

13

ANNUAL REPORT





FAIR
HOUSING
COUNCIL



ANNUAL REPORT 2013

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Letter from Michael Vruno, Board of Directors Chairperson

In 2013, with both solemnity and celebration, we marked the 45th anniversary of the federal Fair Housing Act's passage into law. For 45 years, our federal government has recognized the need to protect civil rights in the housing market. Yet here we are, in 2013, still fighting for the rights of every person to live in any neighborhood, anywhere in this nation.

In the past 45 years, discrimination has grown less overt, but it continues in new and pernicious forms. We continue to struggle against individual and systemic forms of discrimination in every segment of the housing market, and against public policies that have the effect of perpetuating our segregated housing patterns.

Despite these tremendous accomplishments, we know that illegal discrimination and segregation endure, in forms both new and old. Our work is needed as much as ever, and the current climate demands that we are innovative and unrelenting in protecting the civil rights of all Wisconsinites.

I ask you to be part of those efforts. With your contributions of time and financial support, we can make great things happen in our neighborhoods and in our State. Please visit www.fairhousingwisconsin.com and join me as a member of this excellent organization!

Sincerely,

Michael Vruno
Board of Directors Chairperson

Providing Quality Service for 36 Years

Prompted by prevailing patterns of racial and economic segregation, widespread discrimination in the housing market and an inadequate number of fair housing enforcement agencies, 40 citizens organized the Metropolitan Milwaukee Fair Housing Council (MMFHC) in 1977. A non-profit, membership-based organization, MMFHC is comprised of men and women who share a desire to create open and inclusive communities throughout Wisconsin.

Shortly after its formation, MMFHC received funding to embark on an ambitious full-service fair housing program. This continues today, as MMFHC works to promote fair housing throughout the State of Wisconsin by combating illegal housing discrimination and by creating and maintaining racially and economically integrated housing patterns. MMFHC serves Milwaukee, Washington, Waukesha, Ozaukee, Dane, Outagamie, Brown, Winnebago and Calumet Counties, as well as the City of Fond du Lac. In addition, MMFHC conducts some out-of-service-area activities.

MMFHC operates two satellite offices, the Fair Housing Center of Greater Madison (FHCGM) and the Fair Housing Center of Northeast Wisconsin (FHCNW). FHCGM has been in existence since 1998, and FHCNW's work began in 2002.

During the past 36 years, MMFHC has established an impressive record of accomplishments and assumed a leadership role in the struggle for equal opportunity in housing.

Enforcement Program Activities

MMFHC provides complaint intake and investigative services to persons who allege violations of local, state and federal fair housing laws. As a part of these services, MMFHC counsels clients on their options for administrative and judicial remedy, assists clients in filing complaints with administrative enforcement agencies and makes referrals to attorneys. In addition, MMFHC conducts investigations into systemic forms of discrimination in the housing market and maintains a pool of volunteers who assist in fair housing enforcement activities.

Intake of Fair Housing Complaints

MMFHC received 198 housing discrimination complaints in 2013. Due to the complex nature of discrimination, some complaints were based on more than one protected class.

The protected class basis of complaints in 2013 was as follows:

Metropolitan Milwaukee

Age	4
Ancestry	1
Disability	40
Familial Status	10
Lawful Source of Income	9
Marital Status	1
National Origin	3
Race/Color	29
Religion	2
Sex	3
Sexual Orientation	2
Status as Victim of Domestic Abuse, Sexual Assault or Stalking	1

Dane County

Age	2
Ancestry	1
Disability	12
Familial Status	9
Gender Identity	1
Lawful Source of Income	3
Marital Status	3
National Origin	3
Physical Appearance	1
Race	24
Section 8 Rent Assistance	6
Sex	3
Sexual Orientation	2
Status as Victim of Domestic Abuse, Sexual Assault or Stalking	1

Northeast Wisconsin

Age	4
Disability	18
Familial Status	6
Lawful Source of Income	2
Marital Status	1
National Origin	1
Race	16
Sex	3
Sexual Orientation	1

Out of Service Area Complaints

Disability	8
Familial Status	1
Race	3
Sex	3
Sexual Orientation	2

Referral of Complaints

The following are the numbers of complaints referred to administrative enforcement agencies and attorneys.

