



# CHICAGO JOURNAL

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## Public housing to get museum *Remembering the positives, negatives*

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File photo

The Jane Addams homes were demolished February of 2003, but one building remains and could house a new public housing museum.

in the museum, including the negatives.

In order to have the building donated, supporters must raise \$14 million for renovation and resources for programs by June 31, 2008. The original deadline was on Dec. 31, but it was extended by the CHA after the group was able to set up a Board of Directors, a Steering Committee and an Advisory Committee.

So far, they have been able to raise more than \$300,000 and have donation commitments from many others, Beverly said.

The Public Housing Museum has also garnered support from local politicians. Mayor Richard M. Daley, Rep. Danny Davis, Sen. Richard Durbin, Sen. Ricky Hendon and 2nd Ward Alderman Bob Fioretti, in whose ward it will be built, have all written letters of support for the museum.

Local universities, cultural institutions and state preservation agencies have endorsed the Public Housing Museum, and philanthropic, corporate and government agencies have pledged support for its development.

The National Public Housing Museum will be modeled after the similar Lower East Side Tenement Museum in New York, said Sunny Fischer, executive director of the Richard H. Driehaus Foundation and member of the board of directors and steering committee.

Fischer said the apartments within the building will be restored to show the actual stories of people who have lived in public housing.

"We hope to educate the public on what the issues are so somebody from two very different political perspectives could have the information to have a conversation about it," Fischer said. "We're also hoping it can become a place where we can discuss things like poverty and race, what a government's responsibility is to its citizens."

Besides the apartments, other exhibits and programs will take place in the museum. Fischer said the work of Harry Callahan, a well-known American photographer who did a lot of work in public housing, would be featured. She also mentioned the minutes taken from CHA board meetings have been revealing and would like to see them in the museum as well.

So far, the feedback has been mostly positive, Fischer said.

"People have voiced some concern, but I think that's just because they don't know what it's going to be," she said. "They think it's an eyesore, they just remember the bad stories about public housing, but I think once they see what a boon to the neighborhood this could be, that will change some minds."

Christopher Provenzano, executive director for the University Village Association, said his only concerns were that there was adequate planning for parking at the museum, and that the community input is listened to.

"From a conceptual standpoint, the UVA supports the museum and hopefully they'll move forward on it," he said.

Despite the vast amount of support, if the funding is not raised, the CHA will redevelop the building, said Bryan Zises, a CHA spokesman.

"We're in support of their efforts and if they're able to find the financing for it, we're happy to donate it," Zises said. "Otherwise, we're going to continue with our goal of affordable housing in a mixed-income community."

### NEAR WEST

Public housing has a long history in Chicago, dating back to the 1930s. The Jane Addams Homes has only one remaining building on the Near West Side, which may become the first National Public Housing Museum.

The Chicago Housing Authority promised to donate the building, located at 1322-24 W. Taylor, to CHA resident leaders who are interested in turning it into a museum, if the organizers are able to raise enough funding.

CHA residents have been talking about the creation of a Public Housing Museum since 1998, said Deverra Beverly, founding chair on the museum's board of directors and president of the Local Advisory Committee.

"There were a whole lot of things that happened in public housing that our children and our grandchildren don't know anything about," Beverly said. "We want to be able to talk about it all and we want it to be known what public housing was really like."

Although Beverly hopes to change the negative perceptions of public housing by featuring positive people who have come out of it, such as Ramsey Lewis, she said all elements of public housing will be

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