# Housing Fund for Linn County

2026

# Housing Assistance Plan

# Introduction

Housing advocates, non-profit housing providers, and local governments have identified safe, decent affordable housing as a need in Linn County. The Housing Fund for Linn County (HFfLC) is a community-based organization dedicated to improving the quality of life by offering innovative and flexible funding in order to expand affordable housing opportunities and meet that need.

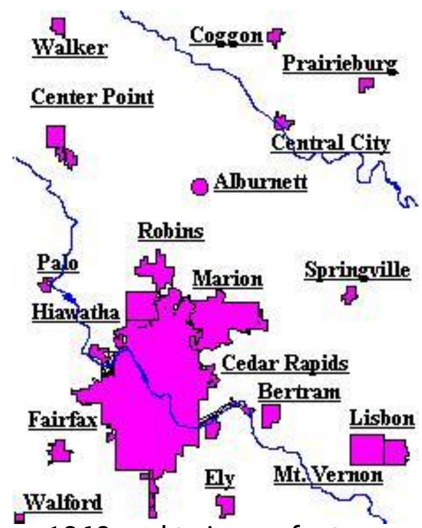
### Structure of This Document

This document is organized in three parts. Part 1 provides detailed data for Linn County. Part 2 identifies the desired goals of the HFfLC based on the analysis of affordable housing needs. Part 3 describes the proposed activities HFfLC will undertake to achieve these goals.

## Part 1: Data

## Linn County Profile

There are 18 incorporated communities and 11 villages. The urban center is in the southern part of the county and encompasses the city of Cedar Rapids, and the communities of Marion, Hiawatha, and Robins. According to the 2020 U.S. Census, the Linn County population was reported to be 230,299 persons.




Linn County is one of the few areas in Iowa experiencing growth. Over the past decades, population migration trends demonstrate a movement to the urban centers of the state, including Linn County. Linn County's population grew by nine percent between 2010 and 2020, compared to the state's growth of 4.5 percent. Linn County is the 6th fastest growing county in Iowa, where 68% of counties lost population from 2010 to 2020.

***An Aging Population***: In 2010, the 65-and-over population in the U.S. was 40.3 million and increased to 55.8 million in 2020, or 16.8%. This was the fastest growth rate, 38.6%, for this cohort since 1860 and twice as fast as the previous decade. In Linn County, during this time, the over-65 age cohort increased from 27,363 in 2010 to 38,060 in 2020, a 38.2% increase. In the next decade, this trend is expected to continue as all Baby Boomers reach age 65, and the 75-to-84 age group will increase at a similar rate.

***More Diversity:*** Linn County has greater racial and ethnic diversity than other communities in Iowa.

| | 2010 | | 2020 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Linn County | Iowa | Linn County | Iowa |
| **White** | 90.8% | 91.3% | 82.8% | 84.5% |
| **Black** | 4% | 2.9% | 7.1% | 4.1% |
| **Other Minority** | 5.2% | 5.8% | 17.1% | 11.5% |
| **Hispanic** | 2.6% | 5.0% | 3.9% | 6.8% |

***Disability Status:*** Approximately 22,410, or 10% of Linn County residents have a disability, 18% of those age 65 to 74 have a disability, and 41% of those over 75 have a disability affecting their ability to live independently.

| Disability Type | All Ages | Over Age 65 | Over Age 75 |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Hearing Difficulty** | 2.9% | 7.7% | 21.2% |
| **Vision Difficulty** | 1.4% | 2.5% | 7.0% |
| **Cognitive Difficulty** | 4.2% | 3.6% | 8.8% |
| **Ambulatory Difficulty** | 4.6% | 10.7% | 24.4% |
| **Self-care Difficulty** | 1.7% | 2.1% | 7.2% |
| **Independent Living Difficulty** | 4.4% | 4.7% | 17.0% |

***Income:*** According to the 2024 ACS 1-year estimates, 6% (5,827) of all households in Linn County had income below $15,000, which is extremely low-income. An additional 6,507 households were estimated to have income between $15,000 and $25,000.

***Workforce:*** The largest employment sectors in Linn County, according to the 2024 ACS:
Educational services, health care, and social assistance: 22%
Manufacturing: 17%
Retail trade: 13%
Professional and Business Services: 10%
According to Iowa Workforce Development, the occupations expected to experience the greatest amount of growth from 2020 to 2030 are Registered Nurses, Heavy and Tractor Trailer Truck Drivers, and Teaching Assistants.

### Housing

The 2020 Decennial Census revealed Linn County has 94,751 occupied households, with 58,528 family households and 36,223 non-family households. Single-family housing units accounted for 71.6 percent of all units in 2024, which was a 1.7% decrease from 2023. Rental units have increased to 28.3 percent in 2024, a 1.6 percent increase since 2023, according to the 2024 ACS data. On average, we are seeing a shift of about 1.5% from owner occupied housing units to rental units each year since the 2020. Utilizing Zillow seasonally adjusted metrics for Linn County, the average Linn County home value is $242,747, up 3% over the past year, and homes go to pending around 7 days of being listed on the market.

### Renter-Occupied Housing

In 2024, Linn County had an estimated 27,538 renter-occupied housing units, an increase of 307 units from 2023, for a 28.3% renter-occupancy rate (2024 ACS). Utilizing Zillow seasonally adjusted metrics for Linn County, the median rent for Cedar Rapids in September 2026 is $1,200, a 4.3% increase within the last year. As rents continue to rise, so do the percentage of Linn County residents that are cost burdened. An estimated 176% of renter households making under $50,000 in Linn County lacked affordable housing in 2026, which is defined as paying greater than 30% of their income on housing.

For example, in Linn County:

- A two-person household with extremely low income (30% AMI) earning $2,108 monthly can afford housing costs of no more than $632, while the HUD Fair Market Rent for a two-bedroom unit is $993 in 2025.

- An hourly wage worker earning $10 per hour for 40 hours/week can afford housing costs of no more than $520, while the HUD Fair Market Rent in Cedar Rapids for a one-bedroom unit is $757 in 2025.
- An SSI recipient receiving the minimum benefit of $994 monthly can afford housing costs of no more than $298, while the HUD Fair Market Rent for an efficiency or studio unit is $681 in 2025.

Housing affordability can be defined as paying no more than 30% of your gross pay on housing. To afford the Fair Market Rent for a two-bedroom apartment in Linn County in 2025, a household must earn $20.69 per hour or $39,720 annually. This is referred to as the "Housing Wage". This is nearly three times that of Iowa's minimum wage of $7.25 per hour.

Linn County's affordability issues effect a broader range of households than is commonly recognized. According to the 2025 Iowa Workforce Development data:

- An entry-level preschool teacher in Linn County earns $14.06 per hour, a position with an hourly mean wage $16.26 per hour.
- The home healthcare workers charged with caring for our community's elderly and disabled earn an average entry wage of $16.14 per hour, a position with an hourly mean wage $17.35 per hour.
- An entry-level cashier in Linn County earns an average of $13.25 per hour, and an experienced cashier earns an average wage of $16.71 per hour.

Of the workers listed above, no one can afford a two-bedroom apartment in Linn County. It should be noted that these hourly pay rates also assume they are paid for 40 hours per week at these wages, which may not be realistic.

While Linn County has no public-owned housing, there are several properties that have been created by private developers subsidized with public funds. According to the Comprehensive Housing Needs Update completed in October 2025 for the City of Cedar Rapids, there were 60 income-restricted properties, with 2,942 units in Cedar Rapids, Marion, and Hiawatha. There are 68 efficiency units, 811 one-bedroom units, 1,373 two-bedroom units, and 690 three and four-bedroom units. The Cedar Rapids Housing Authority manages the Housing Choice Voucher program, formerly known as the Section 8 program, which provides rental assistance to approximately 1,200 households.

Since the derecho storm in August 2020, Linn County has experienced a loss in rental units The State of Iowa was awarded over $57 million in federal funding to assist with the derecho recovery, and over $17 million was awarded for rental units in Linn County.

### Owner-Occupied Housing

According to the 2024 ACS data, there are 101,230 housing units in Linn County, 94,751 of which are occupied, and approximately 71.6% of which are owner-occupied. Nearly two-thirds of owners had a mortgage or debt to purchase a home, while over 9% of owners had a second mortgage, home equity loan, or both, in addition to the first mortgage.

The median value of a single-family home in 2026 is $224,700. The monthly mortgage for a $224,700 home purchase is estimated to be $1,509, assuming a 30-year term at a 6.48% interest rate, 20% down payment, and estimating property taxes and insurance. A household would need to make $60,400 annually (or $29.04 per hour) to afford this purchase price; however, the amount does not reflect the cost of utilities, which would also be considered a housing cost.

***Condition of Housing Stock:*** The age of housing stock can be an indicator of the condition of housing and the potential need for repair. The median year of housing built in Linn County is 1978, with 25% of homes built between 1940 and 1970 and 14% of homes built prior to 1939. To determine the extent of housing deterioration, a drive-by assessment of the exterior quality of housing stock in original city plats and subdivisions was completed for 14 rural communities in Linn County by ECICOG. Houses were rated in terms of structural and surface integrity and estimated repair costs. The rating criteria are as follows:
**Good:** A structure recently built or restored and meeting codes or has had careful maintenance of both structure and grounds. No surface wear is apparent, and repairs are not needed.
**Fair:** A sound structure but in need of surface maintenance and possibly showing small signs of wear. The structure is not as well maintained as the "good" units, the pavement, or any accessory buildings may need repairs. Minor maintenance is needed.
**Major Repairs**: Significant wear is noticeable. The structure itself is slightly out of plumb with cracks, holes, or breaks evident in walls, foundation, and/or roof. The paint is blistered. Windows, steps, etc. may need to be replaced. Major maintenance is needed.
**Infeasible:** Structural defects are obvious and may be serious enough that the unit cannot be returned to good or fair condition.

Of the 2,472 homes surveyed, 32% were rated as good, 30% were fair, 33% are in need of major repairs, and 5% may have defects serious enough that the unit cannot be rehabilitated.

## Needs of individuals experiencing homelessness

The January 2025 Linn County Continuum of Care's Point-in-Time survey showed a total of 172 individuals experiencing homelessness. Men represented 63%, women 27%, and 10% were children. The table below shows the results of the point-in-time survey for the shelters, transitional housing facilities, and the street, as well as those in community-based housing.

| Emergency Shelter | Unsheltered | | Total |
|---|---|---|---|
| 149 | 23 | | **172** |

***Recent Local Initiatives:*** For Linn County and several city governments in the county, quality, affordable housing is a serious concern. They have funded and supported several housing programs with local, state, and federal funds. The cities of Cedar Rapids and Marion and Linn County, as well as many area lenders and private businesses, have committed funds to HFfLC to enhance the dollars that are committed to addressing affordable housing issues throughout Linn County. Further, several non-profit and for-profit agencies and businesses have partnered with county and municipal governments to address the area's housing needs. Despite these efforts, low-income workers and residents in Linn County continue to face a shortage of affordable housing and deteriorating housing stock while transitional housing and emergency shelters have been unable to keep pace with the need. Recent initiatives include:

- CDBG-DR funded new construction projects totaling 290 units in Cedar Rapids, Center Point, Marion, Walker and Linn County and a City of Cedar Rapids Owner-occupied Rehabilitation Program for 50 units.
- Linn County and the City of Cedar Rapids partnered with the National Alliance to End Homelessness to hold a two-day clinic with city and county officials, service providers, and nonprofit housing agencies to develop targeted solutions to homelessness and housing insecurity in Linn County. From their recommendations, a Local Oversight Board was created to review local data on a quarterly basis and work collaboratively to address the needs of the community. A Homeless Systems Manager was hired through joint

funding from the City of Cedar Rapids and Linn County, to work with community nonprofit organizations addressing homelessness. Through these efforts over the last year, several pilot projects/programs have started and include:

- The Landlord and Tenant Incentive program - Landlords receive a financial incentive to accept a “higher risk” tenant, who may have barriers to housing, such as a recent eviction. Tenants receive a financial incentive to take a “Tenant’s Academy” put on by a local non-profit, to teach them how to be a good tenant, pass in-unit inspections, and follow through with support services to help them remain in stable housing. This program was funded through Cedar Rapids Bank and Trust.
- The Lived Experience Advisory Council – beginning with a grant received through the Iowa Finance Authority, a group of seven individuals with lived experience in homelessness, have been meeting twice a month to discuss local challenges and gaps in services provided to those experiencing homelessness and unsheltered homelessness. This Council has reviewed shelter policies and procedures, created an easy to read brochure/map of local services, and will be assisting with peer support at The Commons on 16th. They review policies and procedures from local service providers and make recommendations on how to improve service delivery to this population. Funding for this Council has continued to be supported by the City of Cedar Rapids and United Way.
- The Housing Collaborative - The City of Cedar Rapids partnered with the Housing Fund for Linn County (HFfLC) to provide funding for a case manager position within the Community Care Team to support individuals experiencing unsheltered homelessness. The team works with individuals prioritized through the Coordinated Entry System, helping them secure and maintain stable housing. Recognizing that the transition from unsheltered homelessness to permanent housing often requires additional support, the City of Cedar Rapids agreed to fund a case manager position through Hawkeye Area Community Action Program, Inc. (HACAP). The position is designed to serve up to 34 individuals, providing individualized assistance, connections to community resources, and ongoing support throughout the housing process. This initiative began in October 2025 and has successfully helped individuals experiencing homelessness access housing and essential resources within the community.
- The Commons on 16$^{th}$ - In collaboration with Linn County Community Services and the City of Cedar Rapids, HFfLC plans to transition its financial support of the Linn County winter/overflow shelter to a new collaborative initiative, **The Commons on 16th**. The Commons on 16th will provide single-room occupancy (SRO) units prioritized for households experiencing literal homelessness in Linn County. Each housing unit will include a one-year lease, along with comprehensive wraparound services designed to support tenants in making a successful transition from chronic homelessness to permanent housing. Building staffing will be supported through funding from United Way and local philanthropic partners. The project represents a strong example of true community collaboration, bringing together individuals and organizations with a shared commitment to addressing homelessness. The initiative incorporates guidance from the Lived Experience Advisory Council, staffing support from local

service providers, and financial investment from the City, County, and local businesses. Through this collaborative approach, The Commons on 16th will provide not only immediate housing stability, but also the services and community support needed to help individuals move toward long-term housing stability and greater independence.

## Part 2: Goals of HFfLC

The Housing Fund for Linn County (HFfLC) is a community-based organization dedicated to improving the quality of life by offering innovative and flexible funding to expand affordable housing opportunities.

***Collaboration:*** One of the core values of the HFfLC is collaboration. The housing trust fund initiative was spearheaded by a broad-based steering committee representing a variety of housing and community interests. The composition of the Board of Directors was purposefully crafted to ensure that a wide range of interests remain active in the affordable housing effort. The HFfLC Board of Directors includes public agencies, non-profit agencies, and private sector professionals. The Board may also establish committees and recruit area experts to explore specific issues or initiatives. This range of expertise and varying perspectives enhances the opportunity to address affordable housing in a comprehensive manner.

The commitment to collaboration is incorporated into the process used to distribute HFfLC funds in Linn County. Any agency active in providing housing and/or support services, whether a non-profit, for-profit, or governmental body, is eligible to apply for funding. Funding assistance is provided to organizations or entities, rather than individuals; however, the HFfLC may also provide assistance directly to individuals through specific programs or initiatives, as determined by the board. Through the Board of Directors, its committees, and a semi-annual application process, inclusive community involvement is a hallmark of the management and work of the HFfLC.

The HFfLC Executive Director serves on the City of Cedar Rapids Affordable Housing Commission and the Development Sub-committee. The Executive Director also serves on the Greater Cedar Rapids Community Foundation Nonprofit Advisory Council. The Executive Director also actively participates in the Linn County Continuum of Care (COC) and Linn Area Partners–Active in Disaster (LAP-AID) meetings and works collaboratively with many organizations through those groups and their committees.

The PATCH program that was established as a result of the derecho storm is a unique demonstration of HFfLC's initiative to take the lead in collaborative efforts. HFfLC will continue to pursue opportunities to collaborate with affordable housing advocates and organizations and to lead initiatives that will benefit the organizations.

***Public Awareness/Education:*** To build local support for a sustainable affordable housing initiative, the HFfLC must educate the public, in addition to elected officials. Education would include sharing information about current programs and services that help people attain and maintain their housing. Additionally, a clear and consistent message must be developed that reflects the need for, and benefits of, providing attainable housing. The public must be aware of the existing gaps that limit affordable housing opportunities for many in our communities.

The HFfLC Board of Directors will continue to pursue opportunities to educate and make the community more aware of the affordable housing needs throughout the county.

***Fundraising:*** In addition to the application to IFA for Local Housing Trust Fund grant funds, HFfLC will actively seek out other sources to further affordable housing initiatives. Potential funding partners include Linn County, City of Cedar Rapids, City of Marion, Federal Home Loan Bank, local lenders, businesses, foundations, and interested individuals. While pursuing direct contributions from area lenders and foundations, HFfLC may also explore the potential for establishing a consortium of local lenders and other collaborative financing opportunities.

**Part 3: Proposed Activities of the HFfLC**

Pursuant to Iowa Finance Authority guidelines for the State Housing Trust Fund, the Housing Fund for Linn County is eligible to apply for funding. HFfLC combines those funds with local contributions and then distributes these funds to be used in a variety of ways to promote the provision of affordable housing. At the discretion of the HFfLC, this may include providing temporary or permanent assistance for owner or rental property demolition/clearance, development, reconstruction, or rehabilitation; homeownership assistance (such as down payment/closing costs for homebuyers, mortgage payments for principal, interest, taxes and/or insurance, etc.); rental assistance (such as for rent security deposits, utilities, etc.); transitional housing creation or improvements; and or homeless shelter creation or improvements. Assistance may also be provided for innovative or new housing initiatives or for existing program capacity building. In addition, the funds granted by HFfLC encourage agencies to leverage additional funds from other sources, thereby increasing the overall impact. Finally, funds distributed in the form of zero or low-interest loans will be returned to HFfLC and be redistributed in the community through subsequent application processes. While loan requests are given priority by the HFfLC board, funding assistance may also be provided in the form of forgivable loans or grants if the proposed use of the funds does not support repayment.

The HFfLC Board of Directors strives to make funding available on a regular and timely basis. Currently, funding applications are scheduled for acceptance in the spring and fall/winter. The board also accepts applications outside of this schedule, if a project is determined to be time-sensitive and must have a funding decision prior to the next scheduled application round.

Through the use of HFfLC's active trust fund awards, the following activities have been allocated funding to be utilized this fiscal year:

- Two newly constructed single-family homes for households under 80% AMI
- One single-family home rehabilitated for households under 80% AMI
- Three rental units will receive rehabilitation and rented to households under 80% AMI
- 10 households under 50% AMI will receive emergency repair assistance
- Rental Assistance provided to 30% AMI households
- Deposit Assistance provided to 30% AMI households in partnership with the City of Cedar Rapids, which serves as the Linn County Public Housing Authority. Households exiting homelessness and receiving a Housing Choice Voucher (Section 8) that require assistance with the deposit to obtain housing.

HFfLC Board of Directors strive to assist residents anywhere on the continuum of affordable housing need – from homelessness to those with more moderate income in need of rehabilitating their home or to developers who create new housing opportunities for low-to-moderate income persons. Dedicating dollars to the operation of the winter/overflow shelter provides the opportunity to assist those without housing.

HFfLC, in collaboration with East Central Iowa Council of Governments (ECICOG), has applied to the Federal Home Loan Bank's Affordable Housing Program for 2026 program funding and dedicated further housing trust fund dollars towards the activities proposed in that application

prioritizing projects that assist homeowners with special needs.
ECICOG was recently awarded a HOME grant through the Iowa Finance Authority to assist First-Time Homebuyers with downpayment assistance and home repairs, which the HFfLC Board has dedicated housing trust fund dollars as local match to further leverage these funds.
ECICOG was also awarded a Lead Grant through the Iowa Finance Authority to assist up to 89 homeowners with housing rehabilitation and lead abatement. The HFfLC has dedicated housing trust fund dollars as local match to secure and leverage these funds.

The board strives to determine the best and most efficient use of its dollars to preserve existing housing through rental and owner-occupied rehabilitation programs and the creation of new housing opportunities for those in need in Linn County, prioritizing projects to reflect the rapidly changing needs in the community.

### PROGRAM ALLOCATION GUIDELINES

Based on the needs assessment detailed in Part 1 of this Housing Assistance Plan, the HFfLC Board of Directors adopted the following principles to guide the distribution process:

**Location and income eligibility.**
Only housing projects that will serve Linn County households with incomes less than 80% of area median income (AMI), as determined by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), are eligible for HFfLC funding. Further, as required by the LHTF program, 30 percent of the IFA grant funds will serve households with income at or below 30 percent AMI. Those income levels are:

| Household Size | Linn County Maximum Income Levels | |
|---|---|---|
| | 80% | 30% |
| 1 | $59,000 | $22,150 |
| 2 | $67,400 | $25,300 |
| 3 | $75,850 | $28,450 |
| 4 | $84,250 | $33,000 |
| 5 | $91,000 | $38,680 |
| 6 | $97,750 | $44,360 |
| 7 | $104,500 | $50,040 |
| 8 | $111,250 | $55,720 |

*Effective June 2026*

**Project Requirements.**

Proposed projects must meet the criteria outlined in the Application Guidance made available with the application for funding, which is in alignment with the LHTC program guidelines.

**Project Evaluation.**

In general, the project evaluation process will give priority to projects that:

- Fill an unmet need for those impacted by disasters.
- Serve extremely low-income people, defined by HUD as below 30% of area median income.
- Leverage additional funding sources (local, state, federal, or private) Do not duplicate assistance already being provided.
- Have repayment capability (if the project supports repayment and the assistance is not being used for operations or to provide direct assistance)
- Improve or create additional housing units.
- More specific priorities may be identified in the Application Guidance made available with the application for funding.

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