



City of Milwaukee
Tom Barrett, Mayor



Milwaukee County
Scott Walker, County Executive

December 15, 2010

Members of the Common Council
City Hall, Room 205
200 E. Wells Street
Milwaukee, WI 53202

Dear Council members:

I am writing on behalf of the City/County Commission on Supportive Housing, to express the Commission's support for file no. 100848. This file creates "permanent supportive housing" as a specific land use in the zoning ordinance.

Since 2008, the Commission has worked to promote the development of permanent supportive housing (PSH). This housing product combines small affordable housing units with on-site services such as case management and peer mentoring that assist individuals at risk of homelessness to live independently and remain housed. To date, five permanent supportive housing apartment buildings have opened their doors in Milwaukee. The City of Milwaukee has assisted these developments through the sale of City property and provision of grants through the Housing Trust Fund and CDBG. The buildings have become important, positive anchors within their neighborhoods. However, special zoning entitlements were required for these buildings, because they did not meet the zoning code's density and parking requirements for multi-family buildings.

Because permanent supportive housing buildings serve individuals with extremely low incomes, developers are greatly challenged to balance quality development within very tight budgets. The provisions of file no. 100848 will help developers to reach this balance successfully and construct buildings that add value to their neighborhoods by reducing development costs in two ways:

- 1) PSH developments will be able to build more densely and provide fewer parking spaces than other multi-family buildings, reducing capital costs of the development.
- 2) PSH developments will no longer need to expend time and money to seek a zoning change or design variances that are currently required because of existing density and parking standards that are incompatible with the mission and design of this type of housing.

Milwaukee's 10-Year Plan to End Homelessness forecasts the need for about 1200 units of permanent supportive housing in Milwaukee County. To date, 163 units have been constructed in the city of Milwaukee, and 146 additional units are under construction. We believe the provisions of file no. 100848 remove barriers to the development of additional PSH units, helping our community to reach its goals for this much-needed housing product while assuring quality development within Milwaukee neighborhoods.

Thank you for your support for the expansion of permanent supportive housing opportunities.

Sincerely,

James Tarantino
Chair