

CHAMPLAIN HOUSING TRUST
Strategic Plan
2017-2019

Strengthen the Housing Continuum

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INTRODUCTION –

Champlain Housing Trust is 32 years old. We are proud of the positive difference we have made in northwestern Vermont.

Our current form is the result of a merger in 2006 between the Burlington Community Land Trust and the Lake Champlain Housing Development Corporation. The combination of these two very different housing groups has created a full-service housing and community development corporation. CHT now provides housing from homelessness to homeownership, and can respond to a variety of community development needs from new forms of housing and housing services to neighborhood revitalization, historic preservation, emergency redevelopment, blight removal, pollution mitigation and community facilities.

Our ‘parent’ organizations share a proud history that dates back to the 1980s when first the City of Burlington and then the State of Vermont initiated a sea change in housing policy directing all public housing funds to support permanently affordable homes produced and preserved by a network of citizen-led nonprofits. CHT is an active part of this network that continues to preserve Vermont’s affordable housing stock, protect vulnerable renters and low-income homeowners, support smart growth and vital communities, and produce new housing where it is needed.

In the years since the merger, CHT has encountered enormous challenges and has proven its resilience. CHT faced the massive financial crisis in 2008, Tropical Storm Irene in 2011 and provided assistance to affected communities at each juncture by creating new and innovative programs. In addition, CHT has improved its portfolio, maintained a robust development pipeline, strengthened its balance sheet and established reserve funds to stabilize operations through future ups and downs.

More recently, we have become a leader in addressing the homelessness crisis and successfully brought together health, human service and housing resources to produce new housing models that boost people from homelessness to homes where on-site supports assure health and security. As we look forward to the next three years, CHT is ready to double down on serving those with the greatest need, even as we continue to produce rental and homeownership options and to provide financial counselling and other supports to assure that all of our residents succeed in the housing that best serves their needs and provides them the utmost opportunity. We will also respond to related community needs be it for preservation, adaptive reuse, neighborhood improvements or facilities.

CHT is the nation’s largest community land trust and a leader both nationally and internationally in the development and growth of CLT housing. Shared-equity homeownership is the CLT’s singular contribution to the field of affordable housing and the innovation that garnered CHT’s receipt of the 2008 United Nations’ World Habitat Award, and a national Renewal Award in 2016. CHT currently has 570 homes in the shared-equity portfolio, and served our 1,000th homeowner in the past year, as well as 2,250 permanently affordable rentals. The organization also provides specialized services to resident-led affordable communities like Northgate Resident Ownership Corporation (NROC), with 336 apartments, and six housing cooperatives. In all, this portfolio serves 6,000 people and is valued at more than a third of a billion dollars. We also operate a HomeOwnership Center

and a growing home repair loan program, and offer a broad array of home education and financial counseling services.

I. WHO WE ARE AND WHAT WE DO

A. MISSION

The Champlain Housing Trust is a Community Land Trust that supports the people of Northwest Vermont and strengthens their communities through the development and stewardship of permanently affordable homes.

B. VISION

The communities of Northwest Vermont will be diverse and inclusive with safe, decent, affordable, and attractive housing choices for all people, supported by site-specific and neighborhood level services and programs that enhance health and opportunity.

C. VALUES

The following key values guide our work:

- ▶ Permanent Affordability and Community Control. CHT is a Community Land Trust with a membership drawn from our region that elects a Board of Directors with equal representation of local governments, residents of CHT homes and the wider community. Through this open and democratic structure, we steward a variety of permanently affordable housing options for low and moderate income persons, with a priority for our most underserved populations and neighborhoods.
- ▶ Housing Security and Mobility. CHT is committed to providing the widest range of options to serve people at various income levels, with any kind of special need, at different points in their life and in different housing markets within the service area. We do this through our partnerships with social service agencies and by developing and stewarding a variety of housing types and tenures. Most importantly we provide wraparound programs, services and membership benefits that allow people to enjoy security, affordability and mobility within our portfolio of homes to meet changing needs.
- ▶ Diversity and Inclusion. CHT highly values the involvement of members and constituents in our programs and activities, and works towards diversity in our workforce, governance, and the people we serve. In keeping with this value, CHT seeks to ensure the highest possible level of inclusion and cultural sensitivity.
- ▶ Energy Conservation and Smart Growth. CHT is committed to promoting affordability and protecting the environment by reducing energy costs and consumption. CHT supports long-term regional sustainability through development strategies that use the land wisely and that foster pedestrian and transit-oriented communities.
- ▶ Employer of Choice. CHT is committed to employing the best workforce possible by providing competitive compensation and benefits, including a livable wage, and a safe and welcoming workplace for all employees.
- ▶ Flexibility. CHT will balance social responsibility with reasonable risk-taking so that we can meet our commitments in a changing world and adapt services, production and financing models to respond to market changes, customer needs, and new opportunities.

- ▶ Transparency and Accountability. CHT conducts its business, programs and activities with honesty, integrity and transparency and is accountable to the people we serve and our members through our membership and elected Board of Directors.
- ▶ Leadership. CHT is recognized at local, regional, state, national and international levels as being a leader in affordable housing and in particular for our success in creating and preserving permanently affordable homes through the community land trust model. We embrace our obligation to lead and to advocate for policies and programs that will support this sustainable and community-based approach to housing affordability.
- ▶ Excellence. CHT is committed to excellence and quality in all of our programs and services.

D. BUSINESS LINES, PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

The Champlain Housing Trust is a developer and trustee of public assets through two primary activities:

- ▶ Homeownership Promotion and Preservation. CHT develops and preserves affordable homeownership opportunities through our stewardship of shared equity, owner-occupied housing. CHT also promotes, expands, and preserves homeownership through financial and home education and counseling, lending programs, default intervention and foreclosure prevention. CHT's HomeOwnership Center has offices in Burlington and St. Albans to provide these services.
- ▶ Multi-Family Housing and Property Management. CHT owns and manages affordably priced rental housing. CHT provides training and technical support for housing cooperatives so that residents may effectively govern their corporations and their communities. CHT also provides management to our commercial tenants and non-profit facilities. Management and maintenance is on-site at larger properties or served regionally through our Burlington Headquarters or St. Albans satellite.

These two primary activities are supported by:

- ▶ Real Estate Development. CHT develops new, and preserves existing, affordably priced housing, including resale-restricted homes, multi-family rental apartments and limited equity cooperative homes. CHT also develops commercial spaces, service facilities, community parks, and other non-residential amenities that provide a foundation for strong, vital communities.
- ▶ Community Relations. CHT is a membership organization that encourages advocacy and community building activities in support of affordable housing programs. CHT raises private donations from individuals, corporations and charitable foundations as well as public sources in support of our mission and activities through an annual campaign, endowment, planned giving and targeted fund drives. CHT promotes our mission through marketing, community group engagement and other outreach tools. CHT is also a leader and mentor in promoting affordable housing and the community land trust model in Vermont, nationally and internationally.
- ▶ Finance. The Finance Department provides financial and accounting services to all CHT departments, manages the annual corporate and partnership audits, develops annual budgets, and provides monthly and quarterly reporting as well as mid-year budget projections and forecasts.

- ▶ Human Resources, Administration and Management. Human Resources leads all recruiting & staffing efforts, insures staff performance management, develops and coordinates training and development, oversees the establishment of staff compensation and benefits, supervises administrative staff and technology services.
- ▶ Governance. Board members are committed to CHT's mission of expanding affordable housing opportunities in our region, and to the Community Land Trust model of permanent affordability. They use their diverse array of skills and perspectives to add value on strategy, governance, fundraising and CHT's profile in the community.

In all, there are 90 CHT employees. We are headquartered in downtown Burlington and have a property management office in St. Albans and property site offices in Burlington, Colchester, South Burlington, Swanton, Alburgh, and a maintenance office in Burlington.

E. SERVICE AREA

Champlain Housing Trust serves and draws membership from a three-county service area in northwest Vermont, encompassing Chittenden, Grand Isle and Franklin Counties. This service area is home to one third of Vermont's population at just over 200,000 people. The region's 39 cities and towns are all able to draw on CHT's deep history and capacity to fulfill their affordable housing and community development goals. A scan of our market can be found in the following section.

Membership in CHT is open to all residents of the service area. Members elect the Board of Directors who govern CHT at a policy level and vote on key organizational decisions, especially those that advance our mission of being perpetual stewards of land, permanently affordable housing and related community assets to the primary benefit of low and moderate income persons and neighborhoods. The Board of Directors is made up of three distinct stakeholder groups (five seats each): residents of our homes; municipal leaders; and general members. This open membership and representative governance helps to assure that we will remain responsive and responsible to the people of this service area. Board term limits also provide for continual outreach to new stakeholders and keep our mission focus and activities in tune with the times and varied needs across our service area.

While the service area is broader, CHT's Target Area is Burlington's Old North End, the region's largest concentration of poverty and Vermont's most multi-cultural area with a very high concentration of refugees and new Americans. CHT has its highest concentration of housing in this neighborhood which has historically suffered from poor housing stock - now a very old stock - and periods of neglect and disinvestment. CHT has made the most of the Old North End's diversity and proud history as the neighborhood of immigrants going back to the nineteenth century, and has a mixed portfolio of affordable homes that include historic renovations and new construction that have significantly upgraded the neighborhood overall while continuing to serve its lower income residents.

It is in this Target Area that CHT has provided most of its non-housing facilities to deliver much-needed services, including a pocket park, properties housing daycare and senior services, a food shelf, and offices for Legal Aid. This targeting of community development capacity has been consistently supported through generous funding by the

City of Burlington and a three decade collaborative partnership with the City's Community and Economic Development Office.

CHT's affordable housing development, management and stewardship activities are predominantly deployed in our service area of northwest Vermont which includes urban, suburban and rural housing markets. This diversity requires CHT to be nimble and flexible to respond appropriately to a variety of local priorities. CHT also partners with nonprofits in other regions of Vermont to deliver specific products and technical assistance statewide, and this exchange of specialties among Vermont's nonprofits is a potential area of growth for CHT.

F. GOVERNANCE

Implementation of this Plan is ultimately in the hands of the Board of Directors. To successfully manage and oversee all the ongoing work and new initiatives of CHT, the Board will need to continue to function at a high level and develop and adhere to its own plan for effective governance.

CHT is a complex social enterprise with multiple grant-funded programs and services as well as property assets and real estate development activities that generate fee income. Affordable housing is highly regulated with many silos of compliance that place further demands on the Board's fiduciary obligations.

Our sector continues to evolve at a rapid pace in response to environmental factors in the economy, government and housing market. Over the next three years CHT will secure and deploy new sources of capital to replace lost programs in order to responsibly steward our substantial portfolio into the future and to continue to address the acute housing needs of lower income residents in our region.

In this rapidly changing environment the Board will need to balance CHT's institutional responsibilities with the need to step up to core mission responsibilities - a balance that requires courage, and an appetite for innovation along with a healthy dose of sound risk-management. As part of the planning process, the Board has identified several focus areas to improve its own work:

- A renewed emphasis on core Board training in all aspects of CHT's business and programs.
- Succession planning that places emphasis on recruiting the best talent and formally training the next leaders.
- Top notch support for Board development in fundraising and ambassadorial roles to build greater fiscal strength.
- Better use of committees to build specialized Board expertise that the group can rely on.

