

# Homes for All!

## The MHP Bulletin

March 16, 2007

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### News/Announcements

#### Federal Update

##### **Congressman Keith Ellison: Housing Supporter**

In January, freshly elected Congressman Keith Ellison talked with Cathy Wurzer of Minnesota Public Radio regarding his new job and his first impressions. "I think Barney Frank has impressed me the most. He seems to have an encyclopedic knowledge of the subject matter of financial services. He has a real heart for ordinary people and he understands how important it is to get them into good housing," Ellison told Wurzer. "[R]ight now it is so interesting and so exciting and so engaging that I have a pretty much of an insatiable appetite to read about all things financial, all things insurance related, all things housing related. I just want to gobble up as much information as I can," Ellison continued. Minnesota's new Congressman also told MPR that some of the issues he is interested include the foreclosure problem and predatory lending. To hear the full <http://minnesota.publicradio.org/display/web/2007/01/25/offices/> (Source: MPR)

##### **Senate Looks at Three Public Housing Bills**

Three bills were introduced recently that address public housing. The first, introduced by Senator John Sununu (S.788) would expand the number of public housing agencies (PHAs) eligible to participate in the Moving to Work program. The second bill (S.809), also introduced by Sununu, would reduce the number of PHAs required to submit annual plans for how they plan to utilize their federal funding. Lastly, Senator Barbara Mikulski introduced S.829, which would reauthorize the HOPE VI and makes some changes to the program. Minnesota Housing Partnership, in coalition with multiple other housing advocates, periodically publishes newsletters and sponsors events about public housing and other important federal programs. To add yourself to MHP's federal issues mailing list, or to find out about other learning opportunities, contact Barb Jacobs at [bjacobs@mhponline.org](mailto:bjacobs@mhponline.org).

#### State Update

##### **Minnesota Housing February Board Meeting Minutes**

Two of the major topics at the February meeting of the Minnesota Housing board were sustainable development and agency planning. As a follow up to the board's February discussion on sustainable development, Minnesota Housing staff presented green criteria organized into five categories for multifamily development funded by the agency: performance management, site and water, energy and atmosphere, indoor environmental quality, and materials and waste. For single-family properties, staff reported that existing codes are already sufficient.

Most of the green criteria also already conform to current practice of the agency. However, several new criteria are being reviewed for adoption, including radon mitigation plans, greater ventilation (exhaust fans for bath, laundry and kitchen), and use of low VOC adhesives and sealants. Staff reported that green building criteria generally cost 2-3 percent (but up to 8 percent) more than traditional construction techniques, but these up front cost increases are more than offset by long-term savings. Agency staff will monitor the life cycle costs of the green requirements and the financial impact on the developers using agency funds. The agency will also work with the University of Minnesota's Sustainable Building Research staff to monitor the implementation of the green criteria.

Commissioner Marx and other staff also reported on annual progress on the agency's 2004-2007 strategic plan, which includes five goals: ending long-term homelessness, preserving affordable housing, providing housing choices for workers, increasing minority homeownership, and being the housing partner of choice. Marx advised the board that the agency had achieved all of its major objectives for 2006.

However, board concern arose in response to staff reports regarding minority home ownership. While the target for 2006 was a 20% minority share for the agency mortgage programs, the agency achieved only 16.7% due to both rising interest rates and rising prices. The board asked staff to consider measures of success in minority homeownership that includes fluctuations in market conditions.

Meanwhile, the agency has begun work on a new four-year strategic plan that will run through 2011. The agency will present its key strategic initiatives for board adoption in June. Marx advised that the upcoming plan will give greater emphasis to financial goals for the agency, which he said was the sixth largest "bank" in the state. Upon adoption of the strategic plan and conclusion of the legislative session, the agency will also develop a two-year funding plan, called the Affordable Housing Plan. This document will identify spending targets for state, federal, and the agency's own resources. The Affordable Housing Plan will be presented for board approval at the Minnesota Housing September meeting. — *Chip Halbach*

### **Other States Take up Manufactured Home Park Bills**

Manufactured home parks are a critical source of affordable homeownership in Minnesota. In recognition of this, housing advocates have introduced two bills dealing with the sales of manufactured home parks in Minnesota: one would require the park's tenants the right of first refusal and the other would provide the tenants with relocation reimbursement for the value of their homes if they can't be moved. This move to protect the 180,000 very low-income households, young families, disabled individuals, and veterans who live in manufactured home parks in Minnesota is part of a larger, nation-wide trend. **KnowledgePlex Week in Review** reports that Oregon, Washington, Florida, and California are also considering legislation that would protect manufactured home park residents in the result of a park sale. For more information, go to <http://www.knowledgeplex.org/>. (Source: KnowledgePlex)

### **Greater Minnesota Housing Fund Pledges \$1 Million to Iron Range**

Through recent conversations with local leaders, statewide agencies and funders, Greater Minnesota Housing Fund has recognized that impending economic development projects in Northeast Minnesota pose short- and long-term housing challenges. On March 8, Greater Minnesota Housing Fund (GMHF) responded by announcing that \$1,000,000 will be set aside to support emerging affordable housing needs in Northeast Minnesota.

