

**Statement from Mariner Neighborhood Association
Regarding “Growing MKE” Proposal**

Approved by Mariner NA Membership at the 10/17/24 Annual Membership meeting.

The Mariner Neighborhood Association wishes to express its opinion regarding the proposed amendment to the City’s Comprehensive Plan, titled “**Growing MKE**”, which in turn would guide future updates to the Zoning Code. City officials say the plan may be adopted by the Common Council, and then signed by the Mayor, in early 2025. Mariners NA supports the goals of the proposal but are concerned that the proposal will undermine stable, diverse, middle-class neighborhoods throughout the city.

The proposed zoning changes have the principal goals of increasing the overall supply of housing, including encouraging more diverse and affordable housing, and creating new housing that supports walkable neighborhoods. Another goal is to increase transit options and access to jobs.

Housing costs have risen dramatically, putting homeownership out of reach for many. Renters struggle to afford housing, and are forced to confront sub-standard conditions. More housing will grow the tax base, a key to providing resources for schools, parks and roadways, along with critical government services (safety, sanitation, health, code enforcement, courts, social services, business development etc.) Increased housing density will promote walkable neighborhoods, make public transit more feasible, and lessen the need for automobile transit, helping achieve goals for climate stability.

Mariner NA recognizes Milwaukee racialized poverty plagues the city of Milwaukee. As a result, the city is both racially and economically segregated. The barriers to diverse neighborhoods need to be addressed so all residents of Milwaukee have access to a high quality of life, including decent, safe, and affordable housing.

There are a lot of good ideas in the plan to increase development on transit corridors, empty lots, and retail streets and eliminate some impediments to height and density where it should be promoted. We should do all we can to encourage development of vacant land. However, we should avoid one size fits all policies that threaten to undermine stable middle-class neighborhoods in Milwaukee.

Much, if not all of the east side already achieves most of the goals of the zoning changes. We have access to excellent bus service, and the lower east side/downtown are served by the Hop. Brady Street, along with North, Downer, Oakland, Prospect and Farwell Avenues are proximate to dense and diverse residential neighborhoods and have an array of retail establishments. Overall, the east side is very “walkable.” The east side is also densely-built. There is virtually no vacant land to build new housing, and single and two-family homes are generally on narrow 30 to 50 feet wide lots. Building more units on relatively small lots is generally not feasible, nor desirable, due to our relatively small yards. There are many apartment and condominium developments throughout our neighborhoods.

The east side has public housing developments such as Riverview, Locust Court and Arlington Court, along with LIHTC developments such as Greenwich Park Apartments, Riverwest Apartments (currently under construction,) and Eighteen 87 on Water. More LIHTC-funded family housing on the east side should be welcomed, and encouraged.

Zoning permitting sub-division of larger single-family and duplex homes and adding accessory units will incentivize absentee owners to purchase and exploit existing owner-occupied homes. The loss of owner-occupied homes would accelerate the problems arising from an increase in absentee owners. By devaluing the quality of life for existing residents, east side homeownership rates won't go up, but instead will continue to decline. Many of the units added under this plan would be rented to UWM students, who already put considerable stress on our east side neighborhoods.

The transit corridors and retail streets are the appropriate location for multi-unit developments and apartments. We have seen how building apartments in eastside residential neighborhoods north of North Avenue have destabilized neighborhoods and driven out homeowners. The UWM dorms on North Avenue are a positive example of how to promote dense development without undermining stable owner-occupied neighborhoods.

Mariner NA opposes the "one size fits all" approach that the proposed zoning change recommends. We fear the unintended consequences of adopting **Growing MKE** may lead to a deterioration of housing choice, income diversity, stability, and quality of life on the east side.

Document Owner:

Fred Stoltz, President of Mariner Neighborhood Association

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