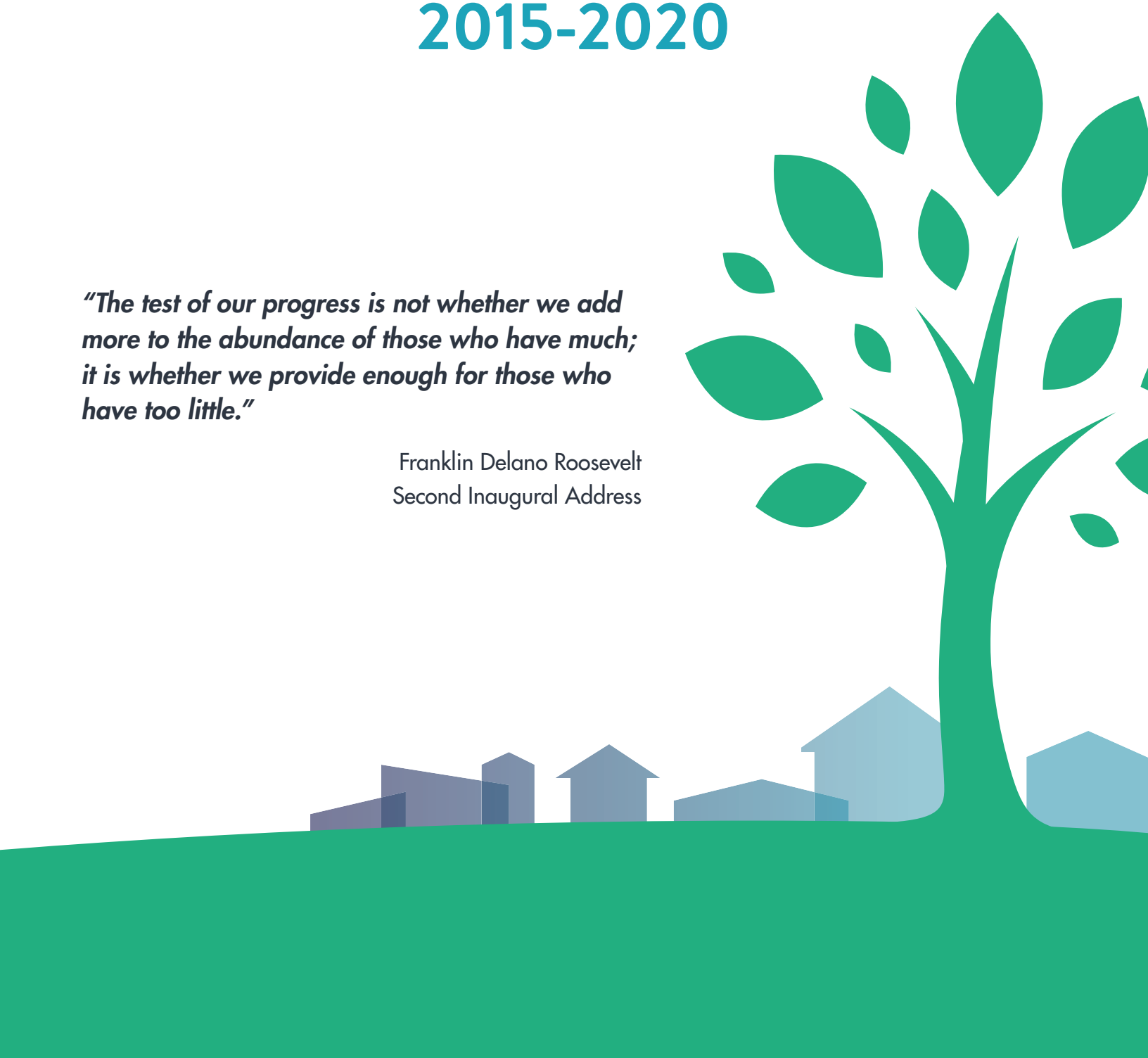
Keene Housing

Strategic Plan

2015-2020

"The test of our progress is not whether we add more to the abundance of those who have much; it is whether we provide enough for those who have too little."

