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For more information contact:
Bob Palmer, Policy Director, Housing Action Illinois
312-939-6074 x. 206 (work) or 312-282-3959 (cell)
bob@housingactionil.org

November is Affordable Housing Month in Illinois
Local Activities Focus on Awareness and Action

During November, organizations and individuals throughout Illinois will be taking action to raise awareness about the importance of affordable housing to individuals and communities.

With the national economy teetering on the edge of recession for at least the past year and the foreclosure crisis continuing to deepen, the demand for affordable housing is growing.

Illinois Affordable Housing Month is coordinated by Housing Action Illinois, a coalition of more than 150 organizations that works to increase resources for the development and preservation affordable housing.

Housing Action Illinois has organized more than 15 groups throughout the state to hold educational events and engage their local elected officials. A complete list of activities is available at <http://www.housingactionil.org/organizing/pages1-5/index01.html>.

According to RealtyTrac, there were 10,204 foreclosure filings in Illinois during September 2008, 23.58% more than in September 2007. The September 2008 data represents one foreclosure filing for every 510 housing units, the 12th highest rate in the nation.

During November, Housing Action Illinois will also be encouraging their members and the general public to comment on local plans to spend the \$172.5 million recently awarded statewide to acquire and redevelop foreclosed properties through the federal Neighborhood Stabilization Program. Before submitting their plans for approval by the federal government, the State of Illinois and the 12 local governments that received funds must post their plans on the Internet and take public comment for two weeks. Links to all the plans will be posted as they become available at <http://www.housingactionil.org/policy-advocacy/nsp.html>.

“The foreclosure crisis has refocused attention on the importance of affordable housing in people’s lives and to the overall economic health of our communities,” said Sharon Legenza, Executive Director of Housing Action Illinois. “However, the foreclosure crisis is only making the affordability problem worse, as owners lose their homes and competition for affordable rental units increases.”

According to the United States Census Bureau’s 2007 American Community Survey, released in September, 36.4% of all Illinois households have a housing affordability problem because they spend more than 30% of their income on renting or owning their own home.

According to the National Low Income Housing Coalition’s Annual *Out of Reach* study, the Housing Wage in Illinois is \$16.23 per hour. This is the average amount a household must earn to afford a two-bedroom apartment without having an affordability problem.

In support of Housing Action Illinois’ efforts, Governor Rod Blagojevich has declared November as Affordable Housing Month in Illinois.

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