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CHA urged to end 'vacant lots' policy **Chicago Rehab Network says overturn policy that makes finding affordable housing more difficult in city neighborhoods**

WHO, WHAT & WHY: The Chicago Rehab Network wants CHA, the entity responsible for leading the restructuring of public housing, to repeal its arbitrary vacant lot policy that makes the already difficult task of providing and finding affordable housing harder for recipients of Section 8 vouchers and non-profit housing developers. The demand will be made Tuesday morning during the open comment period at the CHA board meeting.

Under the vacant lot policy, enacted without public comment, city blocks with three or more vacant lots and/or abandoned buildings are ineligible for Section 8 vouchers or similar funding.

"The policy does not address the fact that many undeveloped lots are city-owned, and others are under preparation for development," said Kevin Jackson, executive director of the Chicago Rehab Network.

"The policy penalizes neighborhoods where community leaders and residents have worked to revitalize where they live. It has a disparate impact on Blacks and Latinos, violates Fair Housing laws and severely restricts housing choice. It also works against city dollars put in neighborhoods by discouraging development, and depriving community builders of the opportunity for success," added Mattie Butler, of Woodlawn East Community And Neighbors.

"We want CHA to understand that this policy just does not work. Where are people supposed to find affordable places to live, and why would you put city money into neighborhoods on one hand, and blacklist these neighborhoods on the other? However well-intentioned this decision was, it must be repealed," Jackson said.

WHEN & WHERE: The board meeting will be held Tuesday, Dec. 19, 8:30 a.m., at Ella Flagg Young Apartments, 4645 N. Sheridan in Chicago.

WEEKEND INTERVIEWS AVAILABLE, call 773-616-5058.

The Chicago Rehab Network (CRN) is a citywide coalition of community-based development organizations. Founded in 1977 by community groups seeking to pool expertise and share information, the coalition membership consists of over 40 housing organizations representing over 60 city neighborhoods. Visit www.chicagorehab.org for more information.