

The Issue: Housing Challenges

Serious and varied housing challenges abound throughout metropolitan Chicago. The problems range from lack of affordable housing to the need for economic development to stabilize and revitalize communities so potential homeowners can purchase quality housing. The future economic health of the region and our local communities is dependent on maintaining a stable and competitive workforce for our businesses and industries, which means we need a diverse range of housing options located near jobs and transportation/transit.

The Solution: Employer-Assisted Housing



In all types of communities, a proven tool is employer-assisted housing (EAH). EAH is an effective strategy in cities, suburbs and rural areas, whether to stabilize neighborhoods, promote energy efficiency, or overcome expensive housing markets. Participating employers come from a range of industries, includ-

ing nonprofit, for-profit and government sectors, and have benefitted from using EAH as a tool for recruiting and retaining their employees.

In Illinois, thanks to state financial incentives and the work of local leaders, the Metropolitan Planning Council (MPC), Housing Action Illinois, and 15 nonprofit housing counseling agencies have created REACH Illinois. This collaboration makes it easy and financially sound for employers to offer EAH programs to their employees. REACH Illinois administers the program, provides homeownership education and financial counseling, and manages the down payment, rental assistance, and in some cases energy retrofit support provided by employers. Special state incentives, including tax credits for employers make REACH Illinois even more compelling. Through REACH Illinois, more than 2,500 employees have bought homes since 2000 and employers have contributed \$9 million in assistance to employees, leveraging \$2.3 million in state incentives.

Energy Efficiency Retrofit: A New EAH Incentive

Employers who operate or want to start an EAH program will be eligible to take advantage of the EAH Retrofit program. Participating employers can help employees make their homes more energy efficient by contributing up to \$3,000 to an employee for retrofitting their home. Homeowners will receive a \$3,000 match through MPC via the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) as part of Energy Impact Illinois. Recipients of the funds will receive an energy audit to determine which type of retrofit would be most beneficial to saving energy and money in the long run. Examples of retrofit projects include: attic insulation, air sealing, and replacing an outdated furnace.

Benefits at a Glance

- Strengthened financial stability for workers, including foreclosure prevention, when employers provide housing counseling and financial assistance to buy or rent a home
- Increased government, business, and community support for housing options
- State and federal tax benefits for employers that generate an attractive ROI as well as leveraged state assistance for employees
- Improved employee retention, loyalty and productivity
- Reduced employee commutes, stress, absenteeism, recruitment and training costs
- A benefits package with a competitive edge
- Enhance sustainability efforts and image

MPC's Role

MPC designs customized programs for participating Chicagoland employers, and matches employers with local REACH non-profit partners who have expertise in EAH, housing and credit counseling, homebuyer education, and the local real estate market.

ENERGY IMPACT ILLINOIS