G. PARTNERSHIPS AND PARTNER FEEDBACK

CHT plays a leadership role at the state and national level in a variety of networks that bring funding, technical assistance, representation and support for our mission. In addition, we collaborate with local social service agencies and other housing organizations on a wide range of innovative programs and projects. Our many strong and valued partnerships are a vital aspect of our ability to leverage resources and deliver services for the benefit of the people and communities we serve.

As part of the planning process for this three-year strategic plan, CHT engaged an independent consultant to gather advice and feedback from our local and state partners and stakeholders. In spring of 2016, interviews were conducted with leaders representing 31 organizations and agencies, including funding partners, housing service providers, and social service agencies. Interview findings were summarized in a written report and presented for discussion by CHT Board and senior staff members. The interviews provided valuable perspectives that inform the three-year priorities outlined in this plan.

A list of partners can be found in Appendix A. A list of respondents to our strategic planning survey and a summary of their feedback is in Appendix B.

H. RISKS AND OPPORTUNITIES

As a result of the economic downturn following the financial crisis, and the steep reduction in public investments by federal and state governments, these are very hard times for the people we serve and a challenging environment in which we need to plan. However, we are building from a strong foundation – one that we have put in place with exactly such contingencies in mind.

CHT has undergone a progression of organizational development since its merger in 2006. In the first phase, the structure for a new organization was developed from the various parts of BCLT and LCHDC creating a new cohesive whole. This reorganization really got underway once we moved all core staff into our new headquarters two years after merger. As examples, new organizational structures were applied and tested, new technology systems were put into place, and plans for a new office infrastructure were implemented. This emphasis on having the right platform for our regional scale has been institutionalized through our management structure and oversight with regular staffing structure reviews, IT upgrades, succession and disaster planning as examples.

The theme for our second phase and strategic plan was ‘Strength Matters.’ CHT focused on building our financial sustainability and improving our portfolio of properties. As examples, individual properties were refinanced, new budget development and review systems were established and tested, and emphasis was placed on building assets and our balance sheet. This focus on financial sustainability is now ingrained in the organization’s DNA.

The third phase was ‘Community Matters’ the first plan where CHT looked outward with a view to deploying our new strength and scale for maximum community benefit. The primary focus was on people: our residents and those in need of our housing who were reeling from the impact of the Great Recession which has disproportionately been borne by lower wage and poor people. Our plan evaluations tracked and documented the overall success of our initiatives and quantitative goals, and this current plan continues and expands on this overarching theme of serving our most fragile citizens and supporting them, and all our residents, to sustain their housing security.

The planning process for Strengthening the Housing Continuum occurred over six months of the past year and included a full staff retreat, a Board retreat and many sessions for all in between. We emerged with a focus on how we will better serve the people who need a home and those who already call CHT home. This builds on past CHT initiatives to serve the homeless, the disabled, people with poor credit and families

in foreclosure. In the next three years we will strengthen, enhance and synthesize this work – and expand it as resources allow.

I. EXTERNAL ENVIRONMENT AND MARKET TRENDS

Regional Economic Factors

CHT's three county service area includes Chittenden, Franklin and Grand Isle counties. Our housing market is varied, encompassing urban neighborhoods and very rural areas with very old housing stock, as well as newer suburbs.

About a third of Vermont's population lives in our region's 39 towns and cities. Two of the largest employers include big institutions: the UVM Medical Center and the University of Vermont. The technology sector also is a significant employer with Global Foundries and Dealer.com in the region, among others.

The unemployment rate is low, and employers have a hard time filling open positions due to primarily two factors: lack of skilled labor and housing costs. Rental vacancy rates fluctuate between 1% and 3% in the core of the region, leaving too many with limited housing choices. While household income for a family of four has increased by 14% since 2010, the income needed to rent a two-bedroom at Fair Market Rent has increased by 22% in that time, and for a three-bedroom apartment it is up 26%.

Homelessness

In 2016's annual Point-in-Time count, homeless providers in Chittenden County found a 29% decrease from the previous January in the number of people who were homeless. This was on top of an 11% reduction from the year before. Clearly, efforts to house people without a home are working. Even with this great progress, there are still 332 people who are homeless in the county – or roughly 100 more than who were homeless ten years ago.

The last two years' progress is largely due to a collective focus and cooperation of agencies through the Chittenden Homeless Alliance and embracing of strategies employed by the widely successful 100,000 Homes Campaign, as well as adoption of a housing first model. Still, the high cost of housing, lack of rent subsidy, and underfunding of services will make continued progress slower than we would like to see.

Rental Costs And Vacancy

Perhaps not a surprise to anyone who is currently renting or has looked for a rental in the past few years, in 2014 Chittenden County had the second highest percentage of cost burdened renters in New England. The county's 56% rate was only second to Barnstable County in Massachusetts – home to Cape Cod – where very little non-vacation rentals exist.

Fair Market Rents have steadily increased over the past ten years at a much faster pace than wages. In 2006, a two bedroom apartment fetched \$935. Today, that apartment has increased to \$1,356, or close to an average 5% increase annually; a renter would need to earn more than \$26 an hour to afford it. Fueling this increase has been a slowdown in the homeownership market. The significant increase in the availability of low-cost capital for the private sector to build multi-family homes has resulted in a slight rise in the number of rentals coming on line, but not nearly enough to bring prices down. With low vacancy, it seems all segments of the market are in high demand, pushing prices north.

For our affordable rentals we see on average 140 applications per month vying for 20 vacancies.

Homeownership Affordability

Unlike other parts of the country, Vermont – and our market in particular – did not see a precipitous decline in prices after the market crash. Median prices have grown slowly over the past ten years from \$218,000 in 2005 to \$250,000 in 2015, or a 14% increase. But the housing market ahead of the crash was very hot, with an average increase of about 9% annually in the decade leading up to 2007.

There was no significant reduction in prices when the housing bubble burst, just a slowdown in sales. Right now, the volume of sales are about 30% less than what it was at its peak ten years ago. With slower growth in prices and historically low interest rates, the biggest barrier has been saving for a down payment. A new program piloted in 2015 by Vermont Housing Finance Agency for \$5,000 in recoverable down payment funds has been very popular. CHT's Shared Equity Homeownership program essentially eliminates down-payment requirements for buyers, and this really deepens affordability for current and future buyers through CHT's resale restrictions.

Public Programs and Political Outlook

The affordable housing sector – and in fact, all of the social safety net supported by public sources – has operated in an environment of professed scarcity and real austerity for the last decade. Calls for federal deficit reduction resulted in programs being cut or level funded in an era of significant need for low income households.

We are also on the verge of a dramatic change in political leadership that may set us on a new path. While the Presidential race provides a stark contrast in the role of government more generally, every new leader brings with them new priorities and ideas that will result in need for CHT to adapt and advocate.

The amount of change on the state level, though, is unprecedented: as this plan unfolds, we will welcome a new Governor, Lt. Governor, Speaker of the House and Senate President. Those new leaders also will leave vacancies in their wake on key committees or leadership posts.

All of these political changes are happening when we see a need for increased capital and increased production of affordable housing – and housing in general. Navigating these waters will be critical to the success of the efforts laid out in this plan.

J. PLAN EVALUATION

CHT has established measurable performance targets and benchmarks for all of the goals described in this Strategic Plan. Progress will be tracked as follows:

- ▶ Monthly written staff reports to Board track progress toward plan goals
- ▶ Quarterly, benchmark reports to Board are on the Board agenda for discussion
- ▶ At the plan mid-point, the Board review overall progress and make any needed amendments to the goals and strategies

In addition to these organization-wide evaluation methods, evaluation tools to analyze and measure effectiveness of specific aspects of CHT services, such as resident and tenant satisfaction surveys, are described in appropriate sections of this Plan. The

triennial survey of community partners and funders (as attached to this Plan) will be utilized to evaluate CHT's community level performance.

II. OVERVIEW OF NEW INITIATIVES: EXPANDING AND STRENGTHENING THE CONTINUUM

New initiatives in this Plan support an overall goal to strengthen the ability of our residents to secure and sustain a quality, affordable home for themselves and their families. These activities will increase and strengthen the continuum of housing choices, and provide **safety, security and mobility** to all who come into contact with CHT.

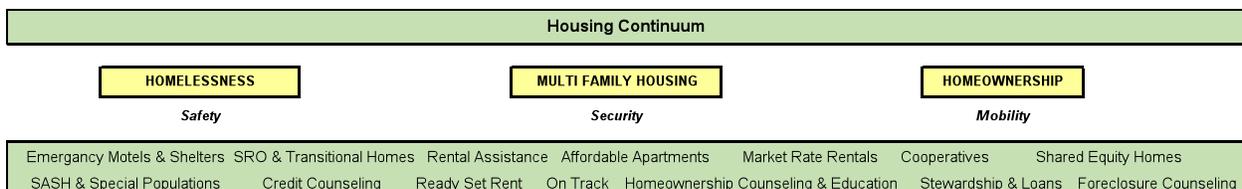
- ▶ We will work tirelessly to end homelessness by building the lower rungs of the continuum and extending and strengthening the continuum by adding new housing types to fill existing gaps, like emergency housing, supportive housing with healthcare, and transitional housing. We will create more homes for people who are chronically homeless, house more families who are homeless within our portfolio, strengthening our tie with homeless service and medical providers, and explore the development of additional housing options with comprehensive, coordinated services. We will also continue to press for additional rent subsidy for this population and to increase affordable capital for much-needed conventional rental production as well as more innovative and targeted housing models, and continue to work on housing retention to reduce evictions.
- ▶ We will help individuals and families to be more financially secure and stable by supporting their ability to transition between rental housing, co-ops and homeownership as well as from homeownership to rental, co-op or housing with specialized services which meet their changing needs. We will assure that all applicants and residents have access to financial counselling and other supports essential to successful tenures.
- ▶ We will provide security and opportunity with services that boost access and retention. We will strengthen our social work program by developing a comprehensive system-wide approach for serving our residents, both in special needs housing and in rental apartments.
- ▶ We will promote a sense of place and community among the residents of our properties, connecting them with CHT's mission and fostering a sense of empowerment. We will add to our ladder of services and community building activities, working with our residents to improve the quality of our properties through reduced turnover, better resident relations, improved community perceptions and overall higher customer satisfaction.
- ▶ We will maintain and strengthen opportunity and mobility, creating new tenure models as necessary.
- ▶ We will support these efforts through new capital sources, both public and private, through targeted charitable campaigns, social investments, as well as new partners for housing development and planned giving.
- ▶ We will build a broad coalition to support the Building Homes Together Campaign, to create allies for new capital sources for affordable housing, and to promote the development of moderate and middle income housing in Chittenden County.

- ▶ We work towards inclusion and diversity amongst our employees, and will continue to invest in and support the employees of CHT, providing livable wages and benefits, strengthening our training programs to ensure their opportunities to grow and learn at the workplace, and to ensure that our leadership bench is deep by strengthening the ability for employees to advance, and for CHT to maintain optimal capacity and transition smoothly between employees.
- ▶ We will redevelop the St. Joseph’s school building in the Old North End Target Area to assure the continued affordable tenancy of critical services of the Association of Africans Living in Vermont (who serve all refugee groups), the Robin’s Nest Children’s Center (a non-profit daycare), the Family Room health services organization; and to provide a gym and theater to the City Parks Department to deliver neighborhood senior, youth and sports programming, and theater and cultural events. The St. Joseph’s school building will also provide a community kitchen to incubate small food businesses and to provide job training in the food services. This will be available to a variety of local groups and associations. Preserving and improving this property as a resource and recreation center for the neighborhood will also revitalize a key corner of our Target Area.

