

VII. STRATEGIC PLAN

A. OVERVIEW OF CONSOLIDATED PLAN NATIONAL GOALS

The goals of the Rockford Consolidated Plan are to provide decent housing, provide a suitable living environment and expand economic opportunities for its low- and moderate-income residents. The DCD strives to accomplish these goals by effectively maximizing and utilizing all available funding resources to conduct housing and community development activities that will serve the economically disadvantaged residents and participating communities of the city. By addressing need and creating opportunity at the individual and neighborhood levels, the DCD and the participating communities hope to improve the quality of life for all residents of the city. These goals are further explained as follows:

- *Provide decent housing* by helping homeless persons obtain appropriate housing and assisting those at risk of homelessness; preserving the affordable housing stock; increasing availability of permanent housing that is affordable to low- and moderate-income persons without discrimination; and increasing the supply of supportive housing.
- *Provide a suitable living environment* by improving the safety and livability of neighborhoods; increasing access to quality facilities and services; and reducing the isolation of income groups within an area through de-concentration of low-income housing opportunities.
- *Expand economic opportunities* by creating jobs accessible to low- and moderate-income persons; making mortgage financing available for low- and moderate-income persons at reasonable rates; providing access to credit for development activities that promote long-term economic and social viability of the community; and empowering low-income persons to achieve self-sufficiency to reduce generational poverty in federally assisted and public housing.

B. CONTEXT IN WHICH ACTIVITIES WILL BE CONDUCTED

PRINCIPLES GUIDING THE STRATEGIC PLAN

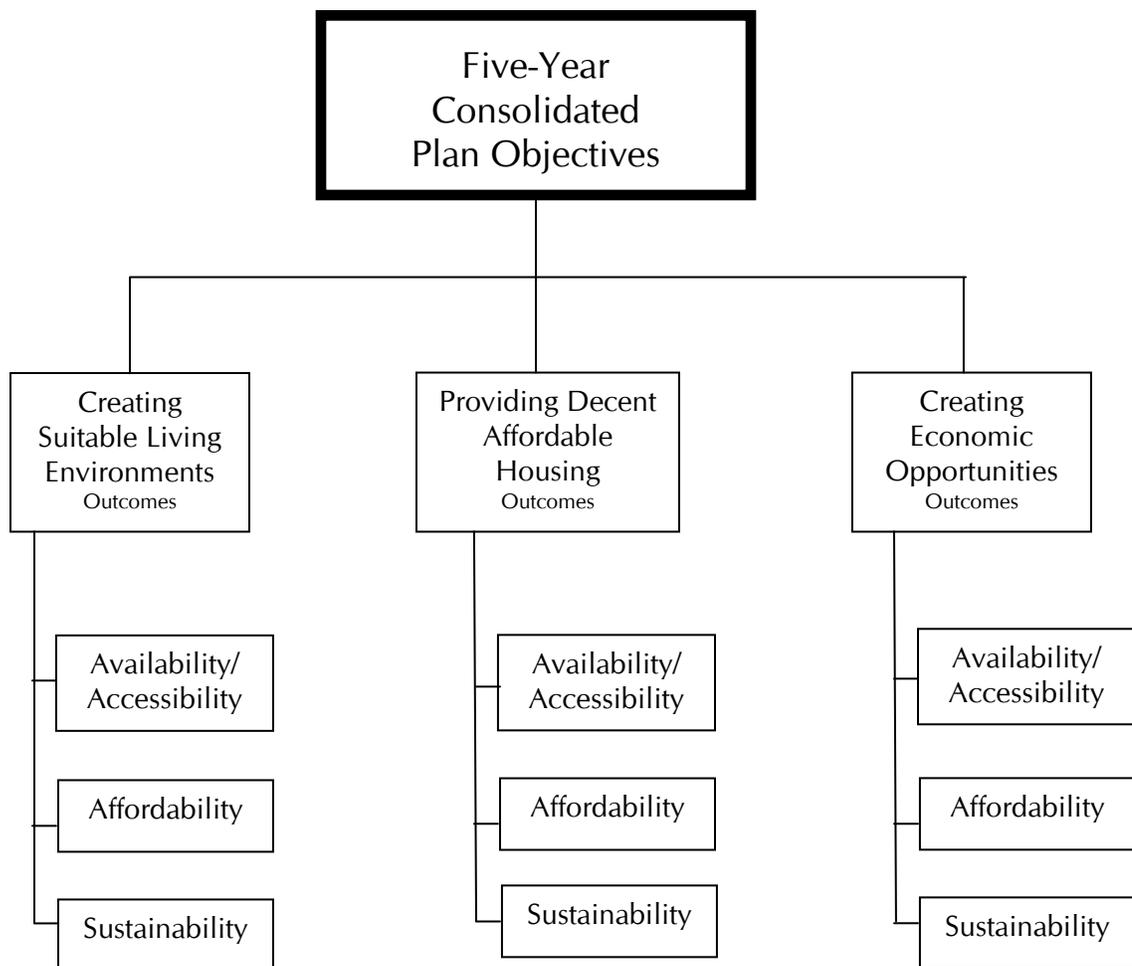
The city of Rockford recognizes that to be successful in the implementation of housing and community development activities, efforts must be efficient and fruitful. Unfortunately, the City does not have sufficient resources in its CDBG, HOME or ESG programs to properly address all needs identified in the city. The City is therefore utilizing several guiding principles for its five-year strategic plan. These principles are as follows:

