


Housing all Rockfordians: A Discussion about Rockford's Housing Future

Thriving Communities Technical Assistance

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Introductions & Discussion Framework

Thriving Communities Technical Assistance (TA)

Jeff Lubell
Abt Global



Jordan Yin
Alabama A&M University



Laura Abernathy
National Housing Trust



What is the Thriving Communities TA Program?

- Funded by HUD, the Thriving Communities TA Program provides local governments with teams of experienced TA providers to:
 - Help ensure **housing needs** are considered as part of their larger infrastructure investment plans while supporting equitable development in disadvantaged communities
 - Support the **coordination and integration of transportation and housing** in infrastructure planning and implementation



City Goals Motivating the Thriving Communities TA



Identify **housing needs** and articulate a **housing strategy**



Create a **shared vision** for housing among elected officials, city staff across agencies, housing developers, and residents that is **feasible and implementable**



Advance residential development, including on the **City-owned green space** available near the 6th & 9th Street Two-Way Conversion



Discussion Objectives

- Review the current **housing context** in Rockford
- Share some **basic information** about housing markets and housing policy
- Discuss local housing **challenges and potential opportunities**
- Identify opportunities for an **ongoing conversation** about housing and its role in Rockford's future



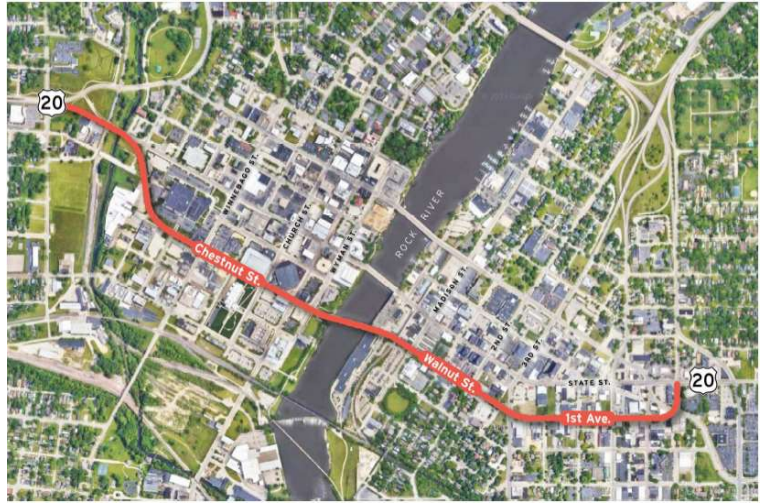
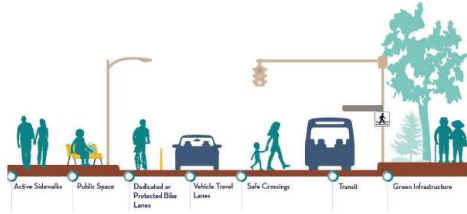
Housing Context in Rockford

Rockford Today

- Several **significant development projects** funded, approved, or underway
 - Downtown and Near Downtown Development
 - 6th & 9th St Two-Way Conversion Reconnecting Communities Grant
 - Downtown Rockford Complete Streets Revitalization RAISE Grant
- 2024 **Housing Needs Assessment** and Market Study



Downtown Rockford Complete Streets Revitalization



6th and 9th St Two-Way Conversion



Rockford Planning and Housing Documents

- 2040 Comprehensive Plan (2023)
- Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy (2019)
- 2020-2024 Consolidated Plan
- Downtown Strategic Action Plan



Housing Needs Assessment & Market Study

Key Takeaways

- On-going plans, policies, and programs are needed to address the **cost, quality, and suitability** of Rockford's existing housing stock
- Rockford needs to plan for more housing to meet the demand for **3,000 to 9,000 new housing units** over the next ten years
- Rockford will need to **increase housing production** by two to five times the current yearly rate to keep up with demand and maintain housing market stability
- A wide range of **housing development approaches** can encourage the development of additional housing units to meet the future needs of the community



Key Trends and Existing Housing Market Conditions

- Housing demand has increased in recent years
 - **Employment has grown** more quickly than housing
 - **Median rents are increasing** faster than average hourly earnings
 - The housing **vacancy rate has declined** appreciably
- According to the *Housing Needs Assessment and Market Study*, nearly **one-in three** of Rockford's households are **burdened by their housing costs** – including about 40% of renter households and 19% of homeowner households



Key Trends and Existing Housing Market Conditions (continued)

- The Rockford metropolitan area is projected to **add 3,400 or more new jobs over the next decade** and this may drive additional demand for housing within the city
- Projections suggest that **future population growth** could occur if Rockford provides more housing options for workers









Q&A

- Do you have any questions about the current housing context in Rockford?



