Keene Housing

STRATEGIC PLAN

—2030—

"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 D. Roosevelt

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INTRODUCTION

This Strategic Plan provides Keene Housing's Board of Commissioners, staff, residents, and partners—local, regional, and national—with a roadmap to guide our work through 2030. It reflects who we are today: a mission-driven, innovative organization grounded in community partnerships and committed to advancing affordable housing, sustainability, and opportunity throughout the Monadnock region.

Over the past quarter century, Keene Housing has transformed from a traditional housing authority with a narrow scope and modest real estate presence into an organization that develops, owns, and manages a growing portfolio of affordable housing, supports residents' and voucher holders' paths toward greater independence, and leads state and national advocacy for policy innovation. Building on the strong foundation of the 2020–2025 Strategic Plan, we enter this next chapter focused on expanding housing, advancing sustainability, and strengthening services for residents of all ages and abilities.

In recent years, Keene Housing has made major progress rehabilitating and recapitalizing its portfolio, supporting the growth and independence of the Keene Housing Kids Collaborative and deepening our partnerships with community organizations and local government. The impending completion of Roosevelt East, the development of Roosevelt West and the planned development of Fortune Commons in Jaffrey exemplify our commitment to meeting the region's housing needs through thoughtful growth. Our long-term goal of achieving carbon neutrality by 2035 remains at the center of our operations, with continued investments in energy efficiency, renewable energy generation, and sustainable design.

As a long-standing Moving to Work (MTW) agency, Keene Housing continues to leverage the flexibility and innovation that MTW provides to design and test new approaches that improve outcomes for families, seniors, and individuals with disabilities. Our ongoing rent reform longitudinal study with the Public and Affordable Housing Research Corporation and expanded partnerships in resident services are helping households build stability, employment, and financial independence, while providing researchers and policy makers with critical lessons about best practices. We also remain deeply engaged nationally through the MTW Collaborative, the Public Housing Authorities Directors Association and the National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials advocating for policy frameworks that empower housing authorities to respond to their communities' unique challenges.

This Strategic Plan is both aspirational and practical. It defines ten interrelated goals that encompass housing development, sustainability, financial strength, management excellence, resident and youth opportunity, and leadership at every level of the organization. It is designed to be a living document—reviewed, updated, and adapted annually to respond to changing circumstances and emerging opportunities.

As we look ahead to 2030, we remain guided by our mission:

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

We are proud of what we have accomplished, mindful of the work that lies ahead, and inspired by a shared belief that every person deserves a safe, sustainable, and affordable place to call home.

GOAL 1:

Preserve, Enhance and Expand Affordable Housing Stock

We remain dedicated to preserving, enhancing, and expanding our real estate portfolio to help address our region's affordable housing shortage. Keene Housing's real estate portfolio remains a critical component of the region's housing stock, and one of Keene Housing's core responsibilities is to maintain and strengthen the portfolio so that it remains a resource for future generations. 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 alone cannot meet the growing demand for high quality affordable housing in the Monadnock region. Therefore, this goal also focuses on addressing broader regional affordable housing needs through preservation strategies and the development of new housing.

OBJECTIVES:

- Address the portfolio's capital needs
- Restructure/recapitalize portfolio financing where needed to ensure viability and long-term affordability
- Identify and secure 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
- Update annually and implement landscape/grounds improvement and maintenance plan
- Implement annual and five-year Capital Plans focused on life safety, energy efficiency, and accessibility
- Update Capital Needs Assessments every five years
- 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
- Complete construction of Roosevelt East and West
- Complete construction of Fortune Commons
- Identify and undertake at least one additional development project by 2030
- Explore and evaluate strategies for mixed-use and mixed-income development
- Create and staff Planning and Development Department to develop and execute preservation and development strategies

GOAL 2:

Advance Energy Conservation and Sustainability

Apart from personnel expenses, energy remains Keene Housing's largest operating expense. Keene Housing aggressively pursues opportunities to reduce energy costs through a combination of energy efficiency improvements, savvy energy procurement and renewable energy production.

OBJECTIVES:

- Achieve carbon neutrality by 2035
- 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 and explore efforts to incentivize energy efficiency and sustainability practices among residents
- Improve the quality of data collection and reporting on energy use and related sustainability activities
- Stay informed about and take advantage of emerging public policies that incentivize energy efficiency and generation projects
- Promote Keene Housing's energy efficiency achievements to partners, stakeholders and the general public

PRIORITY PROJECTS:

- Maintain energy efficiency and sustainability priorities in coordination with execution of Capital Plan
- Replace remaining Electric Thermal Storage units with Air Source Heat Pumps or similar high efficiency HVAC systems
- Develop and implement a water conservation plan for community gardens
- Continue monitoring utility consumption to inform choices and quantify savings from energy efficiency improvements and renewable energy production
- Explore options for adding energy storage to existing and future renewable energy infrastructure
- Improve energy tracking and reporting
- Inform and educate residents about energy conservation benefits at lease-up and periodically during tenancy
- Design and pilot a resident recycling and energy conservation incentive program

GOAL 3:

Strengthen and Carefully Manage Agency Finances

Limited federal and state funding continues to challenge and constrain Keene Housing's ability to fully address capital, supportive service and other needs. In response, we will maximize the impact of our available funds, pursue new revenue streams, and reduce operating costs through innovative management and energy-efficiency strategies. Our objectives in this area include diversifying funding sources and containing operating expenses to ensure long-term financial stability.

