

City of Ithaca, New York

2019-2023 Consolidated Plan

Draft for Public Review



Prepared by Ithaca Urban Renewal Agency
4/18/2019



Executive Summary

ES-05 Executive Summary - 24 CFR 91.200(c), 91.220(b)

1. Introduction

The City of Ithaca has a valuable resource that many communities do not. As a HUD entitlement community, Ithaca receives HUD dollars to dedicate to affordable housing and other community development projects, with a focus on increasing opportunity for people with low-to moderate-incomes (LMI). In the past five years, this funding has helped Ithaca leverage other resources for new construction of affordable housing, both rental and homebuyer, like 210 Hancock Street; filled the gaps on qualified projects, such as the renovation of our local domestic violence shelter; and, in relatively unusual cases, provided the bulk amount for an entire project.

Ithaca is a busy small city -- a strong, regional employment center with two thriving institutions of higher education. People from across the region and the globe come to Ithaca for work, study, or both. In turn, Ithaca has become a vital hub with access to employment; educational and enrichment opportunities for people of all ages; exquisite natural areas and well-maintained green spaces proximate to City neighborhoods; and robust public facilities and public services that strengthen the quality of life for City residents. These characteristics and economic opportunities also put pressure on Ithaca's housing market, creating scarcity and unaffordability. Even as affordable rental and for-sale housing has been newly constructed or preserved through rehabilitation and repair (all prioritized activities in our previous Consolidated Plans), housing at every level of affordability continues to be voiced as a major need.

Purpose: This plan's purpose is to guide the next five years' use of HUD entitlement funding in the City of Ithaca. It is the City's fourth Consolidated Plan ("Con Plan"). Through the consolidated planning process, community members have given input about the housing and community development needs in Ithaca. Community leaders, committees, organizations, and subject-matter experts have been consulted. Quantitative data has been analyzed. Together, these sources of information create a comprehensive picture of the ways in which HUD funding could be deployed to help meet these needs. This plan discusses and prioritizes the needs that have been identified; evaluates past performance; surveys existing resources; and updates past goals. It outlines possibilities for future action and aligns these prospective actions with goals, to ensure we focus on meeting the community's most pressing needs.

2. Summary of the objectives and outcomes identified in the Plan Needs Assessment Overview

The Con Plan outlines goals that will be pursued over the next five years to address identified community needs. CDBG and HOME programs advance the following statutory objectives, for the principal benefit of low-and moderate-income households:

- Provide decent, safe, and affordable housing (CDBG)
- Create suitable living environments (CDBG)
- Expand economic opportunities (CDBG)
- Expand the supply of decent, safe, sanitary, and affordable housing (HOME)

The City has established the following local goals for this Con Plan period, which reflect the needs identified by the community and support the above-named statutory objectives.

Improve and Expand Affordable Housing Options

There continues to be an acute shortage of affordable housing in the City of Ithaca. The City's 2017 Assessment of Fair Housing found 53% of all City households were cost-burdened, with 36% severely so. (Source: American Community Survey 2010-2015). To address this need, the City will support projects that increase the total supply of affordable units of all types and the affordability of existing units, and will improve the condition of existing affordable units.

Develop Economic and Employment Opportunities

Ithaca is highly-educated community with a low unemployment rate. This creates a very difficult dynamic for low-and moderate-income community members who do not have specialized skills or advanced educational attainment. To address this need, the City will provide direct loans and support technical assistance to businesses to create jobs; support entrepreneurship training and technical assistance; and support initiatives that provide career-readiness training, job placement, skill development, and on-going post-placement support.

Remove Barriers to Opportunity

The opportunities of our community should be accessible to all its residents, regardless of residents' particular physical or socio-economic characteristics. Where barriers exist, they should be removed. To address this need, the City will seek to increase transportation options; will support residential and public physical accessibility improvements; support early childhood, senior, and homeless programming; and services to immigrants.

