

COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT

City of Utica Overview

Why, When and How?

The CNA “four-step” process

The Community Needs Assessment (CNA) process was a collaborative effort involving the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and other Federal, State and local partners. The CNA helped Utica identify its priority needs, providing the framework for a 2-year Action Plan.

Step 1: Drafting a Community Profile

A Community Profile was created which assembled pertinent information about local government, community and economic development conditions, federal investment highlights, and demographic data.

Step 2: Organizing and Facilitating Community Roundtables

Nine community stakeholder groups convened, over a two-month period during September and October 2014 to discuss specific issues and to recommend solutions and action steps relating to three main topics:

- Economic Development
- Community Development
- Health, Education and Changing Demographics

Step 3: Gathering Additional Community Input - Surveys

Input from other community members, businesses, organizations and students was collected via community surveys conducted during the months of November and December 2014.

Step 4: Developing a 2-year City Action Plan

In collaboration with HUD, and in conjunction with the development of their new CDBG Consolidated Plan, Utica developed an Anti-poverty Strategy and a 2-year Action Plan relating to the needs and priorities identified during the CNA community engagement process.



**Homes and
Community Renewal**



Cornell University
Cooperative Extension
Oneida County



Utica Community Needs Assessment

2-Year Action Plan Goals - An Overview

Goal #1 – Facilitate Employment

Provide training opportunities, financial assistance, and the support network required to raise the level of earning and employment for individuals, families and new entrepreneurs – leading to self-sufficiency.

Subgoals

- Create a “community employment services” program to remove barriers to employment including basic soft skills education, coordination of childcare and transportation services and referrals to other agencies.
- Provide financial and technical assistance for career development opportunities that align with private employment sector needs to include relevant and paid internships, apprenticeships, and mentorships.
- Develop incubators and support social enterprise development to create new avenues and accessible opportunities for unemployed and underemployed individuals and new entrepreneurs.

Goal #2 – Increase Economic Activity

Upgrade aging infrastructure, fill vacancies, provide incentives for the adaptive reuse of buildings, and enhance and promote quality of life amenities across all demographics and neighborhoods.

Subgoals

- Develop a comprehensive brand for the City and Target Area commercial districts to maximize current assets and amenities, including marketing strategies.
- Upgrade road, water, sewer, technology, broadband, green and architectural infrastructure to address public safety and meet the needs of modern businesses and new urban residents.
- Organize commercial district neighborhood associations to re-engage and empower existing stakeholders and new developers to invest in their community.

Goal #3 – Improve Educational Opportunities

Improve literacy rates, support afterschool programs, increase the number of adults with college degrees, and provide work training and certificate programs for skilled trades and professionals - with a focus on emerging career fields.

Subgoals

- Raise the literacy rate to improve graduation rates, reduce the need for college remedial support, improve health, reduce healthcare costs, lower crime rates, and enable increased revenues associated with a well-trained workforce.
- Increase the percentage of adults with bachelor’s degrees to 25% in an effort to produce higher income levels, lower poverty rates and create less reliance on local, County, State and Federal support.
- Expand workforce training for skilled trades and professionals, with a focus on high tech and nanotechnology to support State and private investments in the region.

Goal #4 – Enhance Public Safety

Address community perceptions regarding public safety through community policing and neighborhood-based renewal strategies, including environmental design and safety infrastructure.

Subgoals

- Incorporate community-policing objectives in comprehensive neighborhood planning to connect people and places, change negative perceptions, create community awareness and provide all residents with a voice.
- Use innovative environmental design strategies in neighborhood streetscape plans to help increase accessibility and walkability, remove blight and deter crime.
- Provide measures to enhance inclusive representation in neighborhood meetings, hiring practices and decision-making related to community development and public safety.

Goal #5 – Improve Health and Wellness

Improve access to healthcare and insurance, re-assess behavioral health and addiction programs and services, improve healthy food access through community gardens and innovative environmental design, and promote walkability and healthy lifestyles.

Subgoals

- Provide enhanced support services for persons facing addiction and behavioral health issues.
- Improve access to healthy food and eliminate food deserts by including innovative environmental designs in neighborhood renewal projects and by promoting community gardens, farmers markets and other healthy retail options.
- Evaluate and enhance neighborhood walkability and connectivity using graphic signage, streetscape and transportation amenities (lighting, bike lanes and bus shelters), and public transportation schedules, routes and rates meet employee and resident needs.

Goal #6 – Provide Enhanced Housing Opportunities

Provide healthy housing without lead, asbestos, mold and pests; renovate aging housing stock and build new quality affordable housing units; and provide live/work, loft and rental housing to meet the needs of Utica's changing demographics

Subgoals

- Work with private housing developers and public agencies to provide healthy housing opportunities using training and technical assistance necessary to meet fair housing law, comply with environmental guidelines, and assist cost-burdened individuals.
- Rehabilitate or build new units of quality, affordable housing in target neighborhoods, with a focus on quality, permanent supportive housing and emergency housing for homeless persons and families.
- Complete a downtown housing inventory and provide financial and technical assistance to meet the urban living needs of any person, regardless of their income level, age, race or physical ability with a focus on the renovation of upper floors.

For more information, please email: UticaCNA@hud.gov or contact:



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UTICA, NY 2014-2015 COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT

"It is very exciting that Utica is one of three cities in the State of New York to be selected by HUD for a Community Needs Assessment initiative. HUD's decision to select Utica is a testament to the positive and substantive working relationship we have built with HUD over the past three years, and highlights the fact that Utica is moving in the right direction."

Mayor Robert Palmieri
City of Utica, NY

"Utica and the (Mohawk Valley) region are on the cusp of a positive and significant transformation. We look forward to working with the Mayor and his staff, along with business and community leaders, to address the needs of our area and offer solutions that will create positive impact."

Raymond J. Durso, Jr.
Executive Director of the Genesis Group & Project Chairperson

"The CNA initiative brought to light some of the unique cultural challenges related to the changing demographics in Utica. This plan will help us foster relationships that enable us to hear the voices of nearly a quarter of our residents who are critical to our growth and prosperity."

Shelly Callahan, Executive Director
Mohawk Valley Resource Center for Refugees (MVRCR)

"Community engagement and participation are foundational to any successful revitalization effort. The enthusiasm we've seen during the Community Needs Assessment process is a promising sign for Utica's bright future."

Holly Leicht, Regional Administrator
U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
Region II (NY and NJ)