
Preserving Housing: A Best Practices Review

SURVEY OF LOCAL HOUSING ORGANIZATIONS

The eight-page questionnaire included questions on: whether agencies were involved in preserving housing, the number of housing units they assisted, the types of assistance they offered, partnerships they had formed, and staffing and revenues.

This questionnaire was mailed to 207 local housing organization directors, 176 of whom responded (for an 85 percent response rate). A table listing the local housing organizations that received the questionnaire, and those that responded, is also available at: www.auditor.leg.state.mn.us/ped/2003/pe0305.htm.

***PRESERVING EXISTING HOUSING STOCK:
A BEST PRACTICES REVIEW***

OFFICE OF THE LEGISLATIVE AUDITOR

**QUESTIONNAIRE ON HOUSING
REHABILITATION AND MAINTENANCE
PROGRAMS**



Please return your completed survey
in the enclosed postage-paid envelope to:

**Minnesota Office of the Legislative Auditor
Best Practices Reviews**

Room 140, Centennial Building
658 Cedar Street
St. Paul, MN 55155

651-296-4708
(Fax) 651-296-4712

«Agency»
I.D. Number «ID»

Instructions: This questionnaire on maintaining and rehabilitating housing stock applies to both single-family detached housing and multi-family housing (two or more units). Shelters and other congregate residences are excluded. Please respond for the 2001 calendar year unless specified otherwise. The questionnaire does *not* apply to construction of new housing. Nor does it pertain to programs to increase home ownership or solely provide rent or mortgage assistance. A separate questionnaire on the State Building Code, local maintenance codes, and housing inspection programs has been sent to other local officials.

For your information, *Minnesota Statutes* (2000) §3.978, subd. 2 gives our office authority to collect this information from public officials and requires them to respond. We will report results from the questionnaire only in the aggregate, not by individual respondent. Upon completion of this project in spring of 2003, however, all information, including questionnaire responses, will be public data (as defined by *Minnesota Statutes* (2000) §13.03, subd. 1) and available to the public upon request.

Feel free to copy this questionnaire if you need to forward it to others in your agency. Please return by **October 11, 2002**, or complete an on-line version as instructed on the enclosed blue sheet. Direct questions about the survey to Jody Hauer at jody.hauer@state.mn.us or 651/296-8501.

1. **Name** (Please print): _____
2. **Telephone number:** (_____) _____
3. **Does your agency or department offer financial help, housing information, or other assistance for improving or rehabilitating existing housing stock?** (N=176)

Number Percent

83 47.2% a. Yes

93 52.8 b. No (If “no,” you may stop here and return the questionnaire.)

If you answered “No” above, please **STOP** here.
Thank you for returning the questionnaire.

4. **If you contract with cities to provide services for improving or rehabilitating those cities’ housing, please list the cities with whom you contracted in 2001.** (You may list a county name if your services covered all cities within that county.) (N=79)

Number Percent

33 41.8% a. Did not contract

46 58.2 b. Contracted with: (Please list.) _____

5. **Please indicate how many units of existing housing received improvement or rehabilitation financial assistance in 2001 through your agency, grouped by the amount of assistance per unit.** (Please include the number of units for which grant, loan, or tax credit applications were approved, regardless of when the rehab work was actually done. Mark the third column if your agency did not offer such assistance. For loans, consider their face value. Exclude units receiving only refinancing or mortgage assistance that was unrelated to rehabilitation-support programs.)

Housing Type	Number of Units Receiving Up to \$25,000 per Unit		Number of Units Receiving \$25,000 or More per Unit		Not Applicable		Don't Know	
	Total	Median	Total	Median	No.	Pct.	No.	Pct.
a. Owner-occupied, single-family (N=76)	4,757	22.0	523	0	2	2.6%	2	2.6%
b. Owner-occupied, multi-family (N=40)	240	11.0	14	0	28	70.0	2	5.0
c. Rental housing (N=60)	736	8.5	49	0	19	31.7	3	5.0

6. If your agency offers financing to improve or rehabilitate housing, what was the total number of applications that your agency approved in 2001 (regardless of whether the work actually started that year)? How many eligible applications, if any, did *not* receive assistance because funding was unavailable? (Exclude applications for which the applicant was deemed ineligible. If your agency does not offer a type of financing, mark the third column.)