Strengthen Neighborhoods

For our City to thrive as a whole, each of its constituent parts must have the adequate resources and infrastructure to meet the needs of its residents and support their aspirations. To address this need, the City will support physical improvements to streets, parks, recreational facilities, public buildings, and transportation systems for the benefit of low- and moderate-income neighborhoods; support redevelopment of abandoned properties; and support programs that facilitate homeownership.

Meet Essential Needs for Food, Shelter, and Safety

Ithaca's most vulnerable, at-risk populations require public services and public facilities that will meet basic human needs for food, shelter, and safety. To address this need, the City will support

programs that prevent homelessness, improve access to health care, ensure safe living environments, and/or increase awareness and utilization of existing community resources in these areas.

Affirmatively Further Fair Housing

The City’s 2017 Assessment of Fair Housing (AFH) analyzed data in order to identify local factors that contribute to local fair housing issues and lack of access to opportunity. The AFH identifies seven fair housing goals, with associated timelines and milestones, to guide the City in promoting fair housing. The City will support projects which promote fair housing. Projects could include strategies to address displacement caused by gentrification, disparity in opportunity, housing problems (as defined by HUD), enforcement, or otherwise support fair housing.

Table 1 Priority Needs

2019 CONSOLIDATED PLAN PRIORITY NEEDS & ASSOCIATED GOALS (DRAFT)				
#	Code	Priority Need	Priority Level	Associated Goals
Code Key: AH = Affordable Housing ED = Economic Development FH = Fair Housing PF = Public Facilities PS = Public Services				
1	AH	Production of New Units	High	Improve & Expand Affordable Housing Options
2	AH	Tenant-Based Rental Assistance (TBRA)	High	Improve & Expand Affordable Housing Options
3	AH	Homeowner Rehab/Repairs	High	Improve & Expand Affordable Housing Options
5	AH	Accessibility Improvements	High	Improve & Expand Affordable Housing Options
6	AH	Transitional Housing	High	Improve & Expand Affordable Housing Options
7	AH	Permanent Supportive Housing	High	Improve & Expand Affordable Housing Options
8	AH	Emergency Shelter	High	Meet Essential Needs for Food, Shelter & Safety
9	AH	Affordable Homeownership	High	Improve & Expand Affordable Housing Options
10	AH	Rental Rehab/Energy Efficiency	High	Improve & Expand Affordable Housing Options
11	ED	Job Creation & Entrepreneurship	High	Develop Economic & Employment Opportunities; Remove Barriers to Opportunity
12	ED	Job Readiness & Placement	High	Develop Economic & Employment Opportunities
13	ED, AH	Childcare Centers	Low	Develop Economic & Employment Opportunities
14	FH	2017 AFH-Identified Goals for City of Ithaca	High	Affirmatively Further Fair Housing
15	PF	Public Facilities	High	Strengthen Neighborhoods
16	PF	Domestic Violence Shelter	Low	Meet Essential Needs for Food, Shelter & Safety
17	PF	Health Facilities	Low	Meet Essential Needs for Food, Shelter & Safety
18	PI	Blight Removal	High	Strengthen Neighborhoods
19	PI	Public Infrastructure	High	Strengthen Neighborhoods
20	PS	Information & Referral	High	Meet Essential Needs for Food, Shelter, and Safety
21	PS	Immigrant Services	High	Meet Essential Needs for Food, Shelter, and Safety
22	PS	Transportation Services	High	Remove Barriers to Opportunity
23	PS	Code Enforcement	High	Meet Essential Needs for Food, Shelter, & Safety
24	PS	Landlord/Tenant Counseling	High	Meet Essential Needs for Food, Shelter, & Safety

