**VISION FOR BHA’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 below the poverty level in the Town. Our staff consists of 18 – six maintenance, five administrative, four service and wellness coordinators, two property managers and one Section 8 grants administrator.

Over the last twenty-five years, we have become known for our 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 (example: when confronted by Tropical Storm Irene – (TS Irene)). New programs and property development have resulted from a fierce belief within the agency that despite its small size, we can accomplish great things working with our residents, participants and the community. The entire agency has worked to develop data driven strategic plans and then concrete steps to implement them. Becoming a Moving To Work (MTW) agency is the last of the significant goals we have worked to attain over the last ten years. We look at MTW as an opportunity to better meet our community and resident needs by improving our internal processes, and by creating housing and programs that better support housing retention and improve quality of life.

We are committed to making the best possible housing for our current resident/participants and specialized populations in our community including multi-generational families, youth aging out of foster care, developmentally delayed and disabled people living in aging families, and people reentering community after institutionalization. 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*

We converted four properties to the Rental Assistance Demonstration (RAD) program December 1, 2019 in order to create opportunities to update and improve our properties in a more flexible manner to meet unique property needs.

We collaborated with Cathedral Square Corp. (Burlington, VT 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 (E/NED) 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. There have been proven decreases in hospitalizations as well as delays and prevention of relocations to nursing homes.

In 2003 we 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 we 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) in which they live by monthly meetings with staff.

*Future*

We will expand the above initiatives by including representatives of Section 8 participants and assuring representation from every BHA housing site. With the flexibility that comes with MTW we plan to make changes to our administrative procedures that will save time and money and allow more creativity and innovation primarily focused on housing retention.

**Self-Sufficiency**

*Past and current*

Eager to engage in any appropriate program to help our residents/participants move toward self-sufficiency, we began participation in the FSS program as soon as it was available in the 90’s. Since then over 116 people have participated.

Our resident services coordinator (RAD funded position) works with residents on issues of concern not necessarily connected to employment but with an impact on quality of life and ability to continue to be independent. 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 single team made up property managers and support staff from the different programs. In 2016 we created the Resident Services and Wellness Team (RS&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. For example, the team addressed rent collection and payments at certain properties; resulting in an increase in rent receipts of 20% within 6 months of the program starting.

*Future*

While we have been very successful with our RS&W Team, we know there are things that we cannot do within the current siloed framework. MTW flexibility will allow us to be more creative in addressing the needs of our residents/participants. We accomplished much within the constraints of the silos, we believe we can do even more with flexibility.

**Housing Choice**

*Past and Current*

In 2008 we recognized the need for assisted living in our community and embarked on a project that would have converted one of our properties to assisted living. We had to abandon that plan in 2011 when TS Irene devasted 80 E/NED units in another property.

As we worked on the above, we were asked to take over an adjacent commercial building which we redeveloped into 21 units of LIHTC housing for the E/NED. The A.W. Richards building opened in 2010.

In 2011, we had a solid, much needed Energy Services Contract ready to sign to make deep energy improvements to our properties. Again, this had to be abandoned because of TS Irene.

Our long-term response to the effects of TS Irene was the development of a large and impressive building for 55 of the flood affected residents. This $16M development opened in 2017. We were an equal partner in all aspects of this development. We are now into construction to house the remaining residents from the flood area. This smaller, 18 unit, $5M development will open summer of 2021. Our staff has expertise and commitment to take on any level of development.

*Future*

With MTW flexibility we will continue to work creatively toward providing the best possible housing options. The ability to partner with other agencies, funders, etc. will allow us to make major improvements to our current housing stock and plan for their re-use. For example, we might be able to provide housing for homeless youth by partnering with Youth Services who would hold a master lease or other legal agreement.

**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 (CAC), held meetings with landlords, and meetings with our residents/participants. The CAC includes housing and service providers, representatives of minorities and persons with disabilities, and representatives of the community. The CAC will continue to be an important part of the process. All meetings are advertised, open, recorded and on local access TV.

Groups representing racial and ethnic minorities, Limited English Proficiency, and persons with disabilities will be engaged as the plan moves forward. We work closely with Vermont Center for Independent Living, NAACP, and representatives/advocates for minority and disadvantaged communities. We use local access TV, mailings, memos, in person/virtual meetings, websites, social media, automatic calling services, emails, community notices, and all means available to keep people involved.

**PHA OPERATING AND INVENTORY INFORMATION**

We own five housing sites developed from 1965 to 1982. All the sites were in the Public Housing Program until last year when four were converted to RAD. The one site left in PH is under a Demolition/Disposal Approval as it is currently in the flood way/plain and is now under a $3.2M FEMA flood mitigation project to convert much of it to a park and flood storage. Five residential buildings (26 units) will remain and the MTW flexibility will greatly assist us with their ultimate use. The Section 18, RAD and FEMA Applications/Awards were written by our staff. All Property and Project Management is also done by our staff. The RAD developments comprise 203 units of housing for the E/NED (134 units) and families (69 units). In addition, are two LIHTC Properties with 76 units of E/NED housing that we co-own and manage. We have a baseline for the Housing Choice Voucher Program of 212 but are 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. The program was given a VT Agency of Human Services Secretary’s Community Award in 2007 (AHS is the funder) and was cited as a promising model to address family homelessness in a 2011 ASPE Research Brief by U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services.