"The Range currently faces a long-term shortage of housing that is affordable to working families. There is potential for even greater increases in demand as large scale economic development projects and related construction bring thousands of temporary and permanent jobs to the region", said Warren Hanson, GMHF president and chief executive officer.

GMHF's \$1 million investment will be used for planning, analysis and capital to support construction of affordable housing and to create long-term housing solutions in the Iron Range. GMHF also plans to

work with local leaders and members of the Iron Range business community to maximize employer investments in housing through GMHF's Employer Assisted Housing program.

"This \$1 million commitment to affordable housing on the Iron Range underscores the importance of going beyond the Governor's proposed housing budget to serve the critical need for workforce housing and housing for the homeless throughout the state", says Hanson. (Source: Greater Minnesota Housing Fund)

### **Designing a Better World**

*Excerpt from Steve Berg interview with Thomas Fisher, dean of the University of Minnesota's newly formed College of Design, Star Tribune, 3/3/2007.*

Berg: "So design has a chance to liberate us?"

Fisher: "Yes, from this highly engineered, inhumane, ugly heartless and low-morale environment that's based more on the efficiency of systems than compatibility with people. We've been doing work with homeless teenage mothers. In wondering how to make things better, I asked if the problem was housing or training or transportation. They said it was all of those. They can't get from affordable housing to day care to a job and back again because we've designed a bus system for the benefit of the operators, housing at the behest of zoning codes and jobs that require a car, which people can't afford. This is a classic design problem."

### **Minnesota's Surplus Myth**

MHP, Minnesota NAHRO, League of Minnesota Cities, and the Association of Metropolitan Municipalities held their 2007 Day at the Capitol on March 15. Participants got the inside scoop on what the important housing issues are in this legislative session, as well as insider information about happenings in St. Paul. Overwhelmingly, the most often discussed issue was the lack of funding legislators have to work with, despite the widely-believe myth of a \$2 billion surplus. As Sen. Tarryl Clark explained, much of the current cash on hand is going to be used to fortify state reserves and inflation accounts for almost all of the projected future surplus, reminding housing advocates that they will have to fight extra hard this year to even get the governor's proposed funding. For more information about MHP's state legislative efforts, contact Barb Jacobs at [bjacobs@mhponline.org](mailto:bjacobs@mhponline.org).

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## **Reading/Resources**

### **Low Income Housing Tax Credit Database Update**

In February, HUD updated its Low Income Housing Tax Credit Database to include projects in service in 2004. The database contains information on over 1.4 million LIHTC units placed in service between 1987 and 2004. To view the data, go to [www.huduser.org/datasets/lihtc.html](http://www.huduser.org/datasets/lihtc.html).

### **HUD's New Homelessness Estimate**

Just released at the end of February, HUD's first-ever Annual Assessment Report to Congress there are 754,000 people experiencing homelessness across the United States on any given night. HUD's assessment represents a large step in counting the homeless population because it measures homelessness numbers over time, not just one point in time as they have in the past. For more information, go to <http://www.hud.gov/news/release.cfm?content=pr07-020.cfm>

### **HousingLink Foreclosure Data**

High foreclosure rates in Minnesota has caught the attention of policy makers and advocates alike. HousingLink has now made it easier to track metro-area foreclosures by posting them on their Web site.

Go to: <http://www.housinglink.org/Foreclosures.htm>.

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## From the Boardroom

### **MHP Welcomes Two Senior Staff**

Minnesota Housing Partnership is proud to introduce their two new senior staff. Hired as operations director is Ellery July. Most recently, Ellery was vice president for programs at Northwest Area Foundation. Prior to that, Mr. July worked with Twin Cities United Way.

Hired as programs director is Shannon Guernsey. Most recently, Ms. Guernsey was vice president for government relations and strategic initiatives at the Midwest Division of the American Cancer Society. Shannon also worked as a staff attorney for the Minnesota Supreme Court.

