for the research team to provide to them a list of the resources to help address the challenges of dilapidated and substandard housing. We were also asked in an initial meeting to look at whether eminent domain could be a tool that a municipality could use to rid dilapidated housing from a community. Lastly we decided to analyze the funding changes to Local Government Aid (LGA) for the cities in Stevens County that took place between 2002 and 2012.

This section will not provide recommendations to CST but rather compiles all of the housing programs that are available to them; having said this we believe that in order for the municipalities to identify which funds match their needs best that they will need to develop a housing inventory by implementing a community engagement strategy. These two recommendations are discussed in other sections of this report so they will not be expanded on in this section.

### **Resources**

We will refer the reader to multiple appendices that detail the housing programs that are offered. Appendix 1 lists programs offered by the United States Department of Agriculture Rural Development. This agency offers 50% of all housing programs to small rural communities (Cowan, 2010).

Appendix 2 lists programs offered by the Minnesota Housing Finance Agency. According to the Minnesota Housing Finance Agency's 2012 Annual Report, the state invested over \$638 million in total housing assistance in 2012. State investments are disproportionately concentrated throughout the Twin Cities Metro Area, leaving outstate regions underserved in proportion to their share of cost burdened lower income



households. The West Central region represents the most underserved region in the state. Stevens County is located within the West Central region.

REGION	Burdened Lower Income Households	Investment (Average 2010 - 2012)	Funding Proportion
Twin Cities	53.6%	65.0%	121.3%
Southwest	5.1%	4.7%	92.2%
Northwest	3.2%	2.6%	81.3%
Southeast	13.0%	10.1%	77.7%
Central	13.5%	9.9%	73.3%
Northeast	7.2%	4.9%	68.1%
<b>West Central</b>	<b>4.5%</b>	<b>2.9%</b>	<b>64.4%</b>

Source: Minnesota Housing Finance Agency  
2012 Annual Report and Program Assessment

Appendix 3 lists programs offered by the Greater Minnesota Housing Fund. Appendix 4 lists programs offered by the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development.

### Local Government Aid (LGA)

Stevens County LGA Amounts 2002 to 2012			
City	Cert. 2002	Cert. 2012	BLS Inflation Adj. from '02
Alberta	16,582.00	28,357.00	\$21,162.47
Chokio	139,135.00	119,050.00	\$177,568.43
Donnelly	41,040.00	50,497.00	\$52,376.53
Hancock	184,654.00	231,189.00	\$235,661.20
Morris	1,717,992.00	2,110,244.00	\$2,192,555.06
Stevens County Subtotal	2,099,403.00	2,539,337.00	\$2,679,323.69

Source: Minnesota House Research Department

<http://www.house.leg.state.mn.us/hrd/lqahistout.aspx>

The cities within Stevens County saw their LGA reduced like many municipalities around Minnesota from 2002 to 2012. There were two inflection points for the cuts. One took place between 2002 and 2003 and the other took place between 2008 and 2012. Alberta was the only city in Stevens County that saw its 2012 LGA allotment surpass the inflation adjusted dollar amount it had in 2002. Every other city in the County had a 2012 LGA allotment that was less than they had in 2002 in inflation

adjusted dollars. This is not news to the local government players but it demonstrates in the simplest of terms the funding challenges the cities faced during this 10 year window.

### **Eminent Domain**

CST staff asked how eminent domain could be used by localities to remove rundown housing or remove problem property owners. Eminent Domain is the power of government to take land or property for public use. The Takings Clause of the 5<sup>th</sup> Amendment of the U.S. Constitution says government may not take land or property without just compensation. In 2005 the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in *Kelo vs. City of New London* that the city's economic development plan qualified as a public use within the Takings Clause. This caused the state of Minnesota and other states to clarify its laws regarding eminent domain in 2006. The result is that Minnesota law for eminent domain today states that it can only be used for public use or a public purpose and "public benefits of economic development, including an increase in tax base, tax revenues, employment, or general economic health, do not by themselves constitute a public use or public purpose" (Minnesota Legislative Reference Library, 2010).

Using eminent domain to condemn property is a very blunt policy tool that can lead to controversy and legal expense on the part of local governments. As such, it should only be used with great care. This view of the blunt nature of this tool was confirmed in discussions with local government leaders. Their response was that eminent domain is not necessary to address dilapidated housing because cities have code enforcement that can be applied to maintain a basic standard of the housing stock that is safe and healthy.

However, according to a July 30<sup>th</sup> CNNMoney story, the city of Richmond, California, has developed a creative use of eminent domain to stabilize their city from the harmful effects of housing foreclosure. Richmond is working with an investment firm to purchase mortgages at below market values from the holders of the loans and then restructure the loan payments so the homeowners can afford to stay in their homes. If negotiations fail then Richmond leaders have indicated they are willing to invoke eminent domain of the properties. This same strategy has been considered and rejected by the cities of Chicago, IL and San Bernadino, CA. It is a controversial idea that has led some to say it could cause lenders to avoid future loan origination in the City of Richmond (Christie, 2013). This is one example of how a city is choosing to use eminent domain law to stabilize their city and prevent it from fraying.

### **Ordinances**

There are steps that can be taken at the local level through the adoption and enforcement of the housing code and zoning. Burnet, TX is one example of how a city used their local housing code to incentivize construction of infill housing in a targeted section of its city core. As such, it should not be viewed as a recommendation from the research team as our primary recommendation is to develop a housing inventory through implementing a community engagement strategy, but it is included to provide insight and ideas about what other cities are doing around the nation to address their housing challenges through the municipal power to pass an ordinance.

The City of Burnet, Texas, passed an ordinance that “rebates 100% of water, sewer, and electric tap fees; building, plumbing, and electrical permit fees; HVAC unit fees; and plan review fees for home building. There’s a catch – rebates are available

only for qualifying lots in a targeted area” (Powell, Center for Rural Affairs). Please see Appendix 6 to read the ordinance that the City of Burnet passed to implement this rebate program. In an interview with City Manager David Vaughn he indicated that the program may save the builder \$3000 to \$4000 in building fees which can be foregone by the city or held and returned to the builder when construction of the housing is completed. The hope is that the revenue lost by the city will be recouped in expanding the future tax base. It is not a silver bullet to eradicate rundown housing but it can be an effective tool to encourage construction of infill housing at a city’s core.

### **West Central Initiative’s Role**

The West Central Initiative could also be turned to for assistance along housing lines although most of its focus appears to be in the following areas: business development, community development, early childhood program, family economic success, and workforce development ([West Central Initiative, “What We Do”](#)). The West Central Initiative (WCI) is the regional community foundation. It provides some of the same functions as a regional development commission (MNADO, 2013). WCI serves Stevens County but it no longer has a housing program. When the team contacted WCI, we were informed that the Initiative has had housing programs in the past to fund demolition and acquisition but has found the need to be cyclical. In fact it has been difficult for the Initiative to spend all of the budgeted funds for demolition and acquisition. The region was also hit in 2011 with the closure of the West Central Minnesota Housing Partnership due to state funding cuts. WCI formed the Partnership in 1993.

## HOUSING REHABILITATION EFFORTS AND STRATEGIES

There is a strong link in rural communities between housing, business development, and community vitality. Identifying and accessing suitable resources to address the problem with housing is a significant challenge for local officials in small towns due in part to low housing values, limited access to mortgage credits and a lack of homebuilders, particularly those with remodeling expertise. It is critical, however, that rural communities understand how housing fits in as a part of a larger economic and community development strategy. It is rare for any community, regardless of size, to address dilapidated housing and increase the availability of suitable housing by seeking outside funds alone. Instead, housing should be seen as a key link in a broader development and sustainability chain with the creation of local expertise and planning (Cook, et al. 2009) (Ziebarth, et al. 2000).

Rural communities who have successfully addressed housing rehabilitation and development employed two strategies that likely contributed to their success. First, housing was incorporated as a part of a more comprehensive community development strategy that also addressed business attraction and retention along with increasing expertise in local leadership. Second, collaborations formed that included multiple communities and sectors to create economies of scale to leverage resources that were not available to a single community.

A 2009 study in *Rural Sociology* looked at how small communities can better leverage their resources to deal with their housing problem. The authors identified a decision chain that was linked to community vitality, with housing planning a core element of that chain. A core group of concerned citizens who are committed to improving housing is at the heart of these efforts. It is this group's task to "articulate

community values, conduct a needs assessment, formulate goals, and identify funds and resources needed and available to meet community housing needs” (Cook, et al. 2009). Identifying entrepreneurial community leaders is seen as the first step in any plan. These residents who are concerned about housing may form a committee that can assess the problem, develop goals, and begin the process to identify and assemble the resources – either from within the community or from outside sources – to meet the needs of the community.

Successful efforts to rehabilitate housing mobilized both internal and external resources and were interwoven with economic development activities rather than strategies that involved chasing new businesses without considering housing. Research into housing rehabilitation and creation strategies found that overall community vitality is enhanced by efforts that also promote housing, while failing to address housing harms broader community development efforts (Cook et al. 2009). Local Development Organizations (LDOs) can play an important role in centralizing government resources and securing funding while creating social cohesion and participation among residents and businesses in the community development strategies. Proactive and strong local leadership is key. In terms of indicators of success in housing rehabilitation, local leadership and planning efforts produced better outcomes than housing finance resources in assessing community vitality (Fey et al. 2006) (Cook et al, 2009).

Existing community efforts and collaborations can provide examples and lessons for communities who need to address dilapidated housing stock. Multi-community collaborations can enhance efforts by creating economies of scale, generating new

ideas, and forming a more powerful political force than many communities can leverage on their own. On the other hand, the difficulties of keeping these efforts focused and a loss of community identity or control can be barriers for these collaborations.

An example of a successful multi-community collaboration that has addressed housing rehabilitation and development as part of a broader community development plan is the Northeast South Dakota Community Action Program (NESDCAP). This non-profit corporation serves 17 counties in northeast South Dakota to focus primarily on housing issues while its partner, the Northeast South Dakota Economic Corporation serves as a community development finance institution that provides a range of economic development programs in the region. Like Stevens County, the geographic area served by NESDCAP has lost population and has traditionally depended on agriculture as an economic driver and job provider. Their services seek to identify and direct private funding sources for housing rehabilitation and mortgages, and create more options for elderly residents. Since their inception in 1996, they have assisted 800 households with rehabilitation grants and weatherized 4,400 older homes (Housing Assistance Council, 2006).

