

Revised housing set-aside plan ready, but mayor still opposed

May 5, 2004

BY [FRAN SPIELMAN](#) City Hall Reporter

Hoping to broaden City Council support and force Mayor Daley's hand, a South Side alderman today will introduce a revised affordable housing ordinance that requires developers of new and rehabilitated housing to set aside 15 percent of their units for low- and moderate-income buyers.

Ald. Toni Preckwinkle (4th) said she's reducing the percentage -- from 25 percent to 15 percent -- to minimize opposition from developers and, she hopes, to attract the 26 votes needed for passage.

"I'm just hopeful that, as we muster more and more support in the City Council, the mayor will decide this is something he can consider and support," she said.

The strategy appears to be working -- at least with aldermen.

Powerful Rules Committee Chairman Richard Mell (33rd), father-in-law of Gov. Blagojevich, said he's prepared to support the revised ordinance, joining 24 aldermen who pledged their support before the 2003 aldermanic election.

"It's one step towards a possible compromise. ...I'm signing on because people in my community have asked me to sign on. But I also realize that, without the mayor's support, it's going nowhere," Mell said.

Ald. Tom Tunney (44th) said he's also leaning toward signing on, adding, "I'm very happy that it is a reduced percentage. That is more reasonable."

Housing Commissioner Jack Markowski said Daley remains opposed, even to the reduced percentage that housing advocates claim would have created 7,338 affordable units between 1998 and 2003.

"It's still mandatory set-asides and we don't believe in mandates," he said. "...We believe in working with the private market in an incentive-based approach."

Last year, the City Council followed Daley's lead and agreed to use the carrot instead of the stick to solve an affordable housing crisis that, according to housing activists, has left Chicago 50,000 units short of demand.

After a vitriolic debate that rankled the mayor, aldermen voted to require city-subsidized developers to make 20 percent of the residential units they build affordable, or 10 percent if they build on city-subsidized land.

By the Housing Department's own admission, the mayor's ordinance would create only 500 to 1,000 units a year.