

**HOUSING MATTERS CONFERENCE**

2025

***SUSTAIN***

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**+ACT**ION  
ILLINOIS



OCTOBER 16-17, 2025

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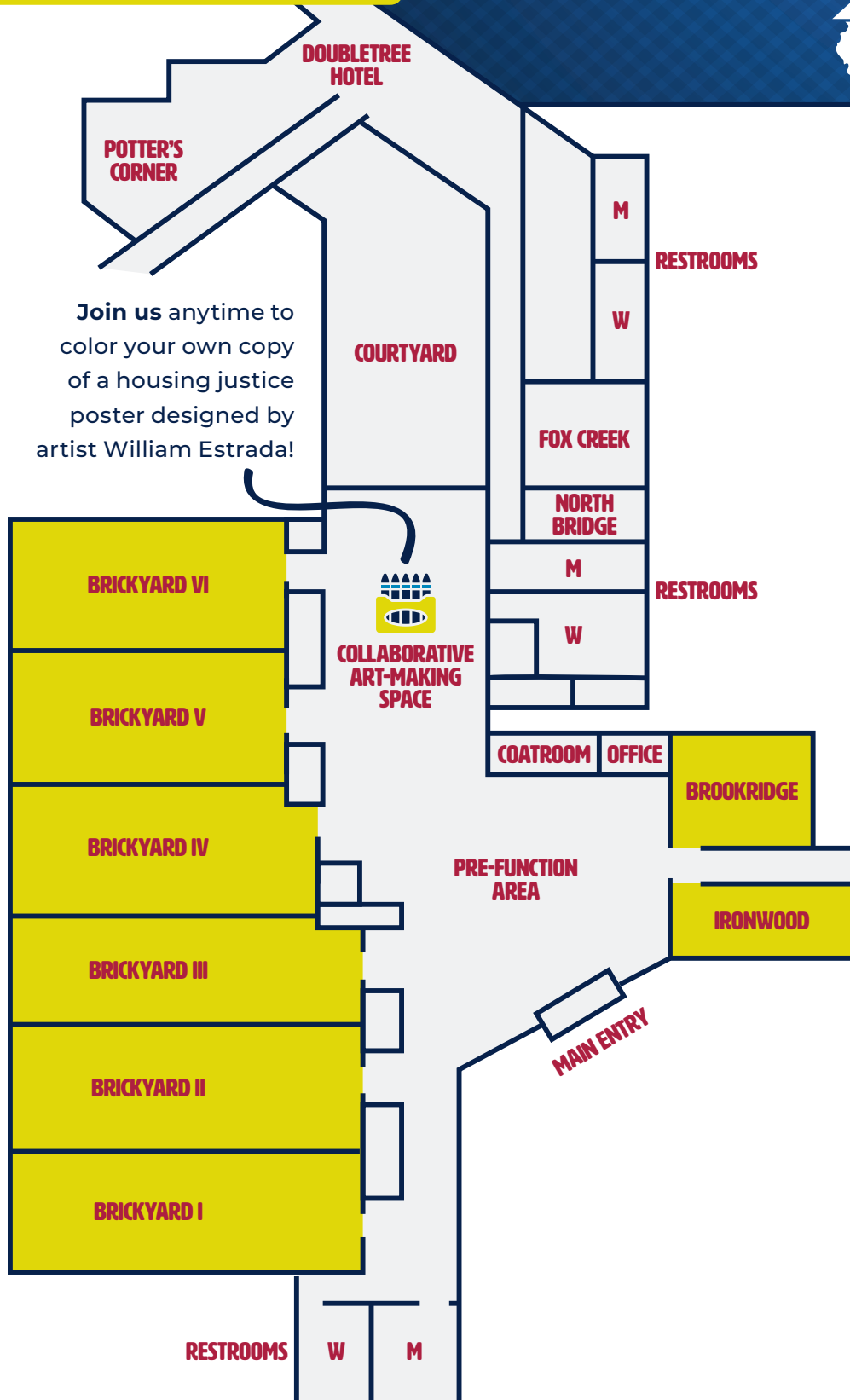
Through collaboration and innovation, we're working to shape an economy that works for everyone.

