MCHENRY COUNTY

HOUSING ***READINESS*** ACTION PLAN

Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Steering committee

The McHenry Housing Readiness project selected a steering committee with representatives that work across McHenry County to address challenges related to housing, transportation, and economic development. The steering committee was instrumental in guiding the planning process and will continue engaging local stakeholders to support the plan.

- Pamela Althoff, McHenry County Board
- Peter Austin, McHenry County
- Chalen Daigle, McHenry County Council of Governments
- Neeley Erickson, Illinois REALTORS
- Jim Haisler, Heartland REALTORS
- Scott Hartman, McHenry County
- Scott Hennings, McHenry County Division of Transportation
- Mark Piekos, McHenry County Economic Development Corporation
- Jake Rohn, McHenry County Workforce Network
- Alicia Schueller, McHenry County
- Kim Ulbrich, McHenry County Housing Authority

Special thanks

Thank you to all who provided input in the development of this plan.

- Amy Hernon, The Community Foundation for McHenry County
- Michael Buehler, McHenry County Board Chair
- McHenry County Board
- Village of Cary
- City of Crystal Lake
- City of Harvard
- Village of Island Lake
- Village of Lake in the Hills
- Village of Lakewood
- City of Marengo
- City of McHenry
- Village of Richmond
- Village of Ringwood
- Village of Spring Grove
- Village of Trout Valley
- City of Woodstock

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

CMAP staff and project team

- Lily Brack, CMAP
- Caroline Caruso, CMAP
- Enrique Castillo, CMAP
- JP DuBos, CMAP
- Jen Maddux, CMAP
- Makala Morales, CMAP
- Sarah Ponitz, McHenry County
- Lee Skuby, CMAP
- Seth Thomas, CMAP
- Todd Vanadilok, Egret & Ox Planning
- Adam Wallen, McHenry County
- David Wells, CMAP

Urban Land Institute (ULI) Chicago partnership

This project partnered with ULI Chicago to understand development practitioners' perspectives on housing opportunities and challenges, to ensure potential actions were rooted in market realities, and to foster meaningful dialogue across industries. The project team would like to thank all who engaged in the ULI Chicago partnership. A full summary of this partnership can be found in the appendix.

- Bill Eager, POAH
- Rob Getz, Pulte Homes
- Jason Koehn, Albion Residential
- Cindy McSherry, ULI Chicago
- Chris Naatz, Crown Community Development
- Matt Nix, REVA Development Partners LLC
- Swasti Shah, ULI Chicago

Funding acknowledgment

This project was supported through the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning's (CMAP) Technical Assistance program. The program is funded by the Federal Highway Administration, Federal Transit Administration, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Illinois Department of Transportation, and the Chicago Community Trust. CMAP thanks these funders for supporting this project.

Other notes

Unless otherwise specified, CMAP staff created all photos, maps, and illustrations that appear in this report.

TABLE OF ***CONTENTS***

HOUSING READINESS ***OVERVIEW***

CMAP and McHenry County are partners in promoting housing readiness. This partnership tackles regulatory barriers — such as zoning, entitlement processes, and building codes and inspections — to clear the way for housing that meets the needs of residents through all stages of life and household budgets. Through this planning process, CMAP collaborates with local leaders to identify barriers to housing development and recommend actions to remove those barriers. Increasing housing development is crucial to addressing the county's housing shortage and ensuring housing for all.

What does it mean for a place to be housing ready?

- Development procedures are clear and navigable
- Funding and financing are available to make deals work
- Public and private sector stakeholders work effectively together
- The community is informed and engaged about housing needs
- Zoning regulations and design standards allow many types of housing, especially near economic opportunities and transportation infrastructure

A housing ready place is free from unnecessary barriers to development. Housing readiness clears the way to supply all types of housing residents need.

What are common barriers to housing development?

- Difficult or costly to navigate development procedures
- High costs for land acquisition, materials, and construction
- Lack of capital and over-subscribed funding sources
- Overly burdensome restrictions on what can be built and where
- Opposition to new housing

About the housing readiness process

The process began with a countywide housing market analysis completed in July 2025. The market analysis offers insights into housing needs, opportunities, and challenges in McHenry County. Data-driven market analysis findings are combined with insights from stakeholders across the county to understand the barriers preventing more housing from being built.

This housing readiness action plan identifies strategies to promote housing readiness, specific actions to advance those strategies, as well as resources and information to support implementation.

This document also includes a housing readiness checklist which prioritizes actions for implementation. Communities that take all the actions on the checklist are considered housing ready.

Housing market analysis key findings

People who live in McHenry County should be able to stay in their community through all phases of life, from youth to adulthood to retirement. Economic conditions and limited new housing development over the last 15 years have contributed to unattainable housing for many. Half (50 percent) of renter households and nearly a quarter (22 percent) of owner households are cost-burdened, meaning they pay 30 percent or more of their incomes towards housing costs.

Between 2018 and 2024, home sales prices increased by 55 percent, and higher interest rates have made homeownership increasingly costly. The county also lacks sufficient housing for small households — more than 90 percent of homes have at least two bedrooms. Many residents struggle to cover monthly housing and transportation costs, particularly when also paying for childcare.

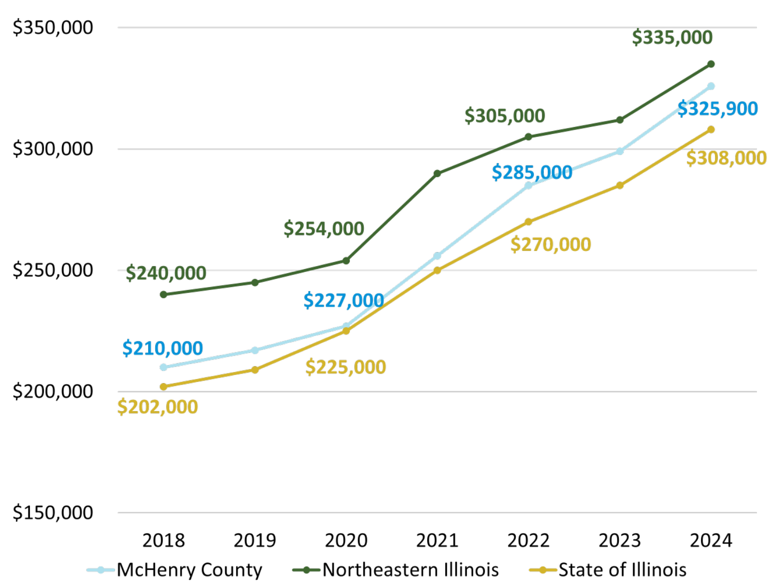
Vacancy rates were already low prior to the COVID-19 pandemic and have steadily dropped in the years since. First-time homebuyers are locked out, and many who bought homes when interest lates were lower are hesitant to sell in a higher interest, high price environment. With very little new supply entering the market, prices will continue to climb and home ownership will become further out of reach.

Additionally, more housing is necessary for economic prosperity in the short- and long-term. Business leaders in McHenry County say they consider housing costs when making decisions and that many who work in the county struggle to find homes in their price range. Starter homes are especially lacking. Supporting workforce housing and improving housing attainability help communities attract talent, grow local businesses, and stay economically strong.

More key findings

- McHenry County's population increased by slightly less than one percent since 2010, while the number of households increased eight percent
- The vast majority of homes are single-family detached houses; homes with two or three bedrooms are most common
- The number of homes listed for sale in the county sharply decreased in the last five years and the vacancy rate is less than three percent
- Only seven percent of homes have been built since 2010
- Most households earning less than $75,000 are burdened by housing cost
- Some of the most common jobs in McHenry County pay enough for a single person to rent a studio apartment only, but less than one percent of homes in the county are studio apartments

Like the region and state, median home sales prices in McHenry County have rapidly climbed since 2018



Source: Heartland REALTORS, Illinois REALTORS, 2025.

The county's population is projected to grow over the next 25 years and will need new homes to keep pace with demand (CMAP Population forecast, 2025). These projections represent just one potential future, the actual population growth will depend on many variables, including rates of housing production.

