The problem we face. As housing costs in Chicago continue to rise and neighborhoods transition, mobile, well-to-do residents look westward hoping to find more affordable addresses. In these “new, hot neighborhoods,” developers create higher-priced, attractive new condos and lofts that steadily displace older family homes and long-time residents. The thousands of middle and lower income residents, especially families who need multi-bedroom residences, suddenly find themselves facing higher home prices, higher rents, and higher taxes. The trends in housing cost burden – the number of renters and homeowners who pay more than 30% of their income for housing – are staggering, especially in the areas Bickerdike serves. In 2013, 65% of all Humboldt Park renters and 70% of homeowners were spending more than 30% of their incomes on housing. Among families making less than $25,000 a year, housing costs are a burden for 94% of renters and 97% of owners. This makes safer, more vibrant neighborhoods less diverse and makes it impossible for longtime residents, who committed themselves to their community during hard times, to enjoy the benefits of growing safety and stability in good times.

Bickerdike brings stability for all. Every one of Bickerdike’s buildings, and every one of its residents, helps to anchor the stability of its block – a ripple effect that benefits whole neighborhoods. The DePaul Institute for Housing Studies reports that the demand for rental housing across all income groups—but especially among very low-income individuals and families—has steadily increased since the recession with 45% of Cook County households renting rather than owning their homes. To qualify for any Bickerdike apartment, a family must earn 60% or less of the area’s mean income. While half of residents are low-income families with children, elderly, disabled, or part time or minimum wage workers, half of Bickerdike residents are families supported by parents working in jobs that make living in Chicago desirable. They are the teachers’ aides and janitors in our neighborhood schools, the servers and bussers in our neighborhood restaurants, and the stockers and cashiers in our grocery and convenience stores. These hardworking men and women help make West Town, Humboldt Park, Logan Square, Hermosa and Avondale vibrant places to live. They deserve to be able to live in the neighborhoods they work in and enjoy the benefits they help to bring to some their neighborhoods. But without Bickerdike’s work to protect and provide family-scaled affordable housing, they simply can’t afford to.

Our work addresses an urgent need that began decades ago. Since 1967, Bickerdike Redevelopment Corporation has developed innovative and sustainable affordable housing for low- and moderate-income long-time residents of communities in Chicago’s near northwest side: West Town, Humboldt Park, Logan Square, Hermosa and Avondale. It’s a mission we’ve pursued for five decades. At a time when banks commonly refused home loans for specific low-income and racially segregated areas and absentee landlords did little to protect the well-being of their residents, Bickerdike invested in these areas by building new single-family homes that would be occupied by their owners. Gradually, this approach gave way to preserving and developing safe, affordable multi-family rental properties with family-sized apartments that people could depend on. The pursuit and protection of affordable, equitable housing that began in the 60s continues today.
Bickerdike doesn’t just build buildings, we build communities. During our 50-year history, Bickerdike has invested more than $353 million to construct or rehabilitate 1,646 affordable rental and for-sale properties in 345 buildings and has helped 151 families become home owners. Today, Bickerdike provides almost 1,100 high-quality, family-scaled, affordable apartments to approximately 3,200 residents. But the structures are only as important because of what they do for the people who live inside of them. When people can afford to stay in their homes, they can put energy into other life goals – family, career, education. Children can avoid the months of academic progress that research says is lost every time they move. Stability provides a regular consumer-base for businesses, allowing them to secure resources and invest with confidence. Most importantly, when long-term residents are secure in their homes, they become community-builders. With Bickerdike they get involved and take the kind of civic action that supports families, generates opportunity, and provides a powerful antidote to gang violence and a host of other social challenges.

Here’s how your investment helps us do this work. Your support helps us in real ways.

   Every dollar we raise is…
   …a dollar that helps us to buy a new building to rent at affordable rates…
   …a dollar we can invest in assisting already struggling families…
   …a dollar that makes it possible to renovate the home of an elderly resident…
   …a dollar that houses Chicago families and strengthens communities…
   …a dollar that keeps hard-working people in our communities.

When we look at our immediate needs as an organization, your support can make a difference today by:

Safeguarding and acquiring affordable housing: Bickerdike is doubling down on its efforts to protect and preserve family-friendly affordable housing in Humboldt Park, West Town and Logan Square while preparing to launch new projects in Avondale, Hermosa and beyond. We need capital to invest in land, buildings and in our organizational capacity.

Growing our expert staff: Bickerdike is staffing up to manage several huge housing preservation and new construction projects planned for the next 3-5 years we need specialized accounting expertise, visionary and detail-oriented housing developers, and compliance-savvy asset managers, who can all stay abreast of the ever-changing and complex obligations of our funding sources.

Building vibrant communities: An engaged community is a proud community; one where residents work hard to make their neighborhood safe, inclusive, and thriving - the kind of community we all deserve to live in. Building resident and community engagement is a high-touch, time-intensive job that requires skilled, passionate individuals who are committed to developing local leaders. Bickerdike stretches to serve more than 3,200 residents; your donations will fund more staff to nurture, educate, and engage residents - and their neighbors - in the communities we serve.

Making vital renovations: Now and over the next 24 months, more than 250 of our apartments – nearly one-quarter of our housing inventory – are scheduled for wear-and-tear renovations and updates. To do so we must secure financing and bear the costs of temporarily moving residents while their homes are improved. Our main offices in Humboldt Park are also in dire need of upgrades to energy-wasting mechanical systems and other obsolescences; rehabilitating this property will allow it to continue serving as a vibrant community asset.

Bickerdike and Chicago need your investment now. A donation to Bickerdike reduces housing hardship among your neighbors, secures families, encourages the growth of children, and reveals the hidden strengths of challenged communities. Your gift will not only help preserve and grow our residents’ hope for the future, it will help Chicago remain a city of richly diverse and stimulating neighborhoods for residents of all walks of life. We welcome your partnership.