



January 25, 2016

St. Paul Planning Commission

Dear Chair Wencl and Planning Commissioners:

As you may be aware, People Incorporated Mental Health Services is a Minnesota non-profit organization with a nearly fifty year history of innovation in community-integrated programs in Twin Cities metropolitan area. Originally founded in 1969 to provide help and support for an underserved and stigmatized population, People Incorporated is recognized as a leader in initiating evidence-based mental health services. People Incorporated currently operates more than 60 programs in a variety of settings, including several programs and facilities within the City of St. Paul.

With this background, I would like to share with you People Incorporated's perspective on the draft zoning code amendments related to congregate living which were presented in a public hearing to the Planning Commission on January 22, 2016.

In reviewing the draft zoning code amendments, People Incorporated has identified that some of the programs or facilities it operates in St. Paul may fall under the definition of "supported housing facilities" as proposed in these amendments. Additionally, People Incorporated has identified several differences between the restrictions placed upon facilities defined as "supportive housing facilities" and the restrictions placed upon facilities defined as "adult care homes." For example, while both supportive housing facilities and adult care homes are permitted to serve the same number of facility residents in most residential, traditional neighborhood and business districts, only supportive housing facilities are required to obtain a conditional use permit in all residential districts for any facility serving seven or more facility residents. (Draft Zoning Code Amendments to Sec. 65-153(b)-(c) and Sec. 65-180(d)). Additionally, supportive housing facilities must comply with distance restrictions (i.e. minimum distances between a supportive housing facility and other types of congregate living facilities), whereas adult care homes have no such restrictions. (Draft Zoning Code Amendments to Sec. 65-153(a) and Sec. 65-180).

While there may be logical, good-faith reasons for differences in restrictions between these proposed categories, we also recognize that restrictions of this sort can sometimes serve to isolate and segregate certain populations, such as individuals with mental illness or individuals with disabilities – some of the very individuals served as residents of supported housing facilities. For this reason, we ask that the Commission closely scrutinize, discuss, and disclose to the public the reasons for any of the differences in restrictions placed upon supportive housing facilities and adult care homes. Only through this open analysis and disclosure can the public be reassured that any differences in the restrictions placed upon these two types facility are not based upon any stigmas or misperceptions about the individuals who may be served as residents of these newly-defined supportive housing facilities.

Thank you for the opportunity to share our perspective with you.

Regards,



Mike Turpin
General Counsel