1. Concentrate efforts on a limited number of areas and activities, so that those resources that are utilized will have the greatest lasting and noticeable effect;

2. Support activities that build upon existing housing and community development infrastructure and provide for on-going maintenance;
3. Implement strategies with sustainable long-term impacts, such as cost-effective rehabilitation and redevelopment that complements surrounding properties;
4. Seek opportunities to form partnerships with other agencies within the city, county or state, generating beneficial activities for the entire city;
5. Explore opportunities to leverage resources with other private, nonprofit, and government agencies so the City's limited resources have the greatest possible net effect.

PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT CRITERIA

The results of the City's resource expenditures will be in terms that are quantifiable; in terms that are measurable and were originally cited as a goal. These objectives, and their outcomes, are best illustrated in the following diagram:



Upon review of all data compiled and analyzed, as well as the qualitative and quantitative research findings as presented in the Consolidated Plan, the city of Rockford has identified and formulated the following strategies and goals for the Rockford Five-Year Consolidated Plan for Housing and Community Development.

C. STRATEGIES GOALS OF ROCKFORD CONSOLIDATED PLAN

The following present the overriding strategies and goals of the Rockford Five-Year Consolidated Plan for Housing and Community Development, including selected performance criteria associated with each goal and strategy.

The objectives the City will pursue over the next five years are as follows:

1. Reduce housing blight and blighting influences.
2. Increase redevelopment activities.
3. Increase the provision of quality affordable housing.
4. Repair and maintain streets and sidewalks.
5. Enhance crime awareness and reduce the incidence of crime.
6. Create, expand and retain jobs.
7. Reduce chronic homelessness.

Each of the objectives identified above, as well as the strategies consistent with each objective, are discussed in greater detail below. Performance measurement criteria are presented at the end of each objective narrative.

OBJECTIVE ONE: REDUCE HOUSING BLIGHT AND BLIGHTING INFLUENCES

STRATEGIES:

Rehabilitate Suitable Homeowner Properties

Rehabilitation of existing homeowner properties is an important part of the overall improvement of Rockford's neighborhoods. Rehabilitation will enhance property values and reduce the number of unsuitable or dilapidated homes.

The City will establish criteria that define housing that is economically feasible and suitable for rehabilitation as well as housing that is not suitable for rehabilitation. This process will help ensure that Rockford can more effectively utilize its housing resources and make incremental improvements focusing on the exterior appearance of a property and significant health and safety deficiencies in the interior of a property. Examples of these standards include:

1. Housing that is suitable for rehabilitation was constructed with higher-quality materials and workmanship and has architectural, historic or aesthetic value.

2. Housing that is not suitable for rehabilitation was constructed with inferior or lower-quality materials and workmanship and has no architectural, historic or aesthetic value.

The City will target rehabilitation efforts in selected areas of the city, so that neighborhood improvements can be more readily reflected in the area's surrounding homes and neighborhoods.

Reduce Blighted Housing

A blighted area is defined as one in which conditions place serious physical or economic burdens on a community which cannot reasonably be expected to be reversed or alleviated by private enterprise acting alone. Blighted areas may be detrimental to the public health, safety or welfare of the community and they may be detrimental to the effective redevelopment of the area. A combination of many factors seems to have left Rockford with a burdensome amount of blighted and dilapidated housing. By reducing blight through the following actions the City will revitalize deteriorated neighborhoods and reduce low-income concentrations:

1. The City will seek to identify housing that is unsuitable for rehabilitation and initiate efforts to acquire and eliminate such housing, whether through acquisition, condemnation or other means. Rockford will attempt to eliminate 1,000 units over the five-year planning period.
2. Once the housing is eliminated, the City will identify private residential owners interested in acquiring the land, expanding selected lot sizes in the city or using the lots for infill housing.