Franklin Delano Roosevelt
Second Inaugural Address



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Introduction

Keene Housing (KH) developed this Strategic Plan with the active engagement of the Board of Commissioners, KH management and operations staff and residents. In addition to an updated mission statement, the Plan includes a series of priority goals and initiatives that provide a framework for major agency activities and resource allocation decisions for the three to five year period beginning in January 2015.

The Strategic Plan was presented to the Board for review and approval at their December 2014 meeting. Prior to Board approval, Keene Housing published a draft version of this Plan to provide the public with an opportunity for review and comment.

Plan Update

When the Board of Commissioners approved this Strategic Plan, they committed to not simply putting it on a shelf, to remain untouched until it expired in 2020. The Board believes that a Strategic Plan must be a living document, one that can be refined and revised in the face of shifting demographics, economics, technology, opportunities and challenges. To accomplish this, the Board of Commissioners, along with KH's management team, periodically meets to review our progress towards meeting the Plan's Objectives. These "check-ins" provide an opportunity for reflection and revision. The report on the following pages tracks changes the Board has made to the Strategic Plan through the "check-in" process.

2018 Progress Report

Goal 1: Preserve, maintain and improve Keene Housing's existing housing portfolio		
1.1	Preventive maintenance plans	✓
1.2	Landscape and grounds improvement and maintenance plan	✓
1.3	Capital Plan activities	✓
1.4	Updated Physical Needs Assessment	✓
1.5	Assess construction defects and implement corrective action plan	✓
1.6	Refinancing/Recapitalization plans for Riverbend and CST	✓
1.7	**REVISED 2018** Assess options for ~~scattered site units and~~ shelters	◎
1.8	Working Capital account for modernization and acquisition	✓
Goal 2: Preserve and expand the Monadnock region's affordable housing stock		
2.1	Undertake at least one development project by 2020	◎
2.2	Re-purpose vacant and/or underutilized KH properties	◎
2.3	**REMOVED 2017** ~~Assess expanding Affordable Housing Preservation Program~~	◎
Goal 3: Promote energy conservation and sustainability		
3.1	**REVISED 2018** Explore strategies for reducing consumption and promoting sustainability and implement energy generation and efficiency strategies	◎
3.2	Evaluate options for replacing electric heat systems	◎
3.3	Monitor utility consumption	✓
Goal 4: Prudently manage and oversee agency finances		
4.1	Create and implement an agency-wide Financial Management Plan	✓
4.2	Regularly renew and update cost allocation methodology	✓
4.3	Conduct analysis of benefits and health insurance costs	✓
4.4	Conduct analysis of property insurance costs	✓
4.5	Identify and secure additional revenue	✓
4.6	Evaluate and, if feasible, increase commercial rents	✓
Goal 5: Achieve excellence in management		
5.1	Maintain high voucher utilization and unit occupancy	✓
5.2	Develop and implement policy and procedures manuals	◎
5.3	Review and revise all Agency forms	◎
5.4	Develop and implement an agency-wide Quality Control protocol	◎
5.5	Work with AHAB to help create industry-wide accreditation standards	✓
5.6	Improve business systems and governance practices	✓
5.7	**NEW 2017** Receive Accreditation	◎