2022	2040	2050
310,200 residents	21% population increase expected	35% population increase expected
114,300 households	34% household increase expected	54% household increase expected
119,700 homes	41,100 new homes needed	65,100 new homes needed

Like in recent years, household growth is expected to outpace population growth as people age and households have fewer children. In addition to an overall shortage, the county is expected to see more demand for smaller homes that better fit the budget and lifestyle needs of smaller households. Housing options for people over the age of 55 are already in high demand, and that is expected to continue.

Housing goals

Housing has been a high priority for McHenry County as costs have risen in recent years. In 2023, the Workforce Housing Workgroup was created to study the availability, challenges, and opportunities related to workforce housing, along with its critical importance to the economic vitality of McHenry County communities. The Workgroup's 2024 report identified housing shortages and next steps for addressing housing cost burden in the county.

The county has committed to addressing housing challenges that span beyond local boundaries through strategic partnership and collaboration. In McHenry County's 2030 and Beyond Plan, one of the primary housing goals is to recognize the unique community character of the county's 30 municipalities and unincorporated areas and appreciate the varied housing choices offered throughout. Understanding local housing goals and challenges enables the county to better support and plan for long-term needs.

To deepen understanding of local perspectives, CMAP held discussions with municipalities throughout McHenry County about their housing goals, priorities, and opportunities. Because the county is home to a broad mix of communities, local priorities often differed, reflecting each municipality's unique challenges and opportunities. The graphic below highlights common housing goals identified by municipalities during these conversations:

Increase supply of starter homes

Ensure enough housing for people aged 55 and older

Fill the gaps of missing middle housing (i.e., duplexes, triplexes)

Promote downtown infill and transit oriented development

Attracting development and new developer relationships

Increase supply of homes for working households (80-120 percent Area Median Income)

These municipal housing goals align with long-term objectives in the McHenry County 2030 and Beyond Plan. These goals also demonstrate the importance of continued collaboration between CMAP and the county, state, and local municipalities to create targeted strategies that address varied housing needs while preserving the unique character of each municipality.

Housing readiness strategies

This action plan details six housing readiness strategies to remove barriers to development:

1. Communicate and engage with residents
2. Review zoning regulations and design standards
3. Streamline development rules and processes
4. Pursue housing funding and finance tools
5. Coordinate land use, transportation, and economic development decisions
6. Foster public-private, community-based, and multijurisdictional partnerships

Each housing readiness strategy includes the actions necessary to advance it. Each action includes a brief description, a list of implementers, and an estimate of resources required for implementation. Resource estimates are provided in four categories:

Category	Description
$	The action can be completed with resources that implementers are likely to have readily available.
$$	The action will require implementers to obtain additional resources that are likely to be available but require additional steps to obtain (e.g., requesting a new expenditure from an existing pool of funds).
$$$	The action will require resources beyond what is already likely to be available. Implementers will likely need to seek out new funding sources, and implementation is expected to take at least one year.
$$$$	The action will require significant resources beyond what is currently available. Implementers will need to seek out new funding sources that can be replenished over time to sustain the action, and implementation is expected to take multiple years.

HOUSING READINESS ***CHECKLIST***

Expanding McHenry County's housing supply is crucial to ensuring residents can stay in their communities through all phases of life, from youth to adulthood to retirement. By implementing housing readiness strategies and actions, McHenry County will be better equipped to provide the housing supply needed now and in the future.

Implementation of the strategies and actions included in this plan will look different in every community. Some communities, like the City of Woodstock, are already working towards actions outlined in the plan by updating their unified development ordinances. For other communities, this housing readiness plan may be the first recent housing planning effort.

For communities looking to implement this action plan, the following is a checklist of specific actions that should be completed to become housing ready. Communities are encouraged to consider all actions in the plan. There may be actions which are not on the checklist but would drive significant impact in certain areas. For example, municipalities with Metra stations are encouraged to consider Action 2.5 Create transit-oriented development special-use zones near Metra stations. Communities should reflect on their local vision for housing, transportation, and economic development when deciding which housing readiness actions to pursue.

Each checklist action has a "gold readiness" standard, which is the highest level of readiness a community can strive to achieve for the action. Communities should consider their available resources, local barriers to development, and broader community goals when deciding which actions to pursue gold readiness.

We encourage municipal leaders to connect with McHenry County and CMAP to discuss what checklist implementation could look like in their community and the resources available to help.

Is your community housing ready?

❑	**1.1 Develop a residential engagement toolkit** **Gold readiness:** Identify partners who will support future engagements and create a plan for maintaining the toolkit over time	$$
❑	**2.1 Allow duplexes and triplexes in commercial and mixed-use districts** **Gold readiness:** Allow in all residential zones	$$$
❑	**2.3 Allow starter homes by changing dwelling, lot size, and setback requirements** **Gold readiness:** Eliminate minimum dwelling and lot size requirements	$$$
❑	**3.2 Modernize and streamline building codes** **Gold readiness:** Establish a process and schedule for future building code audits	$$$
❑	**3.6 Right-size infrastructure requirements for small infill projects** **Gold readiness:** Establish a process and schedule for future requirement audits	$$
❑	**3.7 Adjust development fees to support attainable housing development** **Gold readiness:** Implement sliding scale fees based on unit cost	$$
❑	**4.1 Build strong connections with developers and financing partners** **Gold readiness:** Establish recurring communications with IHDA, connnect with traditional lenders, and plan to publish recurring updates about local development opportunities	$
❑	**5.5 Audit and update local ordinances related to parking, subdivisions, street connectivity, zoning, and more** **Gold readiness:** Elminate all minimum parking requirements	$$$
❑	**5.6 Focus resources in areas with strong existing low-cost housing options and transportation connections** **Gold readiness:** Partner with the county to identify and prioritize areas for investment	$$
❑	**6.2 Partner with the McHenry County Council of Governments to establish recurring housing collaboration meetings** **Gold readiness:** Attend meetings at least once per quarter	$

HOUSING READINESS STRATEGY 1: ***COMMUNICATE AND ENGAGE WITH RESIDENTS***

Effective communication and resident engagement are critical to preparing communities for new housing. Engaging residents early and transparently helps address concerns, clarify the benefits of varied housing types, and foster trust between local governments and the communities they serve. By involving residents in the planning process, municipalities and the county can implement housing actions that reflect community priorities, reduce opposition, and increase the likelihood of successful implementation.

Current housing communication and engagement

Currently, communication and engagement with residents tends to be reactive. Engagements like public hearings often focus on specific housing proposals that are up for review, and reactions tend to vary based on the type of development. Some types of housing, like senior housing, typically receive more support than other types of housing, like workforce housing. There is an opportunity for McHenry County and its municipalities to be more proactive in engaging with residents about housing and more strategic in using cohesive, effective messaging. Local staff and elected officials can collaborate to develop shared understanding and messaging. Municipalities can also learn from each other’s successes and challenges. Additionally, there are private sector partners, such as local business owners, who support building more housing but typically would not attend the type of engagements that residents attend. Leveraging these strategic partnerships will be essential to demonstrating why more housing is needed.

Housing readiness actions

Action 1.1 Develop a residential engagement toolkit

Building community understanding and trust is essential to advancing attainable housing. The county should provide municipalities with a “meeting-in-a-box” style toolkit to guide stakeholder conversations about housing. The toolkit could can include sample messaging, presentation materials, discussion prompts, and strategies for addressing common concerns, to help local governments communicate effectively and consistently with their communities.

The City of McHenry found success hosting meet-and-greets, which welcome residents to discuss proposed developments. A residential toolkit could build on successes like this while providing new resources to lighten the load for municipalities and promoting countywide alignment in messaging.

Implementer(s): County staff, municipal governments, consultant partner, local businesses, and community-based partners
Resources: $$

Action 1.2 Create a housing FAQ sheet

Clear information can help counter misconceptions that slow or stop housing development. Developing a concise, accessible resource that addresses common misconceptions about housing— including impacts on traffic, schools, property taxes, and neighborhood character— can help residents make informed decisions and reduce resistance to new housing development. Examples of current developments, including photos, can help demonstrate how housing projects are already being integrated into the community successfully.

