



Infinite Erie
Erie, PA

HOUSING NEEDS ANALYSIS & ACTION PLAN

Housing Accelerator



Prepared by: Infinite Erie
Analysis by: Fourth Economy and Hemlock & Forge

Published Jan. 2026



Table of Contents

Letter from Executive Director	03
Executive Summary	04
Leadership & Staff	05
About the Study	06
Why a Housing Accelerator Report?	06-07
Infinite Erie's Housing Role	08
Housing Needs Analysis: Key Data Findings	09
Definitions	10-11
Methodology	12
Introduction to Erie's Housing Economics	13-15
Key Data Findings	17-33
Action Plan	34
Housing Needs Analysis: Key Data Findings	35
Why the Infinite Erie Housing Accelerator Framework for Action	36-37
The Path to 250	38-39
• Special Population Programs	40
• Priority Neighborhood Clusters & Opportunities	42-43
• Role of Infinite Erie's Housing Accelerator	44
• The Financial Architecture	45
• Framework for Action	46-48
	49

Letter from the Executive Director

Erie stands at a pivotal moment. A decade after Erie Refocused challenged us to rebuild confidence in our neighborhoods, we've made undeniable progress, yet the fundamental challenge remains: too many Erie residents still struggle to find a safe, quality, affordable home.

The Housing Accelerator Housing Needs Analysis & Action Plan is both a call to action and a practical guide for working together. Guided by data that shows safe, stable housing is where economic mobility and neighborhood growth begin, it marks the next step in Erie's growth.

By aligning focus, capital, and capacity, we can transform the way Erie builds, preserves, and invests in its neighborhoods.

The analysis also makes clear what many in this community have experienced firsthand: our housing stock is aging, affordable rentals are shrinking, and traditional development tools alone aren't enough to keep pace with rising costs or community need.

Erie's current system is built on fragmented funding and a project-by-project approach that lacks momentum. Incremental progress has been made, but not enough to close the gap. Strengthening our neighborhoods requires a more coordinated, long-term approach that expands local development capacity, aligns investment, and creates housing that meets residents where they are.



The path forward builds on Erie's momentum. Data gives us direction, but collaboration will drive results. The Infinite Erie Housing Accelerator is our community's next catalyst. It is a bold, coordinated push to unite public, private, and philanthropic partners in building or preserving 250 affordable, workforce, and supportive homes within five years.

To our partners: thank you for your leadership, insight, and belief that Erie's best days are ahead. To our community: this is your invitation to join us — to invest, collaborate, and help accelerate the work of building an Erie that works for everyone.

Together, we can build a more equitable, resilient, and thriving city.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kim Thomas". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Kim Thomas
Executive Director



HOUSING NEEDS ANALYSIS & ACTION PLAN

Housing Accelerator

Findings Overview

The housing needs analysis shows that Erie faces significant structural challenges that limit the city's ability to produce, preserve, and modernize its housing stock. Long-term population loss and an aging inventory have reduced private-sector reinvestment and contributed to a substantial mismatch between household needs and available housing. The city has a deficit of deeply affordable and workforce units, increasing homelessness, a shortage of one-bedroom homes, and increasing pressure on renters as low-cost units disappear. At the same time, construction costs, financing gaps, and limited local development capacity have stalled new production and placed existing affordable units at risk.

Solutions Overview

The Housing Accelerator establishes a coordinated model to address these systemic barriers by building a predictable project pipeline, strengthening neighborhood-level investment strategies, and expanding the tools available to mission-driven and private developers. A five-year goal of building or preserving 250 affordable, workforce, and supportive homes is supported by a blended capital structure that leverages public, private, and philanthropic resources alongside capacity-building support and shared project management. This framework is designed to move Erie from incremental, one-off projects to a sustained approach capable of increasing supply, stabilizing key neighborhoods, and improving long-term housing outcomes across the city.

Leadership & Staff

Convener, Catalyst, Champion

Infinite Erie strengthens Erie's community and economic development system by identifying, cultivating, and prioritizing the projects and initiatives in the Playbook.

We help develop and champion Erie's shared agenda.



Learn more:
infiniteerie.com

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ABOUT THE STUDY

WHY A HOUSING ACCELERATOR REPORT?

Building and maintaining housing is complex work. It requires coordination among many sectors, government, philanthropy, private developers, and community organizations, each driven by different motivations. While partnerships across these sectors are essential, they often form around a single project and then dissolve once that project ends. The challenge is creating a lasting structure that keeps partners working together over time.

A principle behind a ‘housing accelerator’ is that housing is too difficult to be handled by the normal course of business or relying exclusively on the private market to deliver housing in the right places, for the right people, at the right time. Infinite Erie saw the need to complete a comprehensive analysis of the “why” this system is unsustainable for a thriving community, and to create a roadmap for how to break that system and accelerate growth.

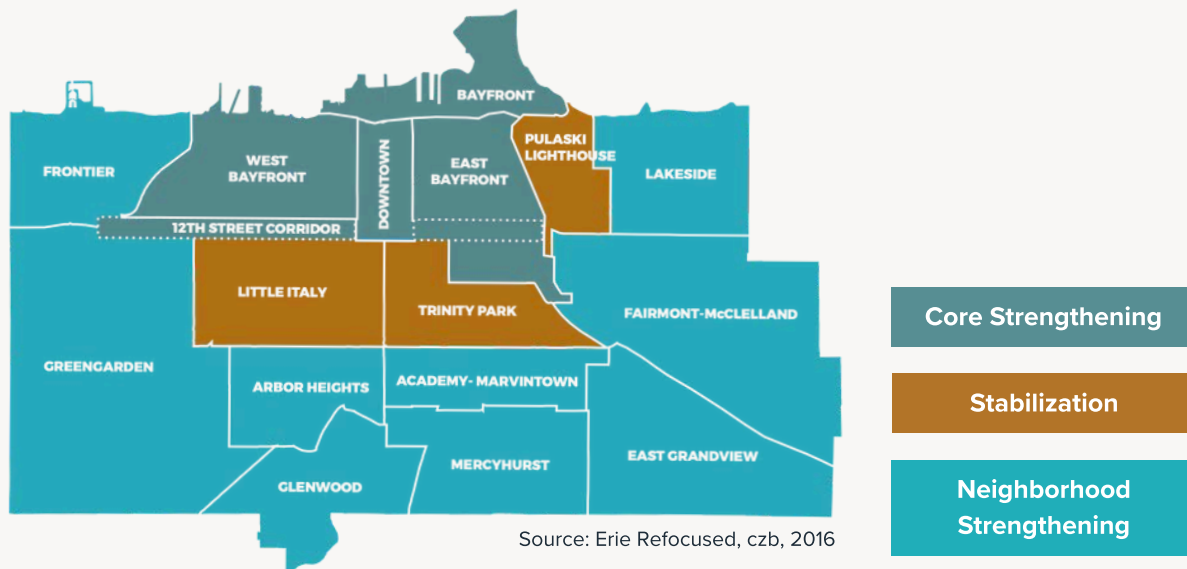
Our Housing Accelerator Report will:

- Set a baseline of the housing market in Erie, describing the conditions for certain populations, neighborhoods, and housing types.
- Describe the key findings from the analysis and the gaps needing to be filled to achieve a vision of housing equity.
- Articulate a strategic framework for how Infinite Erie’s Housing Accelerator program will move a community towards a ‘north star’ goal of community development.

Ten Years Since Erie Refocused

Erie has long battled housing instability, blight, and economic disinvestment. In March 2016, Erie Refocused, the latest comprehensive plan for the City of Erie, proposed an adaptive urban planning framework to guide economic, commercial, and community development in the coming decade.

This Housing Accelerator Report describes how Erie’s housing market has fared on the plan’s directives in the decade since Erie Refocused.



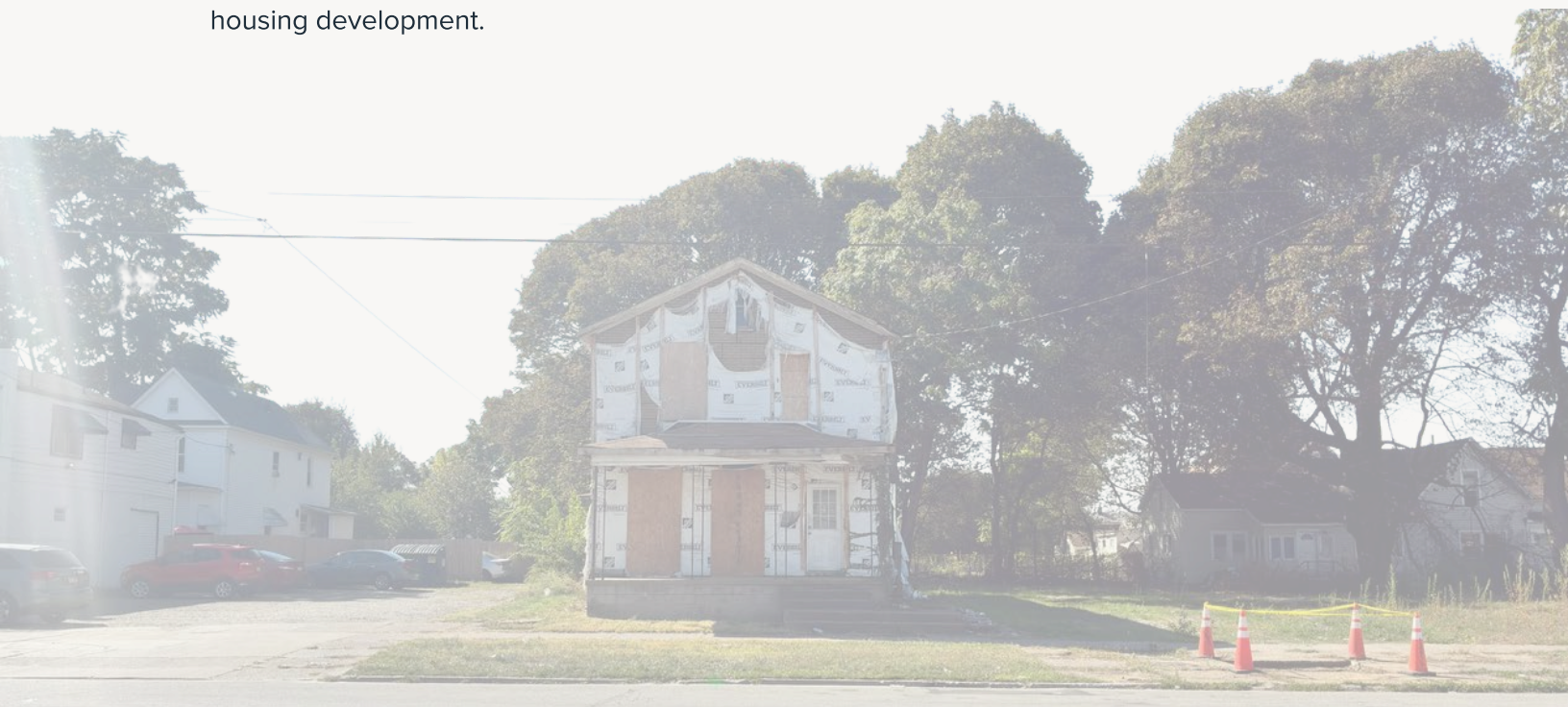
From 2011–2023, over **200 blighted parcels were demolished** in partnership with the Redevelopment Authority of the City of Erie, but across all developments **only 84 new units were permitted**. Addressing the distressed properties in destabilized neighborhoods was a key priority of Erie Refocused, especially in the ‘core neighborhoods’ surrounding downtown.

Half of that equation has been addressed in the last 10 years through blight remediation. Unfortunately, the local housing market has not done enough to bring those parcels back into productive, taxable use through new housing development.

As of October 2025, only one parcel successfully went through the Redevelopment of the City of Erie’s remediation process to go from a status of *blighted* ► *remediated* ► *rehabilitated* ► *fully leased*.

The review of Erie Refocused emphasizes the continuing need to:

- Replace blight with functional housing
- Visibly stabilize neighborhoods
- Guide investment with a focused 10-year strategy



Infinite Erie's Housing Role

Infinite Erie's goal is to catalyze transformative, inclusive growth so that every resident benefits from a region defined by opportunity, momentum, and measurable results.

Infinite Erie serves as a strategic backbone for Erie County's regenerative growth — convening public, private, and civic actors around a unified vision to reverse disinvestment and advance equitable prosperity. Its mission is to translate bold ideas into measurable impact by coordinating investment, technical assistance, and project infrastructure across sectors as defined by the portfolios in “The Playbook”.

A Playbook Priority

Championing initiatives such as Housing First Erie to end chronic homelessness, Infinite Erie will bolster affordable and workforce housing access, and expand homeownership opportunities, particularly among historically underserved communities.



FOCUS

Aligning community efforts around common goal.



FUND

Raising needed capital through public and private funding.



FRAMEWORK

Facilitating implementation of housing strategy.