Comprehensive community initiatives offer another approach that is more geographically focused, but takes on a more holistic approach for addressing housing and other economic development needs along with the other issues that are often facing poor rural communities, like lack of health care and education opportunities. According to the Washington, D.C. based non-profit, Housing Assistance Council, comprehensive community initiatives use “an asset-based approach to community development that seeks to identify existing community assets while helping strengthen a

community's capacity by building leadership among local residents" (Housing Assistance Council, 2006). While reflecting the needs and values of the regions they serve, comprehensive community initiatives are characterized by citizen participation in a comprehensive approach to addressing the community's concerns, collaborations between the public and private sector, and a consensus decision-making process.

The Miner County Community Revitalization is a Comprehensive Community Initiative that successfully addressed the regions' housing challenges (Housing Assistance Council, 2006). While dilapidated housing was not one of the priorities in this initiative, the cross-sector, community-based approach can be applied to a variety of housing and economic development issues in rural communities. The initiative grew out of a student-led project to encourage Miner County residents to support local businesses. The positively-received project spurred a community conversation and task force to halt the loss of population by looking at housing along with several other development issues. By engaging in planning through a citizen-led effort, the community was able to successfully attract outside funding that increased housing options for elderly residents and provided credit to residents to help with both buying and rehabilitating older homes (Housing Assistance Council, 2006).

### **Case Study - West Virginia Community Development Hub**

Few regions of the United States provide a more vivid example of the impact of our declining industry and the harm caused to communities than in coal mining towns in West Virginia. As jobs in coal mining went away, so did the people who lived in many of the small-to-medium sized communities that dot the hills of West Virginia, leaving behind abandoned buildings that would soon fall into disrepair. West Virginia Community Development Hub Executive Director, Kent Spellman, cited several



compelling West Virginia community examples. The small town of Richwood, WV with a population of 2,000 had 110 dilapidated structures in the community (K. Spellman, personal communication, July 10, 2013). In Thomas, WV there were 35 problem buildings in a town of just 575 people (K. Spellman, personal communication, July 10, 2013). An estimated one in fourteen buildings in the state of West Virginia are abandoned and either already dilapidated or at risk for falling into that condition (Pridefield, 2013).

Realizing that the condition of the buildings in these communities was more than just an eyesore, but also a deterrent to potential residents, tourists, and developers, the West Virginia Community Development Hub decided to step in. Formed in 2008, the Hub “envisions a system of community development that is locally-directed, continuous, intentional, respectful of local culture and values, and aligned across all three sectors of society (public, private and civil)” (West Virginia Community Development Hub, 2013). The catalyst for their work comes out of many years of conversation and evaluation of previous community development efforts in West Virginia. These previous efforts had been unsuccessful in improving the quality of life in the state’s impoverished communities despite a significant investment of financial resources, technical assistance, and planning (K. Spellman, personal communication, July 10, 2013). What was missing was a coordinated approach to community development that was consistent, integrated with existing service providers, and built local capacity to sustain the effort.

The Hub is not a direct service or housing provider, but they saw themselves uniquely poised to address this challenge due to their role as a connector and convener

of community development efforts in West Virginia. According to their website, the Hub's "role is to connect service providers to one another, to connect service providers to communities and communities to service providers, and to connect communities to one another" (West Virginia Community Development Hub, 2013). Seeing the need for tools and resources to help small, cash-strapped communities address the problem with dilapidated housing, the Hub created an extensive tool kit for addressing this problem that could help a community make progress on addressing substandard housing and a lack of suitable homes regardless of the financial resources currently available.

According to Hub Executive Director Kent Spellman, most of the communities targeted by Hub did not have much in the way of building codes or enforcement (K. Spellman, personal communication, July 10, 2013). The communities also lacked the resources for acquisition and demolitions of abandoned structures. The Hub relied on their mission to be a connector to help communities identify resources both outside the community, but most importantly within their town to begin the process of revitalizing their community.

Spellman explained that the toolkit relies on a programmatic, civic-engagement model to revitalize the communities. Communities must develop a "home team" to begin the process of surveying the community's buildings and their condition while engaging other interested groups and citizens in the process. This inventory is a critical first step. They then seek to engage the community in a broader conversation about their housing to look at the broader issues connected to dilapidated housing, prevention and maintenance approaches, and the possibility of rehabilitating the buildings. Hub employs a coaching model with communities and provides them with certified

community performance coaches to assist communities and keep them motivated.

“People don’t just do this all by themselves,” said Spellman. The toolkit is available on their website ([www.wvhub.org/vacant-and-dilapidated-building-toolkit](http://www.wvhub.org/vacant-and-dilapidated-building-toolkit)), and Spellman explained that it is a work in progress. As more communities use it, they learn how it can be improved and make revisions. The contents of the toolkit include:

- Preventing vacant and dilapidated buildings. By bringing non-profits, government officials, and concerned citizens together, communities can prevent abandoned or substandard buildings from becoming dilapidated in the first place. This starts with creating a culture of pride in caretaking and taking notice of what problems one’s neighbors may be having. Governments and non-profits can connect residents to services that can help preserve homes with a local directory of service providers and targeted brochures with information about home preservation counseling.
- Creating a vision for the future. “It is important to have a vision beyond demolition.” Spellman explained that, without a comprehensive strategy for what residents want their community to look like beyond dilapidated housing, a town will end up with little but vacant lots that do not enhance livability or spur development. The toolkit includes an extensive list of questions through which to engage stakeholders in starting to think about a long-term plan for the community.
- Using a community-based strategy. The Hub believes that engaged citizens are the best resource that a community has to address dilapidated properties. Residents can help with everything from surveying the local housing inventory,

holding neighbors accountable for the condition of the property and helping to make repairs, to leveraging local private sector resources to make investments in rehabilitating substandard properties. Local media can be engaged to cover the problem with housing in the area and shine a light on efforts to improve substandard and dilapidated buildings. Volunteers organized through places of worship, schools, and other community groups can provide assistance to homeowners struggling to maintain their properties, as well as other community beautification activities.

- Options of local government. Local governments must play a significant role in preventing dilapidated properties and addressing them when they occur. Passing suitable codes and ordinances, connecting citizens with counseling and other resources, and leveraging a variety of legal and financial strategies to acquire, demolish, and redevelop abandoned and dilapidated properties should all be a part of the local governments approach. The public sector also must play a proactive role in encouraging private sector real estate development to ensure that there is access to suitable housing for current and future residents.
- Options for non-profit organizations. Non-profit housing agencies, housing authorities and community development organizations are critical to creating a comprehensive strategy to address housing. By working closely with government officials and citizen groups, they are an effective partner in developing and implementing a housing plan, as well as leveraging outside funding.

- Building community capacity. Spellman explained that communities cannot do this work on their own. The Hub provides ongoing coaching to community leaders to help sustain the efforts and has utilized VISTA and AmeriCorps volunteers to work closely with towns in their housing efforts. To date they have had some significant successes with the toolkit and their community engagement approach. Spellman believes that addressing dilapidated housing is a motivator for many citizens to take on bigger issues around community vitality as it often provides small but tangible victories that can be celebrated – which is significant for communities that have been in decline for so long.

## **BEST PRACTICE: THINKING STRATEGICALLY ABOUT HOUSING**

Concerns related to housing quality in and around Stevens County and the City of Morris were universal across all of our interviews. This would seem to indicate that the topic has gained a wide range of awareness and support across public officials as well as engaged community leaders in the region. And, while everyone enthusiastically supported the idea that identifying additional housing resources would help address the problem, it also seemed clear that everyone we spoke with had their own unique perspective of where the principal concerns might lie within the community. When pressed for details, more precise information seemed unavailable and there did not seem to be any clear consensus on how to proceed. It seemed to our team that perhaps identifying additional resources was not the most important element to address this problem.

In the City of Morris, for example, most of the housing concerns were centered on student rental housing. A cycle persists where landlords continue buying up inexpensive single family homes made available often as a result of changing needs and circumstances of aging homeowner residents. Landlords maximize occupancy capacity by filling these properties with college students willing to pay essentially above market rents for what some might otherwise consider substandard quality housing. The properties meanwhile suffer from poor maintenance and lack of sufficient re-investment.

Neighboring owners perceive declining property and neighborhood quality. University of Minnesota Morris officials express concerns related to student safety

resulting from living in substandard rental housing. City officials wrestle with regulatory strategies with regard to enforcement of existing rental licensing regulations.

It seems evident that a more effective student housing strategy could in part help address overall community concerns related to housing quality. Our team questioned whether additional student housing was needed and discovered that University of Minnesota Morris is currently completing construction of its Green Prairie Living and Learning Community. This \$6.9 million dormitory will provide housing for 72 students and represents the first new campus dormitory in the last 40 years (Dieter, 2013).

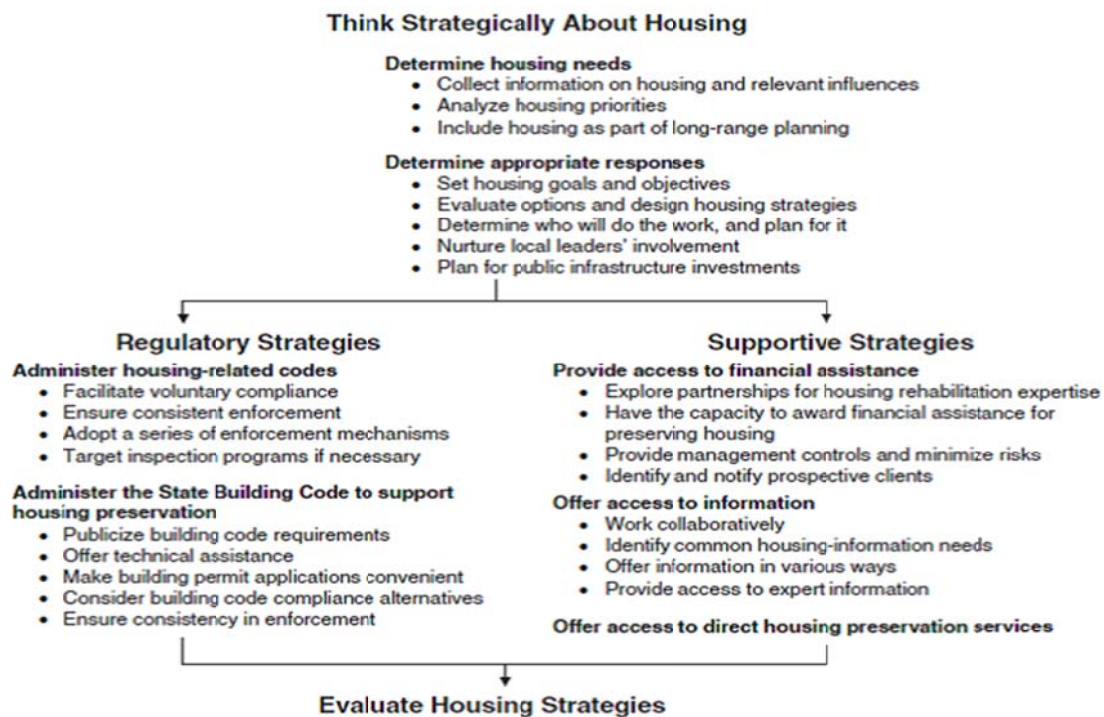
Morris Realtor, Tom Hoffman, presented an entirely different perspective, however. He expressed that the opinion that large numbers of students will always prefer renting these substandard single family homes over dormitories or newer apartment-styled rental housing. He cited lower rental costs as a principal reason (T. Hoffman, personal communication, July 12, 2013).

