



TOMPKINS
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Tompkins County Workforce Housing Solutions

Understanding Need

Making Recommendations

An initiative of:



KEY QUESTIONS POSED OF CONSULTANTS:

- What strategies will promote the development of income-appropriate housing in Tompkins County?
- What type and amount of funding will accelerate the development of affordable and income-appropriate housing in Tompkins County?
- What strategies are being used in other communities to expand access to housing for working families that could be applied in Tompkins County?
- What resources should be explored for greater use, including tax abatements and loan funds?

UNDERSTANDING OUR NEED

Defining “workforce housing” or “income appropriate” housing:

a broad cross-section of our working population at a variety of income levels who might not qualify for means-tested supports or government assistance, but who still struggle to afford housing at Tompkins County housing prices and rental rates.

Figure 1. 80% to 120% Area Median Income Level for Tompkins County by Family Size

4 people			\$67,350	→		\$101,040
3 people		\$60,650		→	\$90,960	
2 people	\$53,900		→	\$80,880		
1 person	\$47,150	→	\$70,800			

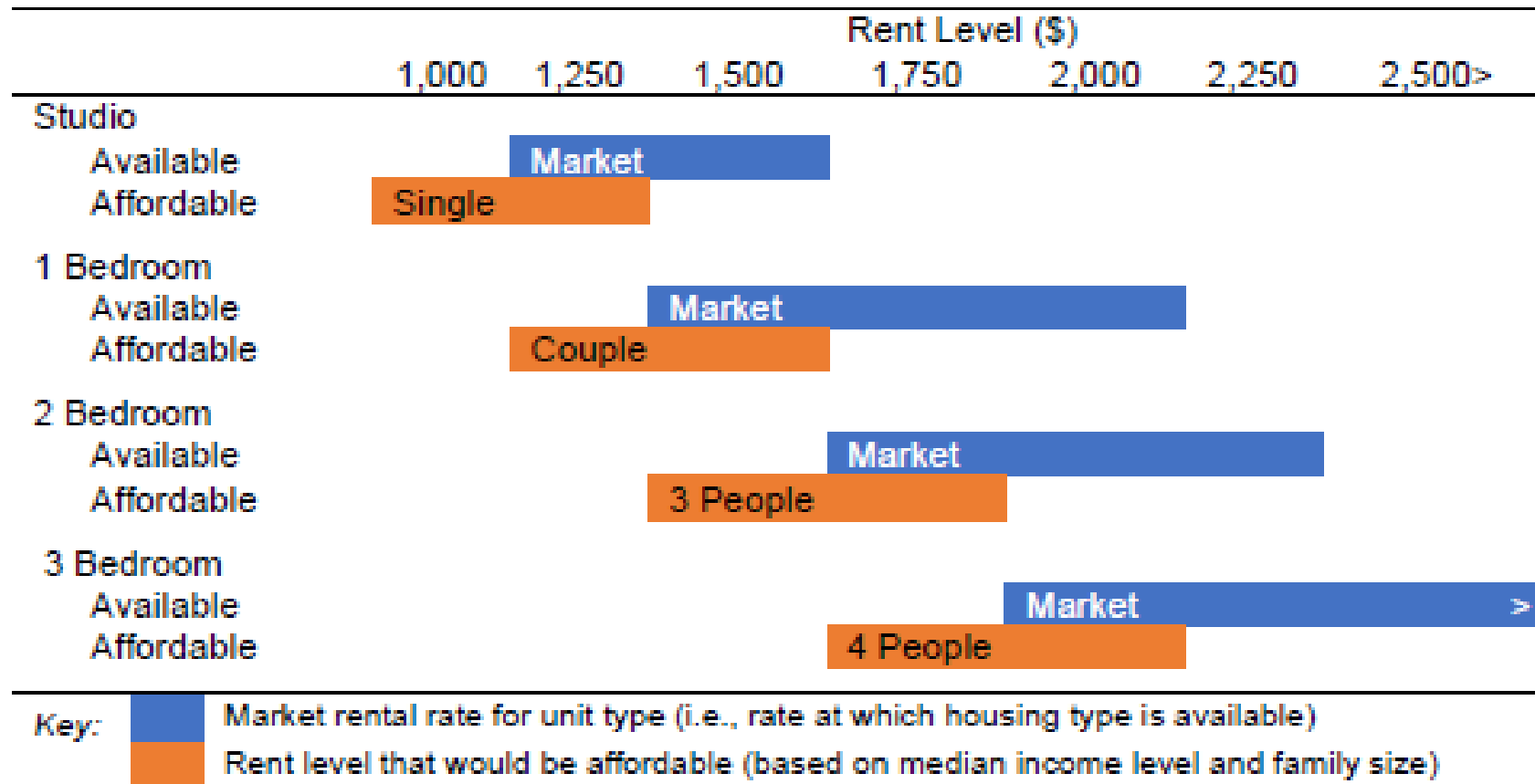
Source: HUD Office of Policy Development and Research. 2018. [FY 2018 HUD Income Limits](#).

