**VISION FOR BHP’S LOCAL MTW PROGRAM**

Brattleboro Housing Authority (BHA) is a small PHA (under 500 Vouchers and RAD units combined) serving a vibrant and engaged community in Southern Vermont. BHA houses 42% of the total number of persons at or under the poverty level in the Town. It also has the deepest subsidy of all subsidized housing in Windham County which accounts for 51% of all subsidized units Our staff consists of 18 – six maintenance, five administrative, four service and wellness coordinators, two property managers and one Section 8 administrator.

Over the last twenty-five years, the agency has become known for its innovations in programs, ability to face and solve large scale human and property challenges, and as a Statewide leader in housing for low income Vermonters. The leadership of BHA is well known for its ability to lead change by focusing on opportunities from planned and unexpected events – see below as an example when confronted by Tropical Storm Irene. New programs and property development have resulted from a fierce belief within the entire agency that despite its small size, it can accomplish great things working with its residents and participants. As you will find in this application, the entire agency has worked in harmony to develop strategic plans and then the concrete steps to implement them. The goal of becoming an MTW agency is the last of the most significant goals BHA has worked to attain over the last ten years. The agency looks at becoming an MTW agency as a huge opportunity to better meet our community and resident needs by improving our internal processes and creating housing and programs that are structured to support housing retention and improve quality of life.

BHA is committed to making the best possible housing for our current resident/participants and for specialized populations in our community. We are constantly learning from our residents, participants and the community at large. We will always seek this engagement as it is the bedrock of a responsive constantly evolving agency clear on its mission of service to others and long-term stewardship of its resources.

**Cost Effectiveness**

*Past and Current*

* BHA converted four properties to the Rental Assistance Demonstration (RAD) program December 1, 2019. RAD has created opportunities to update and improve our properties in a more flexible manner to meet unique property needs.
* BHA collaborated with Cathedral Square Corporation (a Burlington, VT based non-profit housing organization) to develop and implement SASH (Supportive and Services at Home), a program funded by Medicare to improve health outcomes and quality of life for elders and adults with disabilities while saving money to the entire health care system. We then became the first PHA to incorporate SASH into our resident services. We have served over 400 individuals reducing Medicare costs by as much as $1,450 annually per participant. Proven decreases in hospitalizations as well as delays and prevention of relocations to nursing homes has saved federal housing funds by improving independent housing retention.
* In 2003 BHA established Brattleboro Housing Opportunities, Inc – an instrumentality of BHA that allows us to accept donations and grants that would otherwise not be available. It helps fund activities for residents/participants – particularly children.
* In 2018 BHA organized the Resident Advisory and Communication Committee (RACC) as a deliberate way to give and receive information directly from residents about the neighborhoods (property sites) they live in. This committee meets monthly and has representation from various housing sites within BHA.

*Future*

* We will continue and expand the above initiatives.
* Strengthen the RACC by expanding representation from every BHA housing site.
* With the flexibility that comes from being an MTW agency we plan to make changes to our administrative procedures that will save time and money from those duties and allow more creativity and innovation primarily focused on housing retention.

**Self-Sufficiency**

*Past and current*

* Eager to engage in any program that would help its residents/participants move toward self-sufficiency and a better quality of life, BHA began participation in the FSS program, as soon as it was available in the 90’s. Since then over 116 people have participated and worked toward self-sufficiency – with 36 currently enrolled.
* Our resident services coordinator works with residents on issues of concern that are not necessarily connected to employment but do have an impact on their quality of life and ability to continue to function independently. This is particularly important in our family units where obstacles are often daunting and hard to overcome without support.
* As mentioned above our SASH program provides services to our E/NED population and serves members of the larger community as well.
* A long-term goal of ours was to have a singe team made up of the staff from the different programs and property managers. In 2016 we created the Resident Services and Wellness Team (RW&W). This Team provides support to better coordinate services by connecting residents with needed local resources, keeping residents housed and finding innovative resident informed solutions to property wide issues. The creation of this Team within the agency has been more successful than we ever imagined. It has permeated in the best possible way everything that we do and how we look at issues within our neighborhoods.

*Future*

* While we have been very successful with our RS&W Team, there are many things that we cannot do within the current regulatory framework. The flexibility in MTW will allow us to be more creative in addressing the needs of our residents/participants. It will also allow us to create true partnerships with existing community agencies to leverage resources.

