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Illinois Launches Third Cohort to Expand Affordable Housing Development

*Governor Pritzker's Affordability Agenda aims to make life more
affordable for working families by increasing housing supply*

CHICAGO – The Illinois Housing Development Authority (IHDA) and the Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) are thrilled to unveil the latest group participating in the Next Generation Capacity Building Initiative (Next Gen). As the nation faces an ongoing shortage of affordable housing, [Illinois needs to build more than 225,000 units over five years to meet growing demand](#). Next Gen is a flagship program designed to strengthen the pipeline of emerging affordable housing developers across the state and a crucial component of Governor Pritzker's Affordability Agenda.

“Here in Illinois, we’re taking bold steps to ensure that affordable, accessible housing is within reach of our working families,” **said Governor JB Pritzker**. “I’m pleased to congratulate the latest Next Gen cohort – a group of skilled multidisciplinary professionals working to address the housing shortage in rural and urban areas alike. As Illinois continues to build more opportunities for housing and development across the state, I applaud IHDA’s enduring commitment to this innovative program.”

Now in its third year, Next Gen will equip the new cohort of 16 participants with technical skills, industry access, and hands-on support to not only gain entry into affordable housing development but also compete in the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) program, the primary financing tool to build this type of rental housing nationwide. Since launching in 2024, Next Gen has helped participants advance eight real-world projects, building long-term development capacity in communities across Illinois.

“Through Next Gen, IHDA and LISC are opening doors for talented professionals who reflect the communities they serve and are committed to building high-quality, affordable homes,” **said Kristin Faust, Executive Director of IHDA**. “We are seeing participants move from ideas to viable development proposals, and that is exactly the outcome Illinois needs. By investing early in developer capacity, we are helping ensure

viable projects, responsible stewardship of public resources, and additional affordable housing opportunities in communities throughout the state.”

[Next Gen](#) educates participants on developmental team building, deal structuring, navigating IHDA programs, property management, and more, supported by dedicated coaching and industry networking. After program completion, alumni are eligible to apply for a pre-development loan to help cover early-stage costs such as site control and project design, expenses that often pose significant obstacles for new developers.

“As we enter the third cohort of Next Gen, we’re seeing the meaningful impact this program is having in communities across Illinois,” **said Meghan Harte, Senior Executive Director of LISC Illinois.** “Participants consistently tell us the experience makes the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit process clearer and more attainable. Alumni from earlier cohorts have taken critical first steps like positioning projects, building development teams and submitting applications for LIHTC funding. We’re excited to welcome a new group of leaders from across the state and support them as they advance affordable housing solutions in their communities.”

Next Gen was created as part of Illinois’ broader strategy to increase opportunity in affordable housing development. The program prioritizes applicants with geographic diversity, ensuring that rural, suburban, and urban communities alike benefit from affordable housing investment.

As outlined in the [proposed FY27 Budget](#), Governor Pritzker’s Affordability Agenda prioritizes an initiative to lower housing costs by making it easier and more cost-effective to build homes in Illinois. Building Up Illinois Developments—or BUILD—is a package of proposed legislative reforms, capital investment, and financial tools that will making it easier for developers to break ground on new housing and for Illinoisans to afford homes that meet their needs.

In addition to unlocking existing housing potential in communities across the state by legalizing more diverse types of housing, BUILD will:

- Allow developers to build more housing with fewer and more sensible parking requirements.
- Streamline the permitting process to give developers clear, predictable timelines for housing permit reviews and inspections.
- Allow developers to use a qualified third-party who follows all applicable local and state standards to sign off on permits when local delays occur – relieving pressure for local governments.
- Standardize impact fee practices, which increase predictability for developers while preserving local decision-making.

- Modernize outdated building codes to maintain resident safety, free up space for more housing, and drive down costs.

BUILD features \$250 million in capital investment and grants to drive development and make homeownership more attainable, including \$150 million administered by IHDA to support low- and middle-income housing construction (\$100 million) and provide down payment assistance for first-time homebuyers (\$50 million).

Programs like Next Gen and others that support developers will play an important role in making housing more affordable and more aligned with the needs of Illinois families—starting by building more of it.

Next Generation Capacity Building Initiative – Round Three Cohort

Cohort	Hometown
Greg Caffey	Alton
Mark Buford	Chicago
Jovan Crawford	Chicago
Eliseo Elizarraraz	Chicago
Marlan Hicks	Chicago
Andre Howard	Chicago
Steve Thomas	Chicago
Anthony White	Chicago
Gerald Williams	Chicago
Kara Wright	Chicago
Pal Patel	Lombard
Kyle Southard	Naperville
LaTorya Street	Oak Park
Irini Riggenback	Peoria
Cat Valdez Doyle	Rockford
Takeisha Baker	Waukegan

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About LISC

With residents and partners, LISC forges resilient and inclusive communities of opportunity across America—great places to live, work, visit, do business and raise families. Since 1979, LISC has invested \$1.54 billion in Illinois to build or rehab 36,700 affordable homes and apartments and develop 5.8 million square feet of retail, community, and educational space. LISC has an office in Chicago and program staff based in Chicago and Peoria. For more information, please visit lisc.org/Chicago and lisc.org/central-il.

About the Illinois Housing Development Authority

IHDA is a self-supporting and mission-driven state agency dedicated to financing the creation and preservation of affordable housing in Illinois. IHDA offers affordable mortgages and down payment assistance for homebuyers, provides financing for the development of affordable rental housing, and manages a variety of assistance programs to create communities where all Illinoisans can live, work, and thrive. Since it was established in 1967, IHDA has delivered more than \$29 billion in state, federal, and leveraged financing to make possible the purchase, development, or rehabilitation of 335,750 homes and apartments for low- and middle-income households. For more information on IHDA programs, visit www.ihda.org.