



**DENDROS
GROUP**

2642 University Ave W
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Olmstead Plan Public Comment Meeting Report - Housing

April 9, 2026 - 1pm - 3pm

Meeting Summary

The April 9, 2026, draft Olmstead Plan public comment meeting was hosted by Dendros Group virtually via Zoom. The goal of the conversation was to gather public comment on the draft Olmstead Plan housing goals. There were seven participants.

Meeting Agenda

Facilitation Team

- Angela Harper (Dendros Inclusion Consultant)
- Rich Pennington (Dendros Inclusion Consultant)

Schedule

- 1:00 pm - 1:20 pm Welcome
- 1:20 pm - 2:00 pm Presentation on Draft Olmstead Plan and Housing Draft Goals
- 2:00 pm - 2:50 pm Public Comment in Facilitated Breakout Rooms
- 2:50 pm - 3:00 pm Closing, Evaluation and Further Engagement Opportunities

Registration & Attendance

Eighteen people registered for the meeting. Seven people attended and participated in the public comment.

The participants identified as follows:

Perspectives

- Five are persons with disabilities
- One is a parent/caregiver of someone with a disability
- Two work in a disability-related field
- One is a service provider

MN County or Tribal Nation of Residence

- One in Anoka County
- One in Hennepin County
- Two in Olmsted County
- One in Ramsey County
- Two did not disclose

Age Group

- Two 45-54
- Two 55-64
- Three 65+

Gender

- Six Women
- One Man

Race and/or Ethnicity

- Seven white

Military/Armed Forces Status

- Six are not a member of the military/armed forces
- One did not disclose

Experience in the Following Settings

- Two in classrooms only (or primarily) for people with disabilities
- Two in employment only (or primarily) for people with disabilities (for example sub-minimum wage, sheltered workshops, 14c)
- Two in housing only (or primarily) for people with disabilities (for example group home, long-term care facility)
- One in day programs only for people with disabilities

Participant questions from registration:

The registrants were asked “Do you have any questions about the Olmstead Plan or the process that you'd like covered in the presentation?” The following questions were asked

- How people with disabilities were decision makers in the plan especially folks experiencing homelessness or housing instability
- How does this program affect the individual disabled person?
- Housing choice vouchers for 55+ disabled adults living independently, There needs to be consideration for disabled senior adults to have safe stable housing who are unable to live on SSDI alone. I have been homeless in 2017 after domestic abuse and i could t get any help from Ramsey county and was living in Tubman for a year. There needs to be immediate help and vouchers available when living in unsafe , unhealthy buildings or situations that we can turn to in crisis without being told go live in a shelter then we can help you. Trauma Trauma Trauma i couldn't just do that. This needs to become approved within the State Housing to provide the HCV to anyone disabled 55+ living independently on waivers.

Goals Overview

The following are the goals presented to the participants of this public comment meeting.

Housing Goal 1: People with disabilities will have access to more accessible housing and housing with deeply affordable rents paired with supportive services.

- Goal 1A: Housing units that meet universal design standards
 - Measurable goal Between 2027 and 2031, Minnesota Housing will select for funding at least 2,500 new rental units that meet universal design standards, adding on average 500 units each year.
- Goal 1B: Permanent supportive housing units developed to primarily serve people with disabilities
 - Measurable goal Between 2027 and 2031, Minnesota Housing will select for funding at least 1,000 units of PSH primarily for people with disabilities, adding an average of 200 units each year.

Housing Goal 2: More people with disabilities will receive affordable financing for accessibility updates to their homes.

- Measurable goal: By 2031, 60% of households who receive financing under Minnesota Housing’s Rehabilitation Loan Program self-identify as a household having at least one person with a disability.

Housing Data Goal 1: Incarcerated individuals with disabilities will have accessible housing upon release.

- The (Department of Corrections) DOC wants to write a goal about housing for incarcerated individuals with Americans with Disabilities Act plans. The goal will be for more individuals to have accessible housing and supports after release.

Housing Data Goal 2: More people with disabilities will have safe, accessible, affordable housing of their choice.

- Housing Data Goal 2A: (Metropolitan Council) MetC wants to collect data about disabled people's experiences with housing services. This will help MetC identify program strengths, areas for improvement, and ideas to make services better.
- Housing Data Goal 2B: Minnesota Housing and (Department of Human Services) DHS want to measure the share of people with disabilities who have safe, accessible, affordable housing. They also want to measure disabled people's satisfaction with their housing.

Summary

Overview

The following discussion questions were presented to the participants of this public comment meeting.