Along with these new efforts, CHT will maintain its high operating standards and production goals to assure that the people of this region will continue to have access to high quality, safe, and affordable housing that CHT stewards for their benefit while remaining financially sustainable.

- ▶ We will build new apartments, refinance and rehabilitate older ones and work with our partners to save affordable rental housing that is at risk of conversion to market-rate housing due to the expiration of subsidized financing. We will also build or partner to create new homes for sale.
- ▶ We will choose sites and projects that meet smart growth and community development goals including proximity to transportation, goods, services and employment opportunities; develop buildings that are attractive and to a scale that is appropriate to the area and strive for maximum energy efficiency; and, where economically feasible, convert to alternative energy sources in all of our properties.
- ▶ We will continue to provide and support affordable and sustainable homeownership, and in particular, *permanently* affordable homeownership, to those excluded from the market by offering comprehensive education and counseling, residential loans, shared equity purchase subsidies and stewardship. We will also continue to provide home rehabilitation services and affordable loans and expand our loan services and products to support sustainable homeownership.

CHAMPLAIN HOUSING TRUST’S CONTINUUM OF HOUSING



III. BUSINESS LINE PROGRAM GOALS, STRATEGIES & OUTCOMES

A. HOMEOWNERSHIP PROMOTION & PRESERVATION

Shared Equity, Loan Fund, Education

Provide and support affordable and sustainable homeownership, and in particular, permanently affordable homeownership, to those excluded from the market by offering education and counseling, residential loans, shared equity purchase subsidies and stewardship, and related services

1. Goal: Assist low and moderate income households in becoming homeowners.

▶ Strategies:

Shared Equity Program

- Continue to convert apartments to permanently affordable condominiums where it best serves the community, either through conversion of existing CHT apartments (such as Westwood or Coolidge) or through the purchase of a rental development (such as South Meadow or Ethan Allen).
- Participate in opportunities to develop new homeownership units either in low-risk partnerships with private developers/builders or in combination with CHT-developed multi-family properties.
- Collaborate with Green Mountain Habitat for Humanity on the construction of new homes.
- Collaborate with municipalities to encourage more affordable homeownership through Inclusionary Zoning and permit-required affordable homes.
- Offer buyer-driven grants to customers to bring existing high quality scattered-site homes into our portfolio.

Loan Fund

- Continue to offer financing options to assist with the purchase and replacement of manufactured homes throughout Vermont.
- Build upon existing relationships with grant funders, lenders, and other partners to increase CHT's ability to provide affordable financing opportunities to new home buyers and obtain a mortgage broker license in order to implement a USDA loan packaging program to help low-income home buyers to access affordable home purchase financing in a timely manner.
- Identify new funding options to expand CHT's loan products to help more people buy homes.

Home Education

- Continue to offer pre-purchase education and counseling to help low or moderate income households access affordable mortgage products.

► **Outcomes:**

Shared Equity Program

- Facilitate 140 home sales by adding 65 homes to the SEP portfolio and coordinating 75 resales of shared equity properties:

Add 50 properties into the SEP portfolio through CHT new construction development or condo conversions; Add 6 properties through the Buyer Driven program; Add 3 properties through Inclusionary Zoning ordinances; Add 6 properties through partnering with Green Mountain Habitat for Humanity; 60 home buyers will have incomes below 75% of AMI;

- SEP homebuyers will pay on average the same amount in housing costs for their SEP home as they were paying in rent before purchasing:

SEP homebuyers will save on average \$200 per month in owning their home compared to if they bought it without down payment assistance.

Loan Fund

- Provide Manufactured Housing Down Payment Loans to 72 households throughout Vermont;
- 50 households using CHT's manufactured home loan program will have incomes below \$45,000;
- Successfully package 6 USDA 502 Direct mortgage loans.

Home Education

- Provide pre-purchase counseling to 600 households;
- Counsel 240 households who go on to purchase a home.

2. Goal: Preserve and steward existing affordable homes.

► **Strategies:**

Shared Equity Program

- Facilitate the resale of existing properties in the portfolio to income-eligible buyers.
- Assist shared equity homeowners refinance their homes to help take advantage of lower interest rates and to reduce monthly costs.
- When necessary, purchase a home from an owner to steward public investment and preserve the affordable home for future homebuyers.
- Prevent the loss of homes from our portfolio and continue to reduce the portfolio's receivables through outreach, delinquency counseling, support, and intervention. Preserve and promote the health of the shared equity portfolio by offering low-interest loans, stewardship grants, and home maintenance workshops and information.

Loan Program

- Continue to provide affordable rehab loans to help SEP homeowners and other low and moderate-income homeowners in northwest Vermont who are not adequately served through conventional loan products.

Home Education

- Provide post-purchase workshops to all homeowners in the service area, including shared equity homeowners, on all aspects of maintaining their homes such as home repairs, energy efficiency, and credit & budgeting.
- Provide stewardship counseling to SEP homeowners regarding home maintenance, budgeting, and sale of home.
- Offer counseling to all delinquent loan customers and all new loan customers whose housing ratios are greater than 45% due to debt.

▶ **Outcomes:**

Shared Equity Program

- Lose 0 homes from the shared equity portfolio due to deferred maintenance or homeowner foreclosure.

Loan Fund

- Provide rehab loans to 75 home owners, of these:
15 will be SEP owners; 30 will be elderly or disabled; Average household income for rehab loan borrowers will be less than 50% of AMI; 50 homes will be brought to HUD minimum housing quality standards; Keep delinquency rates on loans below 5% of the amortizing portfolio.

Home Education

- Provide 12 post-purchase workshops;
- Provide post-purchase workshops or counseling to 60 households.

3. Goal: Address homelessness by preventing foreclosures.

▶ **Strategies:**

Shared Equity Program

- Explore options that provide stability to at-risk non-CHT homeowners by providing grants and bringing their properties into the Shared Equity Program portfolio.

Loan Program

- Explore offering loan products to help SEP owners at risk of foreclosure gain stability.

Home Education

- Provide delinquency and foreclosure counseling to shared equity, loan fund, and others who are in or at risk of foreclosure.

- Continue the success of Ready, Set, Rent!, a financial education program that serves people who were denied a CHT rental or co-op due to poor credit or no credit history.
- Further develop “On Track,” the counseling program to provide credit and money management counseling to CHT tenants at risk of eviction due to non-payment of rent.

▶ **Outcomes:**

- Offer Ready, Set, Rent! to all CHT Property Management applicants deemed eligible, enroll 300 households in the program, of these, 100 will have rented up with CHT;
- Offer the On-Track program to all eligible CHT tenants, enroll 105 households in the program, 70 will successfully complete it;
- Provide delinquency & foreclosure assistance to 120 households, 80 of whom will have a successful resolution – either a sustainable arrangement to stay in the home or an active choice to divest of the home.

4. Goal: Identify and remove barriers for the refugee community.

▶ **Strategies:**

All Homeownership Programs

- Develop partnerships with organizations such as the Refugee Resettlement Program and the Association of Africans Living in Vermont to market the HomeOwnership Center’s programs to New Americans.
- Use social media and online tools to deliver education in innovative and accessible ways. Develop diverse formats for our education programs, including web-based availability, and translate materials into multiple languages.
- Identify programs most accessed by those for whom English is a second language and/or those who have a disability and require an accommodation.
- Videotape workshops and dub videos and translate materials into the top three most frequently requested languages. Do so for the following workshops and meetings: Focus on Credit, Money Management & Building a Better Budget, Ready, Set, Rent! Orientation, HomeBuyer Education Workshop, and Shared Equity Informational meeting.
- Provide translation services to all who need it.

▶ **Outcomes:**

- Translate at least 3 videos and/or print materials for frequently accessed programs into the 3 most frequently requested languages;
- Assist 15 New American households in becoming shared equity homeowners.

5. Goal: Make systemic improvements in Home Ownership Center operations.

▶ **Strategies:**

- Improve customer service in all home ownership programs by refining communication materials and messaging, following consistent processes, and setting clear expectations.
- Create and implement a customer experience survey in SEP and Loan Program to measure satisfaction. Continue to measure satisfaction rates in Home Education.
- Use technology to provide a better customer experience and to improve operational efficiency.
- Continue to utilize HomeKeeper to lower processing and documentation preparation time. Gain greater efficiencies and eliminate double entries when pairing HomeKeeper with Counselor Keeper – a new homeownership database which should dramatically lower reporting time.
- Streamline processes to insure maximum efficiency and impact.

▶ **Outcomes:**

- Facilitate the creation of 15 testimonials (video, audio, written) from happy customers across all three programs.

Shared Equity Program

- Create a mechanism for tracking customer satisfaction. Average customer satisfaction score will be at least 90%.

Loan Program

- Assist in the creation of efficiencies in the administration of VCDP grants state-wide;
- Reduce the average rehab loan processing time 20% from 268 to 214 days from application to project completion;
- Create a mechanism for tracking customer satisfaction. Average customer satisfaction score will be at least 90%.

Home Education

- Implement and fully utilize Counselor Keeper;
- Offer at least 2 online classes or webinars each year;
- Create and implement an online registration and payment system;
- All workshops will have a minimum average evaluation score of 4.5 out of 5.

6. Goal: Increase Opportunities for CHT renters to become homeowners.

▶ **Strategies:**

- Help CHT residents achieve homeownership through education on affordable financing options and by providing down payment assistance. Work with CHT's property management department to coordinate marketing efforts and develop systems to track successes.

▶ **Outcomes:**

- Facilitate the purchase of 12 shared equity homes by CHT tenants.

7. Goal: Strengthen the Community Land Trust movement in Vermont and beyond.

▶ **Strategies:**

- Provide technical assistance and tools to strengthen other community land trusts in Vermont on shared equity operations, financial capabilities programs, and loan fund management. Provide leadership in the CLT movement nationally and globally to spread the use of the permanently affordable model.

▶ **Outcomes:**

- Coordinate with other VT Community Land Trusts, through the NeighborWorks Alliance, to provide 30 Financial Capabilities workshops and either group or individual counselling to 300 households;
- Provide 50 hours of technical assistance in shared equity operations to other community land trusts.

B. MULTI FAMILY HOUSING AND PROPERTY MANAGEMENT

Rental Apartment, Coops, and Resident Services

1. Goal: Provide affordable, safe, high quality housing that CHT stewards for residents' benefit while remaining financially sustainable.

▶ Strategies:

- CHT will utilize Capital Needs Assessments (CNA) and the internal 5-year plan for each property and will invest and recapitalize our multi-family housing stock to ensure its safety and to preserve these community assets.
- As part of this reinvestment in our portfolio, we will continue to promote energy efficiency and adopt green building standards. We will regularly review and update Energy and Green Policy Initiatives and integrate them further into the CNA process.
- In cooperation with Community Relations, we will improve landscaping, install community gardens, install bike racks and play space, install public art and generally improve curb appeal and livability.
- CHT will continue to implement and manage effective operating budgets for each property aimed at ensuring the affordability and sustainability of each asset. Operating and capital budgets will be developed annually and monitored monthly by Property Management. Immediate corrective action plans will be developed and implemented for properties that are not performing as projected.
- Implement risk-management protocols for building and resident safety, especially for fire prevention.
- Explore and implement improved data sharing and data management systems.
- Work on strategies to decrease the amount of vacancy time it takes to fill a BHA/VSHA project-based unit.