Type of Financing	Number of Applications Approved and Funded		Eligible Applications for Which Funding Was Unavailable		Agency Does Not Offer	
	Total	Median	Total	Median	No.	Pct.
a. Loans (whether or not to be repaid) (N=76)	3,577	14	1,103	0	6	7.9%
b. Grants (N=76)	2,156	5	1,636	0	25	32.9
c. Tax credits (N=76)	3	0	0	0	41	53.9
d. Other (N=76)	255	0	0	0	34	44.7
e. TOTAL (N=76)	5,991	25.5	2,739	0	4	5.3

7. Of applicants who received financial assistance in 2001, what percentage would you estimate were *required* to add their own financial resources or “sweat equity” to complete the project? For what percentage of approved applications were additional dollars leveraged from other sources? (Mark one response for each row.)

	0 to 24%		25 to 49%		50 to 74%		75 to 100%		Don't Know	
	No.	Pct.	No.	Pct.	No.	Pct.	No.	Pct.	No.	Pct.
Single-family housing (detached units)										
a. Applicants required to add resources (N=72)	42	58.3%	7	9.7%	8	11.1%	11	15.3%	4	5.6%
b. Projects with leveraged additional dollars from other sources (N=67)	29	43.3	10	14.9	12	17.9	12	17.9	4	6.0
Multi-family housing (two or more units)										
c. Applicants required to add resources (N=52)	16	30.8	3	5.8	3	5.8	17	32.7	13	25.0
d. Projects with leveraged additional dollars from other sources (N=50)	17	34.0	4	8.0	1	2.0	15	30.0	13	26.0

8. From your experience, to what extent do federal and state financial-assistance programs offer your agency flexibility to meet the local housing needs in your area? (Mark one.) (N=79)

Number	Percent	
46	58.2%	a. Generally sufficient flexibility (Skip to Question 10.)
27	34.2	b. Some afford sufficient flexibility and others do not
6	7.6	c. Generally insufficient flexibility

9. If you believe certain financing programs do not afford sufficient flexibility, please list up to four programs and comment on their requirements and limitations.

a.) _____

b.) _____

c.) _____

d.) _____

10. For how many housing units did your agency provide any of the following services in 2001?*(If your agency did not provide the service, mark the second column.)*

	Number of Housing Units		Agency Did Not Provide	
	Total	Median	No.	Pct.
a. Initial inspections of residential units to identify needed work (N=78)	7,265	33.5	10	12.8%
b. Development of specifications for needed work (N=79)	4,815	28.0	13	16.5
c. Monitoring work plans for compliance with funding requirements (e.g., ensuring only eligible activities are funded) (N=77)	5,934	27.5	7	9.1
d. On-site reviews of contractors' completed work (N=77)	4,109	22.0	9	11.7
e. Home fix-up or repair work done on-site by your agency (N=67)	1,087	23.5	59	88.1
f. Purchase, rehab, and sale or rental of single-family housing (N=83)	224	3.0	50	60.2
g. Purchase, rehab, and sale or rental of multi-family housing (N=76)	341	6.0	67	88.2
h. Tool or supply lending for home improvement or rehab projects (N=75)	245	0.0	58	77.3
i. Expertise or information on planning or carrying out home improvement projects (N=74)	6,340	25.0	37	50.0
j. Designation of Housing Improvement Areas (typically areas with condominiums on which fees are imposed to pay for some or all housing improvements, per Minn. Stat. §428A.11) (N=77)	281	0.0	63	81.8

11. Please indicate whether your agency has formed partnerships with any of the following to assist in improving and rehabilitating existing housing. (Mark all that apply.) (N=81)

Number	Percent	
61	75.3%	a. Nonprofit organizations
42	51.9	b. Local businesses or financial institutions
60	74.1	c. Nearby cities, county, or other local government units
8	9.9	d. No partnerships (<i>Skip to Question 14.</i>)

12. For what types of services has your agency formed partnerships? (Mark all that apply.) (N=73)

Number	Percent	
65	89.0%	a. Financing home repair or rehab projects
50	68.5	b. Offering expertise or information to owners about planning or carrying out home projects
31	42.5	c. Purchasing housing units for rehab and resale
12	16.4	d. Lending tools or supplies
9	12.3	e. Offering on-site home fix-up and repair
9	12.3	f. Other (<i>Specify.</i>) _____

13. In your opinion, how well have these partnerships enhanced your agency's capacity to improve and rehabilitate existing housing? (Mark one for each row.)

