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Progressive Dane and the Affordable Housing Action Alliance strongly support Take Back the Land's campaign to promote housing as a human right and match homeless people to people-less homes. Take Bank the Land is working to maintain housing for innocent tenants at a foreclosed bank-owned home on Hammersley Road and put pressure on M&I Bank, the current owner, to transfer the property over to the people for long-term low income housing. M&I, a recipient of \$1.7 billion in the taxpayer funded bail-out, has yet to enter into a reasonable dialogue with Take Back the Land to address their concerns and seek a resolution to this matter. While our state legislature is working quickly to strip the rights of tenants in foreclosed properties and eliminate municipal tenant protections to further stack the deck in favor of their corporate donors like M&I, Take Bank the Land is courageously taking action to hold these bailed-out-banks accountable and utilize vacant bank-owned properties to provide housing to homeless people.

In 2009 (last annual report available) 3,901 individuals stayed at least one night in a Dane County shelter program. However, 2,622 times they had to turn people away from shelter because there were not enough beds or they were ineligible. Families with children can only stay in shelter up to 90 days and have a 180 life-time limit. The individuals served include 2,061 people in families (666 families with 1,294 children), 1,310 single men, 497 single women, 2 couples without children and 31 unaccompanied youth under the age of 18. 53% are families with children, 34% single men and 13% single women. The federal government continues to cut funding for low income housing and the wait-lists for rent subsidies are either closed or years long. Yet approximately 11% of homes in the U.S. sit vacant.

We reject the notion that there is no money for affordable housing, but there is \$1.7 billion to bail out M&I Bank. Instead of repaying taxpayers, M&I recently skirted federal regulations to give \$70 million in executive golden parachutes. This \$70 million, if transferred to public housing, would have increased our housing stock by 402 Hammersley Road homes. M&I's decision to give \$70 million to their executives instead of paying back their loan from the taxpayers is unconscionable and immoral. Public outrage over M&I's actions is justified and a federal investigation is warranted.

Alder Lisa Subeck recently released an ill-informed statement condemning Take Back the Land's actions on Hammersley Road and wrongfully characterized the actions as exploitative of the homeless. Alder Subeck should apologize for this statement and engage with Take Bank the Land to better understand the facts of the situation so she can assist her constituents and mediate the situation.

Extending the residence for tenants at the Hammersley Road home should be viewed as a win-win for the tenants, M&I Bank, and the neighborhood. Allowing another vacant foreclosed home to diminish surrounding property values and invite antisocial activity would negatively impact the neighborhood. It is not the actions of Take Back the Land members, to improve the property and utilize it for homeless housing, that are the risk to the neighborhood.

Instead of M&I Bank's current practice of paying a security guard to watch the property 24 hours a day, it could utilize the current homeless tenants as caretakers who will keep up the property, pay the utilities, and be good neighbors. Our elected officials should be supporting this creative solution to provide more low income housing, reduce housing vacancy, and house the homeless, instead of siding with M&I Bank who refuse to negotiate in good faith towards a resolution with the tenants.

We call on Mayor Soglin and Alder Subeck to convene a meeting with M&I Bank, the Hammersley Road tenants, and Take Back the Land-Madison to work towards a mutually acceptable resolution which ensures that innocent people are not displaced and rendered homeless just so a bank-owned property can sit vacant. M&I Bank should allow the tenants to stay so long as the property will not be occupied as an owner's principal residence. Protecting the vacancy of bailed-out bank-owned homes at the expense of innocent tenants and already marginalized homeless persons is wasteful, unjust, and deserves no legal sanction. For too long, our communities have let "property rights" trump human rights. We stand in solidarity with the people. Which side are you on?