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# FLOOR PLAN





# WELCOME



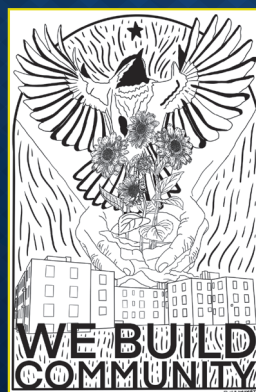
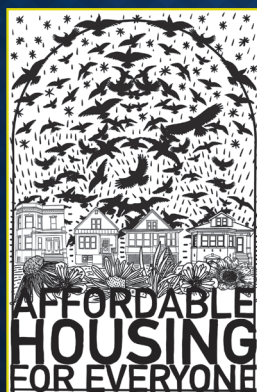
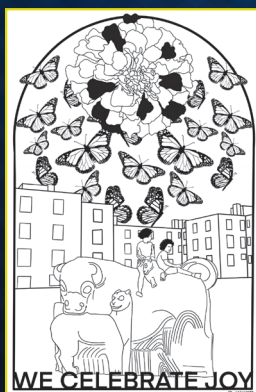
## 2025 HOUSING MATTERS CONFERENCE

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### SEE WHO'S AT THE CONFERENCE WITH YOU!

Download a PDF of the conference registration list or visit the registration table to pick up a print copy.



### COLLABORATIVE ART-MAKING SPACE:

Join us in the Pre-Function Area anytime to color your own copy of a housing justice poster designed by artist William Estrada!



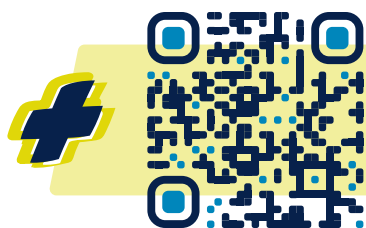
# SCHEDULE



## THURSDAY, OCTOBER 16

8:30 am	<b>REGISTRATION &amp; CONTINENTAL BREAKFAST</b> 8:30 am – 12:30 pm   Stop by the <b>Bobzby Books</b> table to get a copy of <i>Just Action</i> and peruse other books	PRE-FUNCTION AREA
10:00 am	<b>WELCOMING &amp; OPENING KEYNOTE WITH LEAH ROTHSTEIN</b> Co-author of <i>Just Action</i>	BRICKYARDS I-IV
11:30 am	<b>MEMBERSHIP MEETING &amp; LUNCHEON: CRA IN ACTION</b>	BRICKYARDS I-IV
1:00 pm	<b>BREAK</b>	
1:30 pm	<b>WORKSHOP SESSION I</b> Creating a Culture of Moving On* Staffing with Intention: Finding the Right Fit – Part I Expanding Homeownership: Public Policies to Increase Supply & Equity Building for All: Advancing Housing Equity Through the Missing Middle West Bloomington Revitalization Project Tour (1:00-3:00 pm)	BRICKYARD V BRICKYARD VI BROOKRIDGE IRONWOOD OFF-SITE
2:45 pm	<b>BREAK</b>	
3:15 pm	<b>WORKSHOP SESSION II</b> Meeting Local Housing Market Conditions with Local Solutions Updates from the Illinois Office to Prevent and End Homelessness* Staffing with Intention: Finding the Right Fit – Part II 36 Questions for Civic Love	BRICKYARD IV BRICKYARD V BRICKYARD VI BROOKRIDGE
4:30 pm	<b>BREAK</b>	
5:00 pm	<b>RECEPTION</b> Please join us for live music from The Sweet Nothings, hot appetizers, and an open bar. The winner of our 50/50 raffle will be announced at 6:30 pm.	

\* These sessions have been approved for CE (continuing education) credits for LCSW, LSW, LCPC, and LPC licenses; please sign in with a staff member at the session to make sure you get credit.



**SCAN or VISIT**  
[bit.ly/2025HMschedule](https://bit.ly/2025HMschedule)  
for program, speaker information,  
and session materials online!

