

Housing Link Interview, Dan Hylton Research Manager, www.housinglink.org

Claire Jordan and Mindy Greiling, June 29, 2016

Housing Link was started in 1998 as part of a lawsuit judgment against the City of Minneapolis for concentrating affordable housing in high poverty areas. It receives funding from Minnesota Housing, the McKnight Foundation and a variety of other sources, including project-specific contracts.

Their website consists of two primary resources, a housing search tool and Streams, a database inventory of subsidized rental properties in the seven-county metro area.

- **Housing Search Tool:** Housing Link's rental search tool includes subsidized housing waiting lists, rental listings directly maintained by landlords and a growing number of listings provided by direct feed from larger management companies. The search tool includes a number of filters, including voucher acceptance and a variety of accessibility features. Housing Link is free to landlords to list and is used by renters (e.g., the general public) as well as social workers assisting people searching for housing.
- **Streams:** Their goal – which is pretty close to being met – is to have 100% of publicly funded affordable rental properties listed. They get their data from HUD, MN Housing, CPED (Minneapolis Community Planning and Economic Development) and are starting to work with management companies with multiple properties.

Dan recommends we also interview:

- 1) Chip Halbach, president of the Minnesota Housing Partnership (MHP), the prime housing advocacy organization; they worked for Homes for All that resulted in the Legislature appropriating \$100 million in bonding for affordable housing last year. MHP is an independent non-profit that also brings other organizations together for advocacy. They regularly issue informative reports.
- 2) Mary Tingerthal, Minnesota Housing (Minnesota's FHA), the primary vehicle for allocating Low Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC) in MN. This moderately priced housing costs too much for the deep poor.
- 3) Eric Hauge, Lead Tenant Organizer, Home Line. We could enlist their help with local renter advocacy for our consensus recommendations.

Dan said, "Personally, I think one of the biggest issues in affordable housing is the debate about whether investments are made in inner cities or in suburbs (where there tends to be greater opportunity for better schools and lower crime, but where there are accessibility concerns and where there is public resistance to affordable housing development.)"

HUD annually publishes on their website where housing choice vouchers are being used. Dan sent us that website.

There are eleven housing authorities in the metro area that manage Public Housing. Project-Based Section 8 properties are privately-owned and managed, and renters may use Section 8 vouchers (distinct from Project-Based Section 8) in the private market. However, as a result of a MN Supreme Court case,

renters with Section 8 vouchers are not protected against discrimination under Fair Housing regulations. Minneapolis is discussing an ordinance that would supersede that ruling in their city.

Dan said we may find that our cities have different people who manage different affordable housing programs and that the left hand may not know what the right hand is doing. He recommends that we ask all our cities if they license rental units and urge that they give all license holders a packet informing them of Housing Link and strongly urging them to list there if their units are affordable. Housing Link would love to partner with cities more. (Mindy: we could also ask that our cities make listing with Housing Link a condition for licensure.)