

City of Allentown Redevelopment Authority

3-Year Strategic Plan (2025-2027)

Mission Statement

The Redevelopment Authority of the City of Allentown is committed to revitalizing neighborhoods through strategic redevelopment that transforms blighted properties into safe, affordable, attractive, and livable spaces with prioritization of home ownership opportunities where feasible for Allentonions. We champion investment that raises property values without displacement, ensuring balanced growth and long-term stability and quality of life.

Values Statement

- **Fair and Inclusive-** We will support growth that benefits all residents without displacement.
- **Community-Centered Development** – We will seek input from our neighbors.
- **Economic Empowerment** – We will promote job creation, workforce development, and fair economic growth.
 - We will prioritize the creation of jobs that provide a living wage and career development opportunities.
 - We will enhance property values to foster community wealth-building, for long-term stability.
 - We will prioritize homeownership opportunities where feasible and encourage mixed use and mixed income developments.
- **Market-Supported Approach** – We will allow the marketplace to function independently where feasible but intervene strategically when necessary to ensure appropriate investment. When analyzing markets, we are guided by these core principles:
 - Public resources alone cannot create a market where none exists, but they can facilitate and encourage private investment.
 - Investments will be targeted to remove barriers and create pathways for responsible private sector involvement.
 - Public investment in distressed areas should leverage existing community strengths, such as anchor institutions, parks, and thriving adjacent markets.
 - Decisions will be data-driven, using both quantitative analysis and qualitative community insights.
 - All residents deserve access to high-quality government services that support neighborhood stability and growth.
- **Responsible Stewardship** – We will ensure financial sustainability of the organization and ensure the responsible investment of public resources.

- We encourage responsible investment by prioritizing local stakeholders and discouraging unfair and resource draining investment practices.
- We advocate for approaches to growth that preserve Allentown's historic character, protects vulnerable residents and promotes sustainability.
- **Integrity and Accountability** – We will have transparent and ethical redevelopment practices, solid processes for board governance and efficient operations.

Strategic Goals and Initiatives

Year 1: Foundational Development (2025-2026)

1. Governance and Organizational Structure

- 1.1. Finalize and adopt mission and values.
- 1.2. Operate the authority with mindful adherence to cost-effectiveness and efficient stewardship.
 - 1.2.1. Ensure the Authority has no audit exceptions or indications of weakness.
- 1.3. Ensure the Authority has adequate financial resources to facilitate its mission.
 - 1.3.1. Create a sustainable operational reserve.
 - 1.3.1.1. Utilize RACA's reserve capital to catalyze investments while maintaining financial stewardship.
- 1.4. Streamline acquisition and disposition process.
- 1.5. Advocate for diverse board of directors' appointment that represents the needs of the city.
 - 1.5.1. Foster a collaborative relationship with the current administration and elected public officials which promotes the goals of the authority.

2. Blight Removal and Property Rehabilitation

- 2.1. Identify, acquire and facilitate the rehabilitation of strategically valuable blighted properties.
- 2.2. Ensure just compensation acquisition price reflects costs to bring property into a productive use
- 2.3. Deliver a quality housing supply that is affordable and meets the needs of residents using the City of Allentown's "Welcome Home Allentown: Housing Needs Analysis and Strategic Plan" as a guiding plan.
- 2.4. Complement the City's economic development efforts by partnering in the acquisition and disposition of strategic properties when possible, prioritizing projects within City supported initiatives.
- 2.5. Begin process to develop and operationalize a **Land Bank** to streamline the acquisition, management, and disposition of vacant properties for redevelopment.

3. Affordable Housing and Homeownership Initiatives

- 3.1. Prioritize acquisition and disposition of properties for affordable homeownership.
- 3.2. Implement deed restrictions to prevent speculative investment and preserve affordability.

- 3.3.Explore the establishment of a **Community Land Trust (CLT)** to maintain long-term affordability and prevent displacement, with an emphasis on preserving naturally occurring affordable housing.
 - 3.3.1. Identify non-profit partners and interested parties who may be able to assist RACA in facilitating the CLTs
- 4. **Policy Advocacy and Regional Collaboration**
 - 4.1.Align efforts with Building Standards and Safety enforcement, city planning priorities, and zoning laws.
 - 4.2.Align redevelopment efforts with citywide and regional plans.
 - 4.3.Leverage Zone Allentown for increased density in redevelopment
 - 4.4.Advocate for state and federal funding to expand Land Bank and CLT initiatives.
- 5. **Community and Stakeholder Engagement**
 - 5.1.Utilize diverse methods of engagement to increase the effectiveness of RACA and ensure proper outreach to our community including residents, landlords, businesses owners
 - 5.2.Develop a comprehensive marketing and communication plan.
 - 5.2.1. Market all Certified Blighted Properties on the website and develop a process to obtain unsolicited proposals

Years 2-3: Expansion and Implementation (2026-2027)

- 1. **Scaled Property Redevelopment**
 - 1.1.Build the capacity of RACA to redevelop 25% more properties year over year.
 - 1.1.1. Identify new non-HUD funding sources i.e. Real Estate Transfer Tax
 - 1.1.2. Grow staffing levels to support redevelopment efforts
 - 1.1.3. Grow diverse partnerships with local developers, contractors and non-profits to uplift new stakeholders in the redevelopment process
 - 1.1.4. Appropriately train staff
 - 1.2.Establish a Community Land Trust (CLT) to maintain long-term affordability and prevent displacement, with an emphasis on preserving naturally occurring affordable housing.
 - 1.3.Utilize Land Bank to acquire properties for targeted redevelopment projects.
 - 1.4.Efficiently dispose of additional properties in our inventory
- 2. **Economic Development and Job Creation**
 - 2.1.Support mixed-use developments and local businesses.
 - 2.2.Align workforce housing with employment growth.
 - 2.3.Targeted investment in properties with the potential for commercial use
- 3. **Evaluation and measurement**
 - 3.1.Leverage RACA resources to promote \$4 in private sector investment for every \$1 RACA commits.
 - 3.2.Increase available resources for redevelopment by 25%
 - 3.3.Establishment and operational success of the **Land Bank and Community Land Trust**.
 - 3.4.Reviewing effectiveness of RACA policies and procedures to ensure operational efficiency and sustainability.

3.5. Publish annual impact reports for accountability.

Next Steps

- **Adopt and Publish the Plan** for transparency and stakeholder alignment.
- **Begin the Pilot Homeownership Program** with the first round of properties.
- **Form Key Partnerships** with developers, banks, and workforce programs.
- **Host a Public Event** to announce redevelopment priorities and opportunities.
- **Launch the Land Bank and Community Land Trust** as foundational initiatives to ensure long-term housing affordability and community stability.

This strategic plan ensures responsible investment, affordable housing, and community stability while preventing displacement and fostering sustainable economic growth in Allentown.