1. What would make these goals more effective to improve the lives of Minnesotans with disabilities?
2. What would make these goals more effective to better integrate Minnesotans with disabilities in community life?
3. What's missing from these goals?

Participants stressed that affordability must be defined as 30% of income, noting that disability incomes are insufficient to meet this standard. For accessibility, they called for clear, specific universal design standards and argued that all state-funded units should meet these standards. While permanent supportive housing helps some, it should not be the default; a diverse range of housing options is needed for Minnesota's over 600,000 people with disabilities. For home

financing updates, data collection processes are unclear and funding should be expanded to landlords and property owners.

For incarcerated individuals with disabilities, participants highlighted barriers like background checks and the need for privacy protections, advocating for individualized housing plans rather than predetermined supportive housing.

Across all goals, participants recommended narrative, face-to-face data collection (not surveys) that captures people's dreams and desired outcomes, not just current satisfaction. Additional themes included consistent application processes; landlord training on disability; and leadership by people with disabilities as decision-makers, not just consultants, noting the Olmstead Plan remains "very lacking" despite some improvements.

Findings by Goal

Housing Goal 1: People with disabilities will have access to more accessible housing and housing with deeply affordable rents paired with supportive services.

Participants emphasized the need to define affordability as 30% of income and highlighted that without shared language on accessibility, accommodations may fail.

One participant stated, "Affordable housing needs to be kept in mind to create accessible housing and bring awareness to that."

The same participant added, "If people don't have the language to understand what accessibility is, they may do one thing, and not what is working for the individual with disability."

Another participant clarified the definition of affordability: "[The draft goal should state that housing cost affordability is] 30% of whatever income people have." Regarding income as a barrier, they said "the income that people have on disability... is not enough to afford housing." They reiterated that housing should cost "only 30% of their income."

Housing Goal 1A: Housing units that meet universal design standards

The current draft measurable goal does not represent a significant increase over existing practices. All state-funded units should meet universal design standards. Universal design standards feel subjective.

One participant stated, "Minnesota housing needs to have as our goal that all units that they fund have universal design, and it should be really abnormal to not to have that universal design so that we can adjust for the differing needs of folks."

The same participant noted regarding the current goal, "It's not a significant increase in what we're doing right now."

The participant further emphasized, "The movement towards [universal design requirements from all state-funded projects] especially with an aging population, is critical."

Another participant addressed the need for specificity in housing types: "[This goal] doesn't explain exactly what [type of housing units are being considered]. Some sort of [specification] would be great."

The same participant addressed universal design standards: "It would be great if there could be a list of standards." They elaborated on the distinction between shower types "walk-in showers and roll-in showers are different. And they're constructed differently. [Walk-in showers] have a lip [and roll-in showers do] not... They often get talked about equally, or as if they're the same thing and they are not." The participant also explained that their apartment building was listed as accessible but required them to navigate the building through the garage.

Regarding the subjectivity of universal design, the participant stated, "The standards of universal design basically say they can be used by most. So it's very subjective, and the standards, if spelled out, would be easier to understand."

Housing Goal 1B: Permanent supportive housing units developed to primarily serve people with disabilities

Permanent supportive housing is only one component of the housing continuum and not the preferred choice for many people with disabilities. There is a need for diverse housing options.

One participant stated, "While permanent supportive housing is an important component of the continuum of housing for folks, it is just one component, and it's not the housing choice of all people."

The same participant noted, "I think that we've gotten stuck in the model of supportive housing. [Supportive housing] does work for parts of the population, but it's not the model of choice for many people."

Regarding the scale of need, the participant observed, "1 in 9 people in Minnesota have disabilities, so 600,000 to 668,000 people in Minnesota have disabilities. So, the [draft measurable goal] we're talking about as far as making housing accessible, and the opportunities for housing are not enough for the population."

On supportive services, the participant emphasized "making sure that the supportive housing [provides] people that have the training, education, equipping to really deal with the diversity of disabilities that people have."

The participant cited the Olmstead decision as context: "[The Olmstead decision is about] the promise of being able to live in the community... people did not want to live in institutions or have only a certain type of housing choice."

Housing Goal 2: More people with disabilities will receive affordable financing for accessibility updates to their homes.

Data collection processes are unclear. Expand financing to landlords and property owners. Narrative approaches to data collection would provide better insight.

One participant noted regarding the measurable goal, "Who's collecting the data? And where does it go from there? Who then assesses that?"

Another participant stated, "Accessibility for folks owning their homes is very important, and that should continue to be a priority." However, the same participant added "having [funding] for landlords [or] property owners that want to do accessory dwelling units, or want to do other types of housing opportunities [such as] rental or a shared housing situation, is really critical."

