

The Housing Component of the City of Syracuse Comprehensive Plan

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Goals, Objectives and Recommended Actions



GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

Based on the data collected during the inventory and the subsequent evaluation of that information, three Housing goals were developed, each with supportive objectives and each of those with recommended actions. Goals are defined as the general results toward which all efforts will be directed. Objectives are the specific attainable results pursuant to each goal; and recommended actions are the policies, programs and physical projects that are the real means to reaching each goal. Recognizing that not all the recommendations presented are fully developed, nor that they all can be accomplished at once, additional research, development of detailed tasks, and public discussion and debate must continue.

The Housing Plan of the Syracuse Comprehensive Plan has four goals:

- To celebrate Syracuse as a great place to live.
- To capitalize on the City's distinctive neighborhoods.
- To strengthen the City housing market.

Goal 1: Celebrate Syracuse as a great place to live.

From the earliest years of the republic to late 1800s, Americans lived within close proximity to their work places out of necessity, and many even resided and worked within the same property. As the 20th century approached advances in industry, along with emergence of the middle class, resulted in more people able to selectively choose where to live. And while the choice often included placing

some distance between home and work, convenience and economy of travel remained a concern, preventing wholesale abandonment of the nation's cities. This trend changed dramatically, however, following World War II when unprecedented economic growth coupled with federal policies led to an explosion of suburban development. Distances between home and work once considered too costly to cover in terms of time and money gradually became acceptable. Outward migration of residents was in some cases matched by a similar shift in business, as some enterprises followed their customers. Fortunately this urban exodus was not complete. Cities continued to house the seats of government, commerce and culture, and remained inhabited by a vivid mosaic of cultural groups. They still had an intensity, an energy, evocative of high concentrations of people within a dense physical environment—and thereby remained decidedly more dynamic and vibrant than their outlying communities. This rich mix of societal components, and the physical fabric that supports it, distinguishes Syracuse from its surroundings—making it a logical choice as “home” for many current and future Central New Yorkers.

Objective 1: Promote urban living.

As the 21st century begins to unfold and Americans continue to benefit from even greater mobility and exponential advances in technology, choosing where to live increasingly has less to do with life's necessities and more to do with personal preferences. Cities offer a wide range of both traditional and innovative housing options and therefore can far better accommodate more segments of the regional population. In addition, cities



such as Syracuse allow individuals and families to pursue increasing amounts of security and equity as housing needs and preferences change over the course of time, without having to move to another community.

Action 1: Emphasize housing options unique to living in the city, such as living in Downtown, near major universities and colleges, and in historic buildings.

Action 2: Encourage acquisition of 2-family houses to first-time homeowners, extended families, and other special markets.

Action 3: Publicize potential for walk-to-work city neighborhoods.

Action 4: Develop incentives to attract police officers, fire fighters and teachers as city residents.

Action 5: Enforce residency requirements for all city employees.

Action 6: Consolidate public relations efforts with other entities to promote in-city living, including a multi-media campaign for widespread distribution.

Objective 2: Maintain and then increase the resident population.

In addition to employment opportunities, a wide variety of factors that influence daily life are considered when choosing a place to live, including social dynamics of a neighborhood, delivery of public services, proximity to convenience and service retail, and return on real property investment. Heightened security and safety concerns that stem from global, regional and local occurrences cannot overshadow the need for cities to address these other quality of life issues. The City

of Syracuse must adopt policies and institute programs that positively respond to the needs and concerns of its current residents, giving those already vested in the community reason to stay. Once out-migration is halted and the population stabilized, the City will realize far greater success in attracting new residents.

Action 1: Encourage regional smart growth and adoption of the Onondaga County Settlement Plan.

Action 2: Pursue diversification and expansion of the city's employment base.

Action 2: Continue to provide a full-range of housing opportunities for a variety of lifestyles.

Action 3: Increase home ownership, including non-traditional options such as co-housing, cooperatives and condominiums.

Action 4: Invest in quality of life resources, such as parks and open space, cultural venues and historic properties.

Action 5: Strengthen the public school system.

Objective 3: Provide support for owner-occupants.

