



City of Schenectady 2020-2024 *DRAFT* Consolidated 5-Year Strategic Plan

Strategic Plan Overview

The City of Schenectady, as a participating jurisdiction, receives an annual allocation of funding through the Federal Community Development Block Grant Program (CDBG), the Federal HOME Investment Partnership Program (HOME), and the Emergency Solutions Grants Program (ESG). Allocations and the use of these funds are predicated on the following *National Objectives*:

- **To benefit low- and moderate-income persons**
- **To aid in the prevention or elimination of slums or blight**
- **To meet community development needs having a particular urgency**

The **Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)** program targets activities that assist persons having low/moderate-income levels related to the area median income. CDBG funding supports activities that provide decent housing; a suitable living environment; and expanded economic opportunities.

The purpose of the **Federal HOME Investment Partnership Program (HOME)** is to expand the supply of affordable housing for low and very low-income families and individuals. Localities can use HOME funds for: acquisition of property; construction of new and/or rehabilitation of rental or owner-occupied units; and/or demolition of dilapidated housing and improvement of sites for HOME-assisted development.

The **Emergency Solutions Grants (ESG)** program provides funding to participating localities for assistance to homeless persons with basic shelter and essential supportive services. ESG funds are available for: rehabilitation of a building used as a new shelter; operations and maintenance of a facility; essential supportive services (i.e., case management, physical and mental health treatment, substance abuse counseling, childcare, etc.); homelessness prevention activities; and grant administration.

Citizen Participation and Consultation

Public and service provider input is instrumental in developing Plan goals and objectives for proposed funding allocations. The Department of Development conducted outreach and consultation with citizens, neighborhood groups, nonprofits, and governmental agencies to determine community needs and establish Plan priorities. In accordance with the City's approved *Citizen Participation Plan*, outreach consisted of meetings with neighborhood residents and consultations with professionals and practitioners in fields related to community development. Criteria for selecting meeting places included convenience and accessibility. Meetings held (below) were advertised in accordance with the Citizen Participation Plan.

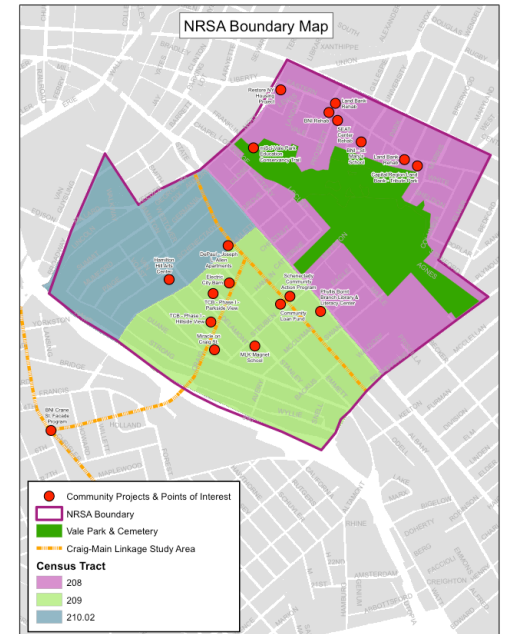
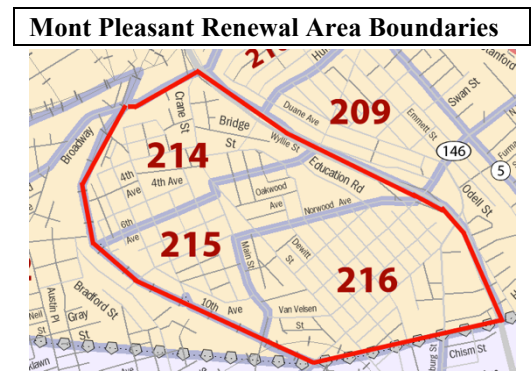
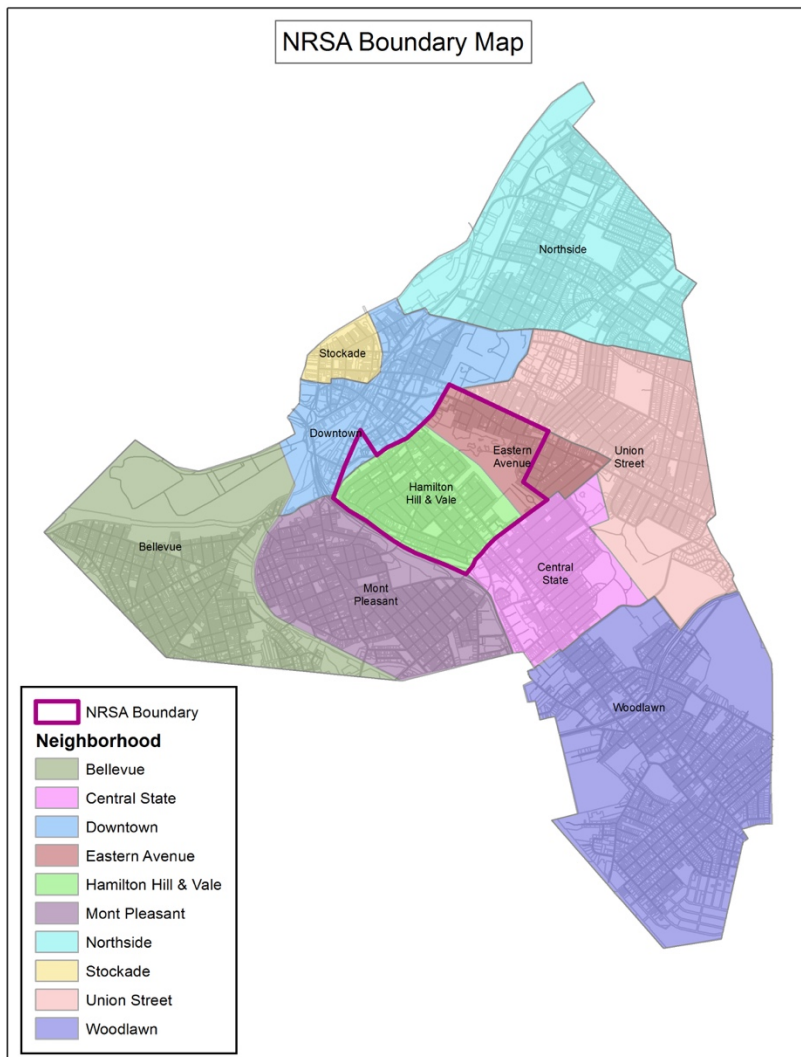
- December 17, 2019, Community Stakeholder/Service Provider Focus Group Meeting, City Hall
- February 25, 2020: Phyllis Bornt Branch Library & Literacy Center, 6 p.m.
- February 26, 2020: Mont Pleasant Library, 6p.m.