Ultimately, our research led us to a State of Minnesota Office of the Legislative Auditor (OLA) report from April, 2003 titled *A Best Practices Review: Preserving Housing* that presents a useful framework for communities to examine their specific housing needs. The purpose of this OLA report was to conduct a comprehensive review of housing preservation best practices to help cities and counties identify the most efficient and effective strategies for their own communities. Rather than starting on this challenge by identifying housing resources, the OLA report recommends cities and counties “think strategically” about housing and start “by determining their housing needs” (OLA, 2003).

Determining housing needs in its fullest sense involves a comprehensive housing study analyzing population, demographics, and household size trends as well as economic factors such as employment indicators and household income. One key aspect of an effective housing study identified by the OLA report is that the study should establish a housing inventory of owner and renter occupied units and physical condition of each housing unit. According to a survey of local housing organizations conducted as part of the OLA report, only 42% of those organizations that responded indicated that housing stock conditions in their community had been analyzed within the last five years.

The OLA report further communicates that “drive-by ‘windshield’ surveys of homes provides a compelling demonstration of housing conditions” (OLA, 2003). A Morris-produced Community Outreach Partnership Center (COPC) report from 2008 indicated that the Stevens County Assessor’s office maintains a housing condition assessment based on visual inspection of properties updated every three years (Finzel, 2008). A 3-year assessment cycle may be sufficient for assessor purposes but maybe not for a more robust housing inventory as the West Virginia Community Development Hub Dilapidated Housing Toolkit recommends a housing inventory based on community-engagement model be updated quarterly (West Virginia Hub, 2010).



**Figure 2.1: Strategies and Best Practices for Preserving Housing**

SOURCE: Office of the Legislative Auditor.

As the OLA Strategies and Best Practices for Preserving Housing figure shows, determining housing needs by collecting housing information, analyzing priorities, and thinking long-term provides the context necessary to determine appropriate responses. Determining appropriate responses should result in setting appropriate community-specific housing goals and objectives. Establishing housing goals sets the course for future action towards achieving objectives through both financial and informational supportive strategies as well as regulatory strategies.

Based on interviews with local officials, the situation on the ground seems to be that budget cuts have dramatically reduced available staffing to more fully implement and enforce regulatory strategies and that aspirational goals to conduct systematic “drive-by” property surveys are not currently being consistently met. Establishing a current housing inventory on its own or as part of a comprehensive housing study

represents a critical initial step in thinking strategically about housing. This is a highlighted recommended best practice from the OLA report and also the key recommendation being made in this paper from which all other recommendations will depend.

In deference to city and county staffing limitations, our team recommends that existing community resources be tapped. As demonstrated with the West Virginia Community Development Hub community engagement model, much of the work in creating a housing inventory can be accomplished by community volunteers. In addition, our team believes that there is a tremendous opportunity to leverage University of Minnesota Morris academic and student participation in conducting a housing study that would serve both community and academic interests. The OLA report contains a “Checklist of Performance Measures” included within this paper under Appendix 7 as a useful and comprehensive guide to further inform housing preservation needs and strategies.

## EARLY WARNING PREVENTION STRATEGY

When solving public problems, strategies aimed at prevention are often the most cost effective. It is often said that the best way to solve a problem is not to have it occur in the first place. Jay Kiedrowski's recent work titled, "Navigating the New Normal," emphasizes "the key to effective prevention is not a specific program, but instead a new way of thinking" (Kiedrowski, 2010).

There are several examples in both Minnesota and nationally of coordinated "early warning systems" aimed to identify "at-risk" properties for potential future foreclosure or abandonment. The oldest such system is the Chicago Neighborhood Early Warning System (NEWS) which was developed in 1984 as a result of the Housing Abandonment Task Force. Chicago NEWS was started by the Center for Neighborhood Technology who worked with various city agencies to collect housing data determined to be predictive indicators of future housing abandonment. Housing data that was collected and analyzed as part of Chicago NEWS included property tax delinquencies, water and utility arrears, code violations, housing court cases, fire records and real estate sales (Snow et al, 2003).

Efforts to identify at-risk properties based on indicative criteria empower stakeholders to engage individual properties and their owners at the earliest possible stages of housing distress. It also creates the ability to see patterns and relationships at the block, neighborhood, community, or regional level facilitating the opportunity for more comprehensive and strategic planning and programming. A fully-realized "early warning system" approach encompasses technological and community resources, combining GIS parcel data with various data from diverse agencies such as county

assessor tax and property owner information, water and utility payment delinquencies, crime statistics.

Recent metropolitan examples of “early warning system” efforts include identifying properties at-risk of foreclosure. Previous efforts have also been undertaken to identify properties at-risk of owner abandonment and to assess concentrated areas of housing distress. All of these efforts at early detection had at their core the idea that identifying the problem before it actually become a fully realized problem would facilitate the most strategic and cost effective interventions. Foreclosure, abandonment, housing distress can all be broadly thought of as general equivalents to dilapidated housing sharing many of the same economic and physical characteristics.

To better appreciate an “early warning system” preventative strategy, it is useful to think of housing abandonment itself as a three-stage process rather than a single occurring event (Miller, 1999). The initial stage is psychological abandonment by the owner. This leads to financial abandonment, or disinvestment. Physical abandonment represents the third and final stage of the process. Focusing on the second stage of fiscal abandonment is something that can be assessed as part of an “early warning system” strategy (Miller, 1999).

The Neighborhood Knowledge Los Angeles (NKLA) is the second oldest “early warning system” developed in 1995 as a result of a 1995 HUD Community Outreach Partnership Center (COPC) grant thru UCLA’s Department of Urban Planning. NKLA represents the concept at the heart of the “early warning system” as follows: “Some time before neighborhoods and buildings decay physically, they decay financially. Due to financial problems or ill intentions, property owners may stop paying property taxes,

utilities, or other bills before their properties become actual neighborhood problems” (Anderson et al, 2004).

Key fiscal abandonment criteria across generally all existing “early warning systems” have been identified as property tax delinquency, non-owner occupancy, water/utility delinquency, deficient building condition, proximity to areas of high crime, and proximity to other distressed properties. It seems reasonable to assume that many of these same criteria would have similar predictive application to identify similarly distressed “at-risk” properties in a rural community in much the same manner as within an urban area.

Another important source of information is incorporating direct resident input. Incorporating resident input can be empowering. In our team’s interview with Kent Spellman of the West Virginia Community Development Hub, Mr. Spellman dramatically emphasized the immediately galvanizing and motivational community organizing energy that results from a coordinated community response to issues of dilapidated or substandard housing in their respective community. Mr. Spellman cites dilapidated housing as a “gateway issue” within the communities he engages, a starting point upon which to build a more coherent and aware community network that more often than not results in future coordinated community development activities.

Interviews with Jeff Matson and Jeff Corn from University of Minnesota’s Center for Urban and Regional Affairs identified two key challenges in implementing an “early warning system.” These challenges were cost to implement and maintain and constantly changing IT technology (J. Matson, personal communication, July 5, 2013) (J. Corn, personal communication, July 8, 2013). Additional vulnerabilities were

identified as changing organizational structure and loss of key staffing personnel (Snow et al, 2003).

Early warning system efforts in Minneapolis were developed and coordinated largely thru the efforts of the University of Minnesota's Center for Urban and Regional Affairs (CURA) beginning around 2001. Initial development and implementation of the Minneapolis Neighborhood Information System (MNIS) project was funded largely thru a \$600,000 Technology Opportunity Grant (TOP) Department of Commerce grant (Goetz and Schaffer, 2004). The program coordinated a similar set of predictive housing data across numerous City of Minneapolis agencies, ultimately representing the data spatially thru a geographic information systems (GIS) mapping application. In addition, the program engaged directly with Minneapolis neighborhood group organizations facilitating training of neighborhood group representatives on how to use this newly developed technology (Goetz and Schaffer, 2004).

For its time, MNIS represented an innovative, comprehensive, and elegant solution within the City of Minneapolis. The MNIS system ultimately did not achieve a sustained foothold within the City of Minneapolis or its numerous neighborhood groups. Based on direct interviews with CURA staff, several challenges were identified as barriers. The underlying IT technology supporting MNIS had changed dramatically shortly after MNIS' rollout and the City of Minneapolis made a conscious decision not to provide necessary funds to convert MNIS to current technology. The City did however dedicate resources towards the creation of a new and similarly functioning intra-agency system restricted to authorized City staff. Another related challenge resulted from cumbersome efforts to train numerous staff across several existing neighborhoods

groups on the use of a somewhat complicated technology. Finally, in its effort to create a comprehensive MNIS system, the project did experience setbacks as a result of some instances of inaccurate data as well as withholding of data entirely (J. Matson, personal communication, July 5, 2013) (J. Corn, personal communication, July 8, 2013) (Goetz and Schaffer, 2004).

These lessons are valuable and easily avoidable. The connection between measuring financial abandonment as a means to identify “at-risk” properties remains relevant. And the opportunity exists to implement and maintain a much smaller “early warning system” within the City of Morris if not entirely throughout all of Stevens County.

According to 2007-2011 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, there are 4,161 total housing units within Stevens County. This represents a small and manageable universe of data that would easily lend itself to a coherent “early warning system” strategy and implementation. Further, focusing initial efforts on only tax delinquency data would create an ample and easily manageable system to initially flag “at risk” properties.

Our team imagines that Center for Small Towns (CST) might reasonably consider an active role in convening a task force of local officials and community leaders to initiate a conversation towards creating and implementing an “early warning system” strategy. Limiting the dataset initially to tax delinquencies would require building and maintaining relationships with a relatively few number of participants. This would serve to minimize costs and keep administrative efforts reasonable to manage.