**Housing Choice**

*Past and Current*

* In 2008 we recognized the need for assisted living in our community and embarked on a project which would have converted one of our properties into an assisted living development. We had to abandon that plan in 2011 when Tropical Storm Irene devasted 80 E/NED units in one property.
* As we worked on the assisted living concept, we were asked to take over an adjacent commercial building which we redeveloped into 21 units of LIHTC housing for the E/NED. This building opened in 2010.
* In 2011, we had completed the work to arrive at a solid, much needed Energy Services Contract to make deep energy improvements to our properties. Again, this had to be abandoned because of Tropical Storm Irene.
* Our long-term response to the devastating Tropical Storm was the development, with a statewide housing non-profit, of a large and impressive building for 55 of the flood affected residents. This 16-million-dollar development opened in 2017. BHA was an equal partner in all aspects of this development.
* We are now into construction for the second and last building to affect the relocation of all residents from the flood area. This smaller, 18 unit, 5-million-dollar development will open next summer. We are a very small agency (see above) and yet we have the staff expertise and commitment to take on this level of development – funding, permits, brownfields, construction, relocation of residents and then management.

*Future*

* With MTW flexibility we will continue to work creatively toward providing the best possible housing options to both our residents and others. The ability to partner with other agencies, funders, etc will allow us to make major improvements to our current housing stock. It will also allow us to enter into true partnerships with other agencies and housing providers to serve some of the specialized populations that are lacking housing options in our community.

**PLAN FOR FUTURE COMMUNITY/RESIDENTS/PARTICIPANT PARTICIPATION**

We have a very active Board of Commissioners, RACC and process for community input. Once we began planning to apply for MTW designation, we established a MTW Community Advisory Committee (see attachment), held meetings with landlords, and meetings with our PH residents and Section 8 participants (see attachment). The CAC includes housing and service providers, groups representing minorities and persons with disabilities, and representatives of the larger community. BHA staff act as liaisons to all BHA boards and committees. The CAC will continue to be active as we move forward and giving a report at each Board of Commissioners Agenda. All meetings are open, recorded and aired on local access TV.

Groups representing racial and ethnic minorities, LEP, persons with disabilities will be specifically queried as the plan moves forward, is implemented, and changes are considered. We make use of local access TV, mailings, memos, in person and virtual meetings, websites, social media, automatic calling services, community notices and all other means available to keep people involved and participating.

**PHA OPERATING AND INVENTORY INFORMATION**

BHA owns five housing sites developed from 1965 to 1982. All the sites were in the Public Housing Program until last year when four of them were converted to RAD. The one site left in PH is under a Demolition/Disposal Approval because it is in the flood way/plain. This property is now under a $3.2 million FEMA flood mitigation project to convert it into a park and flood storage. The Section 18, RAD and FEMA Applications/Awards were written by BHA staff. All Property and Project Management is done by BHA staff as well. The RAD Developments comprise of 203 units of housing for the Elderly/Non-Elderly Disabled (134 units) and families (69 units). In addition, are the two LIHTC Properties with 76 units of E/NED housing co-owned and managed by BHA. BHA has a baseline for the Housing Choice Voucher Program of 212 but is only financially able to have 137 Housing Choice and Project Based Vouchers in use at this time. In addition, we administer 2 supportive housing programs to address homelessness in our community:

Transitions to Housing was created by us in 2005 and has since served over 300 people, 120 once homeless families receiving housing assistance and community based supportive services. Of those 120 families, 102 have successfully exited the program into other permanent subsidized housing units. Funding for this program is from the State of Vermont Agency of Human Services. The program was given a Vermont Agency of Human Services Secretary’s Community Award in 2007 and was cited for effectiveness in addressing family homelessness in a 2011 ASPE Research Brief by U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Shelter Plus Care, part of HUD’s Continuum of Care programs, serves homeless individuals and families with disabilities, who receive on-going support from a community service provider. We are currently providing 27 subsidies to over 35 household members. We have administered this program for over twenty years.

As we move forward with MTW our goal is to be able to improve our housing stock which all dates from the 60’s, 70’s and 80’s. In the past we have remodeled, improved energy efficiencies, improved grounds, etc. But limited funding has only allowed us to do what is absolutely required. MTW will allow us the ability to make improvements that will enhance our housing to better meet the needs of residents.

We do not anticipate reducing the number of people served nor the make up of our residents/participants. We do hope to be able to begin to address the needs of special populations. We have heard from both residents and community members that there is a need for more multi-generational housing, housing for parents with part-time custody of children, housing that can serve the needs of children aging out of foster care, housing for the developmentally disabled and those with disabilities living in aging families. In subsequent years we hope to work with other community groups to begin to focus some of our resources on these populations.

**PLAN FOR LOCAL MTW PROGRAM**

*Cost Effectiveness*

With such a small staff it is important to use each person and his/her time effectively. There are many regulations that make that difficult. During our first year as an MTW agency we will make administrative changes that will both save time and money. Those changes are identified in the schedule for Years 1 & 2. These changes will free staff from overly burdensome administrative duties and allow more flexibility to serve residents/participants and implement new procedures.

*Self-sufficiency-* 

*Housing Choice*

As has been stated above, we have looked at our inventory in the past but have not been able to do the kind of renovations we would like for many reasons. MTW flexibility will allow us to improve our housing stock, offer options that currently are not possible to our residents/participants and to specialized populations in the community.

