



THE MHP BULLETIN*

December 2010
Volume 9, Issue 12

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The MHP Bulletin* is transforming—the same great content in a new, more user-friendly, web-based form, called **MHP Connect, coming soon.

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In addition to **The Bulletin**, MHP also publishes **The Capitol Update**, a newsletter that follows the ins and outs of state and federal housing policy and legislation that affect Minnesota. Click [here](#) to sign up for the **Update**.

NEWS

NHC in DC – Housing Communications Network Panel on Midterm Election’s Impact

A survival skill of Washington lobbyists and policy advocates is to adapt nimbly to shifts in power. To help those promoting affordable housing stay in the game, National Housing Conference (NHC) hosted a [Housing Communications Network](#) forum in mid-November entitled: “Communicating About Housing: Midterm’s Impact on Housing’s Future.”

Political science professor Glenn Richardson joined three political operatives as panelists—Republicans David Avella of GOPAC and Bill Greener of Greener and Hook, with Democrat Ben Waxman of the AFL-CIO.

As a lead in, the panelists compared the 2010 mid-term election to the 2006 mid-term election, when Democrats picked up a number of seats. Greener pointed out that in both elections the youth vote was pretty consistent. In both years, 93% of identified Democrats voted for Democratic candidates while 95% of Republicans voted for Republican candidates. The big change was with independent voters: while a majority of independents (57%) went with the Democratic candidate in 2006, the majority (55%) switched to the Republican candidate in 2010. Panelists considered this change among independents to be a revolt by a middle class perceiving it had not benefited from billions of government dollars that accrued only to the wealthy and the poor.



Waxman pointed out that the 2010 election was about jobs, with the housing crisis seen as a spoke in the economic crisis rather than a key driver. Avella agreed, saying that until the economy changes, all issues will fall second to jobs.

The Republican panelists pointed out the way they thought Republicans will approach housing in the new politically-divided Congress. They will not respond well to government solutions to housing problems, though they acknowledge government can be part of the solution. Housing programs seen as fostering dependence will be resisted in favor of programs seen as helping move people toward independence.

In summary, the panelists recommended that housing advocates first discuss the issues and not lead with funding requests. Anything seen as creating government efficiencies will receive a more favorable response.

The [NHC's Open House Blog](#) on the event notes: "Housing is all about home and community; it's a complex issue with many layers, nuances, values and emotions attached to it." The language we use and the way we talk about housing has a big impact, all depending upon context. Current contexts of national and community economies are good reminders to ever be rigorous students of helping the public connect with the value of affordable housing. For relevant research on public engagement, revisit October 2009's highlight from the [MHP Bulletin: "Three New Surveys of Public Attitudes on Housing."](#)

November Minnesota Housing Board Meeting – Report



Highlights from November's Minnesota Housing board meeting include approval of the strategic plan, some changes to mortgage loan programs, new staff, and a guest presentation by Greater Minnesota Housing Fund.

Having previously spent time meeting about the [Agency's 2011–12 strategic plan](#), the board approved that plan with little fanfare. Though earlier drafts included targeting Agency resources to high-need, high-impact areas of the state, the final plan asks the Agency to develop a definition of high-need, high-impact areas. Once developed, this definition will be brought before the board for further discussion.

In the 2011–12 plan, each of five strategic priorities have identified five to eight action steps. Many of these steps point to creation of implementation plans. For instance, under the priority of preserving existing affordable housing, the Agency will "Create a statewide plan to preserve affordable homeownership and rental housing. This plan will include preservation priorities, market segmentation and targeted communities." The priority for providing new opportunities for affordable housing includes plans to increase the stock of affordable rental housing, with a policy and plan to meet the housing needs of seniors. For the priority to prevent and end homelessness, the Agency will develop

a “contingency plan for potential reductions in available rental assistance funding.” MHP will follow and report on these additional plans as they progress.

Attendees of the Southwest and Northwest Regional Housing Advisory Groups (RHAGs) will be joined by new Minnesota Housing staff in the single family division. Chris Allen will be working as a business representative with lenders, realtors, and others and will represent the Agency at Southwest RHAG meetings. Cal Green has joined the program and policy team and will attend Northwest RHAG meetings.