The process culminated in the identification of the following high priority community needs : **Housing, Youth Engagement, Workforce Development** and **Public Infrastructure**.

Geographic and General Allocation Priorities

During the period of this five-year plan, the City of Schenectady anticipates primarily funding activities designed to address the four (4) identified high priority needs, and the associated objectives shown in the following section. Lower priority community needs will still be considered, within the confines of available funding and other resources available to support these needs. Priority will be given to projects/programs directly addressing these goals and objectives. Emphasis will be placed on targeted investments that would have a significant impact on the HUD designated Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy Area (NRSA), and on the Mont Pleasant Renewal Area.

The maps below depict the boundaries of the City's Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy Area (NRSA) and Mont Pleasant Renewal Area. Documents with additional maps and descriptions of these target areas can be found at <https://cityofscheneectady.com/195/Development>.



Priority Needs, Objectives and Outcomes Identified

The 2020-2024 5-Year Consolidated Plan proposes a strategic investment approach, focused on using HUD funding to make a concentrated impact in key areas, and on building capacity through leveraged funding and collaborative community efforts. Building off of the HUD funded 2017 Community Needs Assessment, with stakeholder and public input, current and near future (1-5 year) priority needs were identified. These needs, framed within the constraints of allowable uses and the amount of available HUD funding, led to the development of the following 2020-2024 goals and objectives.

GOAL #1: Housing Opportunities – Priority 1

Support programs that provide quality, affordable housing options and initiatives for rehabilitation of the existing housing to help stabilize neighborhoods and meet the needs of all residents.

Objectives:

1. **Support Housing Rehabilitation** - Provide loan and grant programs for homeowners and landlords in key areas of the City to remedy blighted conditions.
2. **Emergency Housing Services** – Work with social service organizations that provide rental assistance, utility assistance, and emergency shelter to residents to reduce homelessness throughout the City.
3. **Provide Wraparound Services for Public Housing Residents** - Assist with housing support services (case management) related to mental health, addiction, independent living skills, employment and education.
4. **Address Dilapidated Properties** – Support neighborhood stabilization, technical assistance and code enforcement activities. Provide home repair assistance to homeowners as a preventative measure. Provide funding to manage vacant city owned properties and to assure they do not become health and safety risks.
5. **Offer Homeownership Incentives** - Support programs that enable homeownership, including down payment assistance, low interest loans and housing counseling.

