



WINOOSKI HOUSING AUTHORITY

# Agency Plan – 2025 – 2030

Every five years, each Housing Authority must create a strategic plan aimed at addressing core needs in their service area. The past Agency Plan was marked by changes not seen in many years. It is now time to plan for the next five years.

## 2020 – 2025 Goals and Current Status

1. Create a budget model that can look out five years and allow for a robust capital and development plan to address maintenance, accessibility, and investment in new assets.

**STATUS:** Changes in the economic situation based in the post-pandemic shifting patterns have created more uncertainty in this goal, making a five (5) year plan unrealistic. Due to four retirements in leadership and the need to train new staff with former staff still present, WHA had a two-year budget.

This is a realistic approach to budgeting given that wage requirements needed to retain a workforce remain uncertain.

Planning for wages will be completed in two-year cycles. After a budget is passed, any changes in staffing or pay will be modeled to the next year.

This no longer needs to be a goal but can become practice.

2. Examine the organizational structure to assure expertise exists in critical functions of finance, HR, and policy development, and accounting.

**STATUS:** The structure has shifted given that expertise in the Housing Choice Voucher program are difficult to recruit, leaving WHA with the need to recruit and train new staff for the needed expertise.

Training is underway, and the structure of the positions, while always somewhat in flux, are reasonable steady and will need to be tweaked rather than radically redesigned.

This is now complete and will fall under normal operations where changes are made within a small parameter as needed.

3. Review and improve systems for communicating with clients with limited English proficiency and those who do not read in English.

**STATUS:** This remains a challenge though we have made some progress. We have recorded standard robo-calls for two of our most common languages for standard messages that do not change. We

have translated material to hand out when time permits. We have hired a staff member who speaks one of the most common languages. We continue to recruit among the communities we serve.

4. Reestablish relationships with private developers, housing providers, and city staff to understand current needs and opportunities and be in a position to help solve the affordable housing shortfall problem.

STATUS: WHA is working with several partners on projects in the City of Winooski – in particular two parcels that will be coming available. We need a partner to assist with developing our own housing. This remains elusive.

This will remain a priority for the next five years.

5. Use project-based vouchers to partner with developers to increase affordable housing availability.

STATUS: We have awarded and are in the process of issuing our first fifteen project-based vouchers. We will evaluate how many additional vouchers are available and release an additional Request for Proposal in the summer.

This will continue to be part of a new goal that will focus on housing retention, which is becoming significantly more critical to preventing homelessness.

6. Identify a succession plan for critical positions and begin training and mentoring current staff to fill those positions where possible.

STATUS: This is complete.

Succession plans will be continually part of managing the agency and will become our regular operating mode rather than a strategic goal.

7. Review and, where necessary, rewrite policies and procedures while implementing needed training and systems to assure compliance.

STATUS: we are making significant progress documenting procedures and updating policies, particularly in Property Management. This is ongoing operational work, and will remain a strategic priority until the Personnel Plan, the Property Management system, the financial management system, and the HCV adoption of HOTMA is complete.

8. Work with SASH and property management staff to identify and assist individuals who may be a danger to themselves in their current living situation to support moving to a safer environment when necessary.

STATUS: Complete

9. Update systems that allow remote work and move to a paperless system.

STATUS: WHA is well into having the systems needed to manage our office remotely. There are several tools that we are not yet using effectively.

This will remain a strategic goal until we have the ability to work remotely during an emergency.

10. Update building systems to provide Wi-Fi access, allow staff mobility between buildings, and upgrade alarm and security systems.

STATUS: CARES Act funding was used to achieve this objective. Systems like these will always need to be updated. This will now become an operating practice rather than a strategic goal.

## 2025 Goals

1. Complete RAD closeout.
2. Convert to HOTMA and INSPIRE as required.
3. Continue to search for funding to create more three plus (3+) bedroom affordable apartments in Winooski. Specific targets are:
  - a. Additional apartments at the Elm Street Property
  - b. Work with the City to secure ownership of the Winooski Armory for a developer who will build desired apartments.
  - c. Work with partners to build housing on the St. Steven's Property.

None of these may be fully achievable in FY 25 and will likely continue in a more general nature in the 2025 – 2030 plan.

