

BOSTON HOUSING  
AUTHORITY

# SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGY



May 2023

# OVERVIEW

Sustainable and healthy public housing is critical to provide residents with a high-quality, long-lasting, and vibrant place to call home. As a leading presence in almost every Boston neighborhood and as the largest provider of housing in Boston, BHA understands its responsibility to model and support sustainable initiatives and believes in the importance of championing sustainability for the benefit of its residents and the city as a whole. Low-income residents, and the diverse individuals, families, seniors, and persons with disabilities who live in BHA housing or rent with a BHA voucher, deserve healthy and efficient homes in sustainable and resilient neighborhoods. BHA's planning and programs must contribute toward other local, state, and federal efforts to make this a reality.

Together with Boston Mayor Michelle Wu, the agency has set an ambitious goal of achieving fossil fuel-free public housing by 2030. While working to reach this target, BHA seeks to align itself with a number of environment-focused initiatives enacted by the City of Boston in the past few years, such as the **2019 Climate Action Plan**, **Climate Ready Boston**, and **Zero Waste Boston**. We will also work alongside the City to implement **green infrastructure** and the **Boston Green New Deal** at BHA locations. BHA will continue to closely collaborate with the City of Boston on many of our objectives in order to meet our shared goals for the betterment of the environment and all Bostonians.

Through conversations held both internally and with our partners and residents, the agency has considered the multilayered definition of sustainability and the variety of ways it can be implemented throughout BHA. From these discussions and our additional research, BHA has created a Sustainability Strategy to guide its current and future actions surrounding the agency's environmental impact and resiliency.

The **BHA Sustainability Strategy** is broken down into three categories referencing sustainable improvements to **our buildings**, for **our communities**, and within **our internal operations**. The objectives within each category reference specific initiatives that will help BHA meet its overall sustainability goals. These initiatives may involve agency-wide changes, or they may reference specific pilot programs that will evolve to a broader scale in the long-term. We also include considerations for the project timelines and funding sources needed to achieve each objective. BHA is grateful for the support of and collaboration with the City of Boston and many other local organizations in working to achieve its sustainability goals.

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# SUSTAINABLE BUILDINGS

*Utilize site upgrades to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and advance environmental justice*

The efficient operation and resiliency of BHA’s extensive portfolio of buildings is critical to the agency’s sustainability. BHA often utilizes opportunities created by redevelopment projects to upgrade buildings' ventilation, reduce energy consumption, and introduce higher efficiency systems. BHA has also utilized federal funds for rehabilitation projects as well as strategies like energy performance contracts for utility upgrades.

In 2021, BHA’s portfolio emitted a total of 53,730 metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent (MTCO<sub>2</sub>e) at an estimated annual cost of \$38,292,876 (determined as a 3 year average from 2018-2020). See the table below for the breakdown of emissions and cost by utility type.

BHA seeks to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by increasing its buildings' energy efficiency and exploring opportunities to incorporate clean energy technology. BHA will also improve its outdoor areas through trees and other vegetation to both reduce energy and create inviting natural spaces for residents. These upgrades to our buildings and their surrounding spaces will increase the resiliency of BHA's properties and communities.

Utility type	Metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent (MTCO <sub>2</sub> e)	Annual cost (Based on average of 2018-2020)
Electricity	15,678	\$14,573,346
Gas	35,864	\$8,834,316
Oil	2,107	\$491,355
Water & Sewer		\$14,393,860
<b>Total</b>	<b>53,730</b>	<b>\$38,292,876</b>

## RESIDENT IMPACTS

- Healthy, comfortable housing
- Improved air quality
- Upgraded, efficient appliances
- Fewer negative effects of extreme weather
- Aesthetic improvements to buildings and surrounding spaces

## SUSTAINABLE BUILDINGS

### Objective 1:

Eliminate the use of fossil fuels in public housing developments by 2030

In February of 2023, Mayor Michelle Wu announced a goal for Boston's public housing developments to be free of fossil fuels by 2030. With this policy goal, BHA will accelerate our efforts to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions under the City of Boston's declining carbon emissions standard for large buildings (reported in kilograms of carbon dioxide emitted per square foot per year) - known as BERDO 2.0. BHA will continue to make annual emissions reports for BERDO 2.0 as we work towards full electrification by 2030.

