

# allen county, kansas

PLACEMAKING ACTION PLAN



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**housing**

## OVERVIEW

The key trends and challenges for Housing that were identified in the quantitative and qualitative research conducted for Allen County's Community Assessment includes the following:

- *The cost to build new housing continues to outpace the wages for a majority of local residents and commuting workforce*
- *Housing stock is aging and deteriorating which has created a countywide shortage*

In response to these key trends and challenges, there are a number of **Strategic Opportunity Areas** for Allen County emerged:

- *Establish greater public awareness of local resources*
- *Create new programs to support access to homeownership for higher wage earners*
- *Adopt a countywide land bank ordinance to aid the purchase/disposition of unutilized parcels*
- *Research and consider new technologies or construction methodologies*
- *Establish annual county tax sale versus every three to five years*
- *Create a guidance document to raise awareness and support the succession of elderly homeowners' property*

The following sections will delineate the strategies, partnerships, funding sources, and best practices and resources for Allen County to consider as Thrive Allen County and community leaders collaborate to support the housing needs of Allen County. This information is not intended to be conclusive, but instead, will evolve as strategies are executed and partnerships are fostered.

## RECENT ACHIEVEMENTS

### 01.

Allen County recently received a \$50,000 [Moderate Income Housing](#) (MIH) grant through the Kansas Housing Resources Corporation (KHRC) to address housing needs countywide. The intent of the grant is to purchase infill lots and gift them to builders for housing.

### 02.

The City of Iola was granted the authority to designate [Rural Housing Incentive Districts](#) (RHID) by the Kansas Department of Commerce. RHID is a program designed to aid developers in building housing within rural communities by assisting in the financing of public improvements. RHID captures the incremental increase in real property taxes created by a housing development project for up to 25 years. Changes in the 2021 legislature expanded the RHID program to include renovation of residential units.

### 03.

MEO Development was approved for rezoning of the shuttered Arkhaven Nursing home into a 46-units complex, filled with one- and two-bedroom apartments. The project will also be the first project in Iola to utilize the new powers of the RHID to waive increased value in property taxes for revitalization purposes.

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## **RECENT ACHIEVEMENTS (CONT.)**

### **04.**

The statewide housing needs assessment commissioned by the Kansas Department of Commerce—the first of its kind in nearly 30 years—was made available to the public in early 2022. While much of the report's findings were no surprise and mirrored the Community Assessment, one of the major achievements of this effort was the responsiveness of the legislature. First and foremost, funding for the MIH program grew from the current \$2 million pool of funds per cycle to allocating \$62 million in future rounds. Additional legislative changes include a possible tax credit to support further affordable and moderate incoming housing projects and a rural home loan guarantee program. More details to come on these changes in mid to late 2022.

### **05.**

The future closure of three elementary schools in Iola have presented the opportunity to redevelop these sites into affordable housing. BNIM, a Kansas City architecture firm, is leading the effort to invest \$20 million into all three of these school facilities, converting them into 60+ mixed-income apartments with the possibility of other types of housing or amenities on the properties. To achieve their goal, they will utilize many layers of financing including historic tax credits and low-income housing tax credits as well as the local RHID or NRP programming. The renovations could begin as early as Q1-2023.



## **RECOMMENDED STRATEGIES**

### ***Establish greater public awareness of local resources***

One of the easiest and most attainable action items is to better promote what you already have. Establishing content that includes user friendly handouts with instructions to assist with contacting local banks and other resource providers is the first step in this process.

Access to this information can help prepare interested homeowners to gain financing and purchase a home when it becomes available. In addition to local resources, make sure to include information on state and federal programs such as Creating Assets, Savings, and Hope ([CASH Kansas](#)) that supports low to moderate income (LMI) households save enough money for a down payment. It's also important to consider programs that support those households who make above the "affordability" threshold but still have challenges finding decent housing to meet their limited budget (see EAH programs below). The content can be placed on an existing service provider's website or a completely new page of its own.

### **Create new programs to support access to homeownership for higher wage earners**

While many households can afford the month-to-month expense of owning a home, one of the top barriers to purchasing a house is saving for a down payment. Programs like CASH Kansas can help the low to moderate income households – such as a household of four making below \$51,500 – while households just above that threshold have fewer resources. Establishing an employer-assisted housing (EAH) program can help close the homeownership and rental affordability gap and allow workers to live in the communities where they are employed.

EAH programs can be described as any employer sponsored housing benefit, which could include, but not limited to, down payment assistance or rental assistance, homebuyer education and counseling, or low-interest mortgages. In conjunction with the property tax benefits of the Neighborhood Revitalization Program (NRP), homeowners can work with local banks to request a second mortgage that get paid annually using the tax rebate funds; these funds can help pay for down payment and make major improvements to an existing home.

### **Adopt a countywide land bank ordinance to aid the purchase/disposition of underutilized properties**

One effective tool to address dilapidated property in cities and counties is establishing land banks. Over 20 cities and one county across the state of Kansas have adopted resolutions to enact a land bank ordinance. This legal tool allows localities to manage and reclaim distressed property for the purpose of stabilizing neighborhoods and encouraging the reuse or redevelopment of property. As an entity, a land bank can purchase and obtain properties that have been abandoned or foreclosed upon, and maintain and facilitate the redevelopment, marketing, and/or redevelopment of the properties. The land bank can also be used to aggregate individual parcels that can then be utilized for building out more conventional housing and/or multifamily housing units.

Another major feature of the land bank is its ability to clear a title which can aid the disposition of a property and get it in the hands of an investor or homeowner capable of making necessary improvements to the home. This can prove difficult for those decades old vacant properties; however, land banks are specifically provided this unique authority to get underutilized properties back into productive use.

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In some cases, a land bank will make improvements to these properties and sell or lease the housing to the end user. But many land banks help facilitate the redevelopment of the parcel with an investor or contractor. In these instances, it is important the land bank considers who is buying these properties and making sure they produce the finished housing product desired by the local governing body. The land bank organizations can achieve this through placing covenants on the sale of these properties to the contractor or investor that provide penalties and a clawback clause in the agreement, when necessary.

The land bank can also be used to target specific distressed neighborhoods to buy out dilapidated homes for renovation or demolition for a new use. Purchasing and razing homes beyond repair without having a firm plan for the finished use can negatively impact the land bank by having to hold vacant unproductive land which creates a financial burden on the operations. Having an end use in mind with some form of financial backing identified ahead of any demolition is key to the success of these efforts.