Completed ✓ Underway ◎ Not Started ○

Goal 6: Promote wellness and independence among seniors and residents with disabilities		
6.1	Hire elderly/disabled resident coordinators	✓
6.2	**REMOVED 2017** ~~Participate in efforts to expand supportive housing services~~	◎
6.3	Assess strategies to ensure successful housing search and tenancy	✓
6.4	**New 2017** Implement strategies to ensure successful housing search and tenancy	✓
Goal 7: Support greater resident self-sufficiency		
7.1	Continue operating RSR and SSP programs	✓
7.2	Evaluate RSR and SSP annually, using data to inform policy revisions	✓
7.3	Define and collect measurable outcomes for THASP	◎
7.4	Evaluate feasibility of establishing FACs at additional family sites	✓
7.5	**REVISED 2016** Increase the use of FACs by local service providers and residents	◎
Goal 8: Focus on healthy youth development		
8.1	Establish KHKC	✓
8.2	Develop and implement long and short-term KHKC fundraising strategy	✓
8.3	**REMOVED 2016** ~~Develop and implement youth programming~~	○
Goal 9: Build staff and Board capacity and skills		
9.1	**REMOVED 2016** ~~Develop and implement agency-wide training plan~~	○
9.2	Continue bonus program that recognizes extraordinary performance	✓
9.3	**REMOVED 2018** ~~Expand Policy & Technology lab~~	✓
9.4	Implement periodic employee satisfaction/feedback surveys	✓
9.5	Develop a revised on-boarding packet for new Board members	✓
9.6	**REVISED 2016** Develop regular Board training schedule	◎
9.7	**NEW 2016** Continue developing strategies to attract and retain quality staff	✓
Goal 10: Enhance customer service and operational efficiency		
10.1	Develop and implement data management strategies	✓
10.2	Develop and implement a Communications Plan	◎
10.3	**REVISED 2016** Develop and implement a plan to solicit feedback on KH programs	◎
10.4	**REVISED 2018** Work with Keene State College Safety Department and experts to develop a disaster response plan	◎
Goal 11: Foster innovation through the Moving to Work program		
11.1	Secure ten-year extension of, or permanent, MTW status	✓
11.2	Conduct ongoing evaluations of MTW activities	✓
11.3	Develop and implement Rent Simplification program for AHPP	✓

Completed ✓ Underway ◎ Not Started ○

Background on Keene Housing Programs, Challenges and Opportunities

- Keene Housing was originally established in 1965 as the Keene Housing Authority pursuant to the New Hampshire Housing Authorities law. Today, KH is one of the largest providers of affordable housing and rental assistance in Keene and the Monadnock region, owning and managing a complex, diverse portfolio of housing resources.
- KH's affordable housing resources include tenant-based rental assistance vouchers funded through the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Housing Choice Voucher program. This program consists of 150 vouchers that are targeted specifically for people with disabilities, plus 235 tenant-based vouchers that are available for low-income households selected from KH's waiting list.
- In addition to providing tenant-based rental assistance, KH (through affiliates) owns and/or manages a portfolio of 551 housing units that are assisted with HCV project-based assistance or other forms of subsidy. Due to their age and the limited availability of capital resources, many of these existing units require significant capital investments now and into the near future. Improving and preserving KH's current affordable housing portfolio is a primary goal over the next several years:

  Keene Affordable Housing Properties (KAHP) – KAHP consists of 211 rental units in nine (9) former public housing sites that have been converted to Project Based Voucher (PBV) developments. There is an estimated need for approximately $3.8 million in capital improvements at KAHP developments.

  Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) Properties – KH's portfolio includes 164 LIHTC family and senior rental units located in four developments (Riverbend, Evergreen Knoll, Stone Arch Villages and Brookbend East and West). Financing sources and operating subsidies for these developments come from a variety of State, Federal, and private sources. The initial LIHTC compliance period is over for the twenty-four (24) units at Riverbend, creating the need for refinancing and/or other efforts to preserve its long-term viability and affordability. Excluding the Brookbend developments, which were completed in 2014, there is an estimated need for approximately $1.88 million in capital improvements at these sites.

  HUD Multifamily Section 8 Properties – This includes two (2) developments consisting of a total of 108 family and senior/disabled rental units. Both Meadow Road (18 units) and Central Square Terrace (90 units) have significant capital needs, estimated at approximately $580,000.

Homeless Shelters – KH owns a 14 bed men's shelter on Roxbury Street and a 20 bed family shelter on Water Street. Both shelters are operated by Southwestern Community Services with operating support from KH's Transitional Housing Assistance Subsidy Program (THASP).

Special Programs/Management Only – This property grouping includes forty (40) units including the Ash Brook development of twenty-four (24) rental units managed by KH; two group homes for persons with disabilities owned by Monadnock Family Services (MFS).

