



BATH  
HOUSING

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**Strategic Plan**

**2015 – 2018**

**Dear Friends,**

2014 was a momentous year for Bath Housing, A formal area housing assessment was completed. The organization was rebranded. Staff positions were realigned for greater effectiveness, and we increased our focus on customer service. This was all under the leadership of new Executive Director Debora Keller. Early in 2015, we decided to build on this progress by developing a strategic plan for the subsequent three years—until June 30, 2018.

Bath Housing refers to both Bath Housing Development Corporation (BHDC) and the Bath Housing Authority (BHA). BHDC is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization established in 1984 to engage in the development of housing projects to promote the common good and general welfare of people in the Bath Region. It is an affiliate of BHA, a quasi-municipal organization created in 1969 by the Bath City Council to address the shortage of safe and sanitary dwellings for persons with low incomes.

Our planning process was designed to be as streamlined as possible. We wanted a concise plan on which we could build. External consultant, Valerie Landry of MissionReach, assisted us in developing priorities, strategies, and objectives. The resulting plan will guide our activities and decision-making.

Development of this plan would not have been possible without the active participation of Board members and staff. Factored into the plan are the many conversations over the past year with stakeholders including Bath Housing residents, the City of Bath and Towns of Arrowsic, Georgetown, West Bath, Woolwich and Phippsburg, other housing organizations, Maine State Housing Authority, and local, regional and state housing coalitions. We thank these many individuals and organizations for collaborating with us, and we look forward to working with them closely over the next three years.

Sincerely,

Catherine Powers, Board Chair

Debora Keller, Executive Director

*BHDC Board of Directors - 2015*

*Catherine Powers, Chair\**

*Francis Dillon, Vice Chair\**

*Debora Keller, Executive Director*

*Storrs Bigelow\**

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*William Hayden*

*Jeffrey Knuckles*

*Bernard Wyman, Jr.*

*Al Smith*

*\*denotes BHA Commissioner*

## Introduction

Bath Housing works to enhance housing stability for seniors, those with disabilities, and families in the Bath region to create a safe, vibrant, just, and prosperous community. Bath Housing is committed to being “just a phone call away” from the people we serve. If the people we serve are happy with us, we are happy. It is why one of our key priorities in the strategic plan emphasizes customer service.

The needs of our constituents are changing. Based on a recent regional housing assessment (along with information from applicants and other organizations), we know that existing housing stock in the area is not well suited to the changing demographics of the region. Not only is the need for affordable housing growing, but an increasing number of people need accessible accommodations and better quality housing. These demographics played an important role in shaping our plan.

We also recognize the desire of seniors, including Bath Housing residents, to remain in their own homes as they grow older. Over the next three years—and in collaboration with others—we will develop strategies to enable people to “age-in-place.”

Achieving our mission is linked directly to our organizational capacity. This includes effective governance, financial sustainability, fiscal accountability, excellent staff, and high quality facilities. In addition, community support is essential for successful affordable housing development and for the wellbeing of our constituents.

Finally, we need to work closely with organizations, community groups, and municipalities in our region. Through this collaboration, we will enhance and accelerate our ability to achieve our mission.

We expect that our strategic plan will evolve over time. However, we are committed to the following four priorities and we will evaluate our work based on tangible progress in each of these areas:

- **Customer Service**      Improve quality of life for people we serve through superior customer service.
- **Development**        Increase the supply of affordable housing.
- **Innovation**           Pursue innovative programs and services to meet affordable housing needs in the region, with special emphasis on aging-in-place.
- **Capacity**              Improve organizational capacity to achieve our mission.

## Priorities, Strategies, and Objectives

**Priorities** reflect key areas of emphasis during the next three years.

**Strategies** reflect the methods that we will use to make progress in our priority areas.

**Objectives** reflect the measurable steps that we will take to implement our strategies.

### I. Improve quality of life for people we serve through superior customer service.

#### *Strategies*

To understand and be responsive to the needs and interests of people served by Bath Housing, we will:

- ❖ Foster multiple channels of communication—both formal and informal.
- ❖ Set high expectations for our staff regarding communication and responsiveness.
- ❖ Strengthen our ability to connect individuals to supportive services.
- ❖ Benchmark our progress against national standards.
- ❖ Improve the physical environment of residential units.

#### *Objectives*

- A. Strengthen customer feedback mechanisms.
  1. By June 2015, formalize customer feedback loop, e.g., regular meetings of the Resident Advisory Board; monthly community meetings with the Resident Services Coordinator; complaint and suggestions analysis; and, an open door policy and annual “Meet & Greets” with the Executive Director.
  2. Every two years, conduct a client satisfaction survey and demonstrate how the information is used in planning and decision-making.
  
- B. Connect those we serve with resources to meet their needs.
  1. By September 2015, identify strategies to maximize self-sufficiency and sense of ownership of residents, e.g., expanding gardening and wellness programs.
  2. By September 2015, explore a Family Self-Sufficiency Program or alternative venture in collaboration with other organizations to serve households with Housing Choice Vouchers.
  3. By December 2016, identify additional program strategies to enable Bath Housing residents to age-in-place.