A key participant that would need to be involved would appear to be the Stevens County Auditor / Treasurer. The Auditor / Treasurer manages property tax billing for the

entire county. Based on interviews with local officials, tax delinquencies are made public but this statement has yet to be corroborated. Regardless, tax delinquency records would presumably be kept and could be made available on a regular basis.

Another key participant would be Stevens County GIS staff. Based on local interviews, Stevens County is actively making strides to increase its GIS data capacity. An “early warning system” would represent an innovative and strategic expansion of county GIS capacity.

Upon identification of at-risk properties, an intervention strategy of physically assessing and evaluating each “at-risk” property based on objective dilapidated housing criteria might occur. Appropriate communication with the property owner as the situation might warrant could occur to more fully explore the need and opportunity to work constructively and collaboratively in addressing any challenges the owner or their perspective property might be facing. A survey of directors of housing organizations conducted as part of the OLA report in 2003 indicated that over 75% of these directors believed that “owners’ lack of information on how to maintain or preserve housing “somewhat” or very much” limited housing preservation” (OLA, 2003). Providing at-risk property owners with housing information on potentially available housing preservation resources is an identified OLA best practice and could represent an effective strategy to empower at-risk property owners to resolve property deficiencies on their own. Our team produced a sample brochure of *Homeownership Financing Programs and Resources Guide* reflecting current homeowner financing resources available to Stevens County residents (see Appendix 5).



## PROJECT SUMMARY / RECOMMENDATIONS

Addressing the challenges of dilapidated and substandard housing within the City of Morris presents its own unique concerns separate from the rest of Stevens County. Due in part to the multiple dynamics related to housing conditions in the region, the task of identifying existing housing resources may not represent the most effective starting point in addressing these concerns. Thinking strategically about housing through the creation of a housing inventory as an identified best practice from the 2003 report *A Best Practices Review: Preserving Housing* as published by the State Of Minnesota Office of the Legislative Auditor (OLA) may represent a more effective initial starting point.

Determining housing conditions and needs based on uniform definition and criteria standards through the creation of a housing inventory will help community leaders determine appropriate responses to identified housing challenges. Identifying housing challenges will facilitate community leaders in setting appropriate housing-related goals and objectives. The OLA's *Checklist of Performance Measures* (see Appendix 7) represents a useful framework to consider which types of housing goals might be the most appropriate to measure within the region.

Establishing appropriate housing goals and objectives will help inform the identification of specific housing-related resources (see Appendix 1 – 5) best suited to facilitate meeting community housing goals. Increasing public awareness of identified housing-related resources through printed materials such as the brochure sample included as Appendix 5 as well as City of Morris and Stevens County HRA web sites represent examples of supportive strategy best practices of providing access to housing

information and direct financial assistance. Regulatory strategies with regard to housing-related code enforcement and compliance may also be identified.

As established through the experience of the West Virginia Community Development Hub, utilizing a community engagement strategy in the creation of a housing inventory can serve as catalyst in unifying diverse elements of the community towards a common cause and collectively shared interest. The Hub's *Toolkit of Dilapidated Properties* represents a useful framework for implementing a community engagement strategy in addressing housing-related challenges in a manner that increases awareness and promotes community ownership. The opportunity exists to leverage the University of Minnesota – Morris faculty and students as in addition to the Center for Small Towns as both a significant academic and community resource towards initiating a discussion between local officials and community leaders in discussing housing inventory and “early warning system” strategies.

Examples of prevention strategies aimed at identifying at-risk properties of housing distress, foreclosure, or abandonment based on predictive housing-related financial indicators exist in numerous large, metropolitan communities. The cost of creating and implementing fully-realized “early warning systems” may range from several hundred thousand to over one million dollars. The cost of fully-realized “early warning system” is likely prohibitive at present for the City of Morris or Stevens County. A less formal opportunity to coordinate an effective, low-cost, and simplified “early warning system” tracking only key indicators of property condition, non-owner occupancy, property tax delinquency, and water/utility arrears seems feasible and might be considered as part of an overall strategy to address housing-related challenges.

Providing access to housing information is an identified best practice of the OLA report. Through the combined efforts of both a housing inventory and “early warning system,” opportunities might be leveraged to improve communication and collaboration between community leaders and identified at-risk property owners. Engaging these at-risk property owners earlier in the housing abandonment process and providing owners with access to housing information and / or direct financial assistance may represent a more effective and less costly strategy towards addressing dilapidated and substandard housing challenges.

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## APPENDIX 1: United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Rural Development Housing Programs

Web Site: <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov>

Phone: (320) 763-3191 (Alexandria Service Center Office)

Email: [John.Strand@mn.usda.gov](mailto:John.Strand@mn.usda.gov)

### Single Family Housing Loans and Grants:

Single Family Housing Programs provide homeownership opportunities to low- and moderate-income rural Americans through several loan, grant, and loan guarantee programs. The programs also make funding available to individuals to finance vital improvements necessary to make their homes decent, safe, and sanitary. Visit the following sites for information and/or assistance.

- **Rural Housing Guaranteed Loan:** Applicants for loans may have an income of up to 115% of the median income for the area. Area income limits for this program are here. Families must be without adequate housing, but be able to afford the mortgage payments, including taxes and insurance. In addition, applicants must have reasonable credit histories.
- **Rural Housing Direct Loan:** Section 502 loans are primarily used to help low-income individuals or households purchase homes in rural areas. Funds can be used to acquire, build (including funds to purchase and prepare sites and to provide water and sewage facilities), repair, renovate or relocate a home.
- **Rural Repair and Rehabilitation Loan and Grant:** The Very Low-Income Housing Repair program provides loans and grants to very low-income homeowners to repair, improve, or modernize their dwellings or to remove health and safety hazards. Rural Housing Repair and Rehabilitation Grants are funded directly by the Government. A grant is available to dwelling owner/occupant who is 62 years of age or older. Funds may only be used for repairs or improvements to remove health and safety hazards, or to complete repairs to make the dwelling accessible for household members with disabilities.
- **Mutual Self-Help Loans:** The Section 502 Mutual Self-Help Housing Loan program is used primarily to help very low- and low-income households construct their own homes.
- **Rural Housing Site Loans:** Rural Housing Site Loans are made to provide financing for the purchase and development of housing sites for low- and moderate-income families.
- **Housing Application Packaging Grants:** Housing Application Packaging Grants provide government funds to tax-exempt public agencies and private non-profit organizations to package applications for submission to Housing and Community Facilities Programs.

- **Individual Water and Waste Grants:** Individual Water and Waste Water Grants provide Government funds to households residing in an area recognized as a colonia before October 1, 1989.
- **Self-Help Technical Assistance Grants:** To provide Self-Help Technical Assistance Grants to provide financial assistance to qualified non-profit organizations and public bodies that will aid needy very low and low-income individuals and their families to build homes in rural areas by the self help method. Any State, political subdivision, private or public non-profit corporation is eligible to apply.
- **Technical and Supervisory Assistance Grants:** To assist low-income rural families in obtaining adequate housing to meet their family's needs and/or to provide the necessary guidance to promote their continued occupancy of already adequate housing. These objectives will be accomplished through the establishment or support of housing delivery and counseling projects run by eligible applicants.

## APPENDIX 2: Minnesota Housing Finance Agency Programs

Web Site: <http://www.mnhousing.gov>

Phone: (800) 657-3769

Email: [mn.housing@state.mn.us](mailto:mn.housing@state.mn.us)

### MINNESOTA HOUSING – FIX UP PROGRAM

Web Site:

<http://www.mnhousing.gov/wcs/Satellite?c=Page&cid=1358904985835&pagename=External%2FPage%2FEXTStandardLayout>

Phone: 800-710-8871

Email: [mn.housing@state.mn.us](mailto:mn.housing@state.mn.us)

***Program Goal: Windows, insulation, furnace, central air conditioning, electrical, new roof, garage and septic repairs are some of the common items that can be repaired.***

**Program Summary:** You must live in and own the home. Loans are available from \$2,000 up to \$50,000. Loans are repaid by monthly payments during the length of the loan at the current interest rate. Loans can take up to 10 or 20 years to repay depending on the amount. Reduced interest rates for energy efficient and accessibility improvements. Annual household income can be up to \$96,500. You can hire a contractor or do the work yourself. Unsecured loans available. Locate a lender in the Greater Minnesota area from the following list:

[http://www.mnhousing.gov/idc/groups/public/documents/webcontent/mhfa\\_005160.pdf](http://www.mnhousing.gov/idc/groups/public/documents/webcontent/mhfa_005160.pdf)

MINNESOTA HOUSING – Rehabilitation Loan Program and Emergency Loan Program

(Currently out of funds)

Web Site:

<http://www.mnhousing.gov/wcs/Satellite?c=Page&cid=1358904992980&pagename=External%2FPage%2FEXTStandardLayout>

Administered by: **Stevens County HRA**

Phone: (320) 208-6559

Email: [alicerasmussen@co.stevens.mn.us](mailto:alicerasmussen@co.stevens.mn.us)

***Program Goal: Rehab roofs, siding, windows, doors, insulation, energy efficiency items, electrical and mechanical. Rehab items are approved on a per project basis.***

**Program Summary:** You must own and live in the home. Your assets cannot exceed \$25,000. Loans available up to \$27,000. The loan is 0% interest and payments are deferred. The loan is forgiven after 10 years for manufactured homes and 15 years for single family homes. The loan must be repaid if you refinance, sell or no longer live in the home before the 10 or 15 year time frame. Income must be at or below 50% of Area Median Income.

**MINNESOTA HOUSING START-UP, MORTGAGE CREDIT CERTIFICATE (FIRST-TIME HOMEBUYERS), and STEP-UP (NON-FIRST-TIME HOMEBUYERS) PROGRAMS**

Web Site:

<http://www.mnhousing.gov/wcs/Satellite?c=Page&cid=1358904958035&pagename=External%2FPage%2FEXTStandardLayout>

Phone: 800-710-8871

Email: [mn.housing@state.mn.us](mailto:mn.housing@state.mn.us)

**Program Goal:** Mortgage loans to purchase or refinance a home through local lenders for qualified low and moderate income Minnesotans.

