



A stronger Illinois begins at home

HOUSING ACTION ILLINOIS
2026 General Membership Meeting
September 29, 2026
1:00 p.m. – 2:00 p.m.

Agenda

- I. Welcome & Introductions: Darsonya Switzer & Laura Olvera Yarza, Co-Chairs, and Sharon Legenza, Executive Director
- II. Adoption of 2025 Membership Meeting Minutes: Co-Chair Laura Olvera Yarza
- III. Election of Directors: Slate Presented by Sharon Legenza
For a 3-Year Term Beginning January 2027:
 - Jackie Newman, Springfield Housing Authority, Springfield
 - Darsonya Switzer, DOVE Inc., Decatur
 - Laura Olvera Yarza, Community Partners for Affordable Housing, Highland Park
 - Margaret Wooten, Reach CDC, Chicago
- IV. Recognition of Board Service
 - Sholanda Bedenfield Causey
 - Brigitta Mac-Rizzo
- V. Community Reinvestment Act: Presented by Horacio Mendez, Woodstock Institute,
- VI. Announcements: Sharon Legenza
- VII. Closing: Co-Chair Darsonya Switzer

*Scan the QR code in the program book or on the table tents
for Membership Meeting materials.*

HOUSING ACTION ILLINOIS
2025 General Membership Meeting
October 16, 2025
12:00 p.m. – 1:00 p.m.

Minutes

I. Welcome & Introductions

Sharon Legenza, Executive Director, welcomed members to Housing Action Illinois' annual membership meeting and invited attendees to scan the QR code to access the agenda and other meeting materials. Ms. Legenza then introduced Housing Action's Co-Chairs, Darsonya Switzer, Dove, Inc. and Laura Olvera Yarza, Community Partners for Affordable Housing.

Ms. Switzer called the meeting to order at 12:04 pm and announced Housing Action reaching its 200 membership goal, followed by a short video regarding Housing Action Illinois' work.

Ms. Switzer introduced Housing Action's board members, and Ms. Legenza introduced staff and thanked the conference sponsors

II. Adoption of 2024 Membership Meeting Minutes

A motion to approve the 2024 meeting minutes was made by Horacio Mendez, Woodstock Institute, and seconded by Cornell Lurie, Midland States Bank. The motion passed.

III. Election of Directors

John Herring, Chair of Housing Action's Board Development Committee, introduced the board slate (noted below) and asked for a motion to approve the slate as presented. Nick Dodson, Helping Hands of Springfield, made the motion, seconded by Laura Olvera Yarza, CPAH. The motion passed.

For a 3-Year Term Beginning January 2026:

- Paula Bush, North West Housing Partnership
- Kurt W. Kuyawa, Citizens Bank
- Sarah Leys, City of Rockford Community & Economic Development Department
- Brigitta Mac-Rizzo, Jackson County Housing Authority
- Jennifer Taff, DuPage and Chicago South Suburbs Habitat for Humanity

IV. In Memoriam: Bob Campbell, Zion Development

Ms. Legenza asked the membership for a moment of silence to honor Zion Development Executive Director and Housing Action board member, Bob Campbell. She briefly highlighted his long-time community development work in Rockford and beyond, and his numerous contributions to our collective mission to ensure everyone has a safe place to call home.

V. Recognition of Service

Ms. Olvera Yarza recognized Niccole Clements, PNC, for her many years of service on Housing Action's board. Ms. Clements promised that she would stay engaged despite leaving the board this year.

Ms. Olvera Yarza also recognized Jennifer Pallas, Senior Capacity Building Specialist, for her 10 year anniversary with Housing Action Illinois. She highlighted Ms. Pallas' excellent work to grow Housing Action's HUD Housing Counseling Intermediary Network. Capacity Building Director David Young also provided brief remarks regarding Ms. Pallas' contributions before Ms. Pallas herself addressed the membership.

VI. IL Community Reinvestment Act in Action

Ms. Legenza introduced Jane Doyle, Senior Regulatory Policy Associate at Woodstock Institute, and James Miller, Capacity Building Associate at Housing Action, who provided an overview of the federal and state Community Reinvestment Acts (CRAs). They discussed the policy advocacy and public education work the IL CRA Coalition, which is co-led by Woodstock and Housing Action, has been doing to make sure these critical laws are well implemented in Illinois. Mr. Miller also highlighted the IL CRA Relationship Building Toolkit, which was launched today at the conference.

VII. Announcements

Ms. Legenza thanked Ms. Doyle and Mr. Miller for the presentation. She also announced the 50/50 raffle that will happen during the evening's reception and provided conference-related updates.

VIII. Closing

Ms. Switzer asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. John S. Herring Sr., INCIL, made the motion, seconded by Shalonda Bedenfield, FHLBank Chicago. The motion passed.

2026 Board Slate Candidate - Brief Biographies

Dr. Jackie L. Newman is the Executive Director of the **Springfield Housing Authority (SHA)**, and is actively involved in many initiatives, including serving on the boards of Housing Action Illinois and United Way of Central Illinois, as the President of the Illinois Association of Housing Authorities (IAHA), a member of the Board of Governors for the National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials (NAHRO), and the immediate Past President of the Illinois National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials (ILNAHRO). Dr. Newman holds a Bachelor's degree in Management, a Master of Arts in Public Administration, and a Doctorate in Public Administration. She resides in Springfield with her husband of 30+ years, Roy, with whom she helped found Fresh Visions Community Church. She is active in Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Incorporated, and in various church ministries, as well as the gospel ministry group, Pastor Jerry Jones & The Fantastic Jones Family.

Laura Olvera Yarza is the Director of Counseling and Education for **Community Partners for Affordable Housing (CPAH)** in Lake County. Ms. Olvera Yarza oversees CPAH's education and counseling services and has the responsibility of educating and empowering future homebuyers to prepare for successful homeownership. She also works with current homeowners, providing Post-Purchase Counseling to offer guidance and assist them in sustaining their homeownership. Ms. Olvera Yarza joined CPAH in 2004 and is a HUD-Certified Housing Counselor.

Darsonya Switzer is the Chief Executive Officer of **DOVE, Inc.** in Decatur, Illinois. She assumed the role in June of 2022, but has been employed with DOVE for several years, having begun her career with the agency in 1999 as a Case Manager for the Homeward Bound Program, which is the Macon County Continuum of Care Coordinated Entry program. She also serves as the Chair of the Macon County Continuum of Care. Ms. Switzer is a mother of four daughters and the grandmother of fifteen. She and her husband, Ted, live in Mt. Zion, Illinois.

Margaret Wooten currently serves as Executive Vice President of **Reach CDC**, a Chicago-based Not For Profit community development corporation. Previously, she served as Vice President, Housing and Financial Empowerment, with 33 years of service in HUD housing counseling, at the Chicago Urban League. At the Chicago Urban League, she managed the day-to-day operations of the Housing and Financial Empowerment Center. She oversaw the program that provides free comprehensive housing counseling, including foreclosure, pre-foreclosure, first-time homebuyer, pre- and post-purchase, and rental counseling. Ms. Wooten is a certified housing counselor from the American Homeowner Education and Counseling Training Institute, as well as the NeighborWorks Training Institute for HUD. Previously, she served as a Social Worker for the City of East Orange, New Jersey Department of Public Welfare, as well as a paralegal for the law firm of Franklin and Crutcher. She received her formal education from Chicago State University.