### **Be open to new technologies or construction methodologies**

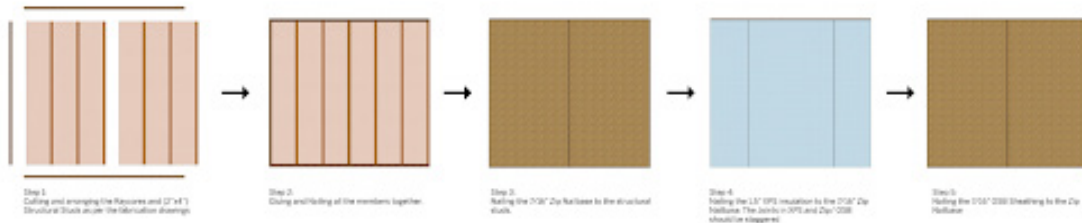
The cost of construction continues to increase due in large part to the rising cost and limited availability of labor and materials. Now is the time to pivot and consider new ways to build the housing needed in rural communities.

There are currently modular home builders in the area who have built homes in Allen County. These are homes constructed with traditional stick-built methods but in a climate-controlled, factory setting. The finished product is then moved and assembled on the site of the customer's choosing. One of the major benefits of this construction method is having a central location for construction crews to work instead of traveling to each site.



Example of modular home under construction, Advanced Systems Homes located in Chanute, KS. | Image courtesy of [Advanced Systems Homes](#)

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The diagram depicts the construction process using prefabricated panels. | Image courtesy of [Net Positive Studio](#)

Modular homes are typically ordered directly from the consumer, not built on spec or by a developer to sell. With that said, the proposed housing task force could help secure funding to place deposits on a number of houses so the modular builder can start construction and then presell these homes before they are completed. The current challenge modular builders are facing is no different than traditional builders: the demand is high for this product and these modular builders are feeling the strain building homes as fast as they are ordered while dealing with material shortages.

Another option is applying truly novel construction methods through the use of academic-led construction methods. Kansas State University's [Net Positive Studio](#) focuses on creating affordable, efficient housing to be constructed for no more than \$150,000. The students prefabricated wall panels in factory setting—similar to modular construction—which allowed for less-skilled crews and volunteers to puzzle-piece the finished product on-site. What sets this apart from other similar homes is the design incorporating passive solar and other technologies that can provide a lower monthly cost to the end user.

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Stafford County Economic Development commissioned the most recent home to be built in St. John as a rental property for its local workforce. The three-bedroom, two bathroom home is nearly 1,100 square feet of finished space. Bedrooms were kept small to accommodate larger communal areas, including the kitchens and living rooms. And while it has a slightly smaller footprint than other new construction homes, the design provides built-in furniture and other space-saving techniques to make the most use of its space.

The newest technological advancement in construction to consider is 3D printing. The technology overlays numerous layers of concrete-like material on top of another to create the structure of the building. One of the many benefits of 3D printed houses is the need for less labor to construct the framework of homes as well as a quicker construction time. Once the equipment is all setup and ready to go, the home can be built within 12 hours of operation. The timber roofing is placed on

the structure, and then electrical, plumbing, and other finishing contractors takeover to complete the build.

[Alquist 3D](#), a partner of Atlas Community Studios, collaborated with the [Virginia Center for Housing Research at Virginia Tech](#) (VCHR) and [Virginia Housing](#) to design and construct the nation's first owner-occupied 3D printed home located in Williamsburg, VA. [Habitat for Humanity Peninsula and Greater Williamsburg](#) provided the financial support to build this pilot project. Alquist has plans to continue building 3D homes emphasizing rural communities throughout the Midwest.



*Example of 3D printing technology*



*Alquist 3D's completed pilot home in Williamsburg, VA with exterior walls constructed using 3D printing technology  
Above images courtesy of Alquist 3D*

### **Establish annual county tax sale versus every three to five years**

A number of contractors and investors noted a backlog of county owned properties and no ability to purchase these properties outside a county tax sale. These properties were deeded over to the county as a result of a tax foreclosure. In the state of Kansas, a property owner has up to 3 ½ years to pay their back taxes before the county takes the property. The current frequency of these tax sales is every three to five years once the county deems enough properties are made available for purchase. The most recent sale was conducted in fall 2017 where 60+ properties were available for sale.

The challenge with waiting so long to put these properties up for sale is the degradation of the property. The longer a vacant home remains uninhabited, the greater the chance the home will need extensive renovations or be razed due to neglect. More regular sales will prompt investors and potential homeowners to be prepared for these auctions with the hope of preserving and renovating these existing homes for another family to move into the area.

# PARTNERSHIPS

At a minimum, the following organizations should be substantially engaged in Allen County’s housing development efforts. Together, as a coalition, these leaders from these organizations should determine who else needs to be involved and what their role should be to advance collective priorities, programs and initiatives, and significant projects.

Recommended members of Allen County’s Advisory Board for Housing:

Organization	Role
<a href="#">Allen County Board of Commissioners</a>	Provide guidance in adopting a land bank ordinance and financial support to the proposed programs
City of Iola, City of Humboldt, City of Bassett, City of Elsmore, City of Gas, City of La Harpe, City of Mildred, City of Moran, City of Savonburg	Lead countywide initiative to establish a land bank and support
<a href="#">Thrive Allen County</a>	Provide leadership in convening various organizations
<a href="#">Iola Housing Authority</a>	Continue to support affordable housing options and work with the committee to dispose of aging properties owned by IHA to the appropriate
Rental Property Owners/ Property Managers	Be involved and provide input to what is implemented
<a href="#">Iola Industries Inc.</a>	Support EAH program
<a href="#">A Bolder Humboldt</a>	Local guidance, marketing/promotion
<a href="#">Southeast Kansas Regional Planning Commission</a>	Support writing grants and accessing state and federal funds to support housing
<a href="#">Allen County Regional Hospital</a>	Support EAH program
Major employers	Support EAH program
<a href="#">Regional Rural Technical Center</a>	Utilize new technologies/methodologies to build out housing units

The Advisory Board for Housing should meet quarterly to ensure critical partners are informed, collaborative opportunities are fostered, and priorities are advanced. The Advisory Board should identify baseline performance measures as well as anticipated outcomes over a specified period of time to track progress and instill accountability throughout the economic development ecosystem.

