
Mapping the Way Toward a Strategic Future for the *New Fresno Housing Authority*

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NOTE FROM THE CONSULTANT

Background

“Mapping the Way toward a Strategic Future for the ‘New’ Fresno Housing Authority¹” was developed by the consultants in conjunction with the executive team and the Board of Commissioners of Fresno Housing Authority. In preparing the plan, Fern Tiger Associates (FTA)² held two half-day Board /manager retreat-style meetings and several intensive sessions with the executive team. In preparation for these sessions, FTA provided extensive organizational and demographic background information and an assessment – including a findings report – to guide the Board and executive team in clarifying and revising the organization’s mission and direction for the future. [*Some materials and notes from these discussions can be found in the Appendix.*]

The strategic plan includes four broad focus areas (*Place, People, Public, and Partnership*), each of which is defined by an overarching program goal, along with commentary, sub-goals and Recommendations. These goals provide directional focus for the organization as a whole and form the basis for internal decisionmaking, site selection and development priorities, and programming. It is hoped that the strategies within each goal will help Fresno Housing Authority maintain and articulate a clarity of purpose while effectively and innovatively addressing the needs of residents of Fresno County, especially low- and very-low income individuals and families unable to access quality, affordable housing.

The plan also includes five management focus areas (*Sustainability, Structure, Strategic Outreach, Success, and Support*) and related goals and recommendations that affect internal operations. These management goals are specifically designed to support Fresno Housing Authority leadership as it sets priorities to implement the programmatic goals, while stabilizing, focusing, and growing the agency to meet the mandate of a bold, newly-articulated mission. Within each of the management goals are tactics that provide more detailed direction and Recommendations (suggestions to help Fresno Housing Authority achieve the broader goals). The Strategic Outreach Goal within the Management section of the Plan is more detailed than other goals in order to lay the groundwork for a new identity, communications materials, and website to be developed immediately following adoption of the Plan. It is also more detailed so that it can lay the foundation for immediate focus by either in-house professionals or consultants.

Some of the goals outlined in this plan require dedicated funding to enact the strategies necessary to achieve particular objectives. As a public agency, Fresno Housing Authority works in a challenging funding environment – (and at this moment in time) within a particularly volatile economic climate. The management goals within this plan address some beginning steps that the

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At the onset of the strategic planning process in January 2010, the organization’s name was the *Housing Authorities of the City and County of Fresno*. During the year-long process, it became clear that the name was unnecessarily difficult to use, and was often shortened to “*Fresno Housing Authority*.” During a retreat held in September 2010 as part of the planning process, board members overwhelmingly supported simplifying the agency name to *Fresno Housing Authority*. (While some supported more dramatic changes, such as *Fresno Housing Solutions* or *Fresno Neighborhood Builders*, or just *Fresno Housing*, the majority of the board favored the change noted.) The new name is used throughout this Plan.

² Fern Tiger Associates is a 30-year-old Oakland-based firm specializing in strategic planning, public policy, advocacy documentation, civic engagement, and communications (www.ferntiger.com).

organization should take to strengthen the organization's position and to enable it to better meet the goals of the plan. A more comprehensive strategic funding plan should be considered to support some of the more specific program goals and objectives sought by the Housing Authority as it works *to create vibrant communities throughout Fresno County.*

Organization of the Plan

The plan is divided into five main sections:

- **Introduction and Background** includes an explanation of the process and methodology used to determine the goals; a summary of the findings and context surrounding the plan's development; and other information that sets the stage for the plan's content.
- **Mission, Vision, and Values** which were developed, refined, and confirmed during the planning process.
- **Program Goals** includes four core areas of focus (*Place, People, Public, and Partnership*). These themes evolved naturally from the analysis and discussion embedded in the planning process. They provide directional focus for the agency as a whole and also form the basis for an internal framework for value-based decisionmaking and prioritizing of actions related to site development and programming.
- **Management Goals**³ relate to internal operations and organizational capacity needed to support and implement program goals.

Recommendations are included in the full version of the plan and are intended to form the base of an implementation plan (or 'action plan') which should be developed by staff and presented to the Board for review within three months of approval of this plan.

