

HOUSING STRATEGY FRAMEWORK

VISION Rockford envisions a vibrant and inclusive community where housing serves as a cornerstone for economic vitality, social equity, and quality of life. These outcomes will be achieved by creating a diverse range of housing options and coordinating government and private resources to ensure residents can live, work, and enjoy life in every neighborhood.

GOAL Create and preserve 6,000–9,000 housing units by 2035 to support and build on regional growth

STRATEGY #1

Make Rockford an attractive place to develop in to encourage new housing choices across the market

ACTIONS

- Engage local and regional developers through focus groups and check-in meetings to understand their needs and challenges and identify actionable next steps to help address them
- Support and expand interest in housing investment in Rockford by mission-aligned out-of-market developers by conducting targeted outreach and building new relationships
- Provide developers of affordable properties with a designated point of contact at the City that can help speed up local approvals and avoid delays that could result in financial challenges for the projects
- Combine HOME and CDBG funding with innovative financing approaches, such as TIF funding, tax rebates, and fee reductions to support housing development and redevelopment

STRATEGY #2

Apply tailored approaches to specific neighborhood contexts to ensure new development benefits existing and future residents

ACTIONS

- Create land use plans for the land around the 6th and 9th Street Conversion project and Southwest Railyard Transit Oriented Development project
- Where appropriate for the neighborhood context, revise and streamline code and development regulations to encourage a more diverse housing stock
- To the maximum feasible extent, focus new development in existing subdivisions with infrastructure in place
- Use TIFs strategically to support housing development and reinvestment
- Focus new housing development for seniors and people with disabilities in areas with high connectivity and access to essential services

STRATEGY #3**Strengthen neighborhoods by preserving existing housing stock and revitalizing vacant and abandoned properties****ACTIONS**

- Continue implementing the Land Bank/Trustee Program to make vacant and abandoned land available for development or other uses
- Provide funding for home rehabilitation programs for households with low, moderate, and middle incomes, including roof and window replacement
- Identify obsolete industrial sites suitable for adaptive reuse that could incorporate mixed use development
- Focus staff time and resources on encouraging full compliance with the Rental Registry and Vacant Land and Foreclosed Property Registry
- Implement the recently updated Rockford Historic Preservation Plan

STRATEGY #4**Strengthen capacity of cross-sector partners to support housing preservation and development****ACTIONS**

- Continue to work with members of the Public Sector Working Group to guide housing preservation and development on a range of shared projects, such as working with the Rockford Housing Authority (RHA) to facilitate a pathway to homeownership for RHA-assisted residents, and working with Region 1 Planning Council to identify opportunities to expand funding for the Land Bank
- Support community development financial organizations (CDFI) through funding and capacity building to enable them to secure additional funding and effectively allocate it for affordable housing rehabilitation projects
- Facilitate the growth and sustainability of community-based development organizations and other community-based organizations that can act as intermediaries between the community and developers; this will help ensure the communities' needs are addressed by new development and increase community acceptance of new development.
- Work in partnership with the Rockford Housing Authority and the Rockford Apartment Association to provide training and education opportunities for families and landlords participating in the Housing Choice Voucher program to expand families' housing options and ensure housing quality
- Continue to support workforce development programs and build capacity of local contractors to access city contracting opportunities

STRATEGY #5**Expand public education, communication, and advocacy to foster more support for housing programs, policies, and development****ACTIONS**

- Provide education opportunities for city council and the public to learn about fair housing, housing affordability challenges, barriers, and potential solutions (e.g., zoning reform)
- Ensure developers are aware of the full range of development opportunities and flexibilities built into Rockford's zoning and planning regulations and listen to stakeholder ideas for how to further improve them.
- Increase community engagement opportunities when conducting planning in neighborhoods and other focus areas and coordinate with neighborhood groups and associations to determine each area's needs and wants
- Promote safe, decent, and affordable rental housing in Rockford by supporting educational opportunities for landlords and tenants
- Create an annual report to share progress toward implementing Rockford's housing strategy and achieving its housing goals