



Rochester Housing Authority

STRATEGIC PLAN

2010 -2015

Top Five Priorities

Increase opportunities for affordable housing
Diversify RHA's revenue base to support our mission
Promote a path to self sufficiency for residents
Align our organization to meet strategic goals
Enhance relationships with stakeholders



Welcome from the Executive Director

In January 2011, I became executive director of the Rochester Housing Authority and upon my arrival I was greeted by a detailed 2010-2015 organizational strategic plan. Today I am pleased to present this plan, and let you know how excited I am to cultivate our talent, dedication, and enthusiasm to accomplish these goals. I am certain our strategic plan will have a positive effect and be of great benefit to RHA, our residents, our staff, and the broader Rochester community. I invite you to review our plan, understand our role, our direction, and where we will be in 2015.

Alex Castro

Our Mission

Rochester Housing Authority is an essential housing resource for the Greater Rochester area providing quality housing opportunities and related services for those in need.

Our Strategic Plan

This is RHA’s first comprehensive strategic plan. Given the changing fiscal environment in which all public housing authorities now operate, RHA seeks to become more strategic about achieving goals that support our mission. In 2010 we identified where we want to be by year end 2015. Executive and senior leaders then worked with staff throughout the organization to draw up action steps, timetables, performance measures, etc. In addition, working together we established the foundation for RHA’s strategic pathway by putting numerous plan elements in place. In the years 2011 through 2015 we are taking more steps on this important journey. Our strategic plan is our roadmap. This document highlights for our stakeholders where we are going and how we will get there.

Terminology:

Strategic Directions – Define, at the highest level, RHA’s priorities.

Goals – The “big picture” outcomes that we will strive for as an organization under each priority.

Targets – The specific areas where we will need to succeed in order to meet our goals.

Strategies – How we will meet our targets.

Action Steps – The steps we will take to turn strategy into reality.

Symbols:

❖ Designates a target

➔ Designates a key strategy

• Indicates a key action step

About Rochester Housing Authority

RHA has been the regional public housing authority for the five-county Greater Rochester, New York region since 1955. We serve lower income families and senior and/or disabled citizens, and have a total population of approximately 22,000. About 20% of RHA tenants live in our 2,400+ public housing units. Others we serve receive assistance from RHA in the form of voucher or certificate programs that help them afford housing in eligible, private housing. In 2010, RHA had about 8,000 housing choice vouchers.

An independent public corporation, RHA was established by NYS Public Housing Law. Historically public housing authorities across the country have been funded by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) but in recent years government support for agencies U.S.-wide has been declining. In 2010, RHA had a staff of about 180, and a consolidated budget of approximately \$62 million.

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Sandra Whitney, *Director of Housing Operations*

Senior Staff

John Mooney, *MIS Coordinator*
Daniel Sturgis, *Assistant to the Director of Housing Operations*

Acknowledgements

RHA thanks the many staff members who contributed to the development of this strategic plan. We are particularly grateful to Paul Simmons and Amie Bush for providing logistical support and assistance. The Center for Governmental Research assisted with the development of this plan.

Use RHA's position as the regional public housing authority to increase opportunities for affordable housing in Greater Rochester.

Context

There is a continuing need for affordable housing in the Greater Rochester region. The number of eligible applicants who seek housing assistance is far greater than the number we can help. Yet in times of declining government support we remain committed to our mission. This commitment requires us to make progress on two fronts. We must preserve and increase our current housing inventory, but at the same time we must grow our base of housing vouchers and the number of landlords who can serve our clients.

GOAL 1A

Preserve and increase the inventory of RHA-owned or controlled properties and grow the base of financial assets.