**Program Summary:** To be eligible for a Start Up, MCC (with First Mortgage) or Step Up, you must qualify for an industry standard product such as FHA, FHA Streamlined 203k, RD, VA, Conventional HFA Preferred™, or Conventional HFA Preferred Risk Sharing™ loan. Household income limits apply. Find a local participating lender at: [http://mnhousing.gov/idc/groups/homes/documents/webcontent/mhfa\\_002964.pdf](http://mnhousing.gov/idc/groups/homes/documents/webcontent/mhfa_002964.pdf).

**MINNESOTA HOUSING – HOUSING TAX CREDITS**

Web Site:

<http://www.mnhousing.gov/wcs/Satellite?c=Page&cid=1358905254471&pagename=External%2FPage%2FEXTStandardLayout>

Phone: (800) 657-3647

Email: [mn.housing@state.mn.us](mailto:mn.housing@state.mn.us)

**Program Summary:** The Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (HTC) Program is a financing program for qualified residential rental properties. The HTC program offers investors a 10-year reduction in tax liability in exchange for capital to build eligible affordable rental housing units in new construction, rehabilitation, or acquisition with rehabilitation.

## **APPENDIX 3: Greater Minnesota Housing Fund (GMHF) Programs**

Web Site: <http://www.gmhf.com>

Phone: (800) 277-2258

Email: [info@gmhf.com](mailto:info@gmhf.com)

**Organization Summary:** *GMHF was founded in 1996 through the McKnight Foundation and Blandin Foundation. GMHF serves affordable housing interests throughout the 80 counties outside of the Twin Cities Metropolitan area by providing direct investments in affordable housing projects as well as technical assistance in finding additional affordable housing resources and research to assist communities with affordable housing development. GMHF finances the acquisition, rehabilitation or new construction of affordable single-family homes and rental units. GMHF works through housing development partners in accomplishing its mission. It does not provide assistance directly to homeowners.*

### **FORECLOSURE RECOVERY PROGRAMS**

#### **Foreclosure Response and Recovery**

**Program Goal:** *Provide large-scale foreclosure prevention funding and strategies to stabilize at-risk families and neighborhoods.*

**Program Summary:** One in 20 households in Minnesota, nearly 100,000 families, has faced a foreclosure since 2005. In response to this crisis, Greater Minnesota Housing Fund has made foreclosure prevention and recovery a top priority for its funding and technical assistance by taking the following actions:

- Worked closely with the Minnesota Home Ownership Center, Family Housing Fund and Minnesota Housing since 2007 to secure more than \$15 million of federal, state and philanthropic resources to dramatically
- Increase the number of non-profit foreclosure prevention counselors from 18 to 70 advisors.
- Assembled new funding for the acquisition and rehabilitation of foreclosed properties in high-impact communities to support local neighborhood stabilization efforts.
- Assisted in assembling over \$22 million in funding from federal, state and philanthropic sources for foreclosure recovery and neighborhood stabilization initiatives in Greater Minnesota, including \$10.8 million in federal Neighborhood Stabilization Program (NSP) funds, \$6.3 million in Federal Home Loan Bank (FHLB) of Des Moines and over \$5 million in private philanthropic investments.
- Established the National Community Stabilization Trust (NCST) program in Greater Minnesota to enable public, private and non-profit partners to purchase foreclosed homes directly from lenders at discounted prices to stimulate community stabilization.

**National Community Stabilization Trust (NCST)**

**Program Summary:** GMHF's Foreclosure Recovery NCST Program provides private sector builders and developers access to up to \$2 million in low interest loans and exclusive access to foreclosed bank-owned real estate for the purposes of engaging private builders to partner with local government and non-profits to foster stable home ownership, stimulate neighborhood revitalization and strengthen local housing markets.

Qualified builder/developers (borrowers) must have a strong track-record working with public and non-profit organizations in the creation of affordable housing opportunities for low-and moderate-income households.

Qualified builder/developers (borrowers) are provided exclusive access to a national pipeline of bank-owned foreclosed properties at discounted prices. (2) Borrowers must agree to meet GMHF income targeting requirements, HUD HQS standards, and the Minnesota Overlay to the Green Communities Criteria.

Greater Minnesota Housing Fund (GMHF) supports efforts to stabilize and strengthen neighborhoods and communities in greater Minnesota hard hit by home foreclosures and disinvestment. In order to address the current scale of the foreclosure crisis, increased collaboration between public, private and non-profit development partners is necessary. Through this program, GMHF seeks to work with public and private entities to:

1. Redevelop vacant, foreclosed and abandoned homes to stabilize local housing markets.
2. Augment existing local Neighborhood Stabilization Program (NSP) foreclosure recovery efforts.
3. Provide sustainable homeownership opportunities for low- and moderate-income homebuyers.
4. Rehabilitate foreclosed homes to green and healthy building standards to foster energy conservation, improved health for families and sustainable communities.
5. Create local green jobs in the residential construction and supporting industries.
6. Engage civic minded builders and developers in community-based foreclosure recovery.

**LOW INCOME HOUSING TAX CREDIT SYNDICATION****MINNESOTA EQUITY FUND**

**Program Goal:** *Help Minnesota Companies Invest in Minnesota Communities*

**Program Summary:** The Minnesota Equity Fund (MEF) is a new social enterprise designed to raise equity capital from Minnesota corporations and banks to invest in well designed, high quality, sustainable affordable housing developments throughout Minnesota. MEF is a subsidiary of the Greater Minnesota Housing Fund, a non-profit Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI) which has raised over \$128 million in charitable grant funds and has financed over 10,000 units of affordable housing in its 15 year history. MEF Fund I is a strategic partnership between GMHF and Great Lakes Capital Fund (GLCF), a nationally recognized syndicator of low income housing tax credits (LITHC) tax credits which has raised over \$1.5 billion in equity.

The mission of the Minnesota Equity Fund is to enable socially motivated corporations and financial institutions make sound economic investments in well designed, high quality affordable housing developments in communities throughout Minnesota.

## **AFFORDABLE RENTAL HOUSING PRESERVATION**

### **Minnesota Preservation Plus**

***Program Goal: Preserve 18,000 units\* of affordable rental housing statewide over the next ten years, in partnership with Minnesota Housing and Family Housing Fund.***

The supply of affordable rental housing is threatened as units are lost each year to physical deterioration, opt-out from federal housing programs, and market-rate conversion. Lack of affordable rental housing destabilizes families and threatens community vitality. Greater Minnesota Housing Fund, Family Housing Fund and Minnesota Housing are collaborating on the Minnesota Preservation Plus Initiative (MPPI), with a goal to preserve 18,000 units of affordable housing over ten years. MPPI is funded by The MacArthur Foundation as part of its national Window of Opportunity initiative to support the preservation of affordable rental housing nationwide. To address the preservation challenges facing our communities, GMHF will:

- Create clear funding priorities based on preservation risk factors and target limited subsidy resources to high priority developments.
- Design model buyer-seller transactions that will enable more cost-effective and efficient ownership transfers.
- Develop preservation training programs for sellers and buyers of aging affordable housing developments to increase the scale of preservation transactions statewide.
- Deliver flexible loan products that address the unique challenges associated with affordable rental preservation financing.
- Identify and advocate for policy and program changes that will result in increased preservation activity.

## **NEIGHBORHOOD STABILIZATION**

### **Building Better Neighborhoods**

***Program Goal: Stabilize and revitalize Minnesota's traditional mixed-income neighborhoods.***

**Program Summary:** Twelve years ago, Minnesota was in the middle of a different type of housing crisis – one marked by strong job growth and high housing costs. In this environment, Greater Minnesota Housing Fund launched the Building Better Neighborhoods program, which provided practical solutions for increasing the supply of affordable housing while reviving traditional and compact neighborhood design with better access to services and amenities.

Today, small cities and towns are facing a crisis of disinvestment in their traditional neighborhoods. Communities now must envision how they will recover from the decline in home values and lack of investment to become economically stable and healthy once again. Greater Minnesota Housing Fund's Re-Building Better Neighborhoods program now focuses on offering the essential tools, techniques and special funding needed to

stabilize and rebuild core neighborhoods. The Re-Building Better Neighborhoods program emphasizes methods for:

- Targeted neighborhood-based planning and design.
- Green and healthy home rehabilitation.
- Strategic demolition of blighted properties.
- Well-designed new “infill” homes.
- Attractive mixed-use redevelopment projects.
- Stimulation of private sector reinvestment.
- Formation of public-private partnerships.

## **EMPLOYER ASSISTED HOUSING**

### **EMPLOYER ASSISTED HOUSING**

#### ***Program Goal: Help Employers Invest in Affordable Housing***

**Program Summary:** Without more affordable housing, many working families in Greater Minnesota are not able to find safe, decent, affordable housing near their workplace, and many employers cannot easily recruit or retain employees. Similarly many communities seeking economic development opportunities find it difficult or impossible to recruit or retain the businesses that will keep their communities economically vital.

GMHF's EAH program was created to find solutions to these problems. GMHF's combination of education, technical assistance and funding has enabled it to work with corporate CEO's and family-owned companies to structure community partnerships that have yielded over \$20 million of new money invested by employers.

GMHF has targeted both major employers such as Hormel, The Schwan Food Company and Mayo Clinic, as well as "Main Street" employers, such as local banks and retail businesses.

## **HRA / EDA TRAINING AND ASSISTANCE**

### **HRA/EDA HOUSING INSTITUTE**

***Program Goal: Enhance the effectiveness of local Housing and Redevelopment Authorities (HRAs) and Economic Development Authorities (EDAs) through the creation of regional, multi-jurisdictional housing partnerships.***

**Program Summary:** Cities, counties and regions across the state are facing unprecedented fiscal challenges and drastic reductions in public resources. In the current economic environment, cost-saving solutions are essential. The Minnesota HRA/EDA Housing Institute is designed to enhance the effectiveness of HRAs and EDAs in Greater Minnesota by helping form inter-jurisdictional housing partnerships and programs that reduce costs and increase effectiveness across multiple cities and counties. The HRA/EDA Housing Institute is a joint effort of Greater Minnesota Housing Fund and Minnesota Housing Partnership.

Over the course of an 18-month training, the Housing Institute provides:

- Peer-to-peer training among HRA and EDA board and staff leaders;



- Legal and financial expertise on joint powers and other interagency partnerships;  
and
- On-the-ground technical assistance to help local agencies move toward shared project management and joint administration of housing programs.

