

Mike Higgins, LISC Peoria
309-676-5472 or mhiggins@lisc.org

Nonprofits tap \$1 million from AG foreclosure award to replace blighted land with new homes in East Bluff

Funding is part of \$3 million in settlement funds to address local housing woes

PEORIA (Dec. 15, 2016)—Residents still reeling from the foreclosure crisis are finally seeing progress take root in Peoria, as new houses and apartments replace abandoned properties, and economic development moves forward.

The latest signpost in this effort is in the East Bluff, where residents, nonprofits and public officials are celebrating the first in a series of newly constructed and rehabbed homes that target low-to-moderate-income buyers.

Funding for the project comes, in part, from the National Foreclosure Settlement—proceeds from a suit brought by state attorneys general against major financial institutions in the wake of the financial crisis. Illinois Attorney General Lisa Madigan awarded \$3 million of Illinois' \$70 million share of the settlement to a coalition of city and community leaders, led by the Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC), to support a long-term plan to attract fresh capital to struggling Peoria neighborhoods. Other financing comes from the Gilmore Foundation, OSF Healthcare, LISC and city of Peoria.

Those funds are now at work on Behrends Avenue. Six newly constructed homes will fill in what was previously vacant, blighted land, and an additional eight rehabbed homes are planned for the surrounding blocks. Because they are concentrated in a distressed area, the homes are expected to lift up nearby property values and contribute to improved safety and economic opportunity for residents—all while offering new homeownership options to families earning up to 150 percent of the area median income, or approximately \$105,000.

Prices for the newly built homes—two of which are completed—will likely top \$90,000. That is higher than average for East Bluff, but financial counseling and down payment assistance are available to qualified buyers. The rehabbed homes, which are yet-to-be completed, are appraised at \$50,000.

These new homes are part of broader work in the area that includes infrastructure improvements, like better lighting and street repairs, a neighborhood garden, public art, and a pocket park. A new 16-unit supportive housing project, which offers affordable rental units along with social services for homeless and disabled residents, opened nearby earlier this year, and an ongoing home repair/neighborhood improvement program has enhanced the streetscape with renovated porches, windows and doors.

“Today’s celebration is not about individual homes,” said Chris Plummer, program vice president for LISC, “but about ongoing improvements in the quality of life for this entire community. The goal is better housing, safer streets, stronger businesses and good jobs right here in the East Bluff. Each development project has a multiplying effect that helps drive economic gains for local residents.”

Plummer applauded the deep commitment of community organizations and city leaders to this effort. The homes are being developed by Peoria Citizens Committee for Economic Opportunity, Inc., a neighborhood nonprofit that has been working on behalf of low- and moderate-income residents for 50 years. A collaborative of community partners is also supporting this and other work in East Bluff. It includes Peoria Opportunities Foundation (POF), East Bluff Neighborhood Housing Services (EBNHS), METEC and Navicore Solutions.

About LISC

LISC equips struggling communities with the capital, program strategy and know-how to become places where people can thrive. It combines corporate, government and philanthropic resources to achieve sustainable change in the communities it serves. Since 1980, LISC has invested \$16 billion across the country to build or rehab 350,000 affordable homes and apartments and develop 55 million square feet of retail, community and educational space. For more, visit www.lisc.org.

In Peoria, LISC is working with residents, non-profit organizations, and local government to revitalize the South Side and East Bluff and improve the quality of life for neighborhood residents. www.lisc.org/peoria.