Partner Agencies	Well		Somewhat Well		Not At All		Don't Know	
	No.	Pct.	No.	Pct.	No.	Pct.	No.	Pct.
a. Nonprofit organizations (N=61)	44	72.1%	14	23.0%	1	1.6%	2	3.3%
b. Local businesses or financial institutions (N=41)	25	61.0	13	31.7	2	4.9	1	2.4
c. Nearby cities, county, or other local governments (N=60)	43	71.7	15	25.0	1	1.7	1	1.7

The next questions refer to housing information and education programs.

14. Please indicate whether your agency offered or financially supported housing maintenance and preservation information through any of the following means in 2001. (Please mark all that apply.)

(N=78)

<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>	
24	30.8%	a. Housing improvement or remodeling fair
16	20.5	b. General housing maintenance courses for homeowners
5	6.4	c. General housing maintenance courses for landlords
7	9.0	d. Workshops on specific projects (e.g., caulking windows) or building systems (e.g., plumbing or electrical)
24	30.8	e. Presentations to civic groups
14	17.9	f. Housing maintenance manuals
3	3.8	g. Manuals indicating acceptable rehabilitation options for homes with historic designation or in historic districts
13	16.7	h. Plan books suggesting remodeling alternatives for different types of homes
32	41.0	i. Published information on sources of rehabilitation financing or other types of home-repair assistance
12	15.4	j. Other (<i>Specify.</i>) _____
21	26.9	k. None of the above (<i>Skip to Question 17.</i>)
1	1.3	l. Don't know (<i>Skip to Question 17.</i>)

15. In what ways, if any, did your agency attempt to determine the effectiveness of housing information or educational opportunities it offered or supported financially? (Mark all that apply.) (N=56)

<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>	
24	42.9%	a. Formal surveys of participants or recipients
16	28.6	b. Informal follow-up phone calls to participants or recipients
26	46.4	c. Anecdotal information from participants or recipients
2	3.6	d. Other (<i>Specify.</i>) _____
9	16.1	e. None
4	7.1	f. Don't know

16. Of the programs in Question 14 that your agency offered or financially supported, which one do you believe was most effective in providing information (even if the programs were not formally evaluated)? Approximately how many people in 2001 participated or were recipients?

a. _____ program

Total Median

b. 29,510 175 number of people (N=30)

c. Don't know (N=16)

17. To the best of your knowledge, through what avenues is housing maintenance and preservation information available in your jurisdiction? (Mark all that apply.) (N=79)

<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>	
52	65.8%	a. Nonprofit organizations
28	35.4	b. Educational institutions
41	51.9	c. Hardware or home improvement stores
14	17.7	d. Landlord or apartment associations
18	22.8	e. Other (<i>Please specify.</i>) _____
15	19.0	f. I am unaware of information available through any other sources.

These questions pertain to the personnel and financial resources of your agency.

- 18. At the end of 2001, how many full-time equivalent (FTE) employees or contract workers, including professional, technical, and administrative staff, did your agency or department employ? How many FTE staff worked in some capacity with improving or rehabbing housing, and how many with other activities?** (For example, if 3 staff worked full-time on activities for rehabbing housing, and 2 worked one-quarter time on such activities but three-quarter time on other services, report 5 **total FTE** employees and 3.5 FTEs for those working on improving or rehabbing housing.) (N=80)

<u>Total</u>	<u>Median</u>	
1,246.0	6.75	a. TOTAL FTE employees and contract workers*
267.1	1.50	b. FTE staff working on activities for improving or rehabbing housing stock
235.5	1.13	c. FTE staff working on other housing activities: housing maintenance codes or inspection programs, new construction, rent/mortgage assistance unrelated to rehab, etc.
733.4	.50	d. FTE staff working on other activities unrelated to housing (if any), such as commercial development or employment assistance

*The staff reported by responsibilities (q18b-q18d) do not add to the total due to incomplete reporting.

