



Housing Costs

The one thing common to all people experiencing housing instability is the lack of affordable housing.

Washtenaw County has the most expensive housing market in the state of Michigan. In Washtenaw County, the standard cost (Fair Market Rent or FMR) of a two-bedroom apartment is **\$1,025/month**.

According to the most recent [National Low-Income Housing Coalition's report](#), in order to be able to afford that apartment, a person would need to be earning at least **\$19.71/hour**. If working at minimum wage (**\$8.90/hour**), a person would have to work approximately **89** hours per week (that's over 2 full-time jobs) to afford a two-bedroom apartment.

What is the common theme of the five projects that RAAH's current campaign supports? All programs share the broad goal of helping people to thrive by getting and keeping them settled in affordable housing.

CAN Housing Stabilization program Community Action Network is using our \$10,000 award to help families in Ann Arbor Housing Commission units avoid the pitfalls that face formerly homeless households. At the same time as CAN staff are counseling parents about financial matters, they're providing activities and tutoring for the kids at Bryant and Northside Community Centers .

We recently sent a \$5,000 check to Avalon Housing's **Family Support Teams**. This program resembles CAN's but serves residents of Avalon Housing sites. Many of these have experienced homelessness. Avalon teams help adult residents with budgets and help the kids with homework, working to keep a safe place for families to struggle out of poverty.

The **House More Serve More** program (**HMSM**) and the **Community Risk Mitigation Fund** are both innovative attempts to make more rental space available for people who are newly housed or rehoused after homelessness.

House More Serve More, run by Shelter Association of Washtenaw County uses modest expenditures as "catalyst support" for clients ready to leave the Delonis Homeless Shelter for a local room or apartment and who need additional funds for startup costs such as security deposits. By helping some residents move out, the **HMSM** program also helps others move into Delonis, where there is always a waiting list.

The **Mitigation Fund**, recently established and administered by Washtenaw Housing Alliance (WHA), is intended to be a backup account to compensate private landlords when their properties or their finances suffer damage caused by a formerly homeless tenant. WHA hopes that the availability of the Fund will encourage more landlords to rent to the formerly homeless.

UNIFIED-HIV Health and Beyond (**UHHB**) runs the fifth program. It's called **Wellness Housing** and provides funding for supportive services and rental assistance for homeless persons with HIV and AIDS. The program recently received the second installment of the \$30,000 that RAAH is raising, hoping to ease the journey from sickness to health for some with a very tough struggle.

YOUR SUPPORT

When you donate to RAAH 100% of your money goes to the projects we support. On our web site, www.raah.org, you can find an option to donate via Paypal. Checks made out to RAAH may be mailed to 306 N Division St Ann Arbor, MI 48104



Housing Access for Washtenaw County recently welcomed Eric Hendershot as their new HAWC Coordinator. Eric continues at the Salvation Army Staples Shelter. HAWC is the central intake organization for individuals and families who are homeless or at-risk of homelessness in Washtenaw County.

The central intake is the single point of entry for all the emergency shelters and housing resources that are available to serve people experiencing homelessness in the county. Residents of Washtenaw County may call HAWC for housing assistance, information and/or referral. Please note: there is a severe shortage of housing resources in Washtenaw County.

HAWC is not able to help all people who are experiencing a housing crisis.

Those experiencing a housing crisis or homeless can call:

(734) 961-1999.

Advocacy – It Matters Now, More Than Ever!

By Amanda Carlisle

Advocacy by residents and community stakeholders is needed now, more than ever. Every government supported program, from healthcare to housing, seems to be under attack. A few years back many of us in non-profit and human services sectors joined forces to fight in favor of preserving the Affordable Care Act (ACA), when the current administration threatened to dismantle it. We shared stories with the hashtag #ThanksACA - about how the Affordable Care Act (ACA) had helped so many Americans get healthcare coverage and thus improve their lives. Our efforts helped protect “Obamacare”.

Today, I am writing to tell you that our efforts to increase affordable housing options throughout Washtenaw County - and specifically the City of Ann Arbor - are becoming increasingly difficult and yet so necessary. As the Executive Director of the Washtenaw Housing Alliance (WHA), which leads affordable housing advocacy and education efforts, I urge you, “Get involved. Advocate for housing.”

