

PRESS RELEASE



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Open Communities' multi-year HUD grant concludes, exposing housing discrimination and ongoing affordability crisis in Chicago's northern suburbs

Justice organization makes recommendations to prevent housing discrimination, further equal opportunities and create more welcoming communities

Winnetka, IL, August 13, 2014 – Open Communities has completed a three-year project to investigate and address discrimination against all persons protected under the Federal Fair Housing Act, including the underrepresented populations of immigrants, seniors, and the homeless in 16 of Chicago's northern suburbs.

Open Communities investigated discriminatory practices in housing markets (from Lincolnwood to Highwood to Park Ridge and areas in between) in order to ensure that all people have an equal opportunity to apply for and retain the housing of their choice. Work under the grant included discrimination complaint intake and investigation, fair housing education, a senior housing study, a focus group study on outsider perceptions of the North Shore, and a housing audit looking for patterns of discrimination in Open Communities' 16 community service area.

Open Communities findings include:

- Most municipal leaders verbally express support for diversity and fair housing laws; however, many local fair housing ordinances do not reflect this support.
- Although few African Americans lodged complaints with Open Communities, audit testing found that racial discrimination against blacks persists in the rental and ownership markets, but in ways that are not obvious to the community or to the home seekers.
- Few suburban officials either support or endorse affordable housing in their suburbs.

Based on the findings of the work completed under this grant, Open Communities has five (5) recommendations for municipalities and the real estate community: 1) Affirmatively advertise their communities as open; 2) Promote housing stock that is affordable to people with low and moderate incomes, with an eye to preserving and expanding rental housing as well as ownership options; 3) Encourage more public transportation, consulting with users about appropriate routes and schedules; 4) Address concerns about the comfort levels of new residents; and 5) Recruit people of color, immigrants, and people with disabilities to appointed or elected positions in local government.

Open Communities commends municipalities such as Niles, Northbrook and Morton Grove that requested fair housing training when presented with the fair housing audit findings. Open Communities also commends Evanston and Wilmette for requiring all landlords/realtors to provide home seekers a statement of the local fair housing law.

Open Communities urges communities to comply with the Affordable Housing Planning and Appeal Act to create at least 10% affordable housing in their communities because this action also affirmatively furthers fair housing. Deerfield, Lincolnwood, and Park Ridge did not submit affordable

housing plans to the state as required in 2005. These suburbs as well as Glencoe, Glenview, Highland Park, Kenilworth, Morton Grove, Northbrook, Northfield, Wilmette and Winnetka must submit updated plans by June 2015. Open Communities also strongly encourages Kenilworth and Winnetka to create Fair Housing Ordinances at the municipal level.

For more information and to view the complete executive summary of the report, please visit our website at http://open-communities.org/files/2327/File/Task_15_report_v5.pdf

You may also view a [1-page highlights page](#).

About Open Communities

Open Communities', formerly Interfaith Housing Center of the Northern Suburbs, is a nonprofit organization that advocates for fair and affordable housing in 16 northern suburbs of Chicago. Our mission is to educate, advocate and organize to promote just and inclusive communities in north suburban Chicago. We are a leading voice for housing, economic and social justice in north suburban Chicago, working to promote inclusive communities that are welcoming to all.

We work with current and prospective residents and local groups to promote economically and culturally diverse communities in north suburban Chicago. We provide fair and affordable housing counseling services, community education, advocacy, and organizing for welcoming communities.

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