

2024 to 2027

Strategic Plan Draft

## **2024-2027 Strategic Plan Vision Statement:**

HCDNNJ has a critical role to play as a leading voice for housing justice, as New Jersey continues to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic and to redress the systemic and institutional racism that has been created and influences our communities to this day. Our 2024-2027 Strategic Plan aims to elevate our work as the premier organization for New Jersey's community development sector by organizing around the fundamental principle that housing is a human right, as declared in the United Nations charter 75 years ago.

This concept provides a framework and a means to demonstrate our commitment to this universal value, so that we can provide our members, decision makers, and partners with exceptional public policy education and advocacy; critical technical assistance and resource development; and cutting edge research and ideas to advance housing and community development opportunities. Our members remain committed to ensuring racial, economic and social justice for the residents and communities they serve.

New Jersey has the largest housing wealth gap in the nation, a chasm that was created and sustained by hundreds of years of racist land use policies. As a result, most of NJ's homeowners are white, while the overwhelming majority of our renters are Black, brown and indigenous residents. Committing to ending this imbalance requires our Network to be anti-racist in our advocacy, technical assistance and resource work. It also demands that we be intentional about organizing, supporting and including tenant advocates with lived experience, while advancing policies that encourage homeownership opportunities for lower-income first-time and first-generation buyers. We will engage our public officials and our private sector partners in these efforts, in order to bring the full resources of our state to bear to solve this persistent inequity.

Our state and nation will make important decisions about our collective future during this strategic plan, when voters will choose our next Governor and our President. Our Network must meet this important moment and mobilize to overcome the challenges and accept the opportunities facing our communities. In order to build a state where everyone can thrive, we need to dismantle systemic and institutional racism so that our policies deliver the abundant resources we have to the communities and residents who need them. Together, HCDNNJ's Board, members, and staff will use our 2024-2027 Strategic Plan to further equity, ensure racial justice and realize the promise of housing as a human right. We hope you will join us.

## Policy & Advocacy

Our *House NJ* campaign that was launched as part of our previous strategic plan has been successful in moving policy priorities forward and preventing potentially harmful legislation. We will build on this success and move forward with policy priorities to focus on Housing as a Human Right.

- Continue to advance policy and programmatic investments that allow non-profit developers to increase the supply and preservation of affordable rental and for-sale homes for NJ's lower income residents in communities of their choice
- Preserve and grow NJ's Affordable Housing Trust Fund, and other subsidy sources; work with DCA to ensure funds are easily accessible, including increased transparent reporting of the AHTF, municipal housing trust funds, etc
- Grow and expand the NJ Neighborhood Revitalization Tax Credit Program and similar investments to support thriving neighborhoods
- Advance policy solutions to remove housing barriers created by institutional and systemic racism, including supporting the Mount Laurel doctrine, eliminating property appraisal bias, and ending discrimination faced by housing voucher holders

## **Policy and Advocacy (con't)**

- Increase opportunities for first time and first generation homeownership; increase funding and support for homeownership and rental housing counseling
- Expand Land Banking throughout NJ to increase access for nonprofits and municipal partners to create affordable homes
- Sustain tenant organizing and advocacy initiatives to achieve stronger renter protections, including securing rent stabilization, preventing evictions, addressing rental arrears, ensuring code enforcement and centering tenants with lived experience
- Work with our partners to end homelessness; including increasing investments in NJ's Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Rehousing Programs, expanding access to housing choice vouchers and addressing other destabilizing costs as appropriate (including: utility bills, transportation, health care, childcare, etc.)
- Participate in efforts led by our national partners, including the National Low Income Housing Coalition, the Community Opportunity Alliance (formerly NACEDA), and others

## **Communications**

All areas of our work are advanced and highlighted through the communications tools and process. We have expanded our member benefits to include Monthly Member Meetings that grew out of the pandemic, provided online training, and held advocacy meetings utilizing our online tools. We've grown our e-communications reach and launched online resources to address housing insecurity to respond to the changing needs of our members and their clients.

- Increase opportunities to reach our members through online tools to allow for greater participation without the expense and time associated with being out of the office
- Provide information in a culturally competent form/manner

## **Communications (cont'd)**

- Create a web-based training resource library for members
- 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary: Opportunities to amplify information about members and sector impact
- Evaluate communications offerings to determine most beneficial to members and provide in various languages
- Create communications member peer group
- Increase opportunities for members to highlight events, issues, and successes
- Expand social media and communications training for members and staff

## **Housing Counseling & Community Investments**

HCDNNJ serves as a HUD approved funded Housing Counseling Intermediary and trained housing counselors throughout the state to be aware of and incorporate best practices, changes in HUD guidelines, prepare for application to funding entities, and increase the services offered to NJ residents in need of assistance for First Time Homebuyers, preventing eviction, negotiating re-payment programs, mediation process, awareness of laws and regulations that protect them, and resources available throughout the state.

