

HOUSING OAK PARK

An Update on Affordable Housing and Diversity in Oak Park

Welcome to the January newsletter of Housing Oak Park. This is a periodic update on issues affecting affordable housing and diversity in Oak Park. You have previously indicated that these issues are important to you. Please feel free to pass this message on to others who may be interested. If you wish to be added to this mailing list or to remove your name, please contact Edward Solan of the Oak Park Residence Corporation at esolan@oakparkrc.com. We welcome your feedback on the attached newsletter.

Index

- 1) Oak Park Rental Market Softens**
- 2) West Suburbs Receive Neighborhood Stabilization Funding**
- 3) West Suburban PADS Offers New Programs**
- 4) Oak Park Township Studies Senior Housing**
- 5) Survey**
- 6) About HOP**

Oak Park Rental Market Softens

The current economic problems facing the nation are also affecting the Oak Park rental housing market. Vacancies throughout Oak Park have increased to more than 8% according to Tammie Grossman, the Housing Programs Manager for the Village. Local landlords are also reporting that rents have remained flat or have actually decreased over the past year.

“We have seen a significant decrease in new rentals over the past year” said Edward Solan, the Executive Director of the Oak Park Residence Corporation. “The number of rental showings has remained relatively high but closing on showings has become much more difficult. Prospective renters are asking to see many more units and are searching for units that have more amenities, such as air conditioning and dishwashers.”

During recessions several things happen that negatively affect the rental market. First, younger renters tend to seek roommates to lessen the cost of housing, thereby decreasing the overall demand for rental units. Also, recent graduates who have been unable to find a job tend to move back in with their parents and delay renting a unit on their own.

Another pressure on the rental market is the recent availability for rent of condo units that cannot be sold. Many condo developers or owners of single units who have been unsuccessful in selling their unit have chosen to lease them as rental units until the sales market rebounds.

While this downturn in the rental market is good news for middle income Oak Park renters who are searching for rental units, this positive news has little impact on low-income renters searching for housing assistance. Waiting lists for subsidized housing in Oak Park remain extremely long. In addition, few Housing Choice Voucher holders are seeing income increases which would bring them over the income limits for the program.

“We expect far fewer Vouchers to turn over in 2010 than we usually see in a normal year. As a result low income applicants for the Voucher program may have to wait for as long as 5 to 10 years before receiving assistance” stated Ken Southward, Director of the Housing Choice Voucher program for the Oak Park Housing Authority.

West Suburbs Receive Neighborhood Stabilization Funding

The Cook County Board of Commissioners announced on November 4 that a group of six communities in the west suburbs of Chicago, including the Village of Oak Park, will receive \$3,067,089 to use for foreclosure recovery. The funding is a portion of the \$28,156,321 the U.S. Dept. of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) awarded to Cook County through the Neighborhood Stabilization Program (NSP), created by HUD to assist communities that have been or are likely to be affected by foreclosed and abandoned properties. The \$3,067,089 will help redevelop foreclosed homes and rental buildings in Bellwood, Berwyn, Broadview, Forest Park, Maywood and Oak Park.

Oak Park Village President David Pope commented that, “Forming the West Cook County Housing Collaborative was a key to our success in securing NSP funding from Cook County. Instead of each community applying on its own, we worked together to submit one coordinated application for all six of our communities.”

The West Cook County Housing Collaborative has earned the support of a wide range of nonprofit organizations, foundations, and companies across the region. The collaborative received financial assistance from The Chicago Community Trust and Grand Victoria Foundation to hire and support the IFF, a non-profit financial institution and real estate consultant, as its housing coordinator. The IFF will help the West Cook County Housing Collaborative carry out its foreclosure recovery activities and serve as a single point of contact for residents, partners, funders, employers and other stakeholders.

With the financial assistance of the Grand Victoria Foundation, the Metropolitan Planning Council and Metropolitan Mayors Caucus are helping support and coordinate the entire collaborative process. The Oak Park Regional Housing Center will work with the Collaborative to identify and prepare qualified homebuyers and tenants to purchase a single family home or rent a rehabilitated unit. The Oak Park Residence Corporation will be a partner in the initiative if any of the funding is used to develop rental or for-sale housing in the Village of Oak Park.

West Suburban PADS Offers New Programs

West Suburban PADS was recently awarded a three-year grant from the Village of Oak Park, as part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, for a new Homeless Prevention-Rapid Re-Housing program (HPRP). With funding from HPRP, West Suburban PADS will help to prevent qualifying residents of Oak Park from losing their housing due to eviction, to provide financial assistance towards utilities, to assist residents with a security deposit and to assist clients of WS PADS Emergency Shelter and Sarah's Inn, a local domestic violence agency, with rapid re-housing services. The Homeless Prevention Program will include case management staff to provide screening and assessment, process applications, provide linkage to other services, and follow-up. Rapid Re-housing services will include financial assistance with rental housing and intensive case management services.

HPRP will go along way to helping the most disadvantaged members of Oak Park stay housed. Keeping people in their housing is the most cost effective, and most humane, way to assist high risk populations from becoming homeless. For those already homeless, they will spend less time in PADS Emergency Shelter and be quickly housed in stable, safe affordable housing.

For additional information about HPRP, please contact Lynda Schueler of West Suburban PADS at lschueler@westsuburbanpads.org.

Oak Park Township Studies Senior Housing

Oak Park Township has received a grant from the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity to undertake a study of the need for additional, affordable, senior housing in Oak Park. The Township has hired Valerie S. Kretchmer Associates, Inc., a real estate planning and consulting firm, to undertake the market analysis.

Kretchmer Associates will assess existing senior housing facilities in Oak Park and the nearby area to determine whether there is sufficient affordable housing to meet the projected need. In addition to basic demographic data analysis, the firm will undertake a random telephone survey of Oak Park seniors to determine their current living arrangements and the type of features and costs that would be important in their consideration of a move.

"If sufficient need is discovered," Township Supervisor David Boulanger stated "the next step would be to investigate the feasibility of new construction as a cooperative venture with the study co-sponsors- the Village of Oak Park and the Oak Park Housing Authority." The completed study is expected in the Spring of 2010.

Survey

In order to assist the HOP Steering Committee in developing an action plan for 2010, we'd like to request your thoughts on affordable housing and diversity in Oak Park . It should take you only about 5 minutes to complete this survey. If you are interested in taking the survey, please go to <http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/CJM8S8R>. (If clicking the link above does not work, copy and paste the URL in a new browser window instead.)

About HOP

Housing Oak Park (HOP) is a grassroots coalition of approximately 150 individuals and organizations in Oak Park that are concerned with affordable housing and diversity. The goals of HOP are to keep the public informed and to advocate for the development of sensible public policy on these issues. You have previously expressed your interest in these topics and in being a member. We charge no dues for membership and always welcome new members. HOP is governed by a volunteer steering committee that currently includes: Rob Breymaier, Anne Frueh, Stuart Jamieson, Dan Kill, Rick Kuner, Lynda Schueler, Sandra Shimon, Sandra Sokol, Ed Solan, and Hank Zuba. If you are interested in learning more about HOP, please contact us at esolan@oakparkrc.com or visit our website at www.housingoakpark.org. (If clicking the link above does not work, copy and paste the URL in a new browser window instead.)

1/10/10