GOAL #2: Expand Economic & Workforce Development – Priority 2

Assist small businesses and non-profit organizations located in the target areas to remove major barriers to the City's growth and prosperity by supporting and increasing access through infrastructure upgrades and programs that provide training, technical assistance and work opportunities.

Objectives:

1. **Upgrade Infrastructure and Streetscapes** - Coordinate actions and available resources for infrastructure upgrades, streetscape improvements and public space amenities to support the growth of existing businesses and attract new economic activity.
2. **Support Workforce and Leadership Diversity** - Support City recruitment policies, local re-integration programs and leadership opportunities that embrace diversity.
3. **Foster Training to Work Pipelines** – Support programs that include training, paid internships, apprenticeships and mentorship programs focused on local employment sector needs.
4. **Remove Employment Barriers** - Provide access to reliable transportation options, affordable childcare, and technical assistance to enable parents and others to find and retain jobs throughout the City.

GOAL #3: Strengthen Local Neighborhoods - Priority 3

Enhance community assets and advance cultural and recreational initiatives to engage residents, improve health, safety and education, while creating jobs.

Objectives:

- 1. Promote Summer Recreational Programs & Youth Employment** - Keep youth engaged in activities at City parks and facilities for both recreation and employment – providing opportunities for social interaction and on-the-job training.
- 2. Support “Community Hubs”** - Support the development and enhancement of community centers in challenged neighborhoods to help nurture talent, build leadership capacity and highlight diversity.
- 3. Increase Nutritional and Environmental Education** – Address food insecurity by supporting education and access to affordable and nutritious food options - including urban farming, neighborhood grocery stores and mobile farm markets.

Quantitative objectives/outcomes such as the number of LMI area activities, housing units improved, persons served, etc. will be projected based on identified need, and projected 5- Year funding levels.

City of Schenectady Housing Data

The top priority identified by the City is: **GOAL #1: ENHANCE HOUSING OPPORTUNITIES**. According to the 2014-2018 American Community Survey (ACS) 5 Year Estimates, the City has a population of 65,482 and 32,564 housing units. The City’s median income is \$44,826, and 63.7% of the City’s households have incomes below 80% of the HUD published area median income (AMI). Data on the City’s housing stock is shown below.

Table 1 – Housing Unit Mix, Vacancy Rates and Median Cost	
Total Housing Units	32,564
Occupied Housing Units	22,694
Rental Occupied Housing Rate	50.2%
Number of Renter Occupied Units	11,390
Median Gross Rent	\$ 870
Number of Homeowner Occupied Units	11,304
Owner Occupied Housing Rate	49.8%
Median Value of Owner-Occupied Housing Unit	\$110,500
Median selected monthly owner costs - with a mortgage	\$1,317
Median selected monthly owner costs - without a mortgage	\$ 567
Vacant Units	9,870
Homeowner Vacancy	2.7%
Rental Vacancy	8.4%

US Census Bureau, 2014-2018 American Community Survey

Housing problems

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) definitions for “Housing Problems” are:

- **Housing cost burden** - over 30% of income expended on housing related costs;
- **Severe housing cost burden** - over 50% of income expended on housing related costs;
- **Substandard housing** – housing unit lacking a complete kitchen or plumbing facilities;
- **Overcrowding** – unit occupied by 1.01 to 1.5 people per room;
- **Severe overcrowding** – unit occupied by more than 1.5 people per room

Current Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy (CHAS) data indicates that 53.4% of City of Schenectady renters experience housing problems, and 33.6% experience severe housing problems. In addition, 27.7% of homeowners experience housing problems and 11.7% experience at least one severe housing problem.

Common housing problems in Schenectady are cost burdened, overcrowding and substandard, older housing stock. Approximately 52.6% of renters, and 26.4% of homeowners in the City are cost-burdened. Many owners struggle to make necessary major home repairs. HUD’s generally accepted definition of affordability is for a household to pay no more than 30% of its annual income on housing; families paying more than that amount are considered cost burdened. According to the *National Low Income Housing Coalition’s 2019 Out of Reach* study, the maximum affordable monthly housing cost at 30% of AMI is \$674 per month. The 2019 Schenectady Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) Fair Market Rent Schedule starts at \$768 for an efficiency unit and in 2020 this number decreases to \$747. Even with the decrease from 2018 to 2019, a household would need to earn at least \$44,600 per year, or an hourly wage of \$21.44, to afford a two-bedroom rental unit at Fair Market rates. The hourly mean wage for a renter wage in Schenectady County is only \$15.16.

