



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Friday, September 27, 2024
Christian Belanger, Director of Press Relations and Research
Cook County Assessor's Office
312-603-5067 / Christian.Belanger@cookcountyil.gov

Assessor's Office Hosts "Advancing Latino Homeownership" Event

Recording of latest Racial Equity and Real Estate Conversation now available

For the latest installment in its ongoing Racial Equity and Real Estate series, the Cook County Assessor's Office hosted an event on "[Advancing Latino Homeownership](#)" this Wednesday, September 25.

Held at Northeastern Illinois University (NEIU), the program featured real estate professionals, elected officials and academic experts discussing the growth of homeownership in the Latino community, as well as remaining barriers to access and equity.

"These conversations are necessary to enact change and reform policy," said **Cook County Assessor Fritz Kaegi**. "This is our first in the series to focus on housing issues facing the Latino community in Chicagoland. We're pleased to host it during Hispanic Heritage Month, which is a time to honor and celebrate the contributions made by Latinos in our great country."

Dr. Katrina E. Bell-Jordan, President of NEIU, introduced the event, and Alderperson Jessie Fuentes (26th Ward) delivered the keynote address.

"I represent a community that has been resisting gentrification, but only hanging on by a thread," said Ald. Fuentes. "How do you combat a system of gentrification and displacement? How do you account for the trauma that it creates?"

In addition to a networking session, the event featured two panels. "Advancing Latino Homeownership: assessments, policy, gentrification, real estate" was moderated by **Hugo Balta**, Publisher of Illinois Latino News. Participants included Assessor Kaegi; **Norma Hernandez**, Illinois State Representative (77th District); **John Schlichtman**, DePaul University Professor and author of *Gentrifier*; **David Dominguez**, CEO of Chicago Realty; and **Gerardo Ravelo**, Home Purchase and Financial Empowerment Program Manager, The Resurrection Project.

"The challenges are there still. Communities still face barriers when it comes to language, the process – there's a culture where our community doesn't trust the banks," said Ravelo. "What I'm seeing are multiple generations, multiple families, coming together to pitch in so they can purchase that dream home."

"Our people are buying homes. For the age group of 18 to 24 in the western suburbs, 20.8% of Latinos own homes compared to our white counterparts at 11.8%. So our younger population has a higher rate of being homeowners than any other ethnic demographic," said Rep. Hernandez. "The farther out of the Chicago region that Latinos are moving to, the more likely they are to be homeowners."



The second panel, “Access and Barriers to Homeownership,” was moderated by **Laura Rodríguez Presa**, Senior Journalist at the Chicago Tribune. Panelists included **Jacqueline Pereda**, Berwyn Township Assessor; **Victoria Villalpando Weissman**, Deputy Communications Director in the Office of the Governor of Illinois; **Liza Irazoque**, Real Estate Broker, RE/MAX Premier and Government Affairs Director for NAHREP Chicago; and **Emilio Carrasquillo**, Program Manager with the Spanish Coalition for Housing.

“There are a lot of misconceptions in the home-buying process,” said Irazoque. “But I always say ‘knowledge is power.’ Sit down with someone you feel comfortable with, that will give you the guidance to purchase that home.”

A recording of the event is available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TdfmY3M8au4>.

Information about past Racial Equity and Real Estate Conversation events can be found at <https://www.cookcountyassessor.com/racial-equity-and-real-estate-conversations>.