Key Takeaways:

- Erie needs a new approach to housing and community development focused on partnerships to acquire, rehabilitate, and build
- A public-private partnership with a concrete framework is essential for attracting investment
- Neighborhood revitalization must be visible and coordinated across sectors

Infinite Erie

Housing Needs Analysis

Key Data Findings

The analysis included a robust quantitative housing needs assessment – conducted by Hemlock & Forge and Fourth Economy, and a series of key informant interviews with Erie stakeholders – conducted by Infinite Erie and Hemlock & Forge. Key Data Findings, expanded upon in the report, are as follows:

- 01. Housing Unit Need**
Erie's available housing supply is significantly mismatched to the population by price, size, and type.
- 02. Not Enough Development**
Erie created ~8 units annually from 2014-2023, an insufficient number to match the housing unit need.
- 03. Affording the Median Rent**
46% of Erie renters are 'severely cost burdened', paying >35% of their income.
- 04. Homeownership**
Minority homeownership are significantly below county and state averages.
- 05. Substandard Housing**
There are at least 500 substandard units in Erie, concentrated in impoverished areas.
- 06. Preservation**
476 of 4,902 federally subsidized units in Erie County will expire by 2031.
- 07. Homelessness**
Since 2020, homelessness has increased by 30%, while supportive housing beds have decreased by 14%.
- 08. Housing Funding**
Erie housing developers and nonprofits need additional public and private funding.



Definitions

The following are important definitions that help explain the concepts behind the analysis:

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

For a household - Housing where the household pays 30% or less of their monthly income on housing cost, either rent or mortgage.

For a housing unit – The rent is targeted at a rate less than 80% of the area median income (AMI).

SUPPORTIVE HOUSING

Permanent housing with supportive services for populations with physical and/or behavioral health needs. Likely dedicated to people exiting homelessness.

WORKFORCE HOUSING

Housing targeted to working professionals who earn between 80% to 120% of the AMI.*

*Based on median Erie wages, 'workforce housing' residents can pay \$900 - \$1,250 for a two-bedroom apartment.

MARKET HOUSING

Housing that the market creates for those earning above 120% of the area median income.


HOMELESSNESS

Households that are - according to the federal definition from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development:

- Unhoused and living in a place not meant for habitation, such as an emergency shelter, street, car, or an unsafe place without utilities or,
- A household actively fleeing from domestic violence without a permanent place to reside.

THE HOUSING CONTINUUM

The following graphic details the 'housing continuum' for the purposes of our analysis (all income data based on the 2023 American Community Survey from U.S. Census):

EMERGENCY/ TRANSITIONAL SHELTER	SUPPORTIVE HOUSING	AFFORDABLE HOUSING	WORKFORCE HOUSING	MARKET HOUSING
				
Shelter: overnight Transitional: temporary and time- limited (often 90 days - 2 years)	Permanent 12-month leases Services included Sustainable rental assistance	Rent (2BR): <\$850 Affordable Home Sale: <\$125,000	Rent (2BR): \$950 - \$1,250 Affordable Home Sale: \$130,000 - \$190,000	Rent (2BR): >\$1,300 Affordable Home Sale: >\$200,000

Definitions cont.

HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT (HUD)

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) administers federal aid to local housing agencies that manage the housing for low-income residents at rents they can afford. HUD provides technical and professional assistance in planning, developing, and managing these developments.

PUBLIC HOUSING

Established by the Housing Act of 1937, the federal government's oldest subsidized rental housing program where the local public housing authority manages and owns the building.

PROJECT-BASED SECTION 8

A HUD program offering direct rental assistance, tied to specific units, to underwrite operating costs and keep rents affordable in a property using the Section 8 program.

LOW INCOME HOUSING TAX CREDIT (LIHTC)

Created by the Tax Reform Act of 1986, the LIHTC program is a pass-through financing tool where a syndicator buys federal tax credits in exchange for providing capital to a development where the developer operates affordable housing.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE (USDA)

USDA administers two housing loan programs to local development in more rural areas.

FEDERAL HOME LOAN BANK AFFORDABLE HOUSING PROGRAM (AHP)

The FHLB system administers housing funds through its Affordable Housing Program (AHP), which offers grants for homeownership and rental housing development. Funds are distributed through approved member financial institutions (banks and credit unions) and project sponsors (developers, non-profits).

AREA MEDIAN INCOME (AMI)

AMI is the middle income for a region, meaning half of households earn more, half earn less. Each year, HUD updates AMI and adjusts it by household size, since a family of four needs more income than a single person to afford housing. AMI is important because it is the foundation for most subsidized housing programs: it determines who qualifies for help and sets rent limits at levels like 30%, 50%, or 80% of AMI. In short, AMI is the key benchmark used to decide which households need assistance and what "affordable" should cost in a given community.

COMMUNITY LAND TRUST (CLT)

A CLT holds land "in trust" to address community needs, usually providing an affordable home sale to local households. A CLT can separate the ownership of land from the ownership of any buildings on that land. This allows the land to remain affordable permanently, while a homeowner can earn equity on their home. A CLT is not a land bank, nor is it a conservation land trust.

Methodology

This Housing Accelerator Report was developed using a mixed-methods approach that integrates **quantitative data analysis** and **qualitative interviews** with community stakeholders.

Quantitative Data Analysis

U.S. Census and American Community Survey (ACS)

The foundation of the analysis is drawn from the ACS, primarily the 2023 five-year estimates, representing the most recent data presented.

Key ACS indicators examined include:

- **Tenure and Housing Affordability:** Owner and renter occupancy rates, median rents, and housing cost burden
- **Housing Stock Characteristics:** Age, size, and type of units, as well as the prevalence of substandard conditions (e.g., lack of plumbing or heating).
- **Demographic and Economic Data:** Income distribution, race/ethnicity, and household composition to identify disparities in housing access.

U.S. Building Permit Survey (2014–2023) to track new construction permitting trends.

PolicyMap to visualize U.S. Census and other informative datasets.

National Housing Preservation Database (2024) for tracking publicly subsidized affordable housing units and expiring subsidies.

Redfin and regional MLS data for market pricing and housing supply for owner-occupied sale trends.

Erie County Department of Human Services and Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) data to understand local homelessness responses.

Qualitative Interviews

Recognizing that data alone cannot fully explain barriers to housing development, the study incorporated extensive interviews and focus group discussions with key stakeholders.

More than 30 participants contributed insights, including:

- **City of Erie**
- **Erie County**
- **Redevelopment Authorities**
- **Community Development Corporations**
- **Philanthropy**
- **Real estate professionals**
- **Nonprofit housing and service providers**

These interviews provided essential context on the systemic barriers limiting production—such as financing gaps, construction costs, zoning constraints, and capacity limitations among smaller developers.

Introduction to Erie's Housing Economics

The housing economics in Erie City, PA are summarized below based on the following themes:

Population Trends

Income Distribution

Racial Demographics

Basic Housing Characteristics

Population Trends

Monitoring the population trends is an important consideration for housing policy and development, as it has implications on the need for new housing and the underlying economics.

Erie County and the City of Erie continue to face long-term population decline. Between 2015 and 2023, the city lost nearly 6,000 residents — **a 6.5% decrease**.

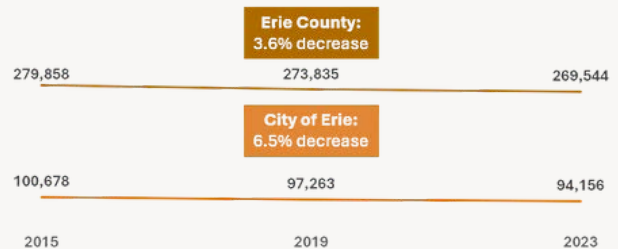
Importantly, population loss is not occurring evenly across Erie's neighborhoods. In the areas hit hardest, higher vacancy, blight, stagnant rents, and aging homes weaken the market and make it difficult to attract new development or sustain economic growth.

Reviewing the population trends from 2018 to 2023, you can see that **the steepest population decline is concentrated in the east side of downtown**. Population growth can be found downtown, in the West Bayfront, and along the Bayfront Parkway.

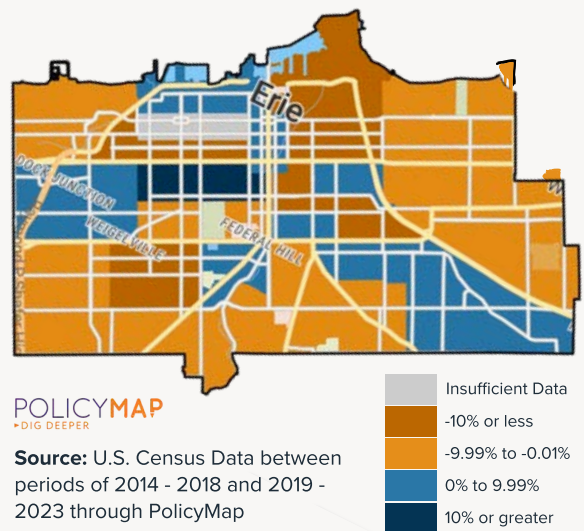
The places with the steepest population decline offer an opportunity to dig deeper into the state of housing in those neighborhoods. They offer a potential focus area for Infinite Erie's partnership.

The size of household in Erie is another trend to monitor in the population, as the household is the base unit of the housing economy. Household size in Erie remains relatively small and consistent across the region, with only slight differences between owners and renters. In the City of Erie, homeowners average 2.3 people per household and renters 2.2, while in Erie County the averages are 2.4 and 2.1, respectively. These modest household sizes reinforce the need for a broader mix of smaller units.

Population Trends



Distribution of Population Decline/Growth from 2018-2023



Income Distribution

Another important indicator of housing economics is the **median household income in the city of Erie was \$43,397 in 2023**. This is a 6% decrease from its figure in 2015 for the city. The city household income does not compare favorably with the median household income of Erie County (\$61,476 in 2023) and the state of Pennsylvania (\$76,081 in 2023).

The Income Distribution in County and City chart shows the distribution of incomes in 2023, according to the U.S. Census' American Community Survey 5-Year Reporting.

The Median Income for Owner and Renters chart demonstrates that the median income is not evenly distributed between homeowners and rents in the city of Erie.

The median household income for homeowners in 2023 in Erie City was \$60,616, while it was \$28,396 for renters.

This disparity between renters and owners has been consistent in Erie since 2010. The median renter earns below the federal poverty level for a family of four. That poverty level is distributed unevenly across Erie neighborhoods.

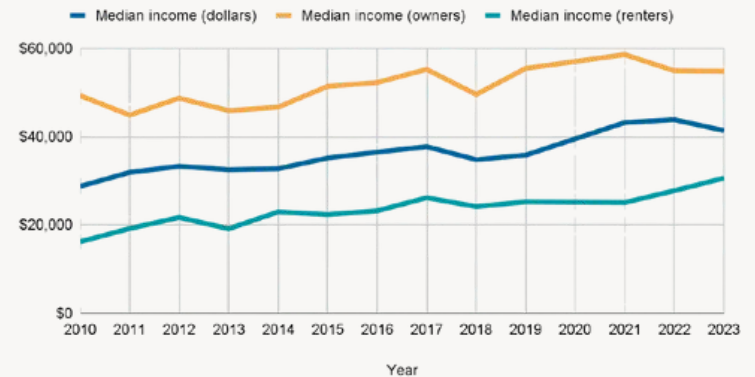
The map demonstrating People in Poverty shows the distribution of poverty rates with the darker colors representing a higher percentage of impoverished households in that area. This level of poverty in the city of Erie speaks to the level of rents and mortgages that the median household can safely afford given their wages.

The national standard for housing affordability is defined by a household paying 30% or less of their income towards housing costs. This allows us to compare what the median household income can afford in a mortgage or monthly rent and compare that against the community's median rent and mortgage.

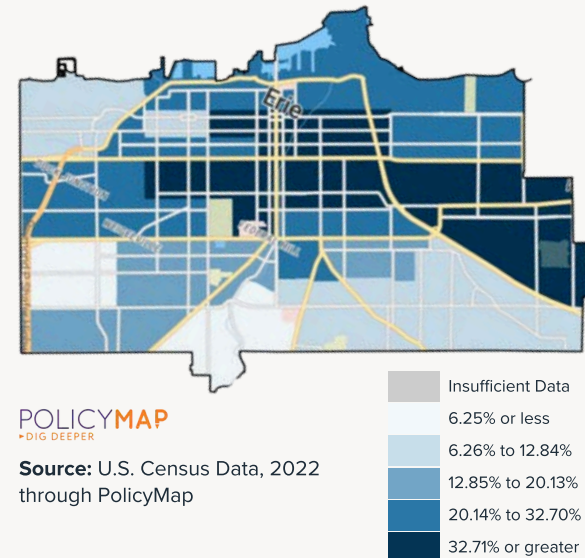
Income Distribution in County and City



Median Income for Owners and Renters



People in Poverty



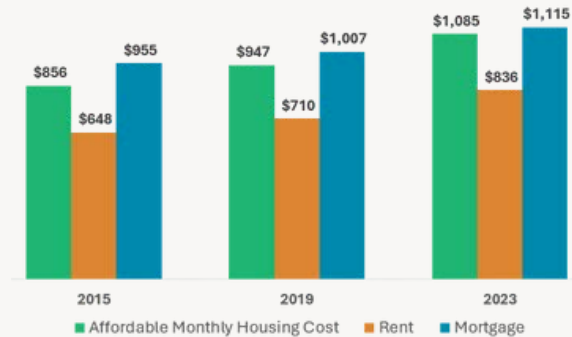
Income Distribution Cont.

