

City of Springfield

Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy Area Plan - NRSA

DRAFT - April 2025

Introduction

The City of Springfield proposes to designate an expanded Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy Area (NRSA) under the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) CPD Notice 96-01. This designation builds upon the previous NRSA and incorporates additional neighborhoods, including Brightwood, Memorial Square, Metro Center, South End, Old Hill, Upper Hill, Forest Park, Bay, McKnight, Lower Liberty Heights and Six Corners/Maple-High.

The expanded NRSA encompasses 14 census tracts and 39 block groups, all of which are contiguous. This area has been selected based on a high concentration of low- to moderate-income (LMI) residents, currently at 79.08%. While the city as a whole faces economic challenges—with 60% of its population qualifying as LMI—certain neighborhoods experience extreme economic distress, including block groups with 100% LMI concentrations, a highly unusual circumstance.

These areas require targeted investment to improve housing, economic opportunities, and infrastructure. At the same time, the City recognizes the importance of development strategies that benefit all neighborhoods, avoiding displacement and ensuring access to economic opportunity for existing residents.

The NRSA designation will enhance ongoing efforts by allowing the City to apply Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) resources with greater flexibility. This designation enables innovative strategies for economic development, housing, and public services with reduced regulatory burdens, expediting the implementation of projects that will improve neighborhood cohesion and address economic and social challenges.

Each CDBG-funded activity in the NRSA will address one of the following objectives:

- Expand Affordable Housing Options
- Improve the Quality of Springfield's Housing Stock
- Prevent and Reduce Homelessness
- Strengthen Neighborhoods
- Create Economic Opportunities

The City has developed performance benchmarks for this expanded NRSA, which will be monitored over the five-year designation period to ensure meaningful progress. Some strategies may continue beyond this period to promote sustained improvement.

The NRSA strategy will be integrated into Springfield's One-Year Action Plans and Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Reports to ensure alignment with the City's broader community development goals.

Purpose

Springfield has multiple neighborhoods with significant needs, and prioritization decisions are informed by the City's Consolidated Planning process. This federally mandated process helps identify and prioritize community development activities and strategies based on data, community input, and alignment with long-term citywide goals. The selection of NRSA priority areas is based on the following factors:

1. Greatest Economic & Housing Need

- Areas with extreme concentrations of LMI residents, high rates of vacancy/abandonment, and deteriorating housing stock are prioritized.
- The presence of key community assets that could serve as catalysts for broader revitalization efforts (e.g., transit hubs, commercial corridors, or educational institutions).

2. Community Readiness & Capacity

- Some neighborhoods may already have active neighborhood associations, CDCs (Community Development Corporations), Community Based Development Organizations (CBDs) or local businesses ready to lead reinvestment efforts.
- Springfield's Neighborhood Councils serve as the primary method of two-way communication between local government and residents and are a key structure for civic engagement at the community level, working to coordinate efforts among residents, businesses, and community organizations. These Councils play an important role in fostering resident-led leadership and advocating for neighborhood improvements. The City's NRSA strategy is positioned to support and strengthen these existing governance structures, ensuring that revitalization efforts are community-driven and locally responsive.

3. Balanced Development Across the City

- While the NRSA plan prioritizes the most distressed areas, the City must also ensure that middle-income or transitional neighborhoods do not decline further due to neglect.
- Encouraging mixed-income development across different neighborhoods can help counteract concentrated poverty and create sustainable economic opportunities.

4. Community Engagement Considerations

- The City's approach recognizes Springfield's historical and demographic shifts, ensuring that revitalization efforts do not lead to resident displacement.
- Investments will be directed towards empowering local businesses and residents to rebuild what has been lost as a result of the decline of the City's manufacturing sector while encouraging development citywide.

These prioritization criteria are designed to align with Springfield's broader 2025-2029 Consolidated Plan, ensuring that the NRSA strategy supports long-term community and economic development goals while fostering growth and stability.

Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy Guidelines

Benefits

The benefits are described in detail in amendments to the CDBG regulations at 24 CFR 570 published in the Federal Register on January 5, 1995, and updated in the Final Rule dated November 9, 1995:

1. **Job Creation/Retention as Low/Moderate Income Area Benefit:** Job creation/retention activities undertaken pursuant to the strategy may be qualified as meeting area benefit requirements, thus eliminating the need for a business to track the income of persons that take, or are considered for, such jobs (24 CFR 570.208(a)(1)(vii) and (d)(5)(i));
2. **Aggregation of Housing Units:** Housing units assisted pursuant to the strategy may be considered to be part of a single structure for purposes of applying the low- and moderate-income national objective criterion, thus providing greater flexibility to carry out housing programs that revitalize a neighborhood (24 CFR 570.208(a)(3) and (d)(5)(ii));
3. **Aggregate Public Benefit Standard Exemption:** Economic development activities carried out under the strategy may, at the grantee's option, be exempt from the aggregate public benefit standards, thus increasing a grantee's flexibility for program design as well as reducing its record-keeping requirements (24 CFR 570.209 (b)(2)(v)(L) and (M)); and
4. **Public Service Cap Exemption:** Public services carried out pursuant to the strategy by a Community-Based Development Organization may be exempt from the public service cap (24 CFR 570.204(b)(2)(ii)).

The City intends to utilize these exemptions and benefits to advantage to the greatest extent feasible to advantage the residents of the NRSA.

Requirements

CPD Notice 96-01 contains certain criteria directed to public agencies when applying for an NRSA designation. This application meets all expectations as stated below:

1. The NRSA must be submitted with the 5-Year Consolidated Plan, or it must be made an amendment to the existing Consolidated Plan;
2. Grantee must clearly identify the neighborhood's boundaries and the boundaries must be contiguous;
3. The designated area must be primarily residential and contain a percentage of low- to moderate-income residents equal to the grantee's "upper quartile percentage," as

determined by the most recent decennial census, or 70%, whichever is less, but in any event, not less than 51%;

4. The strategy must be developed in consultation with the areas' stakeholders, residents, owners/operators of businesses and financial institutions, non-profit organizations, and community groups that are in or serve the neighborhood;
5. An economic assessment of the area must be completed to examine (a) the current economic and neighborhood conditions, (b) opportunities for improvement, and (c) problems that are likely to be encountered within the area;
6. The implementation plan must promote the area's economic progress with a focus on activities that will create meaningful jobs for the unemployed and low- to moderate-income residents of the area;
7. The plan must promote activities for the substantial revitalization of the neighborhood; and
8. The strategy must identify readily achievable performance benchmarks.

Strategy Development

A key benefit of NRSA designation is that a Community Based Development Organization (CBDO) in the zone is exempt from HUD's 15% cap on the amount of CDBG funds that can be spent for public service activities. The North End-Metro Center NRSA is served by the CBDO New North Citizens Council (NNCC). With the NRSA designation, the City will partner with NNCC to provide public services, including job training programs, to assist in bringing economic opportunity to neighborhood residents. The City will also work with other community-based organizations within the community to determine if they can meet the requirements for CBDO.

The flexibility regarding job creation reporting will also enhance the ability to provide economic development assistance to the NRSA.

The Springfield NRSA target area has many assets. The following organizations provide a variety of public services, affordable housing developments and economic development initiatives:

- Baystate Health Inc: Region's largest healthcare facility that provides community health services, as well as a significant employer
- Springfield Technical Community College: Higher Education Institution that provides Workforce Development opportunities
- American International College: Higher Education Institution
- Wayfinders: Affordable housing public services and development
- Springfield Day Nursery Corporation: Preschool- daycare services, in-home daycare services, toddler daycare
- Center For Human Development, Inc.: Mental health/addiction services.

- Association Properties, Inc: Residential and support services.
- Revitalize Community Development Corporation: Affordable Housing Repair
- New North Citizens Council: Housing, Public Services, Youth Build
- The Gray House: Public Services
- Hope CDC: Affordable housing development, small business and non-profit technical assistance
- Latino Economic Development Corporation: Small business technical assistance
- Tech Foundry: Digital/IT Workforce Development
- Valley Venture Mentors: Small Business Technical Assistance and Business Mentorship
- ROCA, Inc.: Workforce Development and public services

The City also intends to use existing collaborative partnerships between governmental, non-governmental organizations and private business to drive improvements within the NRSA. This includes collaborations like the Western Mass Anchor Collaborative, Springfield Food Policy Council, Transformative Development Initiative (TDI), Livewell Springfield Coalition and the Neighborhood Hub.