- The cost of utilities, labor and other expenses associated with owning and managing rental properties continues to out-pace the revenue received by Keene Housing through its HUD and other subsidy sources. Given the extreme pressures on the federal budget, it appears unlikely that this trend will reverse itself. Thus, efforts to conserve energy and to implement management innovations and other cost-saving measures are strategically important goals now and into the future.
- With a median rent of $1,039 in 2013 and a very low vacancy rate, the demand for affordable housing in Keene and the surrounding area is high. Waiting times for low-income households on KH's property waiting lists range from one to seven years. The average waiting time for a tenant-based voucher is approximately three years. In light of increasing demand, KH has prioritized both the need to preserve its existing housing portfolio as well as to preserve other at-risk affordable developments and expand the supply of affordable housing in the Monadnock region.
- Residents of Keene Housing are some of the region's poorest citizens: Median household income is $13,680; 33% of household heads are disabled; 58% of all household income comes from Social Security and Social Security Disability payments; and, only 23% of households have income from employment. Almost 500 children live in KH developments or homes receiving KH rental assistance. Based on family income and other factors, they are at-risk for low school performance, involvement with the criminal justice system, health issues and other problems.
- Keene Housing's mission statement acknowledges the importance of providing supportive services in tandem with affordable housing as a means to strengthen and empower residents. Towards this end, KH has implemented innovative rent policies and partnered with local agencies on an array of supportive service programs. Work-able adults receiving housing assistance through the Moving to Work Housing Choice Voucher Program participate in the Resident Self Reliance (RSR) and Stepped Subsidy Program (SSP) designed to encourage work, improve educational attainment, increase financial literacy and succeed in meeting lease obligations. Family Activity Centers (FAC) at KH's North & Gilsum and Forest View properties provide a focal point for these services as well as for the new Keene Housing Kids Collaborative (KHKC) initiative. In

collaboration with Keene Public Schools and other partners, KHKC will focus intensive services to support youth from preschool through high school. Both ongoing work to support economic self-sufficiency among adults and the new initiative to support healthy youth development are considered high priority goals under the Strategic Plan.

- Keene Housing is one of only thirty-nine (39) Public Housing Authorities in the country selected to participate in the federal Moving to Work (MTW) program. MTW is a demonstration program created by Congress under which Keene and other participating agencies are able to waive some provisions of the US Housing Act of 1937, flexibly use their funding to support approved purposes, and test out locally determined strategies that help address one or more of MTW's statutory objectives. These statutory objectives focus on expanding housing choice, encouraging resident economic self-sufficiency, and achieving operational efficiencies.
- The MTW Agreement between Keene Housing and HUD is currently slated to expire in 2018. Given the enormous negative impact that termination of MTW status would have on the availability of housing and service program resources, Keene Housing views extension of the MTW Agreement beyond 2018 as one of its top priority goals.

Mission Statement

Early in 2013, KH began the process of taking a long, hard look at who we are as an organization and where we see ourselves heading in the years ahead. This self-reflection resulted in a new name, logo, and branding that better reflected our role as more than providers of affordable housing but also as advocates for our low-income neighbors and the community we call home. The last phase of this process is the adoption of a new mission statement that conveys who we are.

The purpose of a mission statement is to communicate the purpose of the agency to people inside and outside of it. The mission statement provides the basis for strategy development, identification of critical success factors, resource allocation decisions, as well as ensuring client and stakeholder satisfaction. After extensive engagement of KH's Board of Commissioners, management and operations staff, and residents, KH adopted the following revised mission statement:

"Keene Housing provides and advocates for affordable housing and supportive services that strengthen and empower low and moderate-income households in the Monadnock region."

Strategic Goals and Objectives

To respond to the challenges and opportunities facing Keene Housing, the following eleven (11) strategic goals are adopted:

Goal 1. Preserve, maintain and improve Keene Housing's existing housing portfolio

Goal 2. Preserve and expand the Monadnock region's affordable housing stock

Goal 3. Promote energy conservation and sustainability

Goal 4. Prudently manage and oversee agency finances

Goal 5. Achieve excellence in management

Goal 6. Promote wellness and independence among seniors and residents with disabilities

Goal 7. Support greater resident self-sufficiency

Goal 8. Focus on healthy youth development

Goal 9. Build staff and Board capacity and skills

Goal 10. Enhance customer service and operational efficiency

Goal 11. Foster innovation through the Moving to Work program

The Strategic Goals are intended as a framework to help shape major activities and budget priorities over the next three to five years. For each goal, a set of related Objectives and Priority Projects are identified as summarized on the following pages. As circumstances change and new challenges and opportunities present themselves, the goals and objectives may be modified accordingly. For example, significant decreases to agency funding may require that some priority projects be reconsidered. The Executive Director will monitor and report periodically to the Board of Commissioners on the status of each goal and priority project.

