

Invest in housing

The Tribune provides an illuminating look into what otherwise is a passing glance of life on the street in "Bold plan for Chicago: End homelessness; Even the most optimistic advocates know it's a complex, costly concern" (Page 1, March 5).

The reader gets an inside look at the difficulties of struggling Chicagoans. One can't help but be inspired by those making a life work against extreme circumstances.

The story demonstrates the role of mission-based organizations and traditional partners on the forefront of social change like the Chicago Coalition for the Homeless, Catholic Charities and so many others.

Housing costs, however, have escalated out of reach for too many households, and across Cook County the shortage of rental dwellings has been projected to be more than 200,000 units by the end of the decade. Foreclosures remain rampant, scarring whole neighborhoods; rents are rising; and the housing landscape is changing. Innovation is required to address these challenges.

Not only does housing for the homeless hang in the balance, but so does an affordable place for most Chicagoans. Business as usual is not acceptable. It's time to rebuild our neighborhoods.

Chicago is fortunate to have a broad range of community development corporations up for the task with the track record to meet these challenges head on.

Investing in housing for people of all income levels is a win-win-win scenario — jobs are created, affordability is provided and the local economy is stimulated.

— *Kevin F. Jackson, executive director, Chicago Rehab Network*