

BUILDING FOR THE FUTURE

Community, Justice and Equity

CHAMPLAIN HOUSING TRUST
STRATEGIC PLAN 2023-2025

*From Growth, Recovery and Resiliency
To Community, Justice and Equity*



INTRODUCTION

Resiliency, Recovery and Growth

Six months after the adoption of CHT's most recent Strategic Plan (2019-2022), the Covid-19 pandemic hit Vermont and the United States. Soon after, the murder of George Floyd reawakened the call for racial justice. These events dramatically influenced our three-year plan.

Over the past three years, our mission, vision and commitment to our work remained strong. We strengthened the housing continuum, while we innovated, evolved and advocated. Our financial strength, size and growth mattered. We remained engaged in the community, responding to its needs, while building and strengthening partnerships. Under it all, our employees remained our greatest asset.

This Strategic Plan for 2023-2025 builds on Champlain Housing Trust's nearly 40 years of history, and a remarkable past three years of Growth, Recovery and Resiliency, with a renewed commitment to Community, Justice and Equity. CHT has committed to the following core initiatives that will be supported and expanded upon by department-specific strategies:



Support the Housing Continuum and Address the Need for Housing Innovations and Community Facilities

While we continue to strengthen our core mission and programs, it is also critical that we remain flexible in addressing the housing and facility needs of the community. In fact, doing so addresses a core theme of justice and equity.

We will:

- Implement the six-point Homeownership Equity Program (HEP) for BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) households.
- Expand Shared Equity homeownership.
- Create new affordable apartments for low, moderate and middle-income people and households that are formerly homeless.
- Continue to support improvements in farmworker housing.
- Create employer-supported housing.
- Seek and create opportunities for childcare facilities and home childcare providers.
- Support the development of new community centers.
- Create transitional housing for refugees.
- Preserve existing housing for middle-income renters.
- Support the creation of new housing options for individuals with developmental disabilities.
- Support housing and programs for veterans.

Provide Services, Build Community and Empower Our Residents

Creating a Resident Services Department was a first step and we need to continue to build our internal capacity and expand our programs while lifting up the strength of our residents.

We will:

- Strengthen our partnerships with existing service providers such as Turning Point, Community Health Centers of Burlington, SASH and Howard Center.
- Provide access for our residents to high-quality services such as health care, food access and security, wealth building and mental health.
- Focus on housing retention and eviction prevention.
- Create restorative justice systems within our properties.
- Deepen our partnerships with community-based organizations led by people of color.
- Target efforts to mitigate eviction and home loss among BIPOC community members.
- Strengthen communication, security and safety within properties through neighborhood watch and ombudsman programs.
- Create resident councils and increase resident feedback systems.
- Strengthen co-op boards and committees through ongoing trainings and board recruitment.
- Create opportunities for celebration, beautification and community building at CHT properties.



Advance Racial Justice and Equity

Addressing racial justice and equity is a strategy that is now integrated into the CHT's everyday work.

In addition to departmental objectives, we will:

- Promote and advocate racial equity and justice in housing everywhere through advocacy.
- Improve and increase contracting with BIPOC businesses.
- Strengthen partnerships with cultural organizations that provide services to various ethnic and racial communities.
- Use the demographic make-up of the community as a starting point to measure and benchmark our work.
- Adopt and adapt the Race Forward Racial Equity Impact Assessment tool, an evidence-based methodology that is widely used in many government racial equity processes. Below is an outline of the process that we will use to assess all future major initiatives. In addition, and as needed, CHT will use this process to assess changes in current programs.



In order to accomplish these goals, we will also need to do the following:

Increase Capital

We will increase capital and development capacity from both public and non-public sources by:

- Raising longer-term private equity.
- Increasing access to flexible, low-cost, long-term debt.
- Continuing to expand capacity at raising philanthropic funds.
- Building our net assets and strengthening our balance sheet.

Support our Human Resources

Make sure that CHT is a best place to work by doing the following:

- Build racial equity considerations into senior hiring practices and increase the diversity of our staff through a series of initiatives such as leadership development.
- Provide training and education to increase cultural competency, staff knowledge and skills.
- Enhance training, orientation and mentoring.
- Create pathways and ladders of opportunity for employees.
- Strengthen equity and diversity in our workplace.
- Support the resiliency of our staff.
- Strengthen evaluations and recognize staff.
- Support a remote and hybrid workplace.
- Recruit the best people ever.
- Work hard, have fun.



Strengthen our Internal Systems

We will continue to develop systems that streamline internal communication and simplify workflow such as:

- Providing translation and interpretation services and reduce cultural barriers. Consider hiring ambassadors from BIPOC communities.
- Creating more automation in business operations.
- Creating one unified property information system.
- Having better processes for housing and program applications to ensure equal access and opportunity.

Build and Engage our Broader Community and Expand our Reach

Strengthen CHT's staff and Board role in the following:

- Engaging in statewide advocacy and coalition building such as the Vermont Affordable Housing Coalition (VAHC), Vermont Housing and Conservation Coalition (VHCC) and Building Homes Together campaigns.
- Participate in national networks such as National NeighborWorks Association (NNA), Housing Partnership Network (HPN), Grounded Solutions Network (GSN) and the Homeownership Alliance.
- Provide technical assistance to peer organizations.
- Provide information and advice to local municipalities on issues of affordable housing.
- Continue to engage in new forms of communication such as email newsletters, CHT in Focus events and other forms that reach a diverse population in our community.

Strengthen our Board Governance

Make our community-based board even better:

- Build our Board's capacity, education and knowledge on issues of racial justice and broader social equity.
- Provide support and leadership to all of CHT.
- Improve committee structure, functions and practices.
- Engage in advocacy and policy work.
- Conduct a Board Self-Assessment.

These initiatives are supported by and expanded upon by departmental strategies from each of CHT's departments:

- Homeownership Promotion and Preservation
- Multifamily Housing and Property Management
- Real Estate Development
- Cooperative Housing
- Resident Services
- Finance and Accounting
- Community Relations
- Human Resources and Administration
- Technical Assistance
- Governance



WHO WE ARE: Housing Is a Human Right

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 and related community assets.

Vision

The communities of northwest Vermont will have a stock of permanently affordable homes to assure that the region will be diverse and inclusive, with safe and decent housing for all people, supported by services and programs that enhance health and opportunity.

Racial Justice and Equity

The Champlain Housing Trust affirms and reaffirms its commitment to fight racism and to the principle of racial justice and equity in its policies, programs and employment in all aspects of its work. CHT is deeply committed to achieving racial equity, diversity and the highest level of inclusion and cultural humility in all our programs, services and in the workplace.

Our Core Values

Permanent Affordability and Community Control.

CHT is a community land trust with a membership drawn from our region that elects a Board of Directors comprising 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 and related community assets 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.



Our Implementation Values

Collaboration.

CHT values strong partnerships and mutual self-help among our peers as the best way for CHT to add value and to amplify our collective impact.

Energy Conservation and Smart Growth.

CHT is committed to combating climate change by building homes that exceed energy codes and reduce reliance on fossil fuels. CHT supports long-term regional sustainability through development strategies that use the land wisely and that foster pedestrian and transit-oriented communities.

Courageous Governance.

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.

Employer of Choice.

CHT is committed to employing the best workforce possible by providing competitive compensation and benefits, including a livable wage, as well as a safe, welcoming and joyful workplace for all employees.

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 including equity, inclusion, cultural humility and competency and justice.