▶ Outcomes:

- CHT's staff will manage each property budget to within a +/- 5% variance;
- 95% of portfolio will have a Debt Service Coverage Ratio of 1.15 or greater;
- 75% of portfolio will have a turnover rate of less than 15%;
- Maintain a vacancy rate of 3% or less;
- 98% of all rent will be collected by the end of each month;
- All properties will be reviewed for refinancing on an annual basis, and CHT will seek refinancing for any property greater than 2% of the current financing rate available;
- Each property will have a five (5) year Capital Plan, updated yearly;

- 95% of portfolio will have capital reserve funds adequately funded to meet capital needs identified in the Capital Plans; and
- The capital reserve account for each property will be no less than \$2,000 per unit after all scheduled activities are completed. Upon normal turnover, apartments will be made ready for occupancy within 10 days of vacancy, and occupied within 30 days;
- 100% of re-certifications will be completed timely and accurately with no findings from regulatory agencies and investors;
- Applicants will be screened and notified of their approval/denial within 10 business days of the date they submit their application.

2. Goal: End Homelessness

▶ Strategies:

- CHT will explore the development of a range of additional housing options (with comprehensive, coordinated services provided by our partners) to help households in crisis overcome their challenges, including exploring additional motel conversions to add new, small apartments serving the homeless.
- We will continue to press for additional rent subsidy for this population, will explore an internal subsidy program and will explore ways for people to overcome subsidy disqualifications such as a loan program to pay off back debt while repairing credit.
- We will continue to partner with BHA and other service agencies to create a streamlined process and designated units for homeless households that combines housing, subsidy and services.
- We will continue to work on housing retention to reduce evictions, both in-house and partnering with the BHA retention team and other service providers.
- We will continue to provide leadership within the local Continuum of Care to work towards an effective, coordinated community system that provides safe and stable housing for all people experiencing homelessness and makes homelessness rare and brief.
- We will advocate for state policy and program changes that acknowledge the needs of some households for non-time limited supports and create funding mechanisms to pay for those supports.

▶ Outcomes:

- We will meet and exceed the Governor's benchmark for providing at least 15% of CHT's housing to homeless households;
- Fewer people will become homeless, both within our portfolio, as measured by the number of CHT-initiated move-outs, and on a community-wide basis, as measured by the point-in-time counts of first-time homeless households;

- People currently on the chronic homeless community wait list will be housed within the next year, and people added to the list after that will be housed within three months;
- Overall, local levels of homelessness will be reduced because more homeless individuals and families are able to find housing options with services to help them keep their homes. The local point-in-time count of people experiencing homelessness will be reduced by at least 15% annually.

3. Goal: Offer asset building and preservation opportunities for renters and rental applicants.

▶ **Strategies:**

- With the leadership of the Homeownership Center, we will continue to implement “Ready, Set, Rent!” to provide credit and budget counseling to prospective tenants that are turned down due to poor credit.
- In addition, we will work to develop counseling, workshops, education, and support similar to RSR to assist current renters.
- Provide internal eviction prevention through a Home Education and Property Management partnership in the On Track program.
- Explore a loan program for tenants to pay off bad debt to CHT that will allow for positive credit reporting.
- Pursue opportunities to reduce landlord initiated move outs for both non-payment and cause through financial education and support services.

▶ **Outcomes:**

- Rent apartments to 100 people who have completed Ready, Set, Rent!;
- 50 renters that are in danger of being evicted for non-payment of rent will complete On Track and not be evicted from their apartment;
- 90% of renters remain in CHT rental housing successfully for 3 years or more or move on to homeownership through CHT’s homeownership opportunities;
- Reduce LIMOs (landlord initiated move-outs) to less than 1% of all turnovers.

4. Goal: Identify and remove barriers, as needed, for refugee community.

▶ **Strategies:**

- Property Management will ensure access to our programs for foreign language speakers and strengthen our work with the Association of Africans Living in Vermont, the Refugee Resettlement Program, and other organizations.
- Property Management staff will utilize translation services from the providers above and Language Line.
- Create documents translated into various languages (videos).

▶ **Outcomes:**

- 100% of tenants from the refugee community will complete their re-certifications/lease renewals in a timely manner;
- Create a positive relationship with local organizations (VTRRP, AALV, etc...) that enables positive collaboration and communication so that 100% of their clients understand their lease and will be successful in rental housing;
- Provide fair and equal access to housing opportunities provided by CHT.

5. Goal: Strengthening Services for Residents in Health Care and Housing. Create a stronger range of social services for our residents in our special needs housing as well as to those with special needs throughout our rental portfolio.

▶ **Strategies:**

- CHT will establish a system-wide plan to respond to the needs of residents and to track our results. As part of this plan, we will advocate on behalf of individuals and resident groups, develop closer partnerships (MOU's) with service providers to address needs of special populations, and offering training and support to property managers and provide wrap-around services.
- We will expand and implement SASH (Support and Services at Home) as one focus to respond to the needs of our aging tenant population and increase efforts to serve the needs of veterans.
- Continue to partner with BHA and Cathedral Square for hoarding and housing retention services.
- Continue to support at-risk households in our portfolio.
- Internally manage homelessness preference and other priority populations.
- Establish additional mission measurements and cross reference mission satisfaction with financial factors.
- Residents will be supported in such a way that they do not become a burden on property management staff by being connected to SASH/Resident Services/partnering service agencies.

▶ **Outcomes:**

- 15% of CHT's households will be made up of formerly homeless individuals/families;
- The vulnerable households in CHT rentals will reduce their emergency room visits by 30%;
- Property managers will reduce time spent on tenant issues that should be handled by social agencies by 50%;
- 85% of vulnerable households remain stably housed.

6. Goal: CHT will strengthen and improve the application process and the customer experience prior to lease up.

▶ **Strategies:**

- Provide more information about rentals and homes online; create a FAQ document for applicants and for service providers to assist their clients.
- Reformat and revise the rental application in order to create a more easy to complete form by simplifying wording and removing unnecessary information.
- Improve the application process to be swifter and more customer friendly.
- Create “Welcome Home” packets for each new resident with a magnet and coupons for community businesses.
- Create a series of tenant handbooks and guides and make them available on line.
- Improve orientation and education for tenants on the following:
 1. Apartment living neighbor issues/housekeeping skills
 2. Maintenance
 3. Support services
 4. The benefits of renters’ insurance
- Exploring ways we can provide a smoother transition and better customer service for approved applicants to find appropriate housing.
- Provide more follow up to tenants during the first few months.

▶ **Outcomes:**

- Reduced calls by 25% with questions regarding how the application process works and checking on application status;
- Reduce hotel stays for serious maintenance incidents by 30 percent per year by improving tenant knowledge/education.

7. Goal: CHT will strengthen and improve the customer service experience for our residents after lease up.

▶ **Strategies:**

- We will use resident surveys to keep abreast of residents’ concerns and satisfaction with the levels of responsiveness by property management and maintenance staff. We will modify the survey to obtain, as possible, more site-specific readings on resident experience. At least one half of all residents will be surveyed each year to assess satisfaction, and the results will be tabulated and used to adjust our services to them.
- Study and survey the impact of eliminating smoking at all or selective properties.
- Immediately respond to graffiti and litter within 24 hours.
- Creating communities at our rental properties:
 - Build community rooms at all new properties and at existing properties (if possible).
 - Create more community gardening opportunities for our residents.
 - Create more youth programming/activities at our properties.

- Consider providing free wi-fi at properties.
- Create and implement a resident rewards system for on-time payments.

▶ **Outcomes:**

- Get 50% response rate from resident survey;
- Reduce turnovers by 10% due to tenant satisfaction with property management;
- 50% participation in programs and activities at the properties;
- Increase on-time rental payments by 10% encouraging households to pay on time through rewards raffle;
- 50% fewer maintenance work orders related to graffiti and vandalism.

8. Goal: Make the maintenance department more efficient.

▶ **Strategies:**

- Maintenance will use Onesite software to track and reduce turnover time.
- Track and reduce maintenance work order calls and call response (both in general and for on-call).
- Maintenance staff will utilize additional tools to track work orders electronically through Onesite facilities and Onesite mobile app.
- Better integration between maintenance and project management as far as sharing contractors and ideas when they are both located in the same building.
- Maintenance will undertake reviews of all contracts to ensure that CHT is paying the best price for the service; ensure that there are two contractors for each required service, and assess whether any of the services purchased under contract could be performed with our own forces.

▶ **Outcomes:**

- The make ready time for turnovers will be 10 days, except for certain exceptions, approximately 5% of all turnovers;
- All non-emergency work orders will be completed within 48 hours of being called in to maintenance;
- Reduced costs of contract repairs by 10% through vendor management.

9. Goal: Help housing cooperatives and related housing communities to be self-governing and self-sustaining, and fee-for-service governance programs to be self-sustaining.

▶ **Strategies:**

- Provide orientations and structured training for Co-op Board members and committees; help the co-ops self-evaluate and strengthen any areas of concern.
- Recruit local professionals to provide training in finance, housing law, conflict management, or other specialized areas.

- Support any Co-op transitions. CHT will help leasing cooperatives manage their transitions from tax-credit partnerships to new financing and/or ownership structures as the tax-credit partnerships expire.
- Help the co-ops assess and plan for their long-term financial needs.
- Help Northgate create a robust process for cultivating resident board members, in part by providing relevant cross-training to appropriate property staff.
- Create a comprehensive Co-ops Policy, Procedures, and Standards Manual codifying our services, training systems and performance standards, to support consistency and staff training.
- Evaluate the program and consider any recommendations for strengthening it.
- If warranted by the program evaluation, begin development of at least one new co-op to strengthen the program's economies of scale.

► **Outcomes:**

- Survey co-op members yearly on their training needs; report back on the answers and any resulting changes staff make to the contents or presentation;
- Achieve at least 80% positive ratings in evaluations of the trainings we provide;
- Recruit at least four experienced co-op members to co-lead trainings by 2017;
- "Train the trainers" on best practices in adult education by 2018 for at least ten staff, subject-matter experts, and experienced co-op members;
- Contract with at least three subject-matter presenters a year;
- Provide honoraria for at least four co-op member trainers a year;
- Establish benchmarks for co-ops' financial health by 2017;
- Assess all the co-ops' 20-year financial needs by 2018;
- Identify at least four recommended financing options, including any specifically for co-ops, and educate the boards and treasurers about them by 2019;
- Conduct an academically sound evaluation of the program's performance over time, especially vis-a-vis rental housing, recruiting qualified advisors to do so, by 2018;
- Identify any program improvement goals arising from the evaluation by 2018;
- Have at least one new co-op in the development pipeline by 2020.

Northgate:

- At least thirty new residents will play volunteer and advisory roles by 2020;

- At least four new Northgate residents will serve on the board by 2020;
- Northgate property staff members will take part in at least two relevant trainings by 2020.

C. REAL ESTATE DEVELOPMENT

1. Goal: Build a broad coalition to support the Building Homes Together Campaign, to create allies for new capital sources for affordable housing.