Boundaries

The 2025 Springfield Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy Area (NRSA) is comprised of Census Block Group geographies, and represents an expansion of the 2020 area, as shown in Map 1, below. As shown in Map 2, it has the Connecticut River as its western/southwestern boundary, with the shared municipal boundary with Chicopee (Carew Street) as its north/northwestern boundary. The south/southeastern boundary, starting at the River, is Leete Street, which jogs to become Woodside Terrace/Leyfred Terrace to Watershops Pond, albeit looping around Springfield College, then continues east along the Pond up to Wilbraham Road. From there, the boundary turns west along Wilbraham to Roosevelt Avenue, then turns north on Roosevelt up to I-291. Going west on I-291, the boundary turns south at the St. James Avenue, doglegging on Princeton Street and Yale Street before arriving at Westminster, turning north along Westminster and Clarendon to Magazine Street. Magazine Street becomes Armory Street, north of I-291, then the boundary turns west along Carew Street and Prospect Street, turning north at Chestnut Street and continuing to the start of the boundary. Of the 4,204 acres (6.6 square miles), 2,167 acres (3.4 square miles, or 54%) are residential uses, constituting the single largest land use in the district.

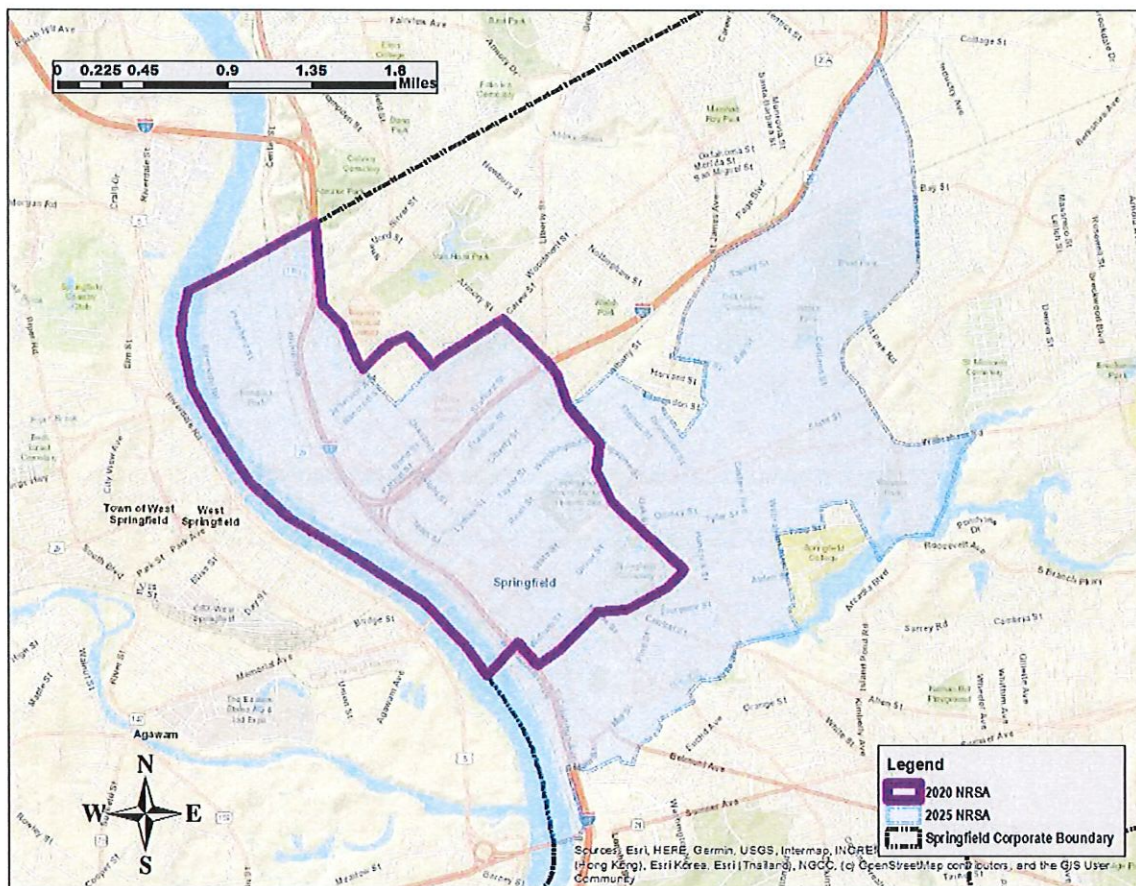
Contiguous Census Tracts

The Springfield NRSA Target area is composed of 14 census tracts and 39 block groups. All are contiguous to each other. This area is made up of parts of the neighborhoods Brightwood, Bay, Old

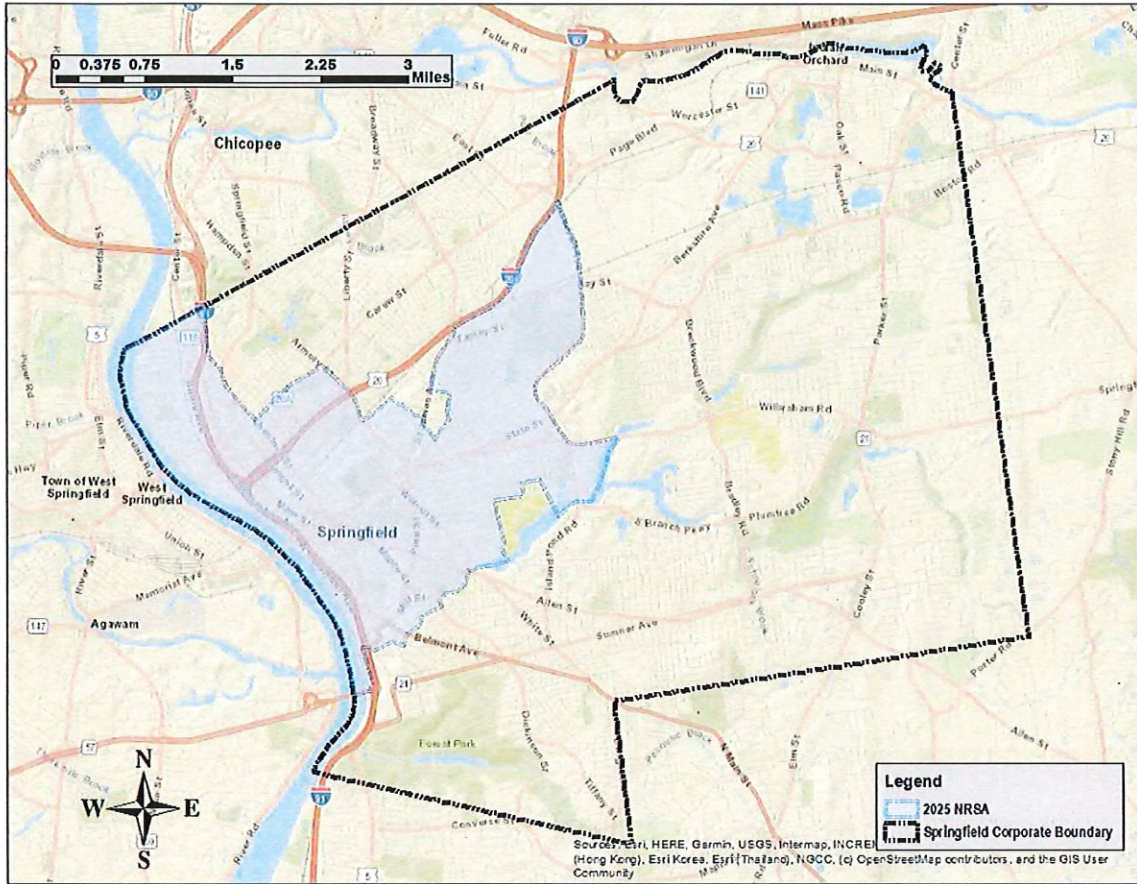
Hill, Upper Hill, Forest Park, McKnight, Memorial Square, Metro Center, South End and Six Corners/Maple High. The census tracts included are:

Census Tract	Block Group
800600	1, 2, 3
800700	1, 2
800800	1, 2
800900	1, 2, 3
801101	1
801102	1, 2
801200	1, 2, 3
801300	1, 2, 3
801401	1, 2
801700	1, 2, 3, 4, 6
801800	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
801901	1, 2
801902	1, 2, 3
802000	1, 2, 3

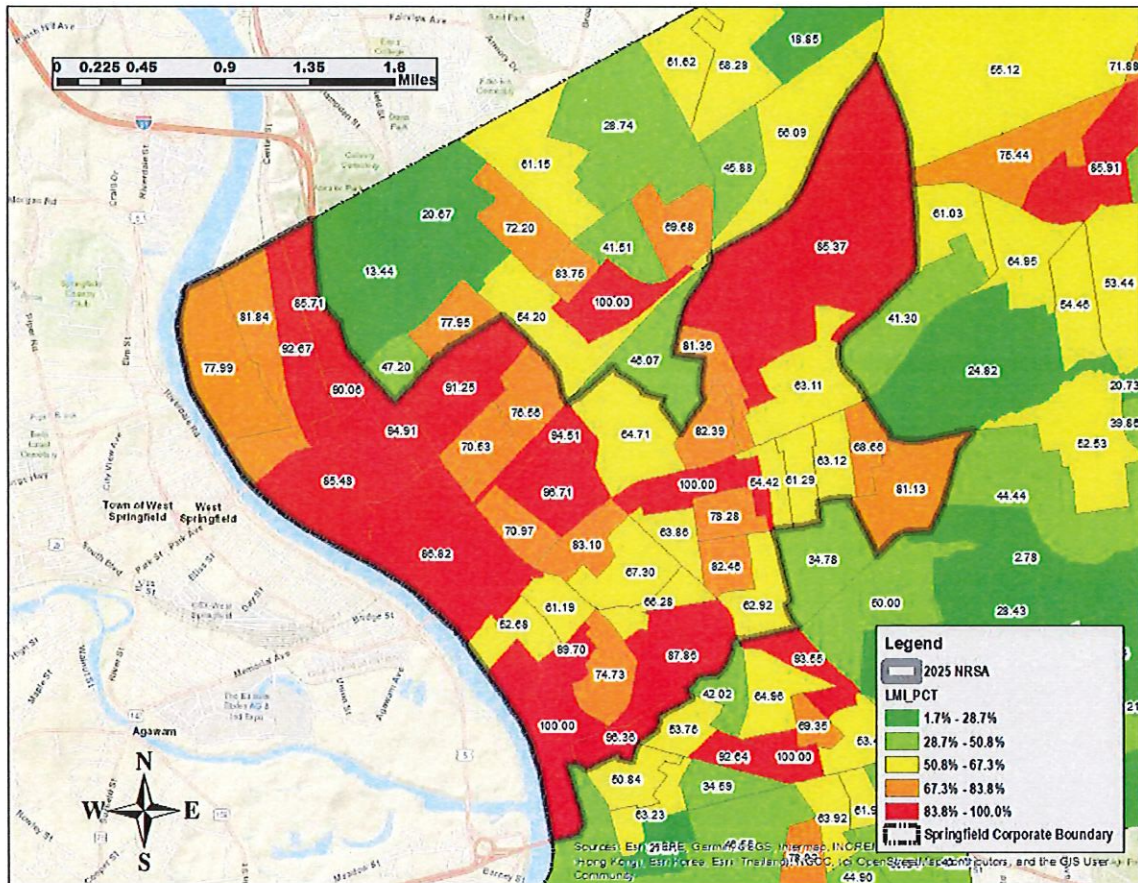
Map 1: OLD AND NEW NRSA DEFINITIONS



Map 2: 2025 NRSA DEFINITION



Map 3: LOW TO MODERATE INCOME AREAS WITHIN 2025 NRSA



Map 4, below, shows the generalized land uses within the 2025 NRSA, divided into employment categories (commercial and industrial), residential uses (single- and multi-family), rights-of-way and open space, and water.

