

CHICAGO HOMES

SERVING CHICAGOLAND | SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 21, 2008 | SECTION 14

NW



Mary Umberger

Caveat renter on foreclosures

The tentacles of foreclosure reach out to renters too.

The National Multi-Housing Council, a trade association for the nation's biggest apartment landlords, usually can be found taking aim against the entrenched notion that every American ought to own a home, not rent one.

Now it's also waging battle with the "shadow market" of investors and other homeowners who can't sell their properties, so they're renting them out. Watch out, the council warns, in case that landlord gets into financial trouble and you find yourself residing in a foreclosure.

The trade group has produced a brochure that its members can offer would-be tenants, warning that nearly 40 percent of all foreclosures involve houses or condos that have been rented out by their owners, a statistic from RealtyTrac, a

foreclosure-data firm. The landlords' group warns that a tenant's security deposit might be at risk in the tumult, not to mention the possibility of being forced to move on short notice.

At about the same time, Chicago's Baird &

Tenants who are current in their rent are entitled to a 90-day notice.

Warner Real Estate has added a feature to its Web site, BairdWarner.com, that allows renters to search a database that promises to tell them whether their landlords are in foreclosure.

The Lawyers' Committee for Better Housing estimates that 2,500 families who rent in Chicago will be displaced by a landlord's foreclosure this year.

But a new law does give them some protections, according to Kathleen K. Clark, the group's executive director.

"If the tenant wasn't named as part of the foreclosure filing and is being taken into eviction court, they must be given 90 days notice," she said. "It's not a tremendous help, but it does give them a little bit of time."

It also provides that court records for a tenant who is evicted because of a landlord's foreclosure

PLEASE SEE **UMBERGER** » PAGE 2

Photo for the Tribune by Anthony Robert La Penna
Andrea Edwards and her family, including 4-year-old son, Jordan Collins Edwards, live in a home developed by the Resurrection Project that's not only affordable, but environmentally sound.

Affordably GREEN

By Chuck Greene
SPECIAL TO THE TRIBUNE

Andrea Collins-Edwards can't say she's ever been an environmental zealot. In fact, she and her husband, Brian, only really started thinking green in the last couple of years.

However, more than a month ago, their newfound interest in green living culminated in the purchase of their first home, a new single-family place with green features at Resurrection Homes in Chicago.

Now the couple can't fathom any other lifestyle. "We're just doing our part for the environment," said Angela Edwards, 37, a credit administrator with a bank. "When I go to the store, I'm more conscious about the things I buy, like paper bags, and how they should be disposed of. I read more about what's green and what's recyclable."

And with two kids, the youngest of whom is 4, she said it's reassuring to know her home is environmentally safe.

There are four more houses in the works at Resurrection Homes, developed by the Resurrection Project, in Chicago, though not all are "green," according to spokeswoman Catherine Ruffing. The group's portfolio also includes 12 affordable apartment buildings with plans for a 72 units of senior housing and a 45 unit in a family building, both adjacent to Alivio Medical Center at 24th Street and Western Avenue in Little Village.

The green homes market is expected to increase—green homes will represent up to 12 percent of all new homes by 2012, according to a recent survey for the National Association of Home Builders.

That's not surprising as awareness of green issues has been growing the last five or 10 years, said Cindy Holler, president of Mercy Housing Lakefront in Chicago, one of the largest national non-profit organizations dedicated to developing affordable housing. She sees the shift tied to rising gasoline and energy prices.

That's particularly true of low-income families, households whose incomes do not exceed 80 percent of the median income for

PLEASE SEE **GREEN** » PAGE 6

Tribune photo by Phil Velasquez
Angela and Peter Hurlock have more than 20 "green" features in their Chicago home.

» GREEN

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

the area, as determined by the Department of Housing and Urban Development, with adjustments for smaller and larger families. Lower-income families spend nearly 17 percent of their income on energy costs.

Adding to overall interest, Holler said, is that green technologies have improved. In the early days, green technologies were overdesigned, Holler said, and thus overly complicated.

"Most buildings didn't have janitors that were highly skilled enough [to operate the new systems], so there was sort of a disconnect between the design and practical usage of the technology," added Holler, whose organization developed The Malden Arms Apartments, a supportive housing property for formerly homeless adults in Uptown. Malden Arms is the first City of Chicago/Clinton Climate Initiative pilot, promoting the use of energy-efficient measures.

According to the National Association of Realtors, 40 percent of its members report that green building is important to their business and clients, while 87 percent believe it will be of even more interest a year from now, largely because of rising energy costs.

The NAR will launch a green designation program in November to better educate its members about energy-efficient and environmentally conscious housing.

One believer is Angela Hurlock, who has lived in a green two-flat in South Chicago for 1 1/2 years with her husband, Peter.