Moving Forward

The next step is the creation of an ‘implementation plan’ to provide a more detailed roadmap for tackling each of the goals. This is a task for each department and staff, but it is also important to coordinate the action plan so that the agency moves forward as a unified whole, understanding the core elements and broad goals of the plan and its impact on each program and the impact of each decision on the whole agency. It is recommended that a small implementation committee, comprised of key management staff from each department, be formed and charged with the development of a set of annual, achievable sub-goals, and that this committee act as the agency’s “planning committee” for the coming years. Additionally, each department should review the goals of the plan and determine how and what it will do to support achievement of the goals. The management of the agency, along with the Board, needs to ensure that the tasks set forth will be feasible for the Housing Authority given existing resources and prospects for future funding. The implementation plan should include regular reviews of the goals and sub-goals to determine continuing relevance and to assess Fresno Housing Authority’s achievements.

The strategic plan is not (and does not include) a “checklist” of items to be accomplished over a certain period of time. Rather the plan is an overarching document with goals, themes, strategies, and tactics interwoven to create what might be considered a “quilt” that can guide the development and prioritization of activities that will support the overarching goals. The implementation plan is critical to the agency’s successful achievement of its goals and its mission. This is where specific activities, designated responsibilities, tasks, and timelines should be delineated and prioritized; and where responsibilities are clearly designated.

Once the Strategic Plan is adopted, the consultants will meet with the leadership of the Housing Authority to consider the overarching priorities of the next five years and develop a framework for action in year one. This will form the backdrop for the implementation plan that will be developed by staff.

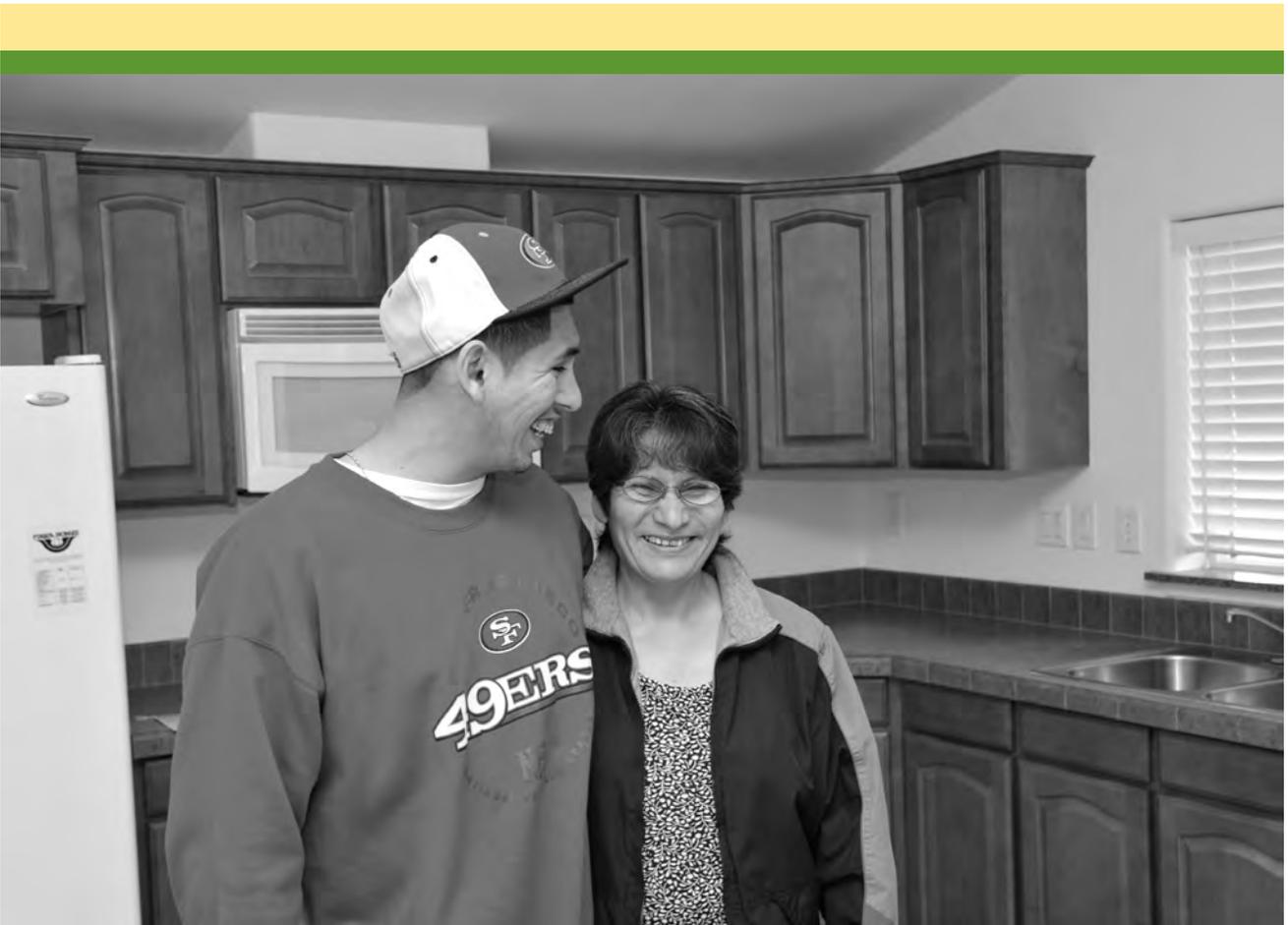
The Strategic Plan for the Fresno Housing Authority