Map 4: GENERALIZED LAND USES WITHIN 2025 NRSA

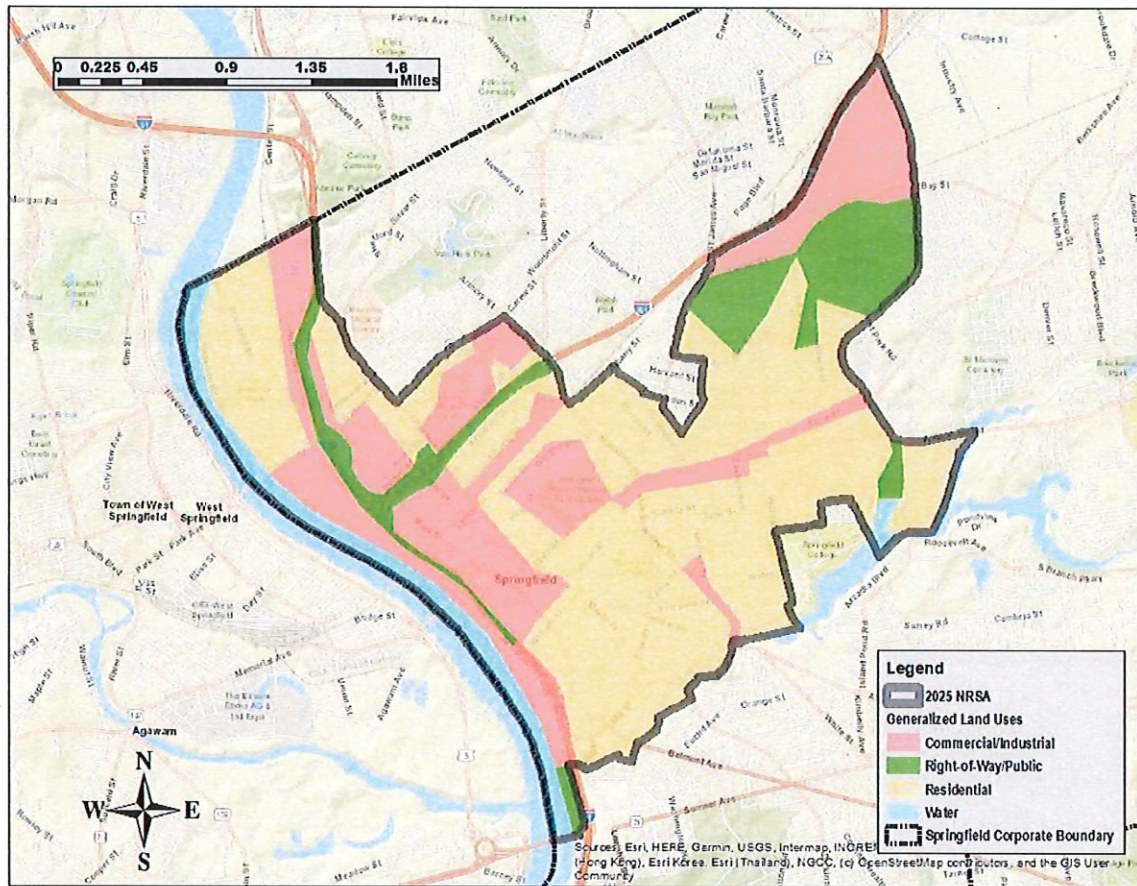


Table 1, below, shows the total areas for each of the categories of land uses and their percentages; as can be seen, the area is predominantly residential, despite encompassing several business districts.

<u>Land Use</u>	<u>Acres/Square Miles</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Commercial et al	1,179/1.84	28.5%
Residential	2,213/3.45	53.5%
Right-of-Way	507/0.79	12.2%
Water	241/0.37	5.7%
Total ⁽¹⁾	4,141/6.45	100.0%

(1) Totals may not add up due to rounding.

Demographic Characteristics

The 2020 population of this target area is 46,005, roughly 29.6% of the total City population.

Renter households make up 83.2% of all households in this area; 57.8% of them pay more than 30% of their income towards rent, including 27.4% who pay more than 50%; furthermore, 32.6% of owner-occupied units pay more than 30% in housing costs. The area includes a large amount of subsidized housing and housing choice voucher holders, keeping housing costs reasonable for many residents. The area includes a concentration of poverty and low-income residents and a lack of market rate housing.

