

Data You Can Use

P R O J E C T



RETURN↑

Analysis of the Housing Gaps for the Reentry Community in Milwaukee County, 2021

Analysis Purpose

Discover the systematic gaps in housing resources for returning persons, nationally and locally (county level).

Intervention Purpose

Project Return can then connect with new beneficiaries and sources of funding. This will allow for program work to continue and expand.

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DATA YOU CAN USE

FROM PEOPLE YOU CAN TRUST



Scope

The ultimate goal for us is to “**map the need and resources available** in the community and **identify the gap**” for the 2700 people returning to society to Milwaukee county each year and interacting with housing, healthcare and employment.

jail vs prison:

Short-term	long-term
local gov't	state or fed
waiting for trial	post-conviction

2015 admissions- MKE

31,171

2,459

“County jail data is priority.”



Recidivism:
committing a new
offense that
results in a new
sentence to prison
or probation
following a release

Reincarceration:
admission to prison
for either a
revocation, revocation
with a new sentence,
or a new sentence
following a release
from prison.

Scope

Data You Can Use has indicated
a focus on housing.

Thus, our scope would be bounded
by housing issues and MKE
returnees from county jails with an
eye for differences between
recidivism and re-incarceration.

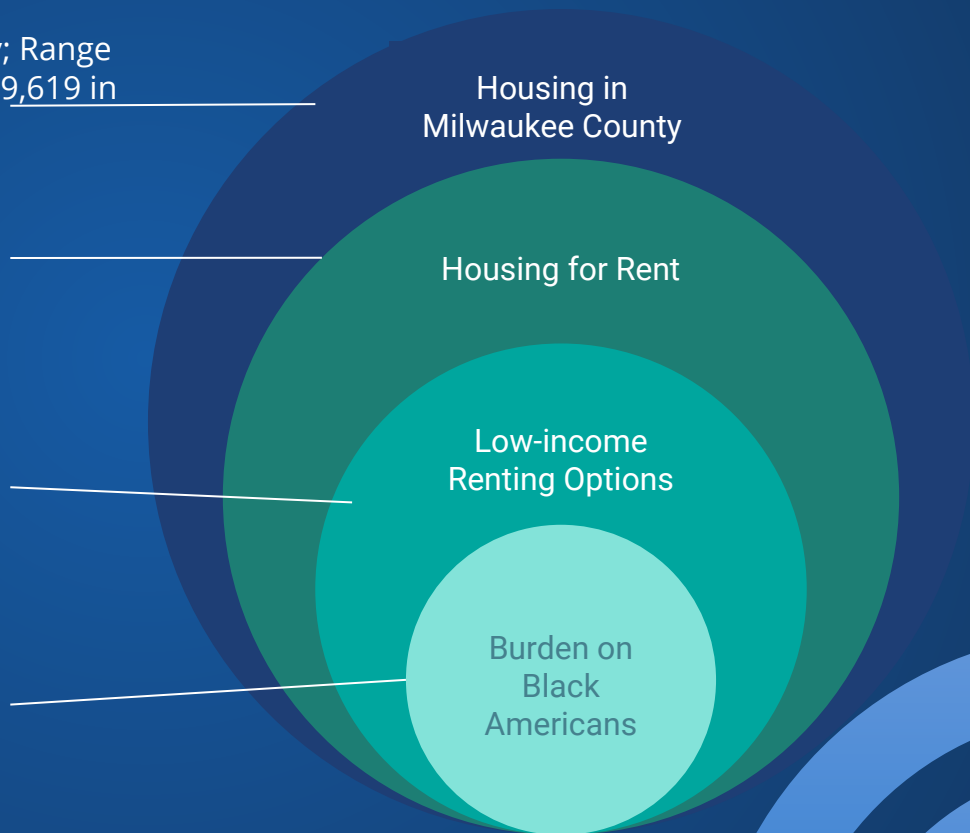
What does the housing data say?