To assist with this goal, we have issued an RFP for the creation of a decarbonization plan and any related technical assistance for the Agency. This plan may involve strategies (in addition to regular capital plan activities) such as utility program efficiency measures (offered by Action for Boston Community Development (ABCD)), energy performance contracts, power purchase agreements and other special initiatives. Such improvements may be made to building envelopes, windows, ventilation and heating systems, and through clean heat and energy sourcing.

#### NEXT STEPS

##### Spring 2023

Procure the development of a decarbonization plan, and identify priority areas for building upgrades

##### Summer 2023

Begin enacting the decarbonization plan and associated technical assistance

##### 2023-2030

Continue reporting annual emissions for BERDO 2.0 and implement upgrades

##### 2030

Ensure all public housing is fossil fuel free

### Funding

BHA will utilize a variety of funding sources for the range of activities within this objective including dedicated funds for building retrofits from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), utility incentives, energy performance contracts (EPCs), and from federal, state, and local capital funds dedicated to emissions reductions as well as the \$50 million dedicated to this initiative in Mayor Wu's proposed budget for fiscal year 2023.



## SUSTAINABLE BUILDINGS

# Objective 2:

## Upgrade buildings to support BHA's decarbonization

BHA will work to retrofit its buildings' interiors and exteriors, as well as complete other weatherization and insulation upgrades, in order to support energy efficiency and clean energy technology. These retrofits and upgrades will occur as both standalone capital improvements as well as part of the redevelopment work for BHA sites such as Mildred Hailey.

These upgrades will not only help make our buildings more efficient, but they will improve the comfort and health of our residents. Where possible, we will also seek to incorporate green walls or living roofs to help remove pollutants from the air and regulate temperatures. We will also undertake upgrades that ensure our buildings' electrical systems can support full electrification and any new electric technology such as induction stoves.

Furthermore, these projects will also improve the resiliency of our residents' homes against extreme weather events and temperatures. Improved efficiency and ventilation, combined with clean electric heating and cooling, will lead to more resilient public housing communities.

### NEXT STEPS

#### Summer 2023

Hire sustainability consultant to review BHA's portfolio, complete a solar feasibility study, and advance design work for window, ventilation, heating system replacement and other key work at flagship sites

#### Ongoing

Adapt building systems for energy efficiency and clean energy during conversions of elderly housing sites such as Ausonia, Patricia White, and Doris Bunte

## Funding

BHA will utilize a variety of funding sources for the range of activities it will undertake as part of this objective including dedicated funds for building retrofits from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), utility incentives, energy performance contracts (EPCs), and from federal, state and local capital funds dedicated to emissions reductions. Within its federal elderly portfolio, BHA will leverage resources from subsidy conversion to project-based vouchers.

## SUSTAINABLE BUILDINGS

### Objective 3:

Utilize BHA's purchasing power to advance energy efficiency and clean energy goals

BHA will update its purchasing strategies and specifications to ensure appliances and fixtures purchased for each upgrade, unit turnover, and new construction will meet the latest standards for energy efficiency. These appliances may include everything from refrigerators, toilets, and stoves to light bulbs, heating, and cooling. BHA will review our current specifications and practices for the purchasing of appliances and update them according to efficiency standards. As efficiency standards will change overtime, BHA will also seek to establish a system to periodically review and update appliance specifications. We will set similar guidelines for smaller, "green" purchases such as recycled paper and non-hazardous cleaning agents or pesticides.

Additionally, BHA can utilize its purchasing power for the procurement of clean energy. In order to meet our goal of fossil fuel-free buildings by 2030, the BHA will seek to maximize the uptake of clean energy for its public housing sites, especially for our state public housing. BHA will explore the potential methods for purchasing clean energy as permitted by HUD.

To address disparities in public contracting and promote equity, BHA has also established robust goals for doing businesses with enterprises owned by women and minorities through its goods, supplies, construction and construction design contracts.