## **APPENDIX 4: Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED) Programs**

Web Site: <http://www.positivelyminnesota.com>

Phone: (651) 259-7114

Email: [DEED.CustomerService@state.mn.us](mailto:DEED.CustomerService@state.mn.us)

### **Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED): Small Cities Development Program – Housing Grants:**

Web Site:

[http://www.positivelyminnesota.com/Government/Financial\\_Assistance/Community\\_Development\\_Funding/Small\\_Cities\\_Development\\_Program.aspx](http://www.positivelyminnesota.com/Government/Financial_Assistance/Community_Development_Funding/Small_Cities_Development_Program.aspx)

Phone: (651) 259-7432

Email: [deed.scdp@state.mn.us](mailto:deed.scdp@state.mn.us)

**Program Summary:** The Small Cities Development Program helps cities and counties with funding for housing, infrastructure and commercial rehabilitation projects that benefit people of low and moderate incomes. Projects must meet one of three objectives:

- Benefit people of low and moderate incomes
- Eliminate slum and blight conditions
- Eliminate an urgent threat to public health or safety

In addition, need impact and cost effectiveness must be documented and the general public must be involved in the application process. Cities with fewer than 50,000 residents and counties with fewer than 200,000 residents are eligible.

Funds are granted to local units of government, which, in turn, lend funds for the purpose of rehabilitating local housing stock. Loans may be used for owner-occupied, rental, single-family or multiple-family housing rehabilitation. Loan agreements may allow for deferred payments or immediate monthly payments. Interest rates may vary, and loan repayments are retained by grantees for the purpose of making additional rehabilitation loans. SCDP funds may also be used to assist new housing construction projects. Funds may also be used for land acquisition, site improvements and infrastructure and housing construction. In all cases, housing funds must benefit low- and moderate-income persons.

### **Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED): Redevelopment Grant Program**

Web Site:

[http://www.positivelyminnesota.com/Government/Financial\\_Assistance/Site\\_Cleanup,\\_Redevelopment,\\_Transit\\_Funding/Redevelopment\\_Grant\\_Program.aspx](http://www.positivelyminnesota.com/Government/Financial_Assistance/Site_Cleanup,_Redevelopment,_Transit_Funding/Redevelopment_Grant_Program.aspx)

Phone: (800) 657-3858

Email: [irene.dassier@state.mn.us](mailto:irene.dassier@state.mn.us)

The Redevelopment Grant Program helps communities with the costs of redeveloping blighted industrial, residential, or commercial sites and putting land back into productive use. Grants pay up to half of redevelopment costs for a qualifying site, with a 50-percent local match. Eligible applicants are cities, counties, port authorities, housing and redevelopment authorities, and economic development authorities.

Grants can pay for land acquisition, demolition, infrastructure improvements, soil stabilization when in-fill is required, ponding or other environmental infrastructure and adaptive reuse of buildings, including remedial activities at sites where a subsequent redevelopment will occur.

At least half of the grant money will be awarded to sites located outside of the seven-county Twin Cities metropolitan area, given that a sufficient number of eligible applications are received from outstate applicants.

# APPENDIX 5: Homeowner Financing Programs (Sample Brochure)

## ADDITIONAL HOMEOWNERSHIP PROGRAMS

### **MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH - LEAD HAZARD REHAB ASSISTANCE**

Web Site: <http://www.health.state.mn.us/dvsh/lead/leadcrank/homepage1.html>  
Administered by: Stevens County HRA  
Phone: (320) 208-6559  
Email: [alice@stevens.mn.us](mailto:alice@stevens.mn.us)

Program Goal: Address lead paint corrections such as windows and doors, replacement and/or repainting of walls, ceilings, baseboards and trim and soil replacement or covering.

### **UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS - SPECIALLY ADAPTED HOUSING AND SPECIAL HOUSING ADAPTATIONS GRANT**

Web Site: <http://www.benefits.va.gov/homeloans/adaptedhousing.asp>  
Phone: (612) 970-5540

Program Goal: Accessibility items such as bathrooms, carpet, doorways, faucets, garages, kitchens, level views, ramps, sliding doors, and walkways.

### **CENTER FOR ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENT - HOME IMPROVEMENT FINANCING**

Web Site: [www.ceelocals.org](http://www.ceelocals.org)  
Phone: (612) 335-5884  
Email: [locinfo@mncee.org](mailto:locinfo@mncee.org)

Program Goal: Energy-efficiency projects or other interior and exterior permanent improvements.

### **WEST CENTRAL MN COMMUNITY ACTION, INC. WEATHERIZATION AND ENERGY ASSISTANCE FUNDS**

Web Site: <http://www.wcmca.org>  
Phone: (800) 492-4805  
Email: [office@wcmca.org](mailto:office@wcmca.org)

Program Goal: The Weatherization Program helps income eligible households cut their heating costs and improve the comfort level of their homes by making energy-saving home improvements.

The program is available to homeowners, renters, those living in mobile homes as well as other types of homes, and low-income residents of Douglas, Grant, Pope, Stevens, Traverse, Clay, and Wilkin Counties.

**Stevens County HRA  
400 Colorado Avenue, Suite 102  
Morris, MN 56267**



**Homeownership  
Financing Programs and  
Resources Guide**



**Housing and  
Redevelopment Authority**

**2013**



**HOMEOWNERSHIP FINANCING**

**MINNESOTA HOUSING START-UP MORTGAGE CREDIT CERTIFICATE (FIRST-TIME HOMEBUYERS), and STEP-UP (NON-FIRST-TIME HOMEBUYERS) PROGRAMS**

Web Site: [www.mnhousing.gov](http://www.mnhousing.gov)  
 Phone: 800-710-8871  
 Email: [mnhousing@state.mn.us](mailto:mnhousing@state.mn.us)

**Program Goal:** Mortgage loans to purchase or re-finance a home through local lenders for qualified low and moderate income Minnesotans.

**Program Summary:** To be eligible for a Start Up, MCC (with First Mortgage) or Step Up, you must qualify for an industry standard product such as FHA, FHA Streamlined 203k, RD, VA, Conventional HFA, Preferred™, or Conventional HFA Preferred Rik-Sharing™ loan. Find a local participating lender at: <http://mnhousing.gov/lcdc/groupz/homes/documents> <http://webcontent/lcdc/002944.pdf>. Household income limits apply.

**ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**

**MN HOMEOWNERSHIP RESOURCES CENTER**

Web Site: <http://www.hocmn.org/>  
 Phone: 866-462-6466



Stevens County HRA  
 400 Colorado Avenue, Suite 102  
 Morris, MN 56267  
 Phone (320) 208-6559  
 FAX (320) 585-5144  
<http://www.co.stevens.mn.us>



**HOMEOWNERSHIP REPAIR AND REHAB FINANCING**

**MINNESOTA HOUSING – FIX UP PROGRAM**

Web Site: [www.mnhousing.gov](http://www.mnhousing.gov)  
 Phone: 800-710-8871  
 Email: [mnhousing@state.mn.us](mailto:mnhousing@state.mn.us)

**Program Goal:** Windows, insulation, furnace, central air conditioning, electrical, new roof, garage and septic repairs are some of the common items that can be repaired.

**Program Summary:** Locate a lender in your area from the following list: Greater Minnesota: [http://www.mnhousing.gov/lcdc/groupz/public/documents/webcontent/rmhq\\_005160.pdf](http://www.mnhousing.gov/lcdc/groupz/public/documents/webcontent/rmhq_005160.pdf)

You must live in and own the home. Loans available from \$2,000 up to \$50,000. Loans are repaid by monthly payments during the length of the loan at the current interest rate. Loans can take up to 10 or 20 years to repay depending on the amount. Reduced interest rates for energy efficient and accessibility improvements. Annual household income can be up to \$9,500. You can hire a contractor or do the work yourself. Unsecured loans available.

**MINNESOTA HOUSING – Rehabilitation Loan Program and Emergency Loan Program**

Web Site: [www.mnhousing.gov](http://www.mnhousing.gov)  
 Administered by: Stevens County HRA  
 Phone: (320) 208-6559  
 Email: [allicer@mussen@co.stevens.mn.us](mailto:allicer@mussen@co.stevens.mn.us)

**Program Goal:** Rehab roofs, siding, windows, doors, insulation, energy efficiency items, electrical and mechanical. Rehab items are approved on a per project basis.

**Program Summary:** You must own and live in the home. Your assets cannot exceed \$25,000. Loans available up to \$27,000. The loan is 0% interest and payments are deferred. The loan is forgiven after 10 years for manufactured homes and 15 years for single family homes. The loan must be repaid if you refinance, sell or no longer live in the home before the 10 or 15 year time frame. Income must be at or below 50% of Area Median Income.  
**United States Department of Agriculture – Rural De-**

**USDA Rural Development (USDA-RD) - RURAL REPAIR AND REHAB GRANT AND LOAN**

Web Site: [http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/H4D-RR/Loans\\_Grants.html](http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/H4D-RR/Loans_Grants.html)  
 Stevens Co. Office: ALEXANDRIA SERVICE CENTER  
 Phone: (320) 763-3191

**Program Goal:** Rehab roofs, siding, windows, doors, insulation, energy efficiency items, electrical and mechanical. Rehab items are approved on a per project basis.

**Program Summary:** Request an application by contacting the main Rural Development office at 651-602-7900 or your local office (320) 763-3191 to request an application.

Your home must need repairs and improvements for health, safety, sanitation and be located in a rural area as defined by the USDA-RD To see if your home is located in a rural area go to [http://offices.scs.gov.usda.gov/localor/lapp?service=daa&County=Mdp&state=MN&stid=home-Minnesota&stid\\_eCode=27](http://offices.scs.gov.usda.gov/localor/lapp?service=daa&County=Mdp&state=MN&stid=home-Minnesota&stid_eCode=27)

Loans available up to \$20,000. Grants are up to \$7,500 for persons 62 or older only and are unable to repay a section 504 loan. Loans and grants can be combined for up to \$27,500 in assistance. Loans are made at 1% interest for 20 years, with monthly payments. Grants do not require repayment but may be recaptured if the property is sold in less than 3 years. Your income must be at or below 50 % of the Area Median Income. For further information about income limits in your area see the following link: [www.rurdev.usda.gov/SupportDocuments/MN%20Direct](http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/SupportDocuments/MN%20Direct).

In addition to providing shelter, maintaining quality housing contributes to the community's long-term neighborhood stability and economic vitality. Stevens County HRA strives to Ensuring that all Stevens County residents have access to decent, safe, sanitary, and affordable housing.

## **APPENDIX 6: Burnet, Texas Ordinance**

ORDINANCE NO. 2004-04

AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF BURNET, TEXAS, PROVIDING FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A CITY OF BURNET HOMETOWN HOUSING PROGRAM; PROVIDING FOR THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE PROGRAM; AND PROVIDING OPEN MEETINGS, SEVERABILITY AND RELATED CLAUSES.

