



I'm HOME Annual Conference 2023

"A Transformational Solution to the Nation's Affordable Housing Crisis"

Welcome: George McCarthy, President and CEO of the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy, opened the conference with a reflection and appreciation for all that had been accomplished over the past two decades since he helped to launch this Network from the Ford Foundation. He continued with remarks on the transition of the Network to the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy and how the Institute's expertise can help continue the success of I'm HOME.

The State of the Field

Chris Herbert, Managing Director of the Harvard Joint Center for Housing Studies, opened the conference sharing data on the drivers of the current affordable housing crisis in the nation, how this crisis expands the racial wealth divide, and the enduring role of manufactured housing (MH) in bridging the crisis in rural, suburban and even urban communities. He ended his presentation outlining four actions that are necessary to expand the stock of affordable housing that resonated in virtually every panel and presentation throughout the day:

1. **Educate consumers and public officials** about increased quality and aesthetic appeal of manufactured homes to overcome stigma
2. **Relax zoning regulations limiting siting of manufactured homes** in residential neighborhoods
3. **Ease the process for titling manufactured homes as real property** to enable use of lower-cost conventional financing
4. **Expand delivery channels**, like home financing and the homebuying experience, to increase availability of manufactured homes

The plenary panel that followed his presentation underscored how the combination of new policy initiatives, the focus on affordability, and technological advances are creating an unprecedented moment to strengthen the MH sector. Homeowners,

manufacturers, regulators, and community developers must work together to address the barriers that face owners of manufactured homes while also investing in innovations in finance, energy efficiency, policy and development to strengthen the field. We must disrupt to move ahead.

The Community Track

The Community Track began by investigating the “ownership question” as revealed by data provided by Lincoln Institute in terms of how much of the housing stock is owned by institutional investors and businesses vs. individual owners. Panelists underscored trends of consolidation and the need for transparency in land ownership while also advocating for “Right of First Refusal” and “Opportunity to Purchase” (OTP) policies for homeowners. This session was followed by two panels that focused on state policy which affirmed that: 1) Residents are effective lobbyists on their own behalf; 2) Homeowners must invite elected officials to visit communities to educate them and seek their support; 3) Empower residents to pass OTP laws and explain how resident ownership is a win/win; and 4) Financial and tax incentives are being met with increasing bi-partisan support as an alternative to subsidy.

The Community Track closed with a session on Personal Property Loans which affirmed the need for these loans through all channels, HUD FHA, Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, and bank portfolio loans. The panel focused on how essential it is to bring the power of federal government to improve the quality and numbers of these loans. FHA Title 1 needs to be “rehabbed” with standardized lease protections, electronic underwriting, and higher loan limits and they will perform as well as conventional mortgages.

The Fee Simple Track

The Fee Simple Track began by exploring how state and federal programs could be leveraged to build energy efficient homes. The new federal money, such as the 45L tax credit for eligible new or substantially reconstructed homes that meet ENERGY STAR or Department of Energy Zero Energy Ready Home (ZERH) program requirements, is incentivizing manufacturers to meet higher standards. While the HUD Code is out of date, the new ZERH standards can help make the quality case for skeptical zoning and planning officials. The key to getting buy-in for high standard state programs is to deeply understand the factory process and develop achievable standards. This session was followed with a review of “Effective Development Models” to fill the supply gap that currently exists for affordable homes. Recommendations included expanding

distribution networks with public, nonprofit and private actors and addressing zoning barriers through education and research underscoring the cost advantages of MH.

The Nonprofit Developer Roundtable described the role of social enterprises to build homes with support from state policymakers addressing the affordable housing crisis. Communities need holistic solutions to combine new homes with rehab and replacement strategies. This track ended with a session on MH Real Property Financing which was grounded on the evolution of “Duty to Serve” regulations to expand access to mortgage finance while seeking to educate appraisers to understand how technology advances in home construction increases value. Once again, all stakeholders need to understand how all aspects of this sector are changing—for the better.

The Plenary Speakers

- **Marion McFadden**, HUD Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for Community Planning and Development, affirmed that the PRICE Fund is truly a game changer, with the notice of funding opportunity (NOFO) to be released in 2023 and funding released in early 2024. MH titled as real estate is appreciating at the same rate as site-built housing. She said that advocates must play the local influence game with legislators to affirm MH as valuable real estate in their communities and address zoning issues to leverage this moment and ensure that MH is never a federal government “blind spot” again.
- **Marietta Rodriguez**, President and CEO of NeighborWorks America, announced that the I’m HOME Network has “expanded the universe of what is possible” to ensure that communities have access to the affordable housing they need to build security and stability. Everyone must continue to make a personal connection to neighbors and representatives because we “can’t stop now” to advance the policies to improve and expand this housing stock.

What is Next for the I’m HOME Network

1. **Build out state level strategies and engagement:** I’m HOME network wants to connect with practitioners and advocates to collect insights on state legislation or local ordinances. We are now connected with advocates in 15 states and want to grow this momentum. Please volunteer to be a state rep!
2. **Race to the Top:** the I’m HOME network is developing a resource to benchmark the sustainability/efficiency goals of leading MH manufacturers, driven by the push for Zero Energy Ready homes.

3. **Support better federal funding for personal property lending:** Our goal is to expand access to safe and affordable loans through updates to FHA's Title 1 program and Freddie Mac's proposal to buy personal property loans.
4. **Expand research and resources:** the LILP team will draft case studies, state level fact sheets, and conduct geospatial analysis research in support of our policy and practice priorities.
5. **Communications:** language around housing is getting more complicated, not less, as a result of technology and other influences. We need to focus on how the I'm HOME Network raises awareness of MH as part of the solution to affordable housing needs.

Event Evaluation Highlights

The event evaluation results indicate that participants found the conference valuable. Of participants who completed the evaluation, 70 percent were "extremely satisfied" and 30 percent were "very satisfied" with their in-person experience. Sessions across both tracks were rated highly for their effectiveness. Participants shared that they appreciated the opportunity to connect and hear from a diversity of experiences and perspectives.