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UNDERSTANDING OUR NEED

Figure 2. Working Families Face Limited Options in Rental Market



Notes: Worker 80-120% Median Income paying 30% monthly gross income. Based on 2018 rent levels from market data collected and monitored by [Integrated Acquisition & Development](#), Ithaca, NY.

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UNDERSTANDING OUR BARRIERS

Our per unit price is higher than all comps but Saratoga County.

Table 7. Building Permits Reported by Value and Housing Type in Tompkins and Comparison Counties, 2016-2017

	2016	2017	Change 2016-2017:	
			All Permitted Projects	Single Family Projects Only
Cayuga County	\$172,000	\$165,813	-4%	-3%
Cortland County	\$124,269	\$112,300	-10%	-8%
Onondaga County	\$153,089	\$170,410	11%	-8%
Saratoga County	\$226,898	\$227,366	0%	-3%
Tioga County	\$125,773	\$125,113	-1%	-4%
Tompkins County	\$140,132	\$183,824	31%	5%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. [Building Permits Survey](#). 2017.

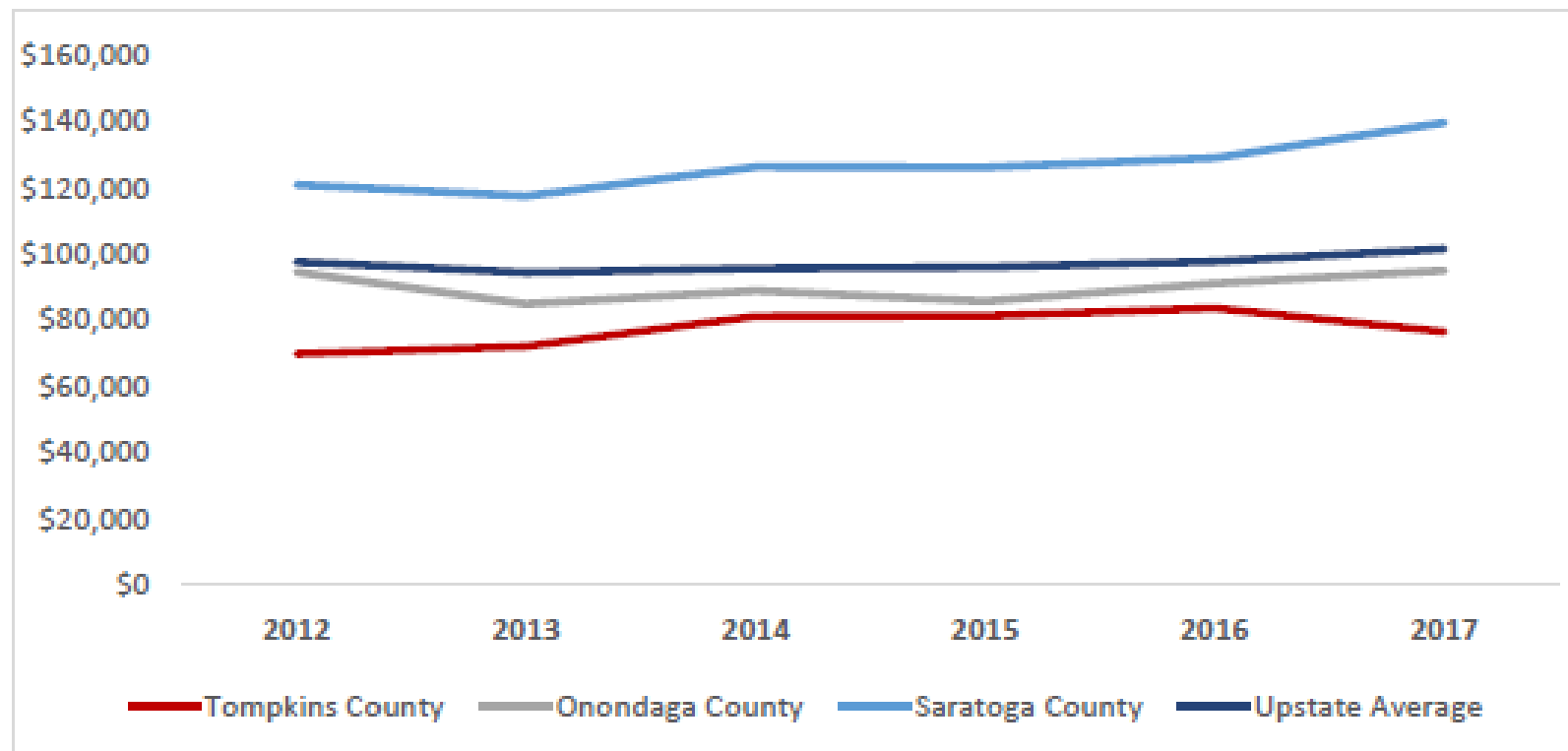
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Land price is often cited as a reason; the data doesn't follow.

Figure 10. Land Values (Average Price of Land per Acre Used in Single-family Housing Units) in Tompkins and Surrounding Counties, 2012-2017



Source: U.S. Federal Housing Finance Agency. [The Price of Residential Land for Counties, ZIP codes, and Census Tracts in the United States](#). 2019.

