

Free workshops geared toward at-risk homeowners

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by Edgar Mendez



Delia Gonzalez, of Select Milwaukee, speaks to workshop participants.

Homeowners learned the ins and outs of the foreclosure process during a free workshop, the second held recently in Clarke Square. The series of seminars provides tips and resources to homeowners fearful of getting swept up in the current foreclosure crisis.

More than 25 Spanish-speaking homeowners spent their evening at Santa Fe Church, 1000 S. Layton Blvd., listening intently to a presentation detailing the foreclosure process from beginning to end, but more importantly, learning how to avoid it.

“As homeowners they still have options, regardless of how many months they are behind on the mortgage payments,” according to Delia Iris Gonzalez, homeowner preservation program manager for Select Milwaukee. Select Milwaukee, a non-profit, provides information and guidance to prospective homebuyers along with advice on avoiding foreclosure.

Gonzalez warned participants of scams intended to take advantage of vulnerable homeowners, desperate to save their homes. Gonzalez also addressed common misconceptions about people whose homes are foreclosed. “The truth is that the No. 1 reason for people losing their homes is loss of income due to unemployment,” Gonzalez said.

In Milwaukee there are currently 1,600 bank-owned foreclosure properties, 600 city-owned, and another 6,200 homes in the foreclosure pipeline, according to Maria Prioletta, redevelopment and special projects manager for the City of Milwaukee.

Gonzalez said there are 400-500 new filings each month. “Most people don’t reach out and do anything about it. We know that most of the help people reach out for is at the neighborhood level, so we’re working to close the gap between the agencies and the people who need help,” Gonzalez said.

The workshops, sponsored by the Healthy Neighborhoods Initiative, in collaboration with the City of Milwaukee, Layton Boulevard West Neighbors and other local agencies, were held across the city this spring. Call (414) for more information.