#### NEXT STEPS

##### Summer 2023

Review current appliance specifications and update to meet to our efficiency standards

##### Fall 2023

Identify opportunities to pilot new efficient appliances, such as induction stoves, and begin procuring clean energy sources

### Funding

BHA purchases appliances and supplies via state and federal operating funds. Converting from gas to electric, or meeting code requirements of newer electric equipment, may require capital investments at BHA sites to perform electrical upgrades. The BHA can phase some of these changes into its regular capital planning, which would require outside capital investment from municipal, state or private philanthropic sources. For clean energy purchasing, BHA may be able to utilize saving programs from the utility.

## SUSTAINABLE BUILDINGS

### Objective 4:

Implement renewable energy technology where possible

In order to move away from fossil fuels and support building electrification efforts, BHA will explore the use of clean energy sources at its facilities. BHA will evaluate all eligible buildings for the deployment of solar photovoltaic systems, seeking to maximize cost savings through direct ownership, energy performance contracting, or other strategies that maximize rate and incentive-based revenues. Savings from on-site clean energy may be invested into host properties' operating maintenance, backstop costs from other clean electricity purchasing initiatives, or further capital investment into sustainability.

BHA will be utilizing technical assistance from Local Initiatives Support Coalition (LISC) and Resonant Energy regarding the deployment of renewable energy technology and in accessing state and federal incentives.

#### NEXT STEPS

##### 2023

Compile data to provide LISC and Resonant Energy for their PV suitability analysis

##### 2024

Develop specific clean energy pilot initiatives

##### 2024-2030

Implement clean energy technology

### Funding

The federal Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) creates new opportunities for tax-exempt entities to benefit from the Investment Tax Credit and Production Tax Credit. The IRA also creates a new Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund, administered by the Environmental Protection Agency, which will support low-income solar projects. Massachusetts' SMART program also provides significant solar energy incentives.



## SUSTAINABLE BUILDINGS

### Objective 5:

Ensure new buildings and renovations follow certain energy and sustainability standards

In order to follow the current best practices for energy efficiency in buildings, BHA will update its existing sustainability guidelines for construction projects. BHA and its contractors will use these guidelines for various construction projects including development conversions, renovations, and new construction. As the standards for energy efficiency and sustainability vary by project and building typology, BHA may seek to create a contract to assist with this complex task. The scope of this work involves analyzing BHA's current guidelines, cross-referencing them with local, state, and federal regulation, and providing recommendations for updating these guidelines to meet specifications for environmental sustainability. These guidelines may also include instructions regarding the use of sustainable or recycled building materials, as well as local plants for landscaping.

BHA will also discuss methods for rewarding contract bids that emphasize sustainable construction practices and/or include innovative designs for energy efficiency and sustainability. We will also seek to create a schedule for updating construction sustainability standards every few years to meet current industry standards.

#### NEXT STEPS

##### Summer 2023

Determine whether a contractor is required to assist with updating BHA's current building standards and guidelines

##### 2024

Create a BHA policy for sustainable construction standards

### Funding

While the relative costs of sustainable construction versus traditional construction are falling, the BHA may pursue utility incentive programs, federal credits, and local or state capital grants may be utilized to address any incremental costs (or simply high costs of construction) for green building. Energy performance contracts also allow the BHA to fund emissions reductions measures based on savings.

## SUSTAINABLE BUILDINGS

### Objective 6:

#### Utilize green infrastructure techniques at BHA developments

Working closely with the City of Boston's Green Infrastructure Director, BHA will explore opportunities for the integration of green infrastructure at its sites. This may include interventions such as rain gardens or bioretention features installed at sites with high levels of flooding, replacing horizontal paved areas with porous pavement to reduce stormwater runoff, and using native plants in landscaping to lessen maintenance needs and promote resiliency.

BHA's implementation of green infrastructure will involve both the construction of ad hoc projects at certain developments - such as those with flooding issues - as well as more comprehensive efforts to incorporate green infrastructure best practices Agency-wide. Through our participation in the City's Green Infrastructure Working Group, BHA will create and utilize green infrastructure design guidelines for a variety of project types. These guidelines will also help create comfortable and inviting outdoor spaces at our developments for residents to enjoy.