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Labor costs are also blamed frequently. The BLS data doesn't agree.
More likely, labor and contractor shortages are to blame here

Table 8. Regional Labor Costs for Private Construction (Occupation Code 1012) as Average Weekly Wage (based on payroll-based employment and wages)

	2016	2017	Change 2016-2017
U.S. TOTAL	\$1,128	\$1,168	4%
New York	1,351	1,373	2%
Cayuga County, New York	1,083	1,057	-2%
Cortland County, New York	979	1,017	4%
Onondaga County, New York	1,106	1,137	3%
Saratoga County, New York	1,105	1,177	7%
Tioga County, New York	823	866	5%
Tompkins County, New York	890	921	3%

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. [Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages.](#)

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Taxes! It must be the taxes...

Table 9. New York Property Tax Rates, Fiscal Year 2017

Local Fiscal Year	2017 Rate	Assessment Percentage	Effective Property Tax Rate (payment/value)
New York State (less NYC) (\$)	28.1	varies	--
Chemung County (\$)	33.9	varies	1.38%
Cortland County (\$)	41.4	80-100%	3.23%
Onondaga County (\$)	36.0	78%	2.79%
Saratoga County (\$)	20.7	49-100%	1.09%
Schuyler County (\$)	27.9	Varies	2.33%
Seneca County (\$)	29.8	73-100%	--
Tioga County (\$)	35.7	26-100%	2.70%
Tompkins County (\$)	32.3	100%	2.35%

Sources: New York State Department of Taxation and Finance. [Overall full-value tax rates by county 2008-2017](#) and [Equalization Rates](#).