- 19. What did your agency or department spend in 2001 for wages, salaries, and benefits of the employees and contract workers indicated in Question 18a?** (Include amounts for all employees and contract workers, not only those working on rehabbing housing. Exclude consultants hired for special one-time, limited projects.) (N=66)

<u>Total</u>	<u>Median</u>	
\$33,374,876	\$250,615	Employee compensation

- 20. We are interested in the sources of revenue for your agency's housing improvement and rehabilitation programs. Using your revenues from 2000 and 2001, please estimate the amounts your agency received for programs, personnel, and administration to improve or rehabilitate housing, by source of revenue.** (Exclude revenues for new-housing construction projects, rent or mortgage assistance unrelated to rehab, work associated with housing maintenance codes or inspection programs, and work unrelated to housing.)

<u>Source of Revenue</u>	(N=61) <u>2000 Revenues</u>		(N=69) <u>2001 Revenues</u>	
	<u>Total</u>	<u>Median</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Median</u>
a. Local sources (e.g., property tax levy, tax-increment finance, local sales taxes)	\$ 5,637,615	\$ 0	\$ 5,953,891	\$ 0
b. State (Minnesota Housing Finance Agency or other state programs)	11,665,380	25,000	11,489,385	30,000
c. Federal (e.g., Community Development Block Grants, Small City Development Program grants through Minn.'s Dept. of Trade and Economic Development, tax credits, HOME funds)	30,604,875	150,000	33,142,617	186,100
d. Foundations or other private contributions	4,460,925	0	3,384,682	0
e. Repayments of earlier loans	2,417,542	0	2,566,781	0
f. Other revenues (including charges for services, investment income, miscellaneous, etc.)	1,738,938	0	2,695,842	0
g. TOTAL	\$56,525,275	\$270,000	\$59,233,198	\$294,861

This section of the questionnaire pertains to housing conditions and other characteristics of your jurisdiction.

21. Based on your observations, how would you describe the general condition of existing housing units in the community(ies) within your jurisdiction? (Mark one for each type of housing.)

	Generally Good Condition, Well Maintained		Mostly Good, With Some Having Maintenance Needs Visible		Many Have Maintenance Needs Visible		Generally Poor Condition		Don't Know	
	No.	Pct.	No.	Pct.	No.	Pct.	No.	Pct.	No.	Pct.
a. Owner-occupied housing (single- or multi-family) (N=79)	9	11.4%	37	46.8%	32	40.5%	1	1.3%	0	0.0%
b. Rental housing units (N=79)	4	5.1	26	32.9	43	54.4	3	3.8	3	3.8

22. Based on your observations, how has the general condition of existing housing units in your community(ies) changed over the past five years? (Mark one for each type of housing.)

	Improved Greatly		Improved Somewhat		Generally Stayed the Same		Worsened Somewhat		Worsened Greatly		Don't Know	
	No.	Pct.	No.	Pct.	No.	Pct.	No.	Pct.	No.	Pct.	No.	Pct.
a. Owner-occupied housing (single- or multi-family) (N=79)	9	11.4%	35	44.3%	22	27.8%	13	16.5%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
b. Rental housing units (N=77)	3	3.9	26	33.8	32	41.6	12	15.6	1	1.3	3	3.9

23. How much, if at all, does each of the following factors *limit* the preservation of existing housing in your community(ies)?