Housing 101

A Well-Functioning Housing Market . . .

-  Has an adequate supply of housing available at different price points to ensure that households of all incomes can find housing that meets their needs
-  Includes different types of housing (such as rental and ownership and single-family and multifamily)
-  Provides stable, decent-quality housing to support the community's health and education goals
-  Provides housing for the workers needed to fuel the economy
-  Includes housing options that meet the needs of seniors, persons with disabilities, families with children, young adults, and other household types
-  Provides housing options close to jobs and public transit to allow households to reduce their energy use and transportation costs and reduce traffic congestion



Need for Public-Private Partnerships

- Most housing is produced by the private sector
- Ability of the private sector to produce housing depends on basic economics: rents or home prices need to be high enough to justify construction costs
- Local government action can change the economic calculus to make housing development more feasible. For example:
 - Use of publicly-owned land
 - Tax abatements
 - Zoning policies
 - Subsidies
 - Historic Tax Credits
 - Tax Increment Financing
- Subsidies are available from the federal and state governments to make housing development more feasible for those not well served by the private sector alone

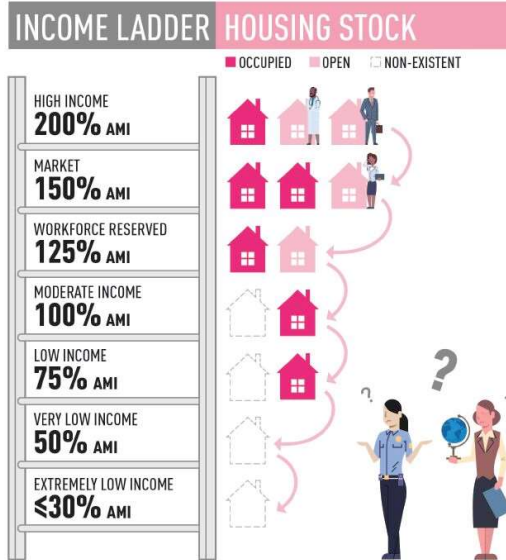


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**WHEN THERE
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COMPETES FOR
WHAT'S
AVAILABLE.**

- SIGHTLINE INSTITUTE



Housing Challenges and Opportunities

Existing Housing Challenges in Rockford

Needs Assessment Findings

- There is not enough housing to support the number of new jobs expected to be created in the community over the next five years
- There is not enough housing to meet the demand of entry-level workers and middle-income residents
- Related organizations could collaborate better to work on solving housing challenges in Rockford



Q&A

- **What do you think are Rockford's biggest housing challenges?**



Potential Housing Opportunities

- Build on momentum of Downtown and Near Downtown Development and improved connectivity through the Downtown Rockford Complete Streets Revitalization RAISE Grant to **attract more development to the downtown area**
- **Reimagine the 6th & 9th St Two-Way Conversion** and how the redeveloped land might strengthen the neighborhood through the recently-approved Reconnecting Communities Grant
- Capitalize on the recently completed Housing Needs Assessment and Market Study to **identify a vision and supporting policies** for increasing the overall supply and diversity of the housing stock in Rockford



Q&A

- **What is your vision for Rockford's future and how does housing play a role in it?**
- **What strengths can Rockford build on in shaping its future housing stock?**
- **What ideas do you have for making progress toward achieving these aspirations?**



Opportunities for an Ongoing Conversation

Opportunity to Develop a Shared Housing Vision

- **Align with Rockford's guiding principles** of *Leadership and Communication, Neighborhoods, and Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion*
- Engage all Rockford stakeholders to **better understand housing needs, challenges, and opportunities** and **define housing policy objectives** to address these needs
- Work toward building a **local housing strategy** that can provide a comprehensive approach to meeting the shared objectives



Moving from Vision to Strategy

- **What is a local housing strategy?** A local housing strategy comprehensively describes the approach a city, town, or county plans to take to meet its housing objectives.
- **Steps to develop a local housing strategy:**
 - Analyze housing needs
 - Define housing policy objectives
 - Develop a comprehensive approach to meeting these objectives
 - Identify funding sources and contingencies
 - Develop a plan for implementation
 - Establish numerical goals and milestones to track progress



Next Steps

- Opportunities for **ongoing City Council engagement**
 - Individual follow up meetings to discuss ward-specific challenges and opportunities
- Ongoing coordination with **public sector working group**
 - City of Rockford
 - R1 Planning Council
 - Rockford Housing Authority
- Forthcoming **working groups**



Timeline



Q&A

- **How would the City Council like to be engaged in these processes?**
- **What other next steps would the City Council like to see?**

