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Strategic Plan

The Portsmouth Housing Authority
PHA Housing Development LTD.

Adopted December 14, 2016

Amended July 2019

Amended February 2025

Purpose of Strategic Plan

In 2015, Portsmouth Housing's Commissioners, Directors and staff agreed on the need for a comprehensive Strategic Plan to help guide our priorities. This was informed by internal and external pressures on both the organization and the residents we serve.

Some of these internal pressures included growing pains associated with technology and modernization improvements, staff succession planning, new accounting requirements, changes in the job market and the challenges of managing an increasingly neuro-diverse population.

The external pressures being placed on the PHA included a changing policy environment, continued fiscal constraints, a growing demand for services, an aging population and a spiraling epidemic of opioid addiction that has become a public health emergency.

In January of 2016, the PHA hired the Executive Service Corp. to help guide us through this year-long process. To make the plan, we appointed a Strategic Planning Committee, comprised of PHA Commissioners, LTD Directors, staff, residents, and community members.

Portsmouth Housing Authority History and Mission

The PHA is an independent, special-purpose local government entity governed by a six-member Board of Commissioners. These Commissioners are appointed by the Mayor of Portsmouth and serve five-year terms. The PHA also has an affiliated 501(c)3 non-profit organization, PHA Housing Development LTD. which serves as the General Partner of PHA's tax credit portfolio. Together, these organizations appoint an Executive Director responsible for operating the organization day-to-day operation of the organization.

The Portsmouth Housing Authority was established by the City of Portsmouth in 1953 to address the shortage of safe, sanitary, and affordable housing for low-income people in the city. The PHA built its first development at Gosling Meadows in 1959 and by 1973 had developed six different public housing properties in the city, totaling 421 apartment units. The PHA also played the ongoing role of Property Manager after these properties were developed.

During this time, the PHA was also tasked as the lead agency for two major Urban Renewal projects in the city. The Vaughn Street and Marcy Street projects resulted in more than 200 different commercial and residential properties in the city. While controversial, both projects were among the first in the nation to add a preservation component to Urban Renewal, the most celebrated of which led to the creation of the historic Strawberry Banke Museum and the preservation of many homes in the original Puddle Dock settlement in Portsmouth and The Hill.

Throughout the late 1970s and early 1990s, the PHA expanded resident services it offered to its mostly senior citizen residents. During this time, the PHA sponsored and managed a variety of service programs including a Respite Care program, Meals-on-Wheels, the Portsmouth Senior Center, Senior Transportation Services, and a variety of recreational programs for the children and families who call PHA properties their homes.

Beginning in 1996, the PHA began redeveloping historic properties in the city using Low-Income Housing Tax Credits and a variety of public and private financing. This mixed finance model was used for the redevelopment of the former Atlantic Heights School in 1996, Cottage Hospital in 2003, and Lafayette School in 2010, which added 60 more affordable senior housing in the city. This model was also used to modernize the aging Ridgewood Apartments which would become Wamesit Place, home to one-hundred Portsmouth households.

The PHA also operates a Housing Choice Voucher (Section 8) program which provides portable subsidies for qualified families to rent privately owned affordable housing. Currently, the program manages 459 vouchers being used throughout the region.

The People We Serve

Approximately 1,000 people call Portsmouth Housing Authority properties their home. Our 682 owned and managed housing units are spread among twelve different developments throughout the city and our Housing Choice Voucher (Section 8) program serves an additional 459 households. The PHA is the largest Public Housing Authority per capita in New Hampshire, housing 4.5% of the total population of Portsmouth.

Our resident's aspirations, contributions, and needs, vary widely with age, disability, presence of children, absence of one or more parents, physical health, mental health, income, proximity to family and countless other factors.

The PHA houses several hundred senior citizens, more than 200 children, people with disabilities, and members of our workforce.