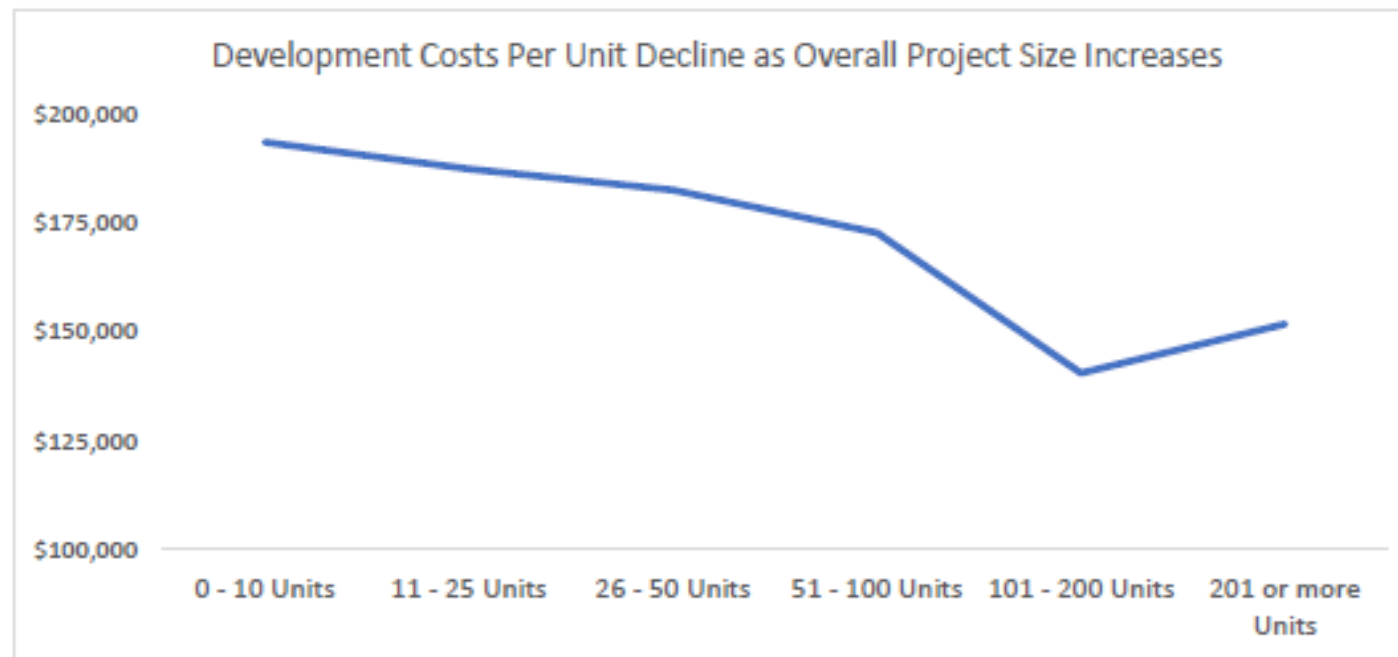
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It's probably a bit of all of these, but development cost per unit is certainly an impediment to single family home construction.

Figure 11 . Illustration of Spreading Out Costs by Project Size




- **Fixed costs of development**
- **Land**
- **Infrastructure**
- **Lengthy and costly approval process**

Source: Abt Associates. 2018. [Variation in Development Costs for LIHTC Projects](#) (Exhibit 3-12).

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We Conducted Key Informant Interviews & Focus Groups



Workforce housing is a priority across all engaged groups: landlords, employers, real estate, planners, community leaders

Regulation & “red tape” are barrier for all types but disproportionately harm workforce and affordable markets.

Promising developments with support from P3’s deserve expedited timelines.

Community review processes allow people to object to anything

Workforce housing can be encouraged with existing tools: trust funds, RLFs, tax abatements, and low-cost loans

There is no single solution to the housing issues facing working families.