WHEREAS, it has been determined through analysis of the community that affordable housing options for the population are needed within the City; and

WHEREAS, the City Council of the City of Burnet desires to provide builder incentives by reducing costs to build affordable houses, thus creating more jobs for the local economy; and

WHEREAS, vacant lots with existing infrastructure are present; and

WHEREAS, the City Council encourages builders to utilize these vacant lots within targeted areas of the City;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT ORDAINED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF BURNET, TEXAS, THAT:

Section. 1. Findings. The foregoing recitals are hereby found to be true and correct and are hereby adopted by the City Council and made a part hereof for all purposes as findings of fact.

Section 2. Burnet Hometown Housing Program.

A. Scope.

To encourage the development of affordable housing options to residents of Burnet by encouraging the development and utilization of existing residential lots in the city. To assist in the reduction of home construction costs, the City will waive 100% of the water, sewer, and electric tap fees; building, plumbing, and electrical permit fees; HVAC unit fees; and plan review fees by the building department, and by the Fire Marshall, for qualifying lots in the targeted area.

B. Qualifying Lots.

1) Lots must have a "standard connection" for city water, sewer, and electricity, and have existing streets, as of January 1, 2000. For the purposes of this chapter, a tap made on a water or wastewater line located between the boundary line of the property to be served and the right-of-way line of the street or alley abutting such lot, or a line located within the right-of-way of such street between the property boundary line and the traveled, paved portions of the street, shall also constitute a tap made at a "standard location". A tap made at a "standard location" shall be a "standard connection".

C. Target Area / Neighborhood.

1) Primary Area –the Southeast Quadrant of Burnet. An area within the city limits of Burnet, encompassing areas East of Highway 281, South of Highway 29, West of Coke Street and CR 330 (Westfall St.), and North of the Railroad tracks. (See attached map.) Must consist of existing lots with existing streets, city water, sewer, and electricity already in-place as of January 1, 2000.

#### D. Target Income Range.

The target income range will be between 80% and 120% of the Area Median Income (AMI) as defined by the Federal Housing Administration, to be adjusted on January 1, of each year.

#### E. Established Price Range.

Homes must be considered affordable in accordance with the current U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development guidelines for home affordability and as based on the Target Income Range, and shall be verified on the Closing Statement's Contract Sales Price. The target income range will be between 80% and 120% of the Area Median Income (AMI). Below is an example of Buyer qualifying criteria:

AMI - \$40,100 @80% of AMI @120% of AMI  
 \$32,000/yr Income \$48,120/yr  
 x 28% \_\_\_ Affordability Factor x 28% \_\_\_  
 \$8,960 / 12 \$13,475 / 12  
 \$ 746.67/mo Est. Monthly House Pmt \$1,122.92  
 \_\_\_ x 100 \_\_\_ Home Purchase Factor \_\_\_ x 100 \_\_\_  
 \$74,670 Established Price Range \$112,300

(Note: According to FHA, the Burnet Area Median Income (AMI), as of January 2002 for the City of Burnet is \$40,100 per year. The assumptions used in estimating house payments; property taxes calculated at \$2.4623/100, insurance calculated at 1% of house value for a home with 51% masonry and taking into account insurance scoring. Principal and Interest payments are based on a 30-year mortgage with a 6.5% interest rate.)

#### F. Target Buyer.

- 1) The program will target the median income sector that fit the income criteria in item D. above. Targeted Buyers may consist of, but are not limited to;
  - a. City employees, firefighters and EMS personnel.
  - b. Teachers and school district employees.
  - c. County employees.

#### G. City Participation.

- 1) Provide Information – The City shall make information on the program available to prospective homebuyers, developers and other interested parties;
- 2) Waiver of Tap Fees – On eligible lots, regardless of whether the lots are publicly owned, privately owned, or owned by a non-profit organization.
  - 100% waiver of tap fees for lots in the “Primary” area
- 3) Waiver of Permit Fees – For Building Permit Fees; Plumbing Permit Fees; Electrical

Permit Fees; HVAC unit fee; Building Department review of plans fee; and Fire Marshall review of plans fee for the eligible lots.

- 100% waiver of permit fees for lots located in the "Primary" area

#### H. Restrictions.

- 1) Homes must be single-family residences
- 2) Homes shall be the primary residence of the home buyer.
- 3) Homes shall not be initially sold as rental property.
- 4) All tap fees and permit fees shall be paid in advance. A rebate of any "waived" fees will be returned upon the City receiving a copy of the Final Closing Statement on the subject property. There will be no rebate on any waived tap fees or permit fees should the home's sales price exceed the upper limit of the price range established.

Section 3. Conflicting Ordinances. All ordinances or parts of ordinances inconsistent with or in conflict with this ordinance are hereby amended and repealed to the extent of such inconsistency or conflict.

Section 4. Severability. If any provision of this ordinance or the application of any provision to any person or circumstance is held invalid, the invalidity shall not affect other provisions or applications hereof which can be given effect without the invalid provision or application, and to this end the provisions of this ordinance are declared to be severable.

Section 5. Open Meetings. That it is hereby officially found and determined that the meeting at which this ordinance is passed was open to the public as required and that public notice of the time, place, and purpose of said meeting was given as required by the Open Meetings Act, Chapt. 551, Loc. Gov't. Code.

Section 6. Effective Date. This ordinance shall take effect immediately upon its adoption by the City Council and publication as required by the Local Government Code.

PASSED AND APPROVED on First Reading this 13th day of January, 2004.

FINALLY PASSED AND APPROVED on this the 27th day of January, 2004.

ATTEST: CITY OF BURNET, TEXAS

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Crista Goble, City Secretary Dennis L. Kincheloe, Mayor



## **APPENDIX 7: Checklist of Performance Measures (OLA Report, 2003)**

### **Preserving Housing:**

#### **A Best Practices Review**

#### **A CHECKLIST FOR MEASURING PERFORMANCE**

This checklist contains performance measures that cities and local housing organizations may use to evaluate their housing preservation efforts. We used some of these measures as the basis for developing questions for our two surveys and to develop a model of best practices. The measures also enabled us to identify cities and housing organizations with best practices in preserving housing.

The next section discusses the importance of measuring performance in preserving housing. After that, we list some of the performance measures identified during the study. We present them in a checklist format for cities and housing organizations that want to assess their performance. Although we specifically discuss “cities” below, the information applies to other local housing organizations as well.

### **The Value of Performance Measurement**

Performance measures help cities determine whether they are meeting their goals of preserving housing and how well they are accomplishing their objectives. Assessing performance entails collecting and analyzing data on impact, efficiency, and cost-effectiveness of housing preservation activities.

Performance data enable cities to make informed decisions about modifying or enhancing their housing preservation strategies. For example, trend data on the percentage of housing units that are substandard, the number of housing units rehabilitated, the level of unmet housing rehabilitation needs, and program costs, for example, can help a city determine how well it is meeting its objective of improving its existing housing stock. Trend data can also help cities plan strategically for their community’s future housing needs.

Even though performance measurement seeks to improve cost-effectiveness in preserving housing, measuring performance has costs of its own. Resources are needed to measure performance, which requires local policymakers’ support. Each step in performance measurement—identifying goals and objectives, deciding on benchmarks to measure performance, recording the necessary data, and analyzing the data—requires an investment of resources in the form of personnel time as well as data-collection tools. Furthermore, performance measurement is not a one-time occurrence. Performance measurement is most helpful when it is conducted periodically, allowing comparisons over time.

### **Defining a Mission, Goals, Objectives, and Measures**

To the extent a city has followed the best practices recommended in this report, it will have identified its mission in preserving housing and the goals and objectives of its housing programs during the process of thinking strategically about housing. Such a city can move directly to identifying measures and collecting data to assess its performance.

However, if cities already have housing programs in place and want to evaluate them, they should first identify their overall mission in preserving housing. The mission describes the fundamental purposes of housing preservation, such as ensuring all residents have access to adequate housing. The mission is the foundation upon which goals, objectives, and performance measures are based.

After defining the mission, cities or local housing organizations should set goals for preserving housing. Broad goal statements delineate what a city intends to achieve with its housing programs, such as maximizing the value of housing units as economic assets of the community. When developing housing preservation goals, cities may want to consider the four goals that are listed at the beginning of Chapter 2.

Identifying their housing preservation mission and goals will help cities create program objectives. Objectives are directly related to the mission and goals, but they are more specific. They establish the specific housing preservation activities a jurisdiction aims to accomplish and by when. For example, an objective might be to reduce the number of boarded-up housing units within two years.

Performance measures quantify the extent to which a city is meeting its objectives. There are four types of measures: outputs, outcomes, efficiency, and cost-effectiveness. Output measures quantify the amount of services provided. For example, in connection with the objective to lower the number of boarded-up housing units, an output measure is the number of boarded-up housing units removed from a city's housing stock. Outcome measures quantify the results of the services. A measure of outcomes related to the boarded-up housing objective might be residents' improved perceptions of the cities' housing. Efficiency measures quantify the costs of providing services, and are based on dollars, personnel, or time. An efficiency measure of this housing objective is the number of boarded-up units either abolished or returned to service per dollar expended. Cost-effectiveness measures quantify the costs associated with achieving desirable results. A measure of cost-effectiveness is the dollars spent for the improvement in resident perceptions.

### **Performance Measures for Preserving Housing**

To identify performance measures for evaluating housing preservation strategies, we read reports from cities throughout the United States and various housing publications, and we interviewed several housing organizations in Minnesota. In the following checklist, we converted the performance measures to "yes or no" questions to make it easier for cities to conduct a self-assessment. The measures are presented in an order that corresponds with the best practices recommended in Chapter 2.

The following checklist is by no means exhaustive. Cities could track many other measures to evaluate their housing programs. Cities may choose to supplement the measures listed here with additional measures related to their own specific objectives. Even though each measure appears below only once, some measures may apply to more than one practice. For example, tracking the number of code violations voluntarily resolved as a percentage of all identified code violations applies to administering both local housing-related codes and the State Building Code.

## Checklist of Performance Measures

### Determine housing needs

The following performance measures pertain to the best practices for identifying housing needs: collecting and analyzing information in the context of long-range planning and strategic thinking.

