

The real impact of housing set-asides:[Chicago Final Edition]

Kevin F Jackson, Executive Director (and) Rachel Johnston, Report Author, Chicago Rehab Network. Chicago Tribune. Chicago, Ill.: Aug 23, 2003. pg. 20

We applaud the Chicago Tribune for calling attention to affordable housing and calling for additional resources in its Aug. 13 editorial, "The push for affordable housing." For 27 years, the Chicago Rehab Network has worked diligently to both analyze housing needs and to offer public and private solutions for strong neighborhoods. Our full analysis can be found at www.chicago-rehab.org.

One of our recommendations is indeed for implementation of an inclusionary zoning or set-aside policy for affordable housing, as currently endorsed by more than 25 alderman. This call for a housing set-aside is not unlike the city contract set-aside for women- and minority-owned businesses that was implemented by the city years ago. There was similar opposition to creating this--but Mayor Richard Daley took the lead because it was the right thing to do.

In other cities with these policies, there has been no retreat in real estate development. The need is very real--the housing that will be created will be available to teachers, janitors, and child-care workers. Our research tells us that developers will step up to the plate in return for city government policies and programs that are clear, predictable and reliable. Developers are fundamentally employers, and they, too, have an interest in a workforce that is well-housed.

Based on the concerns expressed in your editorial and by the mayor's office, we recommend that, as was conducted last summer in Los Angeles, Chicago commission an independent impact analysis to determine which exact set-aside percentages and cost offsets would adequately compensate developers for their affordable housing production. It may not be 25 percent, but it would be more than what we have now. The housing need is there and meeting it will strengthen Chicago.