For example, Taylor Place in the City of McHenry, pictured to the right, fits seamlessly with the neighborhood character while providing affordable one, two, and three bedroom apartments for households earning 30 to 80 percent of Area Median Income.

Implementer(s): County staff, consulting partner
Resources: $$

Action 1.3 Launch an educational housing campaign

Public perception plays a powerful role in housing development. The county could engage a communications consultant to design a campaign that highlights the benefits of varied and attainable housing. The campaign would focus on messaging that housing growth supports the entire community, using data, stories, and visuals to build awareness and foster broad public support. In addition, the campaign serves as an opportunity to humanize the need for housing, particularly illustrating how it helps everyday people from teachers, first responders, and service workers to older adults, young families, and multi-generational households.

The business and local real estate communities can be valuable partners in advocating from a wide range of perspectives about the value of new housing development. Private sector partnerships, such as with the Illinois REALTORS, may also unlock opportunities for sponsorships or grants that can offset costs.

For example, the Welcoming Neighbors Network provides a framework to craft powerful pro-housing messaging to build support across many communities and connect firsthand stories to actionable policy changes.

Implementer(s): Municipal staff, county staff, and consultant partner
Resources: $$$

Source: Housing Opportunity Development Corporation, https://hodc.org/buildings/taylor-place/

HOUSING READINESS STRATEGY 2: ***REVIEW ZONING REGULATIONS AND DESIGN STANDARDS***

Reviewing zoning regulations and design standards enables a wider range of housing options while aligning development with existing infrastructure. Most housing is single-family detached and has at least two bedrooms. Expanding the range of housing options would better serve residents at different life stages and income levels. For example, seniors looking to downsize and young adults entering the housing market often face limited choices in their price range. Updated zoning regulations and design standards can help communities meet demand for more homes and smaller homes, while preserving the community character.

Current zoning and design standards

Residential zoning in McHenry County largely allows single-family detached homes only. Currently, 18 percent of the land within the county is devoted to detached single-family homes, whereas only 0.01 percent of land is devoted to mixed-use development. This imbalance worsens housing supply-and-demand challenges: developers are limited to building single-family homes, while prospective residents face high costs as single-family housing dominates the market.

Some municipalities, such as Cary and Richmond, have recently begun to develop Unified Development Ordinances which simplify rules about what can be built and where.

Housing readiness actions

Action 2.1 Allow duplexes and triplexes in commercial and mixed-use districts

Allowing duplexes and triplexes by right in commercial and mixed-use districts — which also tend to be near transit and job centers — will help create housing variety without putting additional stress on municipal services. This could also increase the value of some properties by expanding the potential uses. According to a zoning reform study done by the Michigan Association of Planning, existing commercial districts and corridors are great locations for more housing.

The best practice, or gold readiness standard, would be to allow duplexes and triplexes in residential zones, as well. Many single-family homes can easily accommodate additional units without significant changes to the home's exterior, and intentional design can allow duplexes and triplexes to fit seamlessly into the local character. The City of Evanston established a Two-Family Residence District which allows for single- and two-family dwellings as permitted uses by right.

Implementer(s): Municipal governments
Resources: $$$

Action 2.2 Allow accessory dwelling units by right in all residential zones

Allowing accessory dwelling units (ADUs) by right in residential districts can help expand housing choice while minimizing regulatory barriers. ADUs can help support affordability and multi-generational housing, and make it easier for people to age in place. Since they are small and integrated into existing residential lots, ADUs create attainable housing options while blending with the existing community character and without requiring large-scale infrastructure expansion.

Implementer(s): Municipal governments
Resources: $$$

Action 2.3 Allow starter homes by changing dwelling, lot size, and setback requirements

Many of McHenry County's communities have bulk standards that were established decades ago, when household sizes were larger and development patterns favored single-family homes on large lots. Changing bulk requirements in local zoning ordinances can create opportunities for smaller, more attainable, and accessible housing options. Communities should review and update bulk requirements by reducing or eliminating minimum dwelling and lot size requirements and updating standards for setbacks and lot coverage to better reflect current and future housing needs.

These changes have the added benefit of bringing existing, older homes into conformity with the zoning code. This makes it easier and cheaper for homeowners to make modifications, which is especially helpful for aging in place and access for people with disabilities.

Implementer(s): Municipal governments
Resources: $$$

Action 2.4 Update design standards to support housing development

Many zoning codes include design requirements that enhance community aesthetics and maintain a cohesive development character. However, overly prescriptive standards can increase construction costs and limit opportunities to build attainable housing.

Regularly reviewing and updating local design standards can help reduce unnecessary costs and barriers to housing development. Examples of design standards that may hinder attainable housing include: restrictions on cost-effective building materials, requirements for complex façades or high window-to-wall ratios sometimes known as "transparency requirements", and excessive landscaping requirements.

Local design standards can also inhibit home renovations and improvements, which are critical for people to be able to age in place and modify their homes for accessibility. These limitations can also be hindrance to the sale of older housing units, which may need modernization and other rehab work to make them attractive to new homebuyers seeking turnkey units and contemporary designs.

By revisiting these standards, which for some communities may include reviewing local historic preservation codes, municipalities can provide greater flexibility and support context-appropriate, lower-cost housing types. Updated design requirements should balance quality with feasibility to ensure that new housing can be developed efficiently and affordably.

Design standards can also help communities visualize how housing options like ADUs, duplexes, triplexes, and townhouses can fit within context of traditionally single-family residential neighborhoods while preserving local character.

Implementer(s): Municipal governments
Resources: $$$

Action 2.5 Create transit-oriented development special-use zones near Metra stations

Supporting multi-family and mixed-use development near Metra stations and Pace bus corridors can support economic growth and reduce vehicle dependance, which can in turn lower household costs. Building on the recent changes from the 2025 People Over Parking Act, transit-oriented development zones within a half-mile of Metra stations could expand what can be built in those prime locations.

The RTA is currently leading a Joint Development Study which explores the opportunity for transit agencies to partner with private developers to sell or lease agency-owned land near transit stations for real estate development.

In 2022, the Village of Elburn in western Kane County adopted its transit oriented development plan for the Metra station area. The next year, the Village revised zoning regulations to ensure new development reflected housing, economic development, and transportation goals. In 2025, Elburn approved a TOD development – a 505-acre master planned community with single family residences and townhomes. Over 350 new homes are planned in 2026.

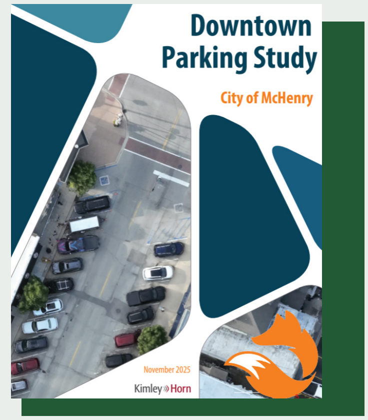
Implementer(s): Municipal governments and county staff
Resources: $$$

Action 2.6 Remove all parking requirements in residential zones

Removing parking requirements allows developers to determine the amount of parking to provide based on the most up-to-date information that is tailored to the site. This market-driven approach to parking requirements allows more feasible, attainable development.

Implementer(s): Municipal governments
Resources: $$$

City of McHenry Downtown Parking Study



The City of McHenry recently completed a Downtown Parking Study, supported by the REALTORS®. While parking has long been perceived as a challenge in McHenry, the study showed the city has sufficient parking. The greatest challenges were lighting, wayfinding, and pedestrian connectivity. Addressing those challenges can improve access and usability more than adding parking alone. By investing in parking studies, communities gain a clearer understanding of their needs and can focus resources on targeted improvements rather than unnecessary and costly regulations.

Does your community have a Metra station or high frequency Pace route?

Read about how the 2025 People Over Parking Act removes minimum off-street parking requirements for new residential developments to enable more housing close to frequent transit. Importantly, this does not apply to municipal and Metra owned lots.