Goal 1: Preserve, Maintain and Improve KH's Existing Housing Portfolio

KH's existing portfolio (551 units) of affordable housing developments represents an enormous investment and an irreplaceable community asset. Improving physical conditions at KH developments and ensuring their ongoing financial viability are essential to the quality of life for current residents and for the preservation of these resources for future generations. This goal encompasses a broad range of planned activities including high priority capital improvements, landscaping and other initiatives to improve "curb appeal", preventive maintenance and, at selected sites, analysis of future ownership and/or refinancing options.

Objective

- Address priority capital needs
- Restructure financing where needed to ensure viability and long-term affordability
- Streamline ownership structures where feasible
- Identify and secure new funding to support capital needs including broader use of MTW funds
- Improve "curb appeal"

Priority Projects

1.1 Update and implement preventive maintenance plans system-wide

1.2 Develop and implement portfolio-wide landscape and grounds improvement and maintenance plan

1.3 Implement approved Capital Plan activities with a focus on life safety issues and building envelope projects, in a manner that keeps residents informed and minimizes the disruptions to their lives

1.4 Update Physical Needs Assessment on a five-year cycle

1.5 Assess construction defects and implement corrective action plan at Harper Acres, North & Gilsum and Forest View

1.6 Develop and implement refinancing/recapitalization plans for Riverbend and Central Square Terrace

1.7 Assess needs, ownership options and future strategies for ~~scattered site units and~~ shelters (REVISED 2018)

1.8 Create and capitalize a working capital account for modernization and acquisition

Goal 2: Preserve and Expand The Region's Affordable Housing Stock

The increasing cost of rents in the Monadnock region, combined with very low vacancy rates, highlights the urgent need to preserve existing affordable housing units while also expanding the regional supply. In tandem with efforts to maintain and preserve its existing housing portfolio, Keene Housing's goal is to leverage its resources to address broader, regional housing needs through a combination of preservation and new development initiatives.

Objective

- Leverage Project Based Vouchers and the Transitional Housing Assistance Subsidy Program (THASP) as regional preservation and expansion tools
- Pursue development opportunities that respond to identified, quantifiable regional housing needs
- Protect long-term affordability of the region's Expiring Use properties

Priority Projects

2.1 Undertake at least one development project by 2020

2.2 Evaluate potential role in local efforts to re-purpose vacant and/or underutilized Keene properties

2.3 ~~Assess expanding Affordable Housing Preservation Program~~ (REMOVED 2017)

Goal 3: Promote Energy Conservation and Sustainability

Energy costs represent Keene Housing's largest single category of non-personnel operating expense. Focusing on reducing current utility consumption and incorporating energy efficient, sustainable materials into capital projects is the focus of this strategic goal.

Objective

- Leverage energy conservation and investment strategies to lower costs and reduce carbon footprint
- Integrate conservation and sustainability into modernization and development planning

Priority Projects

3.1 Assess options and develop an energy reinvestment/sustainability plan exploring generation options, use of sustainable materials and other strategies for reducing consumption, promoting sustainability, and implement energy generation and efficiency strategies (REVISED 2018)

3.2 Evaluate options for replacing electric heat systems and, if financially feasible, implement at portfolio-wide

3.3 Monitor utility consumption to inform choices and quantify savings from retrofits and improvements

Goal 4: Prudently manage and Oversee Agency Finances

Ongoing reductions in federal housing expenditures have severely constrained Keene Housing's ability to fully address capital, supportive service and other needs. Over the next several years, there appears to be little likelihood that this situation will be reversed. Utilizing its MTW flexibility, KH has worked to maximize the resource leveraging impact of its available funds, while implementing creative management policies that have helped to keep per unit housing cost increases to a manageable level. KH's Strategic Goals in this area include efforts to diversify funding sources, increase non-federal financial reserves and contain operating costs.

