

2017 Annual Report Milwaukee City/County Commission on Supportive Housing

The Milwaukee City/County Commission on Supportive Housing was formed in 2007 through actions of both the Milwaukee Common Council and the Milwaukee County Board. The Commission held its inaugural meeting in January 2008.

The enabling legislation established the following mission for the Commission:

...serve as a community infrastructure with the institutional commitment and the financial resources necessary for providing safe, affordable and accessible housing options with supportive services for persons with mental illness or other special needs. The commission shall establish goals and benchmarks for the effort to address housing needs for persons with mental illness and other special needs in the community, and monitor progress and hold the community accountable for meeting these goals.

Under the leadership of Chair Jim Tarantino (Capri Communities), the commission met once in 2017. Others who served on the Commission during 2017 are Suzanne Breier (private citizen), vice chair; Ken Schmidt (private citizen); Paula John (Erica P. John Fund); David Brown (Community Advocates); Tony Perez (Housing Authority of the City of Milwaukee); Steve Mahan (City of Milwaukee Community Development Grants Administration); Matt Melendes (Heartland Housing); Jim Marks (United Way of Greater Milwaukee and Waukesha County), and Ald. Khalif Rainey (Milwaukee Common Council).

The Commission receives staff support from the Milwaukee Dept. of City Development and the Milwaukee County Housing Division.

Key supportive housing accomplishments in 2017

Soldier's Home Apartments

Work began in December 2017 to transform historic Milwaukee Soldier's Home buildings into permanent supportive housing for veterans and their families who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. The buildings are located on the grounds of the Zablocki Veterans Affairs Medical Center, and were built originally to treat disabled Civil War veterans.



Old Main Hall (pictured at left), constructed in 1869 but vacant since 1989, will be converted to 80 one- and two-bedroom apartments, opening in spring 2019. A future phase of the project will create 14 single-room-occupancy units and restore duplexes on the property. The Alexander Co. is developing the project. Management and supportive services will be provided by the Housing Authority of the City of Milwaukee.

Greenwich Park Apartments

Greenwich Park Apartments, a mixed-income community that includes 14 supportive units, celebrated its grand opening on May 4, 2017. Mercy Housing developed the building, located at the intersection of N. Farwell Ave. and Thomas Street, just west of Columbia-St. Mary's Hospital. The initial phase of the project includes 56 units including studio, one-, two- and three-bedroom units. Mercy Housing plans to construct 44 more units in a second phase.



Wayne Porter (shown at left) was one of the first residents to move into the building. Speaking at the grand opening, Mr. Porter shared his history of homelessness. "Finally, I can come home after a hard day of work fixing cars and motorcycles, and I can go upstairs without having to worry about sleeping outside in the bushes," he told the audience gathered for the ceremony. "And I am grateful for the progress, things have moved forward instead of being stuck."

Greenwich Park resident Wayne Porter



Greenwich Park Apartments

St. Anthony's Apartments

Ground was broken October 30, 2017 for St. Anthony's Apartments, 1004 N. 10th St. The project is converting the former St. Anthony's Hospital building into 60 modern permanent supportive apartments for individuals at risk of homelessness. The apartment building adjoins St. Benedict's Church, which has long been the site of the St. Ben's Community Meal Program operated by Capuchin Community Services.

The development will create indoor waiting space for the hundreds of individuals who are served daily by the meal program, along with showers, laundry machines, a health clinic, and homeless outreach services provided by CCS. A Milwaukee County Day Reporting Center for non-violent offenders will also be located at the building, and Milwaukee County's Veterans Service Office will provide services to veterans.



Following the groundbreaking for St. Anthony's Apartments, staff from Columbia St. Mary's checked out the plans for the health clinic at the property.

This is the fourth permanent supportive housing building developed by Heartland Housing in Milwaukee, and the second partnership between Heartland and Capuchin Community Services. The two organizations previously paired up to develop Capuchin Apartments, 2502 W. Tamarack St., which opened in 2011.

Both Milwaukee County and the City of Milwaukee provided financial support to the project. Also providing financial assistance to the project are the Wisconsin Housing and Economic Development Authority, Zilber Family Foundation, the Federal Home Loan Bank, Capuchin Community Investment, and hundreds of individual donors.



Local elected officials join representatives of Heartland Housing and Capuchin Community Services to celebrate the start of construction at St. Anthony's Apartments.

Partnership to End Chronic Homelessness

The Partnership to End Chronic Homelessness, announced by County Executive Chris Abele and Mayor Tom Barrett in June 2015, provides significant resources to address the needs of individuals whose circumstances meet the federal definition of chronic homelessness. These individuals generally have a disability and have lived continuously for a significant period of time in a shelter or a place not meant for human habitation, such as an outdoor encampment or a vacant building.

The Partnership, which pools resources from Milwaukee City and County government and the City and County public housing authorities, follows the “housing first” model. This concept posits that the lack of a permanent place to live is the single most important problem that must be solved for homeless individuals.

Over time, Milwaukee County will identify a number of small apartments that can provide housing for up to 300 chronically homeless individuals identified by a County outreach team and the Milwaukee Police Dept. Rent support for these individuals is supplied by rent vouchers issued by the City and County housing authorities, along with City HOME funds. Housed individuals are offered case management services provided by non-profit agencies including the Salvation Army, Guest House, Hope House, Community Advocates and Pathfinders for Youth.

The 2017 “point in time” survey that counts homeless individuals identified a 40% drop in the number of homeless in Milwaukee County since the Partnership began. By the end of 2017, more than 200 chronically homeless individuals had been housed and voluntarily accepted case management services. 99% of the individuals who have been housed to date are still in their apartments. The use of County employees who serve as housing navigators has contributed to the high retention rate. The navigators serve as intermediaries to assist both housing first tenants and landlords to resolve problems.

Milwaukee County will establish an endowment to raise private funds to continue to support the housing first model. The Greater Milwaukee Foundation will serve as the fiscal agent for the endowment; funds will be used for rent assistance, case management, and employment help.

For more information, consult the initiative’s web site: www.housingfirstmilwaukee.com.

Supportive housing scorecard for 2017

Milwaukee County’s 10-Year Plan to End Homelessness, published in 2010, estimated that Milwaukee County needs 1,260 units of permanent supportive housing. The chart below tracks progress in developing new supportive housing units. Counting the 772 units that were either occupied, under construction or proposed by the end of 2017, our community is more than 60 percent of the way to that goal.

Supportive Housing Scorecard - 2017