70.4% average increase in sold property price between 1999 and 2019 for Milwaukee county; Range = \$118,707 in Milwaukee municipality and \$659,619 in River Hills (Realty Executives)

In 2016, MKE county had a rental housing vacancy rate of 5.7%, above national average. Influx of expensive options, outflux of affordable options (WI Policy Forum).

"While **42%** of renter households in Milwaukee County earned less than \$25,000 per year in 2016, only **9%** of rental units charged monthly rents those households could afford (\$500 or less). (WI Policy Forum)"

Rent burdens affect African-American households at twice the rate of white households in Milwaukee County.



Focus

Landlord Bias

- Personal beliefs
- Worth the risk?
- Ban the Box



Housing Vouchers

- DOC
- Section 8
- Disqualifiers
- Inhibitors



Registrant Prejudice

- Residential restrictions
- Implicit bias
- Counter-productive, unfounded fears



Additional Considerations

- IDs
- Health Insurance
- Health Clinics
- Employment
- Mental Health
- Transportation

Recommendations

- Milwaukee County
- What is being done around the country?

Weekly Population Report from 2/28/2021

Incarcerated: 19,429

Community custody: 62,939

29% released to Milwaukee County in 2019

Landlords - Fair Housing Act

Fair Housing Act of 1968

Banned discrimination concerning the sale, rental and financing of housing based on race, religion, national origin or sex. Later, banned discrimination based on disability and family status. Unfortunately, formerly incarcerated people are **not** a protected class.

“While the Act does not prohibit housing providers from appropriately considering criminal history information when making housing decisions, arbitrary and overbroad criminal history-related bans are likely to lack a legally sufficient justification. Thus, a discriminatory effect resulting from a policy or practice that denies housing to anyone with a prior arrest or any kind of criminal conviction cannot be justified, and therefore such a practice would violate the Fair Housing Act.”

-Helen R. Kanovsky, General Counsel, 2016

In 2018, Milwaukee County passed an ordinance making people who receive rental or housing assistance a protected class. Landlords can no longer deny outright any applicants who receive rental assistance or section 8 benefits. Based on info about vouchers, this is not a lot of people.

Landlords - Akron, Ohio 2007

Landlords were shown to be statistically responsive to the number of vacancies in the market.

TABLE 3.
Screening Criteria Rankings

Variable	N	Mean	Std Dev	Range
Prior Evictions	591	4.65	0.79	1-5
Employment	596	4.62	0.74	1-5
Income	604	4.50	0.82	1-5
Rental History	595	4.37	0.87	1-5
Criminal History	594	4.34	0.99	1-5
Landlord References	592	3.93	1.11	1-5
Credit Level	592	3.81	1.08	1-5

1 = Not Important At All 5 = Very Important

- 66% of landlords didn't accept applications with criminal convictions
 - 60% would consider an application if it shows rehabilitation (broad array of programs, including mental health, substance abuse, and educational services)
- Approx. 20% less landlords would rent to those with felonies than misdemeanors

Landlords - Common Worries

Trustworthiness of Tenant

Most importantly, landlords want to earn rent and fear the reliability of formerly incarcerated tenants to pay rent on time. Though, having a criminal history is not the most important factor.

More important were evictions, employment, income, rental history.

Being Sued by Tenants if Harmed by Tenant

Some landlords fear legal repercussions if another tenant is harmed by the tenant with criminal convictions.

Landlords must show reasonable care to protect tenants, their action must be the proximate cause of any injury, foreseeably preventable.

Nuisance Calls and Fees

Landlords also consider the risks of having nuisance police calls made on their property enough times in a certain time period to pay fines.

Milwaukee has a nuisance program. 3 calls/30 days or 2 VVG complaints/1 year ACLU is challenging programs across the nation.