Promote New Construction for Infill Replacement of Housing

Because Rockford's population is expanding slowly, there remains a need to provide affordable new construction for homeownership. The new construction needs to be handled in a thoughtful manner that takes into consideration the issues of the entire community. Given these considerations, infill opportunities, including the redevelopment of residential properties, should be targeted as follows:

1. Identify possible infill projects.
2. Review and, budget permitting, fund appropriate infill projects.

PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT CRITERIA

Provide Decent Housing:

Availability/Accessibility: the number of eligible households that benefit from rehab.

Affordability: the number of housing units that have been rehabilitated.

Affordability: the number of housing units created through infill replacement.

Sustainability: the number of housing units that have been rehabbed or demolished.

OBJECTIVE TWO: INCREASE REDEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES

STRATEGIES:

Eliminate Older Vacant Commercial and Industrial Properties Lacking a Useful Life

Structural economic change has been occurring for a number of years in Rockford. The previous manufacturing core of the city's economy has declined. Consequently, much of the structural capital serving earlier manufacturing needs, such as suppliers, wholesalers and other related business operations, have also succumbed to those same economic forces. As a result a number of properties are vacant and lack a useful purpose. The City will take two steps toward correcting these difficulties:

1. Continue to eliminate these vacant, blighted commercial and industrial properties.
2. Search for redevelopment opportunities, thereby enriching Rockford's older neighborhoods.

Eliminate Older Vacant Residential Properties Where Land Can be Converted to Useful Purposes

The city tends to have a large base of older vacant residential properties that are concentrated in certain areas of the city. These vacant properties represent an opportunity to enhance the community around which these properties exist. The City will take two actions over the course of the next five years:

1. Continue to remove older vacant dilapidated housing.
2. Consolidate vacant blighted properties into a single development opportunity for redevelopment.

PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT CRITERIA

Expand Economic Opportunities:

Sustainability: the number of blighted non-residential buildings removed.

Sustainability: the number of redevelopment sites located and made ready for use.

Sustainability: the number of properties with blighted structures removed formed into larger development opportunities.

OBJECTIVE THREE: INCREASE THE PROVISION OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING

STRATEGIES:

Enhance Rental Housing Quality Standards

Selected areas of Rockford have a significant number of rental properties. These areas of the City tend to have an older housing stock, some of which is not in suitable housing

condition. This finding was established by review of the Rockford Township Assessor housing data and affirmed in the survey and public input meetings. It is the desire of the City to increase the quality of this rental housing to reflect positively on the image of Rockford. As such, the City will:

1. Review existing systems being used throughout Illinois and the United States and consider alternative methods to enhance rental housing quality so that the goals of improving the quality of rental properties are achieved.
2. Consider the possibility of establishing a rental inspection program.
3. Define housing quality standards and enforcement mechanisms for the program.
4. Evaluate properties only when vacant and for rent.
5. Avoid displacement of renter households.

Increase Transitions From Low-Income Rentals to Homeownership

Homeownership is an important step in transitioning out of poverty. By helping persons in low-income rental situations access homeownership, the City will provide greater opportunity for low-income persons to accumulate equity and wealth. The City will attempt to:

1. Enhance understanding and operation of the credit markets, particularly through homebuyer education classes.
2. Increase minority homeownership in Rockford by using available resources for homebuyers such as the Neighborhood Stabilization Program.

PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT CRITERIA

Provide Decent Housing:

Sustainability: establishment of rental inspection program to improve quality of rental stock.

Affordability: number of units inspected and thereby maintained.

Availability/Accessibility: the number of householders who have benefited from enhancing the quality of the housing stock.

Affordability: number of householders who have taken homebuyer education course.

Affordability: the number of minority racial or ethnic householders who have been assisted with first-time homebuyer activities.

OBJECTIVE FOUR: REPAIR AND MAINTAIN STREETS AND SIDEWALKS

STRATEGIES:

Determine which streets and sidewalks to improve throughout the city

Assessment of Rockford's streets and sidewalks should be considered the first step in determining the size of the City's needs for enhanced infrastructure maintenance. Hence,

the City should consider establishing a “Report Card” for streets and sidewalks that are in need of investment. A ranking from “A” to “D” (“A” being the best) can be assigned to each category, with those in the “D” ranking being considered for investment.

PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT CRITERIA

Provide Suitable Living Environment:

Availability/Accessibility: create inventory of streets and sidewalks that need repair.

Availability/Accessibility: count the number of eligible households assisted.

Sustainability: the number of feet/miles or dollars spent on improving streets and sidewalks.