Over these past seven decades, Fresno Housing Authority has been flexible in adhering to complex and demanding government mandates, while continuously attempting to meet the housing needs of Fresno's diverse communities. As the agency looks to the future, it will need to consider ways to advance its work by growing programs strategically; by maximizing the potential of its resources – increasing its effectiveness and expanding its capacity – and by responding appropriately to the specific issues facing the ever-changing communities of Fresno County.

Timing for this *comprehensive* strategic plan, which begins as we start the second decade of the 21st Century (2011 - 2015) – comes at a poignant moment for the nation, state, and region as well as for the Housing Authority, which is poised, ready and anxious to continue the changes begun over the past two years (to create an agency that is transformative for the populations it serves). Fresno Housing Authority has dedicated valuable energy and resources into this important planning process, through which it has considered the many ways in which it can play a greater role in securing a better future for families and for the under-served communities of Fresno – by focusing on strategies that develop and maintain quality affordable housing, by identifying ways to engage residents in their communities and beyond, by highlighting how to energize the broader community to engender public will, and by creating policies and programs that can strengthen a strategic array of partnerships and alliances –

to create and sustain vibrant communities throughout Fresno County.

The Strategic Plan



Fresno Housing Authority

Vision

Fresno – an engaged county, where all residents have access to quality housing that contributes to vibrant communities, and where all residents are empowered to achieve their educational and economic goals.

Mission Statement

Create and sustain vibrant communities throughout Fresno County

Strategies

To accomplish its mission, over the coming five years, Fresno Housing Authority plans to focus on four primary strategies, as it works toward its broad, community-building mission:

- *Develop and maintain **quality affordable housing** for low-income residents throughout the city and county.*
- *Design, implement, and sustain **exceptional programs** that invest in residents (and other program participants⁷) to become self-sufficient (through an array of educational, employment, and economic platforms).*
- *Lead, encourage, and build **partnerships** with local, regional, and national organizations to promote policies that build community; that increase and enhance, affordable housing options; and that provide programs that reflect and support the needs of housing participants.*
- *Generate **public will** to address the housing needs of low-income households in Fresno (and throughout California) by contributing to effective national and statewide efforts advocacy efforts and by leading local and regional programs that educate and encourage residents of Fresno County to have a voice in housing and civic issues.*

Tagline⁸

Vibrant communities. Quality housing. Engaged residents.

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The term “participants” is used frequently in this document to include “voucher holders” as well as those living in housing managed by the Fresno Housing Authority.

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The name and tagline will be key components of the organization’s new look and communications materials, to be launched in 2011.