- ❖ Achieve HUD “High Performer status for public housing units and sustain that level of performance for all RHA properties annually.
 - ➔ Update and maintain our five-year capital program.
 - Expand planning of capital needs to include housing management and maintenance staff.
 - ➔ Develop an improved preventive maintenance program.
 - Create a lifecycle plan for systems and baseline measurement of the impact of preventive maintenance.
 - ➔ Revise both our financial and management indicators to provide more frequent “snapshots” of how RHA is doing.
 - Determine which ones RHA can affect.
- ❖ Increase inventory of RHA-owned or controlled properties by 100 units by year end 2015.
 - ➔ Identify opportunities for private investment in RHA development projects.
 - Beginning in early 2013, develop a request for information for potential development and financing partnership opportunities.
 - ➔ Expand development of funding opportunities and other affordable housing projects outside our annual contribution contracts with HUD.
 - Identify and apply for grant opportunities.
 - ➔ Seek out development opportunities with non-profit or for-profit private developers in which RHA can become an ownership partner.
 - Determine potential for future development for infill lots near Voters Block housing and other opportunities as available.
 - ➔ Increase RHA knowledge / capabilities regarding development strategies and property development.
 - Hire an in-house development staff person and provide additional training for key staff.

GOAL 1B

Increase the number of Housing Choice Vouchers (HCV) and the number of qualified HCV landlords in order to help address current unmet housing needs in the Rochester region.

- ❖ Increase Leasing Operations programs to serve 9,000 program participants by 2015.
 - ➔ Increase the utilization of programs that have additional vouchers available.
 - Research why programs identified as under-utilized have difficulties filling open vouchers and develop an action plan.
 - ➔ Improve participant retention rates in existing programs.
 - Where turnover is not due to the successful completion of the program, implement appropriate action steps to improve retention.
 - ➔ Identify opportunities for RHA to administer additional vouchers through HUD, NYS, or other potential sources.
 - Once an opportunity is identified, assess RHA administration capabilities, financial feasibility, and whether the program fits with the agency's mission.
 - ➔ Partner with governmental and private agencies to increase RHA's supportive housing programs (e.g., Family Unification, Housing Plus).
 - Identify potential partner agencies and administrative / financial feasibility.
- ❖ Ensure there are additional qualified housing units to match to the increase in vouchers by year end 2015.
 - ➔ Assess if landlords have specific issues with regard to participating in RHA programs.
 - Survey landlords.
 - ➔ Educate landlords about benefits / requirements of participating.
 - Improve informational packets, conduct semi-annual landlord training sessions, attend landlord meetings.
 - ➔ Perform market analysis to identify underutilized target areas.
 - Based on analysis, focus marketing / outreach to target specific communities, regions, and/or landlord groups.
 - ➔ Partner with experienced, affordable management companies to market property management services to landlords.
 - Determine feasibility by 2014, and if viable, determine interest of local agencies and private companies capable of providing property management services.



Interim Rochester Housing Authority Executive Director John Accorso attends the Voters Block groundbreaking ceremony on 12/23/2010.

Diversify and grow overall revenue so that RHA is not dependent on any one revenue source and can continue to fulfill its mission.

Context

Developing revenue streams outside our current financial base requires our agency to be creative. The opportunities we are exploring are diverse and range from investigating the potential of marketing fee-based services to making changes that affect some scattered site properties.

GOAL 2

Become more fiscally independent by building our capacity to develop our non-regulated income stream.

❖ By year end 2012, position RHA to increase non-HUD revenue by identifying key opportunities and gaining the capability to improve cash flow.

➔ Investigate making use of RHA’s financing capability to improve cash flow.

- Acquire bond financial training and also meet with public housing authorities that have successfully improved cash flow.

➔ Investigate the potential value of marketing fee-based services (e.g., property management, maintenance) to the private sector.

- Determine whether a property management affiliate is viable and conduct a cost study of management, maintenance, and other in-house services.

➔ Explore opportunities for leasing RHA space to outside organizations that could offer services to tenants (e.g., credit unions).

- Inventory available space, assess incorporating leasable space in new developments.

➔ Explore grant funding opportunities (e.g., energy, green build initiatives).

- Keep our development team informed of opportunities.

❖ Increase non-regulated revenue by \$1 million by year end 2015 – by averaging \$250,000 annually for the years 2012 through 2015.

➔ Depending upon outcome of investigations and explorations identified at left and above, implement as appropriate.

- Determine need for in-house marketing staff person or commission-based sales position.

❖ Reposition, if appropriate, scattered site public housing units to voluntary conversion by year end 2015.

➔ Assess whether to reposition 50-60 units through sales, partnerships, collaborations, etc. Then assess other scattered sites to determine if repositioning is viable – and, if so, if they have potential for home ownership.