Home ownership can occur at the onset of adulthood and personal independence or it can come at the culmination of years of effort. It can last for a brief period or an entire lifetime, and for that time it can relate to an isolated property or to several different ones. No matter when it began or how long it lasts, home ownership brings with it a wide variety of personal and community responsibilities. One must be prepared not only to meet the



financial obligations of acquiring property, but also to adequately maintain it over time. And this commitment to insure both the fiscal and physical integrity of one's home must extend to the neighborhood in which it is located. Cities such as Syracuse contain a high concentration of private advocacy organizations and public agencies that have the means to assist individuals and families in meeting their obligations as homeowners and neighbors.

Action 1: Coordinate with not-for-profit housing organizations to distribute information regarding existing owner-occupant training and assistance programs.

Action 2: Support rent-to-own programs.

Action 3: Expand existing and create new programs aimed at quality home repair and maintenance.

Action 4: Partner with the building trades and design professionals regarding information and resources regarding quality home repair and maintenance.

Action 5: Target specific existing programs for absentee/investor owners.

Objective 4: Advocate programs that assist renters.

Although home ownership might be a goal for a large number of individuals and families, many do not have nor can they obtain the personal or financial resources necessary to become owner-occupants. Others choose not to take on the responsibilities inherent in ownership; and still others are transient residents who

forgo establishing the ties often associated with owning a home. In any city renters often make up a significant segment of the population and, as such, they should make an emotional investment in the neighborhoods in which they live. The City of Syracuse must take an active role in supporting programs that successfully will address the needs of renters, thereby instilling in them an increased sense of community-belonging and civic pride.

Action 1: Encourage creation of tenant associations.

Action 2: Coordinate with not-for-profit organizations and state and federal agencies regarding renters' insurance, legal services, and similar programs.

Objective 5: Require accountability of absentee investor owners.

Cities across the country, and particularly in the Northeast, generally have seen a steady decline in population over the last fifty years. A common result of this decrease in residents is an oversupply of housing, which in turn can lead to a depressed housing market. The resulting low property values attract investors, many from outside a community. While such absentee property owners seek to maximize their investment over time, their remote location and therefore lack of personal association with a city can result in negligible improvement to both the fiscal and physical condition of individual properties, and by extension neighborhoods. With appropriate policies and programs in place, Syracuse can safeguard against insensitive and/or irresponsible absentee investors

Action 1: Enforce codes and ordinances consistently.

Action 2: Create and implement rental housing licensing program.

Action 3: Tax all non-owner occupant residential properties as commercial property.

Objective 6: Enhance neighborhood identity and character.

Every neighborhood in every city has physical and cultural characteristics that make it a great place to live—or that, with careful planning and determination, can be used to make it more attractive in the future. Some of these characteristics have been entrenched in the collective psyche for generations and are as commonplace as a traffic light or as extraordinary as dramatic, natural topography. Some are relatively new additions, such as the calligraphy of Eastern Asia or the fragrance of Caribbean cuisine. Regardless, overtime these features can define a neighborhood, providing residents with a sense of shared identity and purpose. Syracuse has many outstanding neighborhoods that evoke such feelings, and several others that have the potential to illicit a similar response.

Action 1: Improve the TNT program.

- Define smaller sectors.
- Develop common program goals and objectives.
- Foster community and political support for program.
- Provide professional staff support, including seasoned senior level planners/designers and training opportunities for younger members.
- Publicize program results.

Action 2: Support neighborhood businesses as integral to neighborhood identity.

Action 3: Invest in neighborhood parks and open space.

Action 4: Retain and expand neighborhood-based schools.

Action 5: Promote and expand existing community-participation programs.

- Continue community gardens opportunities
- Promote adopt-a-lots opportunities
- Support neighborhood watch

Action 6: Promote existing and new neighborhood-based events and programs.

- Support both existing and new festivals, parades and similar celebrations.
- Create public awards programs recognizing notable neighborhood persons, places and events.
- Partner with not-for-profit organizations to publicize neighborhood events and programs.

Action 7: Promote civic responsibility and community involvement.

Objective 7: Enhance the role of local universities and colleges in city life.

Recent trends in community planning strongly promote advancing the “creative class,” that portion of the general population involved in the visual and performing arts, design, technology and medicine. There also is a call for cities to grow their under-40 population, those persons just entering the work force, beginning careers and making their first contributions to society. Institutions of higher learning are principal generators of such individuals and therefore potentially can have the greatest success involving the creative class and younger adults in a community. Syracuse is fortunate to be

home to several nationally recognized universities and colleges, each of which already contributes to the community. Expanding already successful town-gown ventures and partnerships and fostering new ones will serve both the City and institutions well.