Welcome Ellery and Shannon!

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## Upcoming Events

**March 21**

### **Investment in Minnesota Day**

Invest in Minnesota is a one-day phone-in to members of the Minnesota Legislature - Call your legislators on Wednesday, March 21 and ask them to invest in the services Minnesotans rely on. For more information, go to <http://www.mncn.org/>.

**March 21**

**The Future of Federal Funding for Permanent Supportive Housing Audio Conference**, 12:00 p.m. - 1:00 p.m. Presented by the Corporation for Supportive Housing, this audio conference will focus on the federal budget and policy initiatives that will have an impact on building and sustaining supportive housing in the coming years. Participation is free, but you must register. Go to <http://www.csh.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=page.viewPage&pageID=641&nodeID=81> for more information.

**March 23**

**Lending Practices and Shattered Dreams: What Can We Do about It?** 12:00 p.m. to 1:30 p.m., Room L-10, Carlson School of Management, University of Minnesota. This session will address the impact of rising foreclosures on St. Paul's neighborhoods, including an analysis of the causes for the trend and opportunities for reform. RSVP is required no later than March 21 to [curahf@umn.edu](mailto:curahf@umn.edu) or 612-625-2086. For more information, contact Adrienne Hannert at 612-625-2086 or [curahf@umn.edu](mailto:curahf@umn.edu).

**April 4**

**Organizers' Roundtable Discussion on an Elected Met Council**, 12:00 p.m. to 1:30 p.m., McKnight Foundation Board Room, 710 South Second Street, Minneapolis. The Metropolitan Council oversees regional planning for housing, transportation, parks and open space, and wastewater treatment in the seven-county Twin Cities metropolitan area. The 16 members and the chair are and have always been appointed by the governor. Should the Met Council be elected? If so, how? Join us for an engaging discussion about regional planning policies, past and current attempts to create an elected Met Council. Myron Orfield will provide a brief introduction, and the discussion will be facilitated by Russ

Adams. [Click here](#) for more information. Please RSVP to me at 612-332-4471 or [unny@metrostability.org](mailto:unny@metrostability.org) by April 2.

**April 21 to July 1**

**Affordable Housing: Designing an American Asset**, Goldstein Museum of Design, University of Minnesota, St. Paul Campus. This exhibit explores the history of housing for the least wealthy Americans and presents a statewide-view of affordable housing in Minnesota. For more information go to <http://goldstein.cdes.umn.edu/exhibitions/upcomingexhibition.html>

**April 10**

**Training Workshop: Promoting and Defending the Human Right to Housing in Minnesota**, St. Stephen's Human Services, 2211 Clinton Avenue South, Minneapolis. This Workshop will be a unique opportunity to connect the inter-related issues of housing, social justice and the human rights framework. It is designed to engage grassroots activists, housing and homeless advocates, legal aid lawyers, community service providers, students and others interested in learning more about the human right to housing - especially those who have experienced homelessness. Cost: \$25/person, free or reduced rate for homeless and low-income participants. For more information, please contact: Mayra Gómez at: [Mayra@cohre.org](mailto:Mayra@cohre.org) or Joshua Lang at: [jlang@ststephensmpls.org](mailto:jlang@ststephensmpls.org)

**May 16-17**

**Green By Design: How to plan and build healthy and sustainable communities in Minnesota**, The Depot, Minneapolis. This annual, state-wide conference is hosted by Minnesota Green Communities conference and training is aimed at providing housing developers, contractors, architects, city planners, environmentalists, funders, and others the tools needed to build energy efficient, healthy, and sustainable housing. The event includes keynote speaker John F. Kennedy Jr. and both technical and policy sessions that focus on various elements of the Minnesota Green Communities Criteria and other related topics. For more information, go to [www.greencommunitiesonline.org/minnesota/default.asp](http://www.greencommunitiesonline.org/minnesota/default.asp).

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*The Bulletin* is published by the Minnesota Housing Partnership, distributed bi-weekly and includes affordable housing news, announcements, legislative updates, publications and upcoming events. For more information on affordable housing, back issues of *The Bulletin*, to submit news or events to include in future issues, or if you would like to unsubscribe, please contact Barb Jacobs at (651) 649-1710 ext. 117, email [bjacobs@mhponline.org](mailto:bjacobs@mhponline.org).

Minnesota Housing Partnership's mission is to promote homes for all Minnesotans and to assist Minnesota communities in the creation and preservation of housing affordable to low- and moderate-income people.