- Develop ranking process for all sites and follow through with assessments (e.g., disposition, demolition).

Promote a path to self-sufficiency for public housing residents and housing choice voucher tenants.

Also create a supportive environment for residents for whom economic self-sufficiency is not a realistic option.

Context

Our Resident Services department works in myriad ways to support youth and break the cycle of public housing; facilitate programs that can lead to a GED, job, or home ownership; and provide a supportive environment for our elderly and disabled residents. Offering the comprehensive program that is needed requires more than RHA resources. Now, more than ever before, there is a need for additional partners and outside support.

GOAL 3

Enhance opportunities for residents served by RHA so that both they and the greater community become stronger.

- ❖ Reach out annually to the 1,500 elderly and/or disabled persons we serve.
- ➔ Make RHA staff more aware of Resident Services offerings and encourage them to promote them.
 - Utilize communication tools and meetings in zones.
- ❖ For these 1,500 residents, annually provide Resident Services' offerings to the number listed in our HUD grant submission. (Total was 400 in 2010 but changes with each submission.)
- ➔ Make appropriate referrals to Resident Services.
 - Create revised referral form for maintenance staff and expand use of existing referral tools.

Youth enrolled in the RHA after-school programs took a field trip to PolarWave Snow Tubing during their winter break from school in February 2010.



- ❖ Investigate avenues for creating a nonprofit 501 (c) (3) entity or relationship by mid-2012, with a goal of raising \$200,000 in grant funding over the first five years following incorporation.
- ➔ Objective: an entity that can apply for grant funding to support programs for residents for which RHA cannot currently receive funding, and accept donated funds that can be used to encourage resident self-sufficiency.
 - Explore working with community agencies or creating a separate entity.

- ❖ Complete a Resident Services facility needs assessment by April 2012.
 - ➔ Assess for all RHA communities.
 - Use the agency’s existing survey, but augment it with a resident survey.
- ❖ Provide tutoring programming for youth and boost GPA scores by the HUD target (.50 per student) for a minimum of 60 students per year.
 - ➔ Identify opportunities within the tutoring program (and other programs where possible).
 - Develop memorandums of understanding (MOUs) with partners, identify and recruit volunteers to tutor, gather report cards.
- ❖ Annually, through Section 3, place 10 residents in jobs lasting a minimum of three to six months.
 - ➔ Effectively use Section 3 strategies to provide jobs for those who meet federal low and very low income guidelines.
 - Review Section 3 bids approved for employment opportunities and Section 3 opportunity plans from contractors.
 - Refer appropriate residents to available positions.



Resident works with Monroe #1 BOCES instructor to complete the orientation for GED classes.

- ❖ Facilitate establishment of one resident-run business by 2015.
 - ➔ Effectively use Section 3 strategies.
 - Utilize programs currently available through RHA (e.g., Family Self-Sufficiency, Entrepreneurship Training).
- ❖ Increase community service and self-sufficiency program participation to break the cycle of public housing.
 - ➔ Enroll a minimum of 25 families per year in the public housing Family Self-Sufficiency Program.
 - Provide outreach and orientation to residents.
- ➔ Facilitate 18 home purchases per year through RHA.
 - Provide homebuyer education and develop MOUs with community agencies.
- ➔ Assess how to provide credit restoration and repair support to increase the credit scores of 20 residents.
 - Develop agreements with community agencies to provide financial literacy education; and obtain consent forms to monitor credit reports.
- ➔ Provide educational opportunities that result in at least 10 residents obtaining a GED each year.
 - Gather, via a questionnaire, educational information for households; develop agreements with GED service providers; and refer residents.
 - Utilize recertification process to assess achievement.

Ensure work processes, systems and staff are integrated and aligned to support RHA's mission.

Context

There are six key areas that fall under this goal: Information Technology; Property Management; Inspections; Leasing Operations; Maintenance / Procurement; and Supervision / Management. We highlight key components of general interest under each area.

GOAL 4

Enhance operational effectiveness and efficiency.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

❖ Assuming there is successful implementation of RHA's \$200,000 wireless work order system rolled out in 2010, implement the system's inventory / procurement component by October 2012.

➔ Assess performance quarterly.

- Review functionality.

❖ Institute document imaging RHA-wide by September 2011.