Action 1: Encourage community-based, off-campus involvements.

- Support unique off-campus classroom options, such as Syracuse University Architecture and Fine Arts programs.
- Support entrepreneurial business programs, such as those through the Syracuse University Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs.
- Support cooperation between area universities and colleges and the Syracuse School District, such as the ESF In the Classroom program by the SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry.
- Increase municipal internships and community service opportunities for area university and college students.
- Collaborate with faculty and students through service learning and research.

Action 2: Encourage institution-sponsored programs promoting civic responsibility in students living off-campus.

- Promote LeMoyne College off-campus residency requirements as a model.
- Consider national examples for local application.

Action 3: Encourage all area universities and colleges to be “good neighbors.”

Goal 2: Capitalize on the City’s distinctive neighborhoods.

Cities are physically complex, decidedly heterogeneous, and above all dense. Street, blocks and lots are arranged in discernible patterns, sometimes with no one organization more dominate than the others and resulting in an intricately woven configuration. Within these patterns, buildings and structures are present in a multitude of sizes and shapes and exhibiting an abundant array of stylistic accouterments, materials and colors. What at first glance might appear as row upon row of the same is anything but. Seemingly uniform collections are unquestionably distinguished by the richness of their detail. Similarly there are open spaces that contribute to a city’s visual and physical variety, sometimes occurring as breaks in the pattern and at other times reinforcing the underlying organization. These places are important counterpoints to the otherwise tightly packed composition of buildings and structures that define a city. They serve to contrast with, rather than replace, dense urban fabric. And it is this density, the intimacy that comes from buildings in close proximity to one another, that more than any other physical characteristic sets a city apart from its surroundings. Demolition of even one building can diminish traditional density. Loss of multiple buildings can be devastating. Syracuse must make the most of all these physical attributes, particularly as they occur within the neighborhoods, for these places are the essence of city living.

Objective 1: Preserve diverse physical neighborhood character.

City neighborhoods are the canvas upon which generations of individuals and families leave evidence of their lives. They are a composite of personal and

shared values and experiences manifested in physical features and cultural expression. They are illustrative of how the citizenry finds comfort and security, expresses triumph and success, and commemorates loss and disappointment. And like their inhabitants, neighborhoods are unique. For despite having similarities in size and shape, economic and physical condition, or total population and demographic breakdown, city neighborhoods are distinguishable from one another in their details. Syracuse has such distinctive, yet compatible, neighborhoods—and both the physical character of the city as a whole and that of its individual parts must be protected and enhanced.

Action 1: Retain traditional densities.

- Create and enforce standards for minimum and maximum lot frontages.
- Modify and enforce standards for minimum and maximum lot coverage.

Action 2: Improve streetscape character.

- Continue implementation of the *Comprehensive Urban Forest Management Plan*.
- Create and implement comprehensive streetscape design and maintenance standards.
- Utilize light levels to enhance streetscape character.
- Commit to short- and long-term public investment for public improvements.

Action 3: Ensure neighborhood walkability.

- Develop a comprehensive pedestrian circulation plan.
- Provide clearly defined pedestrian connections from residential areas to neighborhood schools, library

branches, parks and open space, and business areas.

- Ensure universal access.

Action 4: Encourage alternative, non-vehicular circulation.

- Pursue connections to regional bicycle systems.
- Investigate intra-city bicycle system
- Investigate potential to expand intra-city On-Track service.

Action 5: Address physical parking needs.

- Modify and enforce design standards for parking lots.
- Create legal and administrative mechanisms and design standards for neighborhood parking lots.
- Institute residential parking permit program in key neighborhoods.

Action 6: Retain and/or introduce physical features that distinguish individual neighborhoods.

- Retain historic and/or traditional features such as entry walls/piers, signs, decorative lighting, and brick street paving.
- Promote neighborhood identification signs.
- Implement a multi-faceted, neighborhood-based public art program.

Action 7: Address transitional edges of neighborhoods.

- Promote pedestrian connections between adjacent neighborhoods.
- Improve streetscape character in areas of transition
- Improve current and future conditions at unique neighborhood edges.
- Mitigate impacts high volume corridors such as the interstates and urban arterials.