# SCHEDULE



## FRIDAY, OCTOBER 17

7:30 am	<b>REGISTRATION &amp; CONTINENTAL BREAKFAST</b>	<b>PRE-FUNCTION AREA</b>
	8:30 am – 12:30 pm   Stop by the <b>Bobzby Books</b> table to get a copy of <i>Just Action</i> and peruse other books	
9:00 am	<b>WORKSHOP SESSION III</b>	
	Ready, Set, Go: Emergency Preparedness for Housing Counseling Agencies	<b>BRICKYARD IV</b>
	Case Study: City of Elgin's Unsheltered Pilot Project*	<b>BRICKYARD V</b>
	Staying the Course in a Challenging Federal Policy Climate	<b>BRICKYARD VI</b>
	From Chicago to Chattanooga: Building Affordable Housing Without Traditional Subsidies	<b>BROOKRIDGE</b>
	Mission Under Pressure: A Crisis Communications Playbook for Public Funding Challenges	<b>IRONWOOD</b>
10:15 am	<b>BREAK</b>	
10:30 am	<b>WORKSHOP SESSION IV</b>	
	Making the Case: Funding the Future of Housing Counseling	<b>BRICKYARD IV</b>
	Centering Experience: Strengthening Homeless Services with Lived Experience Councils*	<b>BRICKYARD V</b>
	What's Ahead in 2026: State Budget & Policy Landscape	<b>BRICKYARD VI</b>
	LIHTC 101: The Basics of Low-Income Housing Tax Credits That Which Keeps Us Grounded	<b>BROOKRIDGE</b>
		<b>IRONWOOD</b>
11:45 am	<b>LUNCHEON &amp; CLOSING KEYNOTE WITH ANN OLIVA</b>	<b>BRICKYARD I-III</b>
	CEO of National Alliance to End Homelessness	
2:00 pm	<b>ADJOURN</b>	

\* These sessions have been approved for CE (continuing education) credits for LCSW, LSW, LCPC, and LPC licenses; please sign in with a staff member at the session to make sure you get credit.



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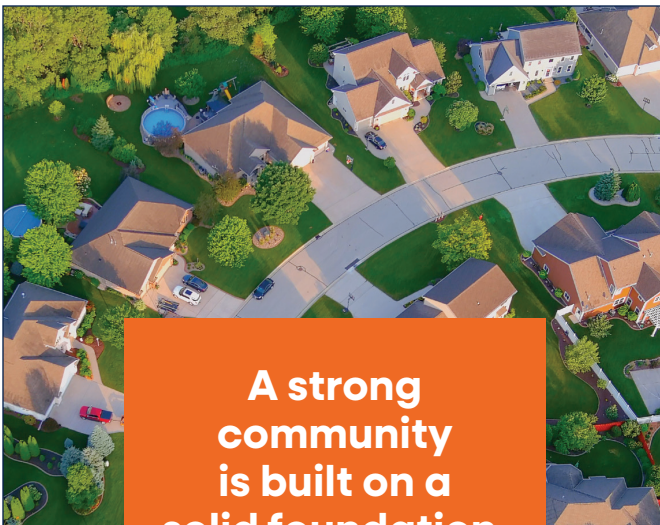
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# GENERAL SESSIONS



## OPENING KEYNOTE: JUST ACTION WITH LEAH ROTHSTEIN

Thursday, October 16 | 10:00 am – 11:30 am

BRICKYARDS I-IV



Racial segregation characterizes every metropolitan area in the U.S. and bears responsibility for our most serious social and economic problems. We've taken no serious steps to desegregate neighborhoods, however, because we are hobbled by a national myth that residential segregation is de facto—the result of private discrimination or personal choices that do not violate constitutional rights. *The Color of Law* demonstrates, however, that residential segregation was created by racially explicit and unconstitutional government policy. *Just Action* describes how we can begin to address this, providing dozens of strategies local groups can pursue to redress segregation in their own communities. By starting with achievable local victories, we can build a national movement that can remedy our unconstitutional racial landscape. Leah will be joined in conversation by Andrew Greenlee, a professor in the Department of Urban and Regional Planning at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