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 the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and the U.S. Department of Agriculture
- Maximize rent and management fee potential
- Minimize vacancy loss across the portfolio
- Maximize occupancy and rent potential for commercial spaces
- Evaluate current and future administrative space needs
- Strengthen financial planning to support long-term agency expansion and growth

PRIORITY PROJECTS:

- Annually update and implement the agency-wide Financial Management Plan
- Conduct annual review of rent and management fees
- Continually monitor and reduce vacancy loss
- Regularly renew and update cost allocation methodology
- Conduct annual review of benefits and health insurance costs, pursuing cost effective but equitable opportunities where feasible
- Conduct annual review of property and casualty insurance costs, pursuing cost effective opportunities whenever feasible
- Identify and secure additional revenue through real estate development, grants, increased management fees, and other initiatives
- Conduct a workspace needs assessment with engagement from staff in anticipation of future growth

GOAL 4:

Achieve Excellence in Property and Program Management

Delivering 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, turnaround time, rent collection and work order completion. In pursuing these benchmarks, we are committed to fair and consistent lease enforcement while working closely with residents to minimize the need for evictions.

OBJECTIVES:

- Maximize utilization of available voucher and housing resources
- Meet or exceed voucher utilization, property management and maintenance performance goals
- Document, maintain, and implement best practices that meet or exceed applicable regulatory requirements
- Strengthen performance through integrated enterprise software and enhanced quality control measures

PRIORITY PROJECTS:

- Achieve annual voucher program utilization goals
- Achieve annual property management and maintenance goals
- Annually update and implement Tenant Selection and Occupancy Plan and Moving to Work Administrative Plan
- Identify areas of risk, develop and implement quality control protocols where needed
- Streamline and wherever possible consolidate housing and voucher administrative processes and systems to maximize efficiencies and improve operational outcomes
- Evaluate current software and identify future needs, including preparation of a solicitation to address ongoing system requirements
- Convert to a single enterprise software platform for voucher, property management and finance operations, if possible

GOAL 5:

Support Wellness and Independence Among Seniors and Residents with Disabilities

Nearly half of the households Keene Housing serves include at least one member who is elderly or a person with a disability. State and regional demographic data suggest that this trend will continue growing well into the future. This strategic goal affirms Keene Housing's commitment to supporting aging in place and advancing initiatives that improve quality of life for elderly residents and residents with disabilities. We will accomplish this goal by partnering with agencies that bring specialized expertise and resources, and by ensuring that residents' physical needs are reflected in our capital planning process.

OBJECTIVES:

- Leverage existing resources and relationships to secure new funding and services
- Integrate accessibility features and resident comfort into new and retrofit project design
- Promote development and redevelopment strategies to support aging-in-place
- Strengthen supports and services available to residents

PRIORITY PROJECTS:

- Explore opportunities for additional resident services through recurring federal and state sources
- Expand partnerships to offer wellness, mental health, and social service programs for residents
- Implement strategies to ensure successful housing search and long-term tenancies for residents with disabilities and voucher holders, including making sure residents understand what reasonable accommodations are and how they can request them
- Pursue CORES certification (a national designation that recognizes housing organizations for their commitment to high-quality resident services coordination)
- Evaluate service coordinator staffing and training to meet resident needs
- Create, distribute, and maintain a one-page resident resource guide listing local service contacts and programs

GOAL 6:

Expand Resident Economic Development

As evidenced by our resident-centric approach to property management and robust resident services programming, Keene Housing prioritizes helping residents and voucher holders access well-paying jobs, pursue educational opportunities, and build financial stability. This strategic goal leverages Keene Housing's Moving to Work (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
- Evaluate and expand rent reform initiatives to identify best models and share findings with residents, partners, stakeholders, and regional and national networks
- 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
- Encourage and support resident employment by continuing to provide resources that help working families increase their employment and earning options

PRIORITY PROJECTS:

- Complete evaluation of rent reform and services demonstration project with the Public and Affordable Housing Research Corporation (PAHRC), and analyze results to identify the most effective model(s) across cohorts
- Share results and findings from the rent reform and services demonstration project with partners and stakeholders to promote lessons learned
- Pursue broader rent reform initiatives based on recommendations and findings from the evaluation
- Look for additional Transitional Housing Assistance Subsidy Program partners and other opportunities to expand sponsor-based subsidy programs
- Increase the use of the Family Activity Centers by residents and local service providers