The Purchasing Power of Median Income chart compares the affordable housing cost for the Median Monthly Income in the City of Erie Against the Median Rent and Median Mortgage monthly cost. **The data indicates a clear affordability gap.** Median-income households cannot support the mortgage payments tied to today’s home prices and interest rates, which exceed the rates most current owners secured in earlier years.

The median mortgage paid by Erie households has only grown by 17% since 2015, muted due to people locking in fixed 30-year mortgage rates while housing costs were low.

Purchasing Power of Median Income

Comparing the affordable housing cost for the **Median Monthly Income** in the City of Erie against the **Median Rent** and **Median Mortgage** monthly cost.



2015-2023 Growth Rates:

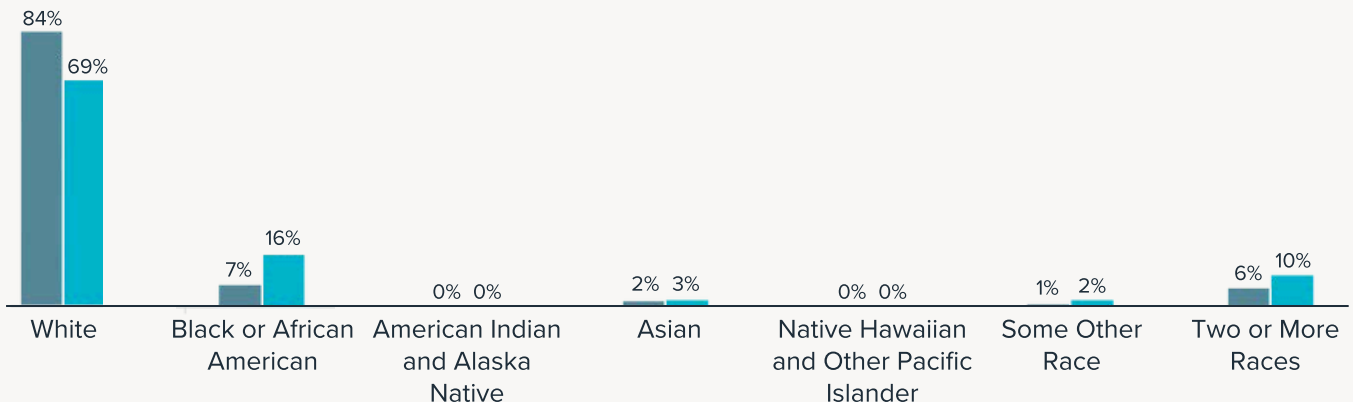
Median Monthly Income +27%, Median Rent +29%, Median Mortgage +17%.

Rental Market:

The rental market shows a similar mismatch: because the median renter earns far less than the median household, they cannot afford the median rent. Though the median income has grown by 27% from 2015 to 2023, the median rent has grown by 29% during that time, erasing any realized income gains.

Racial Demographics

The City of Erie is comparatively diverse to Erie County as a whole, with over double the representation of Black households and almost double the representation of those identifying with two or more races.



Source: U.S. Census Data, 2023

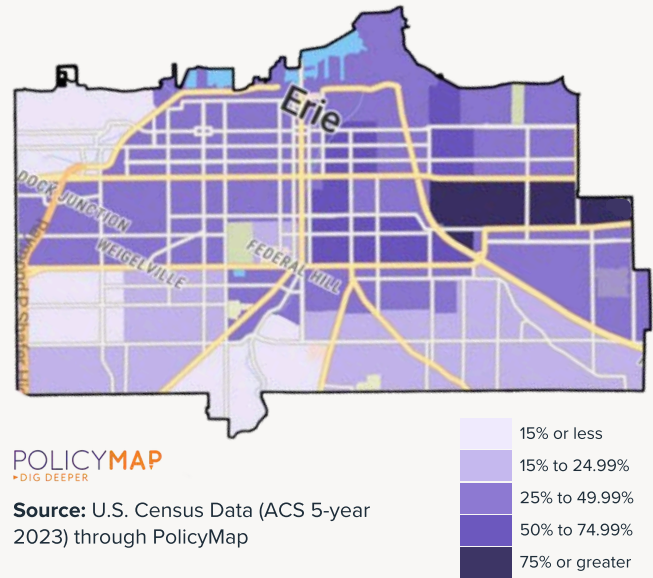
City of Erie Erie County

Racial Demographics Cont.

Erie’s diversity is spread across its neighborhoods, with a lot of the neighborhoods claiming a historical culture brought out by the people who have called it home for generations.

The map on the right sketches how people of color are distributed throughout the neighborhoods. The diversity exists throughout the city with a higher concentration on the east side.

People of Color in Erie Neighborhoods



Basic Housing Characteristics

The following are some of the basic characteristics of the housing market in Erie City and Erie County, according to the 2023 American Community Survey 5-Year Reporting from U.S. Census.

Characteristic	City of Erie	Erie County
Housing Units	43,377	120,019
Vacant Units	9.10%	8.30%
Homeowner Tenure	53%	68%
Renter Tenure	47%	32%
Homes Built Before 1939	39%	25%
Substandard Homes	664 (1.7% of all occupied units)	1,529 (1.4% of all occupied units)
Homes Valued Less than \$100,000	44%	24%
Median Home Value	\$108,200	\$169,500
Median Housing Cost: Rent	\$836	\$876
Median Housing Cost: Mortgage	\$1,115	\$1,371

Infinite Erie Housing Analysis

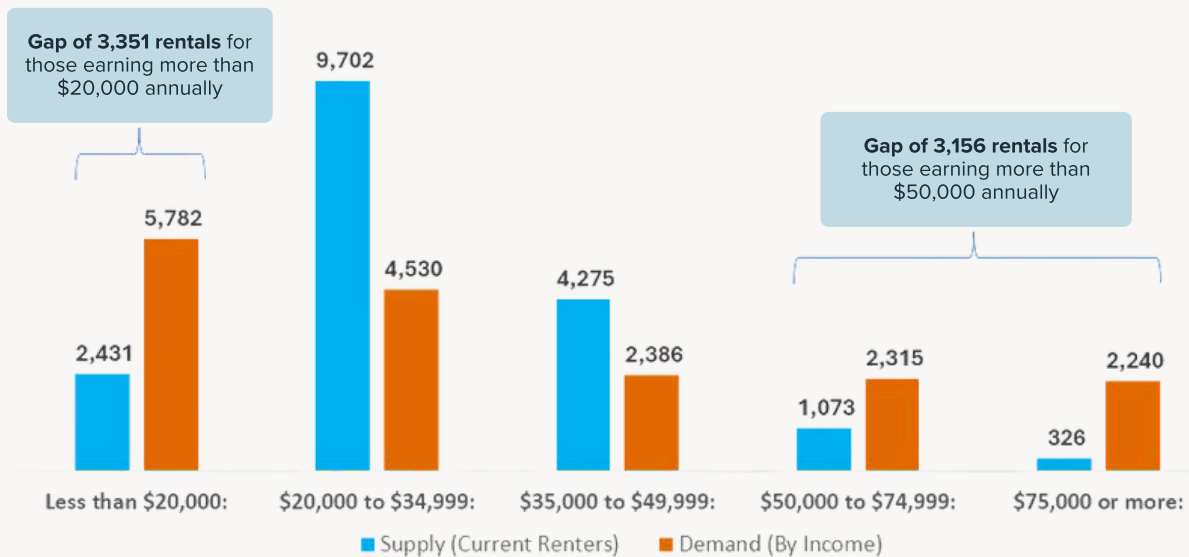
01. Housing Unit Need

Erie faces a significant housing mismatch, with a shortage of 6,000 deeply affordable and workforce units, and a stark deficit of one-bedroom homes despite most households being small. The most affordable rentals are rapidly disappearing, with units under \$500 dropping 57% since 2020, adding pressure to the lowest-income renters. Overall, the city’s housing supply—by price, size, and type—does not align with what Erie households need or can afford.

Housing Unit Gaps Between Supply and Demand

How well does Erie’s housing market match what renters can afford? When you compare renter incomes to the number of units available at each affordability level, two clear pressure points emerge. The largest gaps are at the lowest end of the market, for renters **earning less than \$20,000 annually**, and at the upper end, for those **earning more than \$50,000 annually**.

Comparing what people are paying for rent (**supply**) vs. what they should be paying (**demand**) if they paid only 30% of their income to rent.

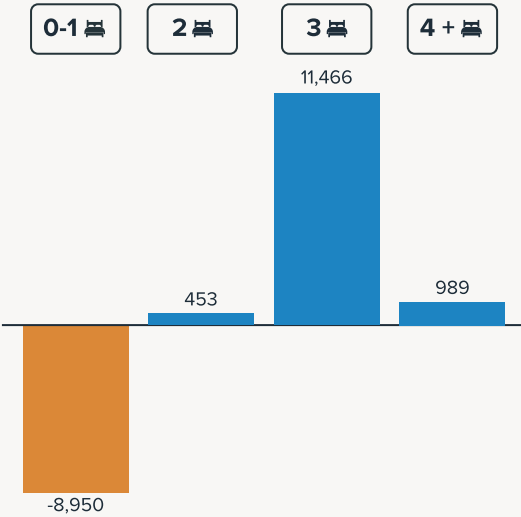


Source: data from the 2023 U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey

These gaps reflect the “two tails” of Erie’s rental market, where the lowest-income households and those seeking higher-quality options are both underserved, leaving limited choices at each end of the spectrum.

Mismatch Between Unit and Household Size

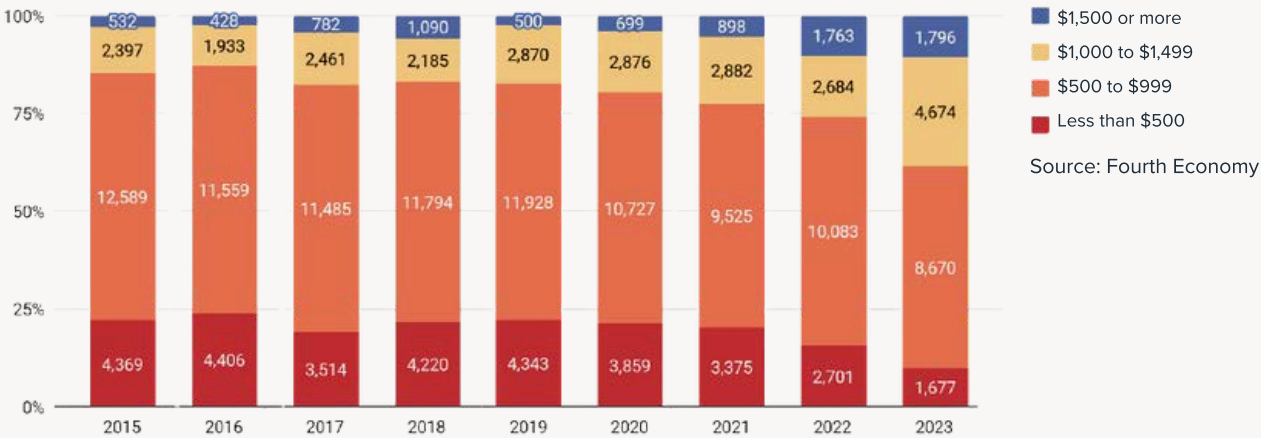
The housing availability is not equally distributed based on household size. **A stark one-bedroom deficit exists locally in the city of Erie**, alongside a surplus of 3+ bedroom units, emphasizing a structural mismatch between available units and household needs.



Source: Census American Community Survey (Selected Housing Characteristics and Occupancy Characteristics)



Rental Units by Monthly Rent



Source: Fourth Economy

This indicates a need to expand both deeply affordable units (under \$500/month) and workforce units (above \$1,000/month). Unfortunately, the existence of rentals at deeply affordable rates is decreasing over time. Since 2020, the following:

- Units charging \$500 or less have decreased by 57%
- Units charging \$500-\$999 have decreased by 19%

Infinite Erie Housing Analysis

02. Not Enough Development

An average of 8 units were created annually in Erie City from 2014-2023. Erie Downtown Development Corporation (EDDC) created 104 additive units in 2024, demonstrating the impact of a concentrated neighborhood development approach.

Development Patterns:

Reducing blight was a guiding policy coming out of Erie Refocused a decade ago. Accordingly, the City of Erie and the Redevelopment Authority of the City of Erie have concentrated their efforts on the areas rated as highly distressed or distressed in the comprehensive plan, including East Bayfront, Trinity Park (Center City), West Bayfront, Little Italy, and Pulaski-Lighthouse.

