SMART START HOUSING PLANNING GUIDE

Source: This checklist is adapted from the PLAN framework developed by Local Housing Solutions, a project of the Housing Solutions Lab at NYU Furman Center, and customized for the Mayors' Partnership for Progress.

STEP 1:

LAY THE GROUNDWORK/BUILD YOUR PLANNING FOUNDATION

Get organized internally before launching a formal planning process.

- [ ] Secure commitment from key leaders (mayor, council, city manager).
- [ ] Identify a staff lead or point person to coordinate strategy development (even if part-time or volunteer).
- [ ] Form a planning committee or steering team that includes:
  - *Internal stakeholders (housing, planning, infrastructure).*
  - *Local elected officials*
  - *Planning commission members (if applicable)*
  - *Engage external partners (employers, businesses, nonprofits, developers, lenders, schools, residents from across neighborhoods).*
- [ ] Decide whether to build internal capacity or hire a consultant.
- [ ] Secure or set aside a small budget or planning grant for outreach and initial data gathering.
- [ ] Contact your regional planning agency or council of governments for guidance/support. https://development.ohio.gov/community/governors-office-of-appalachia/local-development-districts
- [ ] Conduct a SWOT analysis to assess readiness and capacity.
- [ ] Identify existing plans (local, regional, state, federal) that overlap/encompass your municipality to reference or strive for alignment where practical and feasible.

STEP 2:

GATHER AND ANALYZE EXISTING HOUSING CONDITIONS

Know where your community stands before deciding where it's going

ASSESS HOUSING NEEDS USING LOCAL AND NATIONAL DATA.

- [ ] Identify underserved populations (e.g., seniors, young families, low-income households, workforce).
- [ ] Analyze affordability gaps (e.g., % of income spent on housing).
- [ ] Review housing accessibility and availability for people with disabilities.

EXPLORE DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES.

- [ ] Identify publicly owned land or buildings suitable for housing.
- [ ] Review zoning and land use regulations that may restrict or enable housing development.
- [ ] Consider adaptive reuse of vacant schools, churches, or commercial buildings.

ENGAGE HOUSING PARTNERS FOR INPUTS.

- [ ] Reach out to local developers, land banks, housing authorities, and nonprofits.
- [ ] Explore partnerships and seek input from regional or state housing agencies.
- [ ] Identify potential funding sources (e.g., LIHTC, Ohio Housing Trust Fund, Welcome Home Ohio Program).

SET HOUSING GOALS

- [ ] Define initial short- and long-term housing goals (e.g., "Build 10 affordable units by 2027").

TIP: Reach out to MPP Staff for assistance gathering or analyzing your community's specific data

STEP 3:

ENGAGE THE COMMUNITY

Make sure the plan reflects community values and lived experiences.

- [ ] Schedule and promote initial public workshops or town halls.
- [ ] Offer multiple ways to engage: online survey, in-person meetings, pop-up events.
- [ ] Ask questions like:
  - *What do you love about living here?*
  - *How could your current housing situation be improved?*
  - *What kind of place should this be in 20 years?*
- [ ] Create a summary report or dashboard of the input gathered.

STEP 4:

DEFINE A SHARED VISION AND GOALS

Set the foundation for policies and action.

- [ ] Draft a Housing Vision Statement in plain language (1 paragraph)
- [ ] List 2-4 objectives that are specific and measurable.
  - *Example:*
    Goal: Improve housing supply
    Objective: Build 15 single-family homes by 2030.
- [ ] Review with the public and revise as needed.

STEP 5:

DEVELOP STRATEGIES AND IMPLEMENTATION TOOLS

Identify how to achieve the vision and goals.

- [ ] Review local regulations (zoning, subdivision rules) for alignment with goals.
- [ ] Draft recommended policies, strategies, and actions for each goal and objective.
- [ ] Identify implementation partners and funding sources (e.g., local housing authority, economic development representative, public works or maintenance supervisor).
- [ ] Develop performance measures (e.g., % of residents within 10-min walk of a park).
- [ ] Establish a realistic timeframe for implementation
- [ ] Draft an implementation table:
  - *Action Item* | *Lead Agency* | *Timeline* | *Estimated Cost* | *Funding Source*

STEP 6:

DRAFT AND REVIEW THE HOUSING STRATEGY

Put all the work into a formal document and prepare for adoption.

- [ ] Ensure the plan is accessible—limit jargon, include visuals, and translate as needed.
- [ ] Release the draft plan for public comment.
- [ ] Schedule and promote public workshops or town halls.
  - *Present the draft strategy and seek input*
- [ ] Offer multiple ways to engage: online survey, in-person meetings, pop-up events.
- [ ] Create a summary report or dashboard of the input gathered.
- [ ] Identify and empower community champions.

STEP 7:

ADOPT AND USE THE STRATEGY

Turn the Strategy into official policy to guide decision-making.

- [ ] Present the final plan to the council/board, planning commission
- [ ] Hold required public hearings.
- [ ] Adopt the plan by resolution or ordinance.
- [ ] Distribute the plan to all departments, boards, and agencies.
- [ ] Use the plan to:
  - *Review housing development proposals*
  - *Guide zoning and annexations*
  - *Apply for grants*
  - *Prioritize capital improvements*

STEP 8:

MONITOR, REPORT, AND UPDATE

Keep the strategy alive, relevant, and effective.

- [ ] Develop a system to track progress and evaluate outcomes.
- [ ] Report regularly to leadership and the public.
- [ ] Adjust strategy based on performance and changing needs.
- [ ] Plan to revise the strategy every 5–8 years.