Objective

- Strengthen financial analysis and reporting capabilities
- Contain/minimize operating costs
- Expand and diversify funding sources to reduce reliance on HUD and USDA
- Increase non-federal operating reserves
- Maximize potential rent for commercial spaces

Priority Projects

4.1 Create and implement an agency-wide Financial Management Plan

4.2 Regularly renew and update cost allocation methodology

4.3 Conduct analysis of benefits and health insurance costs pursuing cost-effective but equitable opportunities where feasible

4.4 Conduct analysis of property insurance costs pursuing cost effective opportunities where feasible

4.5 Identify and secure additional revenue through grants, increased management fees, and other initiatives

4.6 Evaluate and, if feasible, increase commercial rents

Goal 5: Achieve Excellence in Management

A commitment to providing high quality property management and maintenance services to all residents is at the core of Keene Housing's organizational culture. This strategic goal focuses on achieving industry-leading performance on key performance indicators including occupancy, vacancy turnaround, rent collections and work order completion. Documenting and implementing best practice procedures throughout the organization is a major objective under this goal. KH will also collaborate with affordable housing providers throughout the country to create a national Affordable Housing Accreditation system.

Objective

- Maximize utilization of available voucher and housing resources
- Meet or exceed performance goals related to property management and maintenance indicators
- Document and maintain policies and procedures that meet applicable regulatory requirements
- Become accredited

Priority Projects

5.1 Maintain 93%/101% utilization in MTW voucher program, 98% in the Mainstream and Non Elderly Disabled voucher programs, and 98% occupancy in the owned and managed portfolio

5.2 Develop and implement Housing and Programs and Services policy and procedures manuals including an annual review/revision plan

5.3 Review and revise all Agency forms including an annual review/revision plan

5.4 Develop and implement an agency-wide Quality Control protocol

5.5 Work with Affordable Housing Accreditation Board (AHAB) to help inform and create industry-wide accreditation standards

5.6 Improve business systems and governance practices as needed to meet Accreditation standards

5.7 Recieve Accreditation (NEW 2017)

Goal 6: Promote Wellness and Independence Among Seniors and Residents with Disabilities

Seniors and people with disabilities comprise a substantial percentage of Keene Housing's residents. This strategic goal reflects a commitment to assist elderly and disabled residents to live independently and to access health care and other services. Primarily this will continue to be accomplished through partnerships with local agencies that have the necessary resources and expertise. Efforts will be undertaken to secure funding for site-based service coordinators to assist in linking residents to local resources.

Objective

- Leverage resources to secure funding and services

Priority Projects

6.1 Secure new funding or allocate existing funding to hire elderly/disabled resident coordinators

6.2 ~~Participate in regional efforts to make supportive housing services available to more elderly and disabled residents (REVISED 2016)~~ (REMOVED 2017)

6.3 Assess strategies to ensure successful housing search and long-term tenancies for disabled residents and voucher holders

6.4 Implement strategies to ensure successful housing search and long-term tenancy (NEW 2017)

Goal 7: Support Greater Resident Self-Sufficiency

Assisting work-able residents in finding and keeping employment, improving educational attainment and increasing family assets are key objectives under the MTW Program. The Resident Self Reliance (RSR) and Stepped Subsidy Program (SSP) are innovative strategies adopted by KH that work together to encourage and incentivize residents towards family self-sufficiency. This Strategic Goal incorporates the continued operation and evolution of RSR and SSP and related partnerships and other activities. KH is committed to ongoing program evaluation to determine which program components are effective or ineffective so that policy and procedural changes can be made.

Objective

- Provide incentives for employment and asset building
- Build social connections and sense of community
- Focus on measurable outcomes

Priority Projects

7.1 Continue operating RSR and SSP programs with mentoring, incentives, employment and financial literacy tools

7.2 Evaluate RSR and SSP annually, using data to inform policy revisions

7.3 Define and collect measurable outcomes for Transitional Housing Assistance Shelter Program (THASP)

7.4 Evaluate feasibility of establishing Family Activity Centers at additional family sites

7.5 Increase the use of the Family Activity Centers by local service providers and residents (REVISED 2016)

Goal 8: Focus on Healthy Youth Development

Through the newly formed Keene Housing Kids Collaborative (KHKC), a major effort is being launched to support the healthy development and educational success of KH youth. Working in partnership with the Keene Public Schools, MoCo Arts, and an array of other local agencies, KH is committed to building/strengthening a network of programs and services that support youth development from preschool through high school. During the Strategic Plan term, KH will work with its partners to raise new funds to support expanded after school programming, internships, Individual Development Accounts (IDA) and other initiatives proven to help low-income youth become successful, self-sufficient adults.