- Implement recommendations for open space improvements along the Onondaga Creek corridor.

Objective 2: Retain traditional and add new housing types.

To be socially and economically successful a city must support a diverse population and therefore offer a wide variety of housing options. There must be a good assortment of both housing types and affordability to serve the greatest cross-section of the citizenry. Housing types must address both owner-occupants and renters, and include apartments, detached single-family residences, condominiums, co-operatives, work-live units, and assisted living facilities. Existing building stock must be considered a first priority in providing these choices, and compatible new construction used to supplement the supply as demand increases. Creative adaptive re-use, property assembly, and public-private partnerships also can be used to provide new or currently under-represented housing types in the community. In addition housing options must serve the range of incomes found within the population, providing high-quality public, affordable and market-rate choices. The building stock and distinct neighborhoods in Syracuse have the potential to provide this exciting mix of housing types as well as a broad range of affordability.

Action 1: Increase property inspections and improve code enforcement.

- Identify alternative sources of funding to support additional inspectors.
- Explore potential for frequent cyclical inspections.

Action 2: Create and enforce guidelines for repair and maintenance of existing housing stock.

Action 3: Promote reuse of select older large buildings for housing.

- Coordinate with not-for-profit organizations and individual property owners to market available buildings.
- Support conversion of large, former single-family houses into multiple units.
- Support conversion of former industrial buildings into multiple units.
- Support development of work-live units, such as artists' lofts/studios.
- Support mixed-use projects.

Action 4: Target reuse of existing smaller housing stock.

- Coordinate with not-for-profit organizations and individual property owners to develop and/or market existing smaller houses to first-time buyers and singles.
- Coordinate with not-for-profit organizations to develop retirement and life-care communities.

Action 5: Promote housing types that attract a broad market.

Action 6: Encourage new housing development in Downtown.

Objective 3: Undertake a comprehensive approach to vacant properties.

Cities that continue to suffer from a steadily declining population are faced with an oversupply of housing, some of which becomes vacant, tax delinquent and/or abandoned in the face of decreasing property values. Such disinvestment first becomes evident in the rapid deterioration of buildings due to a lack of maintenance or acts of vandalism. It is more glaring as buildings are razed and replaced by vacant, often unkempt



lots. And it is unmistakable when there is no discernible plan for reversing the trend. The result is incremental destruction of traditional neighborhood composition and ultimately community character. Many Syracuse neighborhoods have fallen prey to the combination of less-than-effective code enforcement and an aggressive municipal demolition policy, leaving many blocks physically scarred and visually disturbing. Both policies and programs must be put in place to ensure more positive short- and long-term solutions to the problem of vacant properties.

Action 1: Promote retention of existing buildings over demolition.

- Modify and enforce requirements for securing vacant buildings.
- Prioritize code enforcement and policing of vacant buildings.
- Coordinate with not-for-profit organizations and individual property owners to market vacant buildings.

Action 2: Promote new construction on open neighborhood lots.

- Create and enforce maintenance standards for vacant lots.
- Coordinate with not-for-profit organizations and individual property owners to develop and/or market individual vacant lots.
- Create and enforce design guidelines to ensure compatible new construction.

Action 3: Develop special options for strategically located vacant lots.

Objective 4: Develop a comprehensive park and open space plan.

The physical and cultural vibrancy of a city neighborhood can be greatly enhanced by the amount of open space

found within or adjacent to it. Large-scale municipal parks act as physical and visual counterbalances to the buildings and structures that comprise the bulk of neighborhood texture. They are contrasting yet complimentary to the forms, materials, textures and colors of architecture. Small parks and open spaces provide similar relief, although on a more intimate scale as they relate to more immediate portions of a neighborhood. Natural areas, whether maintained or unmanaged, afford a more striking contrast with city fabric but nonetheless add to neighborhood character and identity. The City of Syracuse has an outstanding collection of formal, informal and natural open spaces that increase the attractiveness of its neighborhoods. Employing a more pro-active approach to managing, maintaining and using these places will only enhance this quality.

Action 1: Design and implement a management and maintenance plan for all public park/open space properties.

Action 2: Use small-scale parks and open space to enhance neighborhood character.

Action 3: Promote historic significance of key parks.

- Designate all eligible historic properties.
- Maintain historic features.
- Publicize park histories.

