



# Livable Communities Initiative

## About R1

Region 1 Planning Council (R1) is a regional government agency that collaborates across jurisdictions to foster a cohesive vision for the Rockford region. R1 supports regional initiatives in transportation, economic development, sustainability, legislative policy, blight, and community health. Under this capacity, R1 has developed a Livable Communities Initiative (LCI) program.

## LCI Program Overview

The Livable Communities Initiative (LCI) is a program to enhance the quality of life for residents in the Rockford region's middle neighborhoods through sustainable, accessible, and vibrant community development. LCI is administered annually by Region 1 Planning Council (R1). The program will continue to be conducted each fiscal year for the foreseeable future. The goals of LCI are inspired by the [HUD-DOT-EPA Partnership](#) for Sustainable Communities' six livability principles:

1. Provide more transportation choices
2. Promote equitable, affordable housing
3. Enhance economic competitiveness
4. Support existing communities
5. Coordinate policies and leverage investment
6. Value communities and neighborhoods

LCI takes a two-part approach: **technical assistance** and **implementation**.

- **Technical assistance** is the primary service offered. Communities receiving technical support through LCI will work with R1 to create a planning document within a given neighborhood boundary outlining a path for a stronger neighborhood. The plan could address traffic safety, inadequate street lighting, sidewalk gaps, energy resilience, flooding, or blight, according to the community's most pressing needs.
- If a neighborhood organization completes the technical assistance component and is interested in further support, R1 offers an **implementation** program. This implementation program carries out infrastructure projects identified through the LCI's technical assistance program.

R1's technical expertise and resources allow LCI awardees the ability to address livability challenges at the neighborhood level. LCI provides significant support and incentives for local communities to make land use and transportation decisions that benefit both local neighborhoods and the broader Rockford region. Each selected project will focus on addressing the unique needs and opportunities within its area.

## Funding Information

LCI funding is sourced from a combination of public and private funding that may include local, state, and federal dollars:

- **Local Funding:** Contributions from local municipalities within the Rockford region.

- **Private Investment:** Contributions from private sector partners aimed at driving economic development and community revitalization.

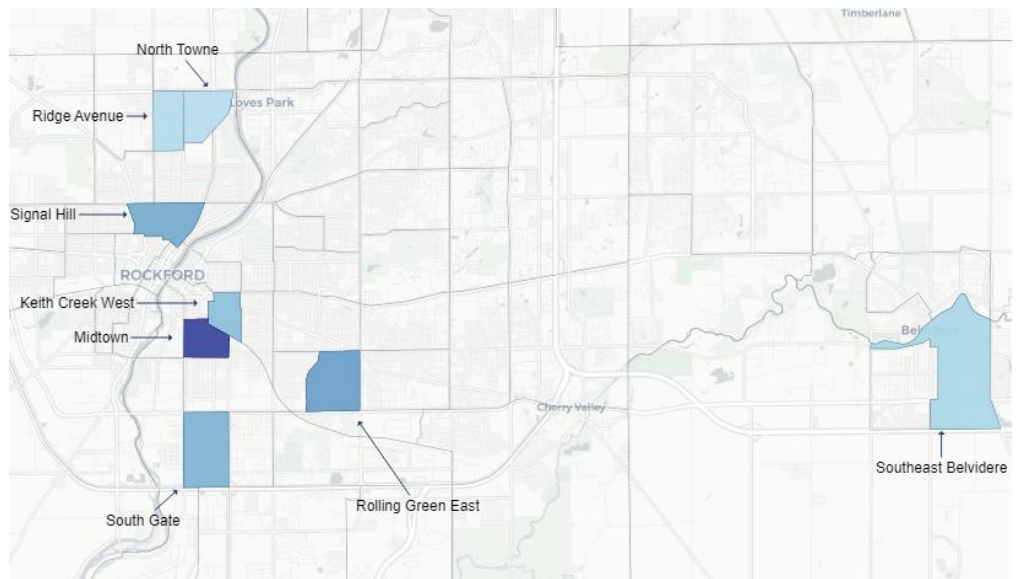
Visit our [Engage R1](#) page to learn more about awarded LCI projects!



### Middle Neighborhoods

Middle neighborhoods are a category of neighborhoods that are teetering between growth and decline. Typically, they are home to middle- and working-class families. About 46 percent of the nation’s urban population live in middle neighborhoods, which are important for the area’s economy, taxes, and opportunities for upward mobility.<sup>i</sup> LCI aims to stabilize and reinvigorate middle neighborhoods to ensure the entire region can thrive.

Middle neighborhoods are especially vulnerable to economic decline because local and federal resources are often designated for downtown revitalization and “distressed neighborhoods” projects. Without dedicated resources for middle neighborhoods, job availability can decrease, housing can continue to become outdated, and housing markets in those areas can shrink.



In many cases, local jurisdictions often lack the resources needed to invest in these neighborhoods. LCI is intended to address this gap by providing planning support and additional funds to restore these vulnerable areas.

#### Characteristics of Middle Neighborhoods:

Community and Job Access <sup>ii</sup>	Housing Quality <sup>iii</sup>	Economic and Social Conditions <sup>iv</sup>	Health Indicators
80 <sup>th</sup> – 100 <sup>th</sup> Percentile	40 <sup>th</sup> – 60 <sup>th</sup> Percentile	40 <sup>th</sup> – 60 <sup>th</sup> Percentile	40 <sup>th</sup> – 60 <sup>th</sup> Percentile
Population density Job Proximity Index <sup>v</sup>	Old Buildings Vacancy Rates	Education levels Uninsured Individuals Housing Costs	High Blood Pressure <sup>vi</sup> Depression <sup>vii</sup>

### Technical Assistance (TA) Program

The Technical Assistance (TA) Program allows neighborhood organizations in the Rockford region to apply for planning support from R1. This support focuses on improving **middle neighborhoods** by balancing high-quality transportation,

diverse housing options, vibrant community spaces, and sustainable economic growth. A core goal is to stimulate strategic reinvestment from public and private sectors.

TA recipients will complete a planning document outlining a path for a stronger neighborhood, tailored to each neighborhood’s unique concerns. These community-driven plans could improve traffic safety, inadequate street lighting, sidewalk gaps, energy resilience, flooding, and blighted properties. The length of TA assistance will be determined on the complexity of issues addressed.

### Technical Assistance Program Application Checklist

Applicant commitments and expectations:

- Complete application
- Present application to the R1 Community Advisory Forum (CAF)
- Participate in community engagement activities

### Eligible Applicants

Eligible applicants include neighborhood organizations, in collaboration with their local municipality (typically a neighborhood association).

**Neighborhood Association:** A neighborhood association is a group of residents who work together to enhance their community. They may organize events and establish clear neighborhood boundaries. To be recognized as an official neighborhood association, the group must receive approval from an elected official.<sup>viii</sup>

*Note: Eligible applications are limited to projects located in identified middle neighborhood census tracts within the Rockford region.*

**Below is a list of the current identified middle neighborhoods in the MPA:**

Forest Plaza	North Towne
Keith Creek West	Signal Hill
Ridge Avenue	Southeast Belvidere
Rolling Green East	Southgate
Midtown	Southwest Rochelle
New Towne	Will Creek

### Call for Projects Timeline

*The call for projects is a seven-month process, outlined below.*

**Phase 1:** Informational Meetings – One month before the call for projects opens, the CAF will hold an informational meeting to explain the program to prospective applicants.

**Phase 2:** Application Period Opens – The application window opens. Project abstracts can be submitted to R1 for preliminary feedback. Feedback will be given about 7 days after abstract is received by R1. *The application window will be open for about 2 months.*

**Phase 3:** Application Period Closes – Eligible projects are reviewed by a selection panel comprised of CAF members. Scoring is based on criteria published in the formal announcement.

**Phase 4:** Public Comment Period – The CAF releases final project recommendations for a 30-day public comment period. Finalists are asked to present their projects to R1’s [Community Advisory Forum](#) (CAF). Projects are also presented to the [R1 Governing Board](#) for consideration.

**Phase 5: Project Awards** – Once the CAF and R1 Governing Board have determined recipients, successful applicants are notified.

## Key Dates

Milestone	Description
February 6, 2025	R1 board approves Round 1 applications
April 24, 2025	Present Round 2 application guidelines to Community Advisory Forum (CAF)
June 2, 2025	Round 2 application period opens
August 4, 2025	Round 2 application period closes
August 21, 2025	Neighborhoods present applications to CAF
September 2025	Stakeholder meeting
November 13, 2025	Neighborhoods present applications to R1 Governing Board

## Implementation Program

*Note: The Implementation phase follows the successful completion of a TA plan for an awarded organization, and is available exclusively to communities that have successfully completed a TA plan.*

The Implementation Program awards funding for infrastructure projects identified in a TA plan. Local governments, in collaboration with the community, are eligible to apply to R1 for implementation funding. Interested neighborhoods may contact R1 for further guidance regarding the implementation decision process.

Funding for this program is combination of public and private funding that may include local, state, and federal dollars.

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## Helpful Resources

[HUD-DOT-EPA Partnership for Sustainable Communities](#)

[The Future of America’s Middle Neighborhoods](#)

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## Program Contact

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<sup>i</sup> [America’s Forgotten ‘Middle Neighborhoods’](#). Governing. January 4, 2017.

<sup>ii</sup> [Census Data](#). ACS 2021 5-year estimates: B01003, B11003, B11016, B23009, B08202, B11012. Accessed 4 February 2025.

<sup>iii</sup> [Census Data](#). ACS 2021 5-year estimates: B27001, B25001, B25036, B11009, B11005, S2701. Accessed 4 February 2025.

<sup>iv</sup> [Census Data](#). ACS 2021 5-year estimates: B15003, B25106, B19101, B19001. Accessed 4 February 2025.

<sup>v</sup> [Jobs Proximity Index](#). HUD. Accessed 4 February 2025.

<sup>vi</sup> [Places: Local Data for Better Health](#). CDC – High Blood Pressure Adults aged 18 or older. Accessed 28 Jan 2025.

<sup>vii</sup> [Places: Local Data for Better Health](#). CDC – Depression among adults aged 18 or older. Accessed 28 Jan 2025.

<sup>viii</sup> [Neighborhood Associations](#). Policy Circle Brief. Accessed 24 Jan 2025.