ORGANIZATIONAL VALUES AND PRINCIPLES

Fresno Housing Authority is committed to innovation and excellence in housing and services for low-income households throughout the city and county. The Housing Authority:

- promotes and supports quality housing and services that are accessible to low- and very-low-income residents and that help to build strong communities
- emphasizes the value of good design in its developments and the importance of creating places that support vibrant and engaged communities
- increases and improves the supply of quality affordable housing
- strives to create a common voice and to build leadership that can articulate the housing needs of Fresno's communities and finds ways to ensure that these needs are understood and met
- develops materials about housing issues and options that can be understood by a broad cross section of the population and assures that its information is sensitive to the economic, cultural, and ethnic diversity of Fresno County.

Fresno Housing Authority works to maintain a responsive agency that meets the needs of its many different constituents as well as the broader Fresno community. The Housing Authority:

- provides a vital link between residents and service providers
- supports a diverse housing portfolio, with a range of opportunities for low-income people in Fresno to access quality housing
- assists community organizations and public agencies to develop and deliver quality affordable housing and support services in communities throughout the city and county of Fresno
- captures information and data about the housing needs of Fresno County
- stays current on all federal, state, and local housing policies, and actively pursues available resources to support its mission and influences housing policy locally and nationally
- strives to be inclusive of Fresno's ethnic and racial diversity, as well as those individuals with special needs, homeless individuals and families, the elderly, veterans, and the "hard to house"
- recognizes, reflects, and supports diversity in programs, selection of Commissioners, and recruitment and hiring of staff
- cultivates knowledgeable staff and encourages educational and experiential advancement
- encourages staff to be accountable in accomplishing their job tasks, to express their opinions in constructive ways, and to embrace intentional, ethical decisionmaking
- believes that housing and related services are essential components of a strong and vibrant community – impacting the education, health, and well being of all people
- values the unique contributions and perspectives brought by residents, staff, Commissioners, and the broad Fresno community.

Fresno Housing Authority recognizes that quality affordable housing requires stable, adequate, and equitable funds derived from multiple sources. The Housing Authority:

- develops projects that support the organization's core mission
- pursues contracts and grant funding to maximize affordable housing for the Fresno community
- works effectively and efficiently as a steward of critical resources.

Program Goals



PROGRAM GOALS

To move its vision forward in the coming years, Fresno Housing Authority's efforts will focus on four broad strategic areas which have been conceived to support the organization's mission

To create vibrant communities throughout Fresno County

[through

quality housing (place),

engaged residents (people),

broad support (public), and

effective collaboration (partnership).]

1: PLACE

Develop and expand the availability of quality affordable housing options throughout the city and county of Fresno by growing and preserving appropriate residential assets and increasing housing opportunities for low income residents.

2: PEOPLE

Respect community needs and knowledge – by listening, learning, and researching – and respond to issues compassionately, intelligently, and intentionally – by developing exceptional programs based on shared expectations.

3: PUBLIC

Build support for housing as a key component of vibrant, sustainable communities through public information, engagement, and advocacy that promotes affordable housing and supports the advancement of Fresno's low-income residents.

4: PARTNERSHIP

Collaborate to strengthen the Housing Authority's ability to address the challenges facing Fresno communities.

Program Goal 1: P L A C E



1: P L A C E

Develop and expand the availability of quality affordable housing options throughout the city and county of Fresno by growing and preserving appropriate residential assets and increasing housing opportunities for low income residents.

Sub-goals/ Strategies

Grow a portfolio of assets that responds to the needs of the low- and very-low-income residents of the city and county of Fresno.

- Continuously monitor and access opportunities from HUD that could increase resources for development of new properties.
- Access opportunities available through national, state, and local policies, priorities, and philosophies.
- Secure resources (financial and personnel) to increase the quantity and quality of public housing and to expand the number of vouchers for low- and very-low income residents of the city and county of Fresno.
- Maximize public housing subsidy by developing the largest number of units funding will support.

Promote safe, healthy, vibrant communities.

- Locate, design, and maintain all properties with a commitment to healthy lifestyles.
- Locate housing near schools, parks, retail, social services, and other amenities and services.
- Encourage use of public transportation, walking, and bicycling to ensure access and support of 'walkable' neighborhoods.

Develop a conservation and sustainability plan that supports energy conservation, water and waste management, and reduction of greenhouse gas emissions at all Housing Authority sites.

