2020-2025

Keene Housing

# STRATEGIC PLAN

**“Progress is not in enhancing what is, but in advancing toward what will be.”**

Khalil Gibran

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# INTRODUCTION

This Strategic Plan provides Keene Housing's Board of Commissioners, our staff, the people we serve, and our partners – local, regional and national – with a road map that identifies the strategic goals Keene Housing will strive to achieve by 2025. This plan was developed with active engagement and feedback from our Board of Commissioners, staff, residents, voucher holders, landlords, and community partners from as nearby as City Hall and as far away as Washington, DC.

This strategic plan finds us at a very different place organizationally than we were at when the last strategic plan was developed, in 2015. In 2015 much of Keene Housing's senior staff and several Board Commissioners were relatively new to the organization, having only worked together for a few years. We were in the early stages of developing a strategy for addressing the portfolio's long-term capital needs, and we were just beginning to understand the portfolio's energy costs and opportunities for savings. Similarly, in 2015 we started to think differently about how we could better help the young people we house become successful adults, and about what more we could do to help the elderly and disabled neighbors we serve live healthier, happier, more independent lives.

By early 2019, when work on this Strategic Plan began, we were encouraged that we'd achieved many of the goals we'd set for ourselves in 2015. We'd spent the last five years aggressively addressing the portfolio's most pressing capital needs, including a massive rehabilitation project at Central Square Terrace, our 90-unit historic building in the heart of downtown Keene. Our understanding of the portfolio's energy performance and strategies for improvements had also come into focus. By 2019 we'd made significant strides towards decreasing our energy needs and had already made great progress towards reaching our goal of relying 100% on renewable energy by 2035.

Since providing it with seed funding in December 2014, the Keene Housing Kids Collaborative (KHKC) has grown from a small start-up nonprofit serving a few children, to one of the city's most recognized service organizations, serving hundreds of Keene Housing kids each year. We are also pleased that goals related to our elderly and disabled residents' quality of life were largely achieved, in great part due to the addition of a dedicated Elderly/Disabled Resident Service Coordinator in 2016. Thanks to her hard work, our elderly and disabled residents had many more opportunities to participate in activities that helped maintain their mental and physical health, social connections and sense of belonging. Similarly, our Community Garden program took off with over 35 dedicated Community Gardeners maintaining over 60 raised beds across our real estate portfolio.

Even with all of these accomplishments, there is still much work to be done, and this Strategic Plan is the guide we will use to identify and track our progress over the coming five years.

# 2023 Progress Report

## Goal 1: Preserve, Improve and Expand Affordable Housing Stock

- Preventive maintenance plan, with focus on reducing energy consumption ◎
- Landscape and grounds improvement and maintenance plan ◎
- Implement annual and five year Capital Plans ◎
- Update Capital Needs Assessments on a five-year cycle ◎
- Rehabilitation of Bennett Block ✓
- Recapitalization plans for Stone Arch Village and Evergreen Knoll ✓
- Rehabilitation of 105 Castle Street ✓
- Identify and undertake at least one additional development project ✓

## Goal 2: Promote Energy Conservation and Sustainability

- Implement Energy Strategic Plan in coordination with Capital Plan ◎
- Maintain and update Energy Strategic Plan ◎
- Replace Electric Thermal Storage units with high efficiency HVAC systems ◎
- Water conservation plan for community gardens ◎
- Monitor utility consumption ◎
- Educate residents about energy conservation benefits ◎

## Goal 3: Prudently Manage and Oversee Agency Finances

- Annual update of the agency-wide Financial Management Plan ◎
- ~~Opportunities for residents to contribute to curb appeals~~ (REMOVED 2022)
- Annual review of rent and management fees ◎
- Monitor vacancy loss ◎
- Regularly renew and update cost allocation methodology ◎
- Conduct analysis of benefits and health insurance costs ◎
- Conduct analysis of property insurance costs ◎
- Identify and secure additional revenue ◎
- ~~Revenue opportunities for community rooms~~ (REMOVED 2022)

