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The GAPA press conference held at City Hall in Chicago. Photo by Madeline Hamlin.

abiding people like they are criminals, especially in predominantly black and Latino communities.”

Last month’s 30-page GAPA report went a step farther. “[W]ithout trust, people are less likely to cooperate with the police. This situation makes it much harder for police to fight crime and keep the peace.” As an example, the report cited Chicago’s low murder clearance rate: 17.5 percent in 2017. That’s 50 percent below solved homicides here in the early 1990s — and far below national averages.

Prior to the brutal police beating of motorist Rodney King in 1992 — and six days of violence that left 63 people dead — the Los Angeles PD faced similar concerns about excessive force. Los Angeles overhauled its civilian commission, “which made the Los Angeles model especially relevant to GAPA participants.”

GAPA officials credit changes to police oversight with LA’s solved homicide rate: 73.4 percent in 2017 compared to Chicago’s 17.5 percent.

GAPA participants wanted a method for punishing police misconduct like the McDonald shooting, but more than that, they sought to prevent it. They wanted to address the hiring and training of police officers and new recruits as well as their supervision at the district level.

There are 13 community organizations in GAPA, including Jewish Council on Urban Affairs, ONE Northside, Asian Americans Advancing Justice, Community Renewal Society, Inner City Muslim Action Network, Eugenia Burns Hope Center, Southwest Organizing Project, TARGET Area Development Corporation and West Side Health Authority. Support has also come from The Chicago Community Trust, John D. and Catherine MacArthur Foundation, the Joyce Foundation, Polk Bros. Foundation, Robert R. McCormick Foundation, Woods Fund Chicago and more.

However, Fraternal Order of Police President Kevin Graham said in the Chicago Sun-Times that the existing COPA, as well as the FBI, Illinois State Police, state’s attorney’s office, and an “exceedingly biased media,” have officers “under virtual siege.”

REPORT BACKS BILL TO HOLD EVICTION DATA

A new report by Housing Action Illinois and the Lawyers’ Committee for Better Housing (LCBH) says an eviction filing on the public record can hinder someone from finding housing — even if they did not violate their lease or actually get evicted.

The “Filing As Judgment” study shows that 39 percent of eviction cases filed in Cook County during the past four years did not result in an eviction order and/or other judgment against the tenant. The report recommends enacting state legislation that would hold eviction case records from public view until cases are completed to protect these individuals from unfair barriers to renting a home in the future.

“This is an issue that affects about 15,000 people in Cook County each year,” said Mark Swartz, executive director of Lawyers’ Committee for Better Housing, the only legal aid agency in the Chicago area that advocates solely for renters. “There is no judgment against them, but there is a filing on their record. When they go to rent, prospective landlords too often reject them based on screening reports that don’t reflect the outcome of a case.” One reason is that many landlords purchase reports from tenant screening companies, which collect information from eviction courts and aggregate it with other publicly available data.

“Filing As Judgment: The Stigma of Eviction Records” presents data from more than 100,000 residential eviction cases filed in Cook County between 2014 to 2017, as well as local perspectives from tenants, legal aid lawyers, and a landlord.

The report’s stories include that of Phyllis, a senior living with a disability whose rent payment was lost or stolen by a property management employee, which led her landlord to file for eviction for nonpayment of rent. Despite a settlement in court, the filing on her record led to rejections in response

to 10 apartment applications, and she was only able to find a home after having the case sealed.

The report’s authors back House Bill 4760, now before the Illinois General Assembly, which would seal eviction records until a court decision. Since most filings do result in an eviction order, the majority of cases will wind up being unsealed.

“People shouldn’t be harmed by online court records that don’t accurately reflect their ability to be a good tenant,” says Bob Palmer, policy director at Housing Action Illinois. “HB 4760 is intended to protect tenants whose cases could eventually be sealed under current law and others from ever having the case come up in online records that too often unfairly damage their ability to secure housing in the future.”

—Suzanne Hanney, from prepared materials

CHA APPROVES 38 AFFORDABLE HOUSING UNITS

The Chicago Housing Authority approved transactions March 27 for 38 new units of affordable housing on the North and South Sides.

The CHA Board authorized a redevelopment loan up to \$7.5 million for construction of a new mixed-income community to accommodate former residents of the Washington Park CHA property. Brinshore Michaels will develop 84 units of new, mixed-income buildings at 4400 S. Cottage Grove on CHA-owned land. Twenty-one of those units will be public housing, the remainder affordable and market-rate.

Harlem Irving Companies will develop the Lawrence and Ravenswood Apartments at 1825 W. Lawrence Ave., a 167-unit, four-story building of family housing. The CHA Board authorized the investment of 17 Project Based Voucher (PBV) subsidies that will represent 10 percent of the units; residents will be selected from the CHA wait list. The first floor of the west building will also offer about 10,000 square feet of retail space.

—Suzanne Hanney, from prepared materials