As of 2016, the highly distressed areas experienced 43% poverty rates with 78% of homes in moderate or severe distress. The housing characteristics in the distressed areas were not much improved.

The work of blight reduction has seen success. Since 1955, the Redevelopment Authority of the City of Erie (RACE) has played a leading role in “transforming communities, addressing blight, and fostering economic growth.” In the last period, it has led to 210 parcels demolished, including 88 properties acquired through its Blight Mitigation Program. (source: 2024 RACE Annual Report)



Rebuilding the Gaps: The Need for Infill Development

While demolition has productive results in decreasing blight in the core neighborhoods around downtown, the corresponding empty lots can make community blocks look like they have “missing teeth.”

There is a development strategy called “infill development” that works to fill in the missing teeth of a block with small-scale housing or mixed-use building. New development must work hand-and-hand with demolition to revitalize neighborhoods. Unfortunately, Erie has not seen housing development at a scale to stabilize its core communities.

The U.S. Building Permit Survey shows the City of Erie created **only 84 new units between 2014–2023**, compared to 210 parcels demolished.

This is an average of 8 units per year.

NOTE: 2023 was the last published year of the U.S. Building Permit Survey, the 2024 figures are estimates based on local city reporting.

In the decade from 2014-2023, the City of Erie

- demolished >210 blighted parcels
- built 84 new units
- 13% multifamily units
- 87% single-family homes



Source: U.S. Census Data Building Permit Survey (2014-2023; the last year with reported data)

This imbalance illustrates the urgent need to shift from teardown to build-up.

In one year,
EDDC leased

 **104**
NEW
RENTAL
UNITS

These additive units surpassed the city’s total production over the previous ten years. Erie Downtown Development Corporation shows what’s possible when focused investment and coordinated funding come together. While EDDC is making great strides in the market rate sector, more work needs to be done across the other areas of the housing continuum.

Barriers to New Development:

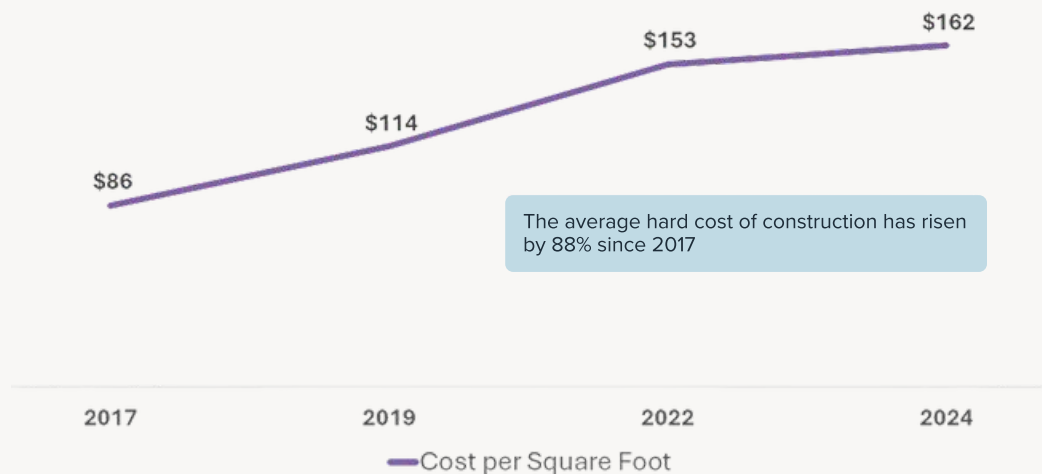
There are numerous barriers to development. The first among them is the escalating cost of construction. The average hard cost of construction for homebuilders has increased by 88% since 2017, according to the National Association of Home Builders.

The average size of home built in the US in 2024 was 2,643 square feet. The cost to build at that scale today would be \$428,215 per home.

The average home listing price in Erie as of February 2025 was \$142,000. The disparity between these two prices demonstrates the immense economic barrier to infill development in Erie and prevents most housing deals from passing an underwriting review.

The interviews with key community leaders mentioned other barriers to development:

- **Capacity:** Many interviews noted the lack of capacity, despite the number of mission-minded organizations locally, which meant that few were actively pursuing off-market housing acquisition consistently. (One developer described how the entire staff would be focused on acquisition until a parcel was acquired, then the entire staff would be focused on capital fundraising and then would move on to construction. There was little specialization or redundancy in local capacity.)
- **Compliance:** A few interviews noted that they do not pursue public funding due to the compliance cost surrounding a funding award.
- **Access to Capital:** It takes too many capital sources and too much time for one Community Development Corporation to redevelop 1 unit. (One nonprofit developer said it took five sources and 18 months to rehab two units.)



Source: National Association of Home Builders annual survey

03. Affording the Median Rent

The median Erie renter has not been able to afford the median rent from 2010-2023, especially true for the downtown and core neighborhoods. While 46% of Erie renters are ‘severely cost burdened’, paying more than 35% of their income on housing.

Affordability

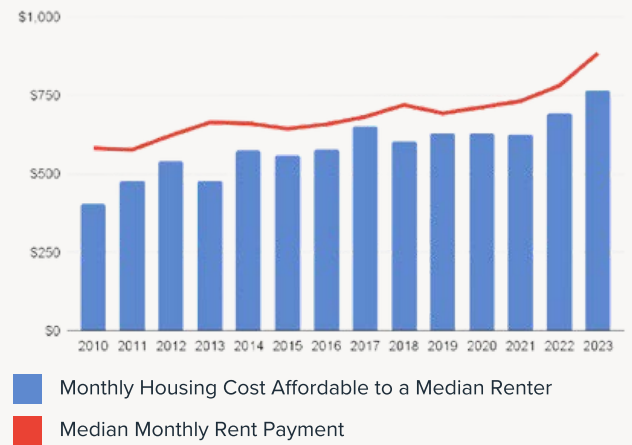
The national standard for ‘affordability’ is for a household to pay no more than 30% of its income to housing. This allows us to understand the relationship between a household’s income and the affordable rent or mortgage for that income. When a household pays more than 30% of its income to maintain stable housing, we term it as “cost burdened.”

The median rent in Erie City was \$836 per month, an increase from \$710 per month in 2019 and \$648 per month in 2015. While incomes have risen in the city of Erie, the inflation of rent has outpaced that wage growth, erasing the gains. As the chart on the right exhibits, **there has not been a time since 2010 when the median household could afford the median rent.**

Housing Cost Burden:

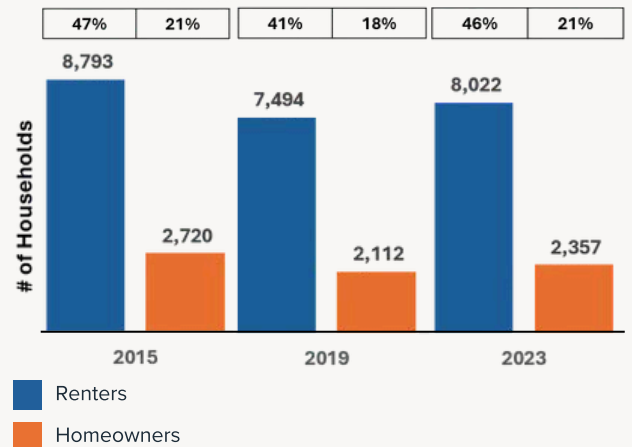
Housing cost outpacing wage growth has led to a large portion of households who are cost burdened in Erie. Nearly half of Erie renters consistently spend more than 35% of their income on housing—classified as “severely cost-burdened.” While the number of cost burdened households has decreased since 2015, the corresponding decrease in the city’s population has held the percentage largely consistent from 2015 to 2023.

Median Rent vs What the Median Renter Can Afford



Source: Fourth Economy analysis of Census American Community Survey Data

% of Renters or Homeowners Who Pay More than 35% of Their Income on Housing



Source: 2023 U.S. Census American Community Survey Data

The rental burden is not consistently felt in each neighborhood in the city of Erie. When you map the census tracts where the median renter can afford the median rent, it cleaves out downtown Erie and its immediate surrounding neighborhoods. The dark purple sections of the map to the right are where the median renter is able to afford the median rent, while the light purple represents areas where the median renter is not able to afford the median rent.

Comparatively, here is what the Erie rental market is currently offering potential tenants. From June 2024 to June 2025, Rentometer collected information from more than 400 listings in the city of Erie and reported the following available rent amounts based on bedroom sizes.

Areas Where the Median Renter Can Afford the Median Rent



- Median renter is **able** to afford the median rent
- Median renter is **not able** to afford the median rent

Source: PolicyMap, U.S. Census American Community Survey Data

	Average	Median	25th Percentile	75th Percentile	Listings, Last 12 Months
Studio	\$845	\$845	\$766	\$924	6
1 BR	\$883	\$838	\$691	\$1,076	74
2 BR	\$1,136	\$1,098	\$887	\$1,385	144
3 BR	\$1,471	\$1,485	\$1,195	\$1,747	129
4 BR	\$1,619	\$1,590	\$1,332	\$1,907	54
5 BR	\$2,011	\$1,900	\$1,495	\$2,527	11

Source: Rentometer

The majority of listings are for two-bedroom and three-bedroom apartments. The median income for an Erie household in 2023 was \$43,397, suggesting that the median household could afford \$1,084 per month in rent. That household could afford the median studio and one-bedroom. But would be cost burdened if their family size required them to get an apartment larger than a one bedroom.

This is the lived experience for nearly half of the renting households in Erie.

04. Homeownership

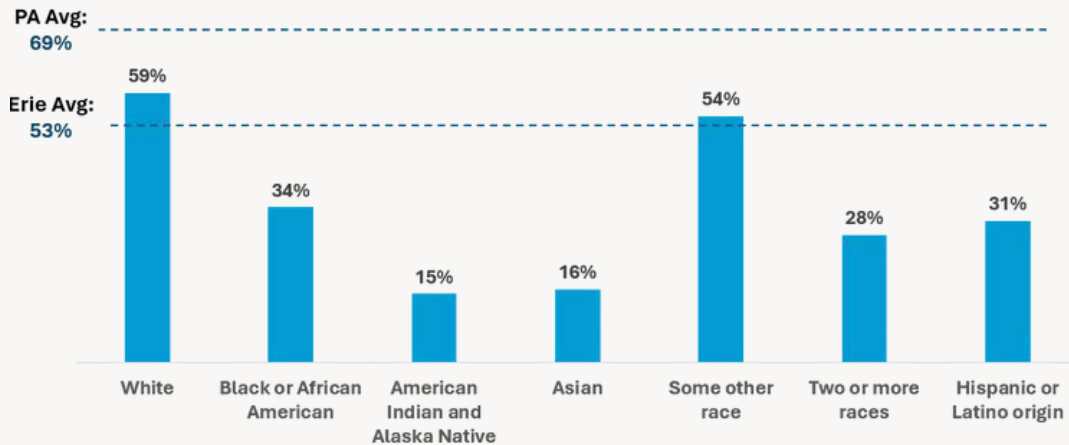
Minority homeownership below county and state averages, with low homeownership concentrated in core downtown neighborhoods.

Homeownership in Erie City (53% in 2023) has continued to lag behind the Pennsylvania average (69% in 2023) and national average (66% in 2023). This depressed homeownership is not evenly distributed – **minority households in Erie own homes at a significantly reduced rate.**

The depressed minority homeownership rates in Erie are far below the national averages.

- Black households homeownership rate in United States was 44%. Erie sits at 34%.
- Hispanic households homeownership rate in United States was 51%. Erie sits at 31%.
- Asian households homeownership rate in United States was 62%. Erie sits at 16%.

Minority Homeownership Far Below City and State Average



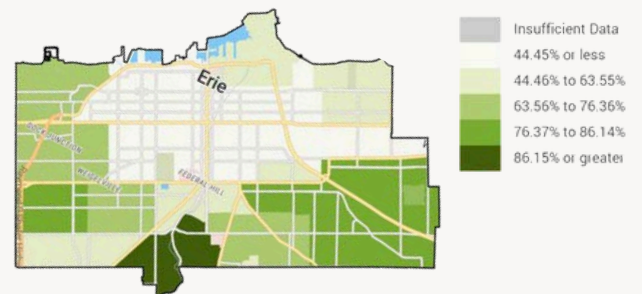
Source: 2023 U.S. Census American Community Survey Data

The homeownership rate is also not evenly distributed throughout Erie neighborhoods.

As we have seen, the downtown and surrounding neighborhoods are more likely to experience poverty and less likely to afford the median rent. This concentration of disparity continues when we map the homeownership rate by Census tract.

The white areas on the map own homes at over 20% below the Pennsylvania average.

% of Homeowners by Area



Darker green: higher homeownership percentage
White areas: less than 45% homeowners

Source: PolicyMap, 2022 U.S. Census American Community Survey Data

Home Buying:

There are two sides to homeownership affordability: what households earn and what homes cost. While Erie’s income distribution contributes to higher poverty rates, rising home prices are also making it harder for many residents to become homeowners.

The home sale price continues to rise, scaling an additional \$50,000 per home in a five-year period from 2019 to 2023.