Major demographic breakdowns include:

- White (non-Hispanic): 9.6%
- Black (non-Hispanic): 21.5%
- Asian (non-Hispanic): 1.4%
- Multiracial (non-Hispanic): 1.7%
- Other race (non-Hispanic): 0.3%
- Hispanic (all races): 65.5%

Planning Process

Consultation for the NRSA included several planning efforts. In addition, this report and application to HUD is subject to community review as part of the 2025-2029 Consolidated Planning Process and includes many elements of that larger plan.

The City began with a survey posted on the City's website. The City made the survey available to the public from November 22, 2024, until December 31, 2024. Notification of the survey included social media posts and an email via the City's listservs. The City made the survey available in both English and Spanish. The City received a total of 726 surveys in English and 13 surveys in Spanish.

The City also hosted three in-person focus group meetings and one virtual meeting for stakeholders. Notification of the meetings included mailings and emails via the City's listservs. The three in-person meetings focused on specific topics: housing and homelessness; public services and community development; and economic development. The virtual meeting, hosted the week after the in-person meetings, was a general meeting for anyone who could not attend one of the in-person meetings. These meetings were held during the day to increase attendance among community stakeholders.

The City also hosted two public hearings in the evening to get input from the public. The first public hearing took place at the Innovation Center in December and the second public hearing took place at the Mason Square Library in January 2025. The City advertised this as a meeting to provide community input on the needs of the community and to present ideas to address those needs. The NRSA document was available for a 30-day public comment period beginning April 10, 2025, through May 10, 2025.

Since 2022 the City has also initiated long-term neighborhood investment planning in neighborhoods that were disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 Pandemic with American Rescue Plan Act State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds (ARPA SLFRF). Development of these plans has included robust community engagement that is ongoing and has occurred parallel to the City's Consolidated Planning Process. This engagement process has included many neighborhood meetings, multiple surveys, participation of resident advisors and obtaining input from residents at community events. The input received through this parallel, but separate community engagement process has also helped form the City's Consolidated Planning Process and NRSA Community Engagement process.

Assessment

Residents in the NRSA take pride in their community, despite the presence of recognizable inadequacies including disproportionate levels of crime, vacant and deteriorating structures, and limited business activity. Over the years, residents have reached a consensus on key problems that pose a threat to neighborhood growth and stability and potential opportunities to reshape business districts and improve residential cohesiveness. Actions and improvement in public

safety, housing, economic development, streets and sidewalks, and public infrastructure have followed concerted efforts of community stakeholders to effectively address problem areas by acting on opportunities and capitalizing on neighborhood attributes. Despite this, the housing crisis, aftermath of the COVID-19 Pandemic and economic downturn has had a disproportionately negative impact on the safety and stability of these neighborhoods.

Some barriers to improvements include:

- Perceptions of neighborhood when trying to attract and retain commercial businesses to the area, resulting in vacant storefronts and underutilized office space
- High number of abandoned buildings that are substandard – would require significant amounts of funding to repair or demolish and replace
- Deteriorated infrastructure, including a high need for street resurfacing, sidewalk improvements, addition of street trees and park improvements
- Sidewalks in many areas are not accessible to persons with disabilities
- Lack of affordable housing and increased homelessness

Economic Assessment

There is a high rate of poverty in this NRSA area with 54.7% of the NRSA's population living below the federal poverty level of \$30,000 for a household of four. The average household size in the area is 2.6 people. 79% of the population earns less than 80% of the area median income, and is thus considered moderate and low income, and accordingly can qualify for HUD funded programs and services.

The areas included within the NRSA have some of the lowest labor market participation rates and low levels of educational attainment. Of the 33,515 residents over the age of 25, 28% do not have a high school diploma or equivalent. Another 35% of the population has a high school diploma or equivalent but no further education.

The skills gap in neighborhoods like these grows greater as employers increase their qualifications for positions. For example, hospitals in Massachusetts are now moving towards requiring a Bachelor's Degree for all bedside positions, making it difficult to access any higher wage positions in one of the largest employment industries in the region for most residents in the NRSA, which has many of these positions available. As greater competition for limited job openings occurs in all economic sectors, the skills gap continues to widen. Low-moderate income residents of the NRSA are struggling with increased costs of living, driven by the housing crisis, increased cost of utilities and inflation, that is making it hard for them to afford things like childcare and food, thus driving the need for increased public services.