Action 4: Develop master plan for Onondaga Creek corridor that recognizes its value as a neighborhood amenity.

Action 5: Encourage the establishment of park friends groups.



Objective 5: Revise the Zoning Rules and Regulations.

The current Syracuse Zoning Rules and Regulations originally were written in 1922, and have not been completely revised since the 1950s. Changes made at that time reflect the popular mid-twentieth century focus of promoting more suburban, and therefore less dense, physical city fabric. Limited revisions made sporadically since then do not relate to an overarching approach to long-range community planning, but rather to single issues raised by various constituencies. The result is that the current text provides little direction as to preferred land use patterns, physical characteristics or visual quality, and addresses primarily use and building bulk, mass and setbacks. A comprehensive revision of the zoning ordinance that incorporates greater sensitivity to traditional urban fabric will result in a legal mechanism supportive of smart growth and economic reinvestment.

Action 1: Provide direct correlation to the Comprehensive Plan.

Action 2: Reinforce existing, desirable land use patterns in terms of allowable and special uses.

Action 3: Incorporate provisions for conservation districts as per the Preservation Component of the Comprehensive Plan.

Action 4: Expand requirements for planned institutional districts, including provisions that address issues of aesthetics and physical context—particularly where contiguous to residential zones.

Action 5: Expand and enforce the requirements for surface parking lots and screening.

Action 6: Expand and enforce provisions of the sign ordinance, particularly as related to all signage in residential districts.

Action 7: Incorporate additional overlay districts.

Action 8: Expand design review mechanisms and design guidelines.

Action 9: Develop guidelines for reviewing and approving variance, subdivision and special permit requests.

Action 10: Increase public notification time, area and degree of information disseminated.

Action 11: Incorporate professional qualifications and training for City Planning Commission and Board of Zoning Appeals members.

Goal 3: Strengthen the City housing market.

As suburban sprawl continues to swallow millions of acres of farmland and woodlots, traditional American cities are seeing their economic base threatened if not significantly diminished. Developers continue to be lured to outlying areas by relatively cheap land, low construction costs and public subsidies, taking their capital for investment further and further from urban centers. Left in the wake of these visually chaotic, functionally complex and culturally mundane environments, the nation's cities battle to remain financially solvent and socially viable. They struggle to attract investors because urban land remains comparatively expensive and construction is somewhat more costly. And they must fight against

the real and perceived negatives of concentrated poverty that result from public policies and programs. While all city sectors suffer from these factors, the effect perhaps is most disheartening in the neighborhood housing market. Many cities have had some success in combating these factors, but most often through individual projects that have had isolated impact. To realize more comprehensive financial revitalization, and in particular a rejuvenated housing market, there must be a commitment to diversifying and strengthening a city's economic base—in large part by stabilizing and then expanding the number of middle-income residents. Increasing this component of the Syracuse population will help fuel the community's economic engine, for these are the individuals and families that have the financial wherewithal to create jobs, invest in their homes, steadfastly add to the tax base, and make contributions to the community at large.

Objective 1: Advocate for housing reinvestment.

In order to reverse the trend of inner city abandonment and declining property values, steps must be taken to instill investor confidence in urban neighborhoods. Homeowners must have some assurance that investments made in their property will not be diminished or entirely undermined by inappropriate development, abandonment or demolition. Although it might not be possible to guarantee a particular rate of return, there should be some degree of certainty that both the financial and emotional capital expended was worth the risk. Outside investors, however, often require a more definitive promise of reasonable financial profit and, not being personally vested in the neighborhood, will more readily withdraw their interest at the first signs of potential loss. To

prevent such decisions, cities such as Syracuse can enact public policies and programs that set the stage for private investment.

Action 1: Develop and distribute information about available housing programs.

- Improve communication and administrative links to current programs through multi-media outlets.
- Enhance and continually update data.
- Coordinate with not-for-profit organizations to distribute information.
- Publicize successful projects that incorporate current programs.

Action 2: Enhance existing local programs.

- Revise and promote Section 444a of the local Real Property Tax Law to provide maximum exemptions.
- Promote the Home Value Protection program.
- Target a percentage of existing programs in close proximity to one another.

Action 3: Encourage creation of new and expansion of existing employer-based incentives for owner-occupant acquisitions.

