

PRESS RELEASE

Interfaith Housing Center of the Northern Suburbs

620 Lincoln Avenue
Winnetka, IL 60093-2308

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT:

Margaret Feit Clarke, Director of Communications & Advocacy
847-501-3278, x 501 Fax: 847-501-5722 www.interfaithhousingcenter.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 19, 2008

Interfaith Housing Center Given Authority to Expand Foreclosure Prevention Role to Help Families Keep Their Homes *Certification from HUD comes as foreclosure rates in northern Cook County skyrocket*

Interfaith Housing Center of the Northern Suburbs, the area's premier advocate for fair and affordable housing, received approval March 13 from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to expand its ability to help homeowners avoid foreclosure and stay in their homes, a move that comes at a time when northern Cook County is experiencing a dramatic rise in foreclosure filings and many once-affordable smaller homes have been lost to "McMansions."

According to a recent report by the Woodstock Institute (www.woodstockinst.org), northern Cook County has had the largest growth of foreclosure filings in the Chicago metropolitan area with an increase of 67 percent from 2006 to 2007. Interfaith, which serves 16 north suburban communities, has seen its own foreclosure and predatory lending case load rise 350 percent between fiscal years 2003 and 2008.

"Foreclosures are the latest threat to diverse and affordable communities in the northern suburbs," said Interfaith's Executive Director Gail Schechter. "Interfaith's new certification gives us additional capabilities to broaden our outreach and our services as we seek to foster an open, stable, and healthy housing market during this difficult economic environment."

HUD's certification of Interfaith as a Housing Counseling Agency means that Interfaith is placed on an approved HUD referral list, and is qualified for additional HUD funding for its foreclosure prevention work. Interfaith is one of only two HUD-certified housing agencies in north suburban Cook County, and the only one to specialize in foreclosures caused by predatory lending.

Interfaith's expertise in foreclosures is particularly necessary in today's market. Although housing prices in this traditionally affluent sub-region have consistently risen beyond the inflation rate and certainly most incomes, with average sales price increases of 160% since 1994 to well over \$700,000, a substantial number of homeowners are increasingly over their heads in debt.

Typically, households in danger of foreclosure have been lower income older adults, people of color, and people with blemished credit. Given the national and local projections, the number of foreclosure filings in the northern suburbs is expected to continue to climb – and this against a backdrop of rental stock gone-condo and more affordable, smaller homes being demolished in favor of housing stock

that is increasingly unaffordable for fiscally-strapped households.

Interfaith's free foreclosure prevention service includes one-on-one mortgage counseling, assistance in re-negotiating loan terms, referral where necessary for legal assistance or low-cost government home improvement programs, and help obtaining deferment of payments for financial or medical reasons. Interfaith also works in collaboration with other housing counseling, government, and public policy advocates in the Chicago area, a role positively recognized by HUD.

Homeowners can contact Interfaith directly 847-501-5760, ihcns@interfaithhousingcenter.org or via a link on the HUD website www.hud.org or via a toll-free 800 number referral service. In this climate of rescue fraud and second tier predatory lending, troubled borrowers receive impartial, expert assistance.

Learn more about Interfaith's 35 years of service to Chicago's north suburban communities at www.interfaithhousingcenter.org. Interfaith Housing Center of the Northern Suburbs advocates for housing justice: educating about fair housing rights and affordable housing policies; assisting victims of foreclosure, predatory lending and housing discrimination; and matching persons seeking affordable housing with home owners who have an extra room in their home to rent through their free Homesharing service.

###