

OUR CHICAGO

Our Chicago: Reclaiming Back of The Yards with affordable housing

By Kay Cesinger 

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Our Chicago
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CHICAGO (WLS) -- The Institute for Housing Studies at DePaul University reports that there are more than 40,000 vacant lots across Chicago, mostly on the South and West Sides.

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An initiative led by the Resurrection Project is transforming some of those properties to build affordable homes for working families.



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Recently, there was a ceremonial ribbon-cutting in the city's Back of the Yards neighborhood for two of 28 new homes planned for that community this year.

The initiative isn't only building homes, but it's helping families through the process of becoming homeowners.

"Reclaiming Back of the Yards is a community rooted home ownership campaign," says Kristen Komara, vice president of Full Circle Homes at the Resurrection Project. "It's part of the larger Reclaiming Chicago initiative where we are working to organize public and private investment."

Their partners United Power for Action and Justice are set to build 2,000 homes across the South and West sides of Chicago.

In addition to Back of the Yards, the initiative is also building in the Chicago Lawn, Roseland, North Lawndale, Washington Park and Woodlawn neighborhoods.

Nineteen homes have already been built and sold in Back of the Yards, with 28 more under construction. Citywide, 160 more are currently being built.



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Leonardo Garcia Lara is one of the people who has purchased a home in Back of the Yards. He says he started the home buying process on his own, but then he found The Resurrection Projects.

"They guided me step-by-step," Garcia Lara said. "I always had somebody assigned to me. Which if I had any questions, I could always call, send an email. If I had any concerns about anything, somebody was there to answer any questions that I had."

Komara explained that sustainable home ownership is just as important as affordability.

"One of the first things we're going to talk about is your home buying budget," Komara said, "The Resurrection Project can help buyers pay for down payment assistance that can cover the cost of closing costs. The governor last week just announced a new initiative, up to \$15,00 for down payment assistance. And we're also bringing in different types of resources, so we can make the homes in the Back of the Yards affordable to working families."

The homes are going to be sold for \$315,000, but Komara said that with the help of the resources, the mortgage for the buyer ends up closer to \$225,000.

Garcia Lara said his family members tell him his home is beautiful.

"It's pride in growing ourselves, growing our community. And making our community better. It means everything to me," Garcia Lara said.

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