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Ald. Khalif J. Rainey
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Rehabilitated felons could buy city-owned property, under new legislation

Convicted felons who have reformed their ways and paid their debts to society will be allowed to purchase city-owned, tax-foreclosed property from the City of Milwaukee, under legislation passed today by the Common Council.

Alderman Khalif J. Rainey, the lead sponsor of the measure, said the intent is to ensure that equal opportunities for housing and employment are available to all Milwaukeeans, regardless of their background. Previously, the city code of ordinances allowed the Department of City Development to consider a buyer's felony record in determining whether to allow a sale.

"Being able to buy a foreclosed property from the city is an opportunity, not only to obtain affordable housing, but also to realize economic benefits and employment by rehabbing and selling these homes," Alderman Rainey said. "In a city that's home to one of the country's most incarcerated zip codes, we can ill afford to discriminate against people who made mistakes when they were younger, but now seek a better way of life."

Alderman Rainey said that the Department of City Development will continue to screen potential buyers of city-owned foreclosed properties, as it always has. The Department of City Development seeks responsible purchasers to rehabilitate properties in all neighborhoods. Potential buyers are checked to ensure they have the financial means to acquire a home and the capacity to achieve and maintain compliance with the city building code. DCD also reviews whether buyers have a history of responsible property ownership, including checking for unpaid property taxes, judgments owed to the city and unabated code violation orders.

"Anyone who has reformed their ways and paid their debt to society should have an honest chance to get ahead," Alderman Rainey said. "This measure, and the city's recent 'Ban the Box' initiative, demonstrate the city's commitment to creating an equal playing field for those with a criminal past and providing them with opportunities to help turn their lives around."