



**Housing Corporation of Arlington**

# **STRATEGIC PLAN**

*For the Years 2007 - 2012*

**ADOPTED  
June 21, 2007**

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# **HCA Strategic Plan for the Years 2007-2012**

## **Executive Summary**

The board and staff of the Housing Corporation of Arlington (HCA) present our strategic plan for Fiscal Years 2007 through 2012. This plan articulates HCA's mission and vision and provides a road map to guide the organization's continued growth.

### **Mission**

The Housing Corporation of Arlington promotes social and economic diversity in Arlington by providing and advocating for affordable housing for low- and moderate-income families and individuals.

### **Vision**

To meet the needs of low- and moderate-income residents, HCA envisions an array of affordable housing that blends well with existing neighborhoods. HCA housing will be safe, attractive, environmentally sound, and affordable in perpetuity.

### **Strategic Directions**

1. HCA will more than double the number of its affordable units over the next 5 years from the current 46 to 100.
2. HCA will support town efforts to reach 10 percent affordable housing in Arlington.
3. HCA will work collaboratively with town organizations that serve low-income households in Arlington.
4. HCA's renovations, maintenance, and new development will be environmentally responsible and sustainable.

## **I. Introduction**

This strategic plan provides clearly articulated goals for advancing HCA and fulfilling our mission. The implementation process that lies ahead will present new challenges, but also offers many opportunities to engage HCA's current and future members, tenants, supporters, board, and staff in realizing our vision for the future. HCA looks forward to fully engaging all of its stakeholders and members in making this plan a reality and to further strengthening and improving the quality of life in Arlington for all who reside here.

### **A. Organizational Overview**

Established in 1986, HCA is a non-profit community development corporation committed to assisting Arlington residents with housing-related concerns. Our mission is to support social and economic diversity, through affordable housing programs, for the town and residents of Arlington. HCA provides housing for low- and moderate-income members of our community, and advocates for expansion of affordable housing opportunities in town.

Since 2000, the Arlington Board of Selectmen has made a strategic decision to prioritize affordable housing through allocation of the town's CDBG dollars. With that support, HCA has been able to grow as an organization and to increase the town's inventory of affordable housing.

In an effort to keep our community diverse and stable, our Board of Directors, committee members, volunteers and small professional staff work closely with diverse stakeholders including Arlington residents, town government, the Affordable Housing Task Force, the Arlington Housing Authority, faith-based organizations, tenants, businesses, housing lenders, public and private funders, and other housing professionals.

HCA provides the following programs:

#### **Affordable Rental Housing**

- HCA currently offers 28 units of scattered two-family housing to income-eligible families. Apartments range in size from 2 to 5 bedrooms. All are lead paint compliant.
- HCA also offers an additional 18 one-bedroom apartments in four two-story apartment buildings along Massachusetts Avenue in Arlington for income-eligible households.

### **Homelessness Prevention Fund**

- HCA's Homelessness Prevention Fund provides emergency financial support to Arlington residents who are facing eviction due to an unexpected crisis. The Fund ensures that residents that are facing economic hardship are able to maintain their housing and regain financial stability.
- The Fund assists approximately 50 families annually primarily through grants to assist with back rent or security deposits. Grants are capped at \$1,500 and are given only for cases in which the assistance will stabilize a resident's housing for at least six months.
- To help maintain housing, HCA staff also provides assistance to residents in accessing other needed services and community resources such as fuel assistance and the Food Pantry.
- The Fund is supported wholly by direct contributions from Arlington residents.
- Since its founding, the Fund has served approximately 200 families and has distributed more than \$200,000 in emergency financial assistance.

### **Housing Advocacy /Community Outreach**

- HCA is a strong advocate for affordable housing. We work with policy makers and local residents to increase awareness of issues related to affordable housing and to promote housing policies that will maintain economic diversity in Arlington. For example, working closely with Arlington's Affordable Housing Task Force, in 2001 HCA helped advocate for a zoning amendment that requires 15 percent affordability in all new developments with six or more units, and in 2007, helped advocate for changes to the Inclusionary Zoning, to make rental units more affordable to lower income households.
- We engage residents in learning about and supporting affordable housing, through activities such as HCA's Walk for Affordable Housing, our Annual Meeting, newsletter, and volunteer activities.
- The 6th annual Walk for Affordable Housing in April 2007 included 55 local commercial sponsors, approximately 100 walkers, and raised more than \$37,000 in support of HCA programs.