## HOUSING FUNDING SOURCES - FEDERAL

Agency	Division	Grant/Loan Program	Description	Funding Range	Application Cycle	To Apply
U.S. Department of Agriculture	Rural Development	<a href="#">Single Family Housing Repair Loans &amp; Grants</a>	Also known as the Section 504 Home Repair program, this program provides loans to very-low-income homeowners to repair, improve or modernize their homes or grants to elderly very-low-income homeowners to remove health and safety hazards. Provides up to \$40,000 loan and \$10,000 in grant funds to very-low-income homeowners to repair, improve or modernize their homes; can be combined for a total of \$27,500 in assistance; grants target elderly very-low-income homeowners to remove health and safety hazards; loans up to 20 years with a fixed interest rate of 1%	\$40,000 loan + \$10,000 grant	Open Cycle	<a href="#">Contact your USDA State or Area Office to request an application package, and to discuss your project</a>
US Department of Housing and Urban Development	Housing	<a href="#">FHA 203K Loans - Mortgage Loan for Fixer Upper Properties</a>	An FHA 203k loan is backed by the federal government and is a financing option for buyers who want to buy a damaged or older home and do repairs on it. The program provides financing up to 110% of the after-improvement value. However, the borrower is required to provide a detailed proposal of the work they want to do and cost estimates for each item so will need to hire an independent consultant or licensed contractor to prepare these exhibits. Local lenders in Allen County has stated they off this product currently.	Up to \$35,000 loan to be used for improvements	Open Cycle	Contact your local lender and request a this loan product
Fannie Mae		<a href="#">Homestyle Renovation Mortgage</a>	Similar to the FHA 203K loan, the HomeStyle Renovation Mortgage can provide a financing option to buy and renovate an existing house. One of the major differences between the two loans is that a HomeStyle Renovation Mortgage can finance renovations to a primary residence, rental property, or vacation home while FHA restricts use to primary residences only. With this flexibility comes a slightly higher down payment minimum of 5% and stricter lending requirements with a minimum FICO score of 620	"75% of the lesser of the purchase price plus renovation costs, or the "as completed" appraised value"	Open Cycle	Contact your local lender and request a this loan product
US Department of the Interior	National Parks Services	<a href="#">Federal Historic Tax Credits</a>	The Historic Tax Credit (HTC) program encourages investment in the rehabilitation and re-use of historic buildings. The federal tax credit allows program participants to claim 20 percent of eligible improvement expenses against their federal tax liability. The federal tax credit program uses the US Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation to determine what kinds of work are appropriate for historic buildings and eligible for the tax credits (link NPS website). IN addition, federal tax credits require a property must be income-producing such as an apartment building, upper-story housing on main street or some other commercial use (i.e. private residence ineligible)	Up to 20% of project costs on Qualified Rehabilitation Expenditures (QREs)	Open Cycle	Contact Kansas State Historical Society Mr. Patrick Zollner, Director 6425 Southwest 6th Avenue Topeka, KS 66615-1099 Phone: 785-272-8681 x205

## HOUSING FUNDING SOURCES - STATE

Agency	Grant/Loan Program	Description	Funding Range	Application Cycle	To Apply
Kansas Historical Society	<a href="#">State Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit</a>	This program offers tax credits to developers who sensitively rehabilitate historic buildings to offer them new life. The state offers this tax credit program to ensure character-defining features and spaces of buildings are retained to help create distinct and vibrant communities. Individual owner-occupied residences do qualify for this program. State income tax credit of up to 25% of the qualified rehabilitation expenditures associated with the project. "Qualified rehabilitation expenditures" or "QREs" means the same as defined in Section 47 of the Internal Revenue Code. These QREs generally include expenditures related to structural components of the building and some soft costs that would normally be charged to a capital account.	Up to 25% of project costs on Qualified Rehabilitation Expenditures (QREs)	Open Cycle	Contact Kansas State Historical Society Mr. Patrick Zollner, Director 6425 Southwest 6th Avenue Topeka, KS 66615-1099 Phone: 785-272-8681 x205
Kansas Housing Corporation	<a href="#">First Time Homebuyer Program</a>	Kansas Housing's First Time Homebuyer Program helps income-eligible applicants with a down payment on a home purchase. To be eligible, applicants must be first time homebuyers or not have owned a home for three years and have a median income at or below 80% of their area. Each homebuyer must make an investment of 2% but no more than 10% of the sale price from their own funds. The program allows homebuyers to apply for a 0% interest loan in the amount of 15% or 20% of the purchase price of the home. The loan is forgiven if the buyer remains in the home for 10 years.	Up to 20% of the purchase price of the home	Open Cycle	Cynthia Howerton chowerton@kshousingcorp.org First Time Homebuyer Program Manager 785-217-2025
Kansas Housing Corporation	<a href="#">HOME Rental Development Program</a>	The HOME Rental Development Program assists communities and developers with increasing the supply of affordable rental housing. The program helps communities, via housing developers, respond to housing issues and needs in underserved areas. The HOME funds are setup as a deferred loan to the developer who only pays interest on the awarded amount for a 15-year period. The balance of that loan is due at the close of the term period.	Up to 25% of the project cost with 1:1 local match required	Due annually in January	Barry McMurphy bmcmurphy@kshousingcorp.org Rental Development 785-217-2024
Kansas Housing Corporation	<a href="#">Housing Trust Fund</a>	"The National Housing Trust Fund assists communities and developers with increasing the supply of rental housing that is affordable to low-income households. The program provides funds for developers creating rental housing for extremely low-income household renters.	Details unavailable	Annual competitive process; application available upon request	Barry McMurphy bmcmurphy@kshousingcorp.org Rental Development 785-217-2024
Kansas Housing Corporation	<a href="#">Moderate Income Housing program</a>	The Moderate Income Housing program (MIH) serves the needs of moderate-income households that don't qualify for federal housing assistance. MIH grants and/or loans are awarded to cities and counties to develop multi-family rental units and single-family for-purchase homes in communities with populations fewer than 60,000 people.	KHRC limits grants or loans to no more than \$400,000 per awardee."	Requests for Proposals are released each summer, with applications due to KHRC in mid-October.	Alissa Ice Director of Housing Development aice@kshousingcorp.org 785-217-2036

## HOUSING FUNDING SOURCES - LOCAL

Agency	Grant/Loan Program	Description	Funding Range	Application Cycle	To Apply
Local Jurisdiction	Neighborhood Revitalization Program (NRP)	This NRP is intended to promote the revitalization and development of new construction and the rehabilitation, conservation or redevelopment of residential, commercial and industrial properties. Property owners will receive a property tax rebate over a period of time - typically 10 years - based on the increased assessed value of their property. The rebate schedules are controlled by the local jurisdiction. A typical schedule provides a rebate of 80-100% for the first three to five years and then declining over the term. One of the main requirements of the program is there must be a minimum increase in appraised valuation of \$5,000 for residential, commercial, and industrial properties as determined by the Allen County Appraiser's Office.	Tax rebate	Open Cycle	Contact your local city clerk to determine eligibility
Local Jurisdiction	<a href="#">Rural Housing Incentive District (RHID)</a>	RHID is a program designed to aid developers in building housing within rural communities by assisting in the financing of public improvements. RHID captures the incremental increase in real property taxes created by a housing development project for up to 25 years. In order to take advantage of the incentive, a property must be within a redevelopment district. Districts are defined by the City or County and must be based on the Housing Needs Analysis. Of special note, recent changes to the program now allow renovation of vacant structures and upper story housing in the downtown district eligible for consideration.	Tax rebate	Open Cycle	Contact your local city clerk to determine eligibility



## **BEST PRACTICES & RESOURCES**

There are a number of great examples to highlight for each of these proposed strategies. Please review the list of resources provided as a starting point and reference.

### **Local Programs & Guidance Examples**

**CASH Kansas** | Program to provide cash match towards a down payment for low-income households by partnering with employers as contributors toward their savings.

**Habitat for Humanity—HOPE Housing Counseling** | Counseling services to support households prepare for financing and owning a home.

