

Pottawattamie County Housing Trust Fund

Housing Assistance Plan (2026)



The Mission of the Pottawattamie County Housing Trust Fund is to support and advocate for safe and affordable housing opportunities.

Approved by the Pottawattamie County Housing Trust Fund Board on 09/09/2025.

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Introduction

The [Pottawattamie County Housing Trust Fund](#) (PottCoHTF) is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization designated by the [Iowa Finance Authority](#) (IFA) as the [Local Housing Trust Fund](#) (LHTF) for Pottawattamie County, Iowa. In 2008, the [Human Services Advisory Council](#) Housing Committee met with Council Bluffs housing professionals and initiated discussions to form a housing trust fund for Council Bluffs. The group recognized they shared a vision that through collaboration they could more effectively address the housing needs of Council Bluffs residents.

That group's strategic planning effort identified and led to the establishment of the Council Bluffs Housing Trust Fund (CBHTF) in 2010 and received an initial LHTF award from IFA in 2011. In June 2019, the service area was expanded to include all of Pottawattamie County, and as a result was renamed the Pottawattamie County Housing Trust Fund (PottCoHTF). The mission of the PottCoHTF is to support and advocate for safe and affordable housing opportunities for Pottawattamie County residents.

Each year, the PottCoHTF Board of Directors reviews its Housing Assistance Plan (HAP) to address the state of housing in Pottawattamie County, identify housing needs, and provide a framework that outlines how the PottCoHTF should allocate its resources. A public hearing was held on September 9, 2025, to review the HAP and to solicit comments to identify any additional housing needs and gaps in Council Bluffs and Pottawattamie County. This information together with local demographics and existing housing conditions were used to update the HAP.

Geographic Service Area

The PottCoHTF confines its efforts and uses its resources to serve housing needs identified within the jurisdictional boundaries of Pottawattamie County, Iowa.

Stagnant/Declining Housing Markets

Pottawattamie County has specific geographic areas that are experiencing stagnant or declining housing markets; including: Central Council Bluffs, Western Council Bluffs, and smaller communities with populations less than 750.

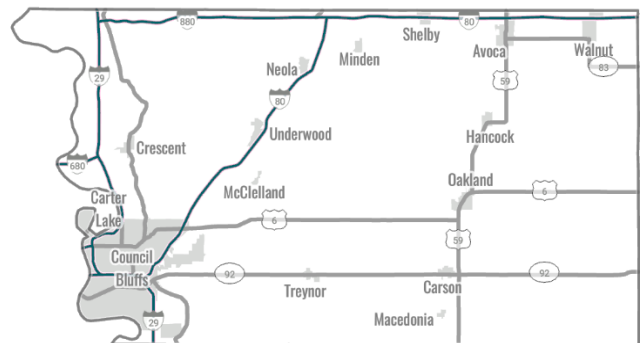
Central and Western Council Bluffs

The City of Council Bluffs has designated a contiguous area of about four-square miles located in the central portion of Council Bluffs as a Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy Area (NRSA). It contains the city's central business district, portions of the Broadway commercial corridor, railroad-related industrial uses, and a variety of single-family residential neighborhoods.

Residential neighborhoods in the western portion of Council Bluffs have a higher portion of LMI households than other areas of the city. Many of these neighborhoods have also experienced an increased conversion of owner-occupied homes to rental. Additionally, these neighborhoods are affected by drainage and floodplain issues.

Communities under 750 in Population

Smaller communities with historically declining populations and limited transportation access to larger metropolitan areas are at an economic disadvantage. Many of these communities have consolidated schools and have seen a significant reduction in commercial activities and services over time. Residential structures are aging and new home construction is rare. These characteristics do not appear to be reversing in the near future.



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Other Local Market Challenges

Pottawattamie County has a variety of local challenges that impact the market of available homes and rental units, including an aging housing stock and new construction that has not kept up with regional population growth.

Age of Housing Units

Overall, housing units are older in Council Bluffs and Pottawattamie County. Older homes tend to need rehabilitation in order to be desirable to home buyers, and many small communities do not have the resources to rehabilitate their housing stock. This leads to a continued decaying of housing stock.

Residential Construction Activity

From 2010 to 2020, approximately 91% of the residential construction activity has occurred in or adjacent to Council Bluffs. Another 7% occurred in Crescent, Neola, Treynor, and Underwood. Quality schools, access to transportation routes, and close proximity to the Omaha-Council Bluffs metropolitan area are the primary reasons for higher construction activity in western Pottawattamie County. The lack of residential construction is of concern in eastern Pottawattamie County. With little new housing construction taking place, population will continue to decline in the eastern half.

