

COMMUNITY REVITALIZATION PROGRAM: FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQS)

Note: This document provides answers to frequently asked questions about IHDA’s Community Revitalization Program, including technical assistance for the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) Application. These FAQs are meant to serve as a general guide and may be updated from time to time. Please reach out to IHDA’s Community Revitalization Team at revitalization@ihda.org with any additional questions.

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COMMUNITY REVITALIZATION OVERVIEW

1. WHAT IS COMMUNITY REVITALIZATION?

Community Revitalization is the implementation of intentional efforts that are likely to lead to measurable increases in access to employment, living wage jobs, healthcare, supportive services, community amenities, transportation, quality and affordable housing stock.

2. WHAT ARE THE DIFFERENT AREAS OF COMMUNITY REVITALIZATION?

Community Development:

- Increase in community meetings/neighborhood organization
- Increase in public safety
- Increase in transportation options and access
- Increase in walkability
- Improvement in recreational opportunities
- Natural resource protection
- Community gardens
- Environmental planning and initiatives
- Improvement in stormwater management

Economic Development:

- Downtown or target-area revitalization
- Business development
- Economic development - growing employers and jobs
- Improvements in infrastructure
- Improvement in services and amenities

Housing Development

- Improvement in housing stock
- Infill housing/reduction in vacant lots
- Rehabilitation of dilapidated properties

3. WHAT IS A COMMUNITY REVITALIZATION STRATEGY?

A Community Revitalization Strategy (CRS) is a deliberate, concerted, and locally-approved plan or documented interconnected series of local efforts with local stakeholder support intended to improve and enhance specific aspects of a Community Revitalization Strategy Area (defined

below). Please note: A locally approved plan is but one method of documentation, and because formalized plans are beyond the capabilities of all municipalities in the state, well-documented efforts taking place outside of formalized plans are equally acceptable for this purpose.

4. WHAT IS A COMMUNITY REVITALIZATION STRATEGY AREA?

A Community Revitalization Strategy Area (CRSA) is the project area for a Community Revitalization Strategy. An area of pre-designated size that is larger than a parcel, planned unit development (PUD), or subdivision, but small enough that one municipality or county (or a small conglomerate of municipalities or counties) can have jurisdiction over it. A CRSA can also align with an existing area designated for development such as a Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Target Area, Neighborhood Strategy Area (NSA), or Tax Increment Finance (TIF) District.

5. WHAT IS A COMMUNITY REVITALIZATION PLANNER?

IHDA's Community Revitalization Planners work with communities and housing developers to discuss current or desired plans for promoting revitalization and development in their communities. Regardless of where you are in the process of community revitalization, IHDA's planners can provide technical assistance to you.

6. WHO SHOULD BE INVOLVED IN THE COMMUNITY REVITALIZATION STRATEGY PROCESS?

A strong Community Revitalization Strategy will provide guidance for the community to follow, to bring about its vision over the long term, and should include input from local residents, neighborhood boards and groups, nonprofit agencies, local businesses, educational institutions, service agencies, and other local stakeholders.

7. WHAT IS THE ANTICIPATED OUTCOME OF A COMMUNITY REVITALIZATION STRATEGY?

IHDA's intended outcome is to help communities throughout the state of Illinois create a Community Revitalization Strategy that can accomplish the following:

- Initiate proactive community planning
- Strategize future planning and investment
- Establish linkages to ongoing initiatives
- Identify realistic housing needs and goals for the community
- Identify potential funding sources for plan implementation
- Identify financially feasible models for meeting housing needs
- Attract investors to community
- Form a working advisory group
- Strategically plan for future tax credit development sites

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

1. WHY IS IHDA INVOLVED IN COMMUNITY REVITALIZATION?

Community revitalization plays a prominent role in ensuring the health and success of Illinois communities, and therefore, IHDA is a strong proponent of these processes.