GOAL 7:

Strengthen Youth Development Through Collaboration with the Keene Housing Kids Collaborative

Since its founding in 2014, Keene Housing Kids Collaborative (KHKC) has benefited from Keene Housing's support in advancing the healthy development and educational success of Keene Housing youth. In partnership with the Keene School District and more than 30 partner agencies, KHKC offers a wide 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. Over the course of this Strategic Plan term, Keene Housing will continue collaborating with and supporting KHKC, with a focus on positioning KHKC to 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 the KHKC become a self-sustaining organization

PRIORITY PROJECTS:

- Continue reducing Moving to Work contribution toward KHKC operating costs while maintaining the service contract to provide KHKC services to children living in Keene Housing assisted households
- Actively participate in and support KHKC's advocacy and fundraising efforts
- Maintain Keene Housing staff and Commissioner presence on KHKC Board and Committees

GOAL 8:

Build Board and Staff Capacity for Leadership and Innovation

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 reflects efforts to increase the Board of Commissioner's engagement in, and advocacy on behalf of Keene Housing's strategic goals. It also encompasses efforts to further support and build Board and staff capacity through training, 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 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 Keene Housing and the people we serve
- Engage in succession planning and leadership development
- Strengthen internal communication and collaboration
- Provide opportunities for local stakeholders, including students, to learn about Keene Housing's work

PRIORITY PROJECTS:

- Continue bonus program that recognizes extraordinary performance
- Continue conducting biennial employee satisfaction and feedback surveys
- Annually update and implement Employee Handbook
- Annually update Board training materials and schedule, including onboarding packet
- Continue increasing opportunities for Board members to participate in relevant trainings and engage with staff
- Continue developing strategies to attract and retain quality staff at all organizational levels
- Integrate interdepartmental "Shadow Days" into new employee orientation
- Develop a succession plan for key leadership roles
- Continue periodic trainings for staff and Board members
- Implement monthly internal department updates to be distributed to all staff

GOAL 9:

Enhance Customer Service and Operational Efficiency

As a service organization, Keene Housing recognizes that applicants, residents and voucher holders are our customers. We are committed to continually improving the customer service experience by streamlining operations and leveraging emerging technology to provide helpful and timely information to our customers and community and minimizing disruptions in the event of a natural disaster or other unforeseen event.

OBJECTIVES:

- Integrate new technologies that streamline work processing and improve public, voucher holder and resident access to information
- Ensure that providing high quality customer service, based on empathy and fairness, is a fundamental organizational principle
- Expand the use of digital tools to improve efficiency and customer convenience and to support resident, voucher participant, and applicant engagement
- Provide additional opportunities to easily receive and respond to public feedback
- Implement a disaster response and recovery plan

PRIORITY PROJECTS:

- Integrate security camera infrastructure at all properties wherever practical
- Periodically assess and implement enhancements to Keene Housing's hardware, software and telecommunications network
- Improve coordination across departments through integrated technology
- Use technology to improve the timeliness, accuracy and accessibility of information about Keene Housing plans and strategies for applicants, residents, voucher holders, community stakeholders and other target audiences
- Explore implementation of online recertifications and similar digital processes to improve efficiency and enhance resident engagement
- Evaluate opportunities for integrating emerging technologies into workflows to further streamline operations and improve customer service including Artificial Intelligence
- Regularly solicit input from residents and stakeholders on Keene Housing programs and initiatives
- 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
- Evaluate and, where cost effective, deploy technological tools such as video updates, kiosks, computers and publicly available printers to assist residents and applicants

GOAL 10:

Advocate for Innovation in Affordable Housing and Supportive Services

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. Keene Housing strongly believes that we achieve excellence by learning from, and sharing with others engaged in activities that benefit our customers. To that end, Keene Housing 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 Keene Housing's leadership in the Moving to Work (MTW) program.

OBJECTIVES:

- Support and participate in the growth of the Moving to Work Collaborative and advocate for the permanent extension of current Moving to Work 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
- Deepen local advocacy and community education around affordable housing and services

PRIORITY PROJECTS:

- Actively participate in and support the Moving to Work Collaborative
- Actively participate in and support the New Hampshire Housing Authority Corporation
- Actively participate in and support the Public Housing Authorities Directors Association
- Actively support the advocacy efforts of Housing Action New Hampshire
- Actively support the advocacy efforts of the Monadnock Housing Collaborative
- Ensure that members of staff hold leadership positions with local, state and federal organizations, committees and councils
- Continue advocating for low- and moderate-income people to local, state and federally elected officials
- Develop a local advocacy packet for newly elected officials, city staff, and partners
- Strengthen partnerships with schools, local government, and nonprofits through briefings and site visits