

## **Low-income housing gains favor ; Poll sees a shift in public opinion:[West Final Edition]**

*William Grady, Tribune staff reporter. Chicago Tribune. Chicago, Ill.: Apr 11, 2003. pg. 3*

A newly released poll has found surprising support among Chicago area residents for building affordable housing in their communities.

About two-thirds of the poll's respondents said they would favor more low- and moderate-income housing in the towns and neighborhoods where they live, according to a survey done last fall for a coalition that includes leading Chicago banks as well as civic and religious groups.

The survey suggests that residents increasingly value diversity in their communities, but it also found evidence of persistent fears about affordable housing.

Two-thirds of those polled believe low-income housing is poorly maintained and 52 percent said low-income housing brings an increase in crime.

"These are two of the concerns that advocates really have to address in order to make their efforts successful," said Nancy Belden, a partner at Belden Russonello & Stewart, a public-opinion research firm in Washington, D.C.

The firm did the poll on behalf of Housing Illinois, a coalition formed in the fall of 2001 to raise public awareness of affordable- housing issues.

Among its 30 members are the Chicago Rehab Network, Business and Professional People in the Public Interest, the Chicago Department of Housing, the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Chicago, the Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Chicago, Harris Trust and Savings Bank, the Lake County Affordable Housing Commission, the Metropolitan Planning Council and Protestants for the Common Good.

The coalition's report, "Valuing Housing: Public Perceptions of Affordable Housing in the Chicago Region," is to be released Friday .

Hoy McConnell, executive director of Business and Professional People for the Public Interest and co-chair of the coalition, said he was encouraged by the percentage of people who recognize that affordable housing is an issue worth supporting. Despite sometimes vocal opposition to proposals for multifamily or other types of affordable housing, McConnell said the survey indicates that often there is strong, if silent, support for high-quality projects among a significant number of people.

The poll found that 31 percent of those surveyed would strongly support building low- or moderate-income housing in their communities and 35 percent would offer some support. Only 17 percent would strongly oppose low- or moderate-income housing. "The results

are surprising and fly in the face of stereotypes," McConnell said. "It suggests there are a lot of YIMBYs out there--yes, in my back yard."

The coalition's efforts come amid a flurry of affordable-housing initiatives in the Chicago area.

On Wednesday, the Chicago City Council approved an ordinance that would require developers who received subsidies from the city to set aside at least 20 percent of their units for affordable housing. The ordinance would apply to new or substantially rehabilitated buildings and condominium conversions with at least 10 units.

A sizable minority of aldermen had pushed for a tougher ordinance but accepted the version supported by Mayor Richard Daley.

Other initiatives are pending in the state legislature, and suburbs--among them Arlington Heights and Highland Park--are pushing efforts to preserve affordable housing or include affordable housing in new developments.

"Diversity seems to be becoming a real Mom-and-apple-pie thing," Belden said.

McConnell and Kevin Jackson, executive director of the Chicago Rehab Network, said the coalition plans to use the poll results to persuade legislators and other elected officials to support affordable-housing initiatives.

The coalition also plans to develop a portfolio of public- education material that can be made available to developers or groups facing zoning or other battles over affordable housing.

Advocates say developers have built quality affordable housing in the Chicago area.

"But what people know is the stuff that is not well managed or not well designed," said Robin Snyderman, director of housing for the Metropolitan Planning Council.