



Entry Form 2017 Annual Awards for Program Excellence

Entry Deadline: Thursday, June 15, 2017, Midnight ET

Each entry must include a completed entry form. Please complete a form for each entry your HFA is submitting. The completed entry form will become the first page of your entry.

This form is a fillable PDF. Type your information into the entry form and save it as a PDF. Please do not write on or scan the entry form. **Questions: Call 202-624-7710 or email awards@ncsha.org.**

Entry Title: Enter your entry's title exactly as you wish it to be published on the NCSHA website and in the awards program.

Category:

Subcategory:

Entry Summary: A 15-word (max) summary of the program, project, or practice you are entering.

HFA:

HFA Staff Contact:

Phone:

Email:

Visual Aids:

Are you mailing to NCSHA 10 copies of any visual aids that cannot be included in your entry PDF? Yes No

Payment:

My HFA is mailing a check to NCSHA.
My HFA is emailing the credit card authorization form to awards@ncsha.org.

Introduction

In 2009, the value of almost every home in the nation was lower, sometimes significantly, than its value 12 months earlier. Today, this is still the reality for many homeowners in Illinois. In fact, the latest report by ATTOM Data Solutions, one of the nation's largest property databases, found that Illinois is second in the nation with 20 percent of all homeowners seriously underwater on their mortgage. With traditional lenders unable to step into this space, IHDA seized the opportunity to create a refinance product for borrowers owing more than their home is worth. IHDA's Homeownership, Finance and Marketing Departments analyzed the local market conditions and developed a product that would meet the needs of the vast majority of income-eligible homeowners in this situation. The data indicated that most borrowers were no more than \$50,000 underwater. Utilizing Hardest Hit Funds as the funding source, I-Refi was born.

I-Refi

I-Refi provides up to \$50,000 in forgivable assistance to reduce the amount still owed on the borrower's mortgage to a level that reflects the current value of the home. By right-sizing the mortgage, the borrower is able to immediately refinance into a 30-year, fixed-rate IHDA mortgage, lowering their interest rate and monthly payments in the process. The borrower erases their negative equity and begins rebuilding wealth. In order to qualify, the borrower must be current on their mortgage for the past 12 months and meet IHDA's income and credit requirements.

Launch of I-Refi

IHDA launched I-Refi in August 2016 via a marketing campaign comprised of the following:

- Held a press conference with Illinois' bipartisan Senate delegation;
- Created and distributed I-Refi marketing materials to our network of lenders, housing counseling agencies and other partners;
- Partnered with Fannie Mae for a direct mailing to all Fannie Mae clients with loan characteristics that aligned with eligibility requirements;
- Created a webpage dedicated to I-Refi on IHDA's website;
- Promoted the product heavily through social media; and
- Pitched and earned coverage in high profile media such as Crain's Chicago Business, Chicago Tribune, the Associated Press and a number of local media outlets.

Too Good to be True

Given the overwhelming need for a refinance product for underwater borrowers AND given the fact that I-Refi was the only product available in the marketplace for homeowners in this situation, we expected it would fly off the shelf. We were wrong.

At first we thought the low reservations were due to lack of outreach, so we lobbied our elected officials, the media and housing advocacy groups to promote the program again. They did and still we did not move the needle on reservations. So we went to the source.

We personally contacted the few homeowners who refinanced through I-Refi to see what obstacles they encountered and what, if anything, held them back from applying sooner. To our surprise, over and over again we discovered that no one had an issue with the program or the process, but rather the most common obstacle was believability. Almost every single borrower to a person said they hesitated before taking action because I-Refi simply seemed "too good to be true."

Now that we had evidence (in lieu of assumptions) as to why I-Refi applications were lagging in one of the most saturated underwater mortgage markets in the nation (pun intended), we needed to figure out a way how to legitimize the program AND how to reach the target audience.

Legitimization

Surveying our customers revealed two things: 1. The State of Illinois seal did not build confidence (given the state of our fiscal crisis) and 2. 3rd party validation carried weight. So we determined that the next marketing push would intentionally highlight that the program was funded through the U.S. Department of the Treasury and emphasize that the program was covered by Crain's Chicago Business and the Associated Press.

Reach

We did not have TV ad money for this campaign. Working with a modest budget, we needed a creative and innovative way to maximize reach at a minimal cost. We returned to our analytics. Our analysis involved a statewide study of historical mortgage origination values against the effects of the housing market devaluation to determine areas of the state where owners were most likely to owe more than their homes were worth. We narrowed this field by factoring in affluence, meaning we focused on communities that were stable but still waiting for property values to return to their pre-recession home levels. Eligibility for the refinance product requires the owner to be current on their mortgage and the correlation between community stability and homeowner stability is high. All of this analysis resulted in a prioritized list – by zipcode – of specific areas most likely to have homeowners who could benefit from our refinance product.