- Promote programs offered by St. Joseph's Hospital, Syracuse University and LeMoyne College as good local models.
- Encourage existing program providers to develop complimentary offerings, such as home improvement assistance.
- Target current and new major employers to create similar programs.

Action 4: Capture capital available from out-of-area investors.



- Coordinate with not-for-profit organizations to create investment vehicle linked to housing.
- Proactively pursue prospective investors.
- Promote use of neighborhood plans to guide expenditure of investment dollars.

Action 5: Create new assistance programs based on successful national models.

- Establish financial mechanisms that assist owner-occupants of market-rate housing.
- Develop and implement programs that prevent unnecessary demolition.
- Provide programs that assist at-risk property owners, such as the elderly.
- Continue public-private partnerships to advance housing development.

Action 6: Support passage of federal and state tax credit programs for owners of historic homes.

Objective 2: Promote the low cost and great variety of in-city market-rate housing.

Housing in American city neighborhoods comes in a range of sizes, configurations, physical conditions, aesthetic quality and costs; and it most is often densely arranged in layers that have developed over generations. This variety has the potential to satisfy a broad spectrum of the citizenry, thereby ensuring community diversity and vibrancy. As urban populations continue to decline, however, it is difficult to see this potential. Housing abandonment, building demolition and loss of neighborhood character discourage economic investment and eventually lead to reduced property values. Certainly such a downward turn in a city's financial state should be avoided. However once

the decline is in progress, the depressed real estate values can and must be seen as a means to reverse the trend. The case must be made that the low cost of high quality housing in a city like Syracuse is too good to pass up.

Action 1: Market in-city housing options as offering the potential for increased amounts of financial security and equity, as well as perpetual affordability.

Action 2: Endorse unique in-city options as meeting contemporary living preferences and needs.

Action 3: Endorse 2-family houses as an affordable option for most first-time homeowners.

Action 4: Coordinate efforts with Chamber of Commerce and Metropolitan Development Association to attract employees from new and expanding businesses as new city residents.

Action 5: Use regional events to attract new residents.

Action 6: Support creation of joint public-private multi-media outlets to market city housing.

- Illustrate advantages of in-city living.
- Describe the added features of city housing types.
- Describe the broad array of housing and neighborhood choices
- Extol the economic value associated with in-city homeownership.
- Partner with the Greater Syracuse Board of Realtors to collect and disseminate information.

Objective 3: Promote new housing projects.

Both public and private sources of funding are available to support housing development projects within cities. Some programs are restricted to projects that address low- and moderate-income individuals and families, while a few others are more broad-based. Regardless of the focus, city administrations must leverage these resources to attract developers. Additionally both comprehensive community plans and more specific neighborhood strategies can lend credibility to and ensure the success of urban housing projects. Any well thought-out approach to strengthening the Syracuse housing market must include provisions for new and innovatively structured housing proposals.

Action 1: Develop and distribute information about available financial assistance programs.

- Improve communication and administrative links to current programs through multi-media outlets.
- Enhance and continually update data.
- Coordinate with not-for-profit organizations to distribute information.
- Publicize successful projects that incorporated current programs.

Action 2: Create new programs based on successful national models.

- Establish financial mechanisms that assist owner-occupants of market-rate housing.
- Provide programs that assist growing and new markets, such as the elderly and the creative class.
- Continue public-private partnerships to advance housing development.
- Proactively seek developers for key properties.

Action 3: Streamline development review process for housing projects of all scales and sizes.

- Develop guidelines for submission requirements.
- Coordinate review responsibilities among city departments.

Objective 4: Pursue redevelopment of vacant land for housing.

The short-term physical treatment of vacant properties and their long-term disposition requires careful consideration by a city administration. Vacant buildings, particularly those left abandoned and lacking maintenance for a significant period, do not contribute significantly to the tax base. Vacant lots produce even less in taxable income for a city and, worse yet, diminish the value of surrounding properties. Cities that establish and enforce serious penalties for building abandonment, tax delinquency and/or code violations can begin to dilute assaults on a neighborhood's economic base. A complimentary approach for dealing with already vacant lots, including alternatives to demolition, can further prevent degradation of older neighborhoods in cities like Syracuse.

Action 1: Monitor availability of land for development.***Action 2: Implement site control strategies, such as land banking, for multiple vacant properties in key neighborhoods.******Action 3: Work with not-for-profit organizations and private interests, such as the Home Builders Association, to market and develop sites.***

Action 4: Support creative development options, such as an in-city Parade of Homes and urban retirement communities.