➔ Pilot within one department and develop department-by-department plan.

- Following pilot, rollout per plan.

PROPERTY MANAGEMENT

❖ Standardize operating procedures by year end 2011.

➔ Identify team to develop.

- Standardize move-in and move-out procedures and develop recertification policies and procedures.

Danforth Towers on the City's Westside - a community of senior and disabled residents.



❖ Develop a plan and checklist so that there is a standard way to measure site performance (e.g., turnaround time, physical condition) – by April 2011.

➔ Assign a team to develop plan and checklist and determine a rollout schedule.

- On an ongoing basis review essential reports (e.g., monthly vacancy logs, biweekly turnaround reports).

INSPECTIONS

❖ Improve landlord awareness of inspection process and requirements.

➔ Work with other teams addressing landlord recruitment.

- Improve information and resources available to landlords (e.g., RHA website, landlord newsletter).

- ❖ Combine, if feasible, two different types of required inspections (Uniform Physical Condition Standard and housekeeping inspections) and integrate Property Management public housing unit visits at the same time.

➔ Managers in charge of inspections, public housing, and maintenance address.

- Investigate HUD regulations, contact other authorities that have combined inspections, create a checklist.

LEASING OPERATIONS

- ❖ Streamline the intake and annual certification process by April 2012.

➔ Assess what creates the greatest hindrances.

- Complete a survey to be taken by about 200 landlords, 500 program participants, and 100 recently processed applicants regarding these processes, and develop a questionnaire to gather information on an ongoing basis (e.g., new applicants, voucher holders).

➔ Revise written intake and annual certification policies and procedures.

- Assess procedures and workflow, survey and questionnaire feedback, and benchmark with up to three other similar-sized public housing authorities.

- ❖ Effectively balance HUD funding and utilization on a monthly basis by January 2012.



Holland Townhouses near the heart of the city houses RHA families.

➔ Develop reporting methods that allow RHA to determine the true costs of specific programs and if each is financially viable.

- Use first year results as baseline, and set annual goal, by program, for subsequent years.

MAINTENANCE / PROCUREMENT

- ❖ Develop a more efficient materials ordering process by March 2011.

➔ Evaluate current state and assess impact of the work order system implemented in late 2010.

- Compare RHA warehouse procedures with up to three other public housing authorities.

- ❖ Develop a standard warehouse inventory control process and seek HUD approval.

➔ Following implementation, assess quarterly.

- Incorporate in operating procedures Procurement, Finance, and Maintenance.

SUPERVISION & MANAGEMENT

- ❖ Develop accounting processes and procedures for new development projects (e.g., Voters Block, Frederick Douglass.)

➔ Develop for construction / operational phases.

- Schedule regular reviews.

- ❖ Review on an ongoing basis expanded departmental budgeting oversight in the Central Office Cost Center, established in 2010 to increase spending visibility and management's understanding and accountability.

➔ Begin reviews of spending variances in February 2011 and continue quarterly.

- Train department heads and relevant support staff how to access spending information.

Enhance relationships with stakeholders to leverage resources, develop partnerships, and ensure a coordinated approach to service delivery.

Context

In developing this Strategic Plan, many different stakeholders told us they need more information about RHA. They also want a better understanding of our procedures and processes that have relevance for their own operations.

GOAL 5

Improve internal and external communications.

❖ Develop a Communications Plan to address internal and external communications needs – by July 2011.

➔ Engage a communications specialist to identify opportunities and processes to enhance communication with both internal and external audiences, oversee development of the plan, and help implement it.

- Evaluate feasibility of hiring someone to direct communication vs. outsourcing.

❖ Link the agency's Communications Plan to specific communications tools, audiences, and messages.

➔ Produce quarterly newsletters for staff and residents, and also bulletins that can serve to communicate RHA key messages to external audiences (e.g., landlords, the development community).

University Tower near the City's cultural district is designed for disabled residents under the age of 50.



• Action steps range from producing newsletters to investigating social media, using public access circuit in high rises, and coordinating with the City of Rochester regarding use of public channel 15/12.

❖ Make this RHA Strategic Plan document available publicly.

➔ Allow for public feedback via website, email or other means.

- Post this document on our website:
www.rochesterhousing.org