Fair market rents (FMR) for the City of Schenectady and Schenectady County are calculated under the FY 2020 Albany-Schenectady-Troy, New York MSA. Fair market rents for 2019 and 2020 are shown in Table 2.

Table 2- Fair Market Rents		
Unit Type	FMR 2019	FMR 2020
Efficiency	\$ 768	\$ 747
1 Bedroom	\$ 855	\$ 904
2 Bedroom	\$ 1,115	\$ 1,054
3 Bedroom	\$ 1,397	\$ 1,313
4 Bedroom	\$ 1,507	\$ 1,428
HUD FY2020 FMR Documentation System		

CHAS illustrates housing problems by income level compared to the Household Area Median Family Income (HAMFI) based on the 2012 – 2016 ACS, as shown below.

Table 3 Housing Problems	# of Renter Households with Housing Problems						# of Owner Households with Housing Problems					
	0 to 30%	>30 to 50%	>50 to 80%	>80 to 100%	>100%	Total Renters	0 to 30%	>30 to 50%	>50 to 80%	>80 to 100%	>100%	Total Owners
Household has at least 1 of 4 Housing Problems	3,815	1,675	560	115	35	6,200	915	805	950	400	160	3,230
Household has none of 4 Housing Problems	745	585	2,040	665	1,175	5,210	255	540	1,690	1,295	4,600	8,380
Housing cost burden greater than 50% of income	3,165	290	135	0	0	3,590	675	325	185	10	0	1,195
Housing cost burden greater than 30% of income	3,755	1,660	500	55	25	5,995	900	795	925	355	85	3,060
CHAS 2012-2016												

Due to the age of the City's housing stock, lead-based paint hazards have been prevalent in many dwellings. The City and Schenectady County continue to work collaboratively, utilizing competitive grant funds awarded through the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development to address these issues.

Public Housing

The Schenectady Municipal Housing Authority (SMHA) owns and manages 1,018 units of public housing across seven properties throughout the City and is the largest provider of affordable housing in Schenectady. Three (3) of the SMHA properties (Schonowee Village, Ten Eyck Apartments and Lincoln Heights) serve the elderly and disabled, while the other four (4) properties (Yates Village, Steinmetz Homes, MacGathan Townhouses and Maryvale Apartments) serve families with children. The Housing Authority's largest housing development, Yates Village, originally constructed in 1948, offers eligible residents 300 apartments, including a mixture of one to five bedroom units. Late last year, work began to rehabilitate Yates Village.

SMHA also offers housing subsidies to 1,387 households through the Section 8 Housing Choice Vouchers program. Due to an ongoing and extensive waiting list for assistance, nearly all of the vouchers are in use at any given time. Under the Section 8 program, tenants pay 30% of their gross income for rent and the subsidy makes up the difference. Only very low-income (50% of the median income) individuals and families are eligible for this program. At the time of the City of Schenectady's 2017 Community Needs Assessment, a 5+ year waiting list existed for the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher program. In 2018, SMHA opened up the waitlist, accepting applications from June 19, 2018 through June 22, 2018, and closed it again due to continued demand. Most recently, SMHA opened the waitlist electronically, from April 7, 2020 through April 10, 2020, with 1,751 applications received during these three (3) days. The program is again closed with a long waitlist.

Nature and Extent of Unsheltered and Sheltered Homelessness

Schenectady County's 2019 Point in Time (PIT) count reported that 22 homeless people were unsheltered, 300 homeless people were in emergency shelter, and 50 homeless people were transitionally housed on a given night in January 2019. The total count of 372 compares to 393 in 2018 and 274 in 2017.