HOUSING READINESS STRATEGY 3: *STREAMLINE DEVELOPMENT RULES AND PROCESSES*

Streamlining local development rules and processes helps prepare municipalities to respond to housing needs and attract investment. Long timelines for plan reviews, inconsistent building codes, and outdated requirements can add cost and uncertainty to housing projects. By modernizing codes, clarifying expectations, and improving coordination among departments, communities can make it easier to build attainable housing.

Current development rules and processes

McHenry County communities have noted that high development fees and lengthy review processes can slow or discourage new housing construction. In some cases, fees are applied uniformly across project types, regardless of size or community benefit, making attainable residential development less feasible. At the same time, several municipalities have expressed interest in exploring how fee structures and permitting processes could be adjusted to encourage housing investment.

Housing readiness actions

Action 3.1 Create pre-approved building program

A pre-approved building program provides pre-designed, code-compliant building plans that have been reviewed by a municipality. These plans are typically for small-scale residential structures like cottage-style single-family homes, duplexes, or ADUs that will fit within existing neighborhoods.

In South Bend, the "Sears Catalog" of housing options presents a variety of vetted and approved housing plans for individuals and developers looking to build. Each plan is compatible with current zoning regulations and takes into account typical lot configurations and prices based on current market conditions. This resource not only simplifies the planning process but also enhances the likelihood of successful project implementation.

> **Implementer(s):** Municipal governments, county staff
> **Resources:** $$$$

Action 3.2 Modernize and streamline building codes

In some communities, smaller multi-unit buildings are classified as commercial structures, which triggers higher design and construction costs and increased inspection requirements.

These same barriers often appear in the reuse and conversion of existing buildings, like converting a single-family home to a two-flat, or adding a residential unit above a ground-floor commercial use. These thresholds can require extensive upgrades — including fire suppression, accessibility retrofits, and structural changes — even when the building footprint remains modest.

Updating local building codes and adopting flexible standards for smaller multi-unit buildings can help municipalities make it easier, faster, and less expensive to build missing middle housing types like triplexes, fourplexes, small apartment buildings, and micro mixed-use, while maintaining safety and accessibility requirements and aligning regulations with existing community character.

Implementer(s): Municipal governments
Resources: $$$

Action 3.3 Set clear timelines for building plan review

Publishing clear timelines for plan review and inspections helps communities support attainable housing development and increase housing supply. When the review process is unpredictable or prolonged, development costs rise due to carrying costs, financing delays, and investor uncertainty. These factors can disproportionately impact attainable and small-scale housing projects that operate in smaller margins.

Clear review timelines ensure that municipal staff and applicants share a common understanding of expectations and turnaround times. This predictability encourages local, smaller, and mission-driven builders to participate in the housing market.

Elgin, for example, has established a 10-day turnaround target for plan review and approval of larger projects that are still moderate in scope.

Implementer(s): Municipal governments, county staff
Resources: $

Action 3.4 Develop guides for small-scale multi-family and accessory dwelling unit development

Navigating complex development processes can be intimidating, even for the most experienced builders. Developing clear, step-by-step guidance can help property owners and small development firms navigate local regulations and processes with ease. These guides could include zoning and building requirements, approval timelines, design standards, and local examples of successful projects. These guides can be especially helpful for small-scale development like triplexes which are not as commonly built in the county.

Implementer(s): County staff
Resources: $$$

Action 3.5 Allow modular and prefabricated construction

Modular and prefabricated construction can help reduce housing costs and shorten construction timelines. Communities should review and update building and permitting regulations to ensure these housing types are allowed. Local codes should also address design standards to ensure modular homes are integrated with the existing character of the community.

Source: McHenry County

Lake and McHenry County Habitat for Humanity celebrate the groundbreaking at Trinity Trails in Woodstock, pictured with McHenry County Board Chairman and staff.

Each single-family unit will be available to people earning between 50 and 80 percent of Area Median Income. McHenry County supported the project through the HOME Investment Partnerships Program.

Along the Fox River, there are numerous modular and prefabricated homes that blend seamlessly into the community character while providing more attainable options.

Implementer(s): Municipal governments, county staff
Resources: $$

Action 3.6 Right-size infrastructure requirements for small infill projects

Infrastructure requirements are often designed for large developments and do not scale to smaller residential projects. Stormwater regulations may require small sites to manage runoff as if they were large projects, while utility policies may classify any building with more than two units as commercial, triggering higher tap and meter fees, additional engineering reviews, and longer permitting timelines. These standards can make projects like duplexes, triplexes, or fourplexes financially unfeasible. Municipalities can be more housing ready by revising these regulations to support small residential and mixed-use development.

Implementer(s): Municipal governments, county staff
Resources: $$

Action 3.7 Adjust development fees to support attainable housing development

High development fees can add significant costs to new housing projects, particularly small-scale or infill developments with limited budgets. Uniform fee structures that apply the same rates to all projects, regardless of size or community benefit, can discourage investment in attainable and workforce housing.

Municipalities in McHenry County can evaluate their current fee structures to identify opportunities to better align them with housing goals. This may include scaling fees based on project size or unit count, reducing or deferring fees for affordable or infill housing, or creating incentive programs that offset fees for developments in priority areas.

Implementer(s): Municipal governments, county staff
Resources: $$

HOUSING READINESS STRATEGY 4: *PURSUE HOUSING FUNDING AND FINANCING TOOLS*

Construction and material costs have risen in recent years, driving up the price of creating homes. Projects that provide housing for the lowest-income households are often not financially feasible without external funding and financing tools. Increasingly, housing developments that would be priced attainably for households earning close to the area median income are not feasible either. By strategically using resources like grants, low-interest loans, and tax incentives, communities can help bridge financial gaps, reduce development costs, and make housing projects more feasible. Communities can also collaborate countywide to share information about funding and financing opportunities and learn from past experiences.

Current housing funding and financing tools

Municipalities and the county leverage a mix of local, state, and federal funding programs to support the development and preservation of attainable housing. However, funding sources such as the Low Income Housing Tax Credit are over subscribed and can only be used for certain types of housing. While there have been some successes, developers express a need for a greater amount and more flexible funding and financing tools to be able to supply the full range of housing types demanded by the market.

Housing readiness actions

Action 4.1 Build strong connections with developers and financing partners

Strong connections can help advance attainable housing projects across the county. The county should take an active role in connecting municipalities, developers, and financing institutions to make these projects a reality. Partnering with organizations like the Urban Land Institute can help the county engage mission-driven developers and identify innovative financing solutions, such as community development financial institutions (CDFIs) that provide access to funding for distressed or low resourced communities. Facilitating networking events, dialogues, and other partnership opportunities can strengthen relationships and build a shared understanding of housing needs and opportunities in McHenry County.

Implementer(s): Municipal governments, county staff, McHenry County Council of Governments
Resources: $

Action 4.2 Host an expert panel with the IHDA to discuss potential opportunities to fund attainable housing

The county can strengthen local understanding of housing financing and funding opportunities by convening an expert panel with the Illinois Housing Development Authority (IHDA) and other partners experienced in funding attainable housing. This event will help municipal staff learn more about programs, application requirements, and strategies for positioning projects for success in funding attainable housing. This event will help municipal staff learn more about programs, application requirements, and strategies for positioning projects for success. The panel could foster coordination across jurisdictions and build shared knowledge about tools and partnerships that can make attainable housing projects more feasible. Partners such as the McHenry County Council of Government and CMAP could help promote the event to municipal partners.

Implementer(s): Municipal governments, county staff
Resources: $

Action 4.3 Help build municipal capacity to leverage funding sources

Accessing housing funds can be complex, and many municipalities lack staff capacity or expertise to navigate funding programs. McHenry County can play a vital role in helping municipalities prepare competitive applications for these programs by sharing relevant data, offering technical guidance on funding programs, and providing letters of support. By serving as a resource and partner, the county can help communities more effectively pursue local, state, and federal funding opportunities, building their capacity to deliver attainable housing.