Regarding data collection methods, a participant recommended "in any type of data collection, I think it's really important that it's a narrative approach, where it's open-ended questions... so that people can give their full thoughts and ideas as opposed to a survey, or a yes or no type of questionnaire, or where you have certain already preconceived ideas of what the answer should be."

The participant further explained, "There's incredible wealth of knowledge in folks with a variety of abilities, and collectively, we can design housing responses that really meet all of our needs, if we will really listen to each other."

Housing Data Goal 1: Incarcerated individuals with disabilities will have accessible housing upon release.

Participants had concerns about privacy protections, background checks as barriers to housing, and the need for individualized narrative approaches rather than predetermined housing models.

One participant stated, "[We need privacy protection] for individuals that are disabled or have come from the incarcerated world... so it doesn't [prohibit] them from finding [suitable] housing."

Another participant identified barriers: "Background checks, credit checks, criminal checks, are major ways that landlords keep people that have been in jail or prison from getting into housing. And so, we need to continue to address that and give people second chances."

The same participant cautioned against predetermined housing outcomes: "[We shouldn't] just predetermine that we're going to put people into supportive housing, because that's the only housing they may be qualified for because of their background issues." They recommended, "Looking at a wide variety of different types of housing opportunities so that people actually can leave jail and prison and actually be able to live successfully in the community."

On planning processes, the participant noted, "It really is [about] an individual approach, as opposed to just a system approach... setting up individualized plans, which [the] Department of Correction does right now to a certain degree. But oftentimes, folks... become homeless, or are sent to our homeless shelters [after] coming out of the system, as opposed to really having a plan that is in place that can actually work."

Housing Data Goal 2: More people with disabilities will have safe, accessible, affordable housing of their choice.

Data collection should use narrative, face-to-face methods rather than surveys, and should capture people's dreams and desired housing outcomes rather than just satisfaction with current housing.

One participant stated, "It's really important how data is collected, and again, I would [recommend] a [face-to-face style] narrative [collection]... to just a survey."

The same participant added, "I think what we really want is for people to dream about and talk about what their dreams are. What would be the type of home or housing situation I would really like? And that we begin to design the housing opportunities across our state really based

on what people's real dreams and desires are for what a home would be that would really meet their needs."

Another participant echoed the same concept: "Creating a designated housing coalition that works in concert with the individual, so it's individualized housing and what their needs are... What is it that individual wants? And what would work best for their life?"

A participant with experience running a transitional housing program described their approach "to have people fill out what we call the dream sheet. What are your dreams? What are your strengths? What are the things that you're really good at? What keeps seeming to get in your way? What are those barriers, and then what are the goals to really address those barriers?"

The same participant concluded, "This individualized approach has really been lost in the system that we created, because we've tried to deal with... a large number of people with differing abilities in our state. But we are not going to deal with it by dealing with a large number. We're going to deal with it individual and family, couple, youth, one at a time in a way that really meets their needs."

Additional Themes

Consistency in Application Processes and Landlord Training

Consistent application processes for people with disabilities, legislation to provide oversight, and landlord training on disability and accessibility is needed.

One participant stated, "[There should be] consistency in the application process for those with disabilities when they're applying, and also how landlords and owners process an application when they know the individual is disabled. Also, legislation that can be oversight for this so that individuals are not [deprived] of their rental if found disabled as well."

The same participant added that landlords may not have an understanding of disability so training in disability language and accessibility would be beneficial for landlords.

Leadership by People with Disabilities

People with disabilities should lead the Olmstead Plan as decision makers, not only as consultants, and noted the plan remains very lacking despite improvements.

One participant stated, "It is critical that the consultants continue in this process. It's already made the Olmstead Plan better." However, the same participant added, "The plan, while it is certainly improving from the previous plan, still is very lacking."

The participant further emphasized, "It needs to be led by people that have experienced housing instability, homelessness, differing disabilities, in really designing the responses that we are doing. So, not only as consultants, but as the decision makers." They added, "People need to have the same decision-making ability and power to be able to help not only co-create, but actually create this."

Participant Exit Survey

Participants were invited to complete an exit survey. Three out of the seven attendees responded to the survey.

Evaluation Metric 1 This meeting was a valuable use of my time.

- One participant strongly agrees
- Two participants agree

Evaluation Metric 2 I was able to participate fully in this meeting.

- Two participants strongly agree
- One participants agrees

Evaluation Metric 3 What would have improved your experience today?

- More people with disabilities participating