## Goal 4: Achieve Excellence in Management

- Achieve annual voucher program utilization goals ◎
- Achieve annual property management and maintenance goals ◎
- Annual update of TSOP and MTW Administrative Plan ◎
- Software platform conversion for voucher, property management and finace operations ◎
- Identify areas of risk and implement quality controls where needed ◎
- Streamline housing and voucher administrative processes and systems ◎
- Receive accreditation from the Affordable Housing Accreditation Board ✓

Completed ✓ Underway ◎ Not Started ○

## Goal 5: Promote Wellness and Independence Among Seniors and Residents with Disabilities

- Opportunities for additional resident services through recurring federal and state resources ◎
- Implement strategies to ensure successful housing search and tenancy ◎
- Expand partnerships providing on-site quality of life programs and services ◎

## Goal 6: Support Resident Economic Development

- Develop, implement and evaluate Rent Reform RCT Study ◎
- Look for additional THASP partners and other sponsor-based subsidy programs ◎
- Increase the use of FACs by local service providers and residents ✓

## Goal 7: Support Youth Development Through Collaboration with KHKC

- Improve communications between KHKC and KH BOC ◎
- Reduce MTW contribution toward KHKC operating costs ◎
- Introduce KHKC leadership to additional affordable housing partners ✓

## Goal 8: Build Board and Staff Capacity and Skills

- Continue bonus program that recognizes extraordinary performance ◎
- Continue conducting employee satisfaction/feedback surveys ◎
- Annually update Board training materials and schedule ◎
- Increase training opportunities for Board members and to engage with KH staff ✓
- Continue developing strategies to attract and retain quality staff ◎
- ~~Implement interdepartmental cross training initiatives~~ (REMOVED 2022)
- Implement interdepartmental "Shadow Days" ✓

## Goal 9: Enhance Customer Service and Operational Efficiency

- Develop and implement a plan to improve the website ✓
- Develop and implement a security plan ◎
- Assess and implement enhancements to KH's hardware, software and IT network ◎
- Use technology to improve communications ◎
- Solicit input from residents and stakeholders on KH programs and initiatives ◎
- Develop a disaster response plan to recover quickly from a natural disaster ◎
- Evaluate and deploy technological tools to assist residents and applicants ◎

## Goal 10: Be a Strong and Effective Advocate for Innovation in Affordable Housing and Supportive Service Programs

- Actively participate in and support the MTW Collaborative ✓
- ~~Actively participate in and support AHAB~~ (REMOVED 2022)
- Actively participate in and support the New Hampshire Housing Authority Corp. ✓
- Actively participate in and support PHADA ✓
- Actively support the advocacy efforts of Housing Action New Hampshire ✓
- Staff hold leadership positions with local, state and federal organizations ✓
- Continue advocating for low and moderate-income people to elected officials ✓

Completed ✓ Underway ◎ Not Started ○

# A ROADMAP TO 2025

As was the case with our previous five-year strategic plan, this plan is organized by goal, with each goal broken down into a series of related objectives and projects that will help ensure that we stay grounded and focused on our way to 2025. We will also continue the practice of reviewing and when needed, revising, the Strategic Plan each year.

These annual reviews give the Board of Commissioners and staff opportunities to check on our progress towards the goals, objectives and projects articulated in this plan. These check-ins also give us opportunities to make revisions when circumstances "on the ground" change. If it is to be a useful tool, the strategic plan must be a living document; we must be able to adjust and revise it in response to emerging opportunities and threats.