▶ Strategies:

- Advocate for State bonding
- Promote housing trust funds
- Explore and secure impact investments
- Support Inclusionary Zoning in local communities

▶ Outcomes:

- 700 new homes a year, 20% affordable;
- \$15 million in new resources per year.

2. Goal: CHT will continue to strengthen its Community and Non Profit Facilities portfolio.

▶ Strategies:

- ReLIEF will be strengthened through the sale of 179 South Winooski Avenue, with net funds being used to finish the un-wind for 88 King Street, and to capitalize the two remaining facilities for the Food Shelf and Legal Aid.
- Repurpose the Multi Gen building for long term use and control by the Children's Space and undertake capital improvements while relocating the Senior Center's programs at more permanent space at St. Josephs Community Center.
- Purchase the St. Joseph's School and work with tenants and others in securing, sustaining and growing its current community center activities.

3. Goal: Low-income households will be able to rent high-quality, safe, permanently affordable apartments.

▶ Strategies:

- Continue to grow the internal LIFT fund in order to facilitate our ability to quickly respond to opportunities to provide additional affordable housing.
- Concentrate new construction development in markets with a demonstrated high demand for rental housing, including the core of Chittenden County.
- Pursue project-based rental assistance when possible, especially for new construction projects in Franklin and Grand Isle Counties.
- Work with towns and cities to institute new or improve existing Inclusionary Zoning Ordinances or similar effective strategies.
- Engage a realtor to investigate opportunities to purchase privately-owned, affordable rental properties of 15 or more units.

- Advocate for the construction of private market rental housing to increase the overall supply of rental housing, thereby stabilizing rents.
- ▶ **Outcomes:**
 - Construct 300 new apartments by the end of FY 2019, an average of 100 new apartments per year;
 - This includes 76 at Cambrian Rise; 36 at South Burlington City Center;
 - Purchase one new privately-owned naturally affordable rental project per year.
- 4. Goal: Low and moderate-income families will have high-quality, affordable homes available for purchase.**
 - ▶ **Strategies:**
 - Condominium conversion: look at opportunities to affordably convert existing rental housing (both in the CHT portfolio as well as privately-owned) into shared-equity condominiums for homeownership, but only where we can do so without economic displacement.
 - Continue to strengthen the relationship with Green Mountain Habitat for Humanity to include the construction of 6 new homes for sale.
 - ▶ **Outcomes:**
 - 50 new affordable homes for sale will be developed through a combination of condominium conversion and new construction.
- 5. Goal: CHT's existing rental portfolio will be strong both financially and physically. Residents of existing, privately-owned, affordable rental properties will not be at risk of losing their housing because of the sale or conversion of their homes for market-rate housing.**
 - ▶ **Strategies:**
 - We will work with partners including VHFA, Housing Vermont, the City of Burlington, HUD, NeighborWorks, the FHLB Affordable Housing Program and VHC B on the refinancing and rehabilitation of existing partnership projects with expiring tax credits to ensure they are permanently affordable to low-income households and are safe and decent homes in which to live.
 - As long-term stewards, owners and managers, we will continue to strengthen the involvement of Property Management in the development of new projects to ensure they are successful. Input from Property Management will be solicited on the design and budget projections for new projects, and the Asset Manager will be involved in reviewing project drawings, specifications and submittals.
 - Purchase of Privately-Owned Projects and Expiring Tax Credit Projects: CHT will seek out, as well as respond to, offers for sale of privately-owned affordable rental housing by assessing the economic feasibility of each project. Consideration of purchase will include price, market demand, rental subsidy, and availability of financing.
 - ▶ **Outcomes:**

- Work with Housing Vermont and funders on the restructuring of expiring tax credit projects including Richmond Village, Swanton School Apartments, Park Place, Mill View Apartments, Bus Barns, Anderson Parkway, Lime Kiln and O'Dell to preserve affordability.

6. Goal: CHT will continue to lead the industry in green and smart-growth initiatives.

▶ **Strategies**

- We will choose sites and developments that meet smart growth and community development goals including proximity to transportation, goods, services and employment opportunities.
- We will continue to pursue projects that maximize density in keeping with smart-growth principles and to maximize ongoing operating efficiencies. New construction projects will be 20 units or more.
- We will strive for maximum energy efficiency and wherever economically feasible, including the pursuit of alternative energy sources in all projects. We will take advantage of proven and effective sustainable products and materials as much as possible.
- We will pursue partnerships with alternative energy companies to provide alternative energy resources to our projects both on-site and off-site through leasing to them good solar locations in our portfolio and projects that make use of the energy use offsets they provide.
- CHT coordinates and institutionalizes green principles standards (i.e. energy efficiency, water conservation, healthy environments, sustainable materials/products, accessibility/walkability, environment friendly landscapes, recycling/water reduction/products, durability, lifecycle approach, etc.)
- CHT communicates its commitment to green practices and performance on the website, in newsletters, press releases, through social media, etc.

▶ **Outcomes**

- CHT projects will be well-sited, well-designed and have low utility costs due to high energy efficiency. When properties are redeveloped, reduced energy use by 20%. Our homes will be free from environmental hazards including lead, asbestos, mold and other chemicals;
- Up to 50% of our portfolio will be served by alternative energy sources.

D. COMMUNITY RELATIONS

1. Goal: Secure the financial resources needed to support our programs and advance our mission.

▶ Strategies:

- Expand size and resources raised from the Cornerstone Community luncheon.
- Cultivate better relationships with existing members and donors to secure larger gifts.
- Build and incorporate a planned giving program into donor communications and on the website.
- Win the highest possible grant awards from our public and private sources of funding, and identify new funding sources.
- With partners, create and respond to strategic opportunities to develop innovative funding proposals that will be submitted to both public sources and private foundations, further demonstrating the effectiveness and sustainability of our housing model and related services.
- Recruit a campaign committee to lead a capital campaign to purchase St. Joseph's School in the Old North End of Burlington, develop a campaign case, hire campaign coordinator and lead rating, screening and solicitations.

▶ Outcomes:

- Raise \$555,000 in donations over the course of the three year plan;
- Secure ten new planned gifts;
- Win awards from three new grant sources;
- Raise \$2,000,000 for the St. Joseph's capital campaign.

2. Goal: Increase public knowledge about Champlain Housing Trust and affordable housing.

▶ Strategies

- Host monthly HopeBuilder meetings and visit community groups to make presentations on CHT and affordable housing.
- Conduct tours for donors, volunteers and policy makers of our housing and programs.
- Engage both traditional and new media outlets with news, commentary, public events or feature stories.
- Initiate new website design on new platform that improves functionality and content for general public, donors, residents and applicants alike.
- Use social media and the website to publicize information about CHT, affordable housing and related issues.
- Do more storytelling, in print, web and video.

- Sponsor local and regional community events.
- ▶ **Outcomes:**
- Over the three years, make forty presentations at either HopeBuilder breakfasts, community organizations or other events, and conduct 15 property tours. Engage over 500 people at these meetings and tours;
 - Earn 50 unique news or media stories;
 - Feature 30 residents, donors, volunteers or staff in print, video, and/or web;
 - Create a new website by the end of FY19.
- 3. Goal: Help connect people needing housing with apartments, homes for sale and services.**
- ▶ **Strategies**
- Integrate marketing efforts with work plans of the HomeOwnership, Co-ops and Property Management programs so that they may effectively promote their housing and services.
 - Initiate new website design on a new platform that improves functionality and content for the general public, donors, residents and applicants alike. Improve the customer focus sections of the site.
 - Be present at the Champlain Valley Fair and other community events to showcase our homes and services.
 - Use print, mail and electronic advertising, coupled with email outreach to reach targeted audiences
- ▶ **Outcomes:**
- Produce two newsletters annually;
 - Create a new website;
 - Sponsor or participate in nine local community events throughout our region;
 - Meet targets set by HomeOwnership and Property Management Departments.
- 4. Goal: Build community among our residents on both property-specific and organizational levels.**
- ▶ **Strategies**
- Organize a summer picnic and annual meeting each year.
 - Support residents of CHT properties who want to add on-site community gardens.
 - Explore ways in which we can add mentoring services to properties where there are a significant number of children.

- Plan a 35th anniversary celebration.

▶ **Outcomes:**

- Nine properties will have successful community gardens;
- Add a youth mentoring program to one or more properties.

5. Goal: Advance policies and funding proposals that encourage the development of housing and those which strengthen the social safety net.

▶ **Strategies**

- Educate local, state and federal policy makers and their staffs on the need for our work.
- Advocate directly with policy makers and policy making bodies for reforms and for funding.
- Explore new ways to look at solving challenges that involve cross-sector collaboration, such as tax reforms or health system reforms.
- Participate as a leader within the Vermont Affordable Housing Coalition and the Vermont Housing and Conservation Coalition to further those coalitions' legislative agendas
- Provide one-on-one tours with legislators and local community leaders to see first-hand the impact of affordable housing in their community.
- Strengthen relationships with Vermont's Congressional Delegation and their staff.

▶ **Outcomes:**

- Local funding sources will be created or expanded by five municipalities in our region to increase the pace of production of affordable housing;
- Vermont Housing & Conservation Board will be funded at the statutory amount, and an additional \$10 million in state capital will be secured for affordable housing development activities;
- Vermont's rental subsidy program will increase from \$1 million to \$2 million;
- HUD programs that provide capital such as the National Housing Trust Fund, Community Development Block Grants, HOME, NeighborWorks® America and others will increase.

6. Goal: National and International Leadership

▶ **Strategies**

- CHT will continue to provide a leadership role on a national level, participating in such national associations as Grounded Solutions Network (formerly National CLT Network), NeighborWorks® America, National NeighborWorks® Association, (NNA is member trade group and advocacy for NWA network), Rural LISC and the Housing Partnership Network, and the Federal Home Loan Bank of Boston Affordable Housing Program Advisory Committee
- CHT will also share our model, cost and time effectively, to active groups and their governments wishing to establish CLTs around the globe.

Through our participation in the Grounded Solution Network (GSN), CHT will actively contribute to GSN achieving the following outcomes:

► **Outcomes**

- Grounded Solutions Network will be a strong, well-funded national organization supporting CHT and all CLTs, as well as being a resource for local governments seeking to create and preserve permanently affordable housing;
- One new Federal funding or finance program will have adopted permanent affordability as a priority, including permanent affordability in its mission;
- All barriers to CLTs accessing federal funding will have been removed;
- All lenders will be obligated to finance properties in CLTs subject to land leases, covenants or other legal instruments protecting affordability at resale;
- GSN will be the US entity representing CLTs and other forms of community-led affordable housing internationally;
- Three new CLT's will be formed on our model outside of the US and Grounded Solutions Network, not CHT, will sustain them with T.A. and training;
- As a result of CHT's work under the Social Innovations Fund CHIP grant to create and implement consistent policies, practices and reporting for all of Vermont's shared equity programs funding will be increased by 25%, with continued commitment by VHCB and support from GSN.

E. FINANCE

1. Goal: CHT operates with a balanced budget, carries no deficit and is financially sustainable in the long term.

▶ Strategies

- CHT will adopt balanced budgets, in which each line of business is fiscally self-sustaining by matching operating expenses with expected revenues.

▶ Outcomes

- Financials for all departments improve their bottom lines or at least maintain their positions while continuing to enhance services as described by the strategic plan.

2. Goal: CHT focuses on balance sheet management which includes increased management of accounts receivable, managing debt and the creation of capital reserves.

