

**HOUSING ACTION ILLINOIS  
SUMMARY OF COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDERS MEETINGS  
2009 CARAVAN**

From August 25-27, 2009, members of Housing Action Illinois' Board of Directors and staff visited five Illinois communities— DeKalb, Ottawa/Peru, Rock Island, Freeport and Rockford— as part of our fourth annual Caravan. Each stop included a community stakeholders meeting to discuss local housing issues and Housing Action's work to address affordable housing issues on a federal and state government level.

Housing Action's purpose in organizing the Caravan is two-fold: first, to obtain current, local information about pressing affordable housing issues and concerns in order to inform our public policy advocacy, public education and organizing, and training and technical assistance work; and second, to inform and mobilize community-based organizations and advocates to get involved in our state and federal advocacy work. "The Caravan continues to be successful in bringing organizations to the table to discuss housing issues and to see the benefit of the advocacy work of Housing Action Illinois," states Bob Campbell, Executive Director of the Rockford Area Affordable Housing Coalition, 2009 Caravan Host, and Housing Action Illinois Board Member.

This year, more than 65 individuals representing nonprofits, government, and business came together to discuss the state of housing in their communities. The paramount issues and concerns that stakeholders shared focused on the lack of *quality* affordable housing in their area, the lack of resources, support and funding available to develop affordable housing, and the growing need to educate communities about the critical need for quality affordable housing.

Another serious concern that many stakeholders echoed is the wide-spread, negative effect suffered by communities as a result of rising unemployment in Illinois, and in particular in rural Illinois, where businesses continue to close and move away. The loss of jobs and the lack of new job opportunities have resulted in a dramatic increase in abandoned and blighted areas throughout north central and north western Illinois. As one Freeport stakeholder noted: "A little bit of blight is a lot of blight in communities like ours." The ability to access stimulus funding was also an issue of pressing concern to many stakeholders, as was the lack of *year-round* emergency shelter and transitional housing for homeless families.

Attached to this introduction is a summary of the main issues raised at each community stakeholders meeting, along with what action steps Housing Action has recently taken, or will take, to address each issue. This is, by no means, a comprehensive list of all of the topics discussed.

Finally, a special thank you to all of our local hosts who made this Caravan possible: the DeKalb County Housing Action Coalition; Illinois Valley PADS and the YMCA of Peru; the Illinois/Iowa Center for Independent Living; NHS of Freeport; and the Rockford Area Affordable Housing Coalition. Thank you also to all of the participants who attended our stakeholders meetings and who openly shared their thoughts and experiences with us. We look forward to working with all of you this upcoming year.

## Cross-Community Similarities in Issues and Solutions, as Stated During the 2009 Caravan

Issues	DeKalb	Ottawa/Peru	Rock Island	Freeport	Rockford
Lack of Quality Affordable Housing (Single Family Homes and Rental Housing)	X	X	X	X	X
Lack of Quality Affordable and Accessible Housing	X	X	X	X	X
Lack of Information and Support (from government agencies) to Develop Housing	X	X		X	X
Lack of Resources and Funding to Develop Housing	X	X	X	X	X
Lack of Emergency Shelter & Transitional Housing for Homeless Families Year Round	X	X	X		X
Foreclosures and Predatory Lending Problems			X	X	X
Aging Housing Stock/Lack of Upkeep				X	X
Negative Perceptions About Affordable Housing/Affordable Housing Attracts People from Outside Communities	X				X
Need for Education Regarding the Critical Need for Affordable Housing		X			X
Lack of Fair Housing Resources	X	X			
Recession/Difficulty Navigating Stimulus Funding	X	X			
Unemployment Continuing to Rise as Businesses Close/Move*		X	X	X	X
Lack of Public Transportation*	X	X			

Issues	Possible Solutions	Possible Responses or Initiatives
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lack of Quality Affordable Housing</li> <li>Lack of Quality Affordable and Accessible Housing</li> <li>Lack of Resources and Funding to Develop Housing</li> <li>Lack of Emergency Shelter &amp; Transitional Housing</li> </ul>	<p>More funding and more flexibility in use of funds.</p> <p>Monitor funding cuts and use of funds.</p> <p>Stricter enforcement and oversight of housing codes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Monitor \$130 million allocation for affordable housing in capital budget to ensure funds are equitably distributed throughout state and aimed at households under 30% AMI (Approximately \$30 million of this funding will be used for disabled adults and veterans)</li> <li>Restore State Funding for the Homeless Prevention Program</li> <li>Restore State Funding for the Emergency Food and Shelter Funding</li> <li>Reform Rental Housing Support Program</li> <li>Fund the National Housing Trust Fund</li> <li>Support Income Tax Reform in Illinois</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lack of Information and Support (from government agencies) to Develop Housing</li> <li>Negative Perceptions About Affordable Housing</li> <li>Lack of Resources and Funding to Develop Housing</li> <li>Aging Housing Stock</li> </ul>	<p>Training and Technical Assistance.</p> <p>Education and Outreach.</p> <p>Year Round Advocacy (not limited to legislative session).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Affordable Housing Month in November provides opportunities for organizations to do public education activities, such as legislative breakfasts, congregational outreach, and tours of affordable housing.</li> <li>Training Workshops and Technical Assistance provided to nonprofit housing developers and housing counseling agencies</li> <li>Illinois Housing Roundtable</li> <li>Forming partnerships and ongoing advocacy with government agencies</li> <li>Media outreach</li> <li>In district meetings with legislators</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need for Education Regarding the Critical Need for Affordable Housing</li> <li>• Recession/Difficulty Navigating Stimulus Funding</li> <li>• Foreclosure and Predatory Lending Problems</li> </ul>	<p>Networking / Coalition Building.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Annual Convention in October provides education and networking opportunities</li> <li>• Committees and working groups focused on specific issues, such as housing counseling, homeless services, housing development, and utilizing ARRA funds</li> <li>• Coordinate and utilize Housing Roundtable and HousingMatters.net</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Foreclosure and Predatory Lending Problems</li> </ul>	<p>Advocate for Predatory Lending Database Program and Promoting Servicer Accountability.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduce foreclosures in Illinois by promoting servicer accountability</li> <li>• Support creation of new Federal Consumer Financial Protection Agency</li> </ul>

*\*Housing Action Illinois recognizes that these issues are interconnected with housing and directly relate to a community's viability. However, at this time these issues are not the focus of any HAI initiatives or mission.*

**What are we missing?** All of the “Possible Responses or Initiatives” above are just some of the programs, initiatives, and campaigns that Housing Action Illinois is currently involved in. Please take this opportunity to contact us to further discuss where you think we can do more and what issues and initiatives should be prioritized in order to find solutions for the issues we explored during the 2009 Housing Action Illinois Caravan.

**Thank you again for sharing your thoughts and experiences with us. We look forward to hearing from you!**