## MEMBERSHIP MEETING & LUNCHEON: CRA IN ACTION

Thursday, October 16 | 11:30 am – 1:00 pm

BRICKYARDS I-IV

Join us for this once-a-year opportunity to meet in person with our diverse membership and vote on new and renewing members of our Board of Directors. This year, we will also give key updates on the federal and Illinois Community Reinvestment Acts. These laws are designed to ensure banks—and, in the case of the IL CRA, also credit unions and mortgage lenders—meet the needs of low- and moderate-income communities. Now that much-needed updates to federal protections are being rescinded, the Illinois CRA is more vital than ever. Learn how you can engage with banks, credit

unions, and mortgage lenders to ensure they meet community needs. *All are welcome to join, whether or not your organization is a member.*

## CLOSING KEYNOTE: NAVIGATING FEDERAL POLICY SHIFTS TOGETHER

Friday, October 17 | 11:45 am – 2:00 pm

BRICKYARDS I-III



More than ever, federal level policy and budget issues are affecting all sectors of our work, and it is critical to remain current with what is happening and how the field is responding. We are therefore excited to wrap up our conference with Ann Oliva, CEO of the National Alliance to End Homelessness. A career veteran of homelessness and housing policy, she is recognized as one of the foremost experts on homelessness in the nation. In her role, Ann works closely with members of Congress and the Administration, as well as with officials and advocates at the state and local levels. She has significant experience on federal housing policy generally, having previously served as Vice President for Housing Policy for the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, Senior Policy Advisor at CSH, as well as 10-years with the U.S. Dept. of Housing & Urban Development. Ann will be joined in conversation by Christine Haley, Chief Homelessness Officer of the Office to Prevent and End Homelessness in Illinois, and Housing Action's Executive Director, Sharon Legenza.

## RECEPTION

Thursday, October 16 | 5:00 pm – 7:00 pm



The Sweet Nothings bring the music of New Orleans and Europe to Central Illinois, incorporating elements of Swing, Trad Jazz, Musette, Jazz Manouche, and many more. They have been described as a mix between The Squirrel Nut Zippers and Post-Modern Jukebox.

# WORKSHOP I

Thursday, October 16 | 1:30 pm – 2:45 pm

## STAFFING WITH INTENTION: FINDING THE RIGHT FIT – PART I BRICKYARD VI

Brandon Pendleton, Harold Washington College

In today's evolving workforce, understanding what defines the "new normal" is critical for building strong, high-performing teams. This two-part session explores common myths surrounding modern work trends, the key traits of multiple generations in the workplace, and why company culture must be a central focus. Attendees will also be introduced to the "4 Jewels Approach"—a practical framework for refining your hiring strategy to attract and retain the right talent. Join us for an engaging and insightful discussion designed to help housing counselors and other housing professionals adapt, align, and hire with intention in a changing work environment. This workshop will continue during the second breakout session slot; participants should plan on attending both sessions.

## CREATING A CULTURE OF MOVING ON\* BRICKYARD V

Johnna Lowe, CSH

Join us to explore how partnerships between supportive and affordable housing entities can strengthen tenant outcomes through Moving On initiatives. These efforts position supportive housing as a platform for long-term success by empowering tenants who no longer need intensive services to transition to greater independence. Participants will learn how to create a culture that supports Moving On, define key staff roles, connect tenants to resources and services, and utilize Housing Choice Vouchers for ongoing affordability. The session will also highlight the critical role of engagement and peer support.

## EXPANDING HOMEOWNERSHIP: PUBLIC POLICIES TO INCREASE SUPPLY & EQUITY

BROOKRIDGE

Emily Bloom-Carlin, Metropolitan Planning Council |  
Paula Bush, North West Housing Partnership |  
Torrence Gardner, Chicago Community Trust

How do we establish policies that will grow and sustain homeownership, particularly for first-time and low-income buyers? Join us for a high-level overview of key homeownership issues Housing Action and our partners are working on: increasing the supply of affordable "middle" homes available for purchase, strengthening mortgage products and other financial resources for new buyers, supporting aging and disabled homeowners, resources for home repair and modifications, and preventing property tax-related displacement—all discussed through a racial equity lens.