Objective

- Build on existing efforts to create a broad service/program network that focuses on youth development from preschool through high school
- Incorporate best practice research to identify evidence based, outcome focused programming
- Achieve collective impact through collaboration with schools and other partners

Priority Projects

8.1 Establish KHKC with MTW seed funding and property management operating proceeds

8.2 Develop and implement long and short-term KHKC fundraising strategy to reduce and ultimately eliminate reliance on MTW funding

8.3 ~~Develop and implement programming including IDA, internship and after school initiatives~~ (REMOVED 2016)

Goal 9: Build Staff and Board Capacity and Skills

A capable and well-trained Board and staff are essential for Keene Housing to continue to achieve excellence, foster innovation and address community needs. This goal incorporates ongoing efforts to support and build Board and staff capacity through training on their respective roles and responsibilities, as well as initiatives to regularly solicit feedback from staff and acknowledge high performance.

Objective

- Provide staff with the training needed to excel at their jobs
- Provide opportunities for growth in the work place
- Provide opportunities for local students to learn about KH's work and share their ideas
- Ensure that new and current Board members are fully informed of roles and responsibilities
- Work towards establishing a national Housing Authority Accreditation system

Priority Projects

9.1 ~~Develop and implement agency-wide training plan for all positions including new hires~~ (REMOVED 2016)

9.2 Continue bonus program that recognizes extraordinary performance

9.3 ~~Expand Policy & Technology lab to attract more local student interns~~ (REMOVED 2018)

9.4 Implement periodic employee satisfaction/feedback surveys

9.5 Develop a revised on-boarding packet for new Board members

9.6 Develop regular Board training schedule for new and current members that anticipate emerging accreditation standards (REVISED 2016)

9.7 Continue developing strategies that attract and retain quality staff at all organizational levels (NEW 2016)

Goal 10: Enhance Customer Service and Operational Efficiency

Streamlining agency operations wherever feasible and striving to continuously improve customer service is the focus of this Strategic Goal. Towards this end, Strategic Goal 10 incorporates activities to upgrade KH's website and other technologies, provide more helpful and timely information to residents and minimize disruption to residents and employees in the event of natural disaster or other unforeseen event.

Objective

- Implement an agency-wide technology plan that helps streamline work processing and improves public/resident access to information
- Implement a communications plan that improves the accuracy and timeliness of information provided to residents
- Provide additional opportunities to receive and respond to public feedback
- Implement a disaster response and recovery plan

Priority Projects

10.1 Develop and implement short and long-term strategies for website enhancements, network support, document management, cloud computing, disaster recovery, and enhanced use of electronic communications

10.2 Develop and implement a Communications Plan that uses technology to improve the timeliness and accuracy of information about KH plans and strategies for residents, community stakeholders and other target audiences

10.3 Develop and implement a plan to utilize technology, satisfaction surveys, and focus groups to solicit feedback on KH programs and initiatives

10.4 Work with local, regional and national experts and the Keene State College Safety Department to develop a disaster response plan that accounts for the safety of residents and staff as well as the need to recover quickly from a natural disaster (REVISED 2018)

Goal 11: Foster Innovation Through the Moving to Work Program

Participation in the MTW Program is a critically important component of Keene Housing's strategy to preserve and expand its portfolio of affordable housing resources and to support residents in securing jobs and improving economic self sufficiency. This goal incorporates activities to secure a long-term extension to the MTW Agreement with HUD and to continue to use MTW flexibility to support innovation and excellence.

Objective

- Secure an MTW Agreement extension beyond 2018
- Utilize MTW flexibility to improve operations, increase efficiency and implement innovative solutions

Priority Projects

11.1 Collaborate with other MTW agencies, HUD, industry groups and Congress to secure a ten-year extension of the MTW agreement or permanent MTW status

11.2 Conduct ongoing evaluations of MTW activities, and use results of evaluations to improve/modify activities as needed

11.3 Develop and implement an effective Rent Simplification program for the Affordable Housing Preservation initiative that can be replicated at other agencies