For example, Cook County's Department of Planning and Development provides extensive support to suburban municipalities to help them access HOME Investment Partnerships Program and Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds. The Build Up Cook program uses American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds to offer technical expertise and staff resources including tradespeople, engineers and experts to municipalities.

Implementer(s): County staff
Resources: $$

Credit unions and other community development financial institutions (CDFIs) provide financing options that extend credit to support businesses that may otherwise be denied financial opportunities to access funding, build wealth, and allow existing residents, jobs, and businesses to stay in the community. The CDFI Coalition's database is continually updated with current CDFIs serving each state. The U.S. Department of the Treasury's CDFI Fund maintains its own, more comprehensive database of CDFIs serving Illinois and specific communities.

HOUSING READINESS STRATEGY 5: ***COORDINATE LAND USE, TRANSPORTATION, AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DECISIONS***

A regional approach to housing development is critical to create more attainable housing options that meet residents' needs. Without coordination, fragmented planning can limit development opportunities and restrict the types of housing that can be built. By aligning policies and coordinating planning efforts, municipalities can ensure that housing development occurs in the most optimal locations and support broader countywide goals for attainable housing. Adopting similar local regulations and plans also makes it easier for developers to understand and navigate development processes.

Current coordination

Roughly two-thirds of McHenry County's land is dedicated to agricultural or natural uses. This makes it a desirable place to live, work, and play. However, mixed-use land accounts for less than 0.01 percent of all land, which limits opportunities for integrating housing, commercial, transportation, and recreational uses. Jobs tend to cluster near each other and along frequent transit corridors, presenting an opportunity to strategically coordinate housing development, transportation improvements, and employment centers.

Currently, municipalities are working to align land use policies and planning efforts by undertaking shared studies, such as Cary and Lake In the Hills which conducted a shared water and sanitary sewer study. Infrastructure capacity is a limiting factor for all communities and technical studies can be costly, so collaborations like this allow communities to reduce costs while thinking collaboratively about resource needs.

Housing readiness actions

Action 5.1 Establish annexation agreements with neighboring communities

Annexation agreements with neighboring communities promote coordinated and efficient regional growth. These agreements help municipalities define shared boundaries, service responsibilities, and development expectations. These agreements can also improve housing readiness by fostering communication and trust between local governments, promoting joint problem-solving on shared issues like housing affordability and strategic growth management.

Implementer(s): Municipal governments, county staff, McHenry County Council of Governments
Resources: $$

Action 5.2 Establish shared zoning and overlay districts

Shared zoning and overlay districts allow neighboring communities to coordinate land use policies and address housing challenges that extend beyond municipal boundaries. For example, when communities adopt similar zoning standards — such as allowing duplexes, townhomes, or mixed-use developments — they can prevent zoning that limits housing types in one area while concentrating them in another. Shared zoning and overlays could help simplify the permitting process for developers working in multiple jurisdictions, lowering costs and making smaller-scale infill or multi-family projects more feasible.

Implementer(s): Municipal governments, county staff, McHenry County Council of Governments
Resources: $$

Action 5.3 Develop joint housing and land use plans

Collaborating on shared plans can help neighboring communities work together to understand shared housing challenges, coordinate policy responses, and align future development in ways that strengthen the entire region. By planning collaboratively instead of independently, municipalities can make more efficient use of resources, reduce competition, and create a more balanced housing market. The county can play a valuable role in reviewing and offering recommendations on plans as well as offering input on how proposed developments align with long-term plans and goals.

Implementer(s): Municipal governments, county staff, McHenry County Council of Governments
Resources: $$$

Action 5.4 Maintain a countywide inventory of opportunity sites for future housing development

Identifying where housing can be built is an important step toward housing readiness. The county can work with municipalities to maintain an inventory of sites with strong potential for housing development, including both publicly and privately owned parcels. This inventory would prioritize locations near transit, neighborhood services, and other amenities that support housing. By proactively identifying and tracking these sites, the county and local governments can quickly respond when development interest arises and provide developers with clear guidance on where housing projects are most viable and aligned with community goals.

Implementer(s): Municipal governments, county staff, CMAP
Resources: $$$

Action 5.5 Audit and update local ordinances related to parking, subdivisions, street connectivity, and zoning

Auditing and updating local ordinances is a time-consuming and technical effort. McHenry County can work with municipal staff and elected officials to understand the community's ordinance needs and provide technical assistance. The county can play a key role in supporting a thorough audit and strategizing ways to align local and county goals through ordinance updates.

Implementer(s): Municipal governments, county staff
Resources: $$$

Action 5.6 Focus resources in areas with strong existing low-cost housing options and transportation connections

Prioritizing capital improvement funds toward pedestrian, bicycle, and other active transportation connections around existing affordable housing allows residents who rely on these modes to more easily access their daily needs. The county should develop new datasets and analyses when considering decisions for prioritizing transportation and other investments. For example, build an inventory of existing housing units that are attainable for low- and moderate-income households, and identify transportation barriers to accessing nearby services and amenities.

Implementer(s): Municipal governments, Metra, Pace, county staff
Resources: $$

HOUSING READINESS STRATEGY 6: *FOSTER PUBLIC-PRIVATE, COMMUNITY-BASED, AND MULTIJURISDICTIONAL PARTNERSHIPS*

Collaborative partnerships allow the county, municipalities, developers, and other partners to coordinate resources, share expertise, and overcome barriers to housing development. By working together, stakeholders can leverage funding, align priorities, and advance projects more efficiently, ensuring that new housing meets local needs and supports countywide goals.

Current partnerships

McHenry County and its municipalities actively collaborate with private developers, nonprofit organizations, and regional agencies to advance housing projects and programs. For example, the City of McHenry frequently connects with its neighboring communities of Crystal Lake and Bull Valley to discuss topics like impact fees. The McHenry Council of Governments is also a crucial player in coordinating between the municipalities and fostering collaboration with the county, as well as regional partners like CMAP. Additionally, the McHenry County Economic Development Corporation connects key stakeholders like local business owners and the McHenry County College with municipal and county leaders.

Housing readiness actions

Action 6.1 Evaluate current land bank membership and opportunities for improvements

A land bank can be a powerful tool by helping communities acquire, manage, and repurpose underused or vacant properties for housing development. Land acquisition is often the biggest barrier to attainable housing. Land banks can sell or lease properties at below market prices to mission-driven developers or charitable organizations that build attainable housing. Land banks can also help package sites and work with lenders and developers to attract financing for projects that would otherwise be too risky without collaboration. Evaluation of current land bank participation is needed to identify appropriate next steps for leveraging land banking.

Implementer(s): County staff
Resources: $

The Chicago Southland Housing and Community Development Collaborative (CSHCDC) and the West Cook County Housing Collaborative (WWCCHC) are two examples of cross-jurisdictional collaboration that have seeded land banks, rehabilitated homes, stabilized neighborhoods following the 2008 housing crisis, and developed shared, cross-border solutions to housing challenges.

Action 6.2 Partner with the McHenry County Council of Governments to establish recurring housing collaboration meetings

The McHenry County Council of Governments is a key convener with a proven track record of bringing county and municipal stakeholders together around shared issues. Building on these successes, establish a recurring cadence for municipalities and the county to coordinate on housing.

As the Council of Governments continues to play the critical role of convener, there may be opportunities in the future to expand the support offered by the Council of Governments, such as providing input on housing plans from the county and regional perspective.

Implementer(s): Municipal governments, county staff, McHenry County Council of Governments
Resources: $

Action 6.3 Create a public-private regional housing trust fund

Public-private regional housing trust funds combine governmental, philanthropic, and private sector resources to support attainable housing. By combining multiple revenue streams and establishing clear eligibility criteria, attainable housing projects can be much easier to get off the ground. These trust funds also allow for flexibility in housing funding that are more difficult to get on the state or federal level, with goals and activities like land acquisition, housing rehab, and new building all supported through the fund.

This fund could provide no-interest loans, similar to a McHenry County program that was established during the COVID-19 pandemic using funds from the American Rescue Plan Act. Establishing a housing fund would require careful planning and collaboration with key partners like the IHDA.