Hurlock, executive director of Chicago-based non-profit Claretian Associates, which has developed more than 130 affordable homes and apartments in South Chicago since 1991, said affordable green homes are particularly important in South Chicago.

"The history of South Chicago is one of steel mills, so it hasn't always been environmentally friendly, which has created more episodes of asthmatics and cancer, as well as tainted water and soil," Hurlock said.

The 30something Hurlocks



Tribune photos by Phil Velasquez

Neighbors of Angela and Peter Hurlock in South Chicago will enjoy the same energy benefits when construction of their sustainable home is complete.

have more than 20 green products in their \$235,000 home. Among the items is carpeting made from recycled ketchup bottles; structural insulated panels; and solar panels, which provide about a third of the energy for their home. "That's a huge savings," she added. For example, "while more traditional homes were paying \$300 to \$500 per month for heating bills during the coldest winter months, homes such as ours were averaging barely \$100 to \$150," she said.

Hurlock also makes the point that the price of the technology declines as usage grows. Her solar-panel system cost about \$16,000 five years ago, and it now runs closer to \$10,000. "That allows residents of such properties to do more things that make sense [in terms of making their home green]."

Enterprise Green Communities, a Columbia, Md.-based organization that provides financing, grants and technical assistance to developers and community groups to build affordable housing, found that green



"Green" features in the Hurlock's home include carpeting made from recycled ketchup bottles and solar panels.

homes can generate substantial savings from reduced energy and water use, and contribute to the better health of residents, said Trisha Miller, deputy director of the organization.

Enterprise has invested more than \$9 billion to help create more than 240,000 affordable homes nationwide. In Chicago, the totals are more than \$50 million for more than 1,300 affordable homes. Its local projects include The Margot & Harold Schiff Residences in the

Near North Side, Washington Park and Wentworth Commons Apartments, on the South and Far South Sides, respectively.

In 2004, Enterprise launched a national Green Communities initiative that aimed to transform the way affordable housing is designed and built. The idea was to provide grants, financing and technical assistance to help non-profit and for-profit developers, community development organizations and community

City provides 'big shoulders' to lean on

The mission of the Chicago Department of Housing is to enhance affordability by providing a range of housing options.

Since Mayor Richard M. Daley took office in 1989, Chicago has invested \$4 billion to facilitate 150,000 affordable homes and apartments.

It also is working with builders to use "green" techniques, says Molly Sullivan, department spokeswoman.

"Our developers have been very cognizant of the need" to use green materials, she said. Even in multifamily units, "the fewer energy-sapping devices the better," as it saves money in the long run.

City initiatives include:

- A framework to increase affordable-housing options through "Build, Preserve, Lead: A Housing Agenda for Chicago's Neighborhoods." It commits nearly \$1.9 billion to creating or preserving 48,000 units of affordable housing by year-end.

- The Chicago Housing Authority's Plan for Transformation has been

replacing public housing with mixed-income communities. These communities also seek to initiate economic development in their frequently depressed neighborhoods. Call the CHA at 312-742-8500.

- The city's 10-year Plan to End Homelessness aims to move from temporary shelters to permanent housing. Call the Department of Human Resources at 312-746-8545.

- The Senior Housing Plan, begun in 2006, calls for 4,000 new units by 2010. Since 1989, the city has helped support 7,134 units of affordable housing for independent elderly and those needing assistance. Call the Department of Senior Services at 312-744-5770.

- The city offers incentives for builders and homeowners who use green materials through the Green Homes Program. Builders may qualify for an expedited permit process through the program. Call the Department of Environment at 312-744-7606.

—Tribune staff

groups integrate environmentally friendly design into affordable housing projects.

Owners of existing homes also can improve the energy efficiency of their homes, Miller said, with projects such as window replacements, new appliances and insulation, as well as landscaping to take advantage of sun and shade.

It's worth noting that reduced utility costs increase the amount people can afford for rent or mortgage, said Walker Wells, director of the resource efficiency and sustainable communities program for Global Green USA.

For example, a typical green apartment will have electricity and gas costs of at 15 percent less than a standard project, a significant savings for a group that he says typically spends more

for utilities than for health care, education and higher-quality food.

"When money is spent on items that create value to the family, there's a net societal benefit."

Collins-Edwards said she and her husband paid \$195,000 for their home, and received a mortgage of about \$150,000. She said they obtained a number of subsidies through Enterprise, including from Chicago's City Mortgage Program, that helped drive down the cost of their home.

Jonathan Boyer, principal of Farr Associates in Chicago, which has designed several affordable and mixed-used projects in the area, said sustainable design is an opportunity to "rethink architecture. It demands a client that's willing to go outside the norm."