2. WHAT ROLE DOES COMMUNITY REVITALIZATION PLAY AT IHDA?

IHDA is committed to expanding the capacity of underserved communities in Illinois to identify local housing needs and to empower those communities to take steps to meet those needs. By

providing a Community Revitalization Strategy and technical assistance to communities, IHDA believes that it will be increasing capacity on multiple fronts. Primarily, it will be contributing to the expansion of local leaders' capacity to see affordable housing as part of their community's growth, and to include a variety of such opportunities in their plans. Housing developers will also benefit from this activity, as the plans developed by or in conjunction with IHDA's Community Revitalization technical assistance will help to provide a clearer path through the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit process. Investors will be able to connect to and potentially utilize the market analysis tools and funding sources identified by the strategy.

IHDA also implements a range of grants and programs designed to meet communities' revitalization needs that are available to nonprofits and units of local government. For more information on this, please contact the Community Affairs department at **CommunityAffairs@IHDA.org**.

3. WHAT DOES IHDA COMMIT TO?

IHDA's intended outcome is to help communities throughout Illinois create a Community Revitalization Strategy that can accomplish the following goals:

- Strategize future planning and investment
- Establish linkages to ongoing initiatives for Economic Development, Education, Health Care, Food Access, etc.
- Identify realistic housing needs and goals for the community
- Coordinate with state, regional, and federal agencies, as well as local organizations, to help meet the planning and implementation needs of the community
- Identify potential funding sources for plan implementation
- Identify financially feasible models for meeting housing needs (to be enacted locally)
- Become a calling card for the community to attract investors
- Form a working advisory group to supervise ongoing implementation of planning strategies
- Strategically plan for future tax credit development sites (if housing needs analysis and financial feasibility planning indicate this as a viable outcome)

4. WHO CAN REQUEST/RECEIVE TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE?

Technical assistance is given to local governments/communities and housing developers interested in promoting revitalization and development in their community. Any community located in Illinois is eligible for this service.

5. HOW IS TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE REQUESTED?

Technical assistance is requested by visiting our IHDA webpage and submitting a Community Revitalization Technical Assistance Intake Form or emailing a PDF version of the form to **Revitalization@IHDA.org**.

6. WHAT HAPPENS AFTER I SUBMIT A TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE INTAKE FORM?

After submitting this form to **Revitalization@IHDA.org**, the Community Revitalization committee will evaluate your request to identify the next steps for you and your community. If, and when, your request is approved, CR staff will work with you to determine a full scope of work for the project.

However, submitting a form does not guarantee an official community revitalization project with IHDA. Priority for technical assistance will be given to communities with limited resources.

7. HOW LONG WILL A COMMUNITY REVITALIZATION PARTNERSHIP LAST?

Technical assistance may be given as long as the community and IHDA deem necessary to fulfill the goals and objectives agreed upon as part of the scope of work. Community partnerships typically last 12-18 months.

8. IS THE TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE FREE OF CHARGE?

Technical assistance provided by IHDA Community Revitalization team is completely free of charge. However, IHDA CR planners ask that partner communities set aside a small fund to pay for refreshments and/or childcare for local community meetings in order to reach the largest number of residents, particularly those most vulnerable.

FAQS FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

1. WHAT ARE OTHER GRANTS AND PROGRAMS THAT IHDA OFFERS TO HELP REVITALIZE COMMUNITIES?

IHDA implements a range of grants and programs designed to meet communities' revitalization needs that are available to non-profits and units of local government:

- Home Repair and Accessibility Program
- Land Bank Capacity Program and Technical Assistance Network
- Strong Communities Program
- Housing Tax Credits
- Homeownership Programs
- Downpayment Assistance Programs

2. IS FUNDING FOR OTHER IHDA GRANTS AND PROGRAMS GUARANTEED IF TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE IS GIVEN?

Although IHDA is committed to helping communities identify potential funding sources for strategy implementation, there is no commitment of funding as a result of a community partnership.