- Identify funding for implementation.
- Consider opportunities for increasing use of renewable energy.

Manage, maintain, and improve existing Housing Authority properties to meet agency-defined standards.

- Set standards for maintenance and management of properties.
- Ensure ongoing maintenance and capital improvements at all properties, based on identified needs and available resources.
- Seek housing development partners who add value to the Housing Authority and who share the agency's values with regard to architectural design and amenities.
- Incorporate art in public spaces and identify ways to ensure that all Housing Authority projects enhance local communities.
- Implement plan to ensure the highest level of safety and quality standards are maintained.

- Invest in responsible and innovative asset stewardship through strategic upgrades and rehabilitation projects.
- Implement long-term sustainability plan for each property, including “green practices” at new and existing properties (as well as at Housing Authority administrative sites).

Assess the Housing Authority’s capacity to address the unique needs of particularly fragile sub-populations (including but not limited to, people with disabilities, substance abuse issues, mental illness; the elderly; veterans; migrants; homeless; and emancipated youth).

- Prioritize housing development for extremely fragile populations as compared with giving priority to those who have a high potential for becoming self-sufficient if provided with key services or programs as part of Housing Authority housing or those who have access to support services independent from the Housing Authority.
- Maximize usage of VASH and other funding sources to increase the availability of housing for veterans, homeless, and other fragile populations (MHSA, McKinney-Vento) .

Maintain a broad range of housing options affordable to low- and very-low-income individuals and families in diverse neighborhoods, throughout the city and county of Fresno, at densities appropriate for the site and compatible with local community standards.

- Seize opportunities to educate communities about the value of higher density, quality design.
- Seek sites that meet the documented needs of residents (proximity to transit, schools, parks).
- Align site selections with planning goals of local jurisdictions.
- Focus on provision of rental housing, while responding to resident aspirations of home ownership.

Seek opportunities to develop mixed-use projects that include housing *only* if they meet the needs of the Housing Authority’s core constituencies – low- and extremely-low-income residents.

- Incorporate market rate housing and/or commercial uses that generate revenue for the Housing Authority’s efforts to support its core mission.

Develop baseline physical and social service programs for all new Fresno Housing Authority sites (e.g., community gardens, child care, exercise rooms, mini-libraries, nutrition programs, education centers) and set timeline to upgrade existing sites to include these programs (where appropriate).

- Establish timeline for implementation of baseline programming into existing properties.
- Include “baseline program” in all new developments.
- Promote baseline as “signature” of the Fresno Housing Authority.

Expand opportunities for voucher holders to obtain quality housing throughout the city and county, in neighborhoods that meet the needs of voucher holders.

- Pursue all economically feasible opportunities to increase the supply of housing choice vouchers (or other housing subsidy options) for qualified Fresno residents, including those designated for populations with special needs that are a high priority for the agency (veterans, seniors, migrant workers, people with mental health needs).

- Improve outreach and communication with property owners throughout Fresno County to encourage participation in voucher program and to increase quality rental options for low- and very-low income renters.

Continue to collaborate with Better Opportunities Builders, Inc. (BOB), an affiliate of Fresno Housing Authority to ensure success and consistency with the goals of the Housing Authority.

Program Goal 2: P E O P L E



2: PEOPLE

Respect community needs and knowledge – by listening, learning, and researching – and respond to issues compassionately, intelligently, and intentionally – by developing exceptional programs based on shared expectations.

Sub-goals/ Strategies

Assess service needs of tenants and refine and develop programs and services to ensure quality support for all Housing Authority participants in Fresno County.

- Identify the existing and emerging needs of specific sub-populations of tenants and constituents (e.g., seniors, including those currently living in Housing Authority properties who are aging in place; people with disabilities; veterans; long-term and recently-homeless families and individuals; emancipated youth and those who will soon be aging out of foster care; migrant workers; and others).

Engage residents and program participants in pro-active communication and problem solving related to housing, programming, and civic issues.

- Establish ongoing opportunities for residents/program participants to express their opinions and describe their experiences.
- Actively engage residents and participants by ensuring that all materials and discussions are linguistically appropriate and accessible (through simultaneous translation and materials in diverse languages).
- Communicate how input from residents/program participants is incorporated into Housing Authority actions (and/or why some recommendations do not result in agency action).