As we look ahead to 2025, we are excited by what is to come. We look forward to completing the portfolio's remaining rehabilitation projects and turning our attention to creating new affordable housing for our neighbors who need it. We look forward to continuing to be leaders in the areas of energy efficiency and solar energy production. We are excited to find new ways to support the health and well-being of our frailest residents and helping our working families achieve greater economic independence. And, as always, we are grateful that, thanks to our designation as a U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Moving to Work (MTW) Agency, we have the flexibility to respond to emerging opportunities and threats in ways that most other Public Housing Authorities cannot. Much of what we have accomplished, and what we hope to achieve in the years ahead is largely possible because of our MTW designation.

Finally, we look forward to working with all of our partners; as we try to meet our shared challenges over the next five years. This Strategic Plan is being printed at a time when business leaders, politicians and policy makers of all political and philosophical stripes are beginning to recognize the effect the affordable housing shortage is having on our communities' social, physical and economic health. While we wish it didn't take as long as it has for the housing crisis to be recognized for what it is, we are grateful that from Keene to Concord to Washington, decision makers are starting to work on solutions. We look forward to doing our part to help.

## 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."***

# GOAL 1:

## Preserve, Improve and Expand Affordable Housing Stock

KH's existing real estate portfolio is a critical component of the region's affordable housing stock. Maintaining and improving the portfolio for future generations is amongst KH's primary responsibilities. This goal captures a broad range of initiatives that help ensure the portfolio's long-term viability including capital improvements, landscaping and other activities to improve "curb appeal", preventive maintenance and, when appropriate, recapitalization.

We also recognize that our current portfolio will never be large enough to meet the growing demand for high quality affordable housing in the Monadnock region. Therefore, this goal also encompasses efforts to address broader regional affordable housing needs through a combination of preservation and development activities.

### OBJECTIVES:

- **Address the portfolio's capital needs**
- **Restructure/recapitalize portfolio financing where needed to ensure viability and long-term affordability**
- **Identify and secure new funding to support capital needs including continuing use of MTW funds**
- **Maintain exceptional "curb appeal"**
- **Leverage Project Based Vouchers and the Transitional Housing Assistance Subsidy Program as regional affordable housing preservation and expansion tools**
- **Pursue development opportunities that respond to identified, quantifiable regional housing needs**

### PRIORITY PROJECTS:

- **Update annually and implement portfolio-wide preventive maintenance plan, with a focus on activities that reduce energy consumption Underway**
- **Update annually and implement portfolio-wide landscape/grounds improvement and maintenance plan Underway**
- **Implement annual and five-year Capital Plans with a focus on priority needs such as life safety improvements, energy efficiency and accessibility projects (including those that support "aging in place"), in a manner that keeps residents informed, and minimizes disruption to their lives Underway**
- **Update Capital Needs Assessments on a five-year cycle Underway**
- **Develop and implement plan for the rehabilitation of Bennett Block Completed**
- **Develop and implement recapitalization strategy, and related capital improvements, for projects nearing the end of the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit initial compliance period including Stone Arch Village and Evergreen Knoll Completed**

# GOAL 1:

## Preserve, Improve and Expand Affordable Housing Stock

### PRIORITY PROJECTS, CONTINUED:

- **Develop a plan for the rehabilitation of 105 Castle Street, preserving its role as a community space for Harper Acres residents** **Completed**
- **Identify and undertake at least one additional development project by 2025** **Completed**

# GOAL 2:

## Promote Energy Conservation and Sustainability

With the exception of personnel expenses, energy is Keene Housing's largest operating cost. Recognizing the overriding importance of reducing energy consumption and costs, KH is an active participant in the Better Buildings Challenge established by the US Departments of Energy and Housing and Urban Development. Focusing on reducing utility consumption and incorporating energy efficient, sustainable materials into capital projects is the focus of the Better Buildings Challenge and this Strategic Plan goal.

