



*Developing people, property, and community*



**STRATEGIC PLAN**  
**2017-2020**

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# Introduction

The Akron Metropolitan Housing Authority (AMHA) celebrates 80 years of serving the Akron and Summit County community in 2018. AMHA has earned a national reputation as a model public housing authority, most recently indicated by 17 successive years of “high performing status” on the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development’s evaluation systems. Since the very beginning, AMHA leadership has supported our internal tagline “more than just housing.” Through decades of community partnerships and many innovative programs, services to improve the quality of life for our residents have been a hallmark.

AMHA and its peer agencies around the country have weathered many challenges over the years. It truly is “the best and worst of times.” The electronic age has brought efficiency and measurement to a degree not seen before; construction innovations have added amenities and operating cost savings that were only dreamed about previously; and collaboration and partnerships among various community partners has never been higher.

However, increasingly high construction costs and the political threats to preserving and expanding affordable housing have arguably never been greater. Nationally, Congress has slashed budgets year after year. Other federal programs that assist people in poverty, including those residing in public housing, are also being cut and face the potential of further cuts as political changes occur in Washington and budget priorities shift.

As a result of continuous underfunding, AMHA has a waiting list of clients of over 20,000 families. Demographic changes, such as rising numbers of elderly and special needs populations, will also have a broad impact on community housing needs for years to come.

As federal, state and local relationships are being redefined, public housing is one of many federally funded programs at risk. It is our hope that in the future housing will be recognized as a primary foundation for family life, education, work, and building a greater sense of community. Bottom line, the fact that the federal government is not keeping faith in honoring commitments to local agencies not only complicates but also reinforces our need to plan for the future.

In order to better deal with the shifting environment within which public housing operates and to set a course for the future, a strategic planning process was undertaken in 2016. In this climate of change and uncertainty, it is tempting to react to the obstacle of the day rather than maintaining focus on long-term goals and objectives. This plan was developed to document and provide this long-term focus on broad goals over the course of the next three years. The intent was to set broad high-level goals that will help us use limited resources to best address affordable housing and client service needs in the years to come.

The planning process for this strategic plan, Akron Metropolitan Housing Authority: *Developing people, property, and community*, began with the establishment of the AMHA Strategic Planning Team, comprised of the Executive Director, the Deputy Directors and the Director of Resident Services. This team oversaw the yearlong development of the plan. AMHA leadership, staff and residents participated in the planning process, and will play important roles in the ongoing implementation of the plan. The participation of each and every member of the AMHA community will generate a sense of pride in meeting our collective goals. While department heads are responsible for identifying the strategies that will move the agency in a positive direction toward meeting our long-term goals, they do not do so alone. Staff members will be able to better understand how their daily tasks are tied to the strategies. Thus assisting their leaders in refining goals and strategies. Using the strategic plan as a guide will assist with clarity and accountability.





## **Mission**

**The Akron Metropolitan Housing Authority provides quality, affordable housing as a platform to develop people, property and community.**

## **Vision**

**We envision a community that fosters individual development and growth through stable, affordable housing empowering all citizens to reach their full potential.**



# Values

## **Commitment To Excellence**

AMHA strives to achieve excellence in all that we do.

## **Professional Integrity**

AMHA is proud of our employees, one of our greatest resources; we set high expectations of a strong work ethic and respectful conduct at all times.

## **Social and Environmental Awareness**

AMHA strives to ensure social justice and to be a trustworthy steward of the environment.

## **Alignment with Community Priorities**

AMHA continues to develop multi-sector partnerships and cooperative relationships to establish opportunities that will enhance programs and services.

# Goals

## **Preserve & Expand Quality Affordable Housing**

AMHA recognizes that more quality housing is needed in our community and it shall endeavor to be part of the solution even while significant financial barriers exist.

## **Pursue Excellence and Innovation**

AMHA strives to be among the best performing housing authorities in the nation through the continuous development of our employees, expanding community partnerships and active involvement in setting national housing policy.

## **Cultivate Operational Efficiencies**

AMHA is committed to sound management of our scarce resources. As stewards of public funds, we continually search for processes to improve efficiencies and implement cost effective practices.

## **Improve Quality of Life**

AMHA is focused on the stability, well-being and advancement of our residents and employees.

# STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS BY GOAL

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## **Goal 1– *Preserve and Expand Quality Affordable Housing***

AMHA recognizes that more quality housing is needed in our community and it shall endeavor to be part of the solution even while significant financial barriers exist.



### **Strategic Direction - *Identify Specific Housing Needs***

Develop a reliable data plan that will inform AMHA about current and future housing needs in Summit County.

- Assess AMHA's existing **data system capacity** to inform decision makers about specific affordable housing needs in the near term of 3 years.
- Determine **information gaps** and identify available outside sources of information to better define housing needs.
- Establish **standard reports** and tracking mechanisms to have readily available and reliable information for decisions about best use of available resources.

### **Strategic Direction - *Strengthen Local Planning Partnerships***

Build local partnerships to share in planning for future housing needs recognizing this is a community responsibility beyond the resource capacity of AMHA.