## BUILDING FOR ALL: ADVANCING HOUSING EQUITY THROUGH THE MISSING MIDDLE

IRONWOOD

Neeley Erickson, Illinois REALTORS® | Nancy Firfer & Ben Schnelle, Metropolitan Mayors Caucus | Sarah Leys, City of Rockford | Dylan Rumsey, Opticos Design

Housing conversations often center only the extremes—deeply subsidized units or luxury developments—overlooking the critical "missing middle." This session will explore how two organizations, The City of Rockford and the Metropolitan Mayors Caucus (MMC), are addressing this gap. Rockford's Housing Strategy Framework takes a comprehensive approach, recognizing the need for all types of housing—from traditional low-income to market-rate and higher-end units, including a range of rental options—and prioritizes collaboration between public and private sector partners. MMC, in partnership with 18 suburban municipalities from across the Chicago region and Opticos Design, has been exploring how to attract "Missing Middle Housing"—multi-unit, house-scale buildings that fit into existing residential neighborhoods. They will share highlights from their recently published toolkit, including common barriers, benefits, and best practices.



## WEST BLOOMINGTON REVITALIZATION PROJECT TOUR\*\*

OFF-SITE – 1:00-3:00 PM – PLEASE BOARD SHUTTLE AT 1:00 PM

In 2008, the City of Bloomington identified West Bloomington—a once-thriving residential and business hub—as a priority for reinvestment. Recognizing its historic and cultural significance, city leaders partnered with neighborhood associations, community groups, churches, and local businesses to create a quality of life plan with Teska & Associates aimed at strengthening the

West Side. This tour offers an insider's look at the West Bloomington Revitalization Project (WBRP), highlighting community-driven initiatives such as the Tool Library and Bike Co-op. Participants will explore the neighborhood on foot, see revitalization efforts firsthand, and hear directly from local leaders about how these programs are creating lasting impact.

**\*\* NOTE:** Only those who pre-registered will be able to join this tour.

## WORKSHOP II

Thursday, October 16 | 3:15 pm – 4:30 pm

### MEETING LOCAL HOUSING MARKET CONDITIONS WITH LOCAL SOLUTIONS

#### BRICKYARD IV

Uri Pachter, City of Evanston | Ben Schnelle, Metropolitan Mayors Caucus | Eric Setter, Northern Illinois Land Bank

What works in one city or town may not work in another. For success, local housing solutions need careful alignment between policy design and housing markets. For example, inclusionary housing can unlock affordable housing opportunities across Illinois, particularly in resource-rich neighborhoods, by leveraging the private market. Meanwhile, in communities with significant vacant and abandoned properties, land banks can be effective for managing and sometimes redeveloping property. Join a facilitated discussion by staff from Metropolitan Mayor's Caucus focusing on these and other local housing tools. We'll also be joined by representatives for Evanston's inclusionary zoning ordinance and the Northern Illinois Land Bank, who will discuss their current work, successes, and challenges.

### UPDATES FROM THE ILLINOIS OFFICE TO PREVENT AND END HOMELESSNESS\*

#### BRICKYARD V

Colleen Mahoney, OPEH | Richard Rowe, IDOC/OPEH | Eugenia Olison, IDPH/OPEH | Brenda O'Connell, IHDA

In this session, leaders from the Illinois Office to Prevent and End Homelessness (OPEH) will share key updates from several projects seeking to improve

the understanding of homelessness in Illinois and opportunities to better support people experiencing homelessness, as well as other new initiatives to strengthen the homelessness response network statewide. Presenters will share key findings from recent work, invite input to shape the FY27-28 Home Illinois Plan, and share opportunities to further engage with the Office.

### STAFFING WITH INTENTION: FINDING THE RIGHT FIT – PART II

#### BRICKYARD VI

This will continue the session started during Workshop I. Participants should plan to attend both sessions.

### 36 QUESTIONS FOR CIVIC LOVE

#### BROOKRIDGE

Tiff Beatty, National Public Housing Museum

How can a few simple questions help build a stronger, more connected community? Inspired by psychologist Arthur Aron's famous intimacy experiment, the National Public Housing Museum adapted his questions to spark civic love—one's love for society, expressed through a commitment to the common good, and the idea that we're all better off when everyone has opportunities to thrive. In this interactive workshop, you'll be introduced to NPHM's 36 Questions for Civic Love toolkit, pair up to try it out, and explore how to bring this powerful tool back to your own community, program, or neighborhood. Join us to practice falling in civic love—one question at a time.

