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MAYOR EMANUEL ANNOUNCES NEW CITY DEPARTMENT FOCUSED ON HOUSING

Chicago Department of Housing Will Focus on Addressing City's Changing Housing Needs and Ensuring Affordable Housing in Every Neighborhood

Mayor Rahm Emanuel today proposed the Chicago Department of Housing, a new City department exclusively focused on supporting access to housing as a core component of all neighborhoods. The new department will implement Chicago's affordable housing strategies and create a long term institutional framework that addresses the unique and constantly-changing needs of housing.

"The Chicago Department of Housing will bring all of our work to make housing more affordable and accessible for all Chicagoans under one roof," Mayor Emanuel said. "Every resident of Chicago deserves a great place to call home, and this new department will give the City a specialized resource to ensure housing remains affordable for anyone who wants to live, work and raise a family in Chicago."

The new department will be responsible for implementing the strategy outlined in the next Five-Year Housing Plan. The Mayor will be calling on the Plan's Steering and Advisory committee to create a new and transformative vision for housing, and the new department will reflect that vision.

The department will allow the City to meet the market where it is in every neighborhood, partnering with developers to implement existing tools and create new strategies where needed. Each affordable housing project requires a unique stack of incentives, including land, financing, credits and affordability requirements to get across the finish line. The housing department will be a partner to the development and advocacy community to bring new solutions to the City's new challenges. The new department will also help the City continue to address its housing needs as Chicago's economy continues to strengthen, avoiding many issues seen in other major cities.

The Mayor's 2019 Budget will outline the structure and funding for the new department. The investment will include an increase in staffing and resources to achieve the department's strategic objectives.

The new department will support the recently-announced Opportunity Investment Fund to preserve existing affordable housing in gentrifying neighborhoods, help residents buy affordable homes built on vacant lots through the Building Affordable Neighborhood Homes program, and

collaborate to expand transit-oriented development to high ridership bus lines. These programs are among the wide array of tools the department will administrator to support housing citywide.

“The new housing department is a proactive step the City can take to ensure we have a dedicated resource, laser-focused on supporting access to housing across Chicago,” Department of Planning and Development Commission David Reifman said. “I look forward to working to build a new department that can innovate and strengthen Chicago’s policies to support affordability and address the city’s constantly changing housing needs.”

“I deeply believe that heart is where the home is, and Chicago is and should continue to be a welcoming home and heartbeat for everyone,” Sol A. Flores, Executive Director at La Casa Norte said. “I support the Mayor’s decision to establish a city department focused on housing development, affordability and policy, especially for those most vulnerable amongst us including homeless young people, seniors, people with disabilities and families. A department with a sharp focus on housing affordability and development would serve our neighborhoods well and therefore the city on continuing to be a welcoming place for all.”

Prior to 2009, the City had a separate Housing Department. In the City’s 2008 Budget the Departments of Housing and Planning were consolidated, creating a new department of Community Development. In 2011, departments were further consolidated, merging the Department of Community Development with the Department of Zoning and Land Use to establish the Department of Housing and Economic Development. In 2014, the department was renamed as the Department of Planning and Development.

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