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GOAL AS SUMMARIZED BY POLICYLAB

STIMULATING DEVELOPMENT OF SINGLE AND MULTIFAMILY HOUSING AT SCALE

County will fall short of the several thousand units needed over the next decade unless there is a concerted effort to add:

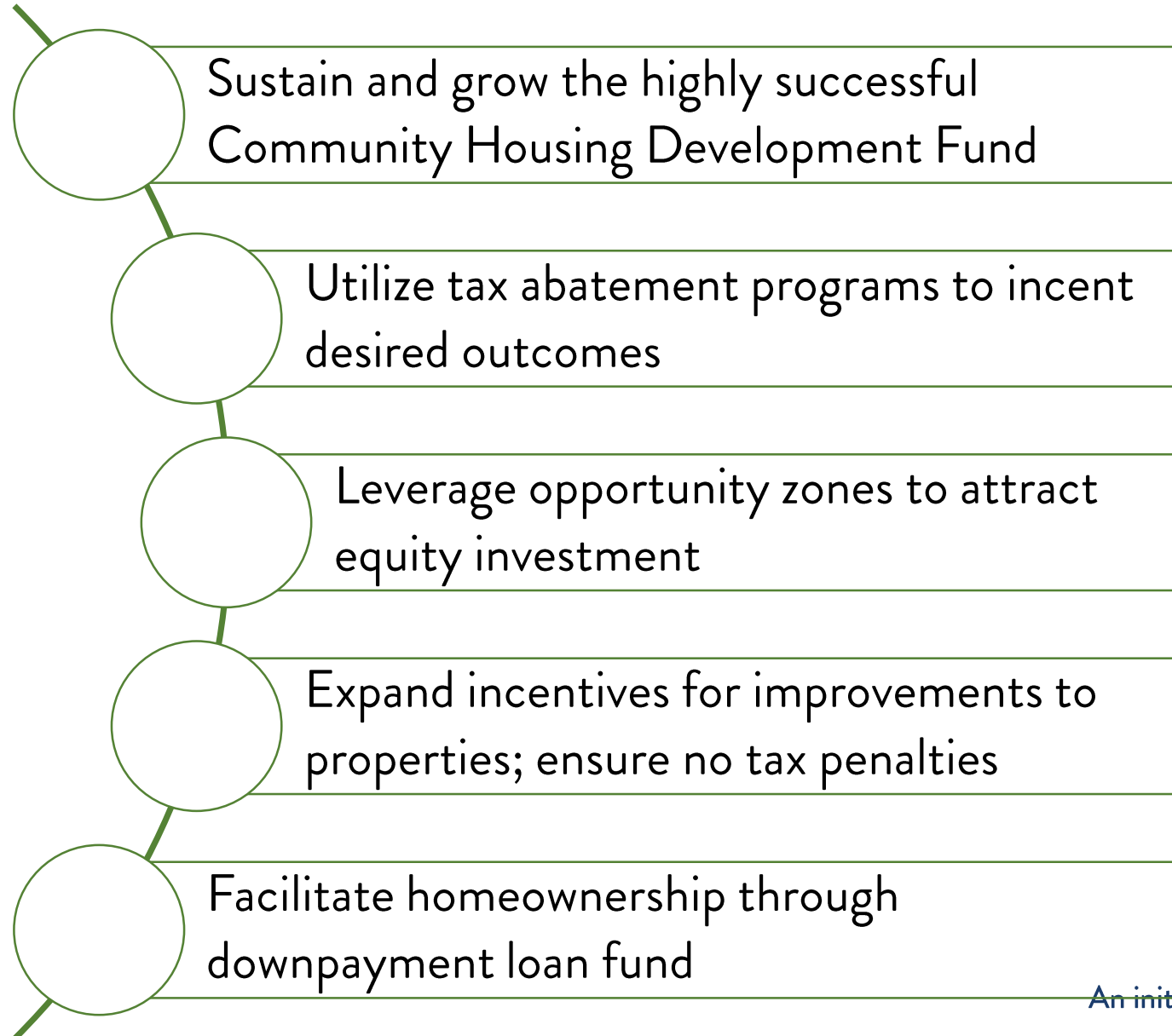
- **Multi-family units.** No one kind or design of housing needed; county needs a mix of projects, including:
 - Multi-family units with affordable rents for families
 - For-sale multi-family units
 - Condominiums
- Expand use of **Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs)** and **infill** housing
- Add to supply of **single-family homes**
- All while prioritizing **location & energy efficiency goals** of Tompkins County
- *and* making **development process easier** and less costly.