Attorneys	21
US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)	9
Wisconsin Equal Rights Division (ERD)	11
US Department of Justice	1

COMPLAINTS

Metropolitan Milwaukee Fair Housing Council, National Fair Housing Alliance, and Wells Fargo Announce Collaboration To Rebuild Homeownership Opportunities in Milwaukee and 18 Other Cities

Ground-Breaking Fair Housing Agreement for Marketing and Maintenance of Foreclosed Properties

In June 2013, the Metropolitan Milwaukee Fair Housing Council, the National Fair Housing Alliance (NFHA) and 12 other fair housing organizations announced a collaboration with Wells Fargo Bank, N.A. that will provide funds in Milwaukee and 18 other cities to foster homeownership, assist with rebuilding neighborhoods of color impacted by the foreclosure crisis, and promote diverse, inclusive communities.

NFHA and the following 13 fair housing organizations are parties to the agreement: Denver Metro Fair Housing Center, Denver, CO; Fair Housing Center of Central Indiana, Indianapolis, IN; Fair Housing Center of West Michigan, Grand Rapids, MI; Fair Housing Continuum, Inc., Melbourne, FL; Greater New Orleans Fair Housing Action Center, New Orleans, LA; HOPE Fair Housing Center, West Chicago, IL; Housing Opportunities Project for Excellence, Inc.,

Miami, FL; Metro Fair Housing Services, Inc., Atlanta, GA; Metropolitan Milwaukee Fair Housing Council, Milwaukee, WI; Miami Valley Fair Housing Center, Dayton, OH; North Texas Fair Housing Center, Dallas, TX; South Suburban Housing Center, Homewood, IL; and Toledo Fair Housing Center, Toledo, OH.

Wells Fargo will provide \$27 million to NFHA and the fair housing organizations to benefit 19 cities and promote homeownership, neighborhood stabilization, property rehabilitation, and development in communities of color. NFHA and the 13 local non-profit fair housing organizations will manage the funds and provide a range of grants for items such as down payment assistance to owner-occupants seeking to purchase homes in targeted neighborhoods and renovation

efforts for homes that languished in foreclosure, including creative programs to increase homeownership and neighborhood stabilization.

The 19 geographic areas included in the agreement with NFHA are: Atlanta, GA; Baltimore and Prince George's County, MD; Baton Rouge/New Orleans, LA; Charleston, SC; Metropolitan Chicago, south Cook County, IL; Oakland and Richmond, CA; Dallas, TX; Denver, CO; Dayton, OH; Grand Rapids, MI; Indianapolis, IN; Miami, FL; Milwaukee, WI; Orlando, FL; Philadelphia, PA; Toledo, OH; and Washington, DC.

Real estate owned (REO) properties are homes that have gone through foreclosure and are now owned by banks, investors, Fannie Mae, Freddie Mac, the Federal Housing Administration, or Veterans Affairs.

Under the agreement, Wells Fargo has made a number of very important commitments that will benefit communities throughout the United States, including the following:

- Wells Fargo will pay \$27 million to NFHA and the 13 fair housing organizations to assist 19 cities to promote home ownership, neighborhood stabilization, property rehabilitation, and development in communities of color.
- Wells Fargo will continue to implement best practices for the maintenance and marketing of its REO properties. A third party will monitor Wells Fargo's portfolio of REO properties to ensure that Wells Fargo maintains and markets its REO properties according to the standards set forth in the agreement.
- Wells Fargo will enhance its Homeowner Priority program to give owner-occupants higher priority over investors in purchasing REOs. Wells Fargo will extend its Homeowner Priority period so that owner-occupants will have priority over investors to purchase Wells Fargo REO properties until the fifteenth day a property is on the market rather than the current twelve-day period.
- Wells will create a new five-day Homeowner Priority period every time there is a price reduction on a Wells Fargo REO home. Wells Fargo will give priority to owner-occupants who make offers that meet or exceed the price of offers from those who do not intend to live in the home.
- Wells Fargo will make it easier to get information about its REO properties. Wells Fargo has improved its web site and toll free numbers to provide more information to prospective purchasers and anyone who wants to tell Wells Fargo about a problem with an REO property or an agent who is selling a Wells Fargo REO property.
- Wells Fargo and NFHA will sponsor two conferences designed to bring together approximately 100 industry and non-profit housing and real estate participants and regulatory agencies to discuss fair housing and its intersection with other current housing issues, including short sales, abandoned properties, and REO maintenance.
- In consultation with NFHA, Wells Fargo will develop a fair housing training program on REO issues for its employees who work on REO issues and for agents who sell Wells Fargo REO properties.