What the Average Renter Can Afford

Increasing first-time homeownership is a common policy goal, but the math shows the challenge. The average renter in Erie earns \$28,396 per year, supporting a mortgage payment of \$710 per month. At a 6% interest rate with no down payment, that equates to a maximum affordable home price of \$88,000.

Erie’s For-Sale Market and Affordability Gap

The average list price of a home in February 2025 was about \$142,000, far above what the typical renter or median-income household can afford. Understanding this price point helps illustrate the gap between market conditions and what first-time buyers can sustainably purchase.

What the Gap Means

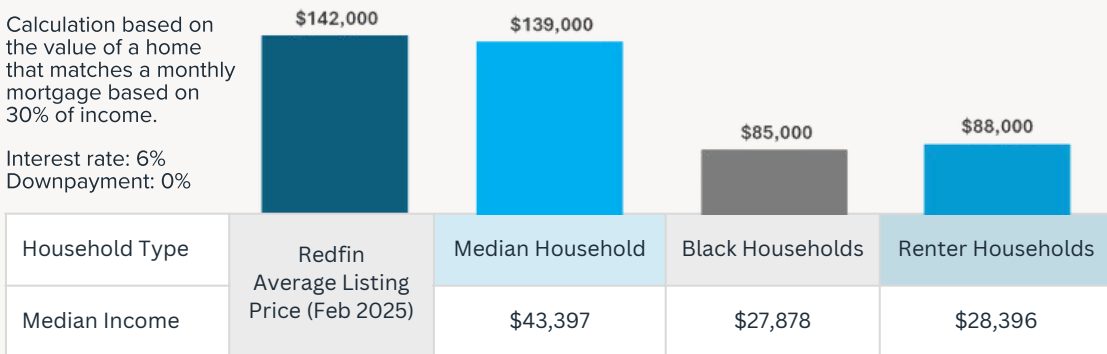
The difference between what the market offers and what households can afford signals the need for intervention on both sides of the transaction. The gap in homeownership affordability suggests an intervention needed on both sides of the transaction:

- **Buying Down the Home:** A gap of \$50,000 exists between the listing price and the affordable mortgage to the median rent. Subsidy is needed to buy down that listing price to ensure a sustainable mortgage for the new homeowner.
- **Homebuyer Assistance:** Supporting first-time buyers will require bringing more cash to the closing table through tools such as down payment assistance, closing cost support, and interest rate buy-downs.

Price of a Home Affordable to Median Income

Calculation based on the value of a home that matches a monthly mortgage based on 30% of income.

Interest rate: 6%
Downpayment: 0%



Racial Equity Considerations

An affordability gap exists for the median Black household in Erie, which could support a home priced around \$85,000, still far below the region’s current average listing price.

Source: 2023 U.S. Census American Community Survey Data. Purchasing power calculations completed by Hemlock & Forge

Infinite Erie Housing Analysis

05. Substandard Housing

There are at least 500 substandard units in Erie and depressed housing values are concentrated in impoverished areas.

Erie’s blight challenges remain acute.

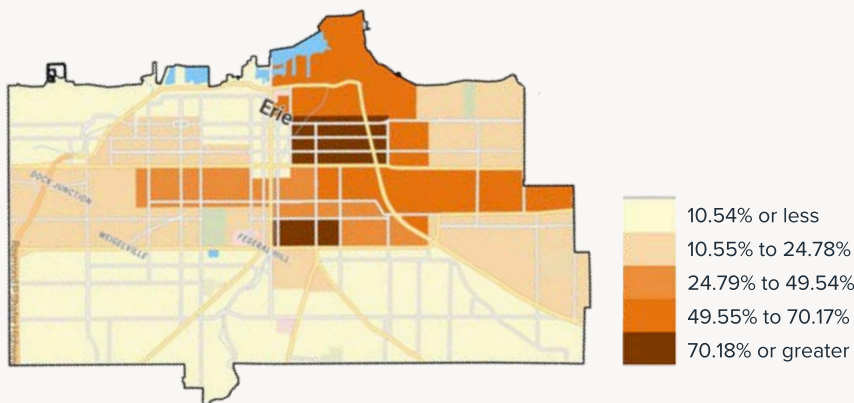
The findings on property conditions from Erie Refocused in 2016 have not abated, though there has been progress in addressing blight. Erie Refocused identified the core neighborhoods around downtown as highly distressed or distressed. The theory of change suggested that by removing blight and investing in commercial and community development, the property values would rise, livability would increase, and the tax base would broaden.

Unfortunately, a review of the property values around the core neighborhoods reveal that the areas remain depressed economically. When we map the concentration of homes with a value less than \$60,000, we see that the areas on the East Side have 70% of their homes valued at less than \$60,000. This acts as a proxy variable for a depressed housing economy.

This low housing value, <\$60,000, is a proxy for potential **substandard housing** and for struggling **neighborhood economics**.



% of Homes Valued Below \$60,000



Source: PolicyMap, 2022 U.S. Census American Community Survey Data

Blight Survey:

A survey of property conditions was conducted by the City of Erie and Redevelopment Authority of the City of Erie over seven years ago. It revealed a concentration of poor conditions citywide and especially in ‘qualified Census tracts.’ A qualified census tract is a designation by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development based on an area that has either a poverty rate above 25% or has over 50% of households earning 60% or less of the area median income. At the time, there were 427 units that were rated as “poor” or “unsound.”

In the intervening seven years, the number of substandard homes has not improved. According to the U.S. American Community Survey, there were 497 units in 2023 that lacked a complete kitchen. There has been drastic increase in the number of homes without a source for heating – a rise from 136 units to 392 units in a decade.

Blight Survey

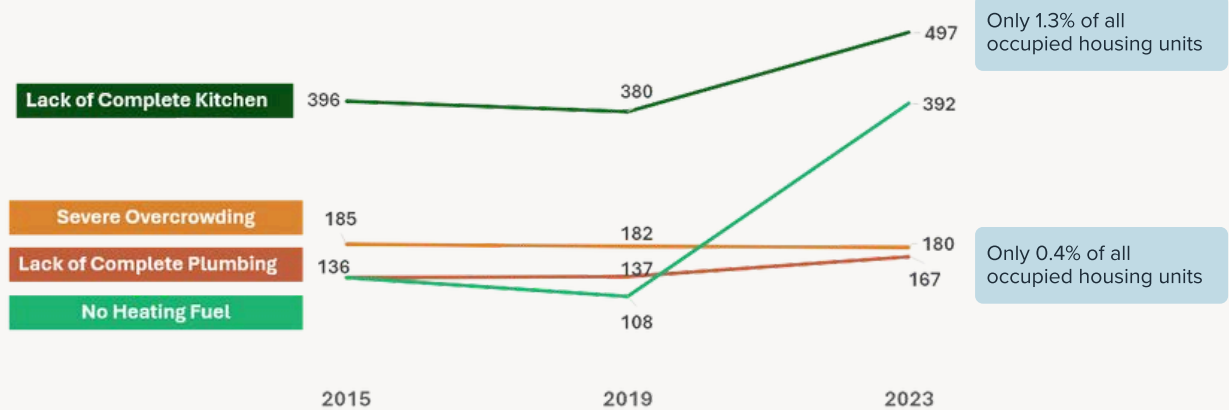
Rating of Property Condition in 2018



	Erie Citywide	Qualified Census Tracts
Excellent	14%	10%
Good	47%	32%
Average	27%	37%
Poor	11%	19%
Unsound	1.50%	3%

427 units

% of Substandard Housing Units (City of Erie)



Source: 2023 U.S. Census American Community Survey Data

Programs like Whole Home Repairs from the State of Pennsylvania have aided local agencies and homeowners in improving their homes. Local initiatives like Love Your Block assist in façade improvements. While the substandard homes represent only 1.3% of all occupied housing units, it still is a keen policy focus for future efforts.

06. Preservation

Erie County has 4,902 affordable units with a federal subsidy. Of those, 476 units have a subsidy that expires by 2031.

The Role of Public Funding

Public funding has been the lifeblood of affordable housing development since the post-World War II build out of veterans housing that gave way to the public housing construction of the 1960's. Public financing has spurred a large majority of private affordable housing development since the low-income housing tax credit (LIHTC) program was created by the Tax Reform Act of 1986. The tax credit serves as the primary capital source to make affordable housing construction a viable operation.

Erie County and Erie City have leveraged these tools for decades to create affordable housing. These housing subsidies traditionally are a trade – the government provides capital directly or indirectly through a tax credit and in exchange the housing owner agrees to keep a percentage of the units affordable for a certain amount of time.

Erie is short over 3,000 units in deeply affordable housing, so these units should be preserved.

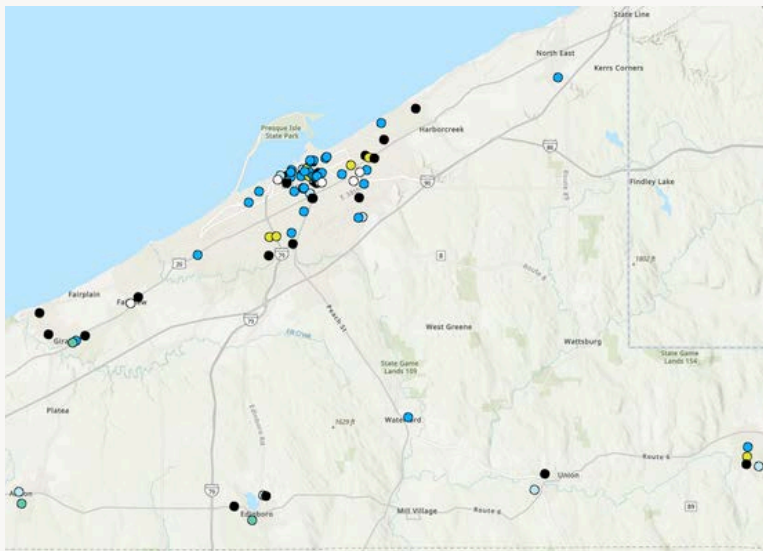
Erie County and Erie City host 4,902 subsidized affordable housing units according to the National Housing Preservation Database, leveraging funding streams such as:

- **Section 8 (Project-Based):** Rental assistance tied to specific units, helping underwrite operating costs and keep rents affordable.
- **Public Housing:** the federal government's oldest subsidized rental housing program where the local public housing authority manages and owns the building
- **Other HUD Programs:** Federal capital sources such as HOME Rental Assistance, administered by local governments to support affordable housing.
- **Multiple Sources:** Properties financed through a combination of several federal housing programs.
- **LIHTC (Low-Income Housing Tax Credit):** A financing tool where investors purchase tax credits, providing capital to developers who commit to operating affordable housing.
- **USDA Housing Programs:** Federal loan programs that support affordable housing development in rural areas.



The timing mechanism is something for local municipalities to monitor. Once a subsidy expires, then the owner can sell the building on the private market. The new owner may hike the rents on the building and the community loses dedicated units for affordable housing. In a community where those units are oversupplied then this would not be a concern.

Expiring Affordable Housing Subsidies in Erie County (2025-2031)



Properties Primary Funding Stream

- LIHTC
- Multiple
- Other HUD
- Public Housing
- Section 8
- USDA



From 2025-2031, 478 units are set to lose their federal subsidies. **This could spell the loss of almost 500 affordable units in Erie County.**

Buildings	Expiring Subsidy Year	Unit Count
Palace Building	2025	30
Rosedale Meadows	2026	8
Royal Homes	2027	15
	2028	0
Battles Village (Girard)	2029	42
St. Joseph's	2030	201
Boston Store + 7 others	2031	180
Expiring in 7 years		476 units

Community leaders should pay attention to and work with the existing owners of these properties to ensure that the owner either sells the building to a responsible party dedicated to affordable housing preservation or recapitalizes the building and retains its mission-minded purpose.

Source: National Housing Preservation Database

Infinite Erie Housing Analysis

07. Homelessness

Homelessness has increased by 30% since 2020, while access to supportive housing beds has decreased by 14% in that time.

“Homelessness is a housing problem” has become a popular refrain with the proliferation of an academic book by the same name, authored by Dr. Gregg Colburn and Clayton Page Aldern.

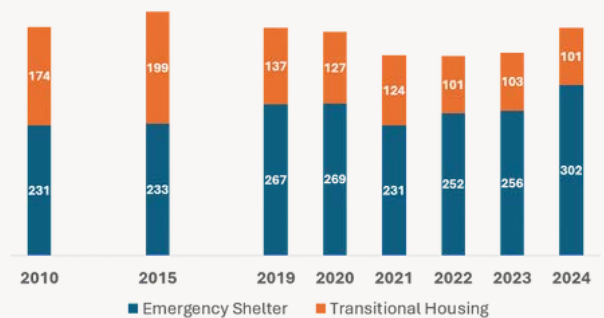
Access to housing is the primary driver of homelessness.

This pushes back on the societal bias that individual risk factors like struggling with substance use or experiencing severe mental illness acts as a cause of homelessness. Instead, loss of housing is the only experience that is true for every unhoused person.