Summary of Findings

- Community leaders report the quality of working relationships with PHA staff is excellent and the assessment of the quality of service provided by PHA is described as good to excellent.
- Some individuals observe that there are human services available in the communities that do not reach varying numbers of eligible PHA residents.
- Some residents report that their “quality of life” falls short of what they hope for.
- There is a growing unmet need for affordable housing in Portsmouth, particularly among low-income individuals and families. The 1,300 families and individuals on PHA’s waiting lists are evidence of this.
- Work still needs to be done, first to better understand and then to address the needs of low-income families, senior citizens, people with disabilities, and members of our workforce.
- The PHA needs to communicate more clearly to be better advocates for more affordable housing in the region, and to connect residents to education, employment, and the wide variety of services available in our community.
- The organizations and individuals these contributors represent are all important partners in supporting our residents and as such, were instrumental in informing this Strategic Plan.
- The high cost of living in Portsmouth leaves many of the lowest income people in our community in a chronic state of scarcity.
- The PHA Our residents would be well served if PHA developed strategies to improve access to resources, reframe goals and objectives to empower residents to make positive changes in themselves and their communities, provide easy access to information and connect people to supports that will allow our residents to the support needed pursue a brighter future.

Goal 1

The Portsmouth Housing Authority will optimize quality of life for its residents by forming relationships that foster equality, trust and transparency while engaging residents to pursue and achieve their goals.

Objective 1-1

Create a culture of caring, open, and empathetic staff for PHA staff to best hear from and understand PHA residents and their ideal quality of life.

Objective 1-2

Based upon the findings that are a result of Objective 1, determine what is currently being done well and what needs to be improved for our residents because of PHA staff, partner, or community involvement.

Objective 1-3

Encourage, educate, motivate, and empower residents to work together, take ownership of their community, and engage in the civic life of Portsmouth.

Objective 1-4

Focus PHA on organizational, financial, regulatory, and development programs that will support additional quality of life improving activities.

Objective 1-5

Increase resident enrollment in personal development and job training programs.

Goal 2

To encourage strong partnerships with organizations and individuals that will serve to support our residents and strengthen the capacity of the PHA.

Objective 2-1

Continually identify partners who can help serve the needs of our residents.

Objective 2-2

Develop a comprehensive external communications plan with the goal of reaching partner organizations and the wider Portsmouth community.

Objective 2-3

Connect to partner networks for collective impact.

Goal 3

To achieve operational excellence through improved efficiencies, staff development and best practices in housing authority management.

Objective 3-1

Evaluate business processes, practices, and costs to create continual and measurable improvements.

Goal 4

To grow and preserve the supply of affordable housing in Portsmouth.

Objective 4-1

Add to or preserve affordable housing units by building, redeveloping, and acquiring properties to preserve permanent affordability.

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Acknowledgements

Portsmouth Housing is grateful for the experienced and engaged PHA Board of Commissioners, PHA Housing Development LTD. Board of Directors, Portsmouth Housing staff and the volunteers of the Strategic Planning Committee that worked over the past year on this project.

The Portsmouth Housing Authority Board of Commissioners:

Mrs. Ruth Griffin, Chair
Mr. John Leith, Commissioner
Mrs. Amy Schwartz, Commissioner
Mr. Gibson “Mike” Kennedy, Commissioner
Mr. Tom Ferrini, Commissioner

PHA Housing Development, Ltd. Board of Directors

The Portsmouth Housing Authority also has an affiliate non-profit organization, PHA Housing Development Ltd., which develops new affordable housing in Portsmouth and the surrounding region. Both boards are affiliated but operate independently.

Mr. M. Kevin MacLeod, President
Mr. John Leith, Director
Mr. Timothy “Ted” J. Connors, Director
Mr. Jack Blalock, Director

2016 Strategic Planning Committee

Commissioner Mike Kennedy
Commissioner Amy Schwartz
Director Ted Connors
Ms. Kristin Jeffrey, Community Member
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