4. Develop systems to assure families avoid losing housing.
  - a. Work with families in the Winooski School District to acquire stable housing and to use tools and funding at hand to retain those families in the School District if desired.
  - b. Provide Project-Based Vouchers (PBVs) to private landlords who are willing to maintain affordable housing in Winooski.
  - c. Make funding available to landlords in order to retain affordable apartments currently available to tenants. This funding will come with a commitment to maintain affordable housing into the future.
5. Update the Finance Department to modernize the approach to making financial investments and decisions.
  - a. Finalize a new Chart of Accounts based on the FDS model in HUD
  - b. Create a procedure and instruction manual for key operating systems.
  - c. Implement an electronic payment system to move away from checks.
  - d. Standardize the management of Interfund Accounting to better understand where funds reside and how to best invest them both in interest bearing opportunities and in taking advantage of strategic priorities.
6. Create a training plan for staff to stay current in their field and prepare for a promotion should the need arise.

## 2025 – 2030 Goals

1. Use available vouchers and resources to secure housing for families in our programs when possible. This includes:
  - a. Building additional housing on land owned by the agency, focusing on three plus (3+) bedroom apartments where possible.
  - b. Issuing Project Based Vouchers where possible to secure housing for families needing three or more bedrooms.
2. Prevent homelessness among the population who we house, hold vouchers, or attend school in our city by using unrestricted net reserves to secure housing for families by
  - a. Helping families at risk of eviction with security deposits or back rents when we have indication that stable housing would be available with this help and where other sources are not available.
  - b. Helping landlords renovate apartments to bring them up to code or to repair damage by tenants on our program.
  - c. Hiring or contracting with retention specialists to work with families in danger of losing housing due to non-compliance with the rules.
3. Create a plan to rent all apartments quicker and focus on a strategy to fill studio apartments.
4. Update and continually improve communication with our participants including strategies around language, hard-of hearing, and visually impaired participants, our waitlist participants, and our voucher holders.
5. Invest in creating and sustaining a capital plan that keeps all buildings updated, in good repair, and compliant with all regulations.
6. Move the fiscal year to either December 31 or June 30, depending on availability.
7. Investigate special HUD vouchers to augment the current use only the Housing Choice Voucher program. Specifically look at the needs in the community for Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (VASH), Family Unification Program (FUP), and/or Mainstream Vouchers.
8. Continue to update policies, including implementing HOTMA and NSPIRE changes.
9. Create a plan to replace Executive Director with anticipated retirement.

## Annual Goals:

FY 2026 – April 1, 2025 – March 31, 2026

Please note that some goals above are ongoing work and not special initiatives.

Item 1 a - Use available funds and programs to secure housing for families in our programs when possible. Building additional housing on land owned by the agency, focusing on three plus (3+) bedroom apartments where possible.

1. Establish and work with partners to find financing and expertise to develop additional apartments at Elm Street.

Item 1 b - Issuing Project Based Vouchers where possible to secure housing for families needing three or more bedrooms.

1. Work with private and non-profit affordable housing providers to find ways to use project -based vouchers to support families with children seeking housing, particularly in ways that help children stay in our local school.

Item 2 (a and c) - Prevent homelessness among the population who we house, hold vouchers, or attend school in our city.

1. Establish rules for programs and secure support from the Board of Commissioners for formal policies to create an established system of support.
2. Create a process of outreach to caseworkers at the local school and at the Veterans Administration to create awareness of the opportunities for assistance
3. Fund a school housing worker who has previously served our community to assist with housing retention.

Item 2 (b) Helping landlords renovate apartments to bring them up to code or to repair damage by tenants on our program.

1. Work with City staff and Housing Commission to help keep housing affordable to rent through assisting with the expenses of keeping apartments compliant with regulations.
2. Work with Champlain Housing trust and other affordable housing providers on new construction project support for families interested in shared equity purchases or new rental housing vouchers.

Item 5 - "Invest in creating and sustaining a capital plan that keeps all buildings updated, in good repair, and compliant with all regulations."

1. Create a formal budget and capital plan for all owned buildings that includes funding using an outside project manager.
2. Develop a procedure, including updating the Procurement Policy to support this work.
3. Complete two projects: Sprinkler Installation at Senior Tower and Transformer Installation at Elm Street.

Item - 8 "Continue to update polices, including implementing HOTMA and NSPIRE changes."

1. Complete approval and roll out of HOTMA regulations when required.
2. Complete the approval and rollout of NSPIRE inspection standards when required.