Implementer(s): Municipal governments, county staff, philanthropic organizations
Resources: $$$$

Action 6.4 Integrate housing needs with tourism and economic development initiatives

Naturally McHenry County serves as the destination marketing organization of the county, promoting the region as a premier visitor destination and driving economic growth. Housing availability is a key driver of business vitality and a critical factor in strengthening the tourism economy. Service industry workers often earn moderate incomes and face limited options near their workplaces, leading to long commutes and staffing shortages that affect local tourism businesses.

Coordinating with tourism partners and local employers can help identify housing needs for hospitality and recreation workers and integrate workforce housing into broader tourism and economic development plans. Expanding nearby, attainable housing options will reduce long commutes and support staffing stability for local businesses.

Implementer(s): Municipal governments, county staff, McHenry County Economic Development Corporation, local businesses, economic development partners
Resources: $$

Action 6.5 Identify opportunities to improve housing access for people with disabilities

People with disabilities face a wide range of challenges when looking for housing that is accessible and in their budget. Many homes, especially older homes, require modifications that can be costly, time-consuming, and in some instances, not allowed under local codes. Information about accessibility features within homes is difficult to find, which is especially challenging for people who have an urgent need to find an accessible home.

In addition to the home itself being accessible, there are important considerations of whether the home is located near accessible transportation options and in proximity to health services. Engaging with people with disabilities will be essential to understanding where there may be gaps in accessible, attainable housing within the county.

For certain disabilities, such as mental health conditions, housing often needs to be paired with supportive services to ensure people are able to maintain a good quality of life. There is an opportunity to evaluate housing supply and demand specifically with a focus on different types of accessible and supportive housing to ensure governments are planning for the housing needs of all residents.

Implementer(s): Municipal governments, county staff, community-based organizations, social service providers, McHenry County Mental Health Board
Resources: $

APPENDIX A: ***ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY***

The Housing Readiness project brings together a broad group of stakeholders — including residents, business owners, nonprofit leaders, developers, and local officials — to ensure that a wide range of perspectives shape the planning process. A key component of this project is building relationships and gaining insights from trusted partners in McHenry County. These partnerships help bridge communication gaps, amplify outreach efforts, and foster meaningful collaboration.

Building on the McHenry County Workforce Housing Working Group's work in 2024, CMAP structured its engagement efforts into two categories — municipal and community — to ensure that all voices influencing the housing landscape were represented.

Municipal outreach

CMAP partnered with the McHenry County Council of Governments and McHenry County to conduct in-depth discussions with municipalities across the county. Out of the 30 municipalities invited, 11 participated. CMAP held meetings in August 2025 and November 2025, to better understand each community's housing priorities, challenges, and future goals. These conversations provided valuable insights into local perspectives and helped ensure that municipal voices are central to shaping the county's housing strategies. The following table summarizes the goals and challenges shared by each municipality.

Municipality	Housing goals	Challenges and other ideas
Cary	• Focus on missing middle and rental infill • Homes for empty nesters and downsizing	• TOD near Metra station • Community concerns regarding development • Limited land
Harvard	• Expand missing middle housing availability • Attract larger developers • Create land inventory • Address abandoned properties	• Many infill lots remaining • TOD near Metra Station • Collaborate across municipalities to advance housing opportunities
Island Lake	• Expand senior housing (55+ apartments filled quickly) • Consider mixed-use zoning • Develop 50 acres of donated land	• High sanitary hookup costs • Limited land, exploring unincorporated land

Municipality	Housing goals	Challenges and other ideas
Lakewood	• Use comprehensive plan update to guide housing • Attract workforce housing developers	• Landlocked • Community concerns regarding development • Limited infrastructure
Marengo	• Attract large-scale mixed-use developments • Leverage three-mile stretch along I-90 • Provide options for empty nesters and more diverse housing options	• Community concerns regarding development • Distant location limits transit
McHenry	• Increase downtown housing density by 2050 • Build 600+ homes via Lennar and other projects • Develop starter, ranch, and larger homes • Advance workforce and affordable housing projects	• Few developers proposing for new development • Financing challenges
Richmond	• Allow more types of housing without encouraging sprawl • Update zoning for missing middle housing	• Zoning code is outdated • Current zoning prioritizes large-lot homes
Spring Grove	• None at this time	• None at this time
Trout Valley	• None at this time	• Potential TOD near Metra • Primarily focused on maintaining existing housing
Woodstock	• Increase senior affordable housing • Focus on missing middle and workforce housing • Downtown infill (nine-acre site) • TOD near Metra station	• Universal design and aging-in-place • Redevelop vacant land with incentives • High costs, tight margins • Additional water infrastructure needed to support development

Community outreach

CMAP attended the McHenry County Fair in Woodstock to raise awareness of the project and hear initial thoughts of the housing landscape in their community. At the fair, CMAP brought a 5-question housing quiz with prizes to engage attendees and spark conversations about housing trends.

Ten individuals participated in the quiz, with 55 percent correctly identifying the increase in home prices across McHenry County. However, many participants were surprised by the age of the county's housing stock, as only seven percent of homes have been built since 2010. Overall, the community members CMAP spoke with expressed a common theme: the need for more varied and attainable housing options to meet the needs of residents at different life stages and income levels.

APPENDIX B: ***ULI PARTNERSHIP SUMMARY***

The Urban Land Institute in Chicago (ULI) provided technical assistance throughout the development of the housing readiness action plan and checklist, contributing expert insights and helping engage private sector stakeholders who play critical roles in housing production.

The partnership included several key components. First, ULI hosted a virtual panel in December 2025, where technical experts discussed barriers to housing development and reviewed an early set of proposed housing readiness strategies. This was followed by a period in January and February 2026 during which ULI experts were invited to provide detailed feedback on the draft plan.

The collaboration culminated in an in-person panel held on February 26, 2026, at the Illinois and Heartland REALTOR office in Crystal Lake. More than 30 attendees participated, representing local, regional, and state government, as well as nonprofit and private sector partners.

Feedback from ULI experts was incorporated into the draft plan and checklist to ensure all recommendations reflected market feasible approaches. Additionally, insights shared during the panel helped participants internalize the concepts discussed, enabling the ideas to carry forward into ongoing municipal and county work.

ULI in Chicago is the preeminent multidisciplinary real estate forum and is in a unique position to convene industry leaders and policy makers to provide leadership in the region for wise land use planning, long-term investment and sustainable development. ULI Chicago brings leaders together to address and build consensus around solutions to land use challenges, and provide a vibrant forum for professional growth and development.

Key takeaways

Transparent, consistent, and navigable development rules are essential for encouraging housing production. Municipalities can support this by streamlining their regulations and considering greater alignment of processes across jurisdictions. When communities reduce unnecessary complexity and minimize wide variations in procedures, developers are better able to understand expectations, which in turn makes it more likely they will pursue projects in areas that are new to them.

Establishing a clear community vision is also critical to successful development. Local leaders who understand their community’s housing priorities are better positioned to guide decision-making and communicate expectations to potential development partners.

Planning provides a process for crafting a vision for a community's future that addresses complex issues like housing cost within local and regional context. Plans also provide clarity that enables development. For example, a future land use map created through a comprehensive plan process is a valuable tool for developers to learn how a community wants different areas to be developed in the future. Developers are then able to seek out sites that align with their development focus and tailor proposals to align with the community vision. When leadership at the municipal level is well informed and aligned around shared goals, developers can focus on delivering projects that match those priorities rather than navigating uncertainty. Strong leadership aligned around a clear community vision ultimately creates a more predictable environment for both residents and the development community.

Additional ideas for consideration

County endorsements of development plans that meet established housing readiness standards could strengthen their prospects for approval by local municipalities. When the county or a council of governments reviews and endorses plans that align with broader housing goals, it provides an additional layer of credibility and helps reinforce shared regional priorities.