OBJECTIVE FIVE: ENHANCE CRIME AWARENESS AND REDUCE THE INCIDENCE OF CRIME

STRATEGIES:

Enhance Crime Awareness and Reduce the Incidence of Crime

Crime against persons or property is of significant concern to the city. Even the perception of the risk of crime can lead to a decline in the livability of residential neighborhoods and suppress economic viability in commercial areas. Consequently, crime prevention, awareness and intervention efforts are important steps toward building a strong community and assisting in arresting slum and blight.

To adequately address crime within Rockford, the most pressing need is to provide an array of public services for at-risk youth, their families and other impacted people that may serve as alternatives to drugs, gangs and involvement in criminal activity. Public service activities that might be funded over the next five years include drug and gang prevention and recreational activities, or other services such as education and employment training.

PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT CRITERIA

Provide Suitable Living Environment:

Availability/Accessibility: the number of drug and gang prevention activities as well as other recreational and service activities that have occurred.

Sustainability: the number of drug and gang prevention activities as well as other recreational and service activities that have occurred.

OBJECTIVE SIX: CREATE, EXPAND AND RETAIN EMPLOYMENT IN ROCKFORD

Rockford has an abundant, capable workforce that has unfortunately experienced significant job losses in recent years, particularly in the manufacturing sector. These recent problems can be overcome by focusing on the strengths of the workforce,

attracting new business to the city, educating and retraining workers, and supporting and expanding current business in the city.

STRATEGIES:

Expand and Retain Employment at Existing Businesses

The City will take action by providing working capital, technical assistance, assistance with locating local employees and/or aiding with special skills training.

Recruit New Businesses

The City will seek new business by targeting employers with needs matching the abilities of the city's workforce.

Retrain Existing Rockford Labor

The City has experienced an increase in persons previously working but now looking for employment. The City will seek to retrain these workers for new and emerging employment opportunities in Rockford.

PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT CRITERIA

Expand Economic Opportunities:

Sustainability: the number of retained or new jobs created at existing businesses.

Sustainability: the number of jobs created by recruiting new business to the city.

Sustainability: the number of persons retrained.

Availability/Accessibility: the number of eligible individuals acquiring jobs, having their jobs retained or being trained for new employment opportunities.

OBJECTIVE SEVEN: PROVISION OF ADDITIONAL COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND PUBLIC SERVICES

Rockford has an ongoing need for enhancing existing and providing additional community facilities and public services. This need goes hand-in-hand with the city's rising population and the desire to enhance the city's well-being, the vibrancy of its neighborhoods, and the overall attractiveness of the community

STRATEGIES:

Create Additional Community Facilities.

The City will take action to enhance existing facilities and create additional community facilities, thereby increasing the vitality of the city's neighborhoods and increasing the attractiveness of the city.

Provide Additional or New Public Services.

The City will seek to provide enhancements to the existing service network so that current and newly arriving residents can obtain the public services needed within an expanding community.

PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT CRITERIA

Additional or Enhanced Community Facilities and Public Services:

Sustainability: the number of new or enhanced community facilities.

Sustainability: the number of persons served through such facilities or services.

Availability/Accessibility: the number of eligible individuals using the new or enhanced facilities or services.

OBJECTIVE EIGHT: REDUCE CHRONIC HOMELESSNESS

One of the nation's goals is to end chronic homelessness by 2012. The City, through its participation in the Rockford/Winnebago, Boone Counties' Continuum of Care, is addressing the problem of chronic homelessness. A chronically homeless person is defined by HUD as an unaccompanied homeless individual with a disabling condition who has either been continuously homeless for a year or more, or has had at least four episodes of homelessness in the past three years.

STRATEGIES:

Assist in Implementing the 10-Year Plan to End Chronic Homelessness

Within the Continuum of Care (CoC) region 240 chronic homeless persons were identified in a 2009 point-in-time count, which provides a conservative estimate of the total population. Helping these persons receive the assistance they need to make a successful transition into permanent housing is a priority that, once achieved, will likely result in greater resources and services for other homeless persons in need of assistance. The following actions, as drawn from the CoC 10-year plan, will be taken by the CoC to end chronic homelessness.

1. Prevent homelessness through short-term aid, education and supply of basic needs.
2. Provide outreach to the chronically homeless, community leaders and agencies.
3. Offer rapid rehousing options that shorten the length of homelessness.
4. Provide supportive services that are designed to fill service gaps.
5. Enhance opportunities for citizens to achieve livable wages.
6. Expand housing options including temporary, transitional and permanent types.
7. Monitor and evaluate progress.

PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT CRITERIA

Provide Decent Housing:

Availability/Accessibility: track the number of beds available for the homeless and count the number of persons assisted.

Availability/Accessibility: enhance the variety of services available for the homeless.