Develop, sustain, and manage programs that support self-sufficiency through education and employment training - for families in public housing and those with vouchers.

- Review and evaluate existing residential programs to determine effectiveness and to institute appropriate change.
- Create and implement (and/or contract for) programs that address the distinct and diverse needs of voucher and public housing households (after-school programs, child care, job training, financial literacy, micro-enterprises and asset building, youth development, and employment).
- Institute a robust information and referral program for participants.
- Support the design and provision of case management-style services (including individualized assessment, screening, development of care plans, “connections” with appropriate mainstream services, monitoring, and follow-up) and clinical services to meet specific health needs (e.g., mental health counseling, alcohol and drug treatment, and medical care) provided through community organizations and public agencies.
- Ensure that programs support resident stability and sustainability and meet the emerging and

ongoing needs of the range of populations needing housing in Fresno (with attention to cultures, languages, traditions, and special needs).

- Identify opportunities for residents/participants to create unique cultural, athletic, educational, or volunteer programs that connect with neighborhoods throughout the county.

Establish meaningful partnerships with key educational institutions, including Cal State Fresno and Fresno Unified School District and other school districts throughout the County.

- Support the development of programs that can educate university students about housing and community development.
- Work with Cal State Fresno and other local colleges to develop unique partnerships that can benefit both students and residents of public housing.

Encourage residents to define goals, to pursue self-sufficiency, and to decrease (to minimum based on individual situations) their level of support/services in housing through a well-defined housing/support continuum.

Continue to collaborate with FSS Corps⁹ to ensure consistency with the Housing Authority's goals, and to maximize participant success.

- Support FSS Corps to operate strategically and to be in sync with the Housing Authority's goals; to stabilize and increase visibility of Fresno Housing Authority; and to best support Housing Authority's objectives.

Revisit ROSS¹⁰ and FSS programming to ensure consistency with the Housing Authority's goals, and to maximize participant success.

- Assist FSS Corps to develop a plan to address needed resources to ensure ongoing support to cover funding gaps in service programming.

Respect the needs of residents and neighbors.

- Engage residents – and neighbors – of public housing properties to integrate housing with the larger community, neighborhoods, and the city.
- Sustain core resident services (that support successful tenancy, e.g., move-in orientation, eviction prevention, information and referral, financial literacy).
- Support activities for residents, especially youth, in communities where Housing Authority sites are located.
- Work with community-serving partner organizations, individuals, and government agencies

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The Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS) program was adopted by the Housing Authorities of the City and County of Fresno in 1993. The program works to help participants reach their employment and education goals. The FSS Corps is a nonprofit organization that raises funds and identifies resources to support the self-sufficiency goals of Housing Authority participants.

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ROSS (Residential Opportunities for Self Sufficiency) links public housing residents with supportive services, resident empowerment activities, and assistance in becoming economically self-sufficient.

(including public safety) to create and implement neighborhood-wide community building programs.

Strengthen mutual understanding of Housing Authority challenges/opportunities and resident/program participant needs and goals, as well as mutual responsibilities and expectations.

- Provide adequate information for families to understand their responsibilities related to the Housing Authority and to access available programs and services.

Exhibit flexibility in ability to respond to changing community needs.

Program Goal 3: P U B L I C



3: PUBLIC

Build support for housing as a key component of vibrant, sustainable communities through public information, engagement, and advocacy that promotes high quality affordable housing and supports the advancement of Fresno’s low-income residents.

Sub-goals/ Strategies

Become the Central Valley ‘go to’ resource for information and advocacy efforts, and the leader of a broad coalition of regional partners.

- Articulate and illustrate the agency’s role in local and regional housing policy and development.

Advocate on behalf of the Central Valley for quality, affordable housing to meet the needs of its diverse communities.

- Identify opportunities for additional state and federal resources.
- Position the Housing Authority to apply for private funding and philanthropy for special projects.

Engage the Fresno community in discussions on housing issues and solutions – increase community interest, participation, and education in affordable housing by expanding the visibility of affordable housing and concern about housing as a key component of a strong, sustainable region.

