

December 13, 2011

Cook County President Toni Preckwinkle
& Cook County Commissioners
118 N. Clark Street, Room 537
Chicago, IL 60602

Re: Cook County Vacant Building Ordinance

Dear President Preckwinkle & Commissioners:

I am writing to urge the Cook County Board to vote *yes* on the Vacant Building Ordinance. Falling property values, increasing levels of crime, difficulty in attracting new businesses and decreased property tax revenues are all putting tremendous financial pressures on governments throughout Cook County. There needs to be a consistent solution to address these issues across Cook County, especially for the municipalities that do not have vacant building regulations or data gathering systems.

The Cook County Vacant Building Ordinance provides a strong foundation for our policy leaders to address the unprecedented levels of vacant buildings by creating a common template to track, monitor and manage vacant properties throughout Cook County. A recent study by Neighborworks America estimates that a single foreclosed vacant property can cost municipalities up to \$30,000 for police and fire protection, clean-up of debris, court costs, unpaid water bills and in some cases demolition.

While the ordinance applies directly only to unincorporated Cook County, it allows municipalities within the County to *opt-in* to the regulation, registry and use of administrative hearings if they choose. The opt-in provision will allow municipalities the ability to enforce the maintenance and enclosure standards that banks have already agreed to. In addition, the Cook County Administrative Hearings Department will be available at the suburban courthouses for municipalities opting-in for adjudication, reducing lengthy and costly hearings for noncompliance. Finally, the ordinance will create a comprehensive vacant building registry for Cook County that will allow direct registration or a feed-in from municipalities with their own registry. All of this will help communities and their leaders deal with this unprecedented foreclosure crisis in a strategic manner.

I hope you will vote yes in support of the Vacant Building Ordinance.

Sincerely,



Sharon K. Legenza
Executive Director