



STRATEGIC PRIORITY UPDATE

HOUSING

Bringing dignified, affordable housing within reach of all

Our homes are the foundation on which we build our lives. When we can afford safe, dignified housing, we can contribute to stronger, more stable communities and build the generational wealth to weather financial setbacks.

Yet Milwaukee stands at the heart of a national housing crisis. For far too long, dignified, affordable housing has been out of reach for far too many, particularly in Black and Brown communities already hindered by decades of intentional and racist policies and practices.

But we now have the chance for a new direction. After more than a decade of work led by the Community Development Alliance – a collection of funders, neighborhood-based organizations, community leaders and public officials including the Greater Milwaukee Foundation – Milwaukee’s first collective affordable housing plan is in place.

Your support can bring it to life – and turn bold aspirations into systemic change.

Milwaukee's Housing Crisis

The award-winning book *Evicted* accurately placed Milwaukee in the national conversation about housing, because the issues we face are both acute and far-reaching.

AFFORDABILITY: Many families – both renters and owners – struggle to afford their homes. Fifty-three percent of Milwaukee households are considered “rent-burdened,” meaning at least 30 percent of household income goes toward rent – a strain that often forces difficult choices between paying rent or buying necessities like food. On average, 13,000 evictions occur each year in Milwaukee, while homeowners who are behind on mortgage payments are more likely to struggle with economic stability, educational attainment and other aspects of a healthy life.

HOMEOWNERSHIP: Milwaukee is the second-worst metro area in the nation for Black homeownership, and Latino homeownership is nearly 20 percent lower than that of whites. With housing representing the primary way most American families build wealth, the effect contributes to our significant and persistent racial wealth gap.

STABILITY: In the last 15 years, the city has lost about 15,000 homeowners, almost exclusively within Black and Latino communities. The result is inequitable displacement and community instability that limits economic opportunity for families, neighbors and entire neighborhoods.

Toward a Collaborative, Systemic Solution

As a funder and founding member of the Community Development Alliance, the Greater Milwaukee Foundation, in partnership with organizations across our community, developed a unified housing strategy focused on expanding the supply of dignified, affordable housing in Milwaukee. This plan addresses the systems behind the crisis, aligning and streamlining more than 20 existing housing programs divided across three city agencies, while prioritizing community voices and collaborating with nonprofit service providers, funders and residents alike.

The Foundation and others in the Community Development Alliance aim to increase stability for renters and build wealth in Black and Brown communities through two critical outcomes:

- **32,000 more affordable rental units** for families making between \$7.50 and \$15 an hour
- **32,000 more Black and Latino homeowners**

In support of these outcomes, the Foundation is committed to funding solutions that will:

- **Support current homeowners and renters.** That includes preventing eviction and foreclosure through financial counseling, litigation assistance and other means, as well as supporting home repairs and modifications.
- **Increase affordable rental units** by investing directly in new developments.
- **Increase homeownership** by investing in land trusts and other land restoration strategies, homebuying counseling programs and homebuying financial assistance.

Change in Action

In June 2023, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and the Council on Foundations awarded the Greater Milwaukee Foundation – as a founding partner and principal funder of the **Community Development Alliance – the 2023 HUD Secretary’s Award for Public-Philanthropic Partnerships**. The award is a recognition of our work to bring forward innovative strategies, align resources with partners in government and the nonprofit sector, and advance shared goals – all in service of creating a Milwaukee for all.

Through the Greater Together Campaign, the Foundation continued to move transformative citywide strategies forward, with a focus on the following initiatives that have already made a difference:

Developing Safe, Affordable New Housing

By investing in new production models while supporting housing agencies, the Foundation aims to facilitate the development of new affordable housing units that support homeownership and mitigate displacement of neighborhood residents. Already, the CDA is working with Milwaukee County and the City of Milwaukee to develop 120 vacant lots into single-family and duplex homes.

Through the unique tool of impact investing, the Foundation will support housing development projects at their most critical junctures: when initial funding is needed to attract and secure other funders and get a project off the ground.

CDA Acquisition Fund

Some 6,300 homes over the past 15 years have transferred from local homeowners to outside investors, who acquire these properties faster than local residents can. To keep these houses in local hands, we must build a pool of funds to provide Milwaukee families more opportunity to own homes.

In late 2022, the Foundation supported the launch of Acts Housing’s homeownership acquisition

fund, which will allow the nonprofit organization to acquire portfolios of houses before investors do and set them aside for graduates of its homebuyer education program. Five single-family homes had already been acquired through this fund as of mid-2023.

Ultimately, Acts Housing seeks to support the local purchase of up to 100 properties per year that would otherwise be bought by investors.

Preventing Displacement

As neighborhoods develop and property values rise, increased property taxes add financial strain for longtime homeowners. In 2019, the Foundation contributed seed funding to the MKE United Anti-Displacement Fund, which supports low- and moderate-income residents. In its first four years, the fund provided over \$317,000 in property tax relief to 139 homeowners in Harambee, Halyard Park, Brewers Hill, Walker’s Point and Clock Tower Acres. Program participants have owned their homes for an average of 25 years, have an average income of under \$25,000 and an average age of 67 years old. Gifts to the Foundation’s Housing Fund support initiatives like this one, helping longtime residents share in the benefits of new development for years to come.

“Homeownership is a catalyst for dismantling systemic racism and building strong communities, and we can’t do our work without strong partnerships like the one we have with the Greater Milwaukee Foundation and all our alliance members.”

TEIG WHALEY-SMITH

Chief Alliance Executive, Community Development Alliance

Immediate Funding Opportunity

For donors interested in bringing dignified, affordable housing within reach of all, the Foundation offers this immediate funding opportunity:

- **GMF Housing Fund:** Your gift will support strategies that contribute to the Community Development Alliance’s plan – and catalyze citywide, systemic transformation.