

Illinois Housing Blueprint
Illinois Housing Development Authority
Special Achievement

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Introduction

In early 2020, IHDA's leadership recognized a fundamental need to better understand the myriad housing needs across the state in order to better address these needs in the HFA's targeting and programmatic focus. IHDA developed the **Illinois Housing Blueprint ("the Blueprint")** to realize that vision and create a plan to achieve it.

The Blueprint effort was begun at the beginning of the pandemic, and therefore the process had to endure and overcome obstacles and roadblocks threatening to limit the effectiveness of a plan that had to span vast geographies and reach residents with varied access to the internet and government programs. By remaining flexible and innovative, IHDA stayed the course and remained diligent in progressing towards an evolved and evolving a vision for the state – one that is informed by and responsive to the obstacles and housing access issues that have materialized either from the massive changes in the way we live, work, and exist brought on from the pandemic or from deep rooted issues of race and class that are once again bubbling to the surface and in need of addressing. We believe that the result is virtually one of a kind on this scale – at least in recent memory – but it could serve as a model for other HFAs in both its process and its results.

IHDA's Housing Blueprint lives online for all to see here: ILHousingBlueprint.org

What is The Blueprint?

The initial goal of The Housing Blueprint was to build an understanding of the current state of housing across Illinois primarily by listening to the diverse voices and experiences of its residents. These voices would then be used to create a detailed and actionable plan to support Illinois' communities to achieve their goals. Within even the initial imaginations of what the Blueprint might be, IHDA understood the magnitude of a statewide plan, and knew that the findings, experiences, goals, and priorities illuminated through this process would reflect many differences across our large state and could not nor should be oversimplified.

The Blueprint's planning process, while coordinated by IHDA, is a collaborative effort and is comprised of many traditional components, including community engagement and quantitative data analyses. The robust community engagement is especially invested in connecting to marginalized communities and residents typically excluded from planning endeavors.

In addition to examining external market conditions by using public data sources, the Blueprint also looks comprehensively at IHDA's programmatic investments and impact in recent years, examining successes and opportunities to better meet the needs of residents across our state. To this end, IHDA included an additional component in the Blueprint's planning and analysis by contracting an external vendor to conduct the agency's first Racial Equity Impact Assessment

Multi-year Planning Effort

IHDA quickly realized that the breadth of the housing needs could not be addressed in a static document and The Blueprint was quickly evolved into **a multi-year planning effort** that incorporates time and space for reflection and continued engagement. IHDA released its inaugural 2021 Blueprint in June of 2022 and will update the plan

on an annual basis summarizing the findings uncovered and identifying various priorities and goals for the year to come.

Each year, the Blueprint's annual updates will provide greater analysis and context around the specific priorities and areas of need identified in previous plans. The culmination of these annual updates, including measurable progress reports and direction towards legislative and programmatic recommendations, will result in an overall Housing Blueprint for Illinois.

Community Engagement

As the Blueprint aspires to foster a broader understanding and honest assessment of housing needs and experiences across Illinois, collaboration, public participation, and open engagement serve as core elements to its planning process. Ongoing engagement efforts include a Statewide Resident Survey, a series of Listening Tour meetings, and an outreach and marketing campaign to inform communities across the state of the planning process and inviting them to participate. Despite beginning these planning efforts at the start of the pandemic, IHDA pushed forward with these efforts and found ways to bring community engagement into the process despite remaining remote and/or socially distant during the Pandemic.

Additionally, in efforts to provide a forum on which residents and organizations could learn about and become more involved in the creation of the Blueprint, IHDA created a website to host the various elements of its planning process. The Statewide Resident Survey, Listening Tour meetings, and various other plan components are continuously published at www.IHousingBlueprint.org as they became available, allowing the public to stay informed of plan findings and opportunities to engage.

Hosted on IHousingBlueprint.org, the Statewide Resident Survey anonymously polled residents from across Illinois about their communities' needs, housing access, and various other areas of community life. This survey's responses helped to illustrate the diversity of experiences across our vast state and provided a venue for individuals to have their experiences, perspectives, needs, and hopes for their community codified as qualitative findings within the planning process. The Statewide Resident Survey was the furthest reaching aspect of the Blueprint's engagement processes, receiving a total of 903 individual responses for analysis within the first year's plan.

For the inaugural 2021 Blueprint, more than 20 community partners and cohorts, IHDA hosted 24 Listening Tour meetings from July through December of 2020 to discuss and listen to residents' experiences, needs, and hopes surrounding housing in their community. The Listening Tour meetings not only provided a platform on which residents could raise their voices and perspectives, but also allowed for engagement and relationship-building between IHDA, housing advocates and providers, and community residents across the state. In total, 597 individuals participated in the 2020 Listening Tour and supplied valuable insights, stories, and issues regarding housing in their community. In addition to cohorts recruited by the Illinois Housing Task Force, IHDA also proactively recruited organizations that could represent a broader range of geographies and specific target populations statewide. This included reaching out to organizations based in areas of the state that had not yet hosted a meeting as well as those that had the ability to host meetings in languages other than English.

Inaugural Results

Despite obstacles, the 2021 Blueprint still effectively accomplished its intended goals and achieved first-time milestones for IHDA. We are incredibly proud of the accomplishments that so many IHDA employees, partnering agencies, and residents have realized through the Blueprint's planning process and are even more optimistic about where they will continue to guide our analyses in the years to come. Some of the accomplishments worth reflecting upon include:

- Listening to and raising the voices of more than 1,000 Illinoisans through the Blueprint's engagement efforts
- Learning from, connecting to, and supporting other planning endeavors and organizations across the state
- Completing IHDA's first holistic examination of IHDA's investments across its programs and resources
- Conducting the first-ever assessment of IHDA's portfolio and policies from a racial equity lens, allowing us to comprehensively view our impact on various racial and ethnic groups
- Reflecting upon the way that IHDA monitors progress and classifies results through the consolidation of all programmatic data within this plan providing a foundational market analysis of the entire state
- Identifying strengths as well as areas of opportunity for improvement across our state's housing market, and translating these into tangible goals for the coming year
- As we reach "normalcy" in Illinois, our affordable housing landscape will not look the same as before the COVID era began. Our current and future Blueprints for Illinois should be used to illuminate the path forward. Each Blueprint will push boundaries and will help map our changing landscape by engaging with it. Each year we will learn new things that cause us to relearn our world many times before we are through. Each Blueprint will keep us in check, in touch, and moving forward. We will keep tugging on threads that emerge and we will keep following them to their logical ends.

The initial housing blueprint gave us an initial place to work from and to expand the Blueprint for the future. As a result of the 2021 inaugural Blueprint's outreach efforts and data analysis, three priority areas were identified:

- Addressing Racial Equity.
- Promoting Resilience Among Communities.
- Aligning Infrastructure and Housing to Promote Access.

Three working groups were established to address these priority areas. Staffed by the Illinois Housing Task Force, these working groups were tasked with investigating and developing actionable proposals and solutions that address the needs and visions identified by the plan. The recommendations and results of the working group are now informing the development of the 2022 Blueprint Update.

The 2021 Illinois Housing Blueprint can be found here: https://ilhousingblueprint.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Illinois-Housing-Blueprint_2021-1.pdf.