

Governor J.B. Pritzker

State of Illinois
207 State House
Springfield, IL 62705

May 11, 2022

Dear Governor, Pritzker:

This letter is regarding the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) Interstate 80 capacity improvements project. We are tenants and citizens that have lived and rented property in the City of Joliet, under the Interstate 80 Des Plaines River Bridge.

We hosted a meeting last week at All Nations Church to discuss the proposed additional mitigation measures. The newly proposed mitigation measures were presented by the I-80 Outreach Team and IDOT prior to and during Community Partner Meeting #4. As tenants, we are reaching out to request that we also be considered for additional mitigation beyond the Uniform Relocation Act (URA). Currently, as presented in Community Partner Meeting #4, only owner-occupied individuals are entitled to a real estate tax mitigation benefit and the City of Joliet will be receiving \$3.5 Million dollars to apply towards community improvement projects. We are an environmental justice community, and we would like the Governor's assistance in identifying an equitable approach to ensure all impacted individuals (owner occupied, tenants and landlords) are considered for benefits beyond the URA, not solely the owner occupied.

During our meeting our group agreed that it is imperative that we are provided with options by IDOT. The tenant group is diverse, complex, and most importantly wants to be heard. Below please find the options that are being requested by IDOT:

Option #1: We understand that under URA we may be entitled to receive a 42-month rental differential payment. Because the range of monthly rents between occupants is so expansive and most tenants are on fixed incomes, we know that the 42-month rental differential under URA is insufficient. We are a group of elderly, disabled individuals and have no mechanism to increase our monthly gross income.

Example:

Current monthly rent is \$600.00 for a 3 bedroom/1 bath single family home within the impacted community

Replacement dwelling is: \$1,200, monthly rent for a comparable single-family home. We understand that the URA will supplement \$600 (rental differential) x 42 months = \$25,200.

The monies outlined in the example above allow us as tenants to either supplement our rent for 42 months or use the rental differential for a down payment on a replacement dwelling. The down payment will be insufficient to allow us to continue to pay \$600.00 per month due to the current real estate market and the lack of affordable housing. We are in a difficult situation,

once the 42 months has been expended, we can no longer afford to live in the replacement rental due to our fix income nor do we have a sufficient down payment to make our payments meet our \$600.00 per month budget (as outlined in the example above).

In the event a renter wishes to seek the path to home ownership, as in Option #1 we are asking that IDOT supplement the URA benefits with a down payment of \$30,000. This down payment assistance would be made available to those tenants who wish to become homeowners and can qualify for a home loan. We are requesting this amount as it is based on a home value of \$150,000 and a 20% down payment. We believe that the down payment assistance in combination with the URA benefit (used towards the down payment), monthly mortgage payments will be made more affordable and within reach of our monthly fixed incomes.

Option #2: We are requesting that IDOT work with the Housing Authority in a collaborative effort to identify methods that we as tenants can sign up for housing vouchers, Section 8. We understand that not all of us may qualify for Section 8 but we do know that the rental differential payment under the URA will possibly leave us homeless within 42 months. We need more affordable housing and more options for our future. We did not ask to relocate, and we are concerned about our lives beyond the 42 months.

Option #3: There is a need for low-income housing in these communities, we are asking that IDOT work with the City of Joliet and the Housing Authority to use either vacant land or houses that require rehabilitation to provide this type of housing. We wish to see more opportunities for rentable dwellings within our communities. We would like to see a row of townhomes or fully rehabbed housing available to our group. Many of us need to remain in Joliet due to proximity to family, doctors, and social service providers.

Overall, we are impacted tenants, on fixed incomes and are requesting that IDOT make considerations to mitigate for our impacts beyond the URA just as they are proposing to do for the owner occupied. We feel that the approach utilized by IDOT is currently inequitable and clearly does not address concerns they have heard from these communities and its members time after time. Why is IDOT not listening, why are they not treating everyone fairly? Why would they give \$3.5 Million to the City of Joliet and not take care of those who are truly impacted and having to move and fear for their futures and where they can afford to live.

Please help our communities and help us seek justice.

Sincerely,

The tenants living under the bridge

Attached is a list of tenant signatures