Landlords - Ban the Box

- Ban the Box refers to measures that would prohibit rental applications from asking if applicants have a criminal history.
- In a research study between 2015 and 2018, Seattle landlords opposed this measure as it would take away their ability to manage “risk.”
- Many threatened to require more extensive employment or rental history to root out potential formerly incarcerated folks.

A study determined that Ban the Box initiatives in employment negatively impact black folks while benefiting white folks. The gap of call-backs for identical applicants with white or black sounding names rose from 7% to 45%.

One can easily access criminal charge and conviction records of individuals online. Conducting background checks is easier than ever.

Landlords - Existing Programs

- Project RETURN has already started reaching out to private landlords to obtain their permission to list them as a landlord who is willing to rent to those with criminal records.
- The results of their efforts is available online as a Google Sheet on their housing resources page.

The City of Milwaukee and Community Advocates, a community partner organization, have landlord or landlord-tenant education programs. These programs could potentially be repurposed to educate landlords and tenants about the Fair Housing Act, Milwaukee's additional protection of rental assistance status, and why renting to formerly incarcerated individuals is not as risky as many may think.



Housing Vouchers

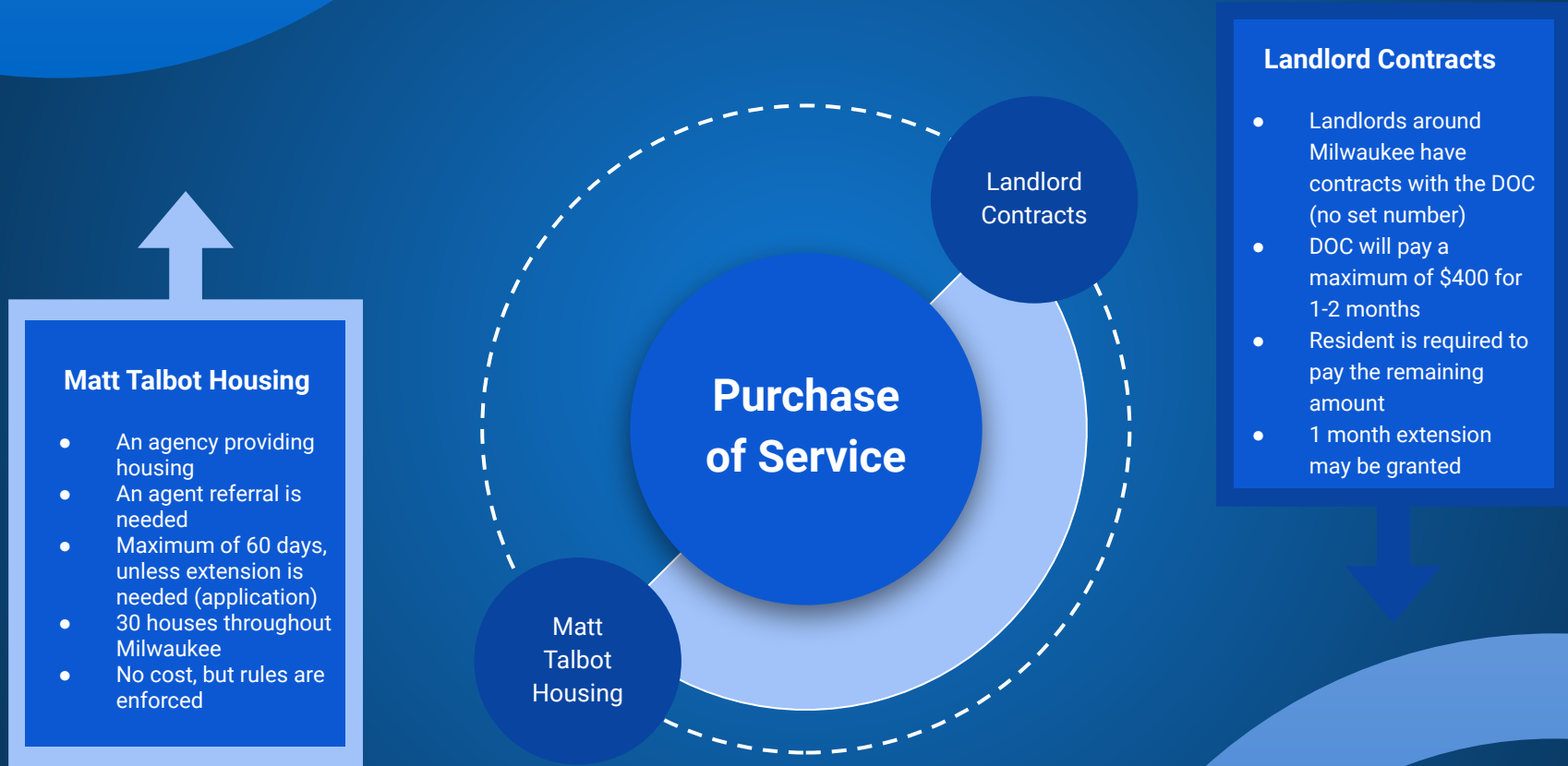
- Studies show that more than 50% of returners live with family upon release from incarceration. Not uniformly available as a permanent option.
- Only 19% find housing within a year.
- The most sustainable option is public housing.



