

Welcome

Housing 1-2-3 is a step-by-step guidebook designed to make the complex issues of planning, developing, preserving, and managing housing more understandable for municipalities and real estate professionals. The housing market expands and contracts, but the need for a diverse housing stock remains constant. Housing is one of the most basic needs in our society. A balanced housing strategy supports a wide range of quality options for people of every age, household composition, race, or income level. However, all too often, communities lack housing diversity. Beyond the question of equity, a lack of housing options has significant economic impacts – workers cannot live near their jobs, congestion increases, and retail dollars are spent elsewhere. This book will help your community plan for and invest in a diverse housing stock, whatever the market and wherever the community.

Addressing a Community's Needs

Housing needs in the Chicago metropolitan area vary by community, and they include preservation and upgrade of existing housing, new construction of affordable and market-rate homes, better linkages between available housing and the local workforce, and stabilizing families and properties so that existing homes do not fall into disrepair. Because these needs are so diverse, the Metropolitan Planning Council, Metropolitan Mayors Caucus, Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, and Illinois Housing Council worked together to produce this how-to guide for local elected and appointed officials, citizen leaders, and the development community to help:

- Assess a community's true demand for all housing types and price ranges, and to determine a course of action to realize a community's potential.
- Identify ways to bring higher quality housing into areas with a preponderance of lower value or poor quality homes.
- Understand the difference between “subsidized” and “affordable housing” and how both are tools that can serve a community's needs.
- Deal with aging rental properties in need of new management or rehabilitation before they become problems for the larger neighborhood.
- Ensure new developments – particularly those with affordable components – add value to the community for the long term, meet community needs, and are well-managed.
- Identify private and public sector resources to advance housing goals.

- Establish partnerships with for-profit and nonprofit developers, financial institutions, employers, and other levels of government.
- Build community acceptance for new construction and preservation projects that meet the Metropolitan Mayors Caucus' Housing Endorsement Criteria, promote balanced growth, and address the jobs-housing mismatch in the Chicago region.

Each community's needs and goals may differ, but providing a healthy housing mix can reduce commute time for residents, increase municipal tax revenues, complement and enhance neighborhood character, provide for cultural and income diversity, allow young residents to start families, give older residents a place to age, and improve overall quality of life.

Throughout this workbook are success stories from communities across Illinois. The Appendix provides information about housing programs, Web sites, data sources, and organizations to help a community get started.

Planning, Housing, and Sensible Growth

The new millennium brought Illinois mayors their first state housing policy and comprehensive plan to guide and support, and in limited cases, require certain housing decisions.

Comprehensive Housing and Planning Act

(Public Act 094-0965) codifies into law the state's first housing policy, and mandates interagency coordination to better serve several priority populations: those who cannot afford to live near their jobs, seniors, people with disabilities, households struggling with homelessness, and those living in housing that is currently affordable but at risk of losing that affordability.

The Regional Planning Act

(Public Act 094-0510) ultimately created the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP), with major responsibilities to coordinate regional land use and transportation planning in northeastern Illinois. Housing, of course, should be central to such planning coordination. By consolidating the functions of the former Northeastern Illinois Planning Commission (NIPC) and Chicago Area Transportation Study (CATS), this Act authorizes CMAP to develop a policy framework under which all regional plans are developed, and to direct all public involvement activities for regional planning, including the development of a process to inform and engage the public. At present, however, CMAP has limited funding and authority, and further legislation will likely be needed to strengthen the agency.

The Green Neighborhood Grant Act

(Public Act 095-032) provides grants to developments that integrate the principles of smart growth, urbanism, and green building into neighborhood design. Once funded, this incentive is expected to spur the development of sustainably designed, energy-efficient neighborhoods.

Local Planning Technical Assistance Act (Public Act 095-0330) updates the definition of a comprehensive plan to include a housing assessment and the provision of a full range of well-located housing options for everyone from special needs households to the local workforce to seniors living on a fixed income. The Act further allows Illinois to give a competitive edge in state funding to communities advancing such a local plan, and technical assistance grants to towns needing and worthy of such support. In 2007, it was updated to include a particular incentive – a school funding bonus – for school districts affected when municipalities embrace multifamily housing that addresses the state's "live near work" and preservation goals. Neither the technical assistance grants nor the school funding bonuses have been funded yet, but legislation is currently proposed to secure those dollars.

Affordable Housing and Planning Appeal Act

(Public Act 093-0595) mandated that towns with less than 10% affordable housing come up with a plan to bridge the gap. Subsequently amended to enable neighboring municipalities to collaborate on developments and programs to achieve these goals, this Act further introduces a new Board of Appeals to hear from developers whose affordable housing proposals were rejected by these towns. If the Appeals Board determines the developer's proposal is of sound quality nature and in compliance with the town's plan (or provided a good proposal in a town that failed to submit such a plan), then it can overturn the local decision to reject that proposal.

Metropolitan Mayors Caucus Housing Endorsement Criteria

Housing Endorsement Criteria, developed by the Metropolitan Mayors Caucus in 2002, validate the work of Chicago-area municipalities and housing commissions to increase the availability of and access to quality housing choices, and put this work in a regional context. The criteria also can set local standards for specific affordable housing policy review, planning efforts, and development proposals to help communities achieve regional goals.

How They Work

The Housing Endorsement Criteria can be adopted by a city council or village board. Once passed, a community may gauge housing-related policies against them, request that developers demonstrate how their proposal meets them, and even give preference to those proposals that meet one or more of them. Housing Endorsement Criteria are not meant to replace or supersede the goals identified in a community's comprehensive plan or zoning code, but rather to reflect what many communities have identified as their vision. The criteria are not mutually exclusive; a proposed development could meet one or all of them.

Location

Infill development and redevelopment within existing cities and towns, as well as new conservation developments, will receive preference. In order to maximize compatibility with public transit and minimize auto use, housing within one mile of major transit service, a job hub, or town center provides a future market for transit. The project may be within two miles of a rail transit station if provisions are made to provide ongoing shuttle service to future residents. Major transit service is defined as a bus or rail stop with peak-period wait times of no more than 30 minutes. Major transit service also includes funded, but not yet built, fixed rail stations.

Land Use

New developments that aim to cluster housing in an efficient manner, in context with the surrounding community to preserve natural resources and open space will be given priority attention. Higher densities and mixed uses are particularly appropriate near Metra and CTA sta-

tions to reduce the growth of traffic congestion on local and regional roads.

Attainability

Mixed-income housing developments, which include units accessible to moderate-income working families and households with lower incomes, along with market-rate units in the same complex, will be given preference. Developments that help balance affordability levels within communities, while assuring consistent quality and design, will receive strong support.

Management

The management and maintenance of developments are as critical as the initial design and construction to meeting the goal of enhancing communities. Therefore, the capacity of the development team to address long-term needs successfully, as evidenced by its track record in selling, leasing and managing development properties, and its history with neighborhood and/or tenant relations, also will be considered.

Design

New developments that stress quality design and construction to help ensure their long-term contribution to the improvement of the neighborhood will be given preference. The proposed buildings will fit their setting, complementing and enhancing the existing neighborhood, and promoting a sense of community, pedestrian-friendly design, and other principles of good village design. Proposals will address transit use and access and, where appropriate, the potential for mixed use.

For more information www.mayorscaucus.org.

A growing number of local councils of governments and communities have adopted the Housing Endorsement Criteria. For example, the Village of Arlington Heights adopted the Criteria in 2002, and has since used the principles to guide development practices, leading to the 2005 approval of Timber Court Condominiums, a mixed-income development.