In Erie County, the Continuum of Care program, administered by the Department of Human Services, manages a centralized waiting list and referral system to track and prioritize people in need of permanent housing and supportive services.

National best practice for addressing homelessness is for a community to prioritize the access to supportive housing units, which pairs permanent homes with individualized supportive services for those who need it most.

Erie County has increased access to a temporary bed, where someone can rest and recover. The number of shelter beds offered locally has **increased by 30%** from 2015 to 2024. This data comes from the Housing Inventory Count, a local reporting published by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

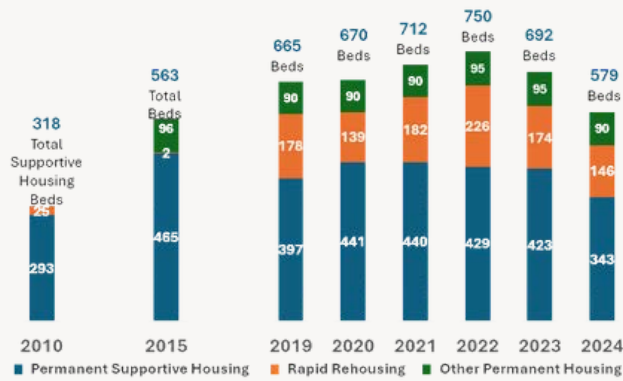


If a community was successful in ending homelessness, then we would see enough supportive housing beds for those residing in shelter or on the street. And then we would see the rate of homelessness decreasing over time.

Unfortunately, the access to permanent housing programming is at the same level in 2024 as in 2015, despite the growth of homelessness. The number of available housing units has decreased by 13% from 2019 to 2024.



Summary of Supportive Housing Bed Trends



Homelessness is a housing problem. And Erie’s supportive housing system has not kept pace with rising homelessness. This reduces the ability to resolve someone’s homelessness if there are not ample housing resources.

The number of supportive housing beds has decreased by 14% since 2020, while homelessness has increased by 30%.

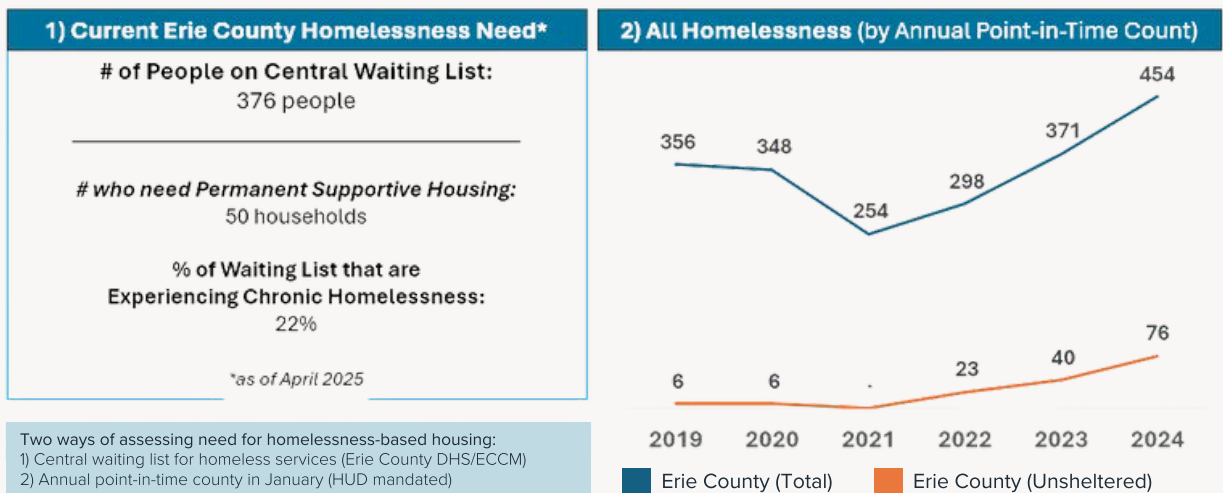
Supportive housing program is delivered in one of three programs:

- **Permanent Supportive Housing:** Permanent housing matched with intensive supportive services and long-term rental assistance, designed for people experiencing substance use and/or severe and persistent mental health challenges.
- **Rapid Rehousing:** Permanent housing matched with short-term supportive services and rental assistance to provide stability focused case management.
- **Other Permanent Housing:** Another permanent housing-based program not easily represented by the above two models.

With the increasing unaffordability of housing in Erie and the decrease in supportive housing program access, it is unsurprising to see homelessness increasing in Erie County.

According to the annual Point in Time Count administered locally each January, homelessness has increased by 28% in the five-year period from 2019 to 2024. There were 376 people as of April 2025 on the centralized waiting list, waiting for a referral to a supportive housing.

Homelessness is Increasing in Erie County



Infinite Erie

Housing Analysis

08. Housing Funding

Erie developers and nonprofits are not maximizing state and federal funding for housing development. There has only been one Low-Income Housing Tax Credit award in the City of Erie in last five years. There is a need for new, flexible funding sources to accelerate development.

New development in Erie City has lagged despite clear shortages in affordable and workforce housing. **A key factor is how projects are financed.** Interviews with local community development organizations revealed a strong reluctance to use debt, with most relying on 100% grant funding from public and philanthropic sources. This approach makes deeper affordability possible in a low-rent market but slows production because projects must wait on competitive grant cycles.



The major financing tool for affordable housing in the United States is the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC), which is administered by Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency (PHFA). The City of Erie and Erie County have received only one award each in the last five years.

In 2021, one award was received in the City of Erie (26 units to GMA Development). In 2022 one award was received in Erie County (45 units to HANDS in Fairview).

The state affords other opportunities to leverage funding alongside LIHTC, including National Housing Trust Fund, PennHomes, Housing Bonds (alongside 4% LIHTC deals), and PA Housing Tax Credit. Most of those awards are paired with a LIHTC award, so the best road to leveraging across these sources is to compete for the 9% LIHTC awards.

The local nonprofits are also pursuing grants from regional and state sources, such as PHFA's PHARE grant, Neighborhood Assistance Program (NAP) from PA Department of Community and Economic Development, and the Federal Home Loan Bank (FHLB) of Pittsburgh. Reviewing the awards across the last five years in the City of Erie for these sources reveals:

Funding Source	Average Total Award to all Erie Projects
PHARE (PHFA)	\$1,014,167
Neighborhood Assistance Program (DCED)	\$688,750
Affordable Housing Program (Federal Home Loan Bank of Pittsburgh)	\$642,314

How Much Can Erie Afford to Develop Based on Current Funding Levels?

Let's understand how much housing development can happen based on the current funding levels coming to Erie from state and regional sources. The assumptions for this quick calculator:

- **Cost of Capital:** \$275,000 (assuming half of the units would cost \$400,000 per unit which is the average cost of new construction, and half would cost \$150,000 which is the cost for a single-family acquisition/rehab in Erie in the last two years)
- **Source of Funding:** all grant funding from state and regional sources. No loans. Let's assume that local philanthropy will be used to fill gaps and cover any escalating costs above the above capital assumption.

Housing Units Developed (at \$275,000/unit)	State/Regional Sources	Tax Credits
	PHARE, FHLB, NAP	LIHTC, NHTF, PennHomes
Annually	9 units	N/A
5-Year Average	45 units	45 units
Total for the City of Erie in a 5 year average	90 Units	

This quick analysis demonstrates that Erie City could create a maximum of 90 units every 5 years based on relying on grant funding from state and regional sources. However, Erie City created 84 units in a 10-year period from 2014-2023, so this estimate from the funding stream seems to be aggressive compared to actual data.

As noted, the creation of Erie Downtown Development Corporation has accelerated downtown residential and commercial development by creating a locally managed and sourced equity fund. This did not rely on existing sources but instead created its own.

From the interviews with stakeholders, there is a need and an appetite for a new, pooled funding resource that focuses on residential development and neighborhood stabilization in the core areas surrounding downtown Erie.





Infinite Erie
Erie, PA

Housing Accelerator: Action Plan

Prepared by: Infinite Erie

Analysis by: Fourth Economy and Hemlock & Forge

Published Jan. 2026

Housing Needs Analysis

The analysis included a robust quantitative housing needs assessment – conducted by Hemlock & Forge and Fourth Economy, and a series of key informant interviews with Erie stakeholders – conducted by Infinite Erie and Hemlock & Forge. Key Data Findings, expanded upon in the report, are as follows:

- 01.** Housing Unit Need

Erie's available housing supply is significantly mismatched to the population by price, size, and type.
- 02.** Not Enough Development

Erie created ~8 units annually from 2014-2023, an insufficient number to match the housing unit need.
- 03.** Affording the Median Rent

46% of Erie renters are 'severely cost burdened', paying >35% of their income.
- 04.** Homeownership

Minority homeownership are significantly below county and state averages.
- 05.** Substandard Housing

There are at least 500 substandard units in Erie, concentrated in impoverished areas.
- 06.** Preservation

476 of 4,902 federally subsidized units in Erie County will expire by 2031.
- 07.** Homelessness

Since 2020, homelessness has increased by 30%, while supportive housing beds has decreased by 14%.
- 08.** Housing Funding

Erie housing developers and nonprofits need additional public and private funding.



WHY THE INFINITE ERIE HOUSING ACCELERATOR

Erie’s housing analysis reveals deep structural issues—from population loss and aging homes to shortages of affordable units and growing pressure on renters. Production has lagged for years due to high costs, financing gaps, and limited development capacity. The Infinite Erie Housing Accelerator is built to change this trajectory by bringing **strategic focus**, a **coordinated funding model**, and a **framework** capable of creating a more responsive and sustainable housing system.

Its purpose is simple:

Come alongside funders and mission-driven developers to move faster and more effectively by reducing barriers, aligning resources, and expanding development capacity.



Why Focus?

The need is great across the housing continuum. We had to focus our attention to make the deepest impact. We decided to focus on the development of affordable, workforce and supportive housing. This can stabilize the neighborhoods for today’s residents without displacing them, while also preparing the neighborhood for investment tomorrow.

By focusing on targeted neighborhoods in Erie, these projects can act as a signal to market-rate developers, small businesses, young professionals and others that these neighborhoods are ‘open for business’ and ready for your investment.

We encourage other partners to continue leading in these important areas of housing work:

- Market rate housing development
- Providing emergency shelter and transitional housing to people experiencing homelessness
- Code enforcement & blight remediation
- Home repair for existing rental or owner-occupied units

Impact of Housing Accelerators

This approach is not theoretical: housing accelerators are proven public–private financing tools that help housing development move at the pace of the market by providing early, flexible capital and reducing development risk.

They offer predevelopment, acquisition, and bridge financing so mission-driven developers can act quickly while assembling permanent funding. Building on decades of revolving loan and stabilization fund models, housing accelerators have supported housing production and neighborhood revitalization nationwide. Erie has not yet adopted this best practice approach at scale. The Housing Accelerator is designed to change that.

ANATOMY OF ACTION FRAMEWORK

We believe that:

- **Everyone deserves a safe, affordable, and permanent home in a thriving neighborhood**
- Investing in Erie's core neighborhoods, housing its workforce, and stabilizing its low-income households is the bedrock of our regional growth strategy
- We create thriving neighborhoods by building housing along neighborhood corridors - creating walkable blocks where small businesses can succeed and neighbors connect
- Housing ends homelessness. We will develop permanent housing matched with supportive services to home our unhoused neighbors.

Objectives:

If we launch a Housing Accelerator to

- **Fund:** Align \$68,500,000 of local, regional, and state funding from public and private sources
- **Capacity:** Invest in the capacity of our local organizations to partner with developers
- **House:** Build 250 new housing units in Erie's core neighborhoods in the next five years



- 50 units of permanent supportive housing to address chronic homelessness



- 100 affordable housing units, with 50 units for new homeowners



- 100 workforce housing units to bring Erie's workforce to core neighborhoods



Key Results:

We will see

- Thriving neighborhoods with quality, affordable housing, increased local jobs, small businesses, walkability, and stabilized economies

Pathway to Infinite Erie's Goals:

GDP growth, population growth, increased median income, and increased workforce participation

- Decrease chronic homelessness in Erie County by 75%
- Increase homeownership rates, especially among minority households
- Increase the number of Erie workers who choose a core Erie neighborhood as home

Infinite Erie

Framework for Action



Guiding Principles for Action

Erie needs a new, partnership-driven approach to housing and community development that can attract investment for visible neighborhood change. A clear public–private framework is necessary to coordinate acquisition, rehabilitation, and new construction at scale.

The interviews and workgroups with community leaders and practitioners suggested themes to consider for the Housing Accelerator plan:

01. Start with an Ambitious, Reasonable Goal:

“Eating the elephant.” Filling a 6,000-unit gap is overwhelming. Start with a reasonable, stretch goal that builds the infrastructure that will sustain action for the long-term.

02. Focus, Focus, Focus:

Success needs to be visible. Erie has employed a scattered, opportunistic approach. Focus on a few, 6-block areas and develop a neighborhood-oriented community development plan to corral the work.