## OBJECTIVES:

- **Achieve carbon neutrality by 2035 (REVISED 2022)**
- **Achieve Better Buildings Challenge goals by 2025**
- **Continue executing energy conservation and investment strategies to lower costs and reduce carbon footprint**
- **Integrate conservation and sustainability into modernization and development planning**
- **Continue accessing available energy efficiency rebate and incentive programs**
- **Stay informed about and take advantage of emerging public policies that incentivize energy efficiency and generation projects**
- **Promote KH's energy efficiency achievements to partners, stakeholders and the general public**

## PRIORITY PROJECTS:

- **Implement Energy Strategic Plan in coordination with execution of Capital Plan Underway**
- **Maintain and update Energy Strategic Plan Underway**
- **Replace all Electric Thermal Storage (ETS) units with air source heat pumps or similar high efficiency HVAC system Underway**
- **Develop and implement a water conservation plan for community gardens Underway**
- **Continue monitoring utility consumption to inform choices and quantify savings from energy-related retrofits, improvements, and solar projects Underway**
- **Inform and educate residents about energy conservation benefits at lease up and periodically during tenancy Underway**

## GOAL 3:

# Prudently Manage and Oversee Agency Finances

Scarce federal and state support for affordable housing severely constrains Keene Housing's ability to fully address capital, supportive service and other needs. Keene Housing must work diligently to maximize the resource leveraging impact of its available funds and seek new income sources, while simultaneously reducing operating costs by pursuing creative management and energy conservation strategies. KH's objectives in this area include diversifying funding sources, increasing non-federal financial reserves and containing operating costs.

## OBJECTIVES:

- **Strengthen and expand financial analysis and reporting capabilities**
- **Contain and, whenever possible, reduce operating costs**
- **Expand and diversify funding sources to reduce reliance on HUD and USDA**
- **Increase non-federal operating reserves**
- **Maximize rent and management fee potential**
- **Minimize vacancy loss across the portfolio**
- **Maximize occupancy and rent potential for commercial spaces**

## PRIORITY PROJECTS:

- **Annually update and implement the agency-wide Financial Management Plan Underway**
- ~~Explore opportunities for residents to contribute to curb appeal~~ **(REMOVED 2022)**
- **Conduct annual review of rent and management fees Underway**
- **Continually monitor vacancy loss Underway**
- **Regularly renew and update cost allocation methodology Underway**
- **Conduct annual review of benefits and health insurance costs, pursuing cost effective but equitable opportunities where feasible Underway**
- **Conduct annual review of property and casualty insurance costs, pursuing cost effective opportunities whenever feasible Underway**
- **Identify and secure additional revenue through grants, increased management fees, and other initiatives Underway**
- ~~Where permissible, repurpose and identify new revenue opportunities for underutilized community rooms in consultation with residents~~ **(REMOVED 2022)**

# GOAL 4:

## Achieve Excellence in Management

Providing high quality property management and maintenance services to all residents is a core value that is deeply ingrained into Keene Housing's organizational culture. This strategic goal focuses on achieving industry-leading performance outcomes in key performance indicators including occupancy, vacancy, unit turnaround time, rent collection and work order completion. In achieving its occupancy goals, KH is committed to fair and consistent lease enforcement, and to working closely with residents to minimize the need for evictions.

### OBJECTIVES:

- **Maximize utilization of available voucher and housing resources**
- **Meet or exceed performance goals related to voucher utilization, property management and maintenance indicators**
- **Document, maintain, and implement best practices that meet or exceed applicable regulatory requirements**
- **Maximize operational efficiencies created by 2019 reorganization of voucher and property management functions**

### PRIORITY PROJECTS:

- **Achieve annual voucher program utilization goals Underway**
- **Achieve annual property management and maintenance goals Underway**
- **Annually update and implement Tenant Selection and Occupancy Plan and MTW Administrative Plan Underway**
- **Convert to a single enterprise software platform for voucher, property management and finance operations Underway**
- **Identify areas of risk, develop and implement quality control protocols where needed Underway**
- **Streamline and wherever possible consolidate housing and voucher administrative processes and systems to maximize efficiencies and improve operational outcomes Underway**
- **Receive accreditation from the Affordable Housing Accreditation Board Completed**

