

# BUSINESS

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Tribune photo by E. Jason Wambsgans

The Park Boulevard development at 35th and State Streets is one of seven participating in a program aimed at jump-starting sales of homes that cost less than \$450,000. One of the incentives is a \$10,000 discount off the sale price, underwritten by the Partnership for New Communities fund.

## Chicago to home buyers: Find your place

By Susan Diesenhouse  
TRIBUNE REPORTER

The city is launching a campaign to lure skittish home buyers off the sidelines to purchase \$150,000 to \$450,000 homes in which the city has an investment.

"Everything is slowing down," Mayor Richard Daley said at a press conference Thursday announcing the Find Your Place in Chicago program. "You don't want [city-assisted development] to stall." The program will use a combination of price reductions, down-payment assistance and financial aid provided by the non-profit Partnership for New Communities, Harris Bank and private developers. Many developers are offering sales incentives that they will continue rather than finance new ones.

The city, while not putting in any new money, has organized the ef-

fort and is launching a marketing campaign to publicize existing city tax credits and price-reduction programs. The goal is to sell about 200 homes in 26 neighborhoods.

Much of the financial aid will go to buyers of about 100 homes at former public housing project sites being redeveloped through the Chicago Housing Authority's Plan for Transformation. The city already provides help for those buying homes in projects being developed with help from the Department of Housing.

All of the homes in the program have been built with city assistance, such as low-cost land sales, land leases, direct financial subsidies and federal or state tax credits funneled through the city. "We want Chicagoans to know that we have affordably priced housing in vibrant neighborhoods across the city and that this is a good time to

buy," housing commissioner Ellen Sahli said.

If the program can jump-start sales, it will help keep alive the Plan for Transformation, a public-private effort to create mixed-income enclaves on once-troubled public housing project sites, said Jonathan Fanton, president of the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, the single largest contributor of new funds for the mayor's sales effort.

The foundation ponied up half of the \$1 million in the Partnership for New Communities fund to give a \$10,000 discount to the first 100 buyers of units in seven Plan for Transformation developments. For those sales, Harris Bank will cover up to \$1,500 in closing costs on fixed-rate mortgages, Sahli said.

Parkside at Old Town, which has closed on the sale of 60 of the 270 units in Phase I, could be a benefi-

ciary since it put 30 units into the pool of 100.

"We hope this will kick-start sales," Parkside development manager Allison McDonald said.

Mitchell Newman, principal of Stratagem Builders LLC, will offer a month of free assessments for two basement condominiums at Lake Park Gateway II on the South Side, priced at \$199,000 each. But he's wary about the program's prospects.

"Other city marketing efforts have had good intentions but not been that effective," Newman said. "Most of all, what we really need is a database of qualified buyers that we can contact by e-mail."

Visit [FindYourPlaceInChicago.org](http://FindYourPlaceInChicago.org) or [ThePartnershipForNewCommunities.org](http://ThePartnershipForNewCommunities.org) for more information.

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