

McMahon opens \$10M housing fund to spur development anywhere in Onondaga County

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Onondaga County today opened a \$10 million grant fund for housing development. In this 2021 file photo, Brian Wright, foreground, and Mike Kepner, employees of Home Depot, are working on a house under construction on Baker Avenue.

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NEW!

By [Tim Knauss | tknauss@syracuse.com](mailto:tknauss@syracuse.com)

Syracuse, N.Y. – Onondaga County today opened a \$10 million fund to support housing development anywhere in the county with grants of \$5,000 per unit, or more in special cases.

Developers can apply for help with any type of housing – affordable, market-rate, apartments, condos or single-family homes. County officials will give preference to projects that include affordable housing, adaptive reuse of buildings, condos or brownfield development, County Executive Ryan McMahon said.

The new program, which the county has never tried before, aims to cover gaps in financing that might delay development. By boosting new construction, McMahon said he hopes to make homes more affordable.

“When you don’t have enough of them, there’s more competition for them and the price increases are there, and you have an affordability issue,” McMahon said.

The maximum award in most cases would be \$250,000 (for a 50-unit development), but county officials will also consider awards of up to \$750,000 for larger projects that are “regionally significant,” McMahon said. Projects must have at least five units to qualify.

Applications will be reviewed by a four-person committee, including one county legislator not yet named plus three county employees who report to McMahon.

Money for the program comes out of the county's fund balance, which soared to about \$200 million last year because of higher-than-normal federal funding and sales tax revenues. The county legislature approved the fund last year.

Kerry Quaglia, executive director of the nonprofit housing developer Home HeadQuarters, said the county fund will be helpful to the organization's mission to build affordable homes. He said local dollars can help make up for long delays in funding that are common to state and federal housing subsidies.

"We've been after a fund like this for a long, long time," he said.

The need for new housing grew sharply last fall when Micron Technology announced plans to build chip fabs in Clay that could spur the creation of nearly 50,000 local jobs. But even before Micron, the county had a shortage that was driving up rents and purchase prices, McMahon said.

He said the county is pursuing an "all-of-the-above" strategy to promote a wide variety of development

“We need more affordable housing,” he said. “We need more mixed-income housing, mixed-use housing, senior housing, market-rate, and single family housing, because we are a growing community.”

Grant applications should be sent to cd@ongov.net. For more information, call 315-435-3558.