## GOAL 5:

# Promote Wellness and Independence Among Seniors and Residents with Disabilities

Almost half of the households Keene Housing serves includes at least one member who is elderly or disabled. State and regional demographic data suggest that this trend will continue well into the future. This strategic goal recognizes this trend, and commits Keene Housing to facilitating aging in place, and to pursuing initiatives that enhance elderly and disabled residents' quality of life. Keene Housing will accomplish this goal by partnering with agencies that have the resources and expertise to help, and by integrating residents' physical needs into our capital planning process.

## OBJECTIVES:

- **Leverage resources to secure new funding and services**
- **Integrate accessibility features and resident comfort into new and retrofit project designs**

## PRIORITY PROJECTS:

- **Explore opportunities for additional resident services through recurring federal and state sources (REVISED 2022) Underway**
- **Implement strategies to ensure successful housing search and long-term tenancies for disabled residents and voucher holders, including educating residents on reasonable accommodations Underway**
- **Expand partnerships providing on-site quality of life programs and services Underway**

# GOAL 6:

## Support Resident Economic Development

As evidenced by our resident-centric approach to property management and robust resident services programming, helping residents and voucher holders seek well-paying jobs, improve their educations and increase their assets are important KH goals. This strategic goal takes full advantage of Keene Housing's MTW flexibility to develop rent reform and resident service initiatives specifically designed to help working families achieve greater economic independence.

### OBJECTIVES:

- **Use MTW flexibility to explore resident service and rent models that provide incentives for employment and asset building**
- **Leverage internal and external resources to help residents and voucher holders build social connections and sense of community**
- **Focus on measurable outcomes and program evaluation**

### PRIORITY PROJECTS:

- **Develop, implement and evaluate rent reform and services demonstration project, with support from third party private or academic researchers Underway**
- **Look for additional Transitional Housing Assistance Subsidy Program (THASP) partners and other sponsor-based subsidy programs (REVISED 2021) Underway**
- **Increase the use of the Family Activity Centers by local service providers and residents Completed**

# GOAL 7:

## Support Youth Development Through Collaboration with the Keene Housing Kids Collaborative

Keene Housing has been the driving force and primary financial supporter of the Keene Housing Kids Collaborative (KHKC), a non-profit organization established in 2014 to support the healthy development and educational success of KH youth. Working in collaboration with KH, the Keene School District and more than 30 partner agencies, KHKC is implementing an ambitious array of after school and summer programs that promote healthy youth development and support parents and children living in Keene Housing owned or assisted homes. During the Strategic Plan term, KH will support and collaborate with KHKC to increase its fund-raising capacity, and to help KHKC become a self-sustaining non-profit organization.

### OBJECTIVES:

- **Continue supporting and collaborating with KHKC to expand and strengthen programs that focus on youth development from preschool through high school**
- **Help KHKC become a self-sustaining organization**

### PRIORITY PROJECTS:

- **Improve communications between KHKC and KH BOC Underway**
- **Continue reducing MTW contribution towards KHKC operating costs Underway**
- **Introduce KHKC leadership to additional potential affordable housing partners Completed**

# GOAL 8:

## Build Board and Staff Capacity and Skills

An engaged, well-trained Board and staff are essential for Keene Housing to continue achieving excellence, fostering innovation and most importantly, addressing community needs. This goal incorporates ongoing efforts to increase the Board of Commissioner's engagement in, and advocacy on behalf of KH's strategic goals. It also encompasses supporting and building Board and staff capacity through continuing education, and initiatives that periodically solicit feedback from staff and the Board, especially when major organizational transitions are under consideration.