	Very Much		Somewhat		Not At All		Not Applicable		Don't Know	
	No.	Pct.	No.	Pct.	No.	Pct.	No.	Pct.	No.	Pct.
a. Owners' lack of information on how to maintain or preserve housing units (N=79)	6	7.6%	55	69.6%	9	11.4%	0	0.0%	9	11.4%
b. Willingness of building owners to finance the work or assume debt for it (N=81)	29	35.8	44	54.3	4	4.9	1	1.2	3	3.7
c. Apprehension of tax consequences from increased property values due to building improvements (N=81)	7	8.6	32	39.5	28	34.6	2	2.5	12	14.8
d. Costs of preserving or renovating housing (including ancillary costs such as demolition or removing hazardous materials) (N=80)	36	45.0	38	47.5	2	2.5	0	0.0	4	5.0
e. Availability of public subsidies to rehabilitate housing (N=80)	33	41.3	35	43.8	9	11.3	1	1.3	2	2.5
f. Availability of experts knowledgeable about rehab financing (N=78)	4	5.1	31	39.7	34	43.6	1	1.3	8	10.3
g. Availability of contractors with rehabilitation specializations (N=79)	13	16.5	38	48.1	24	30.4	2	2.5	2	2.5
h. Regulations for abating lead-based paint hazards (N=79)	32	40.5	37	46.8	4	5.1	0	0.0	6	7.6
i. Environmental regulations associated with asbestos, radon, energy, or air quality (N=80)	11	13.8	44	55.0	14	17.5	0	0.0	11	13.8
j. Regulations associated with historic preservation (N=80)	6	7.5	26	32.5	37	46.3	2	2.5	9	11.3
k. For multi-family housing, sufficiency of budgets for ongoing maintenance and building-system upgrades (N=79)	24	30.4	33	41.8	3	3.8	3	3.8	16	20.3

23. How much, if at all, does each of the following factors *limit* the preservation of existing housing in your community(ies) (continued)?

	<u>Very Much</u>		<u>Some- what</u>		<u>Not At All</u>		<u>Not Appli- cable</u>		<u>Don't Know</u>	
	<u>No.</u>	<u>Pct.</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>Pct.</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>Pct.</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>Pct.</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>Pct.</u>
l. For multi-family housing, availability of property-management expertise to adequately maintain reserves and make capital improvements (N=79)	14	17.7%	31	39.2%	12	15.2%	3	3.8%	19	24.1%
m. For multi-family housing, Davis-Bacon Act requirements (protecting construction-worker wages on federally-assisted projects) (N=79)	16	20.3	18	22.8	15	19.0	6	7.6	24	30.4
n. Variation in enforcing the State Building Code (N=80)	2	2.5	30	37.5	25	31.3	5	6.3	18	22.5
o. Costs associated with applying State Building Code to existing buildings (N=80)	7	8.8	33	41.3	20	25.0	3	3.8	17	21.3
p. Other (<i>Specify.</i>) (N=9)	2	22.2	1	11.1	0	0.0	3	33.3	3	33.3

24. Based on your experience, how do you expect the following factors to affect future demand for the services your agency provides for preserving existing housing? (Mark one for each row.)

<u>Factor</u>	<u>Factor may cause future demand to:</u>							
	<u>Increase</u>		<u>Stay the Same</u>		<u>Decrease</u>		<u>Don't know</u>	
	<u>No.</u>	<u>Pct.</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>Pct.</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>Pct.</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>Pct.</u>
a. Housing age (N=77)	70	90.9%	5	6.5%	0	0.0%	2	2.6%
b. Number of households (N=76)	43	56.6	29	38.2	2	2.6	2	2.6
c. Size of households (N=77)	25	32.5	38	49.4	5	6.5	9	11.7
d. Household incomes (N=75)	36	48.0	30	40.0	3	4.0	6	8.0
e. Vibrance of housing market (N=76)	25	32.9	33	43.4	3	3.9	15	19.7
f. New housing starts (N=76)	21	27.6	36	47.4	7	9.2	12	15.8
g. Physical condition of housing (N=76)	59	77.6	9	11.8	6	7.9	2	2.6

25. Does your agency's primary service area cover more than one city? (N=79)

<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>	
32	40.5%	a. No (Skip to Question 27.)
47	59.5	b. Yes

26. If your primary service area includes multiple cities, please select one city you feel is most representative of all the communities and their housing in your jurisdiction. Write in this city below and refer to it as you consider Questions 27 through 33.