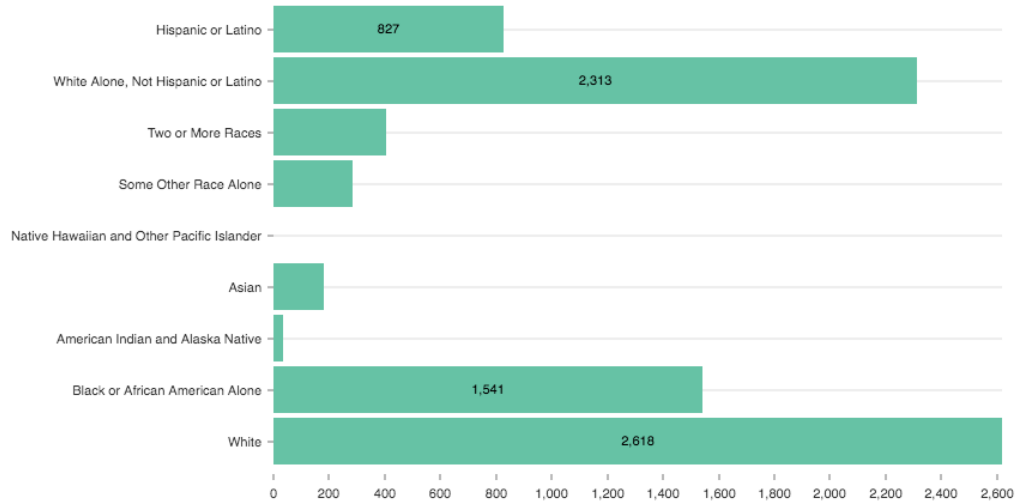
The New York State Department of Education reports that during the 2018-19 school year, 520 children enrolled in a Schenectady County school district experienced homelessness at some point during the school year. 469 of these children were enrolled at the Schenectady City School District.

Numerous local agencies are dedicated to addressing the needs of the homeless and/or of special needs populations in the jurisdiction, including the elderly; physically, mentally, or developmentally disabled; persons suffering from substance abuse; and those living with HIV/AIDS. Although not all resources available in the community are specifically targeted to the homeless and persons with HIV/AIDS, significant outreach is conducted by these agencies to connect individuals to appropriate mainstream services.

Schenectady's service providers have continued to experience an increase in the number of people seeking services related to homelessness and safe and affordable housing. This situation is often directly linked to risk factors that many City residents face, including: income, housing costs, mental health issues, and alcohol and substance abuse/addiction.

Non-Housing Related Priority Needs

The City's **GOAL #2: EXPAND ECONOMIC & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT** speaks to the City's high rate of poverty, unemployment, and low educational achievement, especially prevalent in neighborhoods that are part of the Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy Area. The ACS reports that 18.4% of City residents live in poverty, and 5,573 households with children under the age of 18 receive public assistance (i.e. SNAP/food stamps). The chart below delineates the Receipt of Food Stamps/SNAP by Race.



Capital District Regional Planning Commission (CDPRC)/Capital Region Indicators

The chart below depicts population's median household income levels by race and ethnicity.



Capital District Regional Planning Commission (CDPRC)/Capital Region Indicators

The low educational achievement of many City residents creates barriers to employment, career advancement, economic stability and self-sufficiency. ACS data shows that 15.8% (7,086) of the City's population over 25 years of age have no high school diploma or GED, and 33.8% (12,138) have a high school diploma or GED. Individuals with some college (7,674) comprise 17.2% of the over 25 population, 11.3% have earned an Associate's degree; 13.8% (6,253) have a Bachelor's degree, and 7.9% (3,540) have attained a Graduate degree.

Table 4 – Educational Attainment Adults over 25		
Educational Attainment	Count	% Percentage
Less Than 9th Grade	2,656	5.94%
9th to 12th Grade	4,430	9.90%
High School Graduate	15,138	33.83%
Some College	7,674	17.15%
Associates Degree	5,057	11.30%
Bachelor’s Degree	6,253	13.97%
Graduate Degree	3,540	7.91%

According to **2018-2019 New York State School Report Card Data** the Schenectady City School District (SCSD) has the lowest graduation rate of any district in the Schenectady County, at 68% (2015 Cohort 4-Yr. Rate).

Table 5 – High School Graduation Rates Schenectady City School District				
Student Group	% Grad Rate		Student Group	% Grad Rate
Female	77%		General Education Students	74%
Male	60%		Students with Disabilities	46%
Black/African American	62%		English Language Learners	31%
Hispanic	65%		Not Economically Disadvantaged	71%
White	67%		Economically Disadvantaged	67%

NYS Education Department (NYSED), 2018-19 School Report Card

The 2014-2018 ACS reported that the City of Schenectady’s unemployment rate of 9.2% was higher than both the county (6.6%) and NYS rates (6%). The highest rates of unemployment were found in the Hamilton Hill neighborhood at 21.8%, the Mont Pleasant Neighborhood, at 15.5%. According to New York State Department of Labor, the City’s annual average unemployment rate for 2019 dropped to 4.6%. Unfortunately, the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic began to surface in the unemployment data for March 2020, with New York State at 4.4%, Schenectady County at 4.2%, and the City at 5.3%. The NYS DOL website reported that “*the scope of coronavirus-related unemployment from March is not fully reflected in these figures*”. Just two weeks in April (ending April 11th/April 18th) produced 3,743 new Unemployment claims in Schenectady County.