DOC vs. Section 8

- Though offered in other states, the WI DOC does not provide housing vouchers
- Transitional Living Placement (TLP) is used instead, through Purchase of Service (POS)
- Housing placement through Matt Talbot
- Contracted landlord agreements
- Housing choice voucher program - application
- National strict eligibility guidelines
- Family background plays a role
- National Automatic disqualifiers: Life-time registration of sex-offender registry or conviction of meth production in federally assisted housing

Housing Vouchers - *Wisconsin TLP*



Housing Vouchers - *HUD Disqualifiers*

Principle of Least Eligibility

“[t]he doctrine that prisoners ought to receive no goods or services in excess of those available to people who have lived within the law.”

Milwaukee Section 8

- Engaged in the following criminal activities within the past five years:
(Seriousness of offense, time since conviction/recent history and rehabilitation considered)
 - Drug-related criminal activity, defined by HUD as the illegal manufacture, sale, distribution or use of a drug, or the possession of a drug with intent to manufacture, sell, distribute or use the drug
 - Violent criminal activity, defined by HUD as any criminal activity that has as one of its elements the use, attempted use, or threatened use of physical force substantial enough to cause, or be reasonably likely to cause, serious bodily injury or property damage
- Evicted from federally assisted housing in the last five years
- Terminated by Milwaukee County's rent assistance program
- Owing debt to Milwaukee County Rent Assistance Program or any other Housing Authority.
- Families over income (all household income is considered)
- Incomplete documentation or fraudulent information

Felony

Employment, transportation, health

Identification

Housing Vouchers - *Common Inhibitors*

Portability

- Each county and state has different eligibility requirements pertaining to housing.
- Once community custody is over, vouchers may become invalid after relocation.

Housing Supply

- Majority of available housing in the U.S. is privately owned.
- Some HOAs and other groups refuse to accept vouchers.
- Landlords not required to accept vouchers = low acceptance.

Waiting Periods

- Wait time can be from 3 months to multiple years.
- Depends on availability.
- Applications accepted only during open enrollment.
- Priority status is the only way to get approved sooner.

Registrant Housing

- No evidence that residence restrictions are related to preventing or deterring sex crimes against children.
- To the contrary, the evidence strongly suggests residence restrictions are likely to have the unintended effect of increasing the likelihood of sexual re-offense.



- Registrants have the lowest recidivism rate.
 - As low as 28% overall and as low as 12% for committing another sex offense
- 80-90% of sex offenses against children are from family.

Registrant Housing

- Restrictions may be unconstitutional and some have been overturned.
 - California, Massachusetts, Kentucky, for example.