Shelter Plus Care, (SPC) part of HUD’s Continuum of Care program. For over 20 years we have managed SPC and have provided housing and support to former homeless families with disabilities. We currently provide 27 subsidies to over 35 household members.

With MTW one goal is to improve our aging housing stock. In the past we have made many improvements but limited funding has only allowed us to do what is absolutely required. MTW’s flexibility will allow us to make significant capital improvements to enhance our housing to better meet area needs.

We do not anticipate reducing the number of people served nor the make-up of our residents/participants. Working with community groups to leverage money and resources, we will begin to address the needs of special populations (see above).

**PLAN FOR LOCAL MTW PROGRAM**

*Cost Effectiveness*

With such a small staff it is important to use each person effectively; many existing regulations make that difficult. During our first year as an MTW agency we will make administrative changes to save both time and money as identified in Years 1 & 2 schedule. They will free staff from burdensome administrative duties and allow more flexibility to serve residents/participants.

*Self-sufficiency*

We will make substantial changes to our support services including FSS to create a program that better meets the identified needs of residents/participants. They have expressed interest in being part of the redesign of the program and we welcome this interest and participation.

*Housing Choice*

As 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. MTW flexibility will allow us to improve our housing stock, offer better options to our residents/participants and to specialized populations (see above).

**PROPOSED USE OF MTW FUNDS**

We are requesting authority to use PBV, HCV , Public Housing Operating and Capital funds flexibly in order to better use HUD resources to create integrated programs and property improvements. MTW enabled administrative changes currently in separate programs will result in better human resource allocation and service to participants. They will allow staff to focus on participant, resident, and landlord relations.

We will be evaluating the potential structure of a more integrated services program which may result in staff savings and better self-sufficiency outcomes for residents/participants. We anticipate a full integration of FSS. Thus, these funds will need to be very fungible.

Finally, as we address our existing housing stock and community needs, we will be looking to the re-development and re-use of our housing. With MTW flexibility we might, for example, through a legal mechanism, partner with an agency for their use of one of our buildings to serve a specific underserved population. Again, we will need full fungibility to make this possible.

**EVIDENCE OF SIGNIFICANT PARTNERSHIPS**

Over the years we have developed many meaningful partnerships at the local and state level:

Transitions to Housing: A 15 year collaboration with the Vermont Agency of Human Services, Health Care & Rehabilitative Services (HCRS – mental health agency), Groundworks Collaborative (homeless agency), Youth Services, and Winston Prouty Center for Child and Family Development.

SASH: has a formal Memorandum Of Understanding with Visiting Nurses, mental health agencies, local hospitals, and the Area Agency on Aging.

Shelter Plus Care: A collaboration with Groundworks Collaborative and HCRS.

Tropical Storm Irene: response to the devastation necessitated working closely with Vermont Agencies of Commerce and Community Development, Natural Resources, 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. The relationships have been maintained since 2011 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 Windham Windsor Housing Trust, Housing 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 and Department of Labor, the 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. (See above examples). Currently we work with many community partners but are not able to have legal partnerships with respect to our properties nor with agencies that provide services. With increased flexibility we can partner with others to leverage funds and resources to better meet the needs of our residents/participants, improve housing quality and meet other community needs.

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

YEAR ONE

February – June 2021: Review proposed administrative changes to establish baselines and evaluation methods for each, evaluate best approaches to the changes, identify challenges and opportunities of each; develop procedures for each. These changes include changes in recertifications, inspections, application, wait list, and procurement.

Identify staff and organizational changes necessary to the successful implementation of identified changes.

July – September 2021: Create policies and organizational changes for the proposed changes. Review software needs to implement changes.

October – December 2021: Implement changes cited above.

November-December 2021: Submit annual MTW plan

YEAR TWO

February 2022-June 2022: Comprehensive review of resident/participant needs. Evaluate existing programs for ability to meet the identified needs. Establish baselines and evaluation methods for any proposed changes. Identify challenges and opportunities to any proposed changes to the structure of the program(s). Identify staff and organizational changes necessary to the successful implementation of a newly structured program(s).

July 2022 – September 2022: Create new resident service program(s) to better meets identified needs.

Review software needs to implement change.

Begin to plan for Year 3 & 4 goals including serving specialized populations.

Evaluate the changes implemented in year one.

October 2022 – December 2022: Implement newly structured resident services program.

December 2022: Submit annual MTW plan.