- At the state level, HCA is a member of the Massachusetts Association of Community Development Corporations (MACDC) and Citizens Housing and Planning Association (CHAPA), both of which advocate statewide for affordable housing.

### **HCA Membership**

- HCA relies on community support to make our programs and activities successful. Our members are a critical link in helping us make affordable housing a priority in Arlington.
- Membership is open to any individual or organization that agrees with and supports the purposes of HCA.
- Active HCA members have voting rights to elect our Board of Directors, can serve on most Board Committees, receive our newsletter, and can participate in meetings of the organization.
- Members are also welcome to assist HCA in other ways, such as distributing flyers for events, helping with mailings, identifying development opportunities for HCA, or volunteering time for special projects. For instance, members have worked on weekends to rehabilitate a two-family home.
- Currently HCA has over 200 members.
  - Membership fees are as follows:
    - Individual or Family Membership (\$25)
    - Limited-income Membership (\$10)
    - Business Membership (\$100)

### **Housing Information and Referral**

- HCA fields dozens of calls each month from Arlington residents seeking information about affordable housing, and assistance with landlord/tenant issues. We provide callers with information or make referrals to other community resources such as Arlington's Fair Housing Officer, Arlington's Safety Net programs, the Food Pantry, and Fuel Assistance Program.

## **B. Affordable Housing Needs in Arlington**

Research conducted by the Town of Arlington reveals the need for more affordable housing as demonstrated by the following information.

### **Need for Affordable Housing**

- Many of Arlington's lowest income residents are paying too much for rent, and most renters have no real hope of being able to buy a home here.
- Almost 900 low and moderate income households pay more than half their income for rent. (Year 2000 US Census)
- Arlington's median house price is \$475,000. The median condo price is \$360,000.
- A family with income at the median for renters (\$46,000) can afford to purchase a home that costs \$170,000.
- Purchasing a first home is out of reach for roughly 75 percent of all renter households.

### **Existing Supply of Affordable Housing**

- Arlington has a total of 1040 affordable units, 5.4 percent of its total of 19,411 housing units.
- Elderly housing—572 units
- Family housing—219 units
- Special needs housing—189 units
- Single person household --60 units

## **C. The Planning Process**

To guide the planning process, HCA contracted with TDC, a Boston-based consulting group. The strategic planning committee comprised of HCA staff and board met for a series of planning session in late 2006 and early 2007.

As part of the planning process, TDC conducted a board and staff survey to identify the organization's strengths and weaknesses and

potential future directions. TDC also interviewed 25 community stakeholders and other housing professionals to better understand their perspectives on affordable housing needs in Arlington and how HCA might best address them. Interviewees included representatives of Arlington town government, the Arlington Housing Authority, state housing funders, lending institutions, and other affordable housing professionals and advocates. HCA is grateful to all who participated in this research for their time and insights and contributions to the planning process.

The final plan was approved by HCA's Board of Directors in June 2007.

## **II. Mission and Vision Statements**

The Housing Corporation of Arlington promotes social and economic diversity in Arlington by providing and advocating for affordable housing for low- and moderate-income families and individuals.

To meet the needs of low- and moderate-income residents, HCA envisions an array of affordable housing that blends well with existing neighborhoods. HCA housing will be safe, attractive, environmentally sound, and affordable in perpetuity.

## **III. Strategic Goals**

### **A. Real Estate Development**

**Goal 1: HCA will more than double the number of its affordable units over the next 5 years from the current 46 to 100.**

Objectives:

- Continue to identify housing development and preservation opportunities for affordable rental housing.
- Prioritize properties with three or more units because they generally offer greater financial feasibility and sustainability due to economies of scale.
- Continue to explore opportunities to develop supported housing in collaboration with social service providers. Potential target

populations might include individuals with developmental disabilities, victims of domestic violence, and other populations.

- Look for land and properties along the Massachusetts Avenue corridor in order to develop or preserve larger properties and promote “Smart Growth” development principles. Explore the feasibility of developing mixed commercial/residential properties along Massachusetts Avenue, as well as developing former commercial properties for residential use.
- Pursue development of condominiums for first time home buyers, under appropriate circumstances.
- Hire additional staff to focus on finding new projects.
- Identify new board members who can assist in finding new projects.
- In support of our development goals, reach out to the business and faith-based communities.