03. Experiment with Building Types:

Experiment with various development types (stick-built, modular, rehabs), especially for infill on narrow Land Bank parcels.

04. Increase Capacity through Collaboration and Co-Development:

Increasing development will take increased collaboration between local partners and a business recruitment strategy of regional developers/builders to co-develop with local agencies.





**Building Momentum.
Strengthening Neighborhoods.**

250 NEW UNITS



GOAL FRAMEWORK

The Infinite Erie Housing Accelerator has set an achievable but transformative goal: **build or preserve 250 units in five years** while creating the systems, partnerships, and financing tools needed for long-term, sustained production.

The Housing Accelerator targets the parts of the housing continuum where Erie faces the most urgent gaps: **Supportive, Affordable, and Workforce** housing. The **new unit** goals below reflect our commitment to expanding supply in each of these priority areas:

Infinite Erie's Role:



FOCUS

Align community efforts around common goal.



FUND

Raising needed capital through public and private funding.



FRAMEWORK

Facilitating implementation of housing strategy.



SUPPORTIVE HOUSING

- Special Population Program:
- Housing First Erie: address chronic homelessness

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

- Special Population Program:
- 25 new BIPOC homeowners

WORKFORCE HOUSING

Progress at every part of the housing continuum matters. Infinite Erie is a focused response on the greatest need of our core neighborhoods. The Housing Accelerator is not focused on expanding emergency shelter or market-rate housing. Shelter is essential for crisis response, but it does not create long-term stability; permanent supportive housing does. Market-rate projects, meanwhile, can typically move forward with traditional financing and do not face the same structural barriers as affordable or workforce projects.

The Path to 250

The path to 250 units builds on the strengths of local community development corporations by accelerating their acquisition-and-rehab work for homeownership, while also expanding into larger-scale projects that deliver “missing middle” housing, typically 10-unit developments, in key infill areas.

The approach is diversified across three different development approaches and scales:



 Small-Scale Rehab

50 UNITS

Rehab 1-3 unit properties
 GOAL: advance homeownership
 COST: \$150,000/unit

 Missing Middle Development

100 UNITS

Midsized, multi-family properties
 GOAL: infill development
 COST: \$185,000-\$300,000/unit

 Tax Credit Projects

100 UNITS

Larger-scale new build or rehab
 GOAL: utilize LIHTC, New Market
 COST: \$400,000/unit

Together, these projects form a neighborhood-level investment strategy “filling the missing middle” on key blocks to create visibly stable and productive streets. “Missing Middle Housing” was coined by Opticos Design founder Daniel Parolek in 2010 to define a range of multi-unit or clustered housing types, compatible in scale with detached single-family homes, that help meet the growing demand for walkable urban living. This model strengthens neighborhoods and is **visible community development**.

Small-Scale Rehab
 CDC model: Rehabbing single-family homes or duplexes.

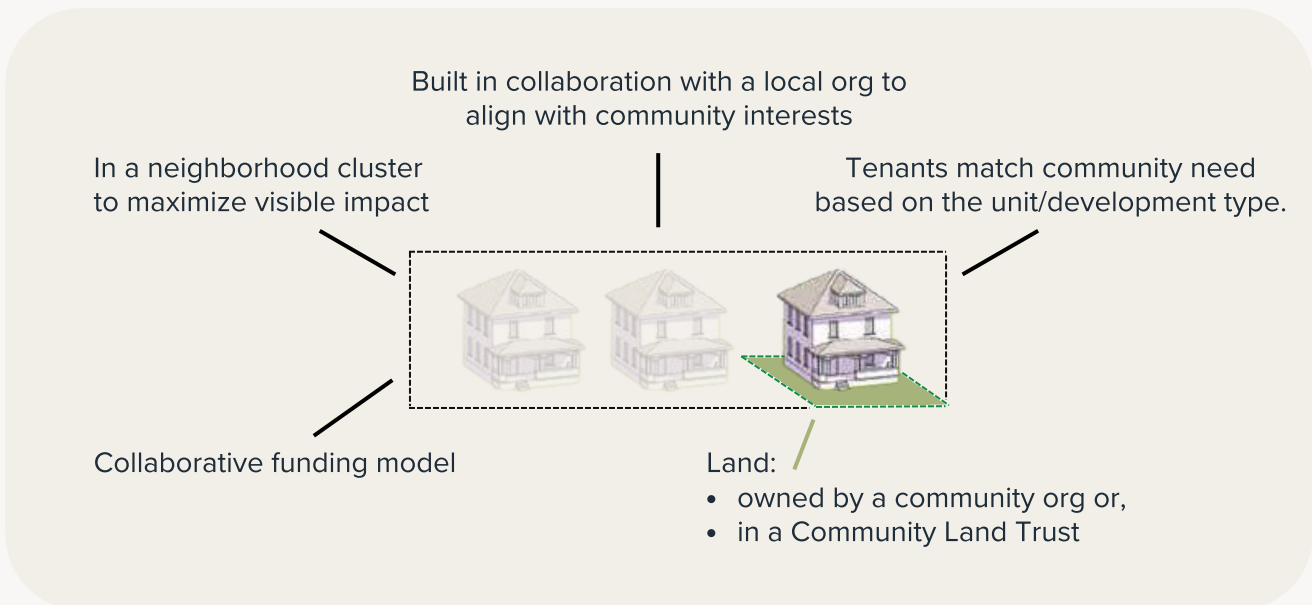
Missing Middle
 Mixed-use, buildings of 4-20 unit communities

Tax Credit Projects for Mixed Use
 Mixed-use, buildings of 30+ unit communities



Graphic Source: Opticos Design

Development Example in Practice:



- **Who Develops It?** Ideally, a community development organization will either develop the project or partner with a developer to co-lead the project. Infinite Erie will assist in recruiting mission-minded developers for larger-scale projects.
- **How Do We Fund It?** The project team will work hand-in-hand with Infinite Erie to align public-private funding for the development. Larger projects will explore Low-Income Housing Tax Credits or New Market Tax Credits for a majority of financing. Mixed-use properties may look to partner locally with Erie CRIZ (City Revitalization and Improvement Zone).
- **Who Moves In?** Tenants or homeowners will match community need, working alongside local nonprofits depending on the priority population.
- **Who Owns the Land?**
 - For rental housing, the land ideally is owned by a community organization to steward the parcel's dedication to mission-minded housing.
 - For homeownership housing, the land will be placed in the 'community land trust' with the building and its improvements owned by the homeowner.



Special Population Programs

Within the 250-unit goal, two priority populations will receive dedicated program focus from Infinite Erie and its partners:

1. Housing First Erie: Infinite Erie is the backbone agency for a public-private partnership dedicated to creating 50 new units of permanent supportive housing for people experiencing chronic homelessness.

Housing First is an approach to homelessness that provides people with immediate access to permanent housing without preconditions, followed by wrap-around supportive services.

2. Minority Homeownership: Only 34% of Black households in Erie are homeowners. Infinite Erie has named increasing that percentage as a goal.

1. Housing First Erie & Permanent Supportive Housing Development

Subgoal: Stably house and serve 50 people experiencing chronic homelessness in Erie, using a Housing First approach and a public-private partnership.

Progress: The coalition is working to develop its first project, Schoolhouse Apartments at Washington Square, to provide 22 homes to people exiting chronic homelessness.

Clients

Who are we serving?



ERIE
MASTER
LIST

50 people experiencing chronic homelessness

Housing

How do we house clients?



SINGLE SITE

Housing First Building

- Develop a 22 unit building
- Tenants can live here as long as they want
- Intensive on-site services



SCATTERED SITE
Dedicated Units

- 28 apartment units around Erie
- Long-Term: After first 50 units, continue working to house all chronic homelessness

Services

How are we serving our clients?



INTEGRATED
CARE TEAM

- Case management and community behavioral health team works to keep people stable
- Mobile team frequently checks in with clients throughout Erie County



Housing First Erie Leadership Team:

- Infinite Erie
- Erie Community Foundation
- Hamot Health Foundation
- Erie County Department of Human Services
- City of Erie
- Housing Authority of the City of Erie
- Erie County Housing Authority
- Facilitator & Project Manager: Hemlock & Forge

Housing First Erie Action Team:

- Single Site: BUILD Community Development Corporation
- Scattered Site: Infinite Erie
- Services: UPMC Western Behavioral Health at Safe Harbor.

2. Minority Homeownership

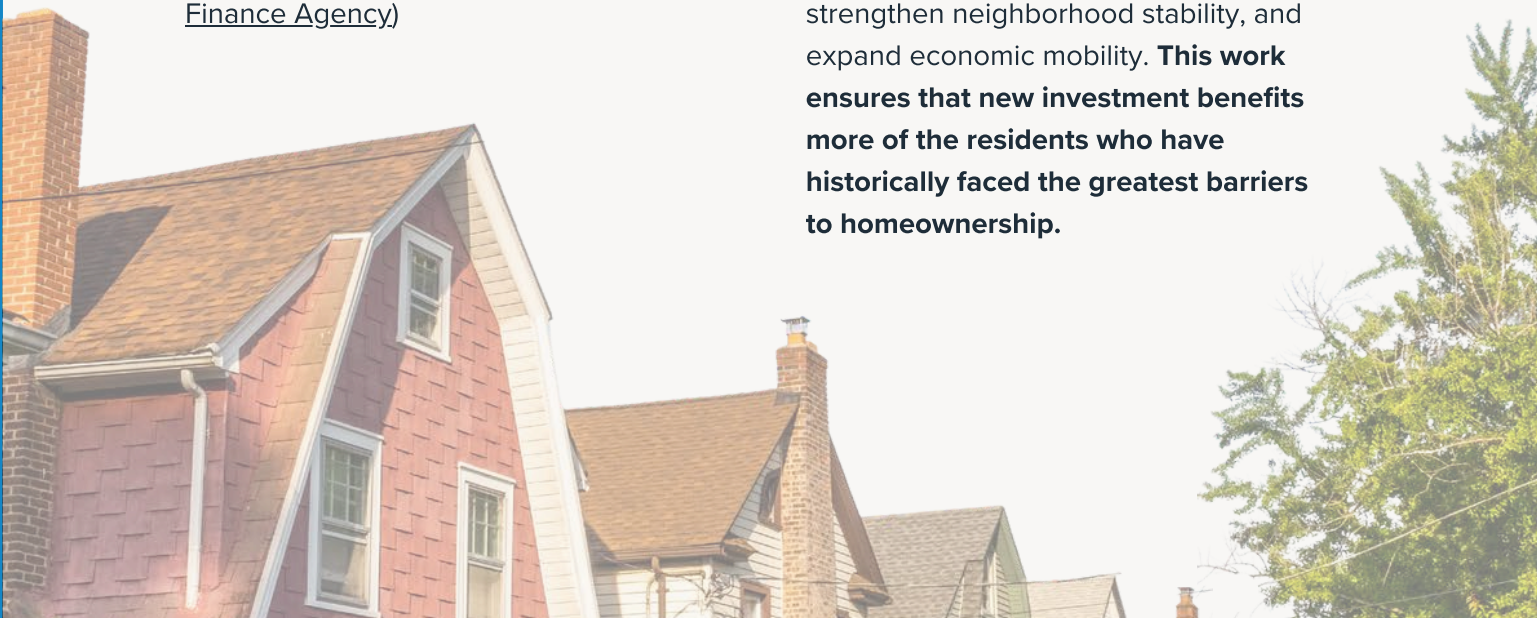
Subgoal: Provide homeownership opportunities to 25 first-time minority homebuyers as a part of the 250 units created under the Housing Accelerator to reduce disparities among homeowners in Erie among minority communities.

Progress: Local agencies have led the efforts to increase Black homeownership, stewarded by Erie's Black Wall Street, which has provided \$81,000 in downpayment assistance to 14 individuals while providing robust home buying education to cohorts over the past three years.

The Housing Accelerator will work with partners such as Erie's Black Wall Street, Minority Community Investment Coalition, and the community centers to provide homeownership education, downpayment assistance, and pipeline of households to match with units coming online.

