

RAAH Advocacy

Platt Road Developments

Washtenaw County has managed the property at Washtenaw and Platt Roads for the benefit for county residents since 1837, first as a poor farm to care for their indigent residents as mandated by the Michigan Legislature. Later on the same site the Washtenaw County Hospital cared for patients without resources and, more recently, a center housed juvenile offenders. Now after several years of planning, consultation and deliberation, the county has chosen a developer to create a sustainable community 125 homes. **Veridian Farms** will include 50 affordable units, 25 supportive housing units for persons earning less than 30% of median income, and 25 units for households earning 60% of median income. This decision continues a tradition of county support for the less privileged on the Platt Road site.



of

RAAH members have been involved for several years in the public decision-making for this parcel, attending planning charettes and county commissioners' meetings. Without advocates for affordable housing, the property could have been sold to build market rate housing only. The commissioners listened carefully to both neighbors' concerns for more park land and community pleas for more affordable housing before choosing the Veridian development. More information about the visionary neighborhood to be built at the site can be found at the web site www.plattroad.org under the Veridian proposal.

Further County-Wide Actions

One of our board members participates in the Washtenaw County Continuum of Care Co which connects leaders of community representatives, housing authorities, and provider agencies.

On November 7th we hope that Washtenaw County voters approve the Community Mental Health and Public Safety Preservation Millage. We know that many fewer people would be homeless if mental health care were more easily available. As stated in the proposal, the a portion of millage will provide for supportive services and post crisis engagement, including supportive housing services.



At our September RAAH board meeting Ashlee Cunningham, Program Coordinator for HAWC, told us about the work of her organization, Housing Access for Washtenaw County. HAWC's function in the community as the single point of access for housing assistance has streamlined the search process for people with housing trouble. The 11 people on staff channel inquiries toward the appropriate local agency, a change from the pre-HAWC days, when clients and their helpers often had to call agencies all over two towns.

When Ms. Cunningham spoke about the complexities of helping to house at-risk persons her compassion and belief in HAWC's mission was clear. She explained coping with the different definitions of homelessness used by different government agencies and checking on the recertification required for homeless persons to every 120 days in order to stay on the waiting list for housing assistance. This status may also be lost if a homeless person incarcerated for more than 90 days because they were "housed" and no longer fit the definition of homeless.

Ms. Cunningham told us about the challenge of retaining staff for the job of finding housing for the hundreds who apply to HAWC; Only 60 or so units are available to fill each a year! The job can be satisfying when HAWC workers manage to connect folks with the helpful resources. Further, they take pride in knowing that their "rapid rehousing program has good results. When they have found short term funds to get people experiencing homelessness under their own roof, 85% of those in the program have remained housed.

For more information about HAWC in Washtenaw County, see www.housingaccess.net.

In support of **Hunger & Homelessness Awareness Week/Month** the Continuum of Care has put together a list of local agency events happening throughout November. WHA is hosting two events.

Nov. 15th, 6-8 pm: Film screening of **@home**, a journey through the landscape of forgotten America-the invisible communities of people living without permanent housing Zingerman's Greyline , \$25 includes food and beverage.

Nov. 17th, 7-8pm: Voices of Homelessness, Stories of Those with Lived Experience. A storytelling event at the Common Cup, Ann Arbor. No charge.