

**PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE**  
**October 22, 2007**

OBSERVER REPORT

**Observer:** Nancy Bashook

**Aldermen Present:** All but Aldermen Bernstein and Holmes

**Staff Present:** Jim Wolinski, Dona Spicuzza, Dennis Marino, Legal Dept. rep.

**Media Present:** Roundtable, Evanston Review

**Meeting began:** 7:40 pm (scheduled for 7 pm)      **Meeting ended:** 8:25 pm

**Items for Discussion**

**(PD1)      Staff Response to Alderman Rainey's Questions Concerning City Supported Affordable Housing Units**

**Staff Memorandum concerning survey of all City supported affordable housing units as to number of vacant units, number of applicants, contractors who performed the rehabilitations.**

Jim Wolinski described two pieces of information that were distributed to the aldermen: 1) listing of general contractors working on affordable housing projects in past 12 years; 2) listing of Evanston addresses owned by banks (some have gone to auction already).

Dona Spiccuza addressed the staff memo (I did not have a copy). This included the status of the available units assisted by the city: 736-38 Mulford, two units completed rehab, eleven units will be available, one at market price. On Dobson, four units available, 18 applications received, invited people to submit evidence of mortgage commitment; and others. Out of 138 rental units, just seven are vacant.

A few local contractors have been used. The local contractors make an effort to hire local subcontractors. Jim Wolinski named a local grassroots movement to train people in trades and crafts. He wants to get them involved.

Staff supported the idea of CHDOs. They provide a real value and serve a market of those at less than 50% of median income. CHDOs provide home buyer counseling, control over rehab of property and encourage energy efficiency building materials and appliances. They also help to reduce property taxes (assessed at price paid not market value). Without CHDOs, another city bureaucracy would need to be created to find properties and do all the legwork.

**(PD2) Meeting with Lenders Who Currently Own Vacant/Boarded Buildings  
Per the Committee direction, staff is inviting lenders who own vacant/boarded buildings in Evanston, how they are being maintained, and the lenders approach to selling/disposing of these buildings.**

Lenders were invited to the meeting, but they didn't show. Alderman Moran suggested that the city invite someone from the local branches and they should bring someone who is conversant with our properties. If they don't show, pressure should be put on them.

Alderman Rainey questioned what happens to properties where there are foreclosures and they go back to the bank. What does the bank do?

Dona Spicuzza said they hope to get the down payment assistant program up and running by the end of the year. They are looking at what other programs to use in Evanston to get these vacant buildings. If a building doesn't serve as a hazard, it cannot be demolished. The city is now looking at seven buildings for demolition because of structural deterioration and value of property. A search warrant is needed to get into vacant buildings.

Alderman Jean-Baptiste suggested that we be more aggressive about approaching the banks about what is available and for sale.

Jim Wolinski said there are other ways to attack this. Talked to developer in town about ways for the city to buy up buildings.