



July 19, 2021

Alderman Michael Murphy
Chairman, Finance and Personnel Committee
Common Council
200 East Wells Street, Room 205
Milwaukee, WI 53202

Dear Alderman Murphy,

Take Root Milwaukee strongly supports using ARPA funds for affordable housing initiative, especially to bolster programs that assist low- to moderate-income (LMI) homeowners stay in their homes, make needed repairs, and to significantly bolster the City's support for homebuyer counseling agencies. We urge the Common Council to adopt Council File Number 210547, Mayor Tom Barrett's first allocation of American Rescue Plan funding. The Stronger Summer Plan provides over \$93 million in needed funding for a range of critical programs as a first phase in the Mayor's Recovery and Resilience Plan, and these resources will help Milwaukee continue a strong recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic through the fall.

Take Root Milwaukee (TRM) is a consortium of over 140 individuals representing 54 organizational members that has been working collectively since 2010 to preserve and promote sustainable, diverse neighborhoods by encouraging and maintaining homeownership. Members include homeownership counseling agencies, financial institutions, Realtors, local government, neighborhood organizations and other community partners.

TRM is a program of the Urban Economic Development Association of Wisconsin (UEDA), and coordinates a comprehensive community outreach, marketing, and educational programming effort to attract, strengthen and promote homeownership in Milwaukee's neighborhoods. Members work together in a formal collaborative partnership that promotes local, trusted resources for homebuyers and homeowners in Milwaukee.

Since its formation in 2009 as a result of the previous foreclosure crisis/Great Recession, TRM has consistently advocated for both funding and institutional support of our HUD-approved homeownership counseling agencies. They are critical partners, assisting residents on the pathway to and throughout homeownership. **We are pleased to see that Mayor Barrett proposed \$1.2 million to invest in and expand access to homeownership counseling in our community.** This will support an additional six new counseling positions to meet the strong demand for services we have seen over the past few years. Each year our work with Acts Housing, Housing Resources, Inc., and United Community Center demonstrates the critical part they play in helping families build wealth and ensure safe, affordable housing.

The Stronger Summer package makes additional investments in affordable housing and homeownership that our members know will benefit Milwaukee families this year. It is a strong first step toward a more resilient city, and with a focus on racial equity and inclusion, it also takes intentional first steps to address the unequal impact of COVID-19 on Milwaukee residents. We urge you again to adopt the plan that will support Take Root Milwaukee's mission of helping Milwaukeeans **Buy, Keep, and Fix** a home when it is before the Council this month.

Sincerely,

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