Objective 5: Preserve neighborhood commercial areas.

Housing and neighborhood business areas are strongly dependent on one another, each lending economic stability and social viability to the other. The residential sector provides the customers necessary to support the range of businesses traditionally found in these small enclaves. The commercial areas provide the residents with a place to obtain goods and services, exchange ideas and information, and experience cultural expression. They offer entrepreneurs the chance to establish new businesses and expand older ones, and in doing so to provide job opportunities. And they help to keep cities walkable. Syracuse boasts a great many neighborhood business areas containing both long-established and innovated establishments. The continued economic success of these areas will have a positive impact on the value of adjacent residential properties.

Action 1: Support traditional mix of convenience retail in neighborhoods.

- Identify key individual business and commercial areas in neighborhood plans.
- Target existing economic development programs for business retention and expansion.
- Proactively seek out new businesses to diversity neighborhood options.
- Encourage participation in small business training programs.
- Promote benefits of Empire and Empowerment Zones where applicable.

Action 2: Promote community responsibility among neighborhood businesses.

- Enforce Certificate of Use regulations.
- Encourage business sponsorship of neighborhood organizations and events.

Action 3: Pursue annual participation in New York State Main Street program.

Objective 6: Explore taxation policies that generate a more equitable distribution of the property tax burden.

Some of the most popular incentives used to encourage development are tax abatements and credits, particularly those used to reduce real property taxes. Projects incorporating these allowances can have an immediate, positive impact on a city's economic condition. If the tax abatements are permanent, however, the long-term economic benefits of these projects are somewhat diminished. Similarly reuse of vacant properties by tax-exempt entities—while potentially resulting in physical, visual and social improvements, has limited lasting economic payment as they generate no net gain in property taxes. Syracuse, which already has an inordinate percentage of its properties held by non-taxable owners as well as others that have full or partial permanent exemptions, should consider measures that will provide more reasonable distribution property tax responsibilities.

Action 1: Prioritize proposals for vacant properties that will generate real property taxes.

Action 2: Limit the reuse of vacant properties for institutional,

governmental and other tax-exempt purposes.

Action 3: Support temporary rather than long-term and/or permanent real property tax abatement and/or exemptions.

Action 4: Reconsider present valuation process and formula.

The three goals of the Housing Component of the Comprehensive Plan clearly recognize the importance of establishing community-based programs that champion urban living, fostering an appreciation for the urban fabric that comprises Syracuse's unique housing options and diverse neighborhoods, and pursuing all available resources to maximize economic benefits for the city housing market.



Goal Two: Capitalize on the City’s distinctive neighborhoods.

Objective 1: Preserve diverse physical neighborhood character.

Action 1: Retain traditional densities.



Shotwell Park, Eastwood.

Action 2: Improve streetscape character.



Inappropriate street tree maintenance.

Action 3: Ensure neighborhood walkability.

Action 4: Encourage alternative, non-vehicular circulation.



Viable transportation alternative.

Action 5: Address physical parking needs.

Action 6: Retain and/or introduce the physical features that distinguish individual neighborhoods.



Neighborhood marker.

Action 7: Address transitional edges of neighborhoods.

Objective 2: Retain traditional and add new housing types.

Action 1: Increase property inspection and improve code enforcement.

Action 2: Create and enforce guidelines for repair and maintenance of existing housing stock.

Action 3: Promote reuse of select older large buildings for housing.



Brick School Terrace, adaptive reuse of former school.

Action 4: Target reuse of existing smaller housing stock.



Example of small scale housing stock.

Action 6: Encourage new housing development in Downtown.

Action 5: Promote housing types that attract a broad market.

Objective 3: Undertake a comprehensive approach to vacant properties.

Action 1: Promote retention of existing buildings over demolition.



Building demolition on Westside.

Action 2: Promote new construction on open neighborhood lots.



New construction on Southwest neighborhood.

Action 3: Develop special options for strategically located vacant lots.

Objective 4: Develop a comprehensive park and open space plan.



Sunnycrest Park.

Action 1: Design and implement a management and maintenance plan for all public park/open space properties.



Fence replacement in Salem Hyde neighborhood playground.

Action 2: Use small-scale parks and open space to enhance neighborhood character.