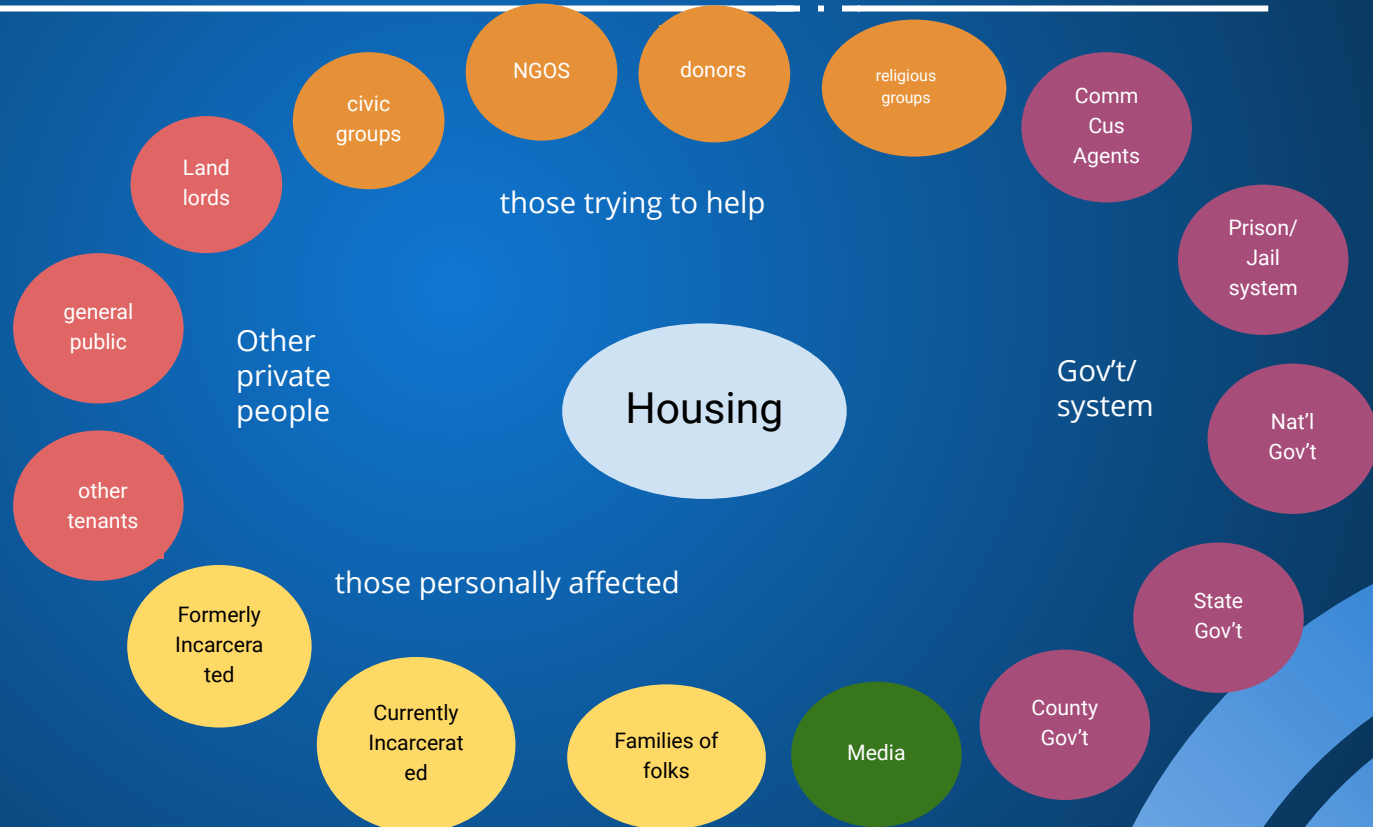
- Housing restrictions lead to greater homelessness.