BHA and its partners will also engage residents in planning processes through informational, interactive events to discuss potential project examples, benefits of green infrastructure, and maintenance strategies.

#### NEXT STEPS

##### Spring 2023

Hold first informational event for residents and staff at Archdale

##### Summer/Fall 2023

Develop guidelines for various project types informed by green infrastructure principles

#### Funding

By carefully managing its public housing capital and operating expenses and updating specifications for routine projects, BHA can seek to replace traditional paving, sidewalk, or landscaping projects with green infrastructure interventions. BHA may be eligible for credits on utility charges from projects that reduce stormwater flooding. The Massachusetts DHCD and DEP, as well as federal agencies such as HUD, EPA and FEMA may be sources of grant opportunities. Shared savings may be possible for ongoing maintenance or upkeep through cooperative contracts with the City of Boston.

## SUSTAINABLE BUILDINGS

### Objective 7:

Support the adoption of renewable and energy efficient technology in buildings in greater Boston through BHA's voucher program

In 2022, BHA, along with the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) and Alternatives for Community and Environment (ACE), received an Innovation and Capacity Building grant from the Massachusetts Clean Energy Center's EmPower program. The goal of our partnership was to explore and develop the idea of a program that pairs the need for expanding clean energy benefits to low-income households with expanding access to Housing Choice Voucher holders. Throughout 2022 and into early 2023, the group conducted desk research, interviews, and focus groups to better understand how a program in which unit owners received technical assistance for clean energy, weatherization, and/or energy efficiency upgrades in exchange for guaranteeing their unit to a voucher holder could work in Greater Boston. Such a program would encourage the adoption of clean energy and energy efficiency technology while also creating healthy and secure homes for voucher holders. BHA will continue to work with MAPC and ACE to develop and implement this program.

#### NEXT STEPS

##### Spring 2023

Finalize program proposal and solidify project partners

##### Fall 2023

Apply for a EmPower grant from MassCEC

### Funding

The work for this objective has been funded by the MassCEC grant, and we will seek another grant to implement the program. Also, BHA is exploring the use of a waiver or other financial techniques through HUD to encourage landlord adoption of this program by emphasizing the potential utility bill savings to tenants.

# SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES

*Engage with our residents to foster resilient, healthy communities*

Throughout all BHA's sustainability efforts, the agency will prioritize the needs and well-being of its residents.

Resident involvement has been crucial to past BHA sustainable projects, especially our Smoke-Free Housing Initiative to improve resident health and improve air quality in BHA housing. The Resident Empower Coalition and Resident Advisory Board remain crucial to BHA's work to improve the lives of our residents.

BHA seeks to use sustainability principles to build resilient communities for residents and improve public health as well as overall quality of life. Through resident participation and outreach, BHA will enhance our community's understanding of the climate crisis, the agency's work to mitigate our environmental impact, and how residents can be involved in our various sustainability initiatives. Additionally, BHA will seek to strengthen the resiliency of our communities against climate change and financial instability.

## RESIDENT IMPACTS

- Improved public health
- Better access to food sources
- Better access to public transportation
- Opportunities for employment, volunteerism, and other forms of involvement
- Fewer impacts from extreme heat, flooding, and other weather events



## SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES

### Objective 1:

Engage with residents while planning sustainability initiatives

Prior to publishing the Sustainability Strategy, BHA held multiple focus group sessions to engage our residents at the Franklin Field and Doris Bunte developments. We also presented at Resident Empowerment Coalition and Resident Advisory Board meetings. The goal of these sessions was to share key aspects of the Strategy with residents, understand residents' ideas and concerns related to sustainability, and gain constructive feedback regarding BHA's sustainability efforts.

In addition to outreach about the Strategy, BHA will continue to engage with residents regarding our sustainability objectives - particularly those that most directly involve residents like community gardens or recycling. This outreach will contribute to the success of these projects and ensure that BHA is prioritizing resident feedback while working toward its sustainability goals.