Lewis Park, Tipperary Hill.

Action 3: Promote historic significance of key parks.



Amphitheater in Thornden Park.

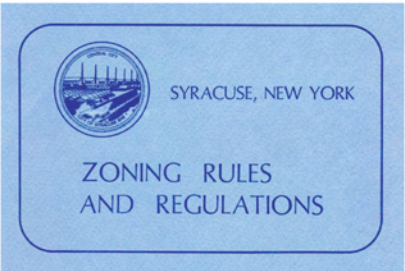
Action 4: Develop master plan for Onondaga Creek corridor that recognizes its value as a neighborhood amenity



Onondaga Creek in Kirk Park.

Action 5: Encourage the establishment of park friends groups.

Objective 5: Revise the Zoning Rules and Regulations.



Syracuse zoning ordinance.

Action 1: Provide direct correlation to the Comprehensive Plan.

Action 2: Reinforce existing, desirable land use patterns in terms of allowable and special uses.

Action 3: Incorporate provisions for conservation districts as per the Preservation Component of the Comprehensive Plan.

Action 4: Expand requirements for planned institutional districts, including provisions that address issues of aesthetics and physical context-particularly where contiguous to residential zones.

Action 5: Expand and enforce the requirements for surface parking lots and screening.

Action 6: Expand and enforce provisions of the sign ordinance, particularly as related to all signage in residential districts.

Action 7: Incorporate additional overlay districts.

Action 8: Expand design review mechanisms and design guidelines.

Action 9: Develop guidelines for reviewing and approving variance, subdivision and special permit requests.

Action 10: Increase public notification time, area and degree of information disseminated.

Action 11: Incorporate professional qualifications and training for City Planning Commission and Board of Zoning Appeals members.



Goal Three: Strengthen the City housing market.

Objective 1: Advocate for housing re-investment.



Recent property sale..

Action 1: Develop and distribute information about available housing programs.



Home Headquarters, Inc. brochures.

Action 2: Enhance existing local programs.

Action 3: Encourage creation of new and expansion of existing employer-based incentives for owner-occupant acquisitions.

Action 4: Capture capital available from out-of-area investors.



Increasing outside investment.

Action 5: Create new assistance programs based on successful national models.

Action 6: Support passage of federal and state tax credit programs for owners of historic homes.



Historic 1850 home in Hawley-Green District.

Objective 2: Promote the low cost and great variety of in-city market-rate housing.

Action 1: Market in-city housing options as offering the potential for increased amounts of financial security and equity, as well as perpetual affordability.



Growing options for home buyers.

Action 2: Endorse unique in-city options as meeting contemporary living preferences and needs.

Action 3: Endorse 2-family houses as an affordable option for most first-time homeowners.

Action 4: Coordinate efforts with Chamber of Commerce and Metropolitan Development Association to attract employees from new and expanding businesses as new city residents.

Action 5: Use regional events to attract new residents.



Annual New York State Fair.

Action 6: Support creation of joint public-private multi-media outlets to market city housing.

Objective 3: Promote new housing projects.

Action 1: Develop and distribute information about available financial assistance programs.



Current programs and organizations.

Action 2: Create new programs based on successful national models.

Action 3: Streamline development review process for housing projects of all scales and sizes.

Objective 4: Pursue redevelopment of vacant land for housing.

Action 1: Monitor availability of land for development.



One of many vacant lots in the city.

Action 2: Implement site control strategies, such as land banking, for multiple vacant properties in key neighborhoods.



Infill housing examples in near Northeast neighborhood.

Action 3: Work with Not-for-profit organizations and private interests, such as the Home Builders Association, to market and develop sites.

Action 4: Support creative development options, such as in-city Parade of Homes and urban retirement communities.

Objective 5: Preserve neighborhood commercial areas.



Book store on James Street.

Action 1: Support traditional mix of convenience retail in neighborhoods.



A family favorite in the Valley since 1954.

Action 2: Promote community responsibility among neighborhood businesses.

Action 3: Pursue annual participation in New York State Main Street Program.



North Salina Street.

Objective 6: Explore taxation policies that generate a more equitable distribution of the property tax burden.



Change of assessment notification.

Action 1: Prioritize proposals for vacant properties that will generate real property taxes.

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Action 4: Reconsider present valuation process and formula.

