

Milwaukee lifts most residency restrictions

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By Mary Spicuzza...

Most residency restrictions for sex offenders would be lifted under a plan approved Wednesday by the Milwaukee Common Council.

The city's current ordinance bans many sex offenders from living within 2,000 feet of places like schools, parks and day care centers.

The measure, which was approved overwhelmingly, repeals such residency "buffers," meaning that sex offenders could basically live anywhere in the city of Milwaukee.

The plan does leave in place a rule that sex offenders would need to return to the community where they committed the offense. And it maintains a restriction put in place under a 2015 state law, which sets a 1,500-foot residency restriction for sexually violent offenders on supervised release.

The plan would also require the Common Council to evaluate the effects of the change after one year.

The current plan, which now heads to Mayor Tom Barrett, is an updated version of a [measure that stalled in July](#), which would have reduced the existing “buffer” to 500 feet.

Ald. Michael Murphy, the lead sponsor of the plan, said the 500-foot buffer zones would “concentrate” sex offenders in certain districts, particularly on the south side.

“It would have been more the outside districts that would be taking the biggest burden,” Murphy said. “The south side was really hit hard.”

He said he was hopeful the plan would still prevent Milwaukee from becoming a dumping ground for offenders.

“If you committed a sexual offense in a community, you have to be relocated back to that community,” Murphy said.

But he urged Gov. Scott Walker and state lawmakers to take further action.

The plan passed on a 13-2 vote, with Aids. Tony Zielinski and Russell W. Stamper II opposed.

The proposal comes after a group of registered sex offenders [filed a lawsuit in May](#) challenging Milwaukee’s existing ordinance, which was adopted in 2014. In it, they argued that the current policy virtually bans them from living in the city and violates their constitutional rights.

The current 2,000-foot radius limits Milwaukee’s registered sex offenders to living in about 115 designated residences, with a few exceptions.

Local and state lawmakers around the country have mostly embraced sex offender residency restrictions, saying they protect children from dangerous convicts. But some researchers

have found no evidence linking such ordinances to lower rates of recidivism, arguing instead that such ordinances make communities less safe by destabilizing the lives of sex offenders.

[Read the full article here.](#)