This is the first-ever agreement regarding the equal maintenance and marketing of REO homes. The agreement is the result of a federal housing discrimination complaint filed in April 2012 with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The complaint alleged that Wells Fargo's REO properties in white areas were much better maintained and marketed by Wells Fargo than REO properties in African-American and Latino neighborhoods. MMFHC and other groups had concerns that, throughout the nation, neighborhoods had been seriously damaged by the foreclosure crisis, including the impact of these poorly-maintained REO homes on property values and tax revenue for schools.



In addition to the \$27 million to promote homeownership, Wells Fargo will pay \$3 million to NFHA and the 13 fair housing organizations for costs and damages, including diversion of resources incurred in connection with the investigations, and attorney fees. Wells Fargo is also committing \$300,000 for the two national conferences and \$250,000 to NFHA and local fair housing centers to hold seminars and address delinquencies and foreclosures.

Furthermore, Wells Fargo will provide an additional \$11.5 million to HUD to support neighborhoods in an additional 25 cities. Those cities are Austin, TX, Bakersfield, CA, Detroit, MI, Fort Lauderdale, FL, Fresno, CA, Houston, TX, Kansas City, MO, Las Vegas, NV,

Los Angeles, CA, Memphis, TN, Modesto, CA, New York, NY, Phoenix, AZ, Riverside, CA, Sacramento, CA, San Antonio, TX, San Diego, CA, San Jose, CA, Santa Ana, CA, St. Louis, MO-IL, Stockton, CA, Tampa, FL, Vallejo, CA, Virginia Beach, VA, and West Palm Beach, FL.

The agreements between Wells Fargo, the private fair housing organizations, and HUD total more than \$42 million and will provide direct assistance to 44 communities nationwide.

The National Fair Housing Alliance and 13 local fair housing organizations are represented by Joseph M. Sellers and Peter Romer-Friedman of Cohen Milstein Sellers & Toll PLLC.

NFHA and its members have two similar housing discrimination complaints pending against US Bank and Bank of America, filed in April 2012 and September 2012 respectively.

The Fair Housing Act makes it illegal to discriminate based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, disability or familial status, as well as the race or national origin of residents of a neighborhood. This law applies to housing and housing-related activities, which include the maintenance, appraisal, listing, marketing and selling of homes.

Selected cases and complaints from 2013

Complaint Based on Race and Familial Status Settles for \$47,000

An African-American mother with 5 children alleged that a Madison housing provider refused to rent to her based on race and familial status. When the complainant inquired about renting the respondent's property, the respondent replied that she would not rent to her, "you have a lot of kids" and that half of her units were already occupied by African American tenants. After conducting complaint intake and counseling services, MMFHC assisted this complainant with referrals to HUD and the ERD, as well as to an attorney on MMFHC's Panel of Cooperating Attorneys. The complainant and the housing provider reached a private settlement, which included monetary damages of \$47,000.

Fair Housing Council Resolves HUD Discrimination Complaint Against Madison Complex

In February 2013, the Metropolitan Milwaukee Fair Housing Council (MMFHC) executed a HUD conciliation agreement resolving a housing discrimination complaint against Stuart Rindy, the owner of Parkview Apartments, and Cindy Lisk, its manager. Parkview is a 24-unit complex on Madison's Monterey Drive. MMFHC alleged that Lisk and Rindy discriminated against families with children.

MMFHC's complaint, filed with HUD in June 2012, was based on a testing investigation. In MMFHC's investigation, multiple testers with children contacted Lisk and were told that families with children under age 12 were permitted to live on the first floor only. Testers without children were told units were available on the second floor.

As part of the settlement, Rindy and Lisk agreed to offer housing on an equal-opportunity basis to families with children. They will pay MMFHC \$1400 toward its costs and legal fees, and will use a fair housing poster in Parkview's rental office and a fair housing logo or slogan in its rental applications, promotional signage and advertisements. In addition, Rindy and Lisk will attend fair housing training conducted by MMFHC.