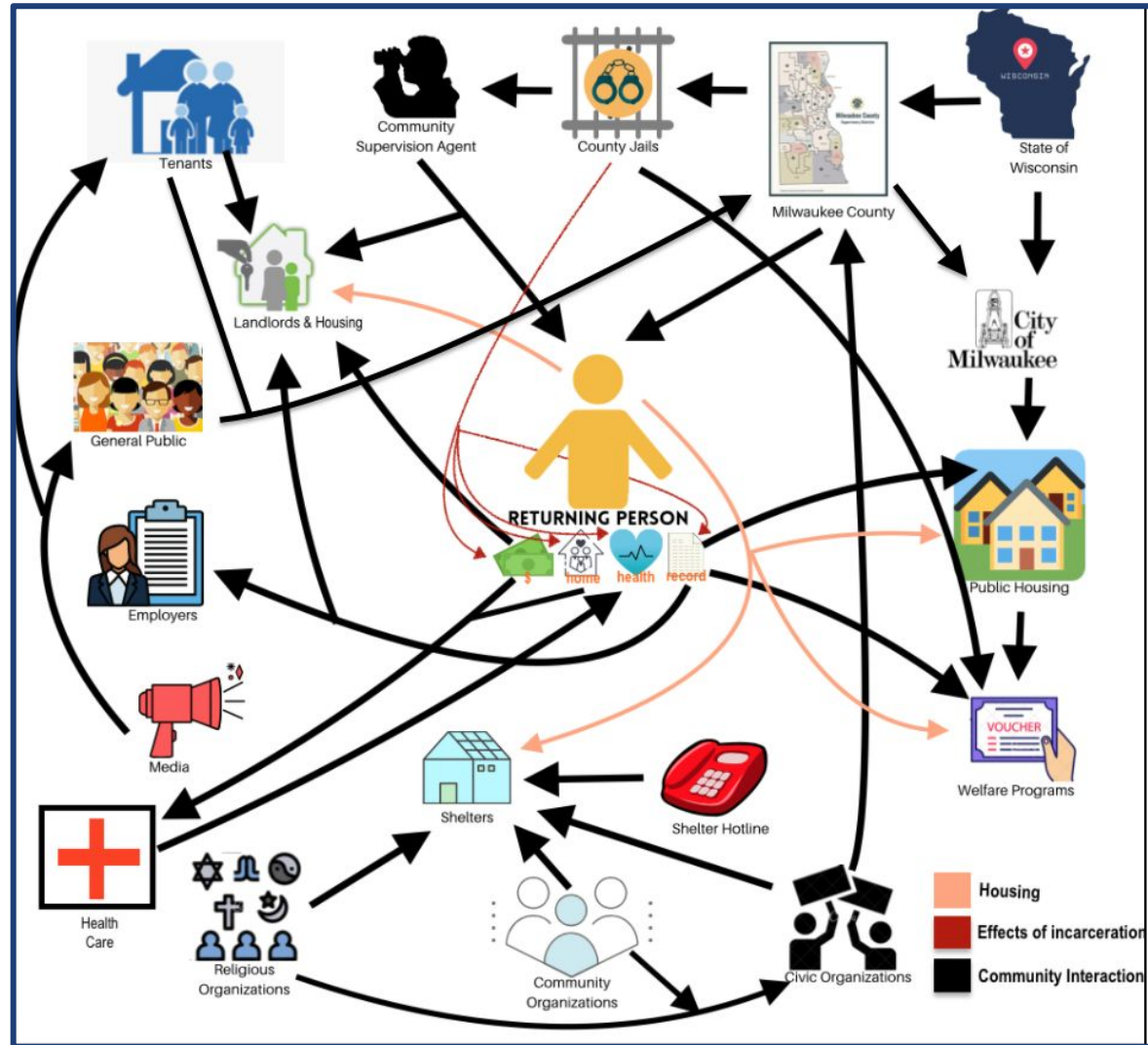
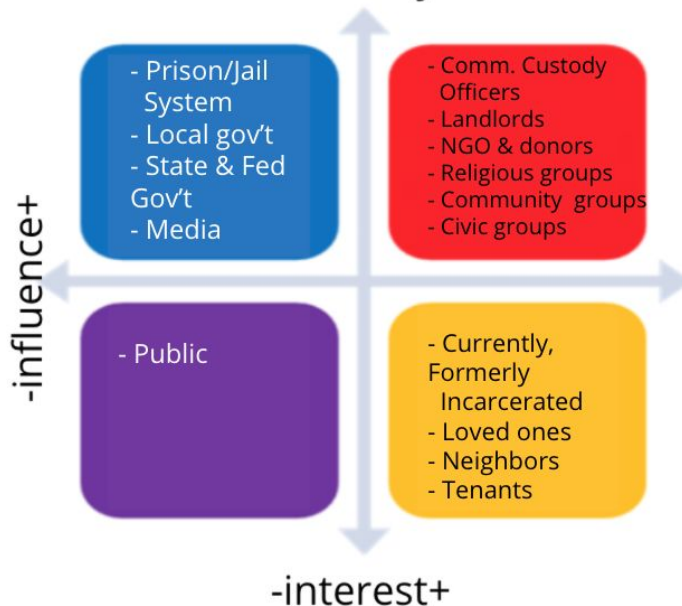
- Restrictions negatively impact employment and stability opportunities.
- Between 2000 and 2019, 322 of the 2,694 people released from the Wisconsin prison system to Milwaukee were registrants.