Lack of Affordable Housing Units

As noted, there is little new housing construction occurring in Pottawattamie County outside of Council Bluffs. The communities that are seeing new housing growth are experiencing mostly market rate construction due to the desirability of these towns in correlation to their access to Omaha-Council Bluffs. This can be seen through the lower LMI values of Crescent, Neola, Treynor, and Underwood as compared to the rest of the county. In 2024, the Omaha-Council Bluffs metro had the seventh most competitive rental market in the nation and just a 1.4% vacancy rate in Council Bluffs, making it difficult to find units for anyone. With construction activity in the county being primarily market rate and single-family, there remains a significant lack of affordable housing options.

Economic, Social, and Health Benefits

Improving and expanding housing options provides many benefits to the area, some of which are identified below:

- Increasing the amount of available, decent, safe, and sanitary housing units helps housing become affordable and attainable for more households.
- Reduced housing costs helps with household financial stability and reduces the risk of becoming homeless.
- Unstable housing situations interfere the physical and emotional health of individuals and families.
- Adequate and diverse housing options help businesses attract and retain their workforce.
- Affordable and attainable housing options entice younger families—especially those with children—to move and stay within the area, which adds to the local school districts' vitality.
- Improvements give homeowners a sense of pride and improved neighborhood appearance. Homeowners are more likely to clean up and repair their homes if neighbors are improving theirs; new residents are more likely to move into clean neighborhoods where housing is well maintained.
- Quality housing helps household members connect to their community. People who feel like part of their community are more apt to volunteer their time and donate resources for community betterment.
- Housing projects generate jobs for local contractors and businesses
- Reduced vacancies/infill housing projects stabilize the local tax base by retaining and increasing property valuation, and allow for a larger population to share community expenses [i.e. infrastructure costs].

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Affordable Housing Gaps and Needs

Pottawattamie County's affordable housing gaps and needs were documented by reviewing data from the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey (ACS) and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Conclusions made from these analyses highlight the county's housing gaps and needs to help identify priority activities for the PottCoHTF program.

Income Levels

Low to moderate income (LMI) persons are those persons with incomes at or below 80% of the median family income (MFI). Presently, the ACS 2016-2020 dataset is used by HUD to determine LMI in communities and other political geographies. This is important in determining the number of households within Pottawattamie County that have the financial capacity to afford housing. Households that earn less than the 80% of the MFI struggle to afford quality housing.

According to FY 2024 HUD data, the MFI for Pottawattamie County [Omaha-Council Bluffs HUD Metro FMR Area] was \$109,500, higher than the state's MFI of \$96,500. According to 2016-2020 ACS data, the total population of Pottawattamie County is 90,895 with an LMI population of 40,835 (44.7%). Council Bluffs has LMI population of 31,085, which is 51.6% of its total population. The following cities have an LMI average greater than the county: Avoca, Carson, Carter Lake, Council Bluffs, Hancock, Neola, Oakland, and Walnut. Council Bluffs is the largest city in the county and makes up 66% of the population, as well as 76% of the LMI population. The table below lists Pottawattamie County total and LMI populations.

Low- to Moderate-Income Populations in Pottawattamie County			
City	Population	LMI Population	LMI Percent
Avoca	1,370	615	44.9%
Carson	730	345	47.3%
Carter Lake	3,800	1,790	47.1%
Council Bluffs	60,290	31,085	51.6%
Crescent	755	135	17.9%
Hancock	265	135	50.9%
Macedonia	215	70	32.6%
McClelland	180	35	19.4%
Minden	650	235	36.2%
Neola	1,055	540	51.2%
Oakland	1,620	850	52.5%
Shelby*	690	295	42.8%
Treynor	940	300	31.9%
Underwood	955	245	25.7%
Walnut	745	435	58.4%
Unincorporated	17,735	4,020	22.7%
Total*	90,895	40,835	44.7%

*Note: Shelby is only partially in Pottawattamie County

Source: [HUD 2016-2020 ACS LMI Data](#)

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Housing Conditions

The PottCoHTF reviewed the general housing conditions in Council Bluffs and Pottawattamie County. In particular, the number of substandard occupied housing units, the number of vacant units, and the age of the housing stock were analyzed. Substandard housing is defined as 1) having units lacking complete plumbing and 2) housing units with 1.01+ persons per room. In 2020, a total of 842 (2.1%) of the occupied housing units in Pottawattamie County were substandard. See the table below for substandard housing unit details.

