

CHICAGO REHAB NETWORK

53 WEST JACKSON BLVD.
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS 60604

FACSIMILE:
312.663.3562

TELEPHONE:
312.663.3936



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Contact: Richard Muhammad
Chicago Rehab Network
312-663-3936, 773-616-5058 (cell)
E-mail: richard@chicagorehab.org

Chicago Rehab Network housing platform calls for more dollars, leadership on affordable housing

With a week left before important municipal elections, the Chicago Rehab Network Feb. 20 released its 2007 Housing Platform, which includes recommendations for preserving affordable housing in the city. The plan outlines areas where city leadership, including funding, policy changes and public commitments can keep Chicago a place where everyone can find a home.

“Our 2007 Housing Platform is about where and how leadership moves in the important area of affordable housing and what the priorities will be. It isn’t about getting candidates to endorse our ideas or positions, but rather finding solutions to a growing problem that must be addressed by the city’s elected leaders,” said Kevin Jackson, Chicago Rehab Network executive director.

“This is not about a small group that needs help, but about half of city residents who struggle with housing costs, whether homeowners or renters,” he added.

The Housing Platform also calls for a moratorium on condo conversion, \$40 million a year dedicated to affordable rental development, elimination of regulatory barriers on government-assisted housing development, and action to preserve trouble properties or properties with expiring federal Section 8 contracts. More than 8,000 units of federally-assisted housing are at risk of expiring by the end of 2009. The loss of these units would be a devastating blow in a city where 71,000 units of rental housing has already been lost in recent years.

In addition, the Chicago Rehab Network calls for greater coordination and transparency between the city departments responsible for housing – including the departments of planning, zoning, building and construction permits. An updated information system is also needed to track city housing policies and their impact on residents.

“Unlike the federal and state government, city government has no information system in place to track legislative activities and initiatives and there is no coherent system to inform the public about what is happening,” Jackson noted. If people don’t know what is happening it is difficult to get neighborhoods involved to make sure that the right things are done, he added.

The complete Housing Platform is available on-line at www.chicagorehab.org.

The Chicago Rehab Network (CRN) is a citywide coalition of community-based development organizations. Founded in 1977 by community groups seeking to pool expertise and share information, the coalition membership consists of over 40 housing organizations representing over 60 city neighborhoods. Over the years CRN’s members have created tens of thousands of affordable housing units and made a visible impact on some of Chicago’s most disinvested communities, while preserving affordable housing in some of its most rapidly gentrifying ones. Visit www.chicagorehab.org for more information.