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Recommendations

FUNDING



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Funding

CHDF has supported a substantial number of units at a great price per unit

Table 12. Community Housing Development Fund Activity

Year	Total Outlays	Total Units	Per Unit
2009	\$275,000	61	\$4,508
2010	\$215,000	7	\$30,714
2011	\$230,000	12	\$19,167
2012	\$380,000	41	\$9,268
2013	\$195,000	4	\$48,750
2014	--	--	--
2015	\$700,000	57	\$12,281
2016	\$641,250	127	\$5,049
2017	\$506,875	132	\$3,840
2018	\$680,000	115	\$5,913
Total	\$3,823,125	556	\$6,876

Funding

Actual funding needed to meet goals of Housing Strategy at various investment levels:

Table 13. Estimated Need for Local Housing Development Funds Annually

Unit Type	Units / Year	Cost / Unit	Total Investment	10% (10:1)	5% (20:1)	2.5% (40:1)
1 BR Rental	75	175,000	13,125,000	1,312,500	656,250	328,125
2 BR Rental	75	200,000	15,000,000	1,500,000	750,000	375,000
3 BR Rental	50	225,000	11,250,000	1,125,000	562,500	281,250
Single Family	100	250,000	25,000,000	2,500,000	1,250,000	625,000
Condo	35	200,000	7,000,000	700,000	350,000	175,000
TOTAL	335		\$71,375,000	\$7,137,500	\$3,568,750	1,784,375

Notes: Author's estimates.

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Funding

Suggested Downpayment Loan Fund concept:

Table 11. Downpayment Loan Fund

	Homebuyers	Purchase	Downpayment	Total Pool
Single Family	100	\$250,000	\$25,000	\$2,500,000
Condo	35	\$200,000	\$20,000	\$700,000
Total				\$3,200,000