**PROPOSED USE OF MTW FUNDS**

The Brattleboro Housing Authority is requesting authority to use public housing and HCV funds flexibly in this application. We ask for this to better use HUD HCV, PHA and RAD resources. We have noted that we are a small agency and as a result, need to reduce redundancies to use our human resources more effectively. In developing a single application, wait list and process for their maintenance we will not only reduce staff resources but more importantly we will make this very important entry process much better for those applying.

Other MTW enabled administrative changes in all our separate programs such as less re-certifications, perhaps one person to do screening, back-ground checks, interviews, determinations, and appeals will result in better human resource allocation and service to participants. Lease up, yearly inspections and resident requested inspections will also be looked at. This will free up current staff from redundant tasks and allow them to focus on participant, resident, and landlord relations.

We will be evaluating and developing an integrated supportive services program which may result in staff savings but more importantly will result in better self-sufficiency outcomes for residents and participants. While we do not know how completely integrated the program can be with our existing SASH program (HIPPA restrictions) we do anticipate a full integration of FSS. Thus, these funds will need to be fully fungible.

Finally, as we address our existing housing stock and community needs, we will be looking to the re-development of our housing. Additionally, we are looking at the ability to use our HCV’s to develop strong partnerships which include a housing component. This may be in our existing housing or housing in the community. Again, we will need full fungibility to make this possible.

**EVIDENCE OF SIGNIFICANT PARTNERSHIPS**

Over the years BHA has developed many meaningful partnerships at both the local and state level:

Transitions to Housing has been a collaboration with the Vermont Agency of Human Services, Health Care & Rehabilitative Services (HCRS – mental health agency), Groundworks Collaborative (homeless agency) and the Winston Prouty Center for Child and Family Development for the past 14 years.

SASH has formal MOUs with Visiting Nurses, mental health agencies, local hospitals, and the Area Agency on Aging.

Shelter Plus Care is a collaboration between BHP and two major community agencies - Groundworks Collaborative and HCRS.

Tropical Storm Irene Response to the devastation cause by Tropical Storm Irene necessitated working very closely with Vermont State Agency of Commerce and Community Development, Agency of Natural Resources, State Historic Preservation, Town of Brattleboro, FEMA, Housing Vermont, and Vermont Housing Finance Agency to determine the fate of our development that was flooded beyond repair. These relationships have been maintained since 2011 in order to allow us to develop replacement housing.

Boys and Girls Club We partner to offer programs at no cost to our youth.

Housing Providers We partner with other housing providers, Windham Windsor Housing Trust, Housing Vermont, State of Vermont, Vermont Housing Finance Agency to provide LIHTC in four developments.

Financial Partners Vermont Housing & Conservation Board, Federal Home Loan bank, People's United Bank, Tax Credit Syndications

FSS collaborates with Vermont Vocational Rehabilitation, Vermont Department of Labor, local 6 College Collaborative, Career/Technical Center and other employment and training providers.

Flexibility in use of funds will allow us to work more closely with other housing providers, social service agencies, and both public and private funders to create different types of housing options: more LIHTC units; units for specialized populations; units in the broader community; more mixed income neighborhoods. The State of Vermont through various programs has committed resources to affordable housing. With the added flexibility available through MTW we will be able to collaborate in ways which allow us to participate in using those funds to create the most positive impact.

With increased flexibility we can truly partner with other resources in our community both to leverage funds, in -kind resources and services for our residents/participants. Currently we work with many community partners but do not have the flexibility to enter into true partnerships. Receiving an MTW designation will allow more of these true partnerships whether it is to provide housing for specialized populations, provide better services and resources to our residents, improve the quality of our housing, or meet other community needs.

**SIGNIFICANT DATES AND MILESTONES FOR THE LOCAL MTW PROGRAM**

August 28, 2020 – notified of invitation to submit application

December 2, 2020 – submit application

YEAR ONE

January 2021 – Execute a Consolidated Annual Contributions Contract (CACC) amendment detailing MTW participation

February 2021- Review and evaluate software

February 2021 - Change annual recertifications for E/NED from annually to every three years

April 2021 – Institute recertification process for family units

April 2021 -Institute new inspection process – family, E/NED, Sec 8

April – October 2021 – plan for combining the Sec 8 and RAD programs into a single program organizing duties by function rather than by program

May 2021 – Introduce and commence using common application form for all programs

June 2021 – Begin use of single wait list

June 2021- Implement continuous purge of wait list

November-December 2021 – Review and revise changes made, submit annual MTW plan

YEAR TWO

February 2022- Start process of comprehensive review of resident/participant needs

May 2022- Review existing programs to see how they can meet the identified needs

August 2022 – Create new resident service program

August 2022 – Begin to plan for year three goal of serving specialized populations

October 2022 – Implement new resident service program

October 2022 – Ongoing review/evaluate effects of changes – revise where needed, plan for years 3 &4

December 2022 – Submit annual MTW plan,