

**Neighborhood Housing Services
of New Haven, Inc.**

**Strategic Plan
2008-2012**

August 2008

NHS Strategic Plan – 2008
Neighborhood Housing Services of New Haven

1. Introduction

The Board of Directors of Neighborhood Housing Services of New Haven (NHS) met with the NHS staff on July 22 and July 23, 2008 to make a number of decisions concerning the direction the organization will take over the next five years. Those choices, which form the heart of this strategic plan, were based heavily on the results of interviews, phone conferences and email correspondence with six members of the board of directors, all 15 staff members, 39 external stakeholders, and a focus group involving 10 community residents.

Included in the strategic plan are:

- Brief summaries of where NHS has come from and where we are headed.
- An analysis of NHS' internal strengths and weaknesses.
- An overview of forces in the external environment that are having or likely will have an impact on NHS.
- A revised mission statement, a clearly defined vision for the organization, and a new statement of values.
- An outline of the goals and objectives we will pursue over the next five years, including the strategic decisions that have been developed by the board of directors.

2. Where We've Come From Since the Last Strategic Plan

▪ New Departments

NHS has continued to expand and take on new challenges since we developed our organization's last strategic plan in August 2004. The organization has grown considerably, beginning with the addition of two new departments: Community Building and Organizing and Resource Development.

Community Building and Organizing

NHS developed the position of community building specialist in 2006 because we recognized that we could not realize our ultimate goal of neighborhood revitalization if NHS did not foster and support community cohesion. Our community building specialist works with neighborhood residents to help them develop leadership skills; motivates less-involved residents to become more engaged in the community; and cultivates community resources, organizations, and activities. Our community building specialist has established partnerships with neighborhood leaders, community-based groups, and other community building organizations throughout the City of New Haven with a common goal to strengthen our target communities. The Community Building and Organizing initiative embodies NHS' dedication to serve not only individual homeowners, but entire neighborhoods.

Resource Development

NHS created the full-time position of resource development specialist in 2005 to optimize our organization's fundraising. Our Resource Development department has greatly increased NHS' organizational capacity to identify and obtain grants and donations, as reflected by our successful pursuit of a \$175,000 Kresge Challenge Grant concluding in June 2008. The creation of a Resource Development department has strengthened the long-term solvency of our organization and has enabled NHS to undertake, among other things, the three ambitious and innovative initiatives of our Neighborhood Revitalization Campaign.

▪ New Initiatives

Neighborhood Revitalization Campaign

NHS' Neighborhood Revitalization Campaign has provided funding for three new initiatives: the creation of a Home Improvement and Energy Conservation Laboratory (the Lab); the development of a Home Maintenance and Energy Conservation IDA Program; and the implementation of a new model of neighborhood stabilization we refer to as our Revitalization Demonstration Project (RDP). The Lab will open in October 2008 and will serve both as a state-of-the-art "green" demonstration model and as a site for hands-on home improvement and energy-conservation classes. The Home Maintenance and Energy Conservation IDA Program will com-

plement these classes by supplying low- and moderate-income homeowners with matching grants for investment in home maintenance and energy conservation improvements. Finally, the RDP, which will be focusing on Winchester Avenue as well as Blake Street, is a holistic approach to revitalization that couples the concentration of our rehabilitation projects with the creation of neighborhood organizations and community networks connecting residents to each other and to local resources. The three-pronged Neighborhood Revitalization Campaign marks NHS' most ambitious and comprehensive attempt to date to stabilize its target neighborhoods.

- **Expansion of Existing Business Lines**

HomeOwnership Center

Not only has NHS undertaken new initiatives and lines of business since 2004, but we have also expanded our existing services. The New Haven HomeOwnership Center (HOC) has responded to the ongoing subprime mortgage and resulting foreclosure crises by increasing the staff's focus on pre-foreclosure counseling and incorporating discussion of subprime loans into the HOC's educational curricula. The HOC is in the process of training three new housing counselors so that we can accommodate the growing demand for pre-foreclosure counseling. We expect to take on two additional counselors by the end of 2008.

Despite organizational restructuring in response to the foreclosure crisis, the HOC continues to provide all of its other counseling and educational services. In fact, the staff has even expanded the breadth of our non-foreclosure-related services with an increased emphasis on post-purchase counseling. A new managing director of the HOC was hired in 2007 to oversee the Center's expanding scope of services. The HOC's versatility and responsiveness to community needs has allowed NHS to remain a "one-stop shop" for first-time and existing homeowners.

Rehabilitation Department

The Rehabilitation Department has also responded to changes in the external environment since 2004 by redoubling NHS' focus on energy conservation in our housing projects. Our affordable housing developments are now among the most energy-efficient on the market. We are committed to developing the "greenest" homes possible both because we are aware of the debilitating effect that rising energy costs can have on low-income homeowners and because we are dedicated to minimizing the negative impact that wasted energy has on the local and global environment.