Encourage Housing Authority program participants to advocate for the needs of low-income residents.

Cultivate leadership to ensure the effective representation of new voices for quality affordable housing in communities throughout Fresno County.

- Look within and outside the Housing Authority for emerging leaders who can articulate the importance of quality affordable housing.

Educate local, regional, and national audiences about housing needs in the Valley – and how those needs are both unique and typical of communities across California and the nation.

- Implement a strategic outreach program that uses a wide range of venues to ‘tell the story’ of the Housing Authority and its multi-faceted role in Fresno County and the Central Valley.
- Assemble, maintain, and disseminate accurate data that increases community understanding of the needs of people living in Fresno County.
- Consider staffing needs to do appropriate, effective data collection and research.

Understand volunteerism as a way to expand understanding and to build support for the importance of the Housing Authority and its programs.

- Ensure that all volunteers understand the broad array of Housing Authority programs and impacts, beyond specific volunteer focus.

Program Goal 4: PARTNERSHIP



4. PARTNERSHIP

Collaborate to strengthen the Housing Authority's ability to address the challenges facing Fresno communities.

Sub-goals/Strategies

Collaborate with other local organizations to develop a 'data bank' of information about issues impacting the community (including 'stories,' data, survey results, migration trends, etc.)

- Ensure that the data bank becomes a community resource for all organizations serving the populations addressed by the Housing Authority, serving as a supplemental source of quantitative and qualitative information.

Build alliances with appropriate community partners to increase access to education (early learning/pre-school through college), job training, social services, mental health, financial security, and economic opportunities – with the goal of empowering residents and program participants through increased financial stability and self-sufficiency.

- Publicize educational and employment opportunities.
- Link with child care resource and referral programs to recruit and train residents to become licensed family child care providers and to better understand opportunities for on-site child development programs.
- Work closely with local educational institutions (early education, K-12, community college, and university level) to ensure that the diverse needs of Fresno's low-income populations are addressed.
- Pursue partnerships focusing on job training and employment/career opportunities, specifically designed to meet the needs of residents and participants.

Create unique pilot programs that build and strengthen partnerships locally and regionally, in order to catapult Fresno Housing Authority to prominence in the field.

- Create programs that provide unique experiences for Housing Authority youth, including field trips, college visits, and other enrichment activities.
- Beyond programming for Housing Authority youth, determine potential for educational programs designed for adult Housing Authority participants.
- Develop appropriate enrichment programs for Housing Authority staff.

Identify and cultivate partnerships (both in the private and public sectors) that create additional opportunities for the expansion of quality affordable housing.

- Target partners who can bring resources (capital, connections, subsidies) that are unavailable to the Housing Authority.

Increase opportunities for homeless individuals and families to secure housing and to build stability by working in partnership with city, county, and other public, nonprofit, and for-profit

organizations to build public will and support for the creation of sustainable, multi-faceted programs to decrease homelessness.

Be consistent, intentional, and collaborative in the development of relationships with organizations and programs.

Management Goals



MANAGEMENT GOALS

Stabilize, focus, and extend activities to meet the mandate of Fresno Housing Authority's mission.

The management goals (some of which are purposely threaded throughout the program goals to emphasize the connectivity between program strategies and management strategies) are divided into three overarching categories, each of which has a set of focus areas:

- **Sustainability** (staffing, finances, effectiveness, evaluation, technology, facilities)
- **Structure** (governance)
- **Strategic Outreach** (communications, image, visibility, public affairs, policy) .

These sections outline steps Fresno Housing Authority will take, over the coming years, to enable it to accomplish the strategic goals it has endorsed to advance the organization's programs which are the heart and purpose of the agency. *These management goals are designed to create a financially stable organization that can attract and retain the most talented and dedicated staff; to engage Commissioners in ways that reflect and project the Housing Authority's values and embrace its direction; to deliver the best possible services to Fresno Housing Authority's primary audience: low- and very-low-income residents of Fresno County; and to build an organization that operates creatively, decisively, intentionally, and effectively, with a strong and consistent ethos – and that understands that it is an organization whose core work involves advancing housing but whose values ensure that housing is about more than bricks and mortar.*