Goal 2 focuses on supporting workforce development efforts. Initiatives that provide employment services and training to City residents and small businesses are a critical need. The City seeks to connect residents with opportunities for employment and engagement in projects and revitalization efforts in their own community. Improved infrastructure, streetscapes and public spaces are needed to support existing businesses, and attract new businesses and additional investment in the City.

The City’s **GOAL #3: STRENGTHEN LOCAL NEIGHBORHOODS** is geared towards supporting other non-housing community needs. Community centers in the City create “community hubs”, safe and welcoming places for education, support, socialization, the arts, and the promotion of diversity and inclusivity.

There is also an identified need for increased youth programming/engagement. City parks and facilities can act as social connectors, recreational outlets, and supportive venues for on-the-job training for City youth.

Finally, areas of the City have been designated as a “food desert”; the lack of affordable and fresh foods is a problem in neighborhoods throughout the City. In support of the goals of the Schenectady County Healthy and Equitable Food Action Plan, published in 2017, the City will prioritize programs and initiatives that address food insecurity and nutrition, such as community gardens, farm-to-table and mobile markets.

Anticipated Resources

The primary challenge facing the City and those responsible for service delivery is limited resources. The City's strategy to address those needs will therefore be to allocate funds in a manner that will leverage the most non-entitlement resources, produce the greatest positive impact on the community and maximize the return on the public investment. The table below lists potential types of activities by program and the current amount of funding the City has been allocated for the first fiscal year (FY) of the 5-Year Plan, FY2020.

Table 6 – Anticipated Resources & Potential Uses of Funds		Allocation Yr1 - FY2020
CDBG	Acquisition - Public Improvements/Infrastructure - Housing - Public Services Administration & Planning - Economic Development - Public Facilities	\$2,320,425
HOME	Acquisition - Homebuyer Assistance - Homeowner Rehabilitation Multifamily Rental New Construction - Multifamily Rental Rehabilitation New Construction For Ownership - Tenant Based Rental Assistance (TBRA)	\$ 558,851
ESG	Transitional Housing - Financial Assistance - Overnight Shelter Rapid Re-Housing (Rental Assistance) - Rental Assistance Services	\$194,820

Table 7 - Market Characteristics that influence use of available funds for affordable housing activities	
Tenant Based Rental Assistance (TBRA)	A significantly large portion of City households who rent are cost burdened. The City will consider funding such assistance based upon need.
TBRA Non-Homeless Special Needs	Tenant rental assistance specific to a non-homeless special needs population will be considered if identified in the future as a critical need.
New Unit Production	The City is targeting rehabilitation of its housing stock, and elimination of surplus vacant and abandoned units. The City will consider funding support for new construction of affordable rental units and projects that include construction of new (for purchase units) replacing substandard units.
Rehabilitation	The vast majority of the City's housing stock was built prior to 1980, and the high cost of housing makes it difficult for many lower income homeowners to afford necessary repairs. Public subsidy of owner occupied rehabilitation is a critical component of the City's affordable housing strategy.
Acquisition, Including Preservation	The City will consider projects that include the acquisition, preservation and rehabilitation of properties and/or housing units as part of the ongoing effort to address the shortage of affordable units and blight.

Leveraging HUD Funds

The City of Schenectady seeks to leverage its allocation of HUD funding with additional investments from other sources including federal and state funding, private and corporate sponsors, and local foundations. As allowable, project-based matching requirements will be satisfied through these sources. Properties owned by the municipality and/or acquired through Capital Region Land Bank activities will be used to meet identified needs to address blight in LMI areas, improve housing stock and strengthen neighborhoods. As available, the City will use HUD Section 108 Loan funding for acquisition of vacant and derelict properties for redevelopment.

NOTE: Under the 2020 CARES Act, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) has allocated additional CDBG and ESG funding, to assist entitlement communities experiencing increased need created by the pandemic, and to help America's low-income families and most vulnerable citizens. These COVID-19 funds will be allocated separately under the direction of HUD. Stated priorities under the 5-Year Plan are also subject to change, as the long-term impacts of the pandemic are realized.