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Durbin says borrowers need help

By Ames Boykin | Daily Herald Staff



U.S. Sen. Dick Durbin Friday hosted a discussion in Rolling Meadows with housing advocates on his proposal to help stem the mortgage foreclosure crisis. Barbara Hyshaw of the Community and Economic Development Association of Cook County, center, and Rolling Meadows Mayor Ken Nelson attended.

Bob Chwedyk | Staff Photographer

U.S. Sen. Dick Durbin urged housing agencies to streamline services so homeowners facing foreclosure have a clearer path to help.

Confusion over knowing what to do or where they can seek services remains the biggest hurdle for homeowners, Durbin said Friday at a meeting with housing groups in Rolling Meadows.

Representatives of agencies serving suburban homeowners attended the brief discussion at the suburban DePaul University campus. Rolling Meadows Mayor Ken Nelson and state Sen. Dan Kotowski, a Park Ridge Democrat, were among attendees.

Homeowners who can't make their mortgage payments can log onto the Community and Economic Development Association of Cook County, or CEDA, Web site (www.cedaorg.net) and click on housing division for help. They also can call NeighborWorks America at (888) 995-HOPE.

Durbin is promoting legislation that would let federal judges work out agreements with lenders in bankruptcy court to help homeowners get a more affordable mortgage and thereby keep their homes.

Foreclosures will lead to lower property values, affecting more than just the individual homeowners, Durbin said.

"We're facing a housing crisis in America where we expect 2.2 million Americans to face foreclosure," Durbin said. "They will not only have personal misfortune but they will bring misfortune to their neighborhoods."

Many of these are suburban families, Durbin said, citing a Daily Herald series that ran this week outlining the extent of the problem.

Arlington Heights resident Alex Zivkoeich, 81, who sat near Durbin Friday, said he worries he could lose his condominium of nine years because he can't make his payments. His trucking business has gone under and he's left with mounting bills. He is working with CEDA and has received an extension.

Durbin said he finds it troubling to discover how few agencies are available to help. He cited the recent congressional approval of \$200 million to help expand housing counseling as a positive measure to aid homeowners.

People need advice to help them navigate the threat of losing their homes, he said.

Barbara Hyshaw, CEDA director of housing services, agreed there's confusion about what to do when the danger of foreclosure arises.

Homeowners don't understand that if they're one month late with their payments, it's harder to refinance, Hyshaw said.

"When we get to them, they're in a crisis situation, and they assume we can bail them out financially," she said.