- C. Respond to the physical housing needs of Bath Housing residents.
  - 1. By December 2015, assess existing accessibility features and develop an incremental plan to increase the number of ADA accessible units or features.
  - 2. By April 2015, determine how many units will be modernized by June 30, 2018 and upgrade all units at turnover, with the intent of 50% completion by December 2017.
  - 3. By June 6, 2017, identify and complete energy efficiency improvements, for the purpose of reducing energy consumption by 15 percent over 2013 usage.
  - 4. Maintain or improve HUD Real Estate Assessment Center physical score of 95.
  - 5. By December 2017, enhance security of units through installation of cameras.
  
- D. Ongoing, review and modify internal policies, e.g., tenant harassment, smoke free, and various programmatic policies such as Admission and Continued Occupancy Policy, and Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) Administrative Plan.

## **II. Increase the supply of affordable housing**

### *Strategies*

To make informed decisions on the development or acquisition of affordable housing, we will:

- ❖ Collect information on housing needs, including from “walk-ins” and community groups.
- ❖ Seek regular communication with municipal officials (elected and appointed) in our defined service area—Bath, West Bath, Woolwich, Georgetown, Phippsburg, and Arrowsic.
- ❖ Pursue land and seek new funding for development and apply for Housing Choice Vouchers (HCV) as possible.
- ❖ As opportunities arise, consider acquisition of multifamily, subsidized housing.

### *Objectives*

- A. By September 2015, develop internal review process and checklist to vet new projects for need, viability, and feasibility; include consideration of tax implications to municipalities.
  
- B. Assess development options for low, very low, and moderate income households with a target of facilitating development of 100 new affordable units over the subsequent three years.
  
- C. By December 2016, identify development options for two land parcels owned by Bath Housing.
  
- D. By February 2016, identify strategies to acquire bank-owned properties.

### **III. Pursue innovative programs and services to meet affordable housing needs in the region, with a special emphasis on aging-in-place.**

#### *Strategies*

To address needs in our region, we will:

- ❖ Convene or participate in community conversations regarding aging-in-place and collaborate with other organizations to identify and develop solutions on this and other housing issues.
- ❖ Pursue programs and services enabling seniors to age-in-place.
- ❖ Offer “housing navigation” to help people with housing needs learn about available resources.
- ❖ Provide information to area landlords and municipalities regarding Housing Choice Vouchers (HCV) and other key housing issues.
- ❖ Remain abreast and involved, as appropriate, in public policy discussions that will improve the availability of affordable housing.

#### *Objectives*

- A. Enable area residents to age-in-place.
  - 1. By December 2015, develop concept for pilot project—Community Aging in Place-Advancing Better Living for Elders (CAPABLE)—in collaboration with area nonprofits.
  - 2. By December 2015, evaluate feasibility of offering maintenance services for seniors in the Bath region on a targeted, trial basis.
- B. By June 2016, identify tenant education strategies to assist people to maintain housing during times of hardship.
  - 1. By December 2016, develop and test eviction prevention curriculum and begin fundraising.

### **IV. Improve organizational capacity to achieve our mission.**

#### *Strategies*

To be successful in an increasingly complex environment, we will:

- ❖ Foster a knowledgeable, engaged Board of Directors.
- ❖ Ensure that staff are skilled, responsive, and well-supported.
- ❖ Maintain a sound financial position and high financial accountability.
- ❖ Cultivate community support.
- ❖ Be resourceful in how we use and leverage our resources.

## *Objectives*

- A. Strengthen the governance structure.
  - 1. By March 2015, set in motion a process to clarify and memorialize the relationship between the Development Corporation and the Housing Authority, and discuss possibilities for modifications, if any.
  - 2. By June 2016, identify specific steps to improve Board effectiveness with attention to orientation, composition, and understanding of roles and responsibilities.
  
- B. Strengthen the staffing structure and build on our strong, well-integrated team.
  - 1. Ongoing, identify efficiencies in staffing structure, e.g., consider outsourcing for snow removal and lawn mowing.
  - 2. Ongoing, identify professional development opportunities for staff.
  - 3. Ongoing, seek ways to build on the high level of internal communication.
  - 4. Ongoing, seek opportunities to host interns, students, and national service volunteers.
  
- C. Improve financial accountability and general operations.
  - 1. By June 2015, revise financial reporting mechanisms.
  - 2. Annually, review technology needs, taking into account available resources.
  
- D. Raise the profile of Bath Housing.
  - 1. By March 2016, identify steps to inform the public about Bath Housing to the general public as well as selected communities and constituencies, e.g., website, social media, and meetings with community groups.
  
- E. Increase revenue, strengthen our core services, and meet the needs of our constituency by providing contractual services to other organizations.
  - 1. By June 2017, identify and review with the Board potential services that could be offered to other organizations in the Bath region.
  - 2. As directed by the Board, develop preliminary business plan to include financial and programmatic benefit, and results of research with potential “customers.”