**Freddie Mac CreditSmart®** | Online program to teach potential homebuyers about homeownership and qualify for HomeOne and Home Possible funding program through Freddie Mac.

**Infill Housing Development Guide** | Atchison, KS (pop. 10,885) City staff published an Infill Housing Development Guide to help interested builders better understand the local development process and access the available incentive programs.

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## **BEST PRACTICES & RESOURCES (CONT.)**

### **Employer-Assisted Housing (EAH) Programs**

#### **Down Payment Assistance | Perham, MN**

The Perham Housing & Redevelopment Authority (HRA) leveraged several funding sources to create an employer-assisted down payment assistance pool. The city contributed \$100,000, local employers a total of \$55,000 and Greater Minnesota Housing Fund (GMHF) promised to match all employer contributions. The two major employer contributors were KLN Industries, a local snack/pet food manufacturer with 565 employees, and Arvig Enterprises, a local cable provider with 335 employees. KLN employees can gain access to up to \$10,000 in forgivable loans while employees of Arvig Enterprises are limited to \$1,000. Both are then provided match funds from Perham HRA.

#### **Eagle Ridge Townhomes | Jackson, MN**

The City of Jackson report housing shortages as a major impediment to securing labor for their primary employer AGCO, a multinational corporation headquartered in Jackson. The County added nearly 2,000 residents in a short period of time and in 2013, AGCO announced a \$42 million expansion. The result was to build a 48-unit rental townhouse development in Jackson to help support the workforce housing needs. AGCO provided cash contributions to support the efforts of Southwest Minnesota Housing Partnership, the developer, to build out the project. The state of Minnesota also provided significant funding sources to this demonstration project.

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## **BEST PRACTICES & RESOURCES (CONT.)**

### **Land Bank Programs**

#### **[Kansas Land Bank Resources](#)**

The Public Health Law Center at Mitchell Hamline School of Law provides a thorough assessment of every locality with an existing land bank ordinance as well as access to the legal language necessary to create your own land bank.

#### **[Wyandotte County, KS | Economic Development Division \(pop. 165,429\)](#)**

The Land Bank of Wyandotte County is a model program with a very robust set of online materials to garner support from individuals and investors alike. There's guidance on how to build on a land bank owned lot as well as an outlined process for contractors and investors to be pre-qualified as a preferred partner. Additional FAQ sections are available to further educate the public.

#### **[SOAR | Kansas City, KS](#)**

The SOAR initiative stands for stabilization, occupation, and revitalization. It is a 5-year plan to confront some of the most pervasive challenges in the appearance, communication, and safety within KCK's neighborhoods. The website is a dashboard with guidance on how individuals can get involved in improving their neighborhoods.

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## **BEST PRACTICES & RESOURCES (CONT.)**

### **Land Bank | City of Stratford, KS (pop. 959)**

The Stratford Landbank serves the community of Stratford to help reduce blighted or problem properties in town, while working to return them to productive use, and get them back on the tax roll. This grassroots group received a grant to support the renovation of three blighted properties. While professional contractors were utilized, many volunteers spent countless hours helping renovate these properties which helped stretch their thin renovation budget.

### **Land Bank | Hutchinson, KS (pop. 40,006)**

The City of Hutchinson administers its land bank through the Planning and Development Department. They provide a list of the available properties with images linked on their city's website which is helpful to know what is available. They also periodically update a PDF map displaying these locations along with the current valuation, property class, zoning, and lot size.

### **Land Bank | Atchison, KS (pop. 10,885)**

The City of Atchison has done a great job setting up its land bank program and administering it through REDO Atchison, a special initiative created to restore and preserve the historic value of its housing stock. They provide a listing of their available properties through an interactive map outlining land bank parcels and providing lot size details in the pop-up description box. Land bank policies and application forms are readily available on the site along with a fillable response form to contact City staff for further assistance.



**economic  
development**

## OVERVIEW

The key trends and challenges for Economic Development that were identified in the quantitative and qualitative research conducted for Allen County's Community Assessment includes the following:

- *Job opportunities are available, but the labor pool is unable to meet employer demand*
- *Some skills training and post-secondary education is available in Allen County, but the region lacks a cohesive workforce development ecosystem*
- *Balancing community priorities with regional economic development efforts is improving but still challenging*

In response to these key trends and challenges, two **Strategic Opportunity Areas** for Allen County emerged:

- *Cultivate a regional workforce development ecosystem*
- *Expand county-wide economic development efforts*

## **RECOMMENDED STRATEGIES**

### ***Cultivate a regional workforce development ecosystem.***

- Build a coalition of employers, higher education, training providers, K-12, wraparound service providers, and economic development professionals
- Based on employer needs and skill gaps, identify training and programs to address these needs
- Leverage a variety of training and education methods, including dual enrollment programs, apprenticeships, traditional classroom courses, internships, mentorship programs, and more
- Create a robust outreach and recruitment effort to make people aware of local employers, job availability, training and education opportunities connected to these jobs, potential earnings and career advancement, etc.
- Ensure individuals are connected to the training and resources they need to be successful (ex. housing, tuition assistance, transportation, mental health counseling, etc.)
- Create and execute a marketing strategy revolving around success stories about individuals who were trained and employed in Allen County
- Use the coalition to continually assess employer needs and the labor market and evaluate performance measurements
- Apply for federal and state grants to support and expand the workforce development ecosystem

### ***Expand county-wide economic development efforts.***

- Determine priorities for economic development annually
- Identify strategic partners and determine how they will advance county-wide economic development efforts
- Build and budget for a standard incentive program to support business recruitment and expansion
- Develop a sustainable budget for county-wide economic development
- Identify sources of funding to support the annual budget
- Build an online presence, promote economic development efforts, and celebrate small and big “wins”
- Apply for federal and state grants to support economic development efforts

## Getting Started

Establish Allen County's Advisory Board for Economic Development.

Develop and implement a local fundraising strategy to expand Allen County's economic development fund.

Determine which projects are top priority for Allen County (ex. water/sewer, broadband, workforce development, recreation, etc.) then identify a comprehensive list of federal/state funding opportunities.

Evaluate the economic development fund (and other in-kind sources) to determine how much funding can be used for local match to apply for funding that supports priority projects.

Collaborate with local and regional partners to develop grant proposals.

*Pro tip: Don't apply for a grant for the sake of applying. Make sure the grant funding supports one or more of Allen County's annual economic development priorities. Doing so will result in the submission of more competitive applications, and will cultivate long-term alignment amongst local and regional partners.*

Evaluate advisory board membership, fundraising strategy, top economic development priorities, and federal/state grant opportunities annually. Make adjustments as necessary.



# PARTNERSHIPS

At a minimum, the following organizations should be substantially engaged in Allen County’s economic development efforts. Together, as a coalition, these leaders from these organizations should determine who else needs to be involved and what their role should be to advance collective priorities, programs and initiatives, and significant projects.