MMFHC was represented by Katherine L. Charlton of Hawks Quindel, S.C.

Outreach and Education Program

The MMFHC Education and Outreach Program provides fair housing presentations and seminars to consumers, advocates and the general public. Staff also conduct training for property owners and managers, real estate agents and other members of the housing industry, and provide fair housing technical assistance to government agencies, civil rights organizations, social service agencies and housing providers.



Fair Housing Presentations and Seminars

This year, 101 fair housing presentations and seminars were conducted: 46 in metropolitan Milwaukee, 29 in Dane County, and 26 in northeastern Wisconsin. These presentations and seminars reached over 1,680 individuals. Audience members received valuable information on the purposes and provisions of federal, state and local fair housing laws; the nature and prevalence of illegal housing discrimination; how to recognize a possibly discriminatory experience; the remedies available to victims of illegal discrimination, and more.

Fair Housing Training for Housing Providers

In 2013, MMFHC staff conducted 20 fair housing rental management training seminars throughout its service area. Over 575 individuals received training; these individuals own or manage thousands of rental units. The seminars cover in-depth information about local, state and federal fair housing laws; how to make reasonable accommodations and modifications for tenants with disabilities; advertising rental units in compliance with fair housing laws; non-discriminatory negotiation with prospective tenants, and much more. Attendees learn how to implement fair housing practices at every stage of a housing transaction, from showing available units to terminating tenancies.

Community Events

MMFHC staff participated in 14 community events such as Juneteenth Day celebrations, commemorations of the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday, community festivals and neighborhood fairs. Staff use these opportunities to recruit volunteers, distribute educational materials and build relationships with other organizations.

Information and Referral Services

In 2013, MMFHC provided information and referral services to over 1,170 callers with non-fair housing inquiries. Such inquiries are most commonly related to issues such as housing subsidies or financial assistance, tenant rights, housing repairs and other landlord-tenant concerns. When callers with non-fair housing questions contact MMFHC, they are provided general information about the protections provided by fair housing laws and are referred to an appropriate community group, government agency, social service agency or source of legal assistance.

Inclusive Communities Program

The Inclusive Communities Program provides technical assistance to community organizations, developers and local policy makers on inclusionary housing policies and the promotion of racial and economic integration. This Program also provides assistance with consumers' access to pro-integrative housing choices, and conducts research, analysis and documentation of fair and affordable housing opportunities and impediments.

The Inclusive Communities Program's 2013 activities to promote racially and economically integrated communities include the following:

- Presented to University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee faculty on Milwaukee's segregated housing patterns and promotion of integration and inclusive housing policies.
- Appeared as a panelist on the television show 4th Street Forum to speak on affordable housing, fair housing and regionalism.
- Participated in the Milwaukee Housing Coalition and the Waukesha Housing Action Coalition, which work to increase housing choices for low-income households.
- Served on the City of Milwaukee's Housing Trust Fund Advisory Board.
- Participated on the Poverty & Race Research Action Council's Civil Rights Task Force on Federal Housing Policy.
- Provided technical assistance to an affordable housing developer regarding the fair housing implications of community opposition to a proposed development.
- Served on Milwaukee County's Rent Assistance Program Informal Hearing panel.
- Updated the City of Appleton's Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing report.
- Met with professional real estate brokers' organizations in MMFHC's 3 service areas to discuss affirmatively furthering fair housing and strategies for collaboration.

MMFHC Takes National Leadership Role in Enforcement Training

In addition to its involvement in training fair housing organizations through the National Fair Housing Alliance's Fair Housing School, MMFHC spent 2013 working to improve the quality and consistency of testing investigations and enforcement actions across the U.S. through a special project called Investigative Support for Testing and Enforcement Programs (ISTEP). This two-year demonstration project, which began in January 2012 and ended January 2014, was supported by a HUD grant. The grant, which was awarded to MMFHC through a competitive process, allowed MMFHC to assemble a team of experienced fair housing practitioners and attorneys.