25	PS	Youth Services	Low	Meet Essential Needs for Food, Shelter, & Safety; Develop Economic & Employment Opportunities; Remove Barriers to Opportunity
26	PS	Homeless Services Day Programming	Low	Meet Essential Needs for Food, Shelter & Safety
27	PS	Senior Services	Low	Meet Essential Needs for Food, Shelter & Safety; Remove Barriers to Opportunity
28	PS	Mental Health & Substance Abuse Services	Low	Meet Essential Needs for Food, Shelter, & Safety
29	PS	Domestic Violence Services	Low	Meet Essential Needs for Food, Shelter, & Safety

3. Evaluation of past performance

The 2014-2018 Con Plan included specific objectives intended to address community needs identified during the planning process. These objectives and their associated outcomes *to date* appear in Table 2, below. Since the 2014 Con Plan’s final program year (2018-2019) runs concurrently with the creation of the 2019 Con Plan, outcomes continue to develop as the 2019 plan is created. As required by HUD, IURA documents all outcomes on a yearly basis in the report known as the “CAPER” (Consolidated Annual Performance Evaluation Report). Final outcomes for the 2014-2018 Con Plan cycle will be available in the 2018-2019 CAPER. Moreover, CAPERs for the previous Con Plan period may be accessed on the Ithaca Urban Renewal Agency’s website under the “Reports” link on the left-hand navigational bar. See www.ithacaura.org.

Some projects anticipated in the last Con Plan did not materialize. Others had longer timelines than anticipated due to their scale, complexity, or unanticipated barriers. For example, the 2015 Spencer Road Sidewalks project is just wrapping up as the 2019 Con Plan is developed. IURA Staff monitors all projects, and records results achieved into HUD’s Integrated Disbursement and Information System (IDIS).

Table 2, Past Performance of 2014 Con Plan Specific Objectives

Specific Objectives ¹	Performance Measure	Expected Units	Actual Units (as of 7/31/18) ²
Affordable Housing Objectives			
New construction - Rental housing	Assisted units	35	21
New construction - Homeowner ³	Assisted units	10	9
Repair or rehabilitation - Homeowner ⁴	Assisted households	250	168

¹ This table (Table 1) ties to the objectives identified in the 2014 Con Plan’s Strategic Plan Overview (SP-05) on pp. 74-75. Additional goals created through the Annual Action Plans are fully reported on in CAPERs.

² This column documents outcomes achieved by the end of the 2017 Program Year (and reported in the 2017 CAPER). The 2018-2019 Program Year is the fifth year of the 2014-2018 Consolidated Plan and concludes on 7/31/2019, at which time further outcomes will be available.

³ For-sale to homebuyers

⁴ Owner-occupied units

First-time homebuyers ⁵	Assisted households	5	1
Tenant-based rental assistance (TBRA)	Assisted Households	250	328
Transitional housing ⁶	Assisted beds	25	0
Economic Development Objectives			
Job creation or retention	Jobs	40	34 ⁷
Job readiness ⁸	Persons assisted	250	168
Job training & placement	Persons assisted	--	29 ⁹
Micro-enterprise assistance	Businesses assisted	3	13
Public Facilities & Infrastructure Objectives			
Improvements to Public Facilities	Beneficiaries (Persons)	5,026	30,720
Public Services Objectives			
Public Services that help meet essential needs for food, shelter, and safety	Persons assisted	2,925	2,317

4. Summary of citizen participation process and consultation process

The IURA conducted significant outreach and consultation with citizens, neighborhood groups, non-profits, and government agencies to determine community needs and establish Plan priorities. In accordance with the City's approved *Citizen Participation Plan*, outreach consisted of both meetings with neighborhood residents and consultations with professionals and practitioners in fields related to community development.

Criteria for selecting meeting places included convenience and accessibility to the neighborhoods served by the IURA. Meetings were advertised in accordance with the City's *Citizen Participation Plan*. Neighborhood Public Input meetings were held as follows:

1/17/2019, 6:00 p.m., Tompkins County Public Library, 101 E. Green Street

1/23/2019, 5:30 p.m., Greater Ithaca Activities Center, 301 W. Court Street

1/24/2019, 12:00 noon, Common Council Chambers, City Hall, 108 E. Green Street

⁵ Direct financial assistance, usually in the form of down payment assistance

⁶ Case management, a Public Service activity, was provided to individuals in transitional housing; however, no sponsor was identified for the creation of a new Public Facility to provide 25 beds of transitional housing.