For this objective, BHA will utilize existing resident outreach channels, including: the Resident Advisory Board, tenant organizations, BHA's newsletters, BHA's website and social media, and partnerships with non-profit organizations. BHA may also provide additional educational materials and recruit resident ambassadors to spread information on-site (see Objective 2).

#### NEXT STEPS

##### Spring 2023

Finalize Sustainability Strategy, including considerations based on resident input

##### Ongoing

Continue to engage residents regarding sustainability initiatives by seeking their feedback and input

#### Funding

BHA will utilize existing resources where possible from the Center for Community Engagement. Additional funding may be sourced from the Communications or Operations Department where needed.

## SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES

### Objective 2:

Promote resident participation in the implementation of sustainable programs

As part of its resident engagement strategy, BHA will explore opportunities for resident involvement in our sustainable initiatives. This may include residents acting as ambassadors that can share information about sustainability initiatives with their communities, as well as volunteer opportunities for programs like community gardens or site cleanups.

BHA will also seek to promote "green" job opportunities for residents where possible. This effort is assisted by the PowerCorps program within the City of Boston's Office of Workforce Development, which provides young adults with training and support to work within the "green" industry. In Fall 2022, BHA promoted the upcoming PowerCorps training cycle to residents and is now exploring placement opportunities for participants in PowerCorps' building operations track. Other work opportunities for residents may utilize the National Green Infrastructure Certification Program or involve the establishment of "Green Teams" or other youth programs.

#### NEXT STEPS

##### Summer 2023

Identify placement opportunities for green jobs, and begin recruiting resident volunteers or ambassadors

##### Fall 2023

Utilize resident ambassadors to promote sustainability initiatives at Unity Days or other events

#### Funding

Residents ambassadors will be compensated through the use of stipends, which will likely be sourced from unused tenant participation funds (TPF). BHA will work with the PowerCorps and Green Infrastructure programs at the City of Boston to expand those opportunities to BHA residents.



## SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES

### Objective 3:

Create opportunities for sustainable activities and food production through urban agriculture

BHA is developing opportunities for urban agriculture in the form of community gardens at our developments in order to provide increased food access, promote healthy nutrition, and exemplify sustainable living. BHA has reviewed several sites for community gardens including MLK Towers and Franklin Field, and Franklin Field was specifically chosen for implementation. BHA will engage the resident task force in order to involve residents at that site, as well as at other sites for future gardens, in order to address any specific wishes or concerns residents may have for the garden.

BHA will seek to integrate community gardens with other initiatives including green infrastructure projects and a composting pilot.

#### NEXT STEPS

##### Summer 2023

Conduct survey of operations staff and residents at 3 potential garden sites (Groveland, Davison, Hassan)

##### Fall 2023

Complete Franklin Field community garden

##### Ongoing

Work with residents and community partners to create new gardens and maintain existing ones

### Funding

Funding to support the community gardens may be utilized from the Operations Department and from GrowBoston.

## SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES

### Objective 4:

Assist with efforts to ensure resident access to affordable and consistent public transportation

Many BHA residents use public transit as their primary form of transportation, and BHA will seek to protect and improve their ability to do so as public transit offers a more sustainable and affordable alternative to cars.

In July 2022, BHA submitted a public comment on the MBTA's proposed bus map redesign that expressed concerns about loss of bus access to some BHA residents, and the updated version of the redesign addressed almost all of those concerns to protect most residents' bus access.

Additionally, BHA is working with the City of Boston and BlueBikes to increase the amount of BlueBikes stations in and around a number of developments, such as Franklin Field, West Broadway, and Faneuil Gardens. BHA will also work with BlueBikes, site managers, and resident task forces to promote usage of the bikes and advertise BlueBikes' discounted membership for residents.

#### NEXT STEPS

##### Summer 2023

Work with BlueBikes to install new stations at chosen developments, and promote BlueBikes usage with programming events

##### Fall 2023

Identify locations for additional BlueBikes stations

### Funding

BlueBikes will fund the installation of its stations at BHA sites. Outreach about BlueBikes's membership program will be conducted through existing channels such as site staff and as part of other sustainability-related resident outreach efforts (see Objective 1).

## SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES

### Objective 5:

#### Increase public safety at BHA sites

BHA will work to improve public safety in and around its sites because feeling safe and comfortable in one's home is an important element of community sustainability and is a key to success for many of our programs. Many residents in our sustainability focus groups named public safety as a top concern.

BHA's Department of Police and Public Safety, which works closely with the Boston Police Department, is committed to providing all residents with a safe community through efficient and effective service. BHA will also work with other City of Boston departments to undertake place-based interventions with vulnerable youth and young adults in Boston. BHA is creating a pilot youth violence intervention program that will utilize BHA community spaces to provide services for youth and young adults such as after-school programming, career training, and guaranteed employment opportunities. This program may also recruit credible messengers to act as mentors for young people and provide mental health support from designated social workers. This program will work in coordination with BHA's resident task forces and other community groups and will target BHA's larger family developments with the highest need.

#### NEXT STEPS

##### Summer 2023

Continue the planning process for the youth violence intervention pilot

##### Fall 2023

Hire program staff and begin program implementation

### Funding

While state and federal resources for public safety have been limited in recent years, the City of Boston has proposed \$1.2 million for BHA public safety initiatives. The BHA has also been successful at working with members of the state legislature in targeted resources for developments such as Fairmount, and in some cases, upgrades to intercom and telecommunications systems can also assist with basic building security measures.

## SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES

### Objective 6:

Promote digital equity and technological accessibility for residents

Spurred by challenges brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic, BHA has increased efforts to expand access to technology and wireless services to its residents. BHA will continue to do so to support residents' resiliency and flexibility, with the added benefit of decreasing paper usage. BHA has also moved towards increasingly "hybrid" and paperless central office functions, including an online admissions portal. These efforts have coincided with the distribution of internet-enabled devices, facilitation of digital literacy classes for residents, and expansion of Wi-Fi in public spaces. Classes for digital equity have also been targeted specifically toward elderly residents (at Holgate, for example) and offered in multiple languages (at Charlestown, for example).

BHA has been working to build digital equity and access since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. As of 2022, we have implemented free Wi-Fi in common spaces in at least 17 developments and have distributed over 3000 tablets and laptops.

#### NEXT STEPS

##### 2023

Schedule digital literacy classes and "drop-ins" on an as-needed basis

### Funding

BHA partnered with a number of organizations to help support these efforts, including Boston Public Library, TechGoesHome, Little Brothers and Friends of the Elderly, and Central Boston Elder Services. The City of Boston supported free Wi-Fi installation through their "Wicked Free Wi-Fi" program and funding from the federal CARES Act.

## SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES

### Objective 7:

Grow residents' and voucher holders' economic mobility through programs such as AMP Up and Family Self-Sufficiency

With the understanding that economic mobility is an important aspect of resilient communities, BHA is seeking to provide financial growth resources for residents by increasing recruitment in both AMP Up and FSS. AMP Up, created through a partnership with Boston nonprofit EMPATH, is a program providing economic mobility mentoring to residents. FSS is a voluntary five-year program, run by BHA in partnership with nonprofit financial services organization Compass Working Capital, in which voucher holders and some public housing residents work with financial coaches to build their savings and achieve other financial goals. Over 200 BHA residents are enrolled in AMP UP as of October 2022, and over 1500 BHA families are currently enrolled in BHA's FSS program - anticipated to soon be the biggest in the country with a goal enrollment of 2000 families.

In 2022, BHA requested that FSS become an "opt-out" program to have more families enrolled, and BHA is currently expanding the program's eligibility to include public housing residents in addition to voucher holders.

#### NEXT STEPS

##### 2023

Expand FSS's eligibility rules to include public housing residents

##### End of 2023

Achieve a total enrollment of 2000 families in FSS

### Funding

FSS is supported by funds from HUD and Compass Working Capital. AMP Up is supported by EMPATH.

# SUSTAINABLE OPERATIONS

*Incorporate environmentally conscious practices and policies throughout BHA's internal operations*

In addition to promoting physical improvements to BHA's property and engagement with residents, the internal operations of BHA can better exemplify sustainable practices.