▶ Strategies

- CHT will manage a \$1 million line of credit (in two \$500,000 lines, one for operations and one for capital) to smooth out cash flow needs within each budget year, but will not carry budget deficits. Development fees over and above expenses will be used to build operating reserves.
- CHT will assign clear accountability for all accounts receivable detail. We will develop goals and strategies both near term and long term for all receivables.
- We will improve reporting and monitoring on all working capital activities

▶ Outcomes

- Preserve and expand working capital and reserve accounts for use in Development, Property Management and HOC for a total of \$900,000;
- Reduce Accounts Receivable to less than 1.5% of total revenue for CHT and Partnerships. This target will not include grants receivable, as grants receivable are for the most recent month/quarter as dictated by the grant agreement. This will also not include pledge and development funds receivable;
- Ensure that grants receivable are managed with no grant due being over 90 days;
- Manage cash to ensure that we rarely use the line of credit and maintain a positive cash flow with a goal of having a balance of one month operating cash;
- Meet all internal and external reporting deadlines;
- Benchmark key balance sheet ratios annually comparing our performance over the last 5 years to the region as well as nationally, including but not limited to the following:
 - Current Ratio (CR) 2.0 (more is better)
 - Cash Ratio (QCR) 1.5 (more is better)

- Days Cash (DOC) 90 (more is better)
- Unrestricted Days Cash 85 (more is better)
- Defensive Interval (DI) 7.5 (more is better)
- Debt Ratio 100% (less is better)
- Capital Ratio 50% (more is better)

3. Goal: CHT streamlines systems to improve capacity and timeliness.

▶ **Strategies**

- CHT will continue to automate financial systems specifically interfacing new property management software with financial software. Finance staff will also look at other ways to automate (or improve) repetitive entries and processes, and implement solutions that have a cost benefit.

▶ **Outcomes**

- Continue to look at software enhancements and streamlining processes to improve overall efficiency of staff time. This will increase our capacity to grow as well as allow for increased analysis and review.



F. HUMAN RESOURCES AND ADMINISTRATION

1. Goal: CHT is a socially responsible and market-competitive employer.

▶ Strategies

- Access independent compensation surveys (salary and benefits) to ensure market competitiveness.
- Provide competitive health care benefits with a focus on managing cost and coverage quality for staff and CHT.
- Adapt CHT's health care benefits to new State and Federal health care initiatives.
- Increase participation in CHT's Wellness Program by offering more regular programming and an annual incentive.
- Promote family-friendly employment practices by providing flexibility to attend school/sports events, family events, and encourage work/life balance.

▶ Outcomes

- All staff receive a livable wage as indexed to the City of Burlington Livable Wage Ordinance for a single individual;
- Salaries and benefits are competitive with the nonprofit and private sector within 10% of market;
- More than 50% of staff participate in CHT's Wellness Program;
- Host one family event annually.

2. Goal: CHT is a model of best management practices.

▶ Strategies

- Managers set clear employee and program goals to measure performance based on strategic plan benchmarks. Managers must ensure that employees also know what their individual goals are with relation to the larger program goals.
- Conduct annual written performance evaluations of all staff with 360° component.
- Acknowledge staff contributions to CHT through recognition programs.
- Develop and document a comprehensive orientation process that includes mission, history, organizational structure, employment policies, IT structure, etc.
- Develop departmental succession plans.

▶ Outcomes

- Maintain annual turnover rate below 10%;
- 100% of new staff complete new hire orientation program within 90 days of hire;

- 100% of performance reviews are completed within 60 days of anniversary and include 360° feedback protocol;
- All job descriptions are reviewed annually by managers, staff, and executives and adjusted as needed;
- 100% of staff will have “individual development plans” by 2018;
- One employee is recognized quarterly through the “Employee of the Quarter Program”;
- Staff who achieve 10, 15, or 20 years of service with CHT are recognized at the Annual Membership Meeting.

3. Goal: CHT provides staff with education and training needed to succeed, grow and respond to changing job requirements.

▶ **Strategies**

- Develop and implement an organization-wide training plan annually (includes safety training, conflict management training, cultural competency training, job shadowing, technical training, leadership training etc.).
- Provide a management training program to develop CHT’s supervisory staff.
- Provide leadership training to senior staff positions in support of succession goals.
- Cross-train staff to provide knowledge transfer, increase skill depth, coverage and career advancement opportunities.
- Educate staff to ensure a diverse/inclusive workplace.
- Implement team-based training sessions.

▶ **Outcomes**

- 100% of staff have “Individual Development Plans” by FY18;
- 100% of staff complete Protected Information and Computer User Security Training annually;
- 100% of staff participate in two team building exercises annually;
- 100% of staff are given a presentation on new CHT Programs - within 90 days of implementation;
- Eight managers complete a minimum of one management or leadership training annually;
- 100% of staff complete one presentation on cultural competency and diverse/inclusive workplaces annually;
- CHT offers two 403(b) retirement educational sessions annually;
- 100% of staff complete a minimum of one presentation/course on “Green Plan Operations” annually;
- A minimum of two team-based training sessions presented annually.

4. Goal: CHT promotes a diverse and inclusive workplace through targeted outreach, recruitment and training.

▶ **Strategies**

- Build relationships and partnerships with local colleges, the Department of Labor, the Refugee Resettlement Program, the Associations of Africans Living in Vermont, and other groups to offer training and job opportunities.
- Include language in employment ads to reach out to minorities, women, individuals with disabilities, and to residents of CHT properties.
- Implement trial Maintenance Apprenticeship Program in partnership with the Refugee Resettlement Program.

▶ **Outcomes**

- Two maintenance apprentices by FY18;
- Two student internships filled annually;
- 100% of managers will attend at least one diversity/inclusion training by 2018;
- 100% of employment ads contain: “CHT is committed to a diverse workplace and highly encourages women, persons with disabilities, Section 3 residents, and people from diverse racial, ethnic and cultural backgrounds to apply.”
- CHT program established by 2017 for regular outreach to community partners that help us achieve a more diverse workplace;
- 100% of managers promote a diverse/inclusive workplace by ensuring staff presence at training sessions and engaging staff in discussions related to issues of diversity, inclusion, sensitivity, and/or cultural competency during team meetings.

5. Goal: IT Systems and Services: CHT supports the organization and staff by providing a current and efficient IT environment.

▶ **Strategies**

- Upgrade software/hardware according to turnover schedule.
- Evaluate new Windows Operating Systems and Office Suite for potential upgrade.
- Each department systemizes and organizes all software computer and hard paper files.
- Evaluate and upgrade security solutions to ensure network infrastructure security.
- Maintain and update the Disaster Recovery Plan.

▶ **Outcomes:**

- 20 computers will be upgraded annually;

- 100% of CHT IT systems/programs are monitored for security exposures and upgrades made as needed;
- Disaster Recovery Plan updated and documentation revised as necessary annually.

G. GOVERNANCE

Board goals, strategies and outcomes are designed to assure informed and responsible stewardship of CHT policy overall and implementation of this plan according to CHT's mission, vision and values. The CHT Board will maintain the high standards of excellence recognized by BoardSource in its Prudential Leadership Awards for Outstanding Nonprofit Boards, awarded to CHT in 2011.

1. Goal: The CHT Board will be well equipped to oversee 21st century community development in today's complex and very fluid environment through training and technical support provided by staff.

► Strategies

- There will be an annual full day Board training retreat.
- New Board members will receive a timely orientation conducted by staff, and will be paired with an experienced Board mentor for the first six months. The Board mentor will contact the new Board member in advance of each Board meeting and other key events to provide relevant context and background information.
- Training topics will be included in at least four Board meetings a year. Priority of training topics will be determined by a Board survey led by the CEO.
- Board members will continue to be supported to attend CHT in-house trainings, as well as relevant national and local training opportunities, such as institutes offered by NeighborWorks® America, the Grounded Solutions Network (formerly National CLT Network), the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board conferences, and VHFA's bi-annual statewide housing conference. All conference expenses, including travel, will be provided by CHT.
- Board members will be given a tour of CHT properties with representative examples of the urban, suburban and rural portfolios, as well as special needs housing properties and non-profit facilities.
- There will be at least one fundraising training provided by an external expert focusing on the Board's outreach responsibilities for CHT's HopeBuilder Breakfasts and Cornerstone luncheon.
- The Board Vice President will oversee and track Board member training and development.
- The Board job description will be revised and updated to clarify Board member responsibilities for and accountability to training targets as established by the Governance Committee in the first 6 months of this plan

► Outcomes

- 100% of the Board will have a full knowledge of CHT programs, policies and history within one year of service by having completed the full training curriculum;
- Members will have visited a representative sampling of our properties within one year of service;

- Five Board members will have attended relevant trainings or conferences in the plan period;
- All Board members will have received fundraising training within a year of service;
- All Board members will be up-to-date with their training targets;
- All Board members will have sufficient knowledge of CHT programs, services, financial position, portfolio performance and development risks to be effective stewards of CHT's mission and plan goals.

2. Goal: Assure that the Board is at full capacity at all times with 15 well-qualified individuals equally representing the three classes of Board members: municipal, resident and general.

▶ **Strategies**

- The Governance and Nominations Committee will convene in March of each year to anticipate vacancies and to undertake the search for high caliber candidates for upcoming board and officer candidates.
- The Governance and Nominations Committee will report quarterly to the Board on progress of candidates' pipeline, and engage the entire Board in prospecting for strong candidates.
- Outreach for resident Board candidates will be conducted through the "At Home" newsletter to members and other means as determined by the Board.
- The Board will deploy a pipeline strategy for lining up candidates, rather than a vacancy-by-vacancy search.
- Board officers will conduct in-person interviews to vet each candidate, familiarize them with Board responsibilities through the Board job description, Board policies and Board strategic plan.
- Board Officers will cultivate strong potential candidates with a view to sustaining Board strength over the long term.

▶ **Outcomes**

- Community members will be eager to serve on the CHT Board, not only to support our mission but due to its reputation for good governance, and opportunity for meaningful and rewarding service;
- The Board will be at full capacity at all times and will be well prepared for unplanned, as well as planned vacancies due to the development and maintenance of a pipeline of 2 qualified candidates for each class of Board membership.

3. Goal: The Board will have strong leadership through well-qualified and supported officers, as well as by the Board Governance and Nominations Committee which will support the officers in their Board leadership duties.

▶ **Strategies**

- Board officer duties will be clarified through job descriptions that differentiate required officer duties from discretionary ones to allow officers to focus on core functions and better distribute workload.

- Discretionary duties of the Chair and the Treasurer will be delegated to other officers, and even non-officer Board members, to spread the workload and develop new leaders.
- The Vice-Chair will be a member committed to training for succession to Chair.
- A new Vice-Treasurer position will be created to reduce the workload and to assure that there is always a treasurer-in-training ready to succeed the current Treasurer just as we do with the Chair and Vice-Chair.
- Recruit up to four non-officer Board members for the Governance and Nominations Committee, relieving officers of shouldering the entire governance role, and building future leaders.

▶ **Outcomes**

- The CHT Board will have strong and well prepared officers through a formal and well planned succession process;
- The CHT Board will have depth of leadership to address any unplanned or premature officer vacancies through it distribution of leadership roles.

4. Goal: In partnership with staff, the Board will help build community understanding of our mission and programs, and help raise the funds necessary for general operations.