Why am I feeling this increased sense of urgency? Our county still is failing to meet goals set out in the County Office of Community & Economic Development’s (OCED) 2015 Affordable Housing & Economic Equity Analysis Report. The aim was to increase the number of affordable housing units annually. However, we have seen a loss of many affordable housing units over the past two years. Recently, Ann Arbor City Council voted down the proposed west side development Lockwood of Ann Arbor,. It would have provided over 40 units of affordable housing dedicated for low-income seniors. Last November, City of Ann Arbor residents voted to support the ballot initiative “prop A.” This essentially forced the City to end negotiations with Core Spaces whose proposed development on the “Library Lot” in downtown Ann Arbor that would have meant \$5 million for the City’s Affordable Housing Trust Fund. These are just two examples but there are many more where our community is falling short of providing enough resources and effective policies to advance our own affordable housing goals. Here are ways you can take action now:

- Engage in public discussions about affordable housing needs
- Attend meetings when developments are in front of government bodies
- Support developments that provide dedicated affordable housing units;
- Attend events that affordable housing entities hold to raise awareness about affordable housing needs
- Help support non-profit housing providers;
- Speak with fellow citizens about the need for more affordable housing units

Advocacy, cont

There are many ways you can get involved. If you want to learn more about advocacy opportunities, please sign-up for the Washtenaw Housing Alliance's newsletter at www.whalliance.org and/or follow us on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/washtenawhousingalliance/>.

The WHA sites list local events concerning housing issues, describes emerging programs and policies and offers ways for ordinary citizens to promote development of affordable and supportive housing.

RAAH about Town

Members of our board have been attending meetings to raise awareness of the housing crisis. The AA News quoted Jim Mogensen speaking of the urgent need for housing at a Democratic Socialist sponsored discussion. Mary Wakefield and Joyce Deren have attended Ann Arbor City Council sessions to address the latest concerns over the allocation of new bond funding. Also RAAH sent letters to join the voices of many others to prompt the Council to maintain the original affordable housing funds. This is one victory after some disappointing Council decisions to limit multi-family housing near the Stadium and to maintain restrictions on Accessory Dwelling Units. On May 20, two of us went to hear the results of the winter Point in Time count of the county unsheltered. It's down! We continue to address local congregations on our mission to expand affordable housing.



Washtenaw County is very close to achieving an end to veteran homelessness. When we say “end” homelessness, we mean that we strive to make homelessness rare, brief and one-time for each person who experiences it. A national agency will certify a community that can meet this target. Locally, WHA leads the Washtenaw County **Built for Zero** initiative working closely with partner county agencies. To be certified the community must demonstrate the capacity to do the following:

- Identify and engage people at risk or experiencing homelessness
- Prevent homelessness: intervene to keep people from losing their housing and divert people from the homeless services system
- Access to Shelter and Services: Provide people experiencing homelessness with immediate access to shelter and crisis services without barriers to entry
- Permanent, Stable Housing: Quickly connect people experiencing homelessness to housing assistance and services tailored to their unique needs and strengths to help them achieve and maintain stable housing.

We hope everyone in our community gets involved to help us achieve these milestones toward ending veteran homelessness. Our homeless system of care needs landlords who are willing to rent to veterans who have experienced homelessness and may have some challenges to obtaining housing. We need resources, to help veterans obtain housing and help them with basic furnishings. RAAH is helping WHA with a contribution of \$5,000 to start a mitigation fund to help encourage landlords by offsetting their concerns in offering rentals to tenants whom they consider a risk. RAAH's grant to the Shelter Association also helps with funding damage deposits and furnishings for new renters. We need employers who are willing to offer a job to a willing veteran. And for the longer-term, we need advocates who are willing to fight for more affordable housing in our community. ***Will you join us in this effort to end veteran homelessness?***

Amanda Carlisle

RAAH

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Ann Arbor, MI 48104

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Some good news from Ypsilanti. A recent meeting of the city's Affordable Housing Task Force drew more than twenty young residents to Riverside Arts Center. Task Force members and city staff shared detailed presentations, followed by a Q & A. Also in Ypsi, the beautifully rebuilt Parkridge Housing Development has been completed, and residents have moved back in. The Ypsi Housing Commission (YHC) spent more than \$19,00,000 on the renovation. The YHC Youth produced a **must-see video** about Parkridge. The video includes history of the homes, going back to the Great Migration, interviews with original and new residents, and details of the new building project. Find the movie on the web site of the YHC: <https://www.ypsilantihc.org/>

RAAH will keep bringing good housing news as well as knowledge about housing problems to the Washtenaw faith community. Find more information, on the website: www.raah.org