

## **Senior Commission Recommendations:**

### **Options for easing Seniors' Property Tax and/or Rental Expenses**

Commissioners Pat Bruce and Dianne Dagen at the request of the Commission researched a number of STEP (Senior Tax Exchange Program) opportunities state-wide, and the Madison Property Tax Assistance for Seniors program. See attached documents. From this information we recommend the following:

1. That the Wauwatosa Senior Commission actively supports Wauwatosa School District's (Dr. Means') plan to enact a STEP system for Seniors as a stipend program.

Rationale: Review of a number of state-wide programs show this to be a positive resource:

First, to reduce financial pressures for senior living expenses so that they do not become "housing burdened" (paying more than 30% of their income on housing per federal guidelines).

Second, to improve mental health by fostering inter-generational relationships, reducing isolation and building community engagement within its educational system. Financial investment is minimal.

2. That the Wauwatosa Senior Commission strongly encourages the Wauwatosa Development Department to initiate a program similar to Madison's Property Tax Assistance for Seniors (PTAS) program via low-cost loans which are repaid when the house is sold. There is no financial loss to the City.

Rationale: Madison's program has been operating successfully for 50 years at no risk to the City financially. It is one option for some people who cannot afford to pay property taxes, especially with Referenda increasing tax debt. But more importantly, it can be an available resource to prevent those seniors from becoming homeless.

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3. That the Wauwatosa Senior Commission strongly urges the Wauwatosa Common Council to provide financial resources in their 2025 Budget Request to initiate both a Senior Tax Exchange Program (STEP) with the School District, and a Property Tax Assistance for Seniors (PTAS) program with our City Development Department. As these programs are developed by their respective departments, we recommend that our Senior Commission has direct input in how they are formed.