### OBJECTIVES:

- **Recruit and retain a qualified, motivated workforce**
- **Provide staff with the training, including cross training, needed to excel at their jobs and grow within the organization**
- **Ensure that new and current Board members are fully informed of their roles and responsibilities, appropriately engaged in governance and policy matters, and fulfilling their obligation to advocate for KH and the households we serve**
- **Provide opportunities for local stakeholders, including students, to learn about KH's work**

### PRIORITY PROJECTS:

- **Continue bonus program to recognize extraordinary performance** **Underway**
- **Continue conducting employee satisfaction/feedback surveys** **Underway**
- **Annually update Board training materials and schedule, including on-boarding packet, using the AHAB accreditation standards for Governance as a source for best practices** **Underway**
- **Increase opportunities for Board members to participate in relevant trainings and to engage with KH staff** **Completed**
- **Continue developing strategies that attract and retain quality staff at all organizational levels** **Underway**
- ~~Implement intradepartmental cross training initiatives~~ **(REMOVED 2022)**
- **Implement interdepartmenental "Shadow Days"** **Completed**

## GOAL 9:

# Enhance Customer Service and Operational Efficiency

Keene Housing is a service organization. Applicants, residents and voucher holders are our customers. KH is always focused on ways to streamline operations and improve customer service for applicants, residents and voucher holders. This strategic goal incorporates activities that leverage emerging technology, provide increasingly helpful and timely information to our customers and community, and minimize disruption to residents and operations in the event of a natural disaster or other unforeseen event.

## OBJECTIVES:

- **Integrate new technologies that streamline work processing and improves public/ resident access to information**
- **Ensure that the providing high quality customer service, based in empathy and fairness, is a fundamental organizational principal**
- **Provide additional opportunities to easily receive and respond to public feedback**
- **Implement a disaster response and recovery plan**

## PRIORITY PROJECTS:

- **Develop and implement a plan to improve the website Completed**
- **Develop and implement a security plan Underway**
- **Periodically assess and implement required enhancements to KH's hardware, software and telecommunications network Underway**
- **Use technology to improve the timeliness, accuracy and accessibility of information about KH plans and strategies for applicants, residents, voucher holders, community stakeholders and other target audiences (REVISED 2022) Underway**
- **Regularly solicit input from residents and stakeholders on KH programs and initiatives Underway**
- **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 Underway**
- **Evaluate and, where cost effective, deploy technological tools such as video updates, kiosks, computers and publicly available printers to assist residents and applicants Underway**

# GOAL 10:

## Be a Strong and Effective Advocate for Innovation in Affordable Housing and Supportive Service Programs

Keene Housing's organizational culture values and actively supports innovation and excellence in the administration of housing and supportive service programs for low- and moderate-income people. KH strongly believes that we achieve excellence by learning from, and sharing with others engaged in activities that benefit our customers. To that end, KH strives to play a prominent role in local, state and federal efforts to improve, promote and expand affordable housing programs and supportive services. Central to this effort is KH's leadership in the Moving to Work (MTW) program.

### OBJECTIVES:

- **Support and participate in the growth of the MTW Collaborative and advocate for the permanent extension of current MTW Agreements**
- **Participate in local, state and national efforts to improve public policy affecting affordable housing development, management and administration**
- **Contribute to efforts to improve local, state and national renewable energy incentive programs and related public policies**
- **Contribute to efforts to improve local, state and national supportive service programs and policies**

### PRIORITY PROJECTS:

- **Actively participate in and support the MTW Collaborative** **Completed**
- ~~Actively participate in and support the Affordable Housing Accreditation Board~~ **(REMOVED 2022)**
- **Actively participate in and support the New Hampshire Housing Authority Corporation** **Completed**
- **Actively participate in and support the Public Housing Authorities Directors Association** **Completed**
- **Actively support the advocacy efforts of Housing Action New Hampshire** **Completed**
- **Ensure that members of staff hold leadership positions with local, state and federal organizations, committees and councils (REVISED 2022)** **Completed**
- **Continue advocating for low- and moderate-income people to local, state and federally elected officials** **Completed**