Expanding Black and minority homeownership is essential to Erie's long-term economic and equity goals. The city's overall homeownership rate sits at 53%, lagging well behind both the Pennsylvania rate of 69% and the national rate of 66%. The gap is even more pronounced for Black households. Nationally, Black homeownership stands at 46%, yet in Erie, minority households own homes at significantly lower rates than their white counterparts, sitting at just 34%. (Source: [The Housing Initiative at Penn and Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency](#))

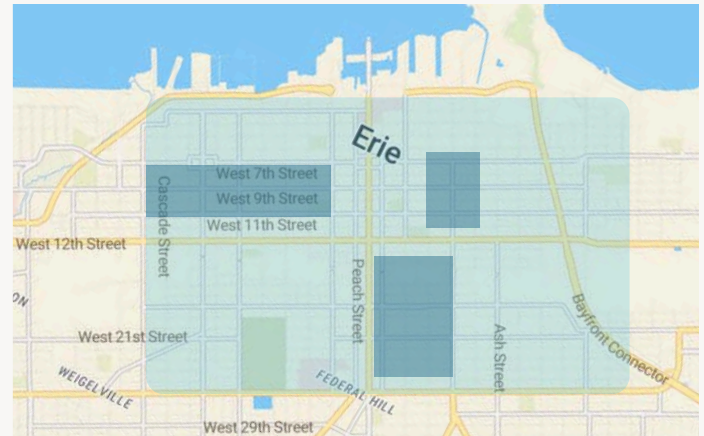
These inequities underscore why supporting minority homeownership must be a core component of the Housing Accelerator. Homeownership remains one of the most reliable pathways to building wealth, but for many minority households in Erie, access is constrained by lower incomes, limited affordable for-sale inventory, and long-standing systemic barriers to credit and financing. By helping 25 first-time Black and minority households become homeowners within the Accelerator's 250-unit goal, Infinite Erie aims to reduce these disparities, strengthen neighborhood stability, and expand economic mobility. **This work ensures that new investment benefits more of the residents who have historically faced the greatest barriers to homeownership.**



Priority Neighborhood Clusters & Opportunities

The difference-maker will be in a focused, neighborhood-level approach to housing development. Community partners consistently emphasized the need for community development to have a more **visible impact**. This cannot happen if the Housing Accelerator acts like an opportunistic private developer and works backwards from any parcel where the demand is there and the numbers work.

Instead, Infinite Erie will facilitate a community development plan in specific **“neighborhood clusters”** where change is possible and necessary. This work will be done alongside community development organizations who have identified areas as places supported by local, neighborhood planning. As planning in these neighborhood clusters continues, Infinite Erie will then identify **“priority projects” within each cluster** and work with the development teams to ready projects for funding.



Infinite Erie Focus Area:

■ Core neighborhoods surrounding downtown

Priority Clusters: identified focus blocks for community development concentration

■ W. 8th Street, Parade Street, Central City

Neighborhood Cluster	Project Opportunities
W. 8th Street	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our West Bayfront has launched coordination efforts surrounding its offices to build a coalition of public and private parties with ownership on 8th Street • Private owners are putting commercial properties for small, community minded business
Parade Street	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BEST has key parcels between 5th & 6th, Parade & Wallace: primed for a master development • Housing Authority of the City of Erie is making a big mark on Parade St between 10th and 11th with new offices and acquisition targets • Eastside Renaissance has key commercial and residential acquisitions along Parade Street • BUILD CDC is supporting development with other partners • Erie’s Black Wall Street owns two historic buildings on Parade Street • Redevelopment Authority of City of Erie and Land Bank have key parcels just off Parade St. • HANDS is developing the Emma Howell Apartments at 13th and Parade
Central City	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sisters of St. Joseph Neighborhood Network developed a neighborhood plan for the area • Erie Land Bank has a large cluster of parcels around 22nd St. and German St. • Erie County Redevelopment Authority owns a large parcel in the old Quin-T site with the potential for a larger scale commercial or residential development • Housing Authority of City of Erie is a vital property owner in the area
Housing First Erie	<p>Development of permanent supportive housing to address chronic homelessness is led by the coalition, Housing First Erie, and housing development will be opportunistic and not concentrated in one cluster.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BUILD CDC is developing the first Housing First Erie project called “Schoolhouse Apartments at Washington Square.” Set to open at the end of 2026. • “The Triangle” – two other developments in the works (rehabbing the Saint Paul School by Mazzini Charitable Foundation and Sacred Heart School by Mercy Center for Women) that will work in tandem to serve people exiting homelessness.

Role of Infinite Erie’s Housing Accelerator

Beyond strategy and financing, **Infinite Erie provides the systems needed for accountability, coordination, and shared impact.** The Housing Accelerator will convene two workgroups to streamline efforts, reduce redundancy, and keep projects moving. Infinite Erie commits to building the partnerships and financing tools required to maintain a strong, predictable pipeline of housing development for the long term.

01. Housing Accelerator Workgroup

All housing partners coordinating across ‘neighborhood clusters’ to identify priority projects and work on project readiness for funding.

02. Investment Committee

Key funders working together to align housing grants and investments for priority projects. Will act as a loan review committee for the Housing Accelerator Fund.



FOCUS: Aligning community efforts around common goal.

Facilitate Housing Accelerator and Investment Committee Workgroups

Pre-Development

- Project management alongside development leads
- Concept design
- Co-development recruitment

Construction

- Private developers lead construction management

Lease Up

- Navigate shared services for property and agency operations including property management, maintenance, and government compliance



FUND: Raising needed capital through public and private funding.

Financing

- Pro forma creation & underwriting
- Prioritize funding with Infinite Erie Investment Committee partners
- Recruit additional public and private capital to finalize capital stack



FRAMEWORK: Facilitating implementation of housing strategy.

2026 ACTION PLAN FOR INFINITE ERIE	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Develop “neighborhood cluster” plans				
Select 1-3 housing priority projects in each neighborhood cluster				
Assist in conceptual design and project readiness with partners				
Recruit capital funding with priority projects				
Work with local philanthropy and banks to underwriting projects and align funding with priority projects				

The Financial Architecture

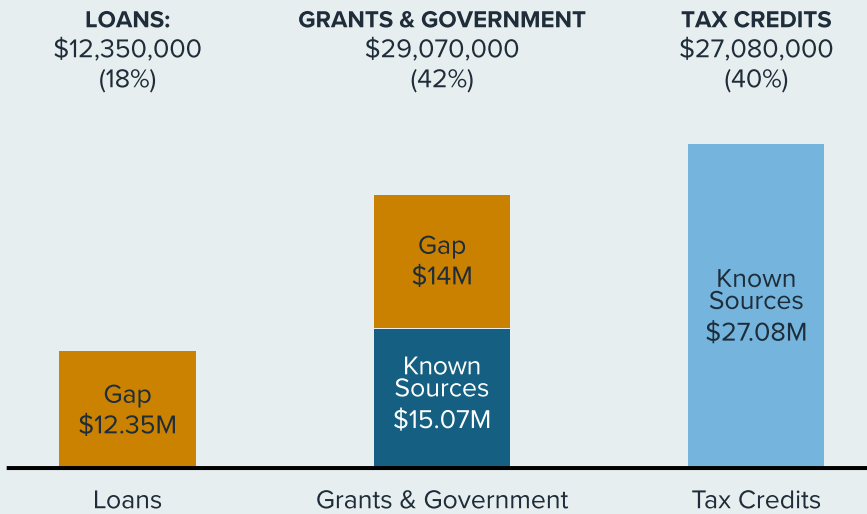
Accelerator Budget

The total cost to deliver 250 units is approximately \$68.5 million, based on the capital cost per unit above using 2024 figures. Of this, \$42.5 million can be secured through familiar sources such as state grants, government funding, and tax credit programs.

The remaining \$26 million gap represents the difference-maker. The ability to raise the remaining funding in grant and loan capital will be the difference between the Housing Accelerator being successful and the status quo prevailing. It is an opportunity for Erie’s financial institutions, foundations, and corporate leaders to invest in their city’s future.



Community Capital Stack



Key Takeaway

To fund the capital stack for the 250 units, we need to **identify at least \$26M in new sources.**

This could be:

- Infinite Erie Accelerator Fund
- New state Funding
- Other sources

Community Capital Stack	250 units	\$68,500,000
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Housing Accelerator Fund

The Infinite Erie Housing Accelerator Fund will braid financing through a blend of:

Gap Sources	Target Amount	Description
Loan Loss Reserve	\$5,000,000*	Work with a local charitable foundation to dedicated funding to be used as a 'loan loss reserve' as a credit enhancement approach for financing
Bank Capital	\$12,350,000	Leverage the 'loan loss reserve' to secure project-by-project loan capital from local and regional banks.
Philanthropy & Government	\$14,000,000	Coordinate funding with local philanthropic foundations. Pursue additional state of PA sources, such as Main Street Matters, Community Revitalization Fund Program, Local Share Account, and others.
Known Sources		
Tax Credits	\$27,000,000	Identify three properties that can compete for Low-Income Housing Tax Credits and New Market Tax Credits.
Regional/State Grants	\$15,000,000	Leverage known sources from PHFA, DCED, and FHLB.

*This funding does not go toward the \$68.5M needed to fund the projects because in an ideal world, this money is not spent and is instead used as a reserve to guarantee the bank capital.

A Financing Model Built for Action

This structure de-risks participation for lenders and investors, while ensuring community organizations and developers have the capital to act at scale.

The Infinite Erie Housing Accelerator Fund will go through three phases for its start up:

PHASE 1	PHASE 2	PHASE 3
<p>Project Readiness</p> <p>The Housing Accelerator will facilitate 'neighborhood clusters' into identifying priority projects and then work with those projects to be ready for underwriting and funding.</p>	<p>Coordinated Project Funding</p> <p>Infinite Erie will coordinate with funders to review ready projects and award funding, to ensure priority projects move forward at speed and at scale.</p>	<p>Pooled Loan Fund</p> <p>Once the initial projects are funded and developed, coordinate with funders to pool funding into a sustainable Housing Accelerator Fund that can reduce the approval and funding time for key projects and can underwrite a long-term housing pipeline.</p>

Project Underwriting Flow

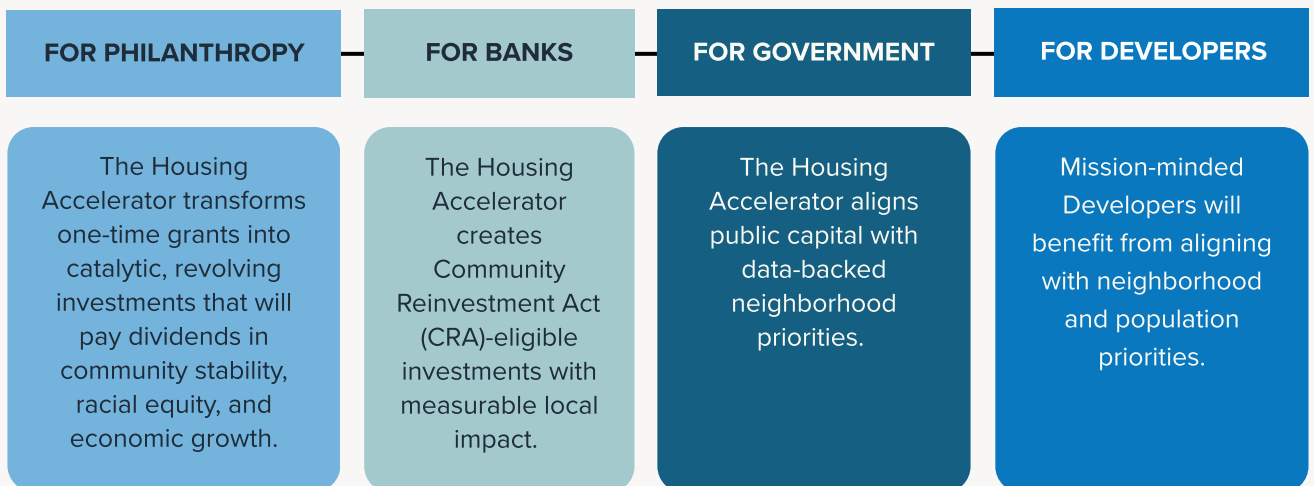
To coordinate the funding, Infinite Erie will manage a project readiness and underwriting process that will look like:



Why Invest — Now

This is not just about housing. It's about restoring confidence in Erie's neighborhoods — creating places where families can thrive, employers can attract workers, and investment can compound rather than dissipate.

The opportunity is clear. The need is urgent.



Capital partnerships will allow Erie to build the needed infrastructure to achieve the goals of the Housing Accelerator while also normalizing a sustainable pipeline of housing development and neighborhood stabilization.

Action Plan

Turning plans into action in 2026.

FOR PHILANTHROPY	FOR BANKS	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Identify seed funding and/or guarantees for early-stage projects					
Partner closely with Infinite Erie and prioritize ready housing projects					
Work towards a pooled funding source like a Housing Accelerator Fund					

FOR GOVERNMENT: ERIE COUNTY	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Be an active, vocal champion locally and to the State				
Be a leader with Housing First Erie by creating permanent supportive housing units				
Conduct funding analysis with City of Erie on the funding pathways to housing and homelessness – in partnership with County Dept of Human Services				
Work on community and project readiness for municipalities outside the city				

FOR GOVERNMENT: CITY OF ERIE	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Be an active, vocal champion locally and to the State				
Analyze and reduce policy barriers to housing development, especially zoning and permitting (reduce parking minimums, address minimum local size, duplex/triplex by right, legalize starter homes, etc.)				
Align departmental work plans with goals of Housing Accelerator and a focus on neighborhood clusters				
Leverage federal and local funding streams with housing priorities				

FOR DEVELOPERS	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Identify potential housing and mixed-use developments in the Housing Accelerator's neighborhood clusters				
Align project development with priorities: supportive, affordable, workforce housing				
For market-rate developments, let Infinite Erie cheerlead your work				
Work with Infinite Erie on project readiness and on capital funding pathways				