- Determine **potential partners** to assist in defining local housing needs.
- Determine any **data sharing** requirements and secure formal agreements if necessary.
- Engage **local foundations** that are focused on senior housing needs.
- Evaluate all current **cooperative agreements** and determine if there are opportunities to update and/or engage additional local municipalities.



## Strategic Direction - *Applying the Tools*

Sustaining the current supply of affordable housing is our first priority. Second is making strategic decisions about future development and programs that address unmet needs.

### Administrative Tools:

- **Evaluate each real estate asset** individually to create decision-making data.
- Improve the utilization of the **asset planner** internally to make informed capital and maintenance repair decisions for AMHA's entire housing portfolio.
- Continue to advocate for rational and responsive criteria for **Ohio Low Income Tax Credits**.
- **Share information** about affordable housing needs with the private and non-profit development sector.
- Monitor available local, state and federal agencies for **funding opportunities**.
- Oversee Capital Fund Financing Program (**CFFP**) **transactions**.

### Preservation Tools:

- Develop and implement a **long-term preservation plan** in order to make strategic decisions about overall preservation goals and financial sustainability.
- Maintain **lead safety** program.

### Expansion Tools:

- Develop an overall **strategy for expansion** opportunities.
- **Advocate for adequate funding** for affordable housing programs.

## Goal 2 – *Pursue Excellence and Innovation*

AMHA strives to be among the best performing housing authorities in the nation through the continuous development of our employees, expanding community partnerships and active involvement in setting national housing policy.



### **Strategic Direction – *Internal Communications***

Promote a work culture of employee engagement and teamwork by establishing interdepartmental work groups that involve staff at all levels; improve internal communications about strategic plan goals, key programs and administrative improvements.

- Develop an **internal communications plan**.
- Establish a standard approach to **department staff meetings**.
- **Utilize dashboard reports**, once developed, and integrate into the intranet.
- Develop an annual progress report to **inform all employees of progress** on strategic plan and key projects.

### **Strategic Direction - *Employee Development***

Enhance employee development efforts recognizing that employee growth and continuous learning is an essential investment to foster excellence and accomplishment of organizational goals.

- Encourage and invest in **continuous training** to include opportunities to learn more about other departments.
- Evaluate current **Human Resource processes** including recruitment, hiring and on-boarding and orientation.
- Utilize the evaluation and coaching tools to **monitor performance** and implement individual improvement plans when appropriate.
- Continue to improve **succession planning** for both staffing purposes and strengthening operations through documentation of key procedures, business processes and business relationships.
- Revise **employee recognition** program.
- Review and update all **job descriptions**.
- Review and update **salary administration plan**

## **Strategic Direction - *Community Partnerships***

Fostering community partnerships that improve AMHA's ability to better serve client needs is the primary focus of community involvement.

- Continue implementation of the **Resident Services department strategic plan** that prioritizes housing stability, economic independence, educational achievement and overall quality of life.
- Continue to expand use of **written agreements** with community partners and review and revise as needed on an annual basis.
- Review **time commitment** to community activities and determine if better alignment is feasible.
- Continue to **expand partnerships** in education, economic independence and health for benefit of residents.

## **Strategic Direction – *Policy Initiatives***

Continue membership in state and national organizations that influence national policy setting goals and strengthen capacity to manage regulatory change and to adopt best practices.

- Attend and participate in meetings and conferences of **state and national industry groups**.
- Refine internal responsibility for **tracking regulatory changes**.
- **Research best practices** for programs and services on an on-going basis and revise strategic plan as needed to allow implementation.
- **Promote our own best practices** to peer organizations and the community.
- **Increase communication with elected officials** about funding, need for deregulation and the need for support services for residents.

## **Strategic Direction - *Regulatory Compliance***

Maintain AMHA's excellent record of clean audits and regulatory compliance on various program reviews conducted by the federal government.

- Review and update the **credit card purchasing policy** for compliance with new state regulations.

- Review and update all Declaration of Trust (**DOT**) documentation.
- Continue to monitor and improve both **SEMAP** and **PHAS** reporting processing to maintain high performer status.

### **Strategic Direction - *Improve Internal Planning Capacity***

Pursue all opportunities that will allow more effective use of resources and improve services to residents. Strengthen internal planning and analytical capacity.

- Continue to participate and contribute to legislative and regulatory efforts to expand the **Moving to Work Program (MTW)** and apply for MTW program status when available and pursue waivers when necessary if MTW is not available.
- Apply for accreditation by the **Affordable Housing Accreditation Board** in 2018.

### **Goal 3 - Cultivate Operational Efficiencies**

AMHA is committed to sound management of our scarce resources. As stewards of public funds, we continually search for processes to improve efficiencies and implement cost effective practices.



#### **Strategic Direction – Financial Resources and Budgetary Controls**

Maintaining sound fiscal management systems and a culture of integrity is essential to earning and keeping public trust in all that we do. Building staff capacity to meet compliance standards and also effectively plan and manage budgets is a core function.