**Goal 2: HCA will support town efforts to reach 10 percent affordable housing in Arlington.**

Objectives:

- Continue to sponsor and participate in activities that support affordable housing.
- Work with town officials to ensure sound affordable housing policies.
- Educate the community about both local and statewide housing issues and trends, using the HCA newsletter, annual report, annual meeting, and website.
- Continue to pursue opportunities to collaborate with the Arlington Housing Authority to promote more affordable housing in Arlington.
- Engage Arlington residents in advocacy for the development and preservation of affordable housing in Arlington through HCA membership.
- Increase membership by ten percent annually.

- Continue to strengthen HCA’s base of support through outreach and membership recruitment to individuals and groups that are most likely to support our development goals.

**Goal 3: HCA will work collaboratively with town organizations that serve low-income residents of Arlington.**

Objectives:

- Continue to provide emergency financial assistance to individuals and families through the Homelessness Prevention Fund.
- Work collaboratively with other organizations to meet housing, health, human service, and employment needs of those who seek assistance from the Homelessness Prevention Fund.
- Work with service providers to better understand and then meet housing needs of more low-income households.
- Assess the effectiveness of the Homelessness Prevention Program annually and adjust as appropriate.

**Goal 4: Ensure that HCA’s renovations, maintenance, and new developments will be environmentally responsible and sustainable.**

Objectives:

- New development projects will be reviewed to ensure the use of appropriate sites and strategies for sustainability and smart growth practices.
- Design and construction practices will be reviewed to incorporate “Green” methods and materials using standards such as the LEED program, the Energy Star Homes program, and other models for sustainable building.
- Maintenance and management practices will be studied and modified to improve environmental performance including: energy conservation and efficiency, reduction of pollution and greenhouse gases, increasing recycling opportunities, waste reduction, water conservation, and indoor environmental health improvements.

- HCA administrative and fund raising activities will be considered and changed where possible to improve energy and resource conservation and to reduce environmental waste.
- Communications with HCA’s membership will include updates and information about the important steps HCA is taking to protect and preserve the environment.
- HCA will engage with other groups and individuals in Town who are working on environmental issues such as Sustainable Arlington, the Open Space Committee, the Conservation Commission, Town Department of Public Works, Vision 2020, and others.

## **B. Building Organizational Capacity**

### **Goal 5: Strengthen HCA’s Board of Directors to provide strong leadership to attain the goals of this plan.**

#### Objectives:

- Recruitment – Recruit new board members to help HCA attain its development and other strategic goals.
- Board Committees – In addition to the current four standing board committees— Executive, Finance, Development, and Membership, a new standing committee will be created to oversee the Homelessness Prevention Fund.
- Prepare new job descriptions and annual objectives for each of the five committees that highlight specific tasks to be completed to attain the strategic goals identified in this plan.

### **Goal 6: Improve communications with donors and members.**

#### Objectives:

- Use existing tools, such as newsletters and the Annual Meeting, and develop new tools to communicate more frequently and easily with the membership.
- Improve existing database of members and supporters.

- Develop a means to communicate quickly and efficiently with members and supporters when needed.

## **C. Managing the Plan**

### **Goal 7: Regularly monitor progress in implementing this plan.**

Objectives:

- Staff, board, and board committees develop annual plans for their respective areas in the context of this strategic plan.
- Staff, board, and board committees develop indicators/benchmarks to track their progress in respective areas, in the context of their annual plans and this strategic plan.
- Staff and board determine best mechanisms to review and finalize annual plans and indicators and monitor progress in implementing this plan.
- Progress is monitored; plan is amended as required.

## **Acknowledgments**

HCA would like to thank members of the Planning Committee for their time and contributions to the planning process.

### **Board of Directors**

Deborah Lewis, **President**

Paul Parravano, **Vice President**

Janet Blodgett, **Clerk**

Marc Dohan, **Treasurer**

Gregory W. Bowe

Jack Cooper

Mary Doyle

Monique Magliozzi

Neal Mongold

Mary Lou Vest

Laura Wiener

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