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Milwaukee nonprofit now providing housing for men exiting incarceration who are at risk of homelessness

Project RETURN expanding services; managing 12 apartments in historic downtown building

MILWAUKEE – Following years of conversations, dreaming and diligent planning, Project RETURN for the first time in its 45-year history will directly provide housing to men exiting incarceration. Starting in March, Project RETURN will manage 12 independent-living apartments for Milwaukee County men who have served their sentence but demonstrated an acute need for housing upon release.

Project RETURN’s offices are relocating to the same floor as the new apartments, on the second floor of the redeveloped Historic Tenth Street Residences, 1004 N. 10th St. The other floors in the six-story complex, owned and renovated by local developer Zuwen Cotton, will soon become available as low-income housing.

Project RETURN anticipates the typical length of stay to be around six months as the men reacclimate to living in the community, secure employment, save money, and continue working toward stability and self-sufficiency. Holistic services will be provided on-site. This includes Project RETURN’s employment services, Circles of Support groups, AODA intervention, community advocacy, and case management. Healthcare services are to be provided through an Ascension Wisconsin clinic already operating on the first floor of the building.

“At Project RETURN, we believe in action. We know that housing is the pre-eminent need in Milwaukee, especially for our formerly incarcerated brothers and sisters. That’s why Project RETURN is taking on this initiative: because we know it will make a difference for our community and the people we serve,” says Wendel Hruska, Project RETURN executive director. “Above all, these men will be able to live with dignity in a community where they are understood, accepted and supported.”



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Some relevant statistics and context:

- 2,500 men and women exit prisons and return to Milwaukee County annually. 42% of them have a residential stability need, half of whom have a “high need” – that means that between 520 and 1,040 people are immediately at risk of homelessness when they return to the community every year ([Who’s Coming Home, Data You Can Use, 2022](#)).
- Formerly incarcerated individuals are at least three times more likely to face homelessness than the general population ([Prison Policy Initiative, 2018](#)). Justice-impacted individuals who do not have safe, stable housing are significantly more likely than their peers to face probation revocations or be re-arrested ([Jacobs and Gottlieb, 2020](#)).
- Across the U.S., 48,500 people every year have no immediate options for housing upon release and thus immediately begin living in a homeless shelter ([Council of State Governments, 2016](#)).

“By providing housing explicitly for this at-risk population, Project RETURN is helping prevent homelessness in Milwaukee County,” said Rob Schreiber, board president. “This new program is making Milwaukee safer while creating hope.”

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About Project RETURN

Project RETURN (Returning Ex-incarcerated people To Urban Realities and Neighborhoods) is a 501(c)3 nonprofit that exists to help individuals who have experienced incarceration make a positive, permanent return to community, family and friends. Rev. Joseph Ellwanger, a lifelong civil rights leader who marched with Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. in Alabama in the 1960s, founded Project RETURN in 1980 through Cross Lutheran Church to serve one of Milwaukee’s most-underserved populations: men and women returning home from incarceration.

In February, Project RETURN’s offices are relocating from the Welford Sanders Enterprise Center, 2821 Vel R. Phillips Ave., to the Historic Tenth Street Residences, 1004 N. 10th St.

To join this mission and make a difference, please consider making a donation at ProjectReturnMilwaukee.org or purchasing items from our Amazon Wishlist at tiny.cc/nbrszz to provide essentials for the residents of the new apartments.

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Anyone with questions about the new apartments or Project RETURN’s mission, please contact Development Coordinator Adam Rogan at adam@projectreturnmilwaukee.org or (262) 994-8841.

Members of the public, press and stakeholders are welcome to join us for an open house at 1004 N. 10th St., from 4-6:30 p.m. on Wednesday, Feb. 26. Please contact Adam to RSVP.

Photographs may be provided upon request.

More:
projectreturnmilwaukee.org
(414) 374-8029