- Research and implement the use of Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (CAFR) for fiscal **year end reporting**.
- Review procedures and train employees on procurement actions and **monitoring of budget expenditures**.
- Review financial processes and **regulatory changes** on an annual basis.
- Review industry best practices for **financial management** on an annual basis.
- Evaluate **fundraising** strategy and revise plan as necessary.

#### **Strategic Direction - Business Processes**

Limited resources, high expectations of excellent customer service and sustaining high performer ratings require continuous improvement of business processes.

- Implement new **payroll/HRIS software** system.
- Implement **employee electronic records** for education and credentials.
- **Strengthen customer service** by creating a system to track and identify trends.
- Complete the Integrated Pest Management (**IPM**)/Bed Bug protocol.
- Review and update all **procedures/desk reference guides**.

- Review and validate all **management reporting** requirements.
- Review and validate all **forms**.
- Create and implement an **Emergency Action Plan** for all AMHA properties.
- Determine means to improve **management of all critical documentation**.
- Review all **data collection** points (outside of housing and case management software) and determine why we are collecting and how we are using the data; determine if there is other data we should be collecting to assist in making strategic management decisions.

### **Strategic Direction - *Technical Improvements***

Investing wisely in technology that improves quality of operations and greater efficiency requires collaboration across departments.

- Complete implementation of the **JIT project**.
- Complete **property profile project**.
- Research and implement **Document imaging** protocol.
- Analyze **Housing software**; issue RFP if applicable.
- Develop **dashboard reports** as part of monthly reports.
- Improve the process of preservation and management of **archived historical documents**.
- Enhance use of relevant data to accomplish **funding and policy goals**.

### **Strategic Direction - *Customer Service***

Excellence in customer service is our goal in all interactions with applicants, clients, partners and the general public.

- Create a more systematic means to analyze any **customer complaints** in order to make improvements when necessary.
- Determine best means to establish **applicant/tenant portals**.



- Implement **online payment** options.
- Utilize website, social media and other forms of technology **to improve external communications** to residents, clients and community to reduce printing and postage costs.

## Goal 4 – Improve Quality of Life

AMHA is focused on the stability, wellbeing and advancement of our residents and employees.



### Strategic Direction – *Employee Quality of Life*

A skilled and caring team of employees is our most important resource to meeting our public mission. Continuous learning, integrity and collaboration are vital to our success.

- Maintain the best **health and wellness program** that we can responsibly afford.
- Promote a **work culture** of caring and fair and consistent accountability.
- Increase **employee morale** and job satisfaction.

### Strategic Direction – *Resident Quality of Life*

Maintain high quality, safe housing with the availability of supportive services.

- Encourage a stronger **community/local law enforcement relationship**.
- Evaluate the structure of the **security and investigative teams**.
- **Expand housing opportunities** for housing choice voucher participants with the implementation of “Moving Up” for Shelter Plus Care grants, execution of Stoney Pointe HAP Agreement and identifying other gaps for special needs populations within the community.
- Provide additional **marketing of Housing Choice Vouchers** and training to new landlords.
- Implement **Smoke Free Housing** by August 1, 2018.
- Increase **resident engagement**.
- Maintain **resident stability** in housing.
- Encourage **resident economic independence** thorough Section 3 and other programs.

- Encourage **resident educational achievement** utilizing the full array of community partnerships and resources.
- Expand **Senior TV**.
- Pursue **greater connectivity** to digital services.
- Collaborate with community partners to **plan for rapidly increasing housing and service needs** for the elderly and disabled populations.
- Continue to review and revise the **LEP/LAP documentation** and processes.
- Continue to conduct outreach for reentry specific programming.

## Plan Maintenance

This strategic plan is meant to be a dynamic instrument allowing AMHA to make thoughtful decisions about their actions, to track the results of those actions, and to respond to environmental changes as they occur. As such, this plan should certainly be used as a guide on a daily basis, but must also be reviewed regularly to ensure that any necessary adjustments are made. Needed adjustments may be the result of changes in the environment within which AMHA operates or in response to information obtained as we track our results.

## Ongoing Maintenance

During the three-year course of this plan, while the goals will remain as stated, minor adjustments may be needed to ensure sufficient progress towards the goals. Both biannual and annual reviews will be conducted. These reviews will focus on the level of **strategic directions**.

**Biannually:** The Executive Director will be responsible for reviewing outcome data and progress biannually. The Executive Director will work with Deputy Directors and department management to ensure progress and develop data-driven adjustments in strategy to better meet goals.

**Annually:** The Executive Director will oversee the revision of the plan annually. Based on analysis from biannual reviews, make any updates needed in strategy to achieve the defined goals.

## Full Strategic Plan Revision

After the three years addressed in this plan, the Executive Director will oversee a full review and revision of this plan. A full environmental scan, a review the outcome data for all goals, and a full revision of the plan will be conducted. During this 3 year revision process, **both the goals and strategies** will be revised as necessary to address the new environmental issues.