⁷ Jobs created/retained under the "Expand Economic and Employment Opportunities" goal are outcomes of the CDBG Economic Development Loan Fund.

⁸ The objective "the provision of job readiness and/or job training with placement to 250 persons" has been divided into its component parts and outcomes are reported for "job readiness" and "job training and placement."

⁹ Jobs created/retained under the "Increase Physical and Economic Mobility" goal are associated with the job training and placement programs.

1/28/2019, 5:00 p.m., 2nd Floor Conference Room, City Hall, 108 E. Green Street

Further opportunities for the public to identify needs for the Con Plan to address were afforded through a presentation and discussion at the Continuum of Care's Homeless and Housing Task Force Meeting; a focus group with local affordable housing advocates; presentations and discussions at two meetings of City of Ithaca's Community Life Commission; and presentations with discussion at one meeting of the Tompkins County Legislature's Housing Subcommittee.

In addition to the outreach specified in the City's *Citizen Participation Plan*, postings were placed on the Human Services Coalition Listserv, which has a reach of over 3,000 subscribers, and the IURA website to encourage the public to attend input sessions and/or reach out directly to schedule individual comment sessions.

5. Summary of public comments

Comments received were grouped into the following categories.

Accessibility

- Remove architectural barriers in public places (Public Facilities)
- Remove architectural barriers in housing
- Promote increased use of universal design features in new construction for people with disabilities, for aging populations, and so people can age in place affordably
- Public restrooms needed, accessible to those with disabilities (Public Facilities)

Aging in Place

- Mini-Repair
- Homeowner Rehab
- Accessibility improvements/modifications (age-related disabilities)

Affordable Housing

- Increase availability at all income levels
- Affordable housing with supportive services needed for an array of special needs populations: recovery, reentry, exiting homelessness, and more.
- Increase availability/access to affordable housing through increased acceptance of Section 8 and other subsidies (landlord education/engagement)
- Housing "assistance cliff" (when a modest increase in income makes a household ineligible for financial assistance)
- Increase affordable homeownership opportunities
- Repair/rehab of Ithaca Housing Authority (IHA)-held properties

- Address housing conditions at housing sites to which people receiving Department of Social Services (DSS) housing shelter allowance are referred – poor conditions, no heat, vermin, unclean, etc.
- Examine process/remove barriers in home loan process that prevent otherwise qualified LMI individuals from being eligible for purchase
- *See comment in Health re: service to eradicate bed bugs*

Services and Coordination related to Housing

- Connect tenants with service providers to landlords willing to rent
- Support Rapid Rehousing goals
- Educate/outreach to landlords to accept tenants with any source of income (SOI)
- Service to help LMI people improve credit scores for better rental options and/or homeownership
- Eviction prevention
- Landlord/tenant counseling
- Safety net needed for individuals on Housing Choice Voucher list (housing burden issue)
- “Damages fund” available to Landlords who take a chance on tenant with high barriers
- “Landlord Liaison”-type service to help people access and retain housing

Childcare

- Increase opportunities for home-based childcare (Economic Development)
- Include compliant ground-floor units within affordable housing developments for seamless provision of home-based childcare (Affordable Housing, Economic Development)

Code Enforcement

- Understand how code enforcement relates to aiding access to affordable housing
- Promote ways to streamline, improve, etc., code enforcement, so it is systematic, timely, and promotes decent affordable housing
- *See comment in Affordable Housing re: housing conditions*