3. WHAT TYPE OF TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE IS GIVEN TO LOCAL GOVERNMENTS?

IHDA's planners can provide technical assistance to you in the following ways:

- Coordinate with other state, regional, and federal agencies who may be able to meet your community's needs
- Gain expertise regarding housing development, planning processes, and utilizing governmental resources
- Connect to market analysis tools that help communities understand and predict trends in their areas, particularly related to housing
- Begin the process of intergovernmental/multi-jurisdictional coordination and planning
- Strategize future planning and investment in your community
- Generate a toolbox for the community to initiate a community revitalization strategy locally
- Conduct a housing needs assessment for the community

4. WHAT IS THE RESPONSIBILITY OF LOCAL GOVERNMENTS/COMMUNITIES RECEIVING TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE?

- Identify a local point-person who will be responsible for collecting input from stakeholders, organizing meetings, assigning tasks to working group, and overseeing work plan
- Provide identification of and outreach to critical local stakeholders and local “champions”
- Provide identification of and outreach to critical regional stakeholders
- Publicize and facilitate community meetings with local and regional stakeholders
- Provide all available planning materials that include the community for review by IHDA community revitalization staff
- Provide all private, local, state, and federal funding sources that the community has accessed, applied for, or received in the previous 10 years
- Establish and oversee a work plan for this initiative

FAQS FOR HOUSING DEVELOPERS

1. WHAT TYPE OF TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE IS GIVEN TO HOUSING DEVELOPERS?

IHDA’s planners can provide technical assistance to housing developers in the following ways:

- Understand the guidelines for preparing Community Revitalization Strategies on your Low-Income Housing Tax Credit application
- Strategically plan for future tax credit development sites
- Gain expertise regarding housing development, planning processes, and utilizing governmental resources
- Connect to market analysis tools that help communities understand and predict trends in their areas, particularly related to housing

2. HOW CAN A COMMUNITY REVITALIZATION STRATEGY BENEFIT AN APPLICATION FOR LIHTC FUNDING?

Preserving the balance of affordable housing in high Quality of Life (QAP) areas as well as in distressed community areas, allowing the greatest amount of choice for low-income households to access quality housing, is an important goal of the QAP. Community Revitalization Strategies that are likely to lead to measurable increases in the following are eligible for up to ten (10) points:

- Access to employment and living wage jobs
- Access to healthcare and supportive services
- Access to a range of community amenities, including (but not limited to) parks, schools, groceries, businesses, and retail locations
- Access to transportation
- Improvement in the quality of housing stock
- Affordable housing opportunities

To be eligible for up to ten (10) points in this category, projects must meet the Community Revitalization Strategy threshold components.

3. WHO NEEDS TO MEET THE MINIMUM THRESHOLDS FOR COMMUNITY REVITALIZATION STRATEGIES?

Subject property(ies) that fall under a Qualified Census Tract (QCT) or Racially/Ethnicity Concentrated Areas of Poverty (R/ECAP) must meet the minimum thresholds for community revitalization strategies.

4. WHEN SHOULD DEVELOPERS CONTACT IHDA IF THEIR SUBJECT PROPERTY FALLS WITHIN A QCT OR R/ECAP?

Developers should contact IHDA Community Revitalization Planners immediately if their subject property falls within a QCT or R/ECAP. If a developer is planning on applying and is unsure if their subject property is in a QCT or R/ECAP they should visit www.policymap.com to locate their subject property and understand its classification under “Federal Guidelines.” Developers may also contact IHDA’s planners for assistance in identifying such designations.

5. HOW SHOULD DEVELOPERS PREPARE TO SUBMIT A COMMUNITY REVITALIZATION STRATEGY TO IHDA?

Developers should use the [Community Revitalization Strategies Thresholds and Scoring Criteria](#) as a guide to outline what documentation is needed. In addition, it is suggested to promptly begin researching planning documents that may exist in the area of the subject property. Likewise, connecting with local agencies and government entities can contribute to the search of such documentation.

