

Kane County Workforce Housing Summit Seeks Solutions

Kane County this month hosted a summit on the critical issue of workforce housing, bringing together individuals from healthcare, real estate, staffing services, transportation, education and social service organizations.

The intent of the summit was to begin a discussion about how to develop affordable housing for working people in Kane County who want to live near the place they are employed.



“We want to ensure our workforce, not only for our government employees but also our teachers, nurses, librarians and our service workers, have the opportunity to work and live here in the community they support,” said Kane County Chair Corinne Pierog.

In Illinois, the Fair Market Rent for a two-bedroom apartment is \$1,186. In order to afford this level of rent, in addition to utilities that don’t exceed more than 30% of income on housing, a household has to earn \$3,953 monthly or \$47,434 annually. Statewide 34% of households are renters.

“Housing is a fundamental need and it’s a fundamental factor in a household’s economic prosperity, alongside their employment and earning potential,” said Scott Berger, Director of the Kane County Office of Community Reinvestment. “So, while these issues are separate, they are very much interconnected.”

During the summit, a series of panelists discussed the need and ability to provide workforce housing in Kane County and how to remove the barriers to increasing the stock of affordable housing options. The goal of many in attendance was to find a proactive approach to keeping people who work in the community, living in the community.

James Pawola took part in one of the panels. He is with the Kane County Regional Office of Education Equal Chance Program. “If somebody does not have shelter, which in my opinion is the number one most basic need, everything else just falls by the wayside,” said Pawola. “How can you be worried about work or how can you be focused on work if you are worried where you are going to sleep at night.”

According to the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP), the top industry sectors in Kane County include:

- Manufacturing
- Health Care
- Retail Trade
- Education
- Administration

After the summit Kane County board members met for a follow-up discussion and listened to remarks from the Midwest Administrator of HUD (Housing and Urban Development), Diane Shelley, who outlined federal funding the White House has promised to make available for workforce housing projects.

For more information on housing and workforce development contact the Kane County Officer of Community Reinvestment <https://www.countyofkane.org/pages/ocr.aspx> or the County Workforce Development Division at <https://www.countyofkane.org/WDD/Pages/Default.aspx>.