Improved coordination with related entities—such as water and sewer districts, fire protection districts, and other service providers—can also support more efficient and predictable development processes. When these partners are engaged early and consistently, communities are better positioned to address infrastructure needs, reduce delays, and provide developers with clearer expectations about service capacity and requirements.

Future efforts would also benefit from expanded engagement with developers, particularly those with experience across a wide range of project types. Including developers with backgrounds in affordable and subsidized housing can provide valuable insights into financing structures, feasibility considerations, and the unique challenges associated with delivering homes at lower price points. This expanded participation can help ensure that plans reflect practical, diverse, market-aware perspectives.

Conclusion

A coordinated, market-informed approach is essential to strengthening housing readiness across the region. The insights gained through the ULI partnership, along with the strategies and ideas outlined in this plan, highlight the value of consistent processes, informed leadership, and collaboration across agencies and jurisdictions. By continuing to engage a wide range of stakeholders—including municipal and county partners, service providers, and developers—communities can advance practical solutions that support long-term housing objectives and position the region to respond effectively to evolving housing needs.

APPENDIX C: ***POPULATION AND HOUSING UNIT CHANGE, 2019-2024***

The relationship between population change and the number of housing units is central to understanding community growth. Population forecasts offer a range of potential futures, whereas recent data reveals what has actually occurred. Which forecasted scenario becomes reality depends heavily on municipal action—communities influence their own trajectories through policies and investments that either support or hinder growth. Forecasts are not predetermined outcomes but tools for planning and decision-making. This analysis of recent U.S. Census American Community Survey data supplements the population forecast within the Housing Readiness Action Plan by offering insights to recent trends. Details on methodology can be found at the end of this appendix.

Findings and analysis

Housing unit growth and population growth show a very strong positive relationship, with a Pearson coefficient of 0.96 on a scale from -1 to 1, indicating that increases in housing supply closely align with population increases. On average, municipalities that added housing units experienced an increase of about 2.29 residents for every new unit built, underscoring the tight connection between housing development and population change.

Among the communities analyzed, twenty-two experienced increases in housing units and eleven saw decreases. Nineteen communities saw increases in population, one community had no change, and thirteen saw decreases in population. The following table is sorted in descending order, from communities that saw the greatest percent increase in housing units to the communities that saw the greatest declines in housing units. Municipalities vary greatly in size, so for some communities, an increase of 50-100 units is a large percent increase. For other communitie, an increase of 50-100 units would be a relatively small change. To better account for this variation, the table presents changes as a percent of the starting size.

Percent change in housing units and population, by municipality

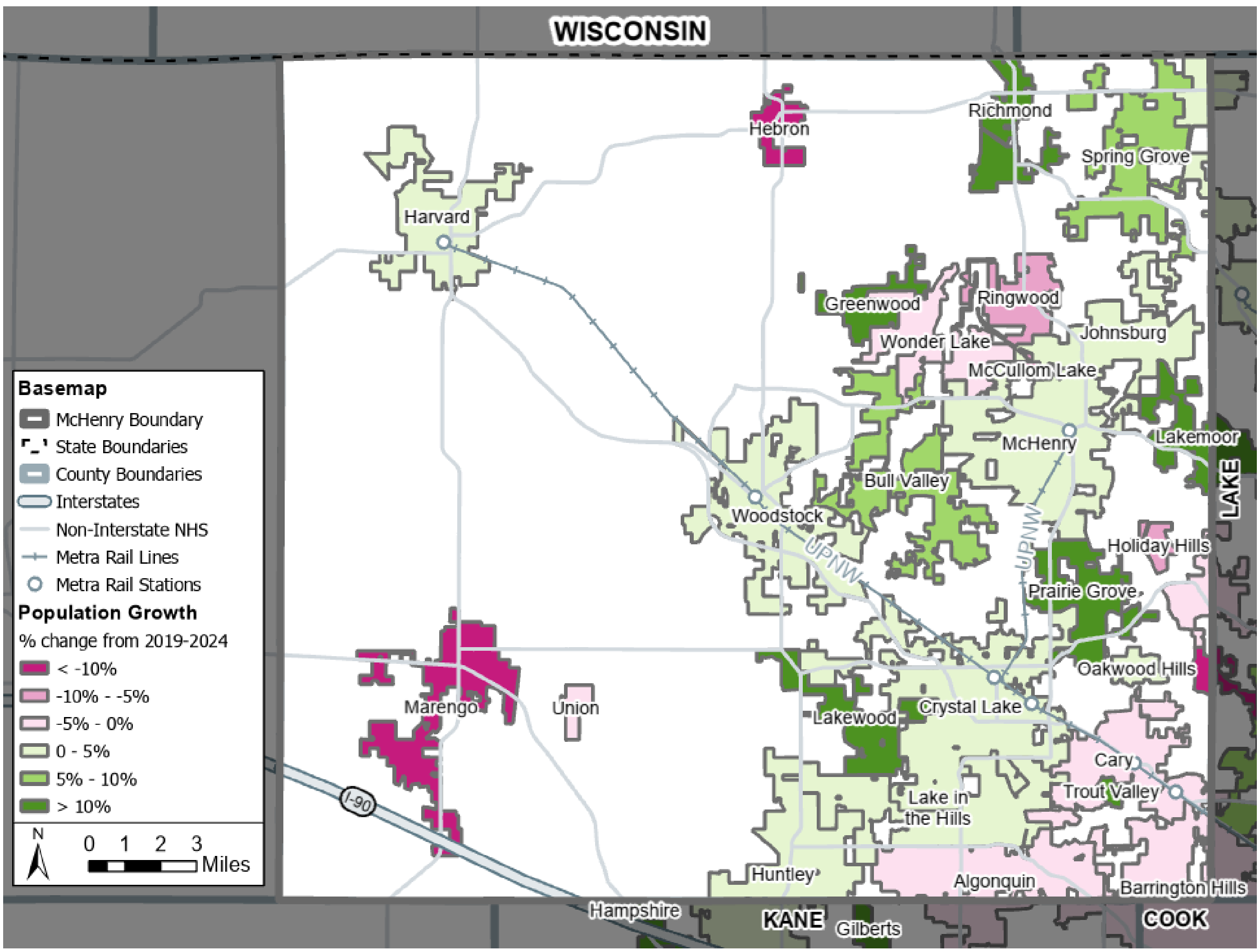
	Housing units			Population		
Municipality	**2019**	**2024**	**Percent change**	**2019**	**2024**	**Percent change**
Greenwood	77	187	Large increase	192	502	Large increase
Richmond	921	1,397	Large increase	2,061	2,622	Large increase
Trout Valley	161	238	Large increase	411	574	Large increase

	Housing units			Population		
Municipality	**2019**	**2024**	**Percent change**	**2019**	**2024**	**Percent change**
Hampshire	2,050	2,604	Large increase	6,008	8,524	Large increase
Lakewood	1,357	1,641	Large increase	3,780	4,707	Slight increase
McHenry	10,529	12,095	Large increase	26,813	28,074	Slight increase
Oakwood Hills	833	947	Large increase	2,336	2,416	Large increase
Johnsburg	2,340	2,642	Large increase	6,384	6,386	No change
Prairie Grove	677	764	Large increase	1,805	2,165	Large increase
Fox Lake	5,334	5,998	Large increase	10,721	11,131	Slight increase
Gilberts	2,708	3,029	Large increase	7,823	8,606	Increase
Bull Valley	467	519	Large increase	1,156	1,269	Increase
Woodstock	10,009	10,846	Increase	25,348	26,147	Slight increase
Union	262	278	Increase	634	624	Slight decrease
Lakemoor	2,482	2,574	Slight increase	5,756	6,467	Large increase
Spring Grove	1,875	1,943	Slight increase	5,614	5,917	Increase
Lake Barrington	2,418	2,502	Slight increase	5,117	5,442	Increase
McCullom Lake	426	438	Slight increase	1,080	1,017	Decrease
Cary	6,551	6,677	Slight increase	17,936	17,923	Slight decrease
Harvard	3,232	3,285	Slight increase	9,281	9,598	Slight increase
Huntley	12,345	12,474	Slight increase	26,966	28,005	Slight increase
Lake in the Hills	9,882	9,952	Slight increase	28,759	28,800	Slight increase
Crystal Lake	15,414	15,256	Slight decrease	39,974	40,579	Slight increase
Port Barrington	571	565	Slight decrease	1,676	1,477	Large decrease
Ringwood	297	286	Slight decrease	789	730	Decrease
Algonquin	11,617	11,151	Slight decrease	30,799	30,067	Slight decrease
Fox River Grove	1,891	1,787	Decrease	4,676	4,523	Slight decrease
Island Lake	3,267	3,073	Decrease	8,035	8,014	Slight decrease
Wonder Lake	1,871	1,720	Decrease	4,466	4,292	Slight decrease
Hebron	513	460	Large decrease	1,469	1,261	Large decrease
Holiday Hills	294	263	Large decrease	680	634	Decrease