Housing Conditions 2020	Council Bluffs		Balance of County		Pottawattamie County	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Total Housing Units	27,171	100.0%	12,681	100.0%	40,032	100.0%
<i>Occupied Housing Units</i>	25,039	92.2%	11,836	93.3%	36,875	92.1%
<i>Vacant Housing Units</i>	2,132	7.8%	845	6.7%	3,157	7.9%
Substandard Housing Units	690	2.5%	152	1.2%	842	2.1%
<i>Lacked Complete Plumbing Facilities</i>	144	0.5%	51	0.4%	195	0.5%
<i>1.01+ Persons per Room</i>	546	2.0%	101	0.8%	647	1.6%

Source: 2020 ACS 5-Year Estimates

In 2020, there were 3,157 vacant units in Pottawattamie County. This may reflect a broader trend of inadequate maintenance and housing quality that leads to property condemnations due to public health and safety issues. It may also reflect the increase in foreclosures and decline in home sales in the area. The number of occupied (owner & renter) housing units and vacant units for Council Bluffs, Pottawattamie County, and the balance of the county in 2010 and estimated in 2020 are documented in the following tables. Council Bluffs has a significantly higher number of renter-occupied housing units than the balance of Pottawattamie County.

Housing Occupancy	Council Bluffs		Balance of County		Pottawattamie County	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Occupied Housing Units (2010)	24,793	100.0%	11,982	100.0%	36,775	100.0%
<i>Owner-Occupied</i>	15,162	61.2%	9,967	83.2%	25,129	68.3%
<i>Renter-Occupied</i>	9,631	38.2%	2,015	16.8%	11,646	31.7%
Occupied Housing Units (2020)	25,039	100.0%	11,836	100.0%	36,875	100.0%
<i>Owner-Occupied</i>	15,708	62.7%	9,661	81.6%	25,369	68.8%
<i>Renter-Occupied</i>	9,331	37.3%	2,175	18.4%	11,506	31.2%

Source: 2010 Census; 2020 ACS 5-Year Estimates

According to 2020 ACS 5-year estimates, 12,652 of the 27,085 housing units (46%) in Council Bluffs were built prior to 1959. This data is important because the age of housing stock provides a rough estimate of the quality of housing stock. Older homes tend to have more problems and often contain environmental hazards such as asbestos and lead-based paint. Older homes are more expensive to maintain and may constitute a health hazard due to compounded years of poor maintenance. Foundation problems, wood rot, poor electrical connections, and other problems are found much more frequently in older houses. Moreover, substandard older housing is often occupied by those residents least able to afford the regular maintenance required of an older home. This can be

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a challenge for persons who live on a fixed income but own their home. The age of the housing stock in Pottawattamie County is similar to that of Council Bluffs. The age of housing units in Pottawattamie County, Council Bluffs, and the balance of Pottawattamie County is presented in the following table.

Age of Housing Units (2020)	Council Bluffs		Balance of County		Pottawattamie County	
	#	%	#	#	%	#
Total Housing Units	27,171	100.0%	12,681	100.0%	40,032	100.0%
Built 2000 to Present (< 20 years old)	4,374	16.1%	2,254	17.7%	6,628	16.6%
Built 1960 to 1999 (20 to 60 years old)	10,145	37.3%	5,959	46.9%	16,104	44.2%
Built 1959 or Earlier (> 60 years old)	12,652	46.6%	4,648	36.6%	17,300	43.2%

Source: 2020 U.S. Census

Housing Costs

According to 2020 ACS 5-year estimates, the median housing value of owner-occupied housing units for Council Bluffs was \$122,400, which is 79.5% of the Iowa statewide average of \$153,900. Pottawattamie County's median housing value was \$141,300. The median monthly housing costs for renter-occupied housing units were also examined. Statewide this figure is \$806. The median monthly housing costs for renter-occupied housing in Pottawattamie County is \$850. An analysis of income levels showed that with over half of Pottawattamie County's population considered LMI; the financial capacity of the residents is limited. This is particularly highlighted by the cost burdens placed on renters who face affordability challenges.

Priority Areas

The PottCoHTF has expanded on the identified needs from the public hearing and has formulated the following types of projects for funding. In no particular order, they are as follows:

- Rental Housing Assistance; including direct assistance to income-qualified tenants, new construction, rehabilitation, emergency housing, transitional housing, and permanent supportive housing;
- Homeownership Assistance, including direct assistance, rehabilitation, and new construction; and
- Education for Tenants, Homeowners, and Landlords, including general maintenance information.

Continuum of Housing Needs

The PottCoHTF will impact the continuum of housing needs through the implementation of its programs.

Homelessness

Addressing homelessness in the Omaha-Council Bluffs service area is guided by [Threshold CoC](#) [formerly, Metro Area Continuum of Care for the Homeless (MACCH)] with the support of its partner agencies. In 2024, stakeholders from across the area came together to review the current state of homelessness in the community and to create a [coordinated plan](#) to address homelessness over the next several years. The priority areas of action include system coordination, aligning cross-provider strategies and approaches, creating homelessness prevention services, enhancing homelessness supportive services, and increasing the availability of housing options. Through its rental housing program, PottCoHTF regularly provides funding to local organizations that operate emergency shelters.

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Transitional Housing

Transitional housing needs are addressed through PottCoHTF's rental housing repair program; which provides matching funds for repairs/upgrades to emergency and transitional housing units or facilities. PottCoHTF has provided rental housing repair program funding to local organizations that own/manage transitional housing units. Education also will be considered for at-risk/homeless persons.

Rental Housing

Rental housing needs are addressed through PottCoHTF's rental housing programs. The rental housing repair program provides matching funds for the renovation or construction of rental units. Rental subsidies are eligible through the rental assistance program. Priority is given for households at or below 30% of MFI.

Homeownership

Homeownership needs are addressed through PottCoHTF's owner-occupied assistance program which will provide up to \$20,000 per home in down payment assistance to persons at or below 80% of MFI.

Housing for the Extremely Low-income

The extremely low-income will be assisted through the rehab, repair, renovation or expansion of owner-occupied and rental housing projects. Many of the elderly population are at or below 50% of MFI due to fixed income. The elderly population aged 62 and over in Pottawattamie County increased from 19,170 in 2010 to 19,909 in 2020. The elderly population aged 75 and over grew from 6,760 in 2010 to 6,820 in 2020. Funds from the PottCoHTF will be made available to the elderly who are very low and low-income, living in homes that need repairs. These repairs will stabilize occupied units, allow the elderly to age in place, and assist in stabilizing the housing market in Pottawattamie County.

PottCoHTF Program Guidelines

Eligible Program Activities

Priority Project Activity Types		Per Unit \$ Limit	Project \$ Limit	Match
1	Owner-occupied home rehab, emergency repairs, or accessibility improvements	\$10,000	\$50,000	None
2	Construction of owner-occupied housing units, including down payment assistance	\$20,000	\$100,000	50%
3	Construction or rehab of rental housing units, including emergency and transitional units	\$15,000	\$100,000	100%
4	Rental assistance; including application fees, deposit, first-month's rent, and eviction aversion assistance	\$1,500	\$25,000	None
5	Homeowner, renter, or landlord education	None	\$25,000	50%

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Other Investment Requirements, Income Targets, and Match

- The program is eligible to receive IFA LHTF resources totaling \$377,017 in 2026. PottCoHTF will be required to provide a minimum of 25% match for this program, which equals \$94,255.
- All households receiving assistance must be at or below 80% of MFI.
- Thirty (30%) percent of PottCoHTF funds will be applied to households or units rented to families at or below 30% of MFI.
- Program administration is limited to 10% of the annual IFA Local Housing Trust Fund (LHTF) allocation.

Underwriting Requirements

- The program will use a combination of grants, forgivable loans, and low-interest loans.
- No properties under land contract will be considered for loan assistance.
- PottCoHTF will work with local financial institutions to use the best underwriting criteria available. This can include lower down payment and interest, reduced closing fees, lower value-to-loan ratio, etc. This will enable PottCoHTF to use its funds efficiently and effectively to assist as many households as possible.