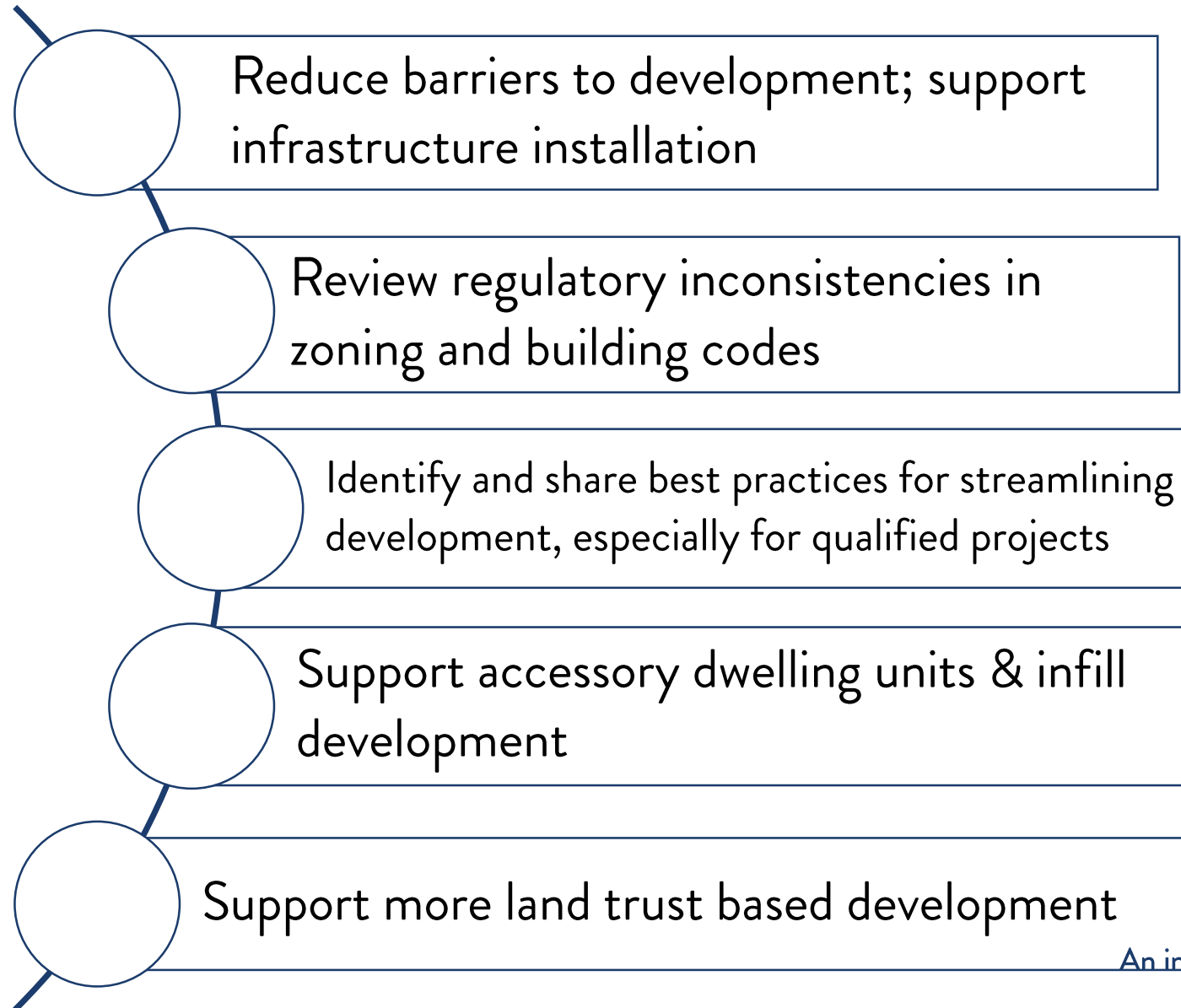
Notes: 10% of purchase price. No interest. Repaid in 120 equal installments on a monthly basis.

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Recommendations

POLICY



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Recommendations

Create a County-wide Zoning Task Force to Consider:

- Standards, codes, and zoning rules applied to infill projects;
- Speed and efficiency of the development process, how plans are deemed complete/ineligible or returned for additional review;
- Lack of uniformity in how land use and other ordinances are interpreted;
- Innovations for streamlining permitting and reviews for projects that meet workforce housing criteria; and
- Using a case manager or facilitator to support developers in working through the process (similar to Energy Navigators)

Regulatory
“delay tax”
can add 10-
35% onto
the cost of a
project.

