

Boston Housing Authority
DRAFT Five-Year Agency Plan 2020 – 2024

Boston Housing Authority owns and manages more than 10,000 units of public housing and administers housing subsidies for an additional 13,500 families in Boston and eastern Massachusetts through its Leased Housing programs. It is BHA's purpose to provide quality homes and strong communities for low-income Bostonians. BHA housing is truly affordable to Boston's most vulnerable families and individuals, and the Authority strives to ensure that its housing resources serve as a platform for opportunity for residents and a resource to the broader community.

BHA is a critical Boston institution that is an integral part of the vast majority of neighborhoods across the city. Employing nearly 800 workers, most of whom live in the city, BHA contributes significantly to the local economy. Each year we invest nearly \$140 million across the neighborhoods of Boston in the operation of our public housing communities, and we also invest \$239 million in private housing throughout the City through our Leased Housing program. We have generated an additional \$1.5 billion of investment in our neighborhoods through public-private partnerships like the redevelopments currently underway at Whittier, Orient Heights, and Charlestown.

One of the priorities laid out in BHA's previous five-year plan, 2015-2019, was to develop a framework to ensure the long-term viability of BHA's public housing communities in the face of persistent federal funding shortfalls. One important strategy has been public-private partnerships between BHA and other providers of affordable housing and supportive services. In November 2014, BHA issued an invitation to the affordable housing community in the form of a Request for Qualifications, asking organizations to propose innovative approaches to preserving BHA's housing for future generations with decreased reliance on federal public housing subsidies. The response was wide-ranging. BHA received ideas focused on over thirty separate public housing communities. In the years since, BHA has been taking up the most promising proposals one at a time, issuing a series of Requests for Proposals that have led to several new public-private partnerships. In the process, BHA has articulated a set of firm principals to guide its partnerships: Engage residents and community members in meaningful participatory planning; ensure tenant protections; fully preserve on a one-for-one basis all deeply subsidized housing units; and focus on sustaining BHA's assets to fulfill its mission to serve future generations.

An equally critical strategy in addition to public-private partnerships is to provide for those BHA communities that will remain under BHA ownership—which is the majority of BHA's housing (about 7000 units). Amassing the resources to upgrade and maintain BHA's public housing portfolio remains a challenge given the nearly \$1 billion in capital backlog. BHA will continue to invest in the long term preservation of these communities using a variety of tools, including

HUD's Rental Assistance Demonstration program, project-based Section 8, comprehensive capital planning, and better use of technology to deliver our housing services. These BHA sites will continue to be a critical part of their surrounding neighborhoods and the community fabric of the City of Boston.

While we endeavor to preserve our public housing assets, BHA's Leased Housing program has steadily grown to cover more than 13,500 homes, providing a critical tool for affordable housing preservation and development throughout Boston. BHA is continually implementing strategies to ensure that the Leased Housing program is effectively serving low-income families and individuals. As part of BHA's commitment to affirmatively further fair housing, in July 2019, BHA implemented Small Area Fair Market Rents (SAFMRs) as exception payment standards in those zip codes where they are necessary to make communities accessible and affordable for voucher holders. The goal of implementing SAFMR exception payment standards is multifold: expand choice for voucher holders and decrease the concentration of vouchers in high poverty areas; preserve people's ability to remain where they live, preventing displacement and harmful gentrification; and minimize the risk of artificially inflating rents throughout the city.

Over the coming five years, as we continue to invest in public housing preservation and expand the reach of the Leased Housing program, BHA will adjust our business processes and expand our internal capacities. For this 2020-2024 Plan we identify six broad strategic priorities:

1. Achieve and maintain high performer status for the public and leased housing programs.
2. Strengthen and preserve the BHA portfolio of public housing.
3. Increase housing opportunities through the leased housing program.
4. Support resident capacity-building, self-sufficiency and quality of life initiatives that help residents meet their personal goals for themselves and their families.
5. Identify and plan for future staffing needs at BHA.
6. Continue to improve customer service in all areas so that the BHA is consistently experienced by residents, applicants, landlords and vendors as an efficient, pleasant and responsive organization.