Mortgage Requirements

All loans will be secured by a mortgage document placed on the real property will include the following general requirements:

- All loans will be secured by a mortgage document placed on the real property in favor of PottCoHTF.
- A title certificate from a licensed abstractor must be provided showing fee simple title in owner, subject only to acceptable liens.
- Insurance is required and must name PottCoHTF as mortgagee.
- All property taxes and assessments must be kept current on the property during the loan period.
- The unit must, at completion and throughout the loan period, be in compliance with all applicable local health and safety codes. Property will be satisfactorily inspected upon completion, if required by the applicable local government jurisdiction.
- If a property violates local code, the owner will have sixty (60) days to cure the violation. If the violation is not cured within the given time period, PottCoHTF may declare the loan immediately due and payable.
- If at any time during the loan period the unit is no longer rented to a household with an income at or below 80% of the MFI, then the pro-rated remaining amount due on the loan is immediately due and payable.
- Any default of the terms of the loan without cure may cause the remaining loan to become immediately due and payable and bear interest at the highest legal rate.
- If title is transferred during the term of the loan, PottCoHTF may declare the loan immediately due and payable.

Forgiveness Periods

- Homeownership Assistance Loans involving amounts greater than or equal to \$10,000 per home will be secured by a 5-year forgivable loan.
- Rental Assistance Loans will be forgiven as follows: At the end of 3 years, 50% shall be forgiven. At the end of 4 years, an additional 25% with full forgiveness at the end of 5 years. No given owner shall have more than \$200,000 in outstanding PottCoHTF loans or grants unless waived by the Board of Directors.

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Program Guideline Modifications

PottCoHTF reserves the right to waive or modify the requirements contained in these program guidelines for grant applicants on a case-by-case basis or upon a request for guideline clarification made by a grant applicant/grantee. Any final program guideline waivers or modifications shall be approved by a vote of the PottCoHTF Board of Directors.

Collaborating Resources

Each of the priority areas requires collaboration with several resources to produce a successful outcome. Potential partners include, but are not limited to: the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), the Iowa Finance Authority (IFA) State Housing Trust Fund (SHTF), Pottawattamie County, the City of Council Bluffs, the Iowa West Foundation and other philanthropic entities, financial institutions, Federal Home Loan Bank, the Municipal Housing Agency of Council Bluffs, the Southern Iowa Regional Housing Authority, landlords, housing developers and contractors, local real estate agencies, and local human and social service agencies.

Fundraising Activities and Efforts to Raise Additional Funds

For the 2026 grant cycle, the PottCoHTF has received \$94,255 in cash or in-kind commitments from the City of Council Bluffs, Pottawattamie County, Dodge Cares, program income, Telpner Peterson Law Firm, and other private donations.

The PottCoHTF Board of Directors continues to research other grant and fundraising opportunities in order to diversify program funding. Fundraising will continue through networking and pooling of available resources. Fundraising will also be done through the solicitation of private and federal funding, donations of property or materials, volunteer labor, and housing units. Monetary or in-kind contributions will be solicited from local businesses, developers, and real estate agents. The PottCoHTF Board of Directors will continue to develop fundraising strategies as needed. Additionally, the PottCoHTF Board of Directors completed a strategic planning session in early 2025 and is working toward implementation of the goals.

References

- [2010 Decennial Census](#)
- [2020 American Community Survey \(ACS\) 5-Year Estimates](#)
- [City of Council Bluffs Community Development Department](#)
- [HUD 2016-2020 ACS LMI Data](#)
- [HUD 2025 Income Limits](#)
- [Iowa Finance Authority Local Housing Trust Fund](#)
- [Iowa State Data Center](#)
- [Threshold Continuum of Care](#)

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2026 LHTF Program Implementation Plan

Objectives/Activities		2025		2026				2027			
		Q 3	Q 4	Q 1	Q 2	Q 3	Q 4	Q 1	Q 2	Q 3	Q 4
1	Complete 2026 Housing Assistance Plan (HAP)	X									
2	Release RFP for PottCoHTF Funds	X									
3	Submit FY26 LHTF Application		X								
4	Receive PottCoHTF Applications		X								
5	Review Applications, Provisional Funding Allocations		X								
6	FY26 LHTF Funding Award		X								
7	Final Reporting & Program Close-out (FY24 LHTF)		X								
8	Execute IFA Contract for FY26 LHTF Funds			X							
9	Prepare & Execute Contracts with 2026 Awardees			X							
10	Awardees Initiate Projects/Programs			X	X						
11	Awardees Complete Projects/Programs, Submit Claims, Review for Compliance, Draw Down Funds				X	X	X	X	X	X	X
12	Final Reporting & Program Close-out (FY25 LHTF)						X				
13	Semi-Annual Reports				X		X		X		X
14	Final Reporting & Program Close-out (FY26 LHTF)										X