These practitioners and attorneys provided intensive training and ongoing technical assistance to six non-profit organizations that operate fair housing testing and enforcement programs in different regions of the country. Throughout 2013, MMFHC and its team of experts provided comprehensive training on testing and enforcement work to test coordinators and directors of these other organizations. These professionals will implement and share their new knowledge in markets across the nation, improving the capacity of victims to seek legal remedy and strengthening overall enforcement of fair housing laws.

Reclaiming Our Neighborhoods

Further, in 2013 the Inclusive Communities Program launched a new initiative called Reclaiming Our Neighborhoods. Funded by the Wells Fargo settlement described in a previous section of this report, Reclaiming Our Neighborhoods makes grants in support of activities that reinvest in communities harmed by the foreclosure crisis and by the unfair marketing and maintenance of bank-owned, foreclosed homes.

MMFHC invited qualified community organizations to submit proposals for funding, and awarded three grants, each to a set of groups working in partnership. The three funded projects, which began their work in November and will continue into 2014, are:

ACTS Housing, Housing Resources Inc, Washington Park Partners and Harambee Great Neighborhood Initiatives

This project, led by ACTS, seeks to expand access to affordable and responsible homeownership while improving neighborhoods that were most damaged by the foreclosure crisis. Each partner organization will contribute services to this project, including assistance to 50 families in purchasing vacant, foreclosed homes for owner occupancy; pre-purchase and post-purchase homebuyer education; and grants for repairs for homes that were previously foreclosures.

Layton Boulevard West Neighbors (LBWN) and Select Milwaukee

LBWN and Select Milwaukee will partner to acquire, renovate and sell 4 foreclosed properties to owner-occupant families and provide at least 30 homeowners with matching grants for exterior home improvements on blocks where LBWN and Select Milwaukee are renovating foreclosed homes. These rehabbed homes will assist in stabilizing the real estate market by selling at prices above the neighborhood average, while still remaining affordable for homebuyers. Further, this project will assist 5 homebuyers in acquiring and rehabbing foreclosed properties and connect 15 homeowners on targeted blocks with financial wellness, foreclosure prevention, mortgage modification, or refinance counseling.

Sherman Park Community Association, Washington Park Partners and Harambee Great Neighborhood Initiative

In order to improve housing stock and facilitate needed housing repairs in Sherman Park, Washington Park and Harambee neighborhoods, these partner organizations will conduct a survey of residential properties, contact owners in need of repair assistance and connect homeowners with resources to address their housing repair needs.

Fair Lending Program

The Fair Lending Program promotes fair lending and foreclosure prevention, and seeks to eradicate predatory lending practices and mortgage rescue scams. This work is conducted through leadership of groups such as Take Root Milwaukee, the Alliance for Economic Inclusion, the Wisconsin Housing Advocacy Coalition, the Wisconsin Consumer Roundtable and other local, regional and national partnerships. Staff monitor financial institutions' fair lending practices and Community Reinvestment Act (CRA) activities, and provide technical assistance and education for lenders, partner agencies and the general public.

In 2013, MMFHC Fair Lending Program activities included:

- Investigated 27 mortgage rescue scam allegations and assisted homeowners file complaints with local, state and federal regulatory and administrative agencies, helping homeowners recover \$11,000 from mortgage rescue scammers.
- Conducted 24 presentations on fair lending rights and mortgage rescue scams to 583 individuals.
- Conducted 26 presentations on unfair marketing and maintenance of bank-owned, foreclosed homes to 113 community leaders in the Milwaukee area.
- Coordinated 3 foreclosure prevention events for borrowers in southeast Wisconsin, presenting fair lending information, providing fair lending materials, and facilitating in-person meetings to over 400 delinquent borrowers who were able to meet with a nonprofit homeowner counselor and/or with their loan servicer on the spot and make progress toward avoiding foreclosure.
- Investigated loans that were alleged to violate fair housing laws, discussed options for remedy with clients, and made referrals to regulatory agencies, as appropriate.