- Expand the number of HUD Certified Housing Counselors and Sub-Grantees in our HUD Comprehensive Housing Counseling Intermediary by providing sub grantees with training, technical assistance, and access to additional resources
- Utilize our network of HUD Certified Housing Counselors and Sub-Grantees to promote Financial Literacy and Education in underserved communities to bridge the wealth gap caused by systemic and institutional racism
- Work with our Community Development Investment Advisory Board, our members, and lenders to collaborate and develop new and emerging market products that expand housing affordability and community development efforts



## **Housing Counseling & Community Investments (cont'd)**

- Advocate and monitor CRA investments at the State and Federal levels
- Increase/facilitate access to Community Investment vehicles such as NRTC, AHTF, NHTF, First Generation Down Payment Assistance and other programs to ensure that these programs invest in and benefit the underserved communities most damaged by systemic and institutional racism
- Utilize our network of HUD Certified Housing Counselors and Sub-Grantees to promote Asset Building and Homeownership in underserved communities by implementing programs designed to eliminate barriers
- Build affordable housing development capacity by securing dedicated, long term, public and private funding for professional development within the Network/Non-Profit sector
- Prepare housing counselors by creating and updating protocols and procedures to protect tenants and homeowners in need of assistance for disaster recovery
- Provide housing counselors with technical assistance to support clients for homeownership, rental, eviction prevention, and other issues as they emerge

## Healthy Homes & Communities

HCDNNJ continues to strengthen our work to be identified as one of the premier statewide community development organizations addressing Healthy Homes and Communities issues. With our members and allies we have continued to advocate for the elimination of childhood lead exposure and poisoning within New Jersey. We have expanded further into the areas of environmental justice and climate change with a focus on affirmatively creating healthier communities in all neighborhoods with an emphasis on those primarily populated with people of color and low income populations.

- Work with our allies and partners to assess and implement emerging trends in social determinants of health
- Work to eliminate childhood lead poisoning in New Jersey utilizing the resources that are available at the State and Federal level

## **Healthy Homes and Communities (cont'd)**

- Grow NEST (Neighborhood Empowerment and Safety Training) as a statewide tool for community developers
- Address and reduce the impact of climate change on affordable housing and the communities our members serve; continue to provide leading research, outreach and education to address natural disasters and impact of climate change
- Provide advocacy and technical assistance and financial resources for these issues, conversations, and meetings including the Green Economy, open space, health contaminants, and other issues as they arise
- Incorporate the Arts from an individual focus area to be a component of NEST (Neighborhood Empowerment and Safety Training)

## **Member Services**

Our membership continues to grow to include organizations involved in support of safe and affordable housing for the clients they serve. Membership has expanded to include housing for people released from a medical facility, victims of domestic violence, those impacted by disaster, etc. We will support our members through:

- Continuing diversification of development streams and funding that is available to support our members
- Expand on our affinity groups with organizations and peer groups convening around issues (i.e. young professionals in community development, Women in Development, marketing/communications, fund development professionals, etc.)
- Creating a BIPOC and emerging developers task force as an extension of the JumpStart Program
- Establishing an active 501(c)4 organization to provide for the education of candidates and identifying the position of candidates on issues impacting affordable housing and focus on voter education and registration

## **Member Services (cont'd)**

- Expanding membership in underrepresented communities and retain our members
- Growing opportunities for introduction to internships in Community Development field through AmeriCorps VISTA, Community Scholars Program, Mentoring Program, etc.
- Expanding training and technical assistance services and opportunities to meet the evolving needs of our members utilizing experts in the field
- Providing information and resources through maintaining Housing Help NJ website and referral system, as well as other tools and opportunities to assist our members and the public find the information and services they need

## **Organizational Development**

As we strengthen our organizational capacity, we will broaden our membership and Board composition, we will provide additional opportunities for Board, staff and sector leaders to participate in coordinated activities and communications that amplify our members' achievements and the impact of the community development field. We will amplify the voices of people with lived housing insecurity experience and increase the power of housing advocates to secure solutions that invest in people and places.

- Restructure committees and task forces to be led by Board members and supported by staff
- consider ways to increase representation from tenant organizations and emerging BIPOC developers
- Continue to advance our Diversity Equity and Inclusion (DEI) work with staff with an intentional focus on racial justice, through inclusion of additional training for Board, staff, and engaging members
- Enhance and expand training for new and existing staff
- Streamline processes and develop procedures for all departments
- Identify areas of impact and opportunity in state and national elections