Each BHA employee plays an important role in promoting the efficient operation of BHA's facilities as well as enhancing the well-being of BHA residents. BHA employees are therefore crucial to the agency's work toward achieving its sustainability goals.

BHA seeks to increase the efficiency of its operations while simultaneously implementing sustainable alternatives to its activities. Not only will these actions likely result in lower energy usage and improve the appearance and maintenance of BHA properties, but they will also contribute to the resiliency of BHA as an organization. By building sustainable concepts into everyday activities, BHA staff can contribute to the long-term growth and durability of the agency.

## RESIDENT IMPACTS

- Improved efficiency of BHA operations, particularly at our sites
- Fewer waste-related problems at the developments, leading to improved public health and site aesthetics
- Longevity of sustainable programs and their benefits to residents due to dedicated staff support





## SUSTAINABLE OPERATIONS

### Objective 1:

#### Improve waste management at all BHA locations

BHA has estimated that it produces over 40,000 tons of trash each year across its 37 public housing developments - about one fifth of the City of Boston's annual tonnage. Consequently, BHA has placed a high priority on the improvement of our current waste management system and established a Waste Reduction Committee in September 2022. In January 2023, BHA also hired a Waste Reduction intern to assist with this objective. The Committee has been working to develop innovative solutions to improve waste management, reduce pests, and increase recycling and composting. It works closely with the City of Boston Public Works Department and Zero Waste team to develop sustainable and highly thought-out solutions that align with the 2019 Zero Waste Boston Plan. With the help of Zero Waste team, BHA is working to improve resident knowledge of best recycling practices through educational materials and outreach. BHA will also support residents at Groveland and Fairmount in signing up for the City of Boston's curbside composting program, as well as pilot a community compost program. We are also looking to expand the city's textile recycling program to more sites and host e-waste recycling events.

BHA is utilizing \$75,000 in city funds for waste reduction at BHA to bring in a consultant to analyze BHA's portfolio and provide recommendations for improved waste management. To support this work, BHA began collecting data on trash container typology and location, as well as on recycling practices, in early 2023. This data will also be used to measure the success of any changes made to our waste system. The recommendations provided by the consultant will guide improvements to our management system and may influence designs for future redevelopment projects. Additionally, BHA will look to begin piloting new container types, as improved container design will assist in the proper separation and disposal of trash, recycling, and food waste in addition to improving site aesthetics and discouraging illegal dumping.

#### NEXT STEPS

##### Spring 2023

Gather data on current waste systems and hire a consultant

##### Summer 2023

Implement the changes recommended by the consultant, including educational outreach, and begin pilot projects

##### 2024

Increase the baseline recycling rate by 20%

### Funding

BHA will utilize \$75,000 from the City of Boston to hire a consultant. Additional funds may be required from the Operations Department to conduct pilots or install upgrades. BHA's waste collection, recycling collection, and textile recycling is currently financially covered by the City of Boston.

## SUSTAINABLE OPERATIONS

### Objective 2:

#### Electrify the BHA fleet

BHA's primarily gas-powered fleet currently emits an estimated 390 metric tons of CO<sub>2</sub>e and uses over 40,000 gallons of fuel annually. The conversion of all fleet vehicles to electric will not only reduce our carbon emissions and use of fossil fuels, but it will also result in long-term savings for BHA as electric vehicles are less expensive to operate and maintain. BHA has hired PowerOptions to develop a conversion plan for our fleet, which involves identifying the most cost-effective solutions for procuring electric alternatives to current vehicles and for establishing a conversion timeline.

To support an all-electric fleet, BHA will also need to install electric vehicle charging infrastructure at multiple sites. BHA is utilizing PowerOptions' knowledge of best practices for charging station placement, purchasing, and operation. BHA will also use Eversource's assistance in installing charging stations at BHA sites through their EV Charging Station program. Through this program, which covers the cost of installation, BHA has already applied for charging stations at 5 key locations. As we expand the number of electric vehicle charging stations on our sites, we plan to allow residents access to the chargers as well.