	Housing units			Population		
Municipality	**2019**	**2024**	**Percent change**	**2019**	**2024**	**Percent change**
Marengo	3,126	2,788	Large decrease	7,969	7,040	Large decrease
Barrington Hills	1,698	1,447	Large decrease	4,070	3,879	Slight decrease

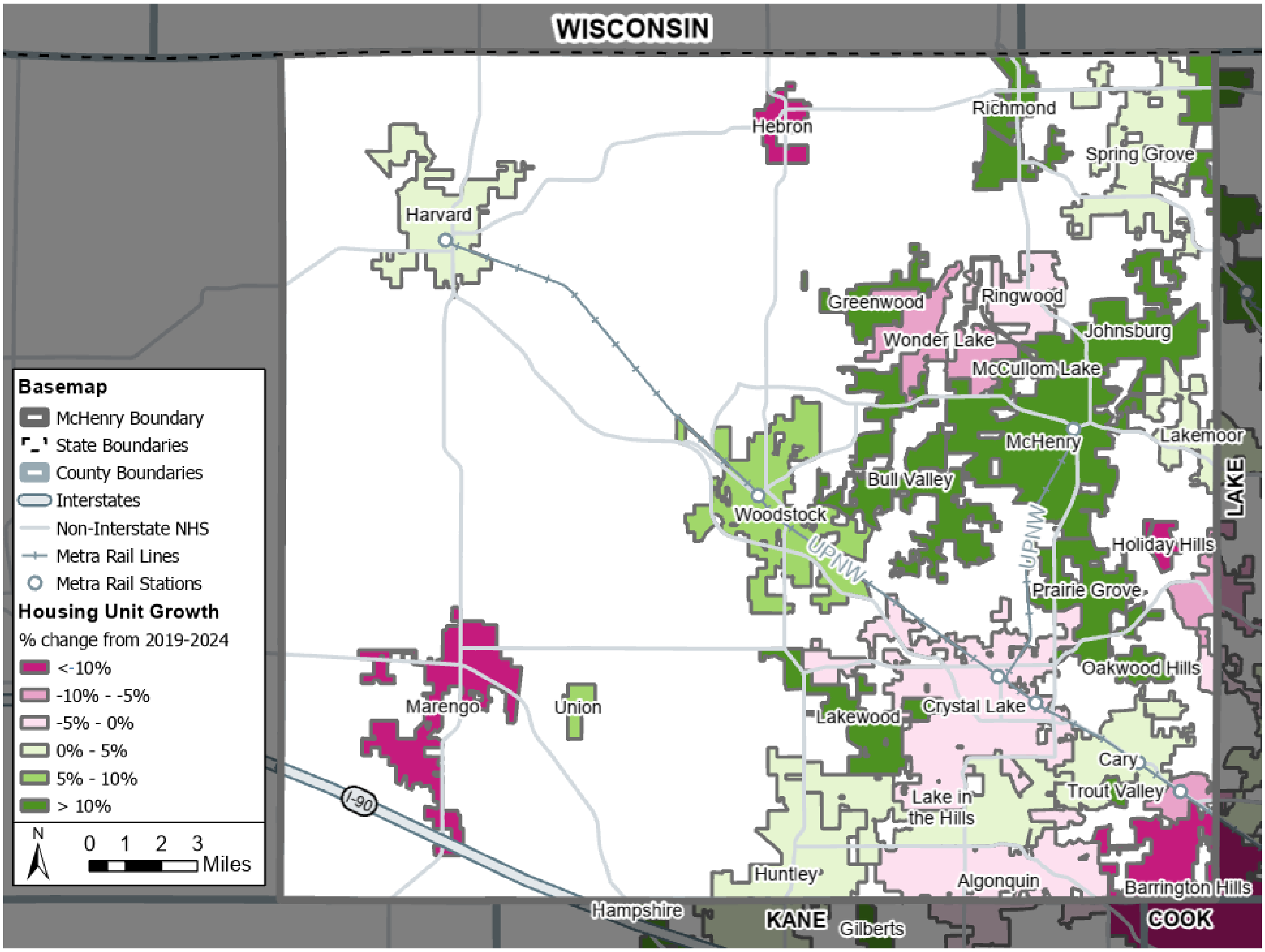
Communities experiencing the largest increases in housing units, dark green in the maps below, tended to be the same places with the strongest population growth. In contrast, municipalities with only moderate housing unit growth, light green in the maps below, often saw moderate population growth as well.

Percent change in population, by municipality, 2019-2024



Housing unit declines were strongly associated with population declines, a pattern that may reflect aging housing stock, redevelopment barriers, or limited local economic momentum. Ten of the eleven communities that experienced percentage declines in housing units also saw percentage declines in population, with Crystal Lake being the only exception. A smaller group of communities experienced large percentage decreases in both units and population, indicating more pronounced challenges related to retention, reinvestment, or broader demographic shifts.

Percent change in housing units, by municipality, 2019-2024



Taken together, these trends illustrate a clear alignment between housing unit change and population trajectories across the county. Growth-oriented communities are seeing reinforcing increases in both people and housing, while places experiencing losses in housing capacity are also disproportionately likely to lose residents.

Considerations for planning and future analysis

Population and housing growth are deeply interconnected. A strong correlation between the two does not imply that building more units automatically attracts more residents, but adequate housing supply makes population growth possible by ensuring that people have places to live. Communities experiencing population increases also see growing housing demand, and insufficient supply—especially when combined with high housing costs—can deter new residents and dissuade employers from investing in areas where workers may struggle to find homes within their budgets.

Vacancy should be incorporated as an important consideration in future research, as available vacant units can provide a buffer when population increases, reducing the immediate need for new housing construction. However, low or declining vacancy rates are key indicators to monitor, as they may signal emerging housing pressures.

Overall, housing availability plays a foundational role in sustaining and supporting population growth. Municipalities that aim to attract or retain residents must consider how land use, zoning, and development policies shape their housing stock. Ensuring that a range of housing options exists is essential not only for meeting current needs but also for enabling future growth and economic vitality. Communities are encouraged to connect with the county and CMAP to learn more about data resources that can support their understanding of local vacancy trends and broader housing dynamics.

Methodology

The analysis draws on two non-overlapping five-year data releases from the American Community Survey, conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau, covering the periods 2014–2019 and 2020–2024. It uses municipality-level counts of housing units and population to calculate percentage changes over time and to compare patterns across communities.

For this analysis, percentage changes greater than ten percent were categorized as large increases; increases between five and ten percent were categorized as increases; slight increases between zero-point-one and five percent were categorized as slight increases; zero percent change was considered no change; slight decreases between negative zero-point-one and negative five percent were categorized as slight decreases; decreases between negative five and negative ten percent were categorized as decreases; and declines greater than negative ten percent were categorized as large decreases.

FY26-0003

The Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) is the region's comprehensive planning organization. The agency and its partners developed and are now implementing ON TO 2050, a long-range plan to help the seven counties and 284 communities of northeastern Illinois implement strategies that address transportation, housing, economic development, open space, the environment, and other quality-of-life issues.

433 West Van Buren Street
Suite 450
Chicago, IL 60607

cmap.illinois.gov
312-454-0400

Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning