

IS CONSUMER EDUCATION ON HOUSING A PRIORITY IN OUR STATE?

Open memo

I have posted this memo to my website as a way to reach others who share my concern about the foreclosure problem facing our city and state. There could be lengthy debate about the underlying causes, but I feel sure all of us would agree that proving consumers with substantial information about financing issues in general and housing decisions specifically would be an effective way to slow the foreclosure rate.

We currently have NO plan in operation to prevent foreclosures. While our focus on law enforcement and debate about new legislation are necessary, they are REactive. Our housing situation continues to worsen. The recent tax assessment will create financial hardship for many and is likely to lead to some additional foreclosures. Our senior population will be hardest hit.

I have been urging the Mayor's office for several months to be PROactive: to find a way to reach a broad spectrum of consumers with a full range of home ownership education as a deterrent to financial hardship and/or foreclosure. In times such as these, it makes sense to utilize any and all resources to try to stabilize our neighborhoods.

I recently became aware that while we don't have public access cable there is a provision which allows the Mayor's office to use Channel 16 for programs beneficial to the public. In a recent meeting with Deputy Mayor Carolyn Coleman, I proposed the use of Channel 16 as an effective way to provide basic housing information to thousands of households. The Mayor's office would only need to say, "Yes, we're supportive of providing such programs." No red tape, no budget constraints, no meeting needs to be called. No consultants hired. There are NO obstacles to prevent such education from being made available immediately.

Proposal

A one year trial commitment of two weeks of housing related education every week on Channel 16. Home Ownership Matters would act as the facilitator, though not the exclusive resource for programming.

Goal

To provide consumers with broad education on such issues as credit, credit repair, home maintenance information, understanding contracts and disclosures, financing and refinancing pitfalls, and 50 other things they need to know, but have no available resource currently.

An early program would cover how to be sure you have the correct exemptions filed on your property and instructions on how to file and appeal of your tax assessment, if you feel you qualify.

Cost

The city would not incur any real dollar cost. The budget for Channel 16 is established and housing programming within the constraints of the time already allocated is NOT EXTRA. Programming is fluid and this simply becomes one of the regularly schedules programs. I have offered my services as a facilitator, educator, at no charge.

Implementation

McANA, President, Cathi Burton, recommended I meet directly with Channel 16's Ken Montgomery, which I did three weeks ago. He agrees that this is a very workable idea and could be in place quickly with endorsement from the Mayor's office. There is ample unused time and Ken is willing to work with HOM on formatting and production.

Note: I am currently scheduled to teach 18 hours of home ownership classes at J. Everett Light Career Center in Washington Township, starting in September, and a four hour class with the STAR program through St. Vincent's Hospital--a good basis for programming.

I feel sure most of you who receive this memo will agree that this is a win/win proposition. A win for the Mayor's office for being the source of valuable information. A win for consumers who need only turn on their television to get information they currently are not receiving, There is no better way to reach thousands of Indianapolis residents.

I have spoken to numerous organizations and individuals who have expressed support for such a program: McANA, City Councilman, Julia Carson's chief of staff, Curt Wiley, Pat Wachtel of Irwin Mortgage and countless others.

What can you do?

Make a phone call to express your support. Either to Carolyn Coleman at 327-2650 or directly to Mayor Peterson at 327-3601. Of course, you may call me with questions at (317)549-3918. Please SHARE this memo with others. We need to let the Mayor know where we stand on housing education. If this is a good idea, we need to do it immediately. If it's a bad idea, we need to IMMEDIATELY come up with another, better idea to reach thousands of Hoosiers.

Visit www.HomeOwnershipMatters.com

YES, WE CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE ! ! !

*Visit the website regularly. We are continually adding new material.

Knowledge is POWER. Get Some.