Each year BHA will report on our progress toward achieving these goals, and we will expand and adjust initiatives as needed. We look forward as a community to strengthening and adapting BHA's operations to best deliver on BHA's purpose of providing quality homes, strong communities, and meaningful opportunity to low-income families and individuals.



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GOALS

1. Achieve and maintain high performer status as evaluated by HUD in their Public Housing Assessment System (PHAS) for the public and leased housing programs:
 - Maintain 97% or higher Occupancy levels.
 - Maintain 100% utilization of Housing Choice Vouchers (Section 8 vouchers).
 - Continually improve toward achievement of high-performer PHAS status.

2. Strengthen and preserve the BHA portfolio of public housing:
 - Formalize asset management staffing and systems within BHA’s organizational structure.
 - In all redevelopment transactions, provide for BHA’s financial stability in order to preserve public housing character and associated tenant protections into the future.
 - Complete a portfolio-wide capital needs assessment for all properties not currently slated for redevelopment. Devise a strategic plan to fund these capital needs over the long term.
 - Add new deeply affordable units where possible during redevelopment.
 - In furtherance of BHA’s commitment to sustainability, continue to reduce carbon emission toward 38% of 2008 level; and continue to explore climate resiliency, moving from identifying vulnerabilities toward implementing solutions.

3. Increase Housing Opportunities through the Leased Housing program:
 - Apply for additional vouchers as opportunities arise.
 - Maintain high occupancy rates in the Project-Based Voucher (PBV) portfolio while decreasing turnover times.
 - Optimize the use of PBVs to preserve and create affordable housing in Boston.
 - Implement ECHO—Expanding Choice in Housing Opportunities pilot program—and Small Area Fair Market Rents to promote access for voucher holders to a wider array of neighborhoods.

4. Strengthen resident capacity-building and quality of life initiatives that help residents meet their own personal goals and that help support vibrant communities:
 - Rebuild resident capacity program to support resident empowerment and leadership; improve the efficacy and efficiency of Local Tenant Organizations (LTOs), Resident Empowerment Coalition (REC), and Section 8 Tenants Incorporated (S8TI).
 - Develop metrics to track levels of resident organization and engagement.
 - Revise LTO policy, election procedures, and by-laws; pursue strategies to maximize diversity of participants and their level of participation in LTOs.
 - Institutionalize resident protections and participation in all redevelopment projects; advance internal BHA systems to ensure long-term compliance by new owners.
 - Explore voter registration at re-certification.
 - Increase Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS) Participation from 200 to 800 households.

5. Identify and plan for future staffing needs and to support BHA staff:
 - Proactively plan for future staffing in light of property repositioning and pending retirements; identify areas where BHA needs to hire for new capacities and functions.
 - Institute additional mentoring and training for the current and the next generation of BHA staff.
 - Continue to promote diverse hiring and employment opportunities for BHA residents.
 - Continue to develop information systems, communications tools, and interactive forums to enhance collaboration, efficiency and productivity across departments.

6. Continue to improve customer service in all areas to ensure that the BHA is consistently experienced by residents, applicants, landlords and vendors as an efficient, pleasant and responsive organization:
 - Develop a Customer Service Policy to promote client-focused and consistent service delivery.
 - Optimize technology to transform interaction with the agency—e.g., landlord and tenant portals, vendor tools, on-line rental payment and direct deposit.
 - Streamline and simplify the housing application process to maximize transparency for applicants and focus staff efforts on working with applicants who are most likely to be housed in the near future.
 - Simplify applicant and resident forms; improve program marketing materials and briefings.
 - Improve landlord recruitment and retention strategies.
 - Provide additional opportunities for customer feedback.