In mortgage loan program news, the board approved procedural changes to programs that provide down payment and closing cost assistance to borrowers. With the changes, the maximum assistance under the HOME Homeowner Entry Loan Program (HELP) will increase from \$7,000 to \$8,500, while the maximum under the Housing Assistance Fund (HAF) will decrease from \$5,000 to \$4,500 for borrowers using the CASA program. The maximum proportion of income to be paid for housing was also lowered from 30% to 25% for the HOME HELP program.

Finally, Warren Hanson, president and CEO of Greater Minnesota Housing Fund (GMHF), presented the first of a series of “partner” presentations to be made to the Agency board. He emphasized the strong alignment between the strategic priorities of Minnesota Housing and GMHF. Hanson highlighted GMHF’s innovations, especially in sustainable land use and design and employer assisted housing. He also advocated for a Minnesota Tax Credit Equity Fund designed to stimulate local investment into tax credit rental projects; Hanson added that investors would look to the Agency for feedback on the new equity fund.

SPECIAL FEATURE:

‘HOMES for ALL 2010’ - National & MN Leaders Convene for Housing Policy Convention



The third Homes for All conference, held Nov. 8 at Saint Paul’s RiverCentre, continued to see the state’s largest affordable housing gathering reach new heights. Highlights included keynote speaker, HUD Secretary Shawn Donovan—also part of an afternoon breakout session panel—and many other participating legislative leaders and policymakers, from local to state to federal jurisdictions.

The gathering’s two plenary sessions and 17 dynamic workshop sessions will help shape statewide housing policy. Recommendations coming out of the workshops will be presented to the Governor-elect (see them on the [website](#)).

The number of contributing organization [hosts](#), [sponsors](#), and [exhibitors](#) was large, with nearly 900 people attending. Amidst concerns about legislative commitments to housing in the wake of recent elections, especially heartening were the variety and quality of presentations ([click here](#) for the agenda), the caliber and content of informed analysis, the bipartisan participation, and the overall energy of the day.

See the [Homes for All website](#) to download information from high-content breakout sessions, or to watch the day’s video montage.



(Photos by Dennis Chick.)

RESOURCES



Housing Organizations Use Maps to Serve Minnesotans and the Country

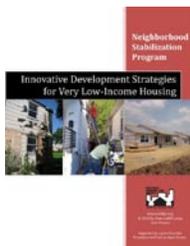
Two Minnesota housing organizations recently released new maps and tools to help ensure Minnesotans can find what they need:

- HousingLink launched [Map Search](#), a new way to search for affordable rental housing in Minnesota. The site allows users to type in employment or other important locations to search for nearby housing.
- The Home Ownership Center of Minnesota created a [printable map](#) showing foreclosure counseling services provided by the Homeownership Advisors Network and the geographic or language service area they cover. (The map is meant to be a reference tool for professionals as a supplement to the interactive online map.)



Meanwhile, HUD's Office of Policy Development and Research has launched [four new interactive maps](#) covering many counties across the country.

- In every single one of Minnesota's 47 largest counties, more than half of all low income households faced substandard housing conditions, overcrowding, or unaffordable housing costs in 2009, according to data presented in one of HUD's maps. The new maps cover housing problems, median household income, building permits, and residential and business vacancies. Users can zoom in or out using the maps and download accompanying data at the county level.



Report Shares Innovative Strategies for Very Low Income NSP Housing

A new report identifies innovative ways that five jurisdictions are meeting and exceeding the Neighborhood Stabilization Program (NSP) requirement that one quarter of funds to each grantee be spent to provide housing affordable to very low income households. (The federal NSP program provides funding to communities to rehabilitate vacant and abandoned housing in high foreclosure communities. It has been funded in three rounds starting with passage of the Housing and Economic Recovery Act of 2008 [HERA].) The [National Housing Law Project report](#) examined five communities using NSP funds in creative ways:

- Knoxville, Tennessee is using most of its award for a large supportive housing development to house formerly homeless people.
- Phoenix, Arizona has targeted large, multifamily properties. It has required developers to contribute a portion of the funding and to agree to a 30-year affordability period.
- Cleveland, Ohio is pursuing a combination of lease-to-purchase options, rehab of a troubled multifamily complex, and redevelopment of a historic landmark, buttressed by successful leveraging of other funds.
- Greenville County, South Carolina is using a mixed strategy with nearly three-quarters of its funds for very low income housing, mostly rental. The county is also pursuing lease-to-purchase and resale rehab projects with some units slated for seniors.
- Finally, Hamilton County, Ohio will finance redevelopment of a troubled housing cooperative with deep historical roots in the African-American community in a Cincinnati suburb.