- A. Has the city assessed the overall number, age, condition, and appearance of housing units?
- B. Has the city identified the substandard housing units in its jurisdiction, by owner-occupied and rental units if appropriate?
- C. Has the city determined the percentage of the housing stock that is boarded up or abandoned?
- D. Does the city monitor the percentage of condemned (for health and safety reasons) housing units in its jurisdiction?
- E. Has the city analyzed the neighborhoods in its jurisdiction to learn what is encouraging or discouraging private investment in existing housing (including data on the history, property conditions and values, housing needs, housing policies and programs, and real estate market)?
- F. Has the city assessed whether local ordinances and policies are hindering private investment in housing preservation?
- G. Has the city identified its housing needs?
- H. Has the city set priorities among its identified housing needs?
- I. Has the city assessed residents' satisfaction with the residential property conditions in the community?
- J. Does the city have a comprehensive strategic plan with a housing component that (1) specifies the role housing preservation will play in achieving broader housing objectives and (2) identifies the impact of other community factors on housing preservation?
- K. Do local leaders view housing as one piece of a larger picture on community development?
- L. Has the city considered how changes in its demographic makeup will affect its housing needs?

### **Determine appropriate responses**

The following performance measures gauge a city's progress in setting housing objectives, evaluating their feasibility, and selecting appropriate responses for meeting housing needs. They also apply to nurturing local leaders' support and planning for public infrastructure investments.

- A. Have local leaders set housing goals for the city, including goals for preserving housing?
- B. Have staff identified a wide range of possible strategies to meet the city's housing goals and considered the appropriateness of those responses given local circumstances?
- C. Has the city weighed the need for direct public interventions against that for indirect incentives to encourage private sector activities?
- D. Has the city estimated the ongoing costs of the different strategies and assessed its ability to implement them?
- E. Has the city set implementation plans for the housing strategies it adopts?
- F. Does the city make strategic and ongoing investments in community infrastructure (e.g., streets, sewers, sidewalks)?
- G. Has the city considered the political feasibility of its potential responses and engaged local leaders?

### **Administer housing-related codes**

These questions will help cities with local housing-related codes measure how well they facilitate voluntary compliance with their local code requirements and ensure consistent enforcement. They also address having a variety of enforcement options and targeting enforcement resources.

- A. Does the city track the number and types of constituent complaints regarding property maintenance?
- B. Are the requirements of, and standards in, local housing-related codes easily accessible to property owners who are subject to the codes?
- C. Does the city track the number of housing units inspected for code violations as a percentage of all housing units (and track rental units separately as needed)?
- D. Has the city created a range of enforcement strategies for code enforcement, including incentives for early compliance and increasingly severe sanctions for continued noncompliance?
- E. Is an acceptable percentage of code violations resolved through voluntary compliance?

F. Has the city established targets for the amount of time that should pass between when a complaint is filed and when an inspection is conducted? Does the city monitor the degree to which it meets the target?

G. Has the city established timeframes within which violations should be resolved, and does it monitor the degree to which the timeframes are met?

H. Does the city have written policies and procedures to guide staff in areas such as the standard to which properties should be inspected, what type of enforcement action to pursue, and when to escalate enforcement action?

I. Does the city target its housing inspection programs if it has insufficient resources to inspect all housing units?

J. Does the city measure the efficiency of its enforcement activities, such as by monitoring the number of hours spent per inspection and the number of inspections per total staff (including administrative staff people), distinguishing among types of inspections as appropriate?

K. Does the city measure the outcomes of its enforcement activities, such as by monitoring the percentage of inspections resulting in identified code violations and the percentage with violations that are brought into compliance with code requirements, distinguishing among types of inspections and violations as appropriate?

L. Does the city measure the cost-effectiveness of its enforcement activities, such as by monitoring the number of agency person-hours spent on code violations brought into substantial compliance or the median number of reinspections conducted before compliance is achieved, distinguishing among types of violations as appropriate?

M. Has the incidence of homeowner property insurance claims due to fire or water hazards declined?

### **Administer the State Building Code to support housing preservation**

For cities that have adopted the State Building Code, the measures below help to evaluate the extent to which they appropriately administer the code. The measures involve whether the building official publicizes code requirements, has streamlined the permit process, offers technical assistance, and considers compliance alternatives that meet the intent of the building code. Consistency in applying the code is also addressed.

A. Does the city have handouts that clarify building code requirements for different types of work on existing buildings?

B. Does the building official offer information to make contractors aware of requirements of the building code and acceptable compliance alternatives for work on existing buildings?

C. Does the building official offer preplan reviews for interested clients and log the number of plan reviews performed?

D. Does the building official have checklists to perform plan reviews and inspections consistently?

E. Does the building official consider compliance alternatives that meet the intent of the code when needed for work on existing buildings?

F. Does the building official periodically review staff work to monitor consistent application of building code requirements and use of compliance alternatives that meet the code's intent?

G. Has the building official established timeframes within which to complete plan reviews and issue building permits? Does the official monitor the building office's success in meeting the timeframes?

H. Has the building official established simplified and expedited permit application processes for routine work on existing buildings (e.g., projects that do not require plan reviews)?

I. When the building official or building inspectors review each others' work, is a high proportion of plan reviews and inspections found to be thorough and consistent in applying code requirements?

J. Does the building official measure the outcomes of providing information and technical assistance by, for example, keeping track of the volume of questions the building office receives or the number of building-code violation notices it issues?

K. Is a large percentage of code violations corrected through voluntary compliance?

L. Are follow-up inspections completed on a timely basis?

### **Provide access to financial assistance**

These measures gauge a city's ability to provide access to financial assistance for rehabilitation by forming partnerships with other agencies, developing its own capacity to administer financing programs, managing rehabilitation risks, and identifying prospective clients.

A. Has the city assessed whether it has the capacity to award financial assistance for housing preservation?

B. Has the city explored partnerships with other organizations that have housing expertise?

C. Does the city maintain a database containing the number of applications reviewed and processed (for each finance program)?

D. Does the city provide application assistance (e.g., answering inquiries, providing preliminary inspection) to potentially qualified applicants within a reasonable number of working days?

- E. Is a high percentage of units rehabilitated within a reasonable time between application for assistance and completion of the work?
- F. Is the city satisfied with the level of private funding or in-kind services that is leveraged by public dollars, distinguishing between owner-occupied and other types of units as appropriate?
- G. Does the city monitor the percentage of scheduled loan repayments made on time and loan default rates? Are these measures at acceptable levels?
- H. Does the city have a system for determining client eligibility for the various housing financial assistance programs?
- I. Does the city have in place a system to monitor project plans to ensure compliance with program requirements (e.g. correcting health and safety hazards)?
- J. Does the city conduct on-site monitoring following rehab work (to determine whether work was satisfactorily completed and conduct follow-up activities)?
- K. Does the city control the risks of rehab projects such as through initial inspections to identify needed work and payments to contractors after work is completed satisfactorily?
- L. Does the city measure its programs' outputs, such as tracking the number of clients served and the size and number of grants and loans, distinguishing among types of housing and assistance?
- M. Does the city measure program efficiency, such as the average number of hours spent per reviewed application?
- N. Does the city measure outcomes of financing programs, such as percentage of targeted housing units receiving full rehabilitation?
- O. Does the city measure the cost-effectiveness of its programs, such as by monitoring the amount of public dollars and total dollars spent per rehabbed unit?
- P. Do staff collect and analyze housing information to determine whether there is a need for the financial assistance?
- Q. Is customer satisfaction with staff competence and courtesy at a high level?
- R. Is the city able to identify potential clients for the housing assistance programs? Has it established a means to communicate with them?

**Offer access to information**

The measures below help evaluate how cities provide housing preservation information and expertise.

- A. Have city staff explored partnerships with planners, funders, non-profits, social service agencies, and/or coalitions with nearby jurisdictions?
- B. Have staff identified how housing information needs differ for different constituents (or prospective clients)?
- C. Is housing-related information available in a variety of ways, such as hard copies of written materials, on-line postings, in-person consultations at housing fairs, or cable television?
- D. Does the city measure the outputs of its housing information programs, such as the number of people to whom the city distributed written housing preservation information, the number of people receiving a visit from a rehab specialist, the number of technical assistance seminars or workshops conducted, or the number of people successfully completing seminars or workshops?
- E. Does the city track the efficiency of its information activities, such as measuring public dollars and total dollars spent per person completing housing-information workshops?
- F. Does the city measure the outcomes of its information activities such as the percentage of housing preservation projects undertaken by people receiving housing information?
- G. Does a large percentage of clients rate highly the housing information they received?
- H. Does a high percentage of clients rate highly the knowledge and ability of program staff?
- I. Do clients rate the length of time they participated in an initiative as appropriate?

**Offer access to direct housing preservation services**

These measures relate to a city's decision to ensure that housing repair and rehabilitation services are available to its residents.

- A. Is a high percentage of rehabilitated units sold or rented within a reasonable time from their purchase? Do the new owners or renters of rehabilitated units maintain them?
- B. Do staff document program inputs, such as the number of hours spent (including administrative time) by program?



- C. Do staff monitor program outputs, such as tracking the number of projects completed (e.g., repairs, septic tanks pumped, fences erected) or the number of housing units it has purchased, rehabilitated, and sold or rented within the jurisdiction?
- D. Do staff track the efficiency of their services, such as the number of clients served per staff person or the number of rehabbed units per staff person?
- E. Do staff track the outcomes of repair or rehabilitation projects, such as increasing the percentage of deficient housing units receiving comprehensive weatherization?

### **Evaluate housing strategies**

The measures a city uses to evaluate its housing strategies will relate directly to the goals the city has set. The following measures relate to the goals identified in Chapter 2.

- A. In cities with local housing-related codes, is an increasing percentage of housing in the city compliant with local code requirements?
- B. Does the city measure how well its housing strategies meet its housing goals?
- C. Can the city detect changes in individual property values as determined by assessors' estimated market values of improvements?
- D. Are elected leaders and staff receiving fewer complaints about the city's housing or has a survey shown improved resident satisfaction with the condition of the city's housing?
- E. Are government housing programs creating "spin-off investment" or additional residential investments?
- F. Has the city improved the diversity of its housing stock, allowing it to retain households that might have otherwise moved and attract new households to the area?
- G. Is the city's residential property tax base sound?
- H. Has the percentage of the city's housing stock that is boarded up or abandoned declined?
- I. Does the city have a low incidence of substandard housing units, owner-occupied and other, in its jurisdiction?
- J. Has the overall appearance of housing in a city's jurisdiction improved?
- K. Are clients surveyed to determine their overall satisfaction with the city's housing programs or services?
- L. Are the measures suggested in earlier sections showing satisfactory progress toward meeting the city's housing goals and objectives for existing housing?