

The issue: Housing Challenges

Serious housing challenges abound throughout metropolitan Chicago, and vary from town to town. In some areas, the demand for affordable housing is greater than the supply. In others, economic development is necessary to revitalize communities and draw potential homeowners to the quality housing available. The future economic health of the region and our local communities is dependent on maintaining a stable and competitive workforce for our businesses and industries, which means we need a diverse range of housing options located near jobs and transportation/transit. In all types of communities, a proven tool is employer-assisted housing (EAH).

The solution: EAH



In Illinois, thanks to state financial incentives — and the leadership of dozens of local mayors — the Metropolitan Planning Council (MPC), Housing Action Illinois, and 15 nonprofit housing counseling agencies have created REACH Illinois. This collaboration makes it easy and financially sound for employers to offer EAH programs to their employees. REACH Illinois administers the program, provides

homeownership education and financial counseling, and manages the down payment or rental assistance provided by employers. Special state incentives, including tax credits for employers and matching funds for employees, make REACH Illinois even more compelling. Through REACH Illinois, more than 2,000 employees have bought homes since 2000. And, employers have contributed \$8 million in assistance to employees, leveraging \$2.3 million in state incentives.

EAH is an effective strategy in cities, suburbs and rural areas, whether to stabilize neighborhoods or overcome expensive housing markets. Participating employers represent nonprofit, for-profit and government sectors. Medical centers, universities, financial institutions, and manufacturers are among the industries that have benefitted from using EAH as a tool for recruiting and retaining their employees.

Benefits at a glance

- Strengthened financial stability for workers, including foreclosure prevention, when employers provide housing counseling and financial assistance to buy or rent a home.
- Increased government, business, and community support for housing options.
- State and federal tax benefits for employers that generate an attractive ROI as well as leveraged state assistance for employees.
- Improved employee retention, loyalty and productivity.
- Reduced employee commutes, stress, absenteeism, recruitment and training costs.
- A benefits package with a competitive edge.

MPC's Role

MPC designs customized programs for participating Chicagoland employers, and matches employers with local REACH non-profit partners who have expertise in EAH, housing and credit counseling, homebuyer education, and the local real estate market. MPC helps each employer create a customized program that addresses both bottom line and local neighborhood goals, such as supporting a particular development, transit access, or other reinvestment priorities.

Visit metroplanning.org or reachillinois.org for more information.