



Metropolitan Planning Council

July 27, 2010

U.S. Senator Chris Dodd
448 Russell Building
Washington D.C., 20510

Dear Sen. Dodd:

Thank you for your leadership in introducing the Livable Communities Act (S 1619 and HR 4690) and for all your hard work advancing this promising legislation to support sustainable, economically vibrant, equitable communities.

Since 1934, the Metropolitan Planning Council (MPC) has been dedicated to shaping a more sustainable and prosperous greater Chicago region. As an independent, nonprofit, nonpartisan organization, MPC serves communities and residents by developing, promoting and implementing solutions for sound regional growth. MPC is a strong proponent of the Livable Communities Act and, along with the National Housing Conference, has proposed minor modifications to include incentives for employer engagement and Employer-Assisted Housing.

Employer-assisted housing is a proven strategy for building public-private partnerships in support of live-near-transit and live-near-work, key strategies that promote livable communities. Additionally, we find that the earlier communities engage employers in planning efforts, the more sustainable those plans tend to be. Why? Involving employers not only promotes effective coordination between housing, jobs and transportation policies and investments, but also more private sector support of catalytic public policies.

With this letter, our hope is to respond to your request -- at the conclusion of the June 9 Hearing in the Senate Banking Committee -- for examples of wise public investments that embody the Livability Principles, and how they leverage economic returns.

In addition to public investments such as roads, sewers and water infrastructure, strategic investments in housing can leverage private sector resources and leadership to help shape livable communities.

On behalf of MPC, I am writing to share the success of employer-assisted housing in Illinois and provide data and links that demonstrate its role in promoting livable communities. Illinois' employer-assisted housing programs, spurred by state incentives, have become a model for the nation, not only by helping 2,200 people afford housing costs, but also by helping achieve [location efficiency](#), financial literacy, [housing affordability in hot markets](#), [community revitalization](#), [public housing integration](#), [transit-oriented development](#), [live-near-work options](#), and more.

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For example, [CVS has announced an employer-assisted housing program](#) in the Chicago region to support the housing plans of local mayors, [local employers provided critical support for a redevelopment of dilapidated rental housing](#) in south suburban Riverdale, and [Loyola University Chicago helps employees live near campus or within a half mile of the train line to campus](#). In all cases, employer-assisted housing and participating employers have played a key role in advancing more livable communities.

Since 2000, the State of Illinois has provided tax credits and matching funds for EAH, which have led to more than 70 employer sign-ons. The state's \$2.3 million investment has leveraged \$8 million in employer expenditures, which amounts to \$400 million in home purchases.

As evidenced by this [summary of the University of Chicago program](#), EAH employees have reduced commutes and emissions, employers have more stable, productive employees, and communities benefit from households investing in the neighborhood. This versatile program has [proven successful for a range of employers](#) in different marketplaces and in urban, suburban, and rural areas.

Thank you again for your leadership in advancing livable communities.

Sincerely,



Robin Snyderman