Stakeholder Analysis

Housing for the formerly incarcerated community has been impacted on and impacted by multiple stakeholders, both local and national.



Power Analysis



Additional Factors Impacting Sustainable Housing

Health Care upon release

Health centers in Milwaukee that help the reentry population (source: CEO of Progressive):

- Progressive
- Milwaukee Health Services, Inc.
- Outreach Community Health Centers
- Sixteenth Street Community Health Center
- Gerald Ignace Indian Health Center
- Aurora Family Care Center and Ascension residency clinics
- All Saints Clinic and the Holton Street Clinic There's also the Muslim community health center
- Walker's Point clinic

Health Insurance

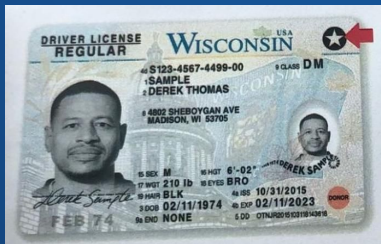
- “Beginning October 24, 2020, Medicaid members that are incarcerated will have their health care benefits suspended and then re-evaluated before they are released from jail or prison. “
- It will lead to cost savings.



Additional Factors Impacting Sustainable Housing

Identification Cards

- Milwaukee Department of Adult Institutions has a policy outlining how designated staff should contact eligible incarcerated folks to obtain state IDs (these would say residency = incarceration).
- Only 1/3 of surveyed DOCs ensure people leave prison with a state-issued ID.



Job Readiness upon release

- Patience with people
- Tolerance of disagreements
- Scheduling/being on time
- Budgeting
- Income expectations
- Ability to take instruction
- Willingness to follow orders
- Familiarity with technology
- Fall back support (for when things get tough)
- A technical skill

Additional Factors Impacting Sustainable Housing

Mental Health

“At the end of the day, they need psychiatric care in the community and access to medications. Without being stable, it’s very difficult for them to address their criminal histories and tendencies.”

