

CHICAGO DEFENDER

Bill "Dock" Walls lays out his ideas for affordable housing in city

by Demetrius Patterson, Chicago Defender
January 26, 2007

Mayoral candidate William "Dock" Walls says he is concerned about whether there will be affordable housing in years to come for minorities and low-income residents.

Walls laid his plan out to the Defender on what should be done to ensure that all people of various ethnicities and social-economic backgrounds can find a niche to call Chicago home

"We will immediately by executive order establish a moratorium on condominium developments and conversions until the average person can afford to own and live in a condominium," Walls said. "This is critical because we must ensure diversity in the city of Chicago and ensure that people in different ethnic and social backgrounds can live in most communities in the city of Chicago."

Walls also said that his administration would see that the city's approximately 10,000 vacant lots would be developed under a Habitat of Humanity-style concept.

"And we want to see an inclusionary housing ordinance that would set aside 15 percent of the units in buildings with 12 or more apartments for lower income persons," Walls added.

Walls comments come on the heels of a Chicago Rehab Network analysis Tuesday that stated the cost of owning homes from 2000 to 2005 has significantly outpaced rising incomes in the city, which has a deep adverse impact on minorities and low-income city residents.

In addition, the city's rental market is spiraling down in availability, according to the analysis.

Over a five-year span, the number of renters paying 35 percent or more of their income toward living expenses has increased by 45 percent.

Walls also has concerns about homelessness in Chicago.

"The city of San Francisco spends about \$65 million a year combating homelessness," Walls said. "The mayor there makes it his own personal issue.

Conversely, (Mayor Richard M.) Daley spends about \$7.5 million combating homelessness, and we are a much larger city. So we are very under-funded."

Walls said Daley is closing down shelters but not building permanent housing consistent with his 10-year plan.

"Homelessness is more than just people living on the streets and sleeping in shelters," Walls said. "It also includes people sleeping with relatives with and no place to stay, or those who will be standing in eviction court tomorrow. We need a dollar for dollar match for state prevention funds."