# WORKSHOP III

Friday, October 17 | 9:00 am – 10:15 am

## READY, SET, GO: EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS FOR HOUSING COUNSELING AGENCIES

### BRICKYARD IV

Mary Dade, Marshall Heights CDO

When disaster strikes, renters and homeowners often struggle to keep up with paying their rent or mortgage. This session explores the wide-ranging hazards communities face—many of which are underestimated—and how climate change is making existing inequities worse. Learn from Marshall Heights' work identifying 14 types of hazards that can occur anywhere and hear how their 2025 Annual Readiness Conference is helping communities prepare, respond, and rebuild. Join a wide range of participants from across the U.S. and beyond who have learned from Marshall Heights CDO's expertise on emergency preparedness.

## CASE STUDY: CITY OF ELGIN'S UNSHELTERED PILOT PROJECT\*

### BRICKYARD V

Lyndsay Hartman, Jenna Strohmenger, and Deidra Trout, Association for Individual Development

In the winter of 2024, the City of Elgin undertook the closure of a large encampment that had existed for over 30 years. This session will share our experience relocating 40 encampment residents into a hotel and transitioning from a Street Outreach approach for support to sheltered, on-site supported behavioral health community support services. We'll explore what worked, what didn't, and the lessons we learned. Our discussion will focus on the pillars of care that guided our approach: trauma-informed care, harm reduction, and a deep commitment to compassionate, client-centered care above all else.

## STAYING THE COURSE IN A CHALLENGING FEDERAL POLICY CLIMATE

### BRICKYARD VI

Sandy Deters, ERBA | Katie Eighan, Alliance to End Homelessness in Suburban Cook County | Brigitta Mac-Rizzo, Jackson County Housing Authority | Josefina Navar, HOPE Fair Housing

The current federal budget and policy landscape demands increased advocacy and organizing to protect and create more good federal housing policies. Hear from leaders across sectors—homeless service providers, public housing authorities, housing counselors, and fair housing advocates—as they share what they're fighting for in DC.

They'll also discuss how they continue to do the best job possible to serve our communities, especially our most vulnerable neighbors, on a daily basis.

## FROM CHICAGO TO CHATTANOOGA: BUILDING AFFORDABLE HOUSING WITHOUT TRADITIONAL SUBSIDIES

### BROOKRIDGE

Daniel Kay Hertz, Impact for Equity | Edwin Ortiz-Reyes, Chicago Department of Housing | Hanneke van Deursen, City of Chattanooga

A new model of financing mixed-income, permanently affordable rental housing without traditional subsidies such as LIHTC has been taken up by a number of states and local governments in recent years, including Chicago, where it is known as "Green Social Housing." In this panel, Daniel Kay Hertz of the law and policy center Impact for Equity will moderate a discussion with Edwin Ortiz-Reyes, Director of Policy, Planning, and Legislative Affairs for the Chicago Department of Housing, and Hanneke Van Deursen, Director of Housing Finance for the City of Chattanooga, on how these programs work. Panelists will discuss both the political path to establishing such a program and the policy and practical considerations in getting it off the ground in two very different contexts, Chicago and Chattanooga, Tennessee.

## MISSION UNDER PRESSURE: A CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS PLAYBOOK FOR PUBLIC FUNDING CHALLENGES

### IRONWOOD

DeRondal Bevely, RubyRose Strategies | Gordon Mayer, Gordon Mayer Communications

Your state funding is delayed. A vital grant is targeted in the media. Public perception is shifting under political pressure. These aren't just budget problems—they are communication crises that threaten your mission, reputation, and community trust. This intensive workshop moves beyond theory to deliver a practical playbook for nonprofit leaders. Part one lays the universal groundwork for crisis response, equipping you with a framework to manage any challenge with confidence. Part two dives deep into the specific, high-stakes threat of public funding instability. You will learn how to message uncertainty without creating panic, align internal teams, and activate external allies. Leave with the tools, scripts, and strategic foresight to not only survive the storm but lead through it, protecting the community that depends on you.