#### NEXT STEPS

##### Spring 2023

Finalize and approve the fleet electrification plan from PowerOptions

##### Summer 2023

Begin installation of charging stations at selected BHA sites

##### Early 2024

Convert first round of vehicles to electric models

##### 2030

Complete final vehicle conversions for a fully electric fleet

#### Funding

BHA has allocated funding for PowerOptions' proposal for our fleet electrification process. If utilized by BHA, Eversource's EV Make Ready Program would cover the cost for charging infrastructure. Funds to purchase and install charging stations will be utilized from our capital plan. BHA may be able to access incentives for both the purchase of EVs and for discounted utility costs for charging the vehicles.

## SUSTAINABLE OPERATIONS

### Objective 3:

Encourage employee usage of bicycles and public transit through incentives

BHA will explore opportunities for staff public transit incentives in order to support BHA employees' increased use of hybrid work models following the COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, this objective hopes to encourage employees' usage of more sustainable transportation methods by making transit more affordable.

BHA has met with the City of Boston to understand their employee incentives for transit, seeking to subsidize the inclusion of BHA staff in the City's programs and generally align BHA policies with those of the City.

Consequently, BHA will begin offering its employees a 65% discount for their MBTA pass, up to the current monthly LinkPass amount (currently \$90). BHA is also working to connect its employees to city-sponsored bike share opportunities through discounted BlueBikes memberships as well as access to bike repair programs for City employees.

#### NEXT STEPS

##### Summer 2023

Begin offering transit incentives to employees

##### Summer/Fall 2023

Collect data to track changes of staff transportation habits before and after incentives

### Funding

As part of the effort to determine which incentives may be viable for BHA to offer, BHA will need to identify funding sources for each type of incentive. If BHA is able to participate in any of the City of Boston employee incentives, some costs may be covered by the City.

## SUSTAINABLE OPERATIONS

### Objective 4:

Engage with all BHA staff regarding sustainability through consistent, visible, and unified messaging

In addition to the resident engagement efforts described in Objective 1 of the Sustainable Communities section, BHA must ensure there is consistent communication about sustainability initiatives with staff. BHA has worked with staff across almost all departments to build the Sustainability Strategy, and the finished version will be shared with all employees in order to create a cohesive agency-wide philosophy surrounding the importance of sustainability.

BHA should also ensure that input from staff, particularly from maintenance teams, is included while planning specific objectives or projects described within the Strategy. This will help ensure the success and longevity of our various projects. For example, maintenance staff experiences should inform changes to the waste management system. BHA must also use consistent messaging about sustainable initiatives to both residents and staff to eliminate potential confusion and encourage the participation of each member of the BHA community in achieving our sustainability goals.

### NEXT STEPS

#### Summer 2023

Publish and promote the completed Sustainability Strategy across the agency, and begin planning the creation of a staff sustainability working group

#### Ongoing

Provide BHA staff with consistent updates regarding sustainability initiatives

### Funding

BHA will utilize existing modes of communication, namely through BHA's Communication Department, to share information with employees about our sustainability goals and plans.

## SUSTAINABLE OPERATIONS

### Objective 5:

Hire BHA staff to support sustainability objectives and projects

BHA will review our staffing and look to hire new employees as needed in order to continue our progress towards environmental responsibility and community resiliency.

A primary component of this objective is to anchor all sustainability efforts under a new, senior-level staff position, such as a Sustainability Director. This employee would work interdepartmentally to integrate all manner of sustainable practices and policies - existing and new - throughout the agency. This position will also be responsible for updating the Strategy periodically as new goals and opportunities for sustainability arise.

BHA will also look to make program-specific hires as needed, which would center on topics such as recycling/composting, energy efficiency or fossil fuel reduction, and more.

#### NEXT STEPS

##### Spring 2023

Identify a strategy for utilizing energy savings to fund a full-time position

##### Summer 2023

Evaluate need for program-specific hires

##### Fall 2023

Hire a senior-level staff position for sustainability

### Funding

A full-time sustainability staff position will likely be situated within the Administration Department. However, funding for this position as well as other sustainability-related staff positions may be supported by savings from other sustainability initiatives, such as savings from lower energy costs that result from building upgrades. Grant or fellowship opportunities may also be available for some positions.