## Recommended members of Allen County’s **Advisory Board for Economic Development:**

<b>Organization</b>	<b>Role</b>
<a href="#">Allen County Board of Commissioners</a>	Oversee economic development activities in Allen County; Provide financial support for the county’s economic development fund; and Participate as an applicant or partner on federal/state grant applications.
City of Lola, City of Humboldt, City of Bassett, City of Elsmore, City of Gas, City of La Harpe, City of Mildred, City of Moran, City of Savonburg	Provide input on local economic development opportunities and challenges; Contribute to Allen County’s economic development fund; and Participate as an applicant or partner on federal/state grant applications.
<a href="#">Thrive Allen County</a>	Partner with Allen County Board of Commissioners to oversee and manage economic development activities in Allen County; With support from the county’s economic development fund, dedicate at least one staff member to manage county economic development efforts (contingent upon funding); Assist with grant identification and development; Participate as an applicant or partner on federal/state grant applications; Serve as a regional liaison for public, private, and nonprofit partners; and Host advisory board meetings
<a href="#">Allen Community College</a>	Engage with employers, other area community colleges, K-12, Regional Rural Technical Center, wraparound service providers, and Thrive Allen County to design and implement a workforce development initiative; Coordinate program offerings with employers to ensure programs are equipping students with the skills needed to be placed in jobs locally; Apply for grants to develop and implement pre-apprenticeships, apprenticeships, and other work-based learning models in Allen County; and Coordinate mentorships, internships, and on-the-job training opportunities for students with local employers.

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[Regional Rural Technical Center](#)

Engage with employers, other area community colleges, K-12, wraparound service providers, and Thrive Allen County to design and implement a workforce development initiative; Coordinate program offerings with employers to ensure programs are equipping students with the skills needed to be placed in jobs locally; Partner with lead applicant organizations on federal/state grants to expand and improve the Center's facility, programming, and career services.

[Iola Industries Inc.](#)

Inform industrial development activities, including site development, incentive packages, and target industry clusters.

[A Bolder Humboldt](#)

Inform industrial development activities, including site development, incentive packages, and target industry clusters.

Iola USD 257, Humboldt USD 258,  
Marmaton Valley USD 256

Engage with employers, Allen County College, other area community colleges, Regional Rural Technical Center, wraparound service providers, and Thrive Allen County to design and implement a workforce development initiative; Assist with recruitment and outreach for job training programs and career services.

[Iola Area Chamber of Commerce & Tourism, Humboldt Chamber of Commerce](#)

Coordinate programming and resources for small businesses and entrepreneurs; Coordinate tourism-related activities; and Identify opportunities for partnership and collaboration.

[Southeast KANSASWORKS, Inc. \(Area V\)](#)

Inform the Advisory Board about upcoming funding opportunities, policy/regulatory changes, and resources to support workforce training/education and career services.

[Southeast Kansas Regional Planning Commission](#)

Assist with planning activities and grant development for priority projects in Allen County; Inform the Advisory Board about upcoming funding opportunities, policy/regulatory changes, and regional economic development activities.

[Allen County Regional Hospital](#)

Provide updates on business-related activities and workforce challenges and/or opportunities; Inform health and wellness initiatives in Allen County; When and where appropriate, provide financial support to Allen County economic development activities.

Major employers

Communicate current and anticipated business development and workforce needs; When and where appropriate, provide financial support to Allen County economic development activities.

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Small businesses and entrepreneurs

Communicate current and anticipated business development and workforce needs; Make recommendations for programming and resources needed to spur business incubation, expansion, and retention.

Regional economic development organizations

Communicate place-based economic development activities; Discuss best practices and lessons learned; and Determine opportunities for partnership and collaboration on regionally impactful projects.

The Advisory Board for Economic Development should meet quarterly to ensure critical partners are informed, collaborative opportunities are fostered, and priorities are advanced. The Advisory Board should identify baseline performance measures as well as anticipated outcomes over a specified period of time to track progress and instill accountability throughout the economic development ecosystem.

### **Committees and Task Forces**

In addition to regularly convening the Advisory Board, it is recommended for Allen County to also consider committees and task forces to help guide specific components of economic development, including but not limited to, the following:

- Public Infrastructure & Transportation
- Workforce Development & Education
- Small Business & Entrepreneurship
- Recreation, Culture, and Tourism

Ideally, these committees or task forces will meet monthly to ensure partners are actively engaged, aligned, and moving forward on priority projects and initiatives.

At the appropriate time, it will be beneficial to expand the number of committees to include other critical aspects of economic development, such as Health and Wellness or Disaster Mitigation and Resilience.

## PRIORITY PROJECTS & INITIATIVES

### 2022

Establish and convene Allen County's Advisory Board for Economic Development

Leverage public and private partners to raise at least \$500,000 for Allen County's economic development fund

Establish Allen County's workforce development initiative (i.e. determine public and private partners, type(s) of training to be conducted and by whom, outreach and recruitment, wraparound services, job placement strategy, and operating costs, etc.)

### 2023

Once annual projects are identified, submit [Congressionally Directed Spending Request\(s\)](#) for one or more

Leverage public and private partners to raise at least \$600,000 for Allen County's economic development fund

Apply for federal/state grants to support Allen County's workforce development initiative

Create (or leverage an existing) website to house all information related to economic development in Allen County

Create comprehensive list of economic development incentives, add to website

Hire an additional staff member to support Allen County economic development activities

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## PRIORITY PROJECTS & INITIATIVES (CONT.)

### 2024

Leverage public and private partners to raise at least \$750,000 for Allen County's economic development fund

Establish business retention and expansion initiative, engage employers of all sizes to ensure equitable participation  
Establish entrepreneurial development initiative to support business incubation and acceleration

Initiate marketing campaign through Allen County's economic development website, partner websites to promote living/working/doing business/playing in the region



## BEST PRACTICES & RESOURCES



[Image from SIU Carbondale School of Aviation](#)

### **Man-Tra-Con Corporation | Marion, IL (pop. 16,855)**

Man-Tra-Con supports the economic health of southern Illinois by identifying the needs of local employers and, in response, provides services designed to build a quality of workforce. Man-Tra-Con's primary mission is to collaborate effectively with their workforce partners to create quality workforce solutions throughout Local Workforce Area 25, comprised of Franklin, Jackson, Jefferson, Perry and Williamson counties. In addition, Man-Tra-Con collaborates with innovative partners in economic development, healthcare, community and social service and education to create unique solutions to the workforce challenges faced throughout the region.

#### **PROGRAM HIGHLIGHT**

**Aviation Technician Program:** Man-Tra-Con partnered with [Southern Illinois University's](#) (SIU) [Aviation Technologies](#) program and [TRANSFRVR](#), a firm that develops simulation-based training, to co-develop virtual reality (VR) software that helps train students in aviation maintenance. SIU offers the training curriculum and the training is delivered through Oculus headsets and hand controllers. The program provides services to various counties throughout Illinois, Kentucky, and Missouri, and is anticipated to impact 600 students with an estimated 370 completing enhanced Aviation Maintenance Technician coursework through VR as a result of a [2020 grant](#) through the U.S. Department of Labor.

