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**THE HOUSING AUTHORITY OF COOK COUNTY ANNOUNCES MAJOR
INVESTMENT IN PEOPLE & PROPERTIES WITH AFFORDABLE HOUSING
RENOVATIONS & SMOKE FREE POLICY**

Largest Public Housing Authority in Illinois to become 100% Smoke Free

(Cook County) – The Housing Authority of Cook County (HACC) today announced renovation plans for two high rise buildings, Armond King Apartments and Albert Goedke House, located in Skokie, Illinois. Officials also used the opportunity to underscore the importance of smoke-free residential properties by implementing a 100 percent smoke free policy at all 23 of its housing properties. Effective December 1, 2015, all HACC properties will transition to smoke-free environments and more than 3,500 HACC residents will have access to smoke-free living.

HACC Executive Director Richard Monocchio was joined by Cook County Board President Toni Preckwinkle, Congresswoman Jan Schakowsky, Village of Skokie Mayor George Van Dusen, Cook County Department of Health COO, Dr. Terry Mason, HACC staff and residents at the Armond King Apartments site in Skokie.

The HACC is investing more than \$25 million in the rehabilitation projects. The HOME Partnership program is one of the most utilized grants for filling these financing gaps. The Authority is in the process of rehabilitating two of its buildings containing a total of 201 units. The \$25 million undertaking would not have been possible without the more than \$3 million in HOME funds received from Cook County and the City of Evanston.

“I applaud the Housing Authority of Cook County for their vision in developing new residential options for our residents, and also for ensuring that the health of those residents will be protected by making these buildings smoke-free,” said President Preckwinkle. “These are the kinds of smart investments the HACC will continue to make under the leadership of Rich Monocchio and his staff.”

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Add One/
Goedke King No Smoke

HOME Partnership funds have been used in four HACC housing buildings with over 450 units of affordable housing for very low income seniors and disabled residents. Without HOME funds, these projects would not have happened and the buildings, built in the 1970s, would have outlived their useful life.

The HACC is also ensuring that the portfolio investments are preserved and also announced its Smoke Free policy. It is extremely costly to refurbish a unit or dwelling when there are traces of cigarette smoke or fire damage. Costs could easily total up to \$10,000 for one unit. Operationally, reduced maintenance costs and less resident turnover are achieved. Residents and their guests who have respiratory ailments, allergies, or other conditions relating to smoke are now able to breathe easier.

The rehabilitation plans for Goedke House and Armond King are perfect examples of investing in people and properties," said HACC Executive Director Richard Monocchio." "Smoke-free residential properties not only promote a healthy environment for the most vulnerable residents, seniors and children, but also a healthy bottom line for the HACC as owners and investors."

Since 2009, HUD has strongly encouraged Public Housing Agencies to adopt smoke-free buildings to protect the health of residents, and now urges federally assisted multifamily property owners to go smoke-free. The HACC is going beyond HUD's proposed rule to institute a smoke free housing policy by mandating that **all** of its properties are smoke free beginning on December 1, 2015.

"The HACC is proud to be a leader in implementing a smoke free policy throughout all of its family, senior and high rise public housing sites," said HACC Executive Director Richard Monocchio. "We are protecting the health of our families, and underscore the importance of the collaboration with the Cook County Department of Public Health (CCDPH). CCDPH is a true partner and has worked shoulder to shoulder with our staff and communities to educate, train and execute this life-saving program," he added.

Surveys were taken across 14 developments, and several questions were asked pertaining to smoke in the environment and the adoption of a smoke-free policy. The population was pulled from various diverse developments including the elderly, disabled, and family use. More than 50 percent of HACC residents completed the survey and of the surveys conducted, a majority of HACC residents support going smoke free.

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Add Two/
Goedke King No Smoke

In addition to providing access to smoke-free living to more than 1,900 units across suburban Cook County, expected health benefits include protecting over 1,800 people from exposure to secondhand smoke and over 550 quitting smoking.

This life saving achievement is the result of a year-long collaboration between HACC and CCDPH, and a shared dedication to improving the health and wellbeing of HACC residents.

“This is an example of how the places we live can support us in being healthy,” said CCDPH Chief Operating Officer Dr. Terry Mason, MD, FACS. “We are excited to have HACC as a Healthy HotSpot partner, taking the lead to promote smoke-free living in public housing in our jurisdiction.”

The Healthy HotSpot initiative led by CCDPH and funded in part by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, aims to build healthy places in suburban Cook County through community partnerships. Healthy HotSpot provided over 3,200 materials to support HACC’s implementation of smoke-free housing protections, including signs door hangers, magnets, and window clings.

Smoking is prohibited inside the public areas of the housing sites, which also includes the units. Smoking is permitted 25 feet from entrances, exits, windows that open or ventilation intakes.

The Housing Authority of Cook County is the largest housing authority in Illinois to transition all of its properties to smoke free buildings before the HUD deadline next year. The HACC manages and owns over 1,800 public housing units and 200 multifamily units

For more information about the Housing Authority of Cook County, please visit us at www.thehacc.org; www.facebook.com/theHACC or www.twitter.com/theHACCtweets.

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