Summary of Staff and Budget Increases

Staff

To carry out the above-mentioned expansions and improvements of our services, NHS has added the following positions since August 2004:

- Three housing counselors
- One administrative assistant
- One assistant rehabilitation specialist
- One community building specialist
- One resource development specialist (with a Yale Dwight Hall Urban Fellow as assistant).

Budget

Our annual operating budget has increased from \$830,000 in 2004 to a projected \$1,500,000 in 2008. At the same time, our total net assets, as indicated in our annual audited financial statements, have increased from \$3,374,900 on December 31, 2003 to \$5,155,662 on December 31, 2007.

3. Where We're Headed

It is NHS' strategic intent to simultaneously increase in number and improve in quality the program services we provide. NHS is committed to increasing our affordable housing production, the quality and capacity of our homebuyer education and counseling services, and the level of resident engagement in our target neighborhoods. NHS will also expand the use of our Revolving Loan Fund, open the Home Improvement and Energy Conservation Laboratory, and graduate participants in our Home Maintenance and Energy Conservation IDA program. In addition, NHS will venture into economic development, concentrating on the commercial revitalization of the Whalley Avenue corridor by providing assistance to area small businesses and considering selected mixed-use developments. While we will continue to consider housing development projects outside of the City of New Haven on a case-by-case basis, we will maintain a focus on New Haven's neighborhoods.

To accomplish these tasks, it is agreed that NHS will need to expand the capacity of both the board of directors and the staff; modify our organizational structure; increase the number and size of our revenue streams; and strengthen our partnerships throughout the City. NHS will strive to improve our public relations and increase our visibility throughout New Haven to establish and strengthen essential partnerships with government officials, neighborhood residents, and other organizations. The specifics of NHS' strategic choices in pursuit of its goals are found below in Section 7.

4. Strengths and Suggestions for Improvement

In focus groups and interviews, internal and external stakeholders noted the considerable strengths that make NHS a respected player in the community and which should allow us to pursue a more expansive agenda. These responses also suggested a number of ways in which NHS can improve. Our stakeholders' evaluations of our strengths and weaknesses are summarized as follows:

Strengths

- Reputation in the community
 - “I cannot think of an area in which NHS is not exceeding all expectations”
 - “Nobody in the Northeast does [neighborhood revitalization] better than NHS”
 - “NHS has a long history of turning properties around and using that to stabilize neighborhoods”
- Competent, dedicated, knowledgeable, well-trained, and experienced board and staff
- Diversity in both the board and staff
- Good office dynamics
- Visionary leadership
- Knowledge of and leadership within the industry
 - When particular problems arise like the downturn of the [housing] market...we look to NHS and Jim Paley...[to] bring experience and expertise to bear”
 - “NHS leads the field and does [affordable housing development] the best. It keeps everybody else honest. From an institutional point of view, that’s the most important thing [NHS does]”
- Comprehensive, careful, and responsive approach to neighborhood revitalization
 - “[NHS] has picked projects that have had a really major impact on...not just the immediate area, but [on] the whole broader community”
 - “People...respond to block transformation [projects]”
 - “NHS looks at neighborhoods, not just the housing piece”
 - “I watched the way NHS focused on one neighborhood at a time and tried to make them more sustainable and better places to live....[We] support [NHS’] neighborhood revitalization work”
- Unique services: NHS has a niche in the affordable housing development field
- High-quality rehabilitations
 - “An NHS house is a gem”
 - “NHS is committed to the possibility of high-quality affordable housing....NHS makes permanent homes”
 - “I’ve never heard a complaint about the quality of an NHS home”
 - “People walk a little taller in [NHS target] communities. I love to look at the before-and-after pictures”
- Informative and helpful homeowner education

- “The Homeowner program is a fantastic complement to NHS’ [rehabilitation] work. It’s really important to not just give [first-time homebuyers] a home without any other guidance”
- “I’ve saved an additional \$3,000 since I attended [the HomeOwnership Center’s] financial fitness classes”
- Innovative and reliable pre- and post-purchase counseling services
 - “NHS is leading the pack in terms of quantity and quality of homeownership work”
 - “The HomeOwnership Center is my first-stop recommendation for housing counseling”
 - “[NHS] just saved my house”
- Leadership in green construction and homeownership strategies
- Resilience and responsiveness in the face of external environmental challenges
 - “The City [of New Haven] seems to be hitching onto NHS’ [responses to the foreclosure crisis]...NHS has carved a little niche out for itself disseminating information to homeowners in trouble...and it’s doing a great job”
 - “NHS has ‘hung in’ in tough and good times”
- Developing a campus for our offices within our target neighborhood to facilitate our delivery of services
- Never complacent: NHS is constantly trying to improve
- Financially sound and creative in securing funding
- Strong organizational structure
- Honesty and financial integrity
 - “NHS has always done what they were supposed to with the money [from the City of New Haven]”

Suggestions for Improvement

- Improve marketing and public relations efforts
 - Increase visibility in specific neighