COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT
ROME, NY

Assessment Overview

The CNA "4-Step" Process

The Community Needs Assessment (CNA) project was a collaborative effort involving the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), City of Rome staff and community partners. The CNA process identified priority needs, which provided the framework for the resulting 2-Year Action Plan.

Step 1: Draft a Community Profile

A Community Profile was assembled to include pertinent information about local government, community and economic development conditions, Federal investment highlights & current demographics.

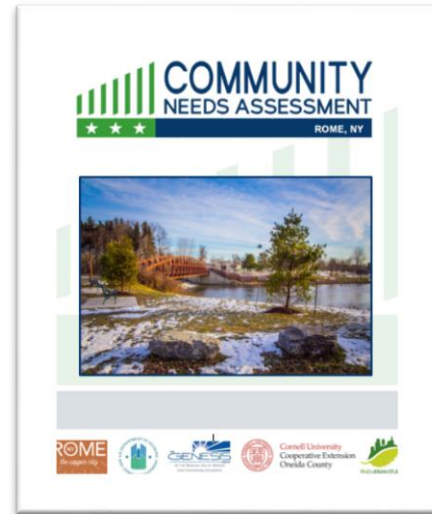### Step 2: Organize and Facilitate Community Roundtables

City Representatives worked with HUD representatives and the Cornell Rust 2 Green Urban Studio to identify local assessment topics, as well as local leaders and appropriate community representatives related to each. The Mayor sent invitations to participants and the Rome Area Chamber of Commerce invited its membership to participate. Three Roundtables incorporated nine group discussions, which were convened over a two-month period (February – March 2016). The Roundtables were held at the Capitol Theatre, Rome Art & Community Center and the Griffiss Institute, with discussions focused on the following topics: Infrastructure, Community & Capacity, Housing, Healthcare & Public Services and Employment, Education & Economy.

Step 3: Gather Additional Community Input - Surveys

Input from other community members, businesses, organizations and students was collected via community surveys conducted during the fall of 2016.

Step 4: Develop a 2-Year City Action Plan

Using the information gathered, the City identified key findings and developed recommendations - six goals for the community - that provide the basis for a two-year Action Plan to be incorporated into the City's HUD Consolidated Plan and used to support grant applications from public and private funders.

GOAL #1: Expand Employment Opportunities

Support programs that provide training, technical assistance and on-the-job experiences to raise the levels of earning and to increase employment opportunities for individuals, families and new entrepreneurs.

SUBGOALS

- **Remove Employment Barriers -** Provide soft skills training, re-integration programs, and access to quality childcare and reliable transportation to enhance job retention and self-sufficiency.
- **Promote Vocational Education** - Support and market programs that provide access to alternative and affordable learning opportunities related to a high local demand for skilled labor.
- **Support School to Work Pipelines -** Help create opportunities for paid internship, apprenticeship and mentorship programs that meet local employment sector needs and help end the brain drain in Rome and the region.
- **Promote Entrepreneurship -** Support technical and financial assistance programs that support existing business owners and help grow new entrepreneurs.

GOAL #2: Increase Economic Activity

Design and implement an economic development strategy focused on removing major barriers to the City's growth and prosperity - including aging infrastructure, an ineffective taxing structure and limited private investment.

- **Upgrade Infrastructure -** Identify and coordinate actions and available resources for infrastructure upgrades to support the growth of existing businesses and to attract new economic activity.
- **Revitalize Downtown -** Engage stakeholders to design and implement programs to beautify streetscapes; enhance facades; fill vacancies; provide business incentives; and strengthen connections to the waterfront.
- **Promote Griffiss Business &Technology Park -** Market Griffiss for heightened regional visibility and highlight its assets and community benefit to attract new businesses, employees and residents.
- **Evaluate the City Tax Structure -** Engage qualified professionals to evaluate the existing tax structure and engage stakeholders to help identify innovative solutions to reduce taxes and increase property values.

GOAL #3: Raise Educational Achievement
Work with the Rome City School District, local colleges and vocational programs to improve educational outcomes.
SUBGOALS

- **Support the Community Schools Model -** Transform schools in distressed neighborhoods into service hubs with a focus on families, academic support, food and nutrition, financial literacy and soft-skills training.
- **Assist Tech-based Learning Programs -** Assist programs that provide interactive, tech-based learning tools and state-of-the art equipment, infrastructure and training to support "digitally competent" teachers, students and parents
- **Support College Preparation Initiatives -** Support college preparation programs leading to successful admissions and financial resources for anyone interested pursuing higher education.
- **Engage Students and Faculty to Promote Rome Public and Private Schools -** Celebrate and recognize youth & school achievements and engage students and educators in civic projects and school "recruitment" initiatives.

GOAL #4: Enhance Local Arts, Cultural and Tourism Opportunities
Promote, enhance and advance arts and cultural initiatives to engage residents, attract visitors, generate revenue, create jobs and improve the City's competitive edge.
SUBGOALS

- **Identify and Promote Rome's Assets -** Assess Rome's cultural assets and promote them as unique tourism destinations for people of all ages - and sustainable revenue streams for Rome and the region.
- **Promote Rome's Downtown as an Arts Hub -** Support the development of an "Arts District" to help nurture creative talent and re-position Downtown as a mixed-use cultural destination.
- **Support Arts Programming, Education and Public Art -** Increase the size, scope and diversity of cultural experiences - providing opportunities for community participation via festivals, events and a variety of other placemaking activities.
- **Make Rome a Walkable City -** Support the connection of parks and recreation spaces; provide pedestrian amenities and streetscape improvements; identify new transportation options; and improve access to services for both residents and visitors.

GOAL #5: Improve Access to Health and Wellness Programs
Improve access to healthcare providers and services with a focus on behavioral health, chemical dependency & nutrition.
SUBGOALS

- **Provide Resources for Healthcare Initiatives that Enhance Public Safety -** Connect public safety personnel with healthcare personnel to develop local initiatives that will meet immediate and critical community needs.
- **Promote Good Nutrition -** Support education and access to affordable and nutritious food options including community gardens, farmers markets and neighborhood grocery stores with a focus on target areas.
- **Support "Early Prevention" Health and Wellness Programs -** Provide resources and incentives for "early prevention" education programs to be delivered in schools, homes, businesses and via community events.
- **Improve Access to Healthcare Providers -** Identify existing resources and provide reliable and affordable consultation, transportation and healthcare delivery with a focus on special populations.

GOAL #6: Provide Enhanced Housing Opportunities
Provide quality, affordable and healthy housing to stabilize neighborhoods and meet the needs of Rome's changing demographics.
SUBGOALS

- **Support Housing Rehabilitation -** Provide loan and grant programs for homeowners and landlords in key areas of the City to include the CDBG Target Area, South Rome, Downtown and the Historic District.
- **Support Wraparound Services (Case Management) for Residents in Public Housing -** Support programs that provide employment, childcare, healthcare and other public assistance.
- **Address Vacant, Dilapidated and Abandoned Properties -** Provide assistance for the acquisition and rehabilitation of properties, which are tax delinquent, tax foreclosed, vacant and/or abandoned.
- **Provide Homeownership Incentives -** Support programs for first-time homebuyers and develop innovative incentive programs to encourage employees to reside in the City.