



HOUSING AUTHORITY OF THE
CITY OF MILWAUKEE

Tom Barrett
Mayor

Antonio M. Perez
Secretary-Executive Director

Board of Commissioners

August 6, 2020

The Honorable Gwen Moore
250 East Wisconsin, Suite 950
Milwaukee, WI 53202

RE: Extension of Choice Neighborhoods Grant Deadlines Due To COVID-19

Dear Representative Moore:

Thank you for your continued efforts to provide resources to help our community recover from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In May, we reached out to you to request the inclusion of an extension of grant deadlines for U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Choice Neighborhoods program grants. Both HUD and Choice Neighborhoods grantees have advocated for such an extension. The House-passed HR 6800, the Health and Economic Recovery Omnibus Emergency Solutions Acts ("HEROES Act"), did include language extending funding through September 30, 2021 for the Choice Neighborhoods Initiative grants that are due to expire this year. However, the current versions of the next relief bill being developed by the Senate include no extensions for the program.

An extension of deadlines is greatly needed for ALL Choice Neighborhood grants. Such extensions would have no fiscal impact but they would provide the time needed to adjust to the impacts of COVID-19 while still achieving the neighborhood transformation goals of the Choice Neighborhoods program. As negotiations continue on the next relief bill, we ask that you continue to advocate for extensions of at least one-year for all Choice Neighborhoods grants.

As a reminder, the City of Milwaukee and the Housing Authority were awarded a \$30 million Choice Neighborhoods Implementation (CNI) grant on September 28, 2015 with grant obligations to be completed by September 30, 2022. You were very supportive of our plan to transform Westlawn and the surrounding neighborhood into an inclusive community of opportunity with quality housing, schools, businesses, services, and amenities where people want to live, learn, work, shop, and play. We have four components with very specific goals:

- Housing: Replace 394 public housing apartments and add 314 new affordable and market-rate rental and homeownership options;
- People: Improve health, employment, educational and self-sufficiency outcomes for Westlawn residents;

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- Education (lead agency is Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS)): Develop a neighborhood-based, high-quality educational pathway to take youth from cradle to college or career; and
- Neighborhood (lead agency is the Redevelopment Authority of the City of Milwaukee): Using and building upon existing partnerships, the plan supports a well-connected, vibrant, mixed-income neighborhood with amenities and assets that attract individuals and families and includes support to businesses that want to expand or move into the Choice Neighborhood.

COVID-19 has created delays that are impacting our Choice Neighborhoods work in Milwaukee, just as it is impacting other Choice Neighborhoods projects across the nation.

Housing has been delayed because production facilities and supply chains have closed to protect their employees. Additionally, with the City's response to the "Safer-At-Home" order, staff who review plans and issue building permits have been partially furloughed and are working at home, which has delayed the issuance of permits and certificates of occupancy.

Residents and applicants have been hesitant to move during the Safer-At-Home Order because of possible exposure to the coronavirus. This is delaying the occupancy of new units, which is one of the metrics in the Choice Neighborhoods grant.

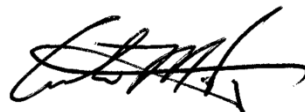
Increasing employment of residents is another metric in the CNI grant. Although we were showing gains in resident employment throughout 2019, unemployment is increasing because of business closures and the lack of available jobs.

Many of the resources provided through our partners, such as Milwaukee Public Schools and the Silver Spring Neighborhood Center, are either not currently available or very limited because of social distancing and the focus on readjusting services to help meet the needs of their students/constituents.

We know that you and your colleagues are hard at work trying to determine the best course to assist communities across the nation with their response to COVID-19. We hope that you will be able to help us with an extension of the Choice Neighborhoods grant deadlines as we continue to adapt our ways of responding to the immediate health and safety needs of our residents and employees.

We are available to provide you with additional information as needed.

In service,



Antonio M. Pérez
Secretary-Executive Director
Housing Authority of the City of Milwaukee