



Letters

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Housing affordability and community stability derailed by City Council

Disregarding the work of a taskforce of industry leaders selected by the mayor that met throughout the fall, the city council ignored their recommendation to improve housing opportunities for working families in Chicago by preventing amendments to the affordable requirements ordinance (ARO.) (*Emanuel's affordable housing plan derailed amid concern higher fees could stifle development, Early & Often, 1/21/15, Fran Spielman*) Despite confidence by the administration's architects in the Department of Planning and Development, the ordinance was "deferred and published." Now the waiting and wrangling begins.

Waiting is not an optimal choice given the inordinate amount of Chicagoans experiencing housing insecurity. The Chicago Rehab Network's 2013 Fact book indicates the difficulty has doubled in the past generation: whereas, in 1990 one in four Chicago households were cost-burdened (paying more than 30%); by 2010, CRN reports the figured has doubled, fully one out of two households were not affording their homes. Housing insecurity reached its highest record across all income categories and all community areas in Chicago CRN analysis of US census data shows.

<http://chicago.suntimes.com/letters-to-the-editor/7/71/316186>



Furthermore, waiting is not smart for the city with elections a month away. There is no guarantee that the ordinance will carry into a new council or there will be interest in passage of an amended ordinance that grows the resources for affordable housing.

Housing is foundational. In the pursuit of lessening the ills of poverty, a safe, stable and affordable place to live is a requisite building block for educational attainment, good health and a ready workforce. Pivotal to those outcomes, however, are the resources necessary to enable policy makers and leaders to leverage a vibrant housing agenda that provides community investment and stabilization. Yesterday's delay puts increasing housing resources at risk.

The ARO and its potential amendments has established an awareness about the type of leadership required to bring a level of equitable development to Chicago's neighborhoods. Candidates for office can learn more about the affordable housing shortage by contacting the Chicago Rehab Network. It ought to be beneficial for the city's well being that there is increased recognition of the importance of the affordability and that more than amendments to the Affordable Requirements will be necessary to aid Chicago's vital neighborhoods in their economic recovery.

Moving forward, the third enhancement of the ARO shows how effective linked development can be in sharing the city's prosperity across all its neighbors and neighborhoods. CRN has encouraged the city council to consider the success of the ARO, one tool for delivering much-needed resources, and how similar principals might be applied to other revenues, such as convention and tourism dollars collected through the Metropolitan Pier and Exposition Authority and the hotel tax, or potential revenues from casino or other gaming sources. The need for housing resources in our communities is such that with a menu of innovative approaches and other linkage-type policies, we can help build a city where prosperity is wide-spread and ample housing choices exist for all who choose to live in and contribute to Chicago.

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