Now how do we reach them?

We were entering the winter season and historical mortgage origination numbers for IHDA lending products reveal that the general public is not actively buying, selling, rehabbing nor refinancing during the holiday season. In fact, they tend to hit the pause button on all things housing-related from Thanksgiving through the Super Bowl. We decided our marketing campaign would launch in early spring.

What do folks do, in Illinois, when the days are short, the temperature is cold and our kids are home from school? We go to the movies.

With spring breaks concentrated in March, we decided to explore an advertisement in geo-targeted movie theaters for the month of March. We reached out to National CineMedia (NCM) to seek a quote. NCM is the nation's largest movie theater advertising network, managing advertisements at chains such as AMC, Cinemark, Kerasotes, Regal, etc. In addition, we discovered they could produce the ad in-house and save us the cost of contracting out to a third party.

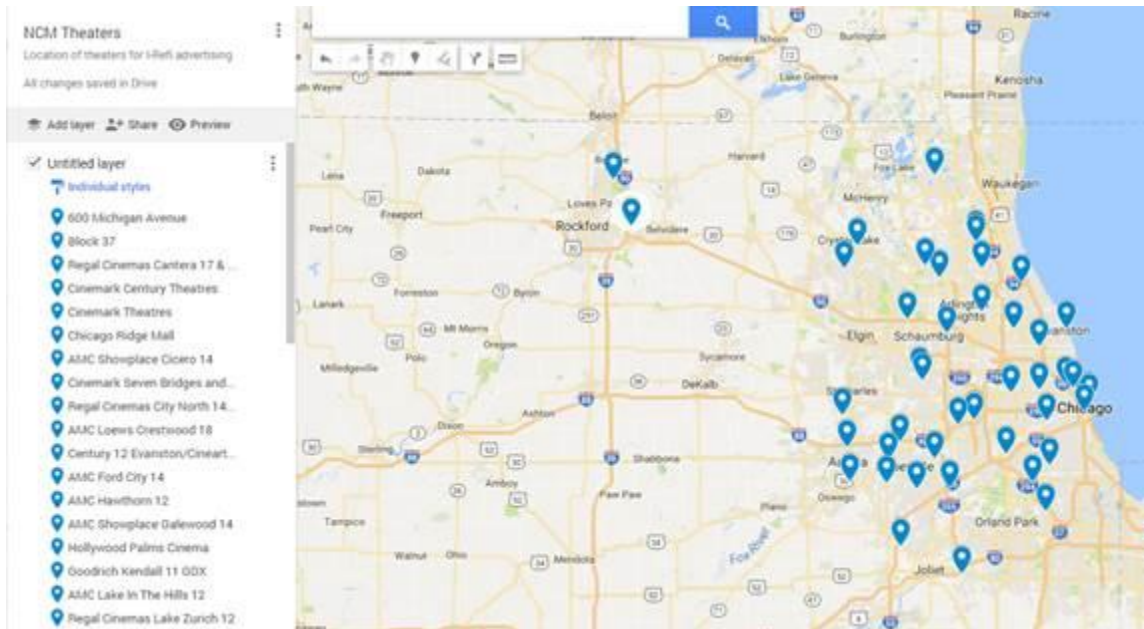
The total cost to produce and distribute the commercial to the theaters was \$34,000. Our return on investment analysis revealed that if IHDA realized 18 new loans via this marketing channel, the cost of this campaign would be covered. The risk level for IHDA was very low.

Campaign

Illinois Housing Development Authority
I-Refi Movie Theater Campaign
Communications – Creative Media

IHDA worked quickly with NCM and their film crew to produce a fifteen second spot that would air in 46 geo-targeted theaters in the zip codes identified. In all, our ad would be shown on 642 movie screens across Northern Illinois with a projected 1.6 million impressions during the month of March, coinciding with the majority of school spring breaks when there is a sharp increase in attendance.

I-Refi Theater Locations



To legitimize the program, we made it point to reference coverage from the Associated Press and the Chicago Tribune in the ad. In addition, we included the seals of the U.S. Treasury and State of Illinois to hammer home the fact that this was not “too good to be true.”

Conclusion

There is a lag time between a marketing campaign and conversion into actual loan reservations. But at only 10 weeks out, I-Refi has seen a **60% increase** in loan reservations. The campaign worked. It worked so well that we are exploring doing this again for other products. In the meantime... we'll see you at the movies!