In 2013, MMFHC staff played leadership and advocacy roles in a variety of other organizations, promoting MMFHC's mission and raising its visibility. A sampling of staff activities follows:

LEADERSHIP & ADVOCACY

Felita Daniels Ashley

- Member, Wisconsin Fair Housing Network
- Board Member, Northwest Side Community Development Corporation

Laurel Bastian

- Board Member, Community Shares of Wisconsin
- Member, Homeless Services Consortium

Lemuel Eaton

- Member, Office of the Commissioner of Insurance, Title Insurance Advisory Committee
- Member, Housing Resources Inc. Board of Directors

Nicole Lemke

- Member, Brown County Homeless and Housing Coalition
- Member, Fox Cities Housing Coalition
- Member, WinnebagoLand Housing Coalition

Bethany Sanchez

- Chair, National Community Reinvestment Coalition (NCRC) Board of Directors
- Chair, NCRC Bankers and Community Collaborative Council
- Chair, Urban Economic Development Association of Wisconsin Program Committee
- Chair, Take Root Milwaukee Foreclosure Outreach Workgroup
- Member, FDIC Alliance for Economic Inclusion
- Member, Wisconsin Consumer Roundtable
- Member, Latino Fraud Fighters Coalition

Kori Schneider Peragine

- Member, City of Milwaukee Housing Trust Fund Advisory Committee
- Member, Poverty and Race Research Action Council's Civil Rights Task Force on Federal Housing Policy
- Member, Wisconsin Fair Housing Network
- Member, Milwaukee Housing Coalition
- Member, Waukesha Housing Action Coalition

William R. Tisdale

- Member, U.S. Congresswoman Gwen Moore's Advisory Committee on Housing
- Member, Wisconsin Advisory Commission to the US Commission on Civil Rights

Carla Wertheim

- Faculty Member, National Fair Housing Alliance Fair Housing School
- Appointee, HUD Fair Housing Initiatives Program Working Group

PEOPLE

2013 MMFHC Staff

William R. Tisdale,
President and Chief Executive Officer

Carla Wertheim,
Executive Vice President

Felita Daniels Ashley,
Senior Program Coordinator

Laurel Bastian,
Program Services Coordinator**

Margaret Bowitz,
Senior Administrator -
Case Management Services

Barbara Collins,
Program Assistant II

Gabriella Dieguez,
Program Assistant II

Lemuel Eaton,
Senior Program Coordinator -
Fair Lending Program

Olena Eichinger,
Lead Accountant

Gail Hyde,
Senior Accountant

Justin Klug,
Program Assistant

Nicole Lemke,
Program Services Coordinator*

Deanna Richardson,
Senior Administrator -
Investigative Services

Bethany Sanchez,
Senior Administrator -
Fair Lending Program

Erika L. Sanders,
Director - Program Services

Rachel Scalise,
Support Services Coordinator III

Christine Schneider,
Project Coordinator - Special Projects

Kori Schneider Peragine,
Program Manager -
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Megan Wanke,
Administrative Services Manager

* Fair Housing Center of Northeast
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** Fair Housing Center of Greater
Madison office staff

2013 MMFHC Board of Directors

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Keith Cowan, Vice Chairperson

James Connolly, Secretary

Johnny Kimble, Jr., Treasurer

Carol Lobes

Richard Strode

William R. Tisdale

Henry Venzant

Mary Yank

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The Honorable Carl Ashley

Mary Bruce

Mildred Harpole

Milwaukee County Supervisor
Willie Johnson, Jr.

Ruth Zubrensky

2013 FHCGM Advisory Committee

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Andrea Bayrd

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Fabiola Hamdan

Tracy Miller

Toriana Pettaway

Merry Fran Tryon

2013 FHCNW Advisory Committee

Gayle Hardt

Stephen Hintz

Rosemary Jonas

Pastor G. Manns

Lisa Schneider

Scott Schnurer

2013 General Counsel

Katherine L. Charlton of Hawks
Quindel, S.C.

2013 Funding Sources

US Department of Housing and
Urban Development - Fair Housing
Initiatives Program

State of Wisconsin
Department of Administration

City of Milwaukee Community
Development Block Grant (CDBG)
Program

Milwaukee County CDBG Program

Waukesha County CDBG Program

City of Appleton CDBG Program

City of Green Bay CDBG Program

City of Madison CDBG Program

City of Neenah CDBG Program

City of Fond du Lac CDBG Program

City of Oshkosh CDBG Program

City of Wauwatosa CDBG Program

Dane County CDBG Program

Community Shares of Wisconsin

Greater Milwaukee Foundation

BMO Harris Bank

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