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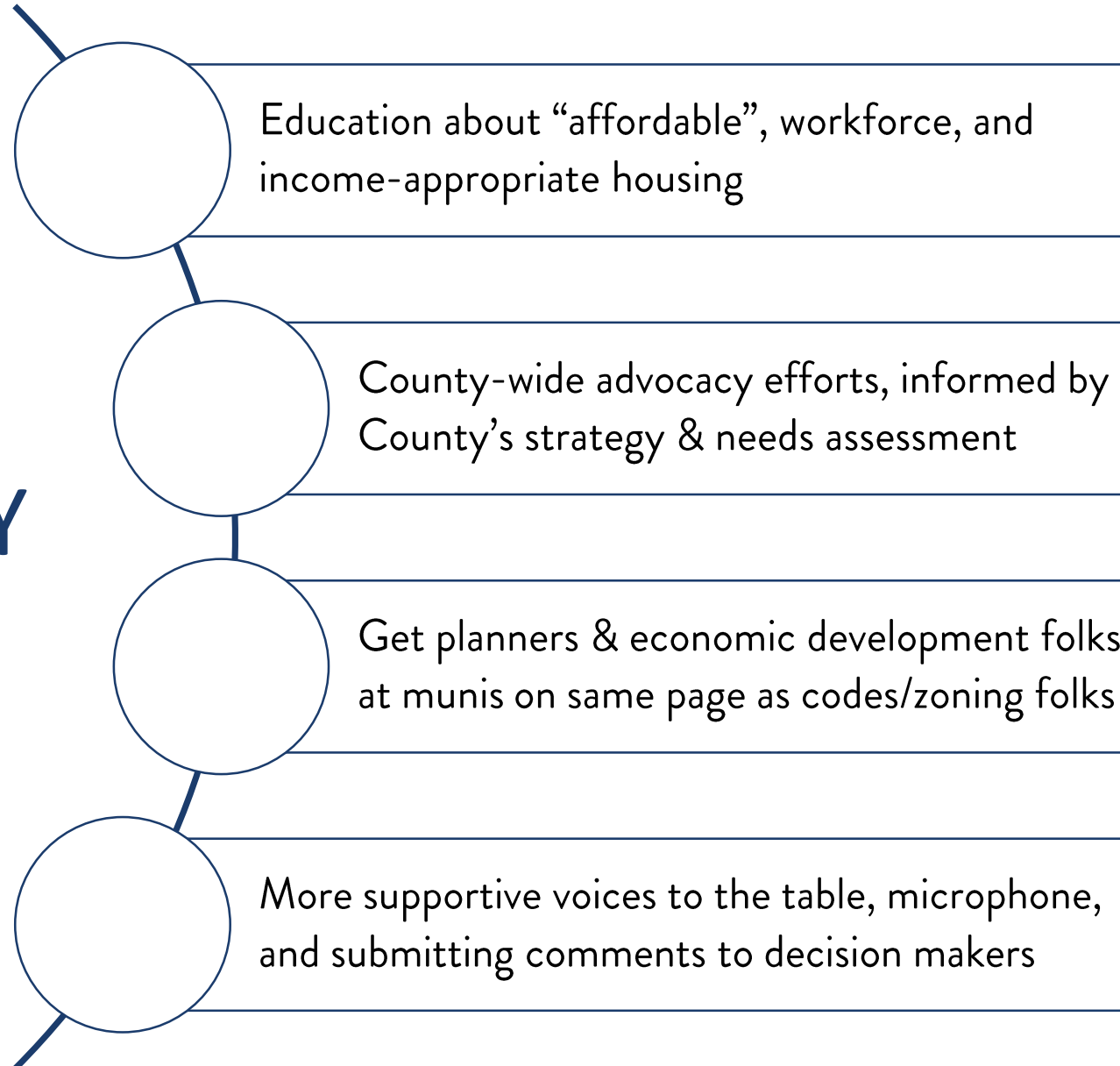


POLICY IDEAS THAT COULD BE CONSIDERED

- **Inclusionary zoning** mandate
- **Zoning based incentives** for affordable set aside
- **As-of-right tax abatements** or incentives that yield desired workforce housing development goals
- **Targeted specialized housing**, especially in nodal corridors identified in Housing Strategy
- Support more **senior housing** developments – there are 6,000 households over 65 in Tompkins County

Recommendations

ADVOCACY



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Recommendations

Locals should understand:

- **An expanding tax base** is a positive thing for our communities, school districts, and residents
- Our **collective economic future** depends on workforce housing being available, and soon
- We should have a shared goal of attracting **young professionals and young families** to our communities
- More housing available here is better for our **energy** use and **transportation** issues

Recommendations

Low-cost ways of enhancing our advocacy efforts:

- Simple briefs/summaries about affordable and workforce housing, and about specific projects
- A website and social media campaigns
- Evidence and fact-based language, with a focus on debunking myths before they dominate the conversation
- **We need to be able to promote Tompkins County as favorable to affordable and workforce housing development!**



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Thank you!