It will be essential to improve incomes and access to employment opportunities in the NRSA to make these important connections between education, skills training, and employment opportunities.

Housing Assessment

The 2025 NRSA includes 19,623 housing units, 17,542 of which are occupied, indicating a vacancy rate of 10.6%. The vast majority of occupied units (83%) are renter-occupied. The area has an extensive supply of public and subsidized housing. The majority of housing units (58.6%) were built before 1950, suggesting a higher rate of substandard housing conditions. There is some evidence of overcrowding, with 6.3% of housing units having more than one person per room. The small numbers of owner-occupied houses are owned by very low-income people, many of whom need assistance with repair and maintenance. The neighborhood has experienced some housing abandonment, and has vacant lots where long-abandoned buildings have been demolished. These vacant lots provide opportunity for new infill housing and for creative lot reuse—such as community gardens or pocket parks.

Strategic Plan

The priorities and strategies for the revitalization area are based on public input as described in the planning process section. The 2025-2029 Consolidated Plan has identified priority needs based on the community development needs of the city and focused on its low- and moderate-income residents. The NRSA plan directly aligns with that plan and proportionately greater amount of CDBG funds will be used to implement programs, projects, and services for the benefits of the low-to moderate income residents of the NRSA.

The priorities and goals below are designated to address the community development needs of the NRSA. However, the specific programs and projects that will best accomplish those goals will change based on changing economic and other circumstances. Therefore, the annual objectives for the NRSA will be developed as a part of the Annual Action Plan for each program year following approval, with corresponding strategies to achieve the benchmarks described below. Taking into account the current needs of the area, the strategic plan will empower the LMI residents of the NRSA. The City will work to expand social services and encourage non-profits and neighborhood groups to do the same.

2025-2029 Consolidated Plan Priorities:

- Expand Affordable housing Options
- Improve the Quality of Springfield's Housing
- Prevent and Reduce Homelessness
- Strengthen Neighborhoods
- Economic Development Initiatives

Performance Measurers

Over the course of the 2025-2029 Consolidated Plan, the City of Springfield plans to use CDBG and HOME funding to accomplish its goals. The following are the performance measurers specifically within the boundaries of the NRSA.

The following goals will be addressed within the Springfield NRSA target area.

1. Create affordable rental housing units through new construction, adaptive reuse, and acquisition for households with incomes below 80 percent of AMI. (adding affordable housing)
2. Create affordable homeownership opportunities through new construction, and acquisition. (adding affordable housing)
3. Provide down payment assistance or buyer subsidy to increase affordability; provide financial assistance for repair/replace heating systems (adding affordable housing) (HEARTWAP)
4. Rehabilitate existing rental housing
5. Provide support to assist homeowners to rehabilitate their housing
6. Direct financial assistance to homeowners for repair/replace heating systems
7. Create Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) units to provide housing for disabled homeless households
8. Provide tenant-based rental assistance (TBRA) combined with services to support disabled homeless households to access and retain rental housing
9. Provide housing navigation services to assist homeless households to access housing
10. Provide assistance to help low-income households avoid becoming homeless
11. Engage Homeless neighbors by completing assessments through street outreach
12. Provide overnight shelter and crisis housing for homeless families and individuals
13. HOPWA Related Goals
14. Public Facilities/Improvements, work to improve the physical environment through enhancement of streets, parks, sidewalks, biking infrastructure, tree planting and open space
15. Public Facilities/Improvements – Capital improvements to Non-Profit and/or public facilities
16. Support public services for low to moderate income families
17. Clean-up of Sites and Structures
18. Fund efforts around public art, placemaking and beautification to foster elimination of blight and enhance neighborhood revitalization efforts

19. Historic Preservation –Rehabilitate historic buildings to promote historic preservation, reduce blight and revitalize surrounding neighborhood
20. Support housing inspectors and staff to conduct pro-active enforcement sweeps of local housing minimum standard requirements
21. Provide financial assistance to small businesses operating in low-mod areas, including operating costs and/or façade improvements
22. Provide technical assistance to small businesses operated by low-mod business owners and/or businesses operating in low-mod areas