6. HOW SHOULD DEVELOPERS SUBMIT THEIR COMMUNITY REVITALIZATION STRATEGY TO IHDA?

Producing a cover letter that highlights the location (i.e. using PDF bookmarks) and summary of documentation and scoring requirements is required for all 4% and 9% LIHTC applications that submit a Community Revitalization Strategy. The cover letter should be attached with all other documentation and requirements, and uploaded to the Multifamily Portal as a part of a project’s application materials.

7. WHAT ARE THE BASIC COMPONENTS OF A PLAN?

- A concerted effort has been undertaken for a specific community/neighborhood.
- The community revitalization strategy must consider affordable housing.
- Community participation (residents, stakeholders, assets) in the creation and/or guidance of the CRS. Adequate community-level participation must be demonstrated.
- Adoption, approval, or local champion. Submitted documentation must have local governmental approval and/or an existing local champion in order to qualify for review.
- Evidence of economic development integration.

8. WHAT ARE THE SCORING COMPONENTS?

- Building opportunity [5pts]
- Accessibility and livability [3pts]
- Plan implementation and funding [2pts]

LIHTC DEFINITIONS

1. WHAT IS A “COMMUNITY/NEIGHBORHOOD”?

For the purposes of Community Revitalization Strategy, the term “Community/Neighborhood” is defined as the project area for a Community Revitalization Strategy. An area of a pre-designated size that is larger than a parcel, PUD, or subdivision, but small enough that one municipality or county (or a small conglomerate of municipalities or counties) can have jurisdiction over it. A Community or Neighborhood can also align with an existing Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Target Area, Neighborhood Strategy Area (NSA), or Community Revitalization Strategy Area (CRSA).

2. WHAT IS A “AFFORDABLE HOUSING”?

For the purposes of Community Revitalization Strategy, the term “Affordable Housing” is defined by one of the following criteria:

- Rent-Restricted rental units (legally restricted via use of programs such as Low-Income Housing Tax Credits, HOME, Housing Trust Funds, etc.) where rent is restricted to levels affordable to households earning under 30%, 50%, 60%, or 80% of the Area Median Income.
- Rent-Subsidized rental units (examples of rental subsidies are Project Based Rental Assistance, Project Based Vouchers, Housing Choice Vouchers, Section 811, Rental Housing Support Program, etc.)
- Affordable Homeownership Programs – Use of subsidized mortgage credit certificates, mortgage revenue bonds, or down payment assistance that are limited to households earning less than 120% of Area Median Income.

3. WHAT IS A “PLAN”?

For the purposes of Community Revitalization Strategy, the term “plan” is defined as any documentation (i.e. comprehensive plans, land bank authority plans, transit-oriented development plans, inter-jurisdictional plans, and other locally designated and approved plans) that successfully qualifies as a neighborhood revitalization strategy for review.

4. WHAT IS A “SUBJECT PROPERTY”?

For the purposes of Community Revitalization Strategy, the term “subject property(ies)” is defined as the property or properties where Affordable Housing activity proposed by the LIHTC application will be located.

5. WHAT IS A QUALIFIED CENSUS TRACT (QCT)?

A Qualified Census Tract (QCT) is an area designated by the Secretary of HUD where, for the most recent year for which census data are available on household income in such tract, either 50 percent or more of the households in the tract have an income which is less than 60 percent of the area median gross income or the tract’s poverty rate is at least 25 percent. QCTs are designated annually as new income and poverty rate data are released. See [HUD map](#) for reference.

6. WHAT IS A RACIALLY/ETHNICALLY CONCENTRATED AREA OF POVERTY (R/ECAP)?

According to U.S. Department of HUD, a neighborhood can be a R/ECAP if it has a poverty rate

that exceeds 40% or is three or more times the average tract poverty rate for the metropolitan/micropolitan area, whichever threshold is lower. HUD designates census tracts with this extreme poverty that satisfy the racial/ethnic concentration threshold as R/ECAPs. HUD used component data from the decennial census (2010) and the American Community Survey (2009-2013) to determine which geographies met R/ECAP criteria in 2010. See [HUD's R/ECAP dataset](#) for reference.