

2014 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, the commission met four times during 2014. Other members of the Commission are Suzanne Breier, vice chair; Ken Schmidt; Paula John; David Brown; Tony Perez; Steve Mahan; Ald. Joe Dudzik; and Jim Marks. Staff support is provided by the Milwaukee Dept. of City Development and the Milwaukee County Housing Division.

Key supportive housing accomplishments in 2014

In 2014, the Commission saw several programmatic changes in the development of supportive housing within Milwaukee County:

- 1) While one new building devoted exclusively to providing supportive housing opened its doors in 2014, other development efforts were either smaller in scale or involved multi-family buildings that mixed supportive and affordable units.
- 2) The supportive housing model is being expanded to serve additional populations, including individuals aging out of foster care, individuals with chronic alcohol abuse, and individuals coming out of the correctional system.
- 3) Foreclosed properties purchased from the city of Milwaukee were repurposed as supportive housing.



Maskani Place opened its doors to families in need of supportive housing in January 2014. This 37-unit development, located on land purchased from the City of Milwaukee at Center and Buffum Streets, serves families that were homeless or at risk of being homeless. Maskani Place was developed by Heartland Housing; supportive services are provided by Community Advocates.

Construction commenced for Bradley Crossing Phase II at 4400 W. Bradley Rd., Brown Deer. Half the units in this 54-unit affordable development will be available to individuals in need of supportive housing. The developer is Jewish Family Services Housing, and supportive services are provided by Jewish Family Services. Residents will have access to programs and facilities at Bradley Crossing Phase I, located just next door.



The Wisconsin Housing and Economic Development Authority (WHEDA) approved an allocation of tax credits for Greenwich Park Apartments, a 56-unit building to be constructed on land purchased from the City of Milwaukee at N. Farwell Ave. and E. Thomas St. The building will include 14 supportive units. Ground breaking for the project, which is developed by Mercy Housing, is anticipated in spring 2015.

The Center for Veterans Issues purchased four scattered site tax-foreclosed properties from the City of Milwaukee for redevelopment as Veterans Gardens, a supportive housing community for military veterans and their families. The four buildings, all located near 84th Street and Villard Ave., will contain 30 housing units. Occupancy is expected in mid-2015.

Journey House, a south side agency that serves youth and families, purchased a six-unit tax-foreclosed building from the City of Milwaukee at 741 S. 23rd St. to provide supportive housing for youth aging out of foster care. This building is the first in a 24-unit development, Journey House Campus Housing Initiative. The first six renovated units, expected to open in early 2015, will be available to youth aged 18 to 25 who are aging out of foster care or “couch surfing” because they do not have a permanent place to live. Journey House will provide Wraparound services including workforce development, on-the-job training, adult education (GED and/or English Language Learning), college coaching, and recreation.

Milwaukee County, in cooperation with The Guest House of Milwaukee, began operation of Keys to Independence, a new scattered site supportive housing program for individuals at risk of homelessness. The Guest House of Milwaukee is managing 40 one-bedroom apartments in Cudahy, West Allis, West Milwaukee and the City of Milwaukee. Tenants who move into these units receive support from peers who have themselves recovered from mental health or substance abuse challenges and received formal training in recovery support.

Milwaukee County began to explore the development of harm reduction housing. This model of supportive housing serves chronic alcoholics who regularly require detoxification treatment services. In communities with harm reduction housing, police are instructed to return residents to their apartments units rather than to detox facilities. Milwaukee County hopes to develop a building with 24 to 30 units of housing which would provide small, basic residential units along with nursing, mental health, and substance abuse treatment services.

Other supportive housing news

Capuchin Apartments, a permanent supportive housing development on Milwaukee’s north side, suffered a fire in August. Though the fire was confined to one housing unit, water damage was far more extensive, and about a dozen residents were relocated to a hotel for several months while repairs were made to the building. All residents moved back into the building by early December.

Supportive Housing Scorecard

In 2014, 77 new supportive housing units were brought on line, and 63 additional units were under construction.

Milwaukee County’s 10-Year Plan to End Homelessness, published in 2010, estimated that Milwaukee County needs 1,260 units of permanent supportive housing. Counting the 561 units either occupied, under construction or proposed by the end of 2014, our community is nearly halfway to the goal of 1,260 units.