Click the image below to view the commercial on YouTube:



I-REFI MOVIE THEATRES

Theater	Address	City	State	Zip Code	Screen
600 North Michigan 9	600 N MICHIGAN AVE	CHICAGO	IL	60611	9
Block 37**	108 N STATE ST	CHICAGO	IL	60602	11
Cantera 17 with RPX	28250 DIEHL RD	WARRENVILLE	IL	60555	17
Century @ Stratford Square	804 STRATFORD SQUARE	BLOOMINGDALE	IL	60108	16
Century 16 Deer Park	21600 W FIELD PKWY	DEER PARK	IL	60010	16
Chicago Ridge 6	500 CHICAGO RIDGE	CHICAGO RIDGE	IL	60415	6
Cicero 14	4779 W CERMAK RD	CICERO	IL	60804	14
Cinemark - Joliet	3340 MALL LOOP DR	JOLIET	IL	60431	14
Cinemark Melrose Park	1001 W NORTH AVE	MELROSE PARK	IL	60160	10
Cinemark Woodridge 17 with	6500 ROUTE 53	WOO	IL	60517	17
City North 14 with RPX	2600 N WESTERN AVE	CHICAGO	IL	60647	14
Crestwood 18	13221 RIVERCREST DR	CRESTWOOD	IL	60445	18
Evanston 18 with XD	1715 MAPLE AVE	EVANSTON	IL	60201	18
Ford City 14	7601 S CICERO AVE	CHICAGO	IL	60652	14
Galewood 14	5530 W HOMER ST	CHICAGO	IL	60639	14
Hawthorn 12	675 HAWTHORN CTR	VERNON HILLS	IL	60061	12
Hollywood Palms Cinema	352 S ROUTE 59	NAPERVILLE	IL	60540	7
Kendall 11	95 5TH ST	OSWEGO	IL	60543	10
Lake In The Hills 12	311 N RANDALL RD	LAKE IN THE HILLS	IL	60156	12
Lake Zurich 12	755 S RAND RD	LAKE ZURICH	IL	60047	12
Lincolnshire 15 with IMAX	300 PARKWAY DR	LINCOLNSHIRE	IL	60069	15
Naperville 16 with IMAX	2815 SHOWPLACE DR	NAPERVILLE	IL	60564	16
New Lenox 14 with IMAX	1320 W MAPLE ST	NEW LENOX	IL	60451	14
Niles 12 with IMAX	301 GOLF MILL CTR	NILES	IL	60714	12
Northbrook Court 14**	1525 LAKE COOK RD	NORTHBROOK	IL	60062	14
Oakbrook 12	100 OAKBROOK CTR	OAK BROOK	IL	60523	12
Oakbrook Center 4	300 OAKBROOK CTR	OAK BROOK	IL	60523	4
Picture Show @ Bloomingdale	324 W ARMY TRAIL RD	BLOOMINGDALE	IL	60108	6
Quarry 14 with IMAX	9201 W 63RD ST	HODGKINS	IL	60525	14
Randall 15 with IMAX	550 N RANDALL RD	BATAVIA	IL	60510	15
Randhurst Village 12 with ETX	200 RANDHURST VILLAGE	MOUNT	IL	60056	12
River East 21	322 E ILLINOIS ST	CHICAGO	IL	60611	21
Round Lake Beach 18	550 E ROLLINS RD	ROUND LAKE	IL	60073	18
Showplace 16	5000 NORTHWEST HWY	CRYSTAL LAKE	IL	60014	16
Showplace Bolingbrook 12	1221 W BOUGHTON RD	BOLINGBROOK	IL	60440	12
ShowPlace ICON at Roosevelt	150 W ROOSEVELT RD	CHICAGO	IL	60605	16
South Barrington 24 with IMAX	175 STUDIO DR	SOUTH	IL	60010	24
Streets Of Woodfield 20 with	601 N MARTINGALE RD	SCHAUMBURG	IL	60173	20
Tinseltown USA	320 S LINCOLNWAY	NORTH AURORA	IL	60542	17
Vernon Hills 8	555 LAKEVIEW PKWY	VERNON HILLS	IL	60061	8
Village Crossing 18 with IMAX	7000 CARPENTER RD	SKOKIE	IL	60077	18
Webster Place 11	1471 W WEBSTER AVE	CHICAGO	IL	60614	11
Woodridge 18	10000 WOODWARD AVE	WOODRIDGE	IL	60517	18
Yorktown 18 with IMAX**	80 YORKTOWN	LOMBARD	IL	60148	18
Machesney Park 14	1860 ANJALI WAY	MACHESNEY PARK	IL	61115	14
Rockford 16 with IMAX	8301 E STATE ST	ROCKFORD	IL	61108	16