



2002 HOUSING ACTION AGENDA

Approved by Housing Task Force: November 28, 2001

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I. BACKGROUND AND NEED

Homeownership studies show that housing in high job growth areas like DuPage, Lake and north suburban Cook counties, and in revitalizing neighborhoods in Chicago, is beyond the reach of the average working family and lower income folks. Census data also confirms the findings of MPC's 1999 Regional Rental Market Analysis that rental housing is not an adequate backup plan for households who cannot afford homeownership. Where housing is affordable, jobs and other opportunities are scarce – contributing to the traffic congestion, economic disparity and racial segregation taxing our region. Compared to other metropolitan hubs, the Chicago area is failing in its ability to meet housing demands with adequate supply. Focus groups and key informant interviews with critical stakeholders identify community resistance and poor communication as primary obstacles preventing local decision-makers from accepting proposals and policies which forward regional housing objectives.

II. GARNER REGIONWIDE SUPPORT FOR HOUSING ENDORSEMENT CRITERIA

Encourage mayors and municipal leaders to accept the Housing Endorsement Criteria to attract, identify and promote quality housing proposals. Because proposals for new housing inevitably face debates about their desirability and value, the goal of the Housing Endorsement Criteria is to build a common understanding of what type of housing addresses community concerns. In Silicon Valley, a similar set of criteria were used to endorse developments leading to the creation of 27,500 renovated and new homes in 18 different cities and municipalities.

III. ENGAGE IN COMMUNITY OUTREACH, PUBLIC EDUCATION AND ACCEPTANCE EFFORTS

Participate in regionwide networking activities to promote fair and affordable housing. A range of actors around the region – including foundations, faith-based leaders, civic organizations, business coalitions and community-based agencies – are exploring how to coordinate and leverage each other's expertise in an effort to more efficiently and effectively build community acceptance specifically as related to affordable housing. In particular, the Housing Task Force can develop a resource book for municipal leaders, facilitate additional tours, and encourage planning commissioners to participate in educational series offered by the University of Illinois at Chicago and the Urban Land Institute.

IV. ADVOCATE FOR "GOOD PLANNING" INCENTIVES AND REWARDS

Pursue additional resources to enable municipal leaders to plan for the appropriate mix of housing resources near jobs and transit. Explore a variety of tools (flexible zoning, trade-off bonuses, reduced-rate financing) to give developers incentives to forward proposals that meet the Housing Endorsement Criteria.

V. ENCOURAGE THE ALLOCATION OF PRESERVATION RESOURCES

Recognizing that the bulk of the affordable housing stock in metropolitan Chicago is in older, private sector properties, it is important to encourage local governments to focus resources on housing rehab, code enforcement, building code unification, and property management training, including training for housing choice voucher landlords. Toward this end, local leaders can help promote legislation at the state and federal level to increase gap financing, preserve financing of buildings with expiring subsidies ("Mark to Market") and advocate for waivers to make federal dollars more practical and attractive to developers (e.g., Davis Bacon, Lead Based Paint waivers).

VI. ENCOURAGE THE ALLOCATION OF HOUSING PRODUCTION RESOURCES

Preservation strategies alone will not address the demand for housing in metropolitan Chicago. Metropolitan mayors can be a powerful voice in securing financial support for land acquisition, new construction, senior housing, Housing Choice Vouchers and other resources. Review and endorse legislation at the state and federal level as opportunities arise.

VII. ESTABLISH AND MAINTAIN SUPPORT FROM THE PRIVATE SECTOR

Collaborate with local businesses to leverage non-governmental dollars and to support the necessary link between housing and employment. Work with the Metropolitan Planning Council to promote the implementation of Employer-Assisted Housing for municipal and private workers, increase the utilization of the State Donations Tax Credit and tap into support from the Chicago Metropolis 2020 “Metropolis Principles.”

VIII. ADVOCATE FOR IMPROVED ADMINISTRATION, COUNSELING AND ALLOCATION OF HOUSING CHOICE VOUCHERS

Promote collaboration and coordination among housing authorities, counseling and service agencies across jurisdictions to ensure these subsidies are used to promote families’ access to social and economic opportunity. Support existing initiatives such as Housing Choice Partners, the Regional Housing Initiative and MetroLinks for Jobs and Housing that combine education, outreach and service strategies toward that end.

IX. EXPLORE WAYS TO REDUCE SCHOOL FUNDING RELIANCE ON PROPERTY TAXES

Coordinate with other task forces of the Metropolitan Mayors Caucus to encourage the governor and the Illinois General Assembly to explore alternatives for funding education. The over-reliance on the property tax as a funding source for K-12 public schools in Illinois has pitted those communities that have large property tax bases to fund good schools and services against those that do not (ranging from \$12,000 of property wealth backing each student to \$1.2 million). Resource-poor communities are forced to levy some of the highest property tax rates in the nation, creating a major barrier to economic development as well as uneven job opportunities across the region.

X. PROVIDE LEADERSHIP

Engage residents, community, business, state and federal leaders in dialogue about the local need for and value of quality housing options. A range of quality housing options is critical to economic development and as fundamental to a community as schools, sewers and water.



The Housing Action Agenda is a joint initiative of the Metropolitan Planning Council and the Metropolitan Mayors Caucus Housing Task Force lead by Mayor Zenovia Evans of Riverdale and Mayor Rita Mullins of Palatine. For more information, contact Robin Snyderman, housing director, Metropolitan Planning Council, at 312-863-6007 or rsnyderman@metroplanning.org; or Beth Dever, housing director, Metropolitan Mayors Caucus, at 312-201-4507 or Beth.Dever@mayorscaucus.org.