Name of representative city: _____

27. What percentage of the housing units in your community would you estimate were boarded-up or abandoned as of 2001? (N=79)

	<u>0 to1</u>		<u>2 to 4</u>		<u>5 to 7</u>		<u>8 to 10</u>		<u>More Than 10 Percent</u>		<u>Unable to Estimate</u>	
	<u>Percent</u>		<u>Percent</u>		<u>Percent</u>		<u>Percent</u>		<u>Percent</u>		<u>Percent</u>	
	<u>No.</u>	<u>Pct.</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>Pct.</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>Pct.</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>Pct.</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>Pct.</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>Pct.</u>
Housing units (single- or multi-family)	54	68.4%	15	19.0%	5	6.3%	1	1.3%	0	0.0%	4	5.1%

28. In general, how has the percentage of boarded-up or abandoned housing changed over the past five years? (N=79)

	<u>Increased</u>		<u>Generally Stayed the Same</u>		<u>Decreased</u>		<u>Don't Know</u>	
	<u>Percent</u>		<u>Percent</u>		<u>Percent</u>		<u>Percent</u>	
	<u>No.</u>	<u>Pct.</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>Pct.</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>Pct.</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>Pct.</u>
Housing units (single- or multi-family)	5	6.3%	40	50.6%	24	30.4%	10	12.7%

29. Has your agency analyzed the housing stock conditions in your community within the past five years? (N=78)

Number	Percent	
32	41.0%	a. Yes
11	14.1	b. Yes, but the analysis' information is outdated. (Skip to Question 31.)
33	42.3	c. No (Skip to Question 31.)
2	2.6	d. Don't know (Skip to Question 31.)

30. If your agency has analyzed the housing stock in the community in the past five years, approximately what percentage of housing units needed some amount of rehabilitation?

	Percentage of Units Needing Up To \$25,000 of Work Per Unit			Percentage Of Units Needing \$25,000 or More of Work Per Unit			Percentage Beyond Preserving		
	Min.	Med.	Max.	Min.	Med.	Max.	Min.	Med.	Max.
a. Owner-occupied housing (single- or multi-family)	1%	30.0% (N=29)	90.0%	0%	8.3% (N=28)	40.0%	0%	2.5% (N=26)	10.0%
b. Rental housing	5	30.0 (N=20)	85.0	0	10.0 (N=15)	45.0	0	1.0 (N=17)	30.0

31. Has the city adopted a comprehensive strategic plan with a housing component? (N=77)

Number	Percent	
41	53.2%	a. Yes
7	9.1	b. One is under development. (Skip to Question 33.)
18	23.4	c. No (Skip to Question 33.)
11	14.3	d. Don't know (Skip to Question 33.)

32. If yes, how well does the comprehensive plan do the following, in your opinion?

	Very Well		Somewhat Well		Not Well		Don't Know	
	No.	Pct.	No.	Pct.	No.	Pct.	No.	Pct.
a. Identifies a specific role for housing-maintenance and preservation activities (N=39)	17	43.6%	11	28.2%	6	15.4%	5	12.8%
b. Identifies the impact of various factors on housing maintenance and preservation (N=39)	12	30.8	15	38.5	7	17.9	5	12.8

33. In your opinion, how sufficiently has the following occurred or been done in the community up to and including 2001? (Mark one for each row.)

	Sufficiently		Partially		Not Occurred		Don't Know	
	No.	Pct.	No.	Pct.	No.	Pct.	No.	Pct.
a. Analysis of factors affecting housing investment (e.g., housing needs, property conditions) in particular neighborhoods (N=76)	24	31.6%	38	50.0%	9	11.8%	5	6.6%
b. Analysis of local ordinances or policies that may hinder or enhance private investments in housing (N=77)	19	24.7	34	44.2	14	18.2	10	13.0
c. Ongoing public investments in community infrastructure (e.g., streets, sewers) (N=77)	43	55.8	27	35.1	2	2.6	5	6.5
d. Local leadership support for existing housing as an important piece of community and economic development (N=76)	40	52.6	27	35.5	5	6.6	4	5.3

Finally, we would like to ask for your comments.

34. What methods has your agency found particularly effective in improving and rehabilitating existing housing?

35. Please add any additional comments or concerns. (Use an additional sheet, if needed.)

Thank you for your response! Please send the completed questionnaire in the pre-addressed envelope or fax it to 651-296-4712 by **October 11, 2002.**