- Jules Cavanaugh, former reentry director for WI DOC

- In 2012, $\frac{1}{3}$ of men and $\frac{2}{3}$ of women in WI prisons lived with a form of mental illness
- Medication received upon release:
 - Jail - 3-day supply
 - Prison - 14-day supply and a 4 month prescription
- Food and shelter are priorities over medication
- Psychiatrists \neq BadgerCare
- Higher recidivism and re-incarceration rates due to coping mechanisms

Transportation

- 1 in 4 returners report difficulty accessing public transportation
 - Location of bus stops
 - Schedule
 - Navigation
- Personal vehicles are not always an option
 - High cost (gas, insurance, upkeep)
 - Driver’s license availability
- Lack of transportation → Lack of employment → Lack of housing

Housing/Shelter

- **WIBOSCOC** (Wisconsin Balance of State Continuum of Care) - Assistance with emergency shelters, 24 hour shelters, hotel vouchers, transitional housing programs, rapid rehousing, eviction prevention – <http://www.wiboscoc.org> – Click on the “Find Services” tab, and select your county/geographic area. Alternatively, call 1-800-569-4287.
- **Salvation Army** - Emergency Shelters, Transitional Housing, Permanent Supportive Housing http://www.salvationarmywi.org/wum/social_services_housing
- **Goodwill** – <http://www.goodwill.org> add services
- **Homeless Services Consortium** - For shelter and other housing or financial information call 1-855-510-2323.

ab findhelp.org

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Milwaukee homeless shelters

There are [19 homeless housing programs](#) in the greater Milwaukee metro area, including the cities of Milwaukee and Waukesha. Combined, these Milwaukee metro homeless shelters [employ 415 people](#), earn more than [\\$16 million in revenue](#) each year, and have [assets of \\$15 million](#).

food health housing jobs reentry

HOME TO STAY

log in

Name: **IMPACT 211**
Address: 6737 W. Washington St., Suite 2225, Milwaukee, WI 53214
Phone: 211

Web: <https://www.impactinc.org/impact-2-1-1/>
Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/IMPACTIncMKE/>

Services: Mobile screeners will continue to provide information and referrals for shelter or housing placement to individuals experiencing homelessness. Email CEteam@impactinc.org or call 211.

Name: **Community Advocates**
Address: 728 N. James Lovell St., Milwaukee, WI 53233
Phone:

Web: <https://communityadvocates.net/>
Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/CommunityAdvocatesMilwaukee/>

Services: Provides homeless outreach and supportive housing services, helps resolve landlord/tenant issues to prevent homelessness, operates the Milwaukee Women's Center, belongs to the Milwaukee County Energy Assistance Program, and advocates for evidence-based solutions to problems related to poverty.

Name: **Milwaukee Rescue Mission**
Address: 830 N. 19th St., Milwaukee, WI 53233
Phone: (414) 344-2211

Web: <https://milmission.org/>
Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/milmission>

Recommendations

Landlord

- Landlord rental commission
- Landlord education
- Updated screening processes
 - Ban the Box
- Advocate for affordable housing

Internal

- Housing advocate with lived experiences
- Reevaluate Milwaukee's nuisance process
- Agent appeal board
- DOC staff training
 - Language
 - IDs
- In-prison tenant preparation and certification

Creative Solutions

- Realtor partnerships
- Volunteered shared housing partnerships
- Operational reentry facilities
- Family member reconnection counseling
- Clear housing resources

Recommendation Feasibility

2 Years

- Landlord education (CO, City)
- Realtor partnerships (CO, City)
- Clear housing resources (DOC, SG)
- Housing advocate with lived experiences (CO)
- Advocate for affordable housing (NG, CG, City)

5 Years

- Agent appeal board (SG, City)
- DOC staff training (DOC)
 - Language
 - IDs
- In-prison tenant preparation and certification (DOC)

Extended Goals

- Volunteered shared housing partnerships (CO, SG, City)
- Operational reentry facilities (SG)
- Family member reconnection counseling (DOC)
- Reevaluate Milwaukee's nuisance process (City, CG)
- Landlord rental commission (City, CG, SG)

Responsibility Key

- Wisconsin Department of Correction (DOC)
- Community Organizations (CO)
- City Government (City)
- County Government (CG)
- State Government (SG)
- National Government (NG)



Thank You

Any questions?

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