# WORKSHOP IV

Friday, October 17 | 10:30 am – 11:45 am

## MAKING THE CASE: FUNDING THE FUTURE OF HOUSING COUNSELING

### BRICKYARD IV

Raquel Garcia, IHDA | Tomas Meneses, Citi Bank

Sustaining housing counseling programs requires more than just strong outcomes—now more than ever it requires making a compelling case to funders for why this work matters. In this session, leaders from a bank and the Illinois Housing Development Authority (IHDA) will share how they think about funding housing counseling and what resonates with them when agencies seek support. Participants will reflect on how they currently communicate the value of their work, explore strategies for framing housing counseling as essential, and consider new ways to educate funders about its impact. Together, we'll identify messages and approaches that both strengthen sustainability plans and help funders better understand why investing in housing counseling is critical.

## CENTERING EXPERIENCE: STRENGTHENING HOMELESS SERVICES WITH LIVED EXPERIENCE COUNCILS\*

### BRICKYARD V

Kate Green, Home for All Continuum of Care/United Way | MeShon Harvey and Genea Moore, Alliance to End Homelessness in Suburban Cook County | Markayla Moore, Lake County Continuum of Care | Jamie Reidle, Heartland HOUSED

Lived Experience Councils (LECs), which bring together individuals with firsthand experiences of homelessness to inform homeless services and policies, are essential to building responsive and equitable programs and systems. This session will feature LEC members and staff from Continuums of Care (CoCs) across Illinois, sharing real-world lessons on how to structure, sustain, and empower these councils. Learn how to meaningfully involve people with lived experience in planning, service design, and advocacy. Whether you're starting a council or looking to deepen impact, this workshop will offer practical tools and inspiration from the field.

## WHAT'S AHEAD IN 2026: STATE BUDGET & POLICY LANDSCAPE

### BRICKYARD VI

Holly Ambuehl, Forefront | Niya Kelly, Chicago Coalition to End Homelessness | Max Seeley, SHPA

Held just after the first week of the Illinois General Assembly's fall veto session and just before the 2026

spring session, this timely workshop will provide the latest updates from Springfield—what's happening now and what's at stake in the coming year. We'll break down how state leaders are responding to recent troubling policy changes and proposals from the federal government, including deep cuts to health care and food assistance in this year's reconciliation bill. You'll also learn how to get involved in advancing key issues that Housing Action and our partners will be championing in the 2026 spring session.

## LIHTC 101: THE BASICS OF LOW-INCOME HOUSING TAX CREDITS

### BROOKRIDGE

Jolyn Heun and Bernardo Rocha, Applegate & Thorne-Thomsen

The Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) is a federal tax incentive that subsidizes the acquisition, construction, and rehabilitation of affordable rental housing for low- and moderate-income tenants. Many kinds of rental buildings are eligible for LIHTC, including apartment buildings, single-family dwellings, townhouses, and duplexes. How are LIHTCs awarded? How is an eligible project structured? How are LIHTCs calculated? What type of compliance is needed? We'll cover all these questions and more.

## THAT WHICH KEEPS US GROUNDED

### IRONWOOD

Nick Dodson, Helping Hands of Springfield | Jalisa Holifield, Alliance to End Homelessness of Suburban Cook County | Elizabeth Pinder, HOPE Fair Housing | Armando Smith, Housing Forward | Carl Wolf, Respond Now

Even in the best of times, providing services is hard work—and when our programs are under constant threat with cuts and attacks on the foundations that drive our efforts, it can be overwhelming. Join us for an interactive, multi-generational discussion that invites participants to explore how we stay grounded amid uncertainty and injustice. Panelists will share the guiding visions, values, and sources of strength that help them stay committed and connected, even when the work is hard. Together, we'll reflect on what sustains us, the kind of communities we're building, and what keeps us moving forward on a daily basis. Come ready to listen, reflect, and participate.



# ABOUT US



Housing Action Illinois staff (2024)

Housing Action Illinois is a statewide coalition that has been leading the movement to end homelessness, address the shortage of affordable rental housing, and expand homeownership opportunities in Illinois for nearly 40 years. Our 200+ member organizations include housing counseling agencies, homeless service providers, developers of affordable housing, and policymakers. We bring everyone together to work toward our vision of an Illinois where everyone has a stable, good home.

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