▶ **Strategies**

- The entire Board will actively participate in the cultivation of existing and new donors. Key events in this effort will include major donor contacts, monthly HopeBuilder networking breakfasts hosted by Board members, and Board leadership for the annual Cornerstone luncheon. Each Board member will host one Hopebuilder breakfast with a fellow Board partner or individually each year.
- Each Board member will commit to inviting at least three good donor prospects to the Cornerstone luncheon. Board members will also be trained and supported to fill a table themselves and host it, if they choose. The Community Relations Committee will follow up with these invitees and seat them with an appropriate host.
- Each Board member will make a personally meaningful annual gift to CHT.
- Board members will be encouraged to recommend new ideas or initiatives for fundraising and networking opportunities to the Community Relations Committee for vetting.
- The Community Relations Committee Chair will lead monthly Board sessions to prepare for HopeBuilder breakfasts and Cornerstone luncheons. Board performance on resource development goals will be tracked by the Chair of the Community Relations Committee, and progress will be reported at Board meetings on a quarterly basis.
- The Board will support staff-led activities to raise community awareness and donor support, as described above in the Community Relations section of the Plan: these include expanding use of social media, creating new mechanisms for contributing to CHT, and building the membership.

- The Board will participate in identifying good prospects for the staff-led planned giving campaign described in the Community Relations Section of this plan.
- ▶ **Outcomes:**
 - CHT will have 100% Board participation overall in our fundraising strategies;
 - \$555,000 from community gifts will be raised over the course of the plan.

5. Goal: Special Campaigns. Board members will support two special campaigns: one for planned gifts and one to raise capital for the St. Joseph Community Center project.

▶ **Strategies**

- Board members, led by the Community Relations Committee, will assist the CEO in a Planned Gifts Campaign by identifying 2 prospects each and facilitating in-person meetings between these prospects and the CEO.
- At least two volunteer Board members will join the St. Joseph's Capital Campaign Committee and one will co-chair along with a community member. Community members dedicated to this project will constitute the majority of this committee.
- The Board will track the progress of this campaign through regular committee reports.
- All Board members will make gifts to the campaign that they are comfortable with for 100% Board participation
- All Board members will participate in identifying prospects for campaign committee leadership and prospective donors.

▶ **Outcomes:**

- The CEO will have 30 meetings with prospective planned gift donors yielding 20 new Board initiated planned gifts;
- The St Joseph's School project will be fully funded and operating soundly with \$2,000,000 raised in the capital campaign.

APPENDIX A: CHT HOUSING PARTNERS

A. NATIONAL

- ▶ Housing Partnership Network (HPN): HPN is a network of high producing housing nonprofits focused on meeting the highest standards through the sharing of good practice and through leveraging our collective buying power. We belong to the property insurance co-op (HPIEX), and also receive some federal funds through HPN for housing counseling. CHT's Chief Operating & Finance Officer is treasurer of HPIEX.
- ▶ Grounded Solutions Network (formerly National Community Land Trust Network (NCLTN)): This network of active CLTs, local governments, Inclusionary Zoning practitioners, CLT partners and supporters across the US develops and provides curriculum for training and technical assistance to emerging and mature CLTs as well as to other entities committed to housing that retains its affordability. GSN maintains a web-based "toolshop" of research, publications, evaluations, history, and practice for CLTs and related models of resale-restricted housing, and stages an annual conference with a members. CHT's CEO is currently on the board of GSN and CHT has hosted two National CLT Conferences.
- ▶ National NeighborWorks Association (NNA): NNA advocates to Congress for NeighborWorks America (NWA) funding and related programs like HUD Housing Counseling. NNA also advocates within NWA on behalf of the members to support good program delivery and relationships between NWA and the field. This is a member driven network. CHT is very active with this network generally and specifically as liaison to our Congressional Delegation which very supportive of affordable housing and influential with their colleagues on the Hill.
- ▶ NeighborWorks America (NWA): NeighborWorks America provides project capital, capacity funding, training and technical assistance. NWA rates its members (245 in all) annually and CHT continues to maintain their highest rating of Exemplary. CHT is a chartered member, and is in the network's Northeast District.
- ▶ Rural (Local Initiatives Support Corporation) LISC: This network provides CHT with a small annual capacity grant as well as leadership on advocacy for rural issues nationally. CHT Board president and CEO (or designees) attend their national seminar.

B. LOCAL/STATE

- ▶ Champlain Valley Office of Economic Opportunity (CVOEO): CVOEO administers a myriad of housing and funding programs with which partner, in addition coordinating a variety of programs that support low-income households.
- ▶ City of Burlington: Our oldest and founding partner, the City of Burlington continues to be the home of our largest portfolio and Old North End Target Area. CHT receives funding from the City from HUD-funded programs like HOME and CDBG as well as the city's Housing Trust Fund. CHT brings equity and other matching resources from a variety of sources and takes the lead on complex and challenging community development projects as well as housing especially in the Old North End and downtown neighborhoods.

- ▶ Vermont Department of Housing and Community Development: This state department administers many affordable housing, preservation and community development programs and awards federal CDBG grants to municipalities through a competitive process.
- ▶ Green Mountain Habitat for Humanity: CHT provides land, development services, homebuyer education and stewardship services to our local chapter of Habitat whose volunteer members build homes and Habitat affordably mortgages them, serving very low income families. CHT's homeownership and development departments are working actively to deepen our partnership with this local chapter.
- ▶ Housing Vermont (HVT): We partner with HVT on all multi-family developments using the Low Income Housing Tax Credits. HVT syndicates the Low Income Housing Tax Credits and New Markets Tax Credits to provide equity for Vermont nonprofit developers. Most of the investors are banks who do business in Vermont. HVT is also a leading advocate for affordable housing and community development in the state.
- ▶ NeighborWorks Alliance of Vermont (NWAVT): NeighborWorks America has provided leadership and funding to bring four Vermont NeighborWorks organizations (RuralEdge, Central Vermont Community Land Trust, Windham and Windsor Housing Trust, and CHT) together to leverage the power of our collective coverage of all regions in the state through the formation of NWAVT. The Alliance has proven it can that can respond quickly and with unity to Vermont's needs as we did after Tropical Storm Irene, as well as develop statewide programs together. CHT is the fiduciary for this Alliance and coordinates NWAVT activities and liaises with state government on its behalf.
- ▶ Vermont Affordable Housing Coalition (VAHC): VAHC advocates for affordable housing and related programs that serve the poor on both a statewide and federal level. CHT's Director of Community Relations is very active in the coalition and is a past steering committee member.
- ▶ Vermont Housing and Conservation Board (VHCB): VHCB is a state-funded Trust Fund that supports permanently affordable housing, conservation, agriculture and historic preservation. VHCB provides CHT with capacity funding annually, as well as with capital for rental and homeownership developments. VHCB also administers the federal HOME and National Housing trust Fund programs (also capital and capacity grant funding).
- ▶ Vermont Housing and Conservation Coalition (VHCC): VHCC advocates for Vermont Housing and Conservation Board (Trust Fund) funding annually, and retains a lobbying firm to assist in that purpose. The coalition also coordinates a lot of specific advocacy and education directly to legislative leaders. CHT's Director of Community Relations is a co-chair of this coalition.
- ▶ Vermont Housing Finance Agency (VHFA): VHFA provides mortgage-revenue bond financed capital for affordable homeownership and rental. Until the real estate crash VHFA provided a special mortgage product for shared-equity housing. VHFA has also financed and closely regulates a number of our owned rental properties.

C. SOCIAL SERVICES

CHT houses people with special needs through partnerships with agencies like the HowardCenter, by far our largest single service partner serving people with mental health challenges. In Franklin County we partner with the Northwest Counseling Services in a similar way. COTS and Samaritan House shelter homeless families and individuals and through a variety of CHT initiated programs we assist them in moving people out of shelter and into our permanent homes. We also house homeless youth with Spectrum. A significant partner in all of these efforts is the Burlington Housing Authority and to a lesser degree the Vermont State Housing Authority and other local Housing Authorities who provide rental assistance vouchers or project-based rental assistance and homeownership to most of these populations whose special needs also place in them in extreme poverty. The UVM Medical Center Hospital, The Community Health Center's Safe Harbor Program and the United Way have become essential partners in our new initiatives to serve people in homelessness. United Way and UVMCH are also key funders in this arena.

APPENDIX B: FEEDBACK FROM PARTNERS

Method: Over the first three months of 2016 consultant Andy Robinson worked with a planning team of staff and board to identify what we wanted to learn from the community, re: how people feel about the work and unique value of CHT. We prepared a list of questions for partners, allies, funders, and donors, and reached them through a series of 31 interviews, as follows:

- Erin Ahearn, Community Health Center / Safe Harbor
- Will Belongia, Vermont Community Loan Fund
- Kathleen Berk, Vermont State Housing Authority
- Yacouba Bogre, Association of Africans Living in Vermont
- Deb Brighton, Vermont Community Foundation
- Sarah Carpenter, Vermont Housing and Finance Agency
- Jan Demers, Champlain Valley Office of Economic Opportunity
- Paul Dettman, Burlington Housing Authority
- Kevin Dorn, City of South Burlington
- Kelly Dougherty, Women Helping Battered Women
- Kim Fitzgerald, Cathedral Square
- Jane Helmstetter, Chittenden County office, Vermont Agency of Human Services
- Penrose Jackson, University of Vermont Medical Center
- Scott Johnstone, Vermont Energy Investment Corporation
- Sarah Launderville, Vermont Center for Independent Living
- Noelle Mackay, Vermont Department of Housing and Community Development
- Erhard Mahnke, Vermont Affordable Housing Coalition
- Martha Maksym, United Way of Northwest Vermont
- Rita Markley, Committee on Temporary Shelter (COTS)
- Dave Mullin, Habitat for Humanity
- Nancy Owens, Housing Vermont
- Eileen Peltier, Downstreet Housing and Community Development
- Jessica Radbord, Vermont Legal Aid
- Mark Redmond, Spectrum
- Kenn Sassorossi, Housing Vermont
- Ken Schatz, Vermont Agency of Human Services
- Gus Seelig, Vermont Housing and Conservation Board
- Elaine Soto, Howard Center
- Samantha Sweet, Northwestern Counseling and Support
- Tom Torti, Lake Champlain Regional Chamber of Commerce
- Robin Way, CIDER

C. Findings. A number of themes emerged from the interviews.

1. **CHT is really, really well regarded.** There are several dimensions to this:

- Professional, competent, skilled staff: Brenda, Michael, Margaret, Chris, and many others
- Creative thinking about programs, partnerships, and financing pervades the organization
- Compassionate, caring people who are willing to advocate for change
- Great partner – inclusive, adaptable, listens well, delivers on commitments, willing to lead with new ideas, political capital, and logistical support for peers

According to several people interviewed, this last bullet marks a turnaround in recent years. The organization was previously viewed as inwardly focused, a bit insular, and narrow in scope. Now, says one ally, “They’re at every table” – and that’s generally perceived as a good thing. Relevant quotes:

- “They’re successful, competent, and capable.”
- “They are personable, warm, outgoing, professional, and extraordinarily entrepreneurial.”
- “CHT has its head up, always looking for what’s next. They ask, ‘What else should we be doing?’”
- “They are courageous and responsive. I never wonder what they are doing.”
- “They are the oldest, largest housing organization in Vermont, and also the most innovative. They are a great development partner, with boots on the ground.”
- “CHT is the biggest, most accessible housing provider in town.”
- “They’re willing to take risks. Harbor Place and Beacon are creative solutions.”
- “They have the heart of the people they serve.”
- “The relationships have improved a lot lately.”
- “They are way more accessible now.”
- “They went through a difficult merger and came through successfully.”
- “Brenda is amazingly generous and empathetic. We feel well-supported by her.”
- “Brenda is always willing to listen to crazy new ideas.”
- “Margaret facilitates the Continuum of Care with great skill. I have so much respect for Brenda and Michael and Margaret.”
- “They are one of our most reliable and effective members in terms of both state and federal legislative advocacy.”
- “Their building is a hub for meetings. That’s so helpful.”