MHP @ WORK

MHP Connect and MHP's Capitol Update:

Improved Formats for MHP Subscription-Publications You Depend On!

The *MHP Bulletin* and *MHP Capitol Update* are transforming—the same great content, in a new, more user-friendly, web-based form. *The Bulletin*, soon to be launched as **MHP Connect**, will allow readers to receive news, resources, analyses, updates, and event-notices throughout the month in a brief, easy-to-

click headline format. *The MHP Capitol Update* will also be updated for Minnesota's legislative session—providing subscribers timely information about state and national housing policy and politics that affect Minnesota. You'll be able to choose RSS feeds or email subscriptions for these MHP publications.

CALENDAR

December 8

Emerging Markets Home Ownership Initiative Summit

Continuing Education and Conference Center, St. Paul campus of the University of MN - This annual event is a hallmark of the Minnesota Home Ownership Center's dedication to the EMHI mission of working to promote homeownership parity. This year brings together industry and community stakeholders to develop tools, resources, and best practices aimed at increasing homeownership opportunities for Minnesota's emerging markets. For more, [click here](#).



December 13 & 14

Live Smoke Free Lunch & Learns

For those interested in making their apartment buildings smoke free. 11:30 A.M.–1 P.M., Dec. 13 in Oakdale, Dec. 14 in Andover. The content of each seminar is the same. Lunch provided; no cost to attend. To register, contact Laura Drake: 651-646-3005 or lbd@ansrmn.org. For more, [click here](#).

December 13

Project Homeless Connect

10:30 A.M.–4 P.M. at the Minneapolis Convention Center (1301 2nd Ave. S. | Mpls, MN 55403), [Project Homeless Connect](#) welcomes neighbors experiencing homelessness to access a variety of resources including: housing providers, employment specialists, employers, medical care, dental care, mental health care, benefits specialists, eye care, haircuts, education, veterans' services, youth-specific providers, children's services, and many more. Hundreds of volunteers needed: register at www.HomelessConnectMinneapolis.org or send email to projectconnectmpls@gmail.com.



December 16

Homeless Memorial March & Service

The march and silent vigil starts 5 P.M. at the Hennepin County Government Center—to honor and remember those who have died while homeless in Minnesota. For event details and schedule, [click here](#).

January 19 & 20 - 2011

Expert HOME & CDBG Training: Working Together to Create Affordable Housing

Eagan Community Center (1501 Central Pkwy, Eagan 55121 | 651-675-5550) – An advanced, HUD-sponsored training,* this course focuses on strategies for using the HOME and CDBG (Community Development Block Grant) programs together to create affordable housing. It is a case-based seminar that highlights effective projects and programs using the two funding sources—walking participants through specific projects and general program design considerations. To register or for the brochure, visit the [“Training” section of MHP’s web site](#). *(At least 5 years’ experience with either HOME or CDBG required.)

January 28 - 2011

Housing Policy Showcase • Save the Date

MHP's annual housing policy showcase will help advocates and policy makers understand more about the proposals and issues they will see this legislative session. Details to be announced.

[The MHP Bulletin](#) (hereafter called *MHP Connect*) is published and distributed monthly by the Minnesota Housing Partnership (MHP - 2446 University Ave. W. - Ste. 140 | St. Paul MN 55114). It includes affordable housing news, announcements, legislative updates, publications, and upcoming events. For more information on affordable housing, back issues of *The MHP Bulletin*, to submit news or events for future issues, or if you want to unsubscribe, call Rick Bernardo at (651) 925-5549 or email him at Rick.Bernardo@mhponline.org.

MHP also publishes the [MHP Capitol Update](#). Distributed weekly during the Minnesota legislative session, and occasionally outside of session, the *MHP Capitol Update* provides information about state and national housing policy and politics that affect Minnesota. Please contact Minnesota Housing Partnership at info@mhponline.org or [click here to subscribe to the Update](#).

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. MHP is an equal opportunity provider and employer.