Displacement Due to Gentrification

- Preserve ability for LMI people to live in neighborhoods where they have long-standing connections
 - These neighborhoods provide access to Ithaca’s high opportunities (walkable access to education, employment, etc.) – fair housing issue
 - Preserve community and cultural fabric
- Increase homeownership opportunities for long-tenured residents
- Targeted economic development – by/for LMI residents
- Targeted Small Repair

- Targeted Homeowner Rehab
- Sponsor community conversation about displacement to find other solutions

Economic Development

- Microenterprise assistance
- Loans to businesses for job creation and other desired outcomes (local hiring, living wages)
- Loans, education, and training to LMI people wishing to start small businesses
- Help overcoming barriers to small business

Fair Housing

- Pursue City's AFH-identified Fair Housing Goals (7)
 - Source of Income Protection
 - Strategies to prevent displacement due to gentrification
- Local enforcement is needed (funding for, designation of local entity)

Health

- Opioid Crisis
 - Access to treatment
 - Adequate treatment facilities/centers
 - Housing for those in treatment
 - Housing for those in recovery
 - Low-barrier shelter
- Service to eradicate bed bugs

Homelessness

- Low-barrier shelter for homeless people with multiple barriers preventing access to housing (Southwest Park)
- Services for homeless people with multiple barriers in encampments e.g. Southwest Park
- Increase funding for Homeless Outreach staff (current focus is supposed to be the Commons, but staff need to go to many locations)
- Pathway to permanent housing for homeless people with high barriers
- Low-barrier/high-tolerance shelter (for people who are using and/or may be ineligible for services from DSS)
- Youth shelter (specify ages)
 - Youth under 18 can't be served by adult shelter
- *See comment in Affordable Housing re: housing conditions*

Job Training Programs

- Programs that reach people with barriers to employment are necessary.

- Programs that build in flexibility are beneficial, so participants can address other life issues that create employment barriers.
- Promote training programs to trades and other professions that provide sustainable living wage
- Employee-Assistance (EAP)-type program for people in job training programs to provide needed support during times of crisis, aid in retention, promote employability

Landlord/Tenant

- Landlord-tenant counseling, services, workshops
- Services directed to tenants in need of eviction-prevention or other assistance
- Landlord training and “licensing” class

Planning Process (Con Plan and Action Plan)

- Process is flawed. Some applicants are funded year after year, which dissuades others from applying.
- There is a lack of people of color or independent people receiving grants

Public Art

- Ithaca needs public art built by and reflective of the community that made it

Public Facilities

- Playground for lower West Hill neighborhood
- Basketball Court for lower West Hill neighborhood
- Public restrooms that are accessible (i.e., on the Commons)
- Low-barrier shelter
- Youth shelter
- Aid for eligible public facilities identified in Southside Plan (i.e., park lighting)
- Acoustics improvement at Southside Community Center’s gym

Public Housing

- Funding to assist Ithaca Housing Authority with needed repair and maintenance

Transportation

- More affordable transportation options needed to address housing affordability/transportation mismatch (i.e., much affordable housing is within the County, not the City, but there is inadequate transportation to get to jobs from these affordable locations).
- “B” and “C” shift options/emergency ride homes
- Employer-assisted or employer flexibility of start times needed to address limited transportation
- Promote ability for children to participate in after-school activities (i.e. West Hill/Cayuga Heights)

- Promote ability for parents to attend teacher conferences

6. Summary of comments or views not accepted and the reasons for not accepting them

All comments were accepted and considered in the preparation of this Consolidated Plan.

7. Summary

The 2019-2023 Con Plan aims to address our community's priority needs with the entitlement funds HUD makes available on a yearly basis. Members of the public, community organizations, practitioners in community development fields, and others were engaged and consulted in the making of this plan. Technical assistance is available throughout the year for individuals and organizations seeking to develop projects to address priority needs, in order to be ready to apply for Action Plan funding. Contact Anisa Mendizabal, Community Development Planner, Ithaca Urban Renewal Agency at amendizabal@cityofithaca.org or (607) 274-6553.