However, a few outliers raised concerns.

- “The Continuum of Care is not what it used to be. Nobody speaks up. We now brainstorm offline.”
- “CHT is a PR machine. Their messaging is all about their self-interest. I wish the messaging was more honest.”

2. **You’re the biggest player in the state, which creates opportunities, responsibilities, and risks.** As noted above, you get lots of compliments for your

effectiveness and partnership skills. You wear your leadership work well. Now that the impact of the merger is clear – and the dust has settled – some people interviewed would like to see you play an even bigger role: perhaps another merger, more consolidation, or expanding your geography.

Having said that, there are whispers of “empire-building,” and those who view you as both a collaborator and competitor. Given your growth, others wonder about CHT drifting too far from its mission and core programs. Still others prefer a diversity of providers and housing developers, and would view further consolidation as a risk to the system as a whole.

- “They could take the lead on a 50-year statewide housing plan. Someone has to be the convener.”
- “We don’t have a CHT in many places around the state – like Rutland – which leaves gaps. Do we create similar entities in other places? Do we ask them to expand?”
- “Consolidate activities with peers from around the state. Permanent supportive housing, more robust home ownership programs – take it to scale. Don’t be a monopoly, but consolidation would be more efficient.”
- “They’re doing all the right things, but maybe too fast. Is there a way to support overhead costs? It’s always a struggle. Should they pull out of property management to free up money and time for development? It’s an inherent tension.”
- “Not every screw is tightened. Sometimes they get ahead of themselves.”
- “I’m not sure what their mission is these days. They’re doing so much, maybe too much.”
- “They’re trying to be all things to all people.”
- “They tend to run ahead of their partners, which creates fear about competition.”
- “Their size causes some to wonder. They’re working on humility.”
- “Their plan is to rule the world.”
- “I wish they had taken on Moran!”

3. **Supportive housing is the new normal.** This may be a flavor-of-the-month moment, or a more permanent and significant shift in how professionals think about housing. A large majority of your peers and funders consider this a positive step – some would like to see this approach expanded beyond Chittenden County and/or expanded to homeowner properties – while a few are concerned that the model could inhibit the rights of people to make their own choices.

As a result of this shift, CHT has taken on new aspects of social service work, while some non-housing agencies feel like they’re in the housing retention business. As one partner noted, “We’ve added 3.5 staff to focus on housing retention and finding housing.” Another added, “We are joined at the hip with CHT on supportive housing.” The sorting out of who does what with whom will continue for a while – and will probably make some people uncomfortable. Relevant quotes:

- “Do more with supportive services. CHT has made good steps in this direction.”
- “The people left to house need services, not just housing.”
- “The next big thing is housing plus health care together.”
- “They’re great at collaborating with service providers. We all want tenants to be successful.”
- “What we call supportive services can be patronizing and disempowering. There’s too much hand-holding. People are being harassed to sign up for programs like SASH, which creates tension between social workers and activists.”
- “Our agency can’t mandate services. We use advocates, not case managers.”
- “A centralized housing retention niche needs to be filled.”

4. **Your shift to emergency housing is both “an opportunity and a reason for caution,”** in the words of one ally. Said another, “There’s been a renewed focus on the homeless at CHT, because of a dysfunctional network of service providers. We’re all trying to sort it out through the collective. Margaret’s leadership has been great. She knows when to push and when to back off.” Other relevant quotes:

- “I can’t tell you how excited I am to be partnering with them on Harbor Place and Beacon Apartments.”
- “Beacon Apartments and Harbor Place are path-breaking.”
- “Beacon and Harbor Place have succeeded amazingly.”
- “Harbor Place has been a strong success. It has its critics, but they’ve managed the situation well.”
- “I’m confused by Harbor Place. It’s in a bad location, the residents have to go back and forth to Burlington.”

5. **The quality of your customer service** – including property maintenance, tenant screening, and tenant services – **has improved, but still gets mixed reviews.** In the interviews, this was referenced in a variety of ways.

- a) Too many denials of potential renters – many of which are overturned after a call from a social service partner
- b) The need to begin evictions sooner, when it’s easier to address the problem and retain housing
- c) More interpretation services required for English language learners
- d) Concerns about the upkeep of your properties

To be fair, you received more compliments than complaints in nearly all these areas, but people expressed enough concerns to be worth noting. Relevant quotes:

- “In recent years, they’re more flexible with difficult to house populations.”
- “They go above and beyond to solve client problems. They’re flexible and committed.”
- “Are they cherry-picking tenants? Or are they housing the most vulnerable?”

- “There are too many denials – then they all get in on appeal. It’s easy to have denials reversed, so why deny in the first place? They need better filters.”
 - “We know who to call to work through denials, but we shouldn’t have to make these calls. What are the existing criteria? Does the applicant come with case management support?”
 - “Tons of families have been kicked out. If they’re not paying rent, I understand, but it’s created problems.”
 - “Rent collection is slow. The better policy is to collect earlier, before it’s time for eviction.”
 - “We run into sticking points with challenging clients, but this is rare.”
 - “The properties are well-maintained.”
 - “They have lots of well-maintained properties. The property managers are generally caring and easy to work with.”
 - “They’ve grown so fast, they’re not keeping up with building maintenance.”
 - “There’s a tendency to maximize income over maintenance and upgrades. Tenant wages are stagnant, costs are up, operating expenses are up...how can they manage this? It’s a conundrum.”
 - “Did the merger improve the tenant experience? They lost some of their personal touch.”
6. There’s also **mixed data on the effectiveness of case management partners**. On one hand, it’s smart to outsource work that’s not central to your mission, especially if you can find others more qualified to do it. On the other hand, when you give responsibility to peers, you have less control over quality.
- “Appropriately, they are leaving social service work to partners.”
 - “They tend to hand their ‘problem tenants’ to our case managers, but they’re getting better at this.”
 - “We’ve heard a lot of negative feedback about poor case management from partner agencies at Harbor Place.”
7. The **shared equity program** is a bit complicated – some of your smartest allies are unclear about the details – but “it’s being replicated around the country and beyond,” according to one partner. You may need to refine the pitch. Adds another, “Is shared homeowner equity more complex than it needs to be? It’s a great entry point for new homeowners, but it’s hard to explain.”
8. **It’s all about the money**. This may be obvious, but people kept coming back to money: investors (specifically the state of Vermont) need to underwrite affordable housing in a variety of ways and with a variety of partners: nonprofits, for-profit developers, housing authorities, etc. As the largest player in the state, you have an increasing responsibility to advocate for full funding and other incentives.

CHT is viewed as a leader, in part, due to your money-gathering skills. Many people praised your ability to assemble development financing. With the understanding that financial strategies can be pretty complex, some partners asked for more details about how specific projects are financed. In the words of one funder, “Be transparent in all activities.”

9. **In the end, it’s all about relationships.** I was struck by the number of people who said they could contact staff to resolve problems, and generally those problems were resolved. For example: reversing a rental denial, or addressing a maintenance issue, or working with a challenging tenant, or creating a flexible solution for so a partner agency can stay involved. More than any other, the word I heard most often was “flexible.”

In the words of one partner, “It can be hard for a big group like CHT to engage with a small organization like ours. They try to make it work.”

As noted above, this reflects a shift in organizational culture. It’s also a product of long-term relationships fostered by long-term employees of CHT. “Their people have been embedded for decades,” said one admirer. “They come to the organization and stay.” One key to your success is developing and keeping good employees – which raises the question of succession planning for long-time staff leaders.

D. Questions and recommendations. These are intended for discussion at our May 14 meeting and beyond. Not every idea is necessarily viable, so please consider this a brainstorm to spark debate.

1. In the words of one funder, “**I hope they can do even more to support peers and affect public policy.**”

The good news: You excel at this work already. “We take for granted that CHT can round up political support,” said one peer, “because they are so good at it. They deliver.”

The bad news: These are tricky waters. As one government official noted, “If we open up a critique of current policy, the fear is that the policy makers will use it as an excuse not to fund VHCB.”

Advocacy means traditional topics like VHCB funding, but also taxes, regulations and permitting, transportation, and wage policy. Affordability isn’t only about cost – it’s also about income and social mobility. Adds a funder, “In the bigger picture, it’s not just more units. Incomes aren’t keeping up, rents aren’t covering costs. Focus more on the income side.” What’s your role, if any, in addressing the problem of stagnant wages?

2. **Continue to deepen relationships with partners.** In some cases, changes in long-time leadership (Burlington Housing Authority, Cathedral Square) might open up new opportunities. In other cases, the obvious avenue is joint grant proposals, which you do really well. Indeed, many of your peer organizations rely on you to generate shared funding.

One option: Recruit housing retention specialists who are jointly hired by more than one organization, with the goal of helping tenants and homeowners maintain their housing.

3. In the words of an ally, “**Is it time for CHT to stretch more toward market rate housing?**” adding, “The biggest challenge is people who aren’t subsidized but can’t buy.” One partner suggested a supportive housing model for market-rate homes – what might that look like? Others talked about deeper relationships with for-profit developers. Another idea: Develop tax incentives to convert Burlington student rental housing into owner-occupied starter homes.
4. **Consider ever-more-creative ways to facilitate owner-occupied housing**, including:
 - a) A “*housing recycling program*,” through which empty-nesters move to communal housing, freeing up their family homes for first-time buyers. You’ve used this concept before with Cathedral Square and others (?) It might be the time to reinvigorate this program.
 - b) Experimenting with *rent-to-own housing models* as a way to expand home ownership.
 - c) More *cooperative housing* that include shared assets – common space, community gardens, etc. – and perhaps supportive services.

In the words of one partner, “There’s been a big shift in the community to affordable rentals. This leaves a gap for people trying to buy homes.” Who will fill that gap?

5. **Can you do more outside Chittenden County?** As one partner stated, “We need single-room occupancy and supportive housing in Franklin County.” Added another, “The current rental model is large projects with a subsidy. We’re missing small projects in rural areas.” And a third: “In rural areas, it’s all about accessible transportation.”
6. **What’s your contingency plan for the fall election?** “There could be a massive shake-out at the Agency of Human Services,” said one ally, depending on who’s elected the next governor. Do you have a proactive strategy to address this?
7. **The need for succession planning.** I was struck by the number of people who asked what would happen when Brenda, Michael, and other senior leaders retire. I am sure the board thinks about this all the time. If don’t have a succession strategy – both an emergency plan and a long-term leadership transition plan – you need to create one. If you have one, I encourage you share it with partners, peers, and funders so they know your intentions.
8. **Share the results of your planning process with everyone.** All interviewees were curious about where you’re headed, so treat them like partners. Once you’ve reached an internal consensus, share your thinking with your constituents.