## BEST PRACTICES & RESOURCES (CONT.)



[Image from Hinds Community College](#)



### [Hinds Community College](#) | Raymond, MS (pop. 2,115)

Serving Claiborne, Copiah, Hinds, Rankin, and Warren Counties Hinds Community College's (HCC) Workforce Division offers a variety of services for career development, workforce training, assessment/testing, and Adult Basic and Continuing Education. HCC is dedicated to providing current and prospective employers in their district with a trained and educated workforce, enabling the district to retain and grow existing businesses and industries as well as to attract new ones.

#### ACADEMY & PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

**[Logging Academy:](#)** HCC offers a Logging Academy Program in partnership with Mississippi Logging Association and Mississippi Forestry Commission. The academy is an 8 to 16-week program designed to equip students with little or no experience to become a logging equipment operator with safety certifications as well as Professional Logging Manager (PLM) status.

**[Deckhand River Barge Training:](#)** HCC offers a Deckhand River Barge Training Program which prepares students for careers in marine transportation technology. Students may elect to pursue a Career Certificate and/or Technical Certificate (see [Curriculum](#) for download).

**[Coding Academy:](#)** The Vicksburg Coding Academy (VCA) was started in 2018 as a joint venture between HCC and the U.S.

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## BEST PRACTICES & RESOURCES (CONT.)



Army Engineer Research and Development Center (ERDC). The Academy is a one-year program, cohort model unique to Mississippi. ERDC and HCC worked to develop a curriculum that would satisfy the needs of the community. The VCA has top of the line computers and the latest software to facilitate the learning process. All courses are presented in-person with the same instructor at either ERDC or on the Vicksburg Campus. Once a student successfully learns how to create and write their own programs, they are eligible to sit for the Microsoft Technology Associate certification. While preparing for this certification, students also earn their Career and Technical Certificate through HCC and can elect to continue their education for an Associate's degree. Classes start every Fall, and are complete at the end of the Summer.

**MIBEST:** HCC offers an innovative workforce training program dedicated to preparing people who need help with foundational skills for careers by mixing career training with additional support for math, writing, and reading inside the classroom. If a student has not earned their high school diploma or HSE, HCC's MIBEST program can provide them with a clear path towards higher education. The goals of the MIBEST Program are to:

- Assist students who need to earn their GED to do so while they are also enrolled in college courses focused on preparing them for a career

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## BEST PRACTICES & RESOURCES (CONT.)



[Images from Mud & Magnolias](#)

- Help students to earn one or more certifications that helps them get a better job now with a family sustaining wage
- Allow students to earn college credit that leads to a degree in the future

**Career and Technical Programs:** HCC designed Pathways as a roadmap to show prospective and current students all the different academic and training options available to them. If a student plans to transfer to a university, HCC's program maps ensure they take the right classes. HCC's career and technical programs offer multiple degree and certificate options, each one training students for high-wage, high-skill, and high-demand jobs. By leveraging federal and state funding, as well as tuition revenue, HCC administers 70 career and technical programs, and more than 20 different academic areas of study.

### **Everest | Water Valley, MS (pop. 3,190)**

Mississippi's first rural education and innovation hub, Everest combines technology skills training with a business-ready incubator and a 30,000 sq ft office park available for co-location.

#### **PROGRAM HIGHLIGHT**

### **Base Camp Coding Academy | Water Valley, MS (pop. 3,190)**

Base Camp Coding Academy (BCCA) is a hands-on, challenging, and fun program designed to train recent high school graduates to be software engineers. In an

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## BEST PRACTICES & RESOURCES (CONT.)

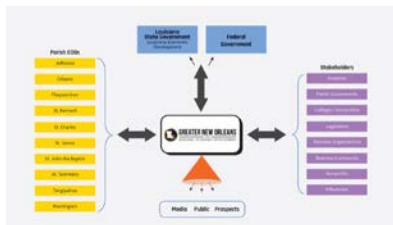


Image from GNO, Inc.

intimate classroom setting, students work with real world technologies to learn the fundamentals of coding, app development and the life leadership skills they will need to be successful in their career and competitive in the job market upon graduation. BCCA is a non-profit, offering a year-long—40 hours each week—program free to their students thanks to the support of Sustaining Sponsors including the MorganWhite Group, CoreLogic, Renasant Bank, and C Spire.

### [Greater New Orleans Inc.](#) | **New Orleans, LA (pop. 383,997)**

Greater New Orleans, Inc. (GNO Inc.) is the regional economic development nonprofit organization serving the [10-parish region](#) of Southeast Louisiana. GNO Inc.'s mission is to create a region with a thriving economy and an excellent quality of life, for everyone. To achieve this goal, GNO, Inc. pursues a two-pronged strategy:

*Business Development – Attract, retain, and develop the businesses that will employ the region's future workforce and drive the economy forward*

*Business Environment – Propose, promote, and facilitate policies and programs that improve the overall conditions under which businesses operate*

GNO, Inc. works together with the business community; local, state, and federal governments; and other regional stakeholders

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## **BEST PRACTICES & RESOURCES (CONT.)**

to coordinate, consolidate, and catalyze action on key issues and opportunities that maximize job and wealth creation and retention, are relevant to their region as a whole, and create systematic impact.

### **PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS**

#### **Mechatronics Apprenticeship Program:**

The Mechatronics Apprenticeship Training Program's curriculum is designed to enhance and prepare an apprentice to be fully qualified in multiple aspects of advanced manufacturing technology.

The two-year commitment provides both technical classroom instruction and on-the-job training using an earn-while-you-learn model with training costs covered completely by the employer. Once assigned to an employer, apprentices earn a paycheck while learning on-the-job. Apprentices alternate between eight weeks of classroom work and eight weeks at their chosen company for the duration of the program. Participants in the program gain experience in a wide range of core competencies including motor controls, basic machining (mill, lathe, drilling, tapping, etc.), blueprint reading, functions of electrical and electronic systems, and much more.

- Partners include GNO Inc., Northshore Technical Community College, Nunez Community College, Delgado Community College, Elmer Chocolate, Laitram, and Zatarain's.
- For more information, check out this [video overview of the program](#).

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## **BEST PRACTICES & RESOURCES (CONT.)**

### **Business Retention & Expansion:**

Working closely with parish (i.e. county) and state partners, GNO Inc.'s Business Retention & Expansion (BRE) program is designed to keep companies growing and competitive by connecting them with resources available in their region. For qualifying companies, GNO Inc.'s business retention team can help with:

- Accessing incentive programs (see [Overview of Incentive Programs](#))
- Workforce training and recruitment resources
- Introductions to public sector and economic development officials
- Demographic data and select market research
- Information about available land and real estate
- Communications strategy support

### **GNO Inc.'s approach to attracting and retaining industry in their region:**

- [Business Assistance](#)
- [Key Industries](#)
- [Workforce & Demographics](#)
- [Operating Costs](#)
- [Sites & Buildings](#)
- [Business Retention](#)



# building revitalization

Photo by Trevor Hoag / [Iola Register](#)

## OVERVIEW

The key trends and challenges for Key Building Revitalization that were identified in the quantitative and qualitative research conducted for Allen County's Community Assessment includes the following:

- *Recreational amenities and cultural institutions are a unique draw to Allen County*

In response to these key trends and challenges, one **Strategic Opportunity Area** for Allen County emerged:

- *Transform the Thrive Annex Building into a multi-use facility*

The following sections will delineate the strategies, partnerships, funding sources, and best practices and resources for Allen County to consider as Thrive Allen County and community leaders collaborate to design a new cultural amenity to spur more tourism opportunities throughout the region. This information is not intended to be conclusive, but instead, will evolve as strategies are executed and partnerships are fostered.

## RECOMMENDED STRATEGIES

### ***Transform the Thrive Annex Building into a multi-use facility.***

- Restore the Thrive Annex Building to its former glory
- Add the building to the National Register of Historic Places
- Leverage historic tax credits (if applicable) for the building renovation
- On the first floor, offer a multi-use event space to accommodate various programming such as art classes, wine tastings, wedding receptions, birthday parties, etc.
- On the second floor, offer a unique short-term rental option to tourists or locals wanting to experience a relaxing getaway
- Promote the county's cultural and recreational amenities to those who utilize the Thrive Annex Building space
- Sustain the building financially through revenue generated from the short-term rentals and event space

## Getting Started

Contact the State Historic Preservation Office to determine if the Thrive Annex Building is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places

Collaborate with an architect and engineering firm to determine the pre-development and renovation costs of the Thrive Annex Building

If eligible, apply for federal and state historic tax credits to assist with paying for a portion of the renovation costs

Kickoff a fundraising campaign to generate public and private funds to restore the Thrive Annex Building

Collaborate with partners and local interior designers to furnish the Thrive Annex Building, including the short-term rental units and event space(s)

Rename the Thrive Annex Building by paying homage to the historical uses

Promote the facility as a short-term rental and event space for locals and visitors

# PARTNERSHIPS

## Organization

[Thrive Allen County](#)

[Allen County Historical Society](#)

[State Historic Preservation Office](#)

[Iola Area Chamber of Commerce & Tourism](#)

Entrepreneurs and Artisans

## Role

Manage the property, including short-term rentals and event space; With the help of public and private funding, sustain operations of the facility.

Assist with the process to add the Thrive Annex Building to the National Register of Historic Places; Ensure building renovations maintain historic character; and Generate ideas for community events that can be hosted at the facility.

Assist with the process to add the Thrive Annex Building to the National Register of Historic Places; Identify funding opportunities (including tax credits), programming, and resources during the renovation process and beyond.

Generate ideas for community events that can be hosted at the facility; Assist with tourism-related activities at the Thrive Annex Building; Promote the short-term rental units and event space to locals and visitors; and Assist Thrive Allen County in partnering with local businesses to feature their products and services at the facility.

Provide input on and assist with programming that can be offered at the facility.



## **PROGRAMMING**

### **Short-Term Rentals (STR)**

During the coronavirus pandemic, many urban dwellers and families sought out short-term rentals located in rural communities. Often, tourists are seeking out unique experiences whether that be where they stay and/or what activities they choose to do in the place they are visiting. The Thrive Annex Building offers more than 5,361 square feet, which can feature two STRs (on two different floors) with some shared space or can be rented as one large STR.

On average, Allen County has approximately 12-16 short-term rentals listed on Airbnb priced between \$95 and \$200 per night. In addition to these nightly fees, Airbnb imposes a "[guest service fee](#)" and Airbnb hosts can charge other fees such as cleaning and/or extra guests, etc. When pricing out the nightly fee to rent out the STRs in the Thrive Annex Building, it will be important to consider how much the total stay will cost for guests above and beyond what the advertised nightly fee is on host sites, such as Airbnb. Compared to other STRs listed on Airbnb, the Thrive Annex Building features many more rooms and can therefore be listed at a higher nightly rate.

However, Airbnb recommends the following when it comes to pricing:

- Set a lower price for a new listing to help get more bookings;
- Improve earnings by adjusting pricing seasonally, on weekends, and for special events or holidays; and
- If your hospitality goes above and beyond (i.e. breakfast is provided or a welcome basket of local goods is offered upon check-in), these amenities and features warrant a higher nightly rate.

If renting out the Thrive Annex Building as two short-term rentals, Atlas recommends pricing the nightly rate for each floor between \$105 and \$125 (excluding guest service fees and cleaning fee). If the Thrive Annex Building is rented in its entirety, Atlas recommends pricing the nightly rate between \$250 and \$275 (excluding guest service fees and cleaning fee). Thrive Allen County should assess occupancy rates and which booking is more popular (two separate listings or one listing) to determine long-term pricing. Again, pricing should fluctuate seasonally. Once the property establishes a good reputation as a place to stay in Allen County, Thrive should consider the appropriate price increase. It is important to keep the Thrive Annex Building occupied—these visitors ultimately spend their money locally while visiting so it is a win-win situation for Thrive, Allen County businesses, and local governments.

<b>Scenario 1: Two STRs</b>		
<b>Nightly Rate</b>	<b>Avg. Annual Occupancy</b>	<b>Total Gross Revenue</b>
\$115	125 nights	\$14,375
\$115	125 nights	\$14,375
<b>Total</b>		<b>\$28,750</b>

<b>Scenario 2: One STR</b>		
<b>Nightly Rate</b>	<b>Avg. Annual Occupancy</b>	<b>Total Gross Revenue</b>
\$260	115 nights	\$29,900
<b>Total</b>		<b>\$29,900</b>

Atlas recommends Thrive Allen County include an at-cost (or slightly higher) cleaning fee so this service can be outsourced instead of relying on Thrive staff to maintain this property between guest stays.

**Event Space**

When the Thrive Annex Building is vacant, Atlas recommends hosting public and private events in the facility. To generate revenue, community events can be sponsored or require an entrance fee; private events should be treated as a facility and/or event space rental. Pricing will vary from event to event.

**> COMMUNITY EVENTS**

During the visioning and public input phase, Allen County leaders and residents—of all ages—shared many ideas about how the Thrive Annex Building could be used. A common theme revolved around ways the Thrive Annex Building could bring the community together through various events. Atlas recommends Thrive Allen County begin by hosting six events per year to generate interest from the broader community.

Some examples include the following:

- Valentine’s Day: “Galentine’s Day” event (ex. wine and paint)
- Easter: egg dying, Easter egg hunt, and other family-friendly games
- Fourth of July: barbeque competition and family-friendly games
- Halloween: haunted house
- Movie nights: featuring movies for kids, teenagers, and adults
- Art galleries / artist talks: featuring the work of local artists and rotated monthly
- Live music: featuring local and regional musicians

To encourage better attendance, it is recommended that these events occur shortly before the holiday instead of the day of the holiday. Cost will vary from event to event; however, Thrive Allen County should consider pricing between \$5 and \$50 (per person) depending on the type of event being hosted. If Thrive Allen County were to host six events per year with an average cost of \$20 per person and assuming 35 people per event, gross revenue would be approximately \$4,200 annually. These figures are conservative and should be evaluated each year when planning and hosting events. If community leaders, residents, and strategic partners engage with Thrive Allen County to host events, there will likely be greater participation and a higher demand (and more capacity) to host community events at the Thrive Annex Building.

Another avenue to engage the community and generate revenue is by hosting classes. Based on capacity and desire to do so, Thrive Allen County can host various types of classes given their staff's expertise; however, it would be beneficial for Thrive Allen County to engage with strategic partners and community residents to host classes at the Thrive Annex Building. In doing so, Thrive Allen County is able to work with these individuals and organizations to feature more diverse programming, such as: art classes, workouts, music classes, wine tastings, cooking classes, book clubs, etc. To generate income, classes should be offered for a fee to cover use of the space at the Thrive Annex Building and to pay the individual(s)/organization(s) offering the classes.

Before events and classes are offered at the Thrive Annex Building, Thrive Allen County should survey residents to assess the demand for both community events and classes. Early programmatic offerings should focus on the types of events that are most in-demand to have the best chance for good attendance.

#### **> PRIVATE EVENTS**

Once the Thrive Annex Building is revitalized, the facility will offer a new event space for local and regional residents to rent for private events, such as birthday parties, retirement parties, meetings (ex. Rotary Club), and more. For each event, Thrive Allen County should use an hourly rate that is comparable to regional event spaces. Similarly to the STR nightly rates, the hourly rate for event space should adjust seasonally—with higher rates on the weekends—to encourage greater use of the space and to increase income potential.

## **Artist-in-Residence**

According to an [Artists-in-Residence Toolkit](#) developed by artsACT, “an artist residency is an opportunity provided by a host organization that enables a guest artist to work in a new environment, often away from the restrictions and pressures of their everyday lives. Artist residencies are about providing the time and space for a guest artist to develop work and creatively explore new ideas. Artists are often selected through a competitive application process. The length of a residency can vary from weeks through months or even a year. Artist residencies can include a working space and accommodation, or may only offer a workspace. Some support a single artist or art form, others can support groups to collaborate across art forms. Artist residencies are important because they provide opportunities for artists from around the world to spend time in a new atmosphere and environment. They support cultural and artistic exchange, nurture experimentation and new ideas, and support research and the development of new work.”

In addition to the creative work performed by the artist throughout their residency, Thrive Allen County could offer the artist a place to stay in the Thrive Annex Building in exchange for the artist to also take care of the building (ex. cleaning) and teach art classes to residents in whatever discipline they specialize. To attract more artists to apply for the residency, Thrive Allen County should offer a small stipend (ex. \$500-1,000/month) to the artist and should promote the sale of their art pieces if they are open to selling their work for profit.

Offering an artist-in-residence program will attract more creative-minded people to Allen County, and might even encourage some to stay for the long-term. There are numerous organizations who are willing to financially support artist-in-residence programs, and they have proven to be a worthy return on investment economically and socially for small and rural towns throughout the country.

Thrive Allen County should consider facilitating a competitive application process to artists who are interested in a residency in Allen County. For the first year offered, Thrive Allen County should consider offering one or two artists a residency for a duration of 3-6 months each. Ideally, these artists will practice different artistic disciplines to offer a variety of classes, workshops, and featured work throughout the year.

## RENOVATION COSTS

To determine more accurate cost estimates, Thrive Allen County should engage with an architect, engineer, and general contractor. The figures below are estimates for Thrive Allen County to consider before undergoing the renovation and fundraising processes.

Square Footage	Avg. Cost per Square Foot	Total Estimate
5,361	\$200*	\$1,072,200
5,361	\$250*	\$1,340,250

*\*Although these numbers seem high, the cost of historic renovation is generally more expensive than new construction. These numbers also take into account inflation and supply chain challenges being experienced as of May 2022.*



The square footage shown above is approximate and represents 16 rooms, and includes the attic and basement.

If federal (20%) and state (25%) historic tax credits are utilized, Thrive Allen County could have approximately \$482,490 to \$603,113 of eligible expenses covered during the renovation process.

## BEST PRACTICES & RESOURCES

### [Travelers Hotel Clarksdale](#) | Clarksdale, MS (pop. 13,763)

The story of the Travelers Hotel begins in the early 1920s, when it was a bare-bones overnight stop-over for railroad workers who found themselves in Clarksdale. Like many small towns in the Mississippi Delta, Clarksdale has struggled mightily over the years. But its world-renowned reputation as the birthplace of blues music has drawn die-hard music-lovers from all over the world, and has attracted an influx of artists who nicely complement Clarksdale's existing, vibrant arts scene.

Today, the Travelers Hotel is equal parts hotel and community hub—a comfortable, eclectic, and modern tribute to the Mississippi Delta and its artistic traditions. There, the sense of place is strong. The lobby is a comfortable space to gather or sit peacefully, surrounded by an evolving collection of local art. The lobby bar features an impressive selection of regional beer, and there's a small kitchen and conference area for meetings and events. Guests are invited to relax and unplug as much as possible—Travelers Hotel offers wifi, but there's no TV in their rooms.

The Travelers Hotel is run by a cooperative of folks seeking to live creatively—some are local, some were drawn to Clarksdale from afar. The interests and areas of practice of their team varies, but they all share a knack for Southern hospitality and a steadfast commitment to making

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## BEST PRACTICES & RESOURCES (CONT.)

their community—once dubbed the “most Southern place on earth”—better for everyone. The cooperative also owns and operates a garden center and general store called [Collective Seed & Supply Co.](#), and a portion of revenues from both businesses fund programs and events that drive engagement, conversation, and collaboration among locals, visitors, and their growing team.

Today’s Travelers Hotel was developed by the downtown revitalization nonprofit, [Coahoma Collective](#). Coahoma Collective first organized in 2016 as a group of real estate developers, nonprofit professionals, artists, and architects who shared a deep commitment to catalyzing arts-driven, community-inclusive revitalization in downtown Clarksdale. Coahoma Collective was granted 501(c)3 nonprofit status in 2018, and in its first year, purchased two historic downtown buildings, including the site of the historic Travelers Hotel.

### Airbnb Inspiration

- [Bayou Long Beard](#) | Monroe, LA (pop. 47,702)
- [The Rodney House](#) | Lewes, DE (pop. 3,505)
- [Post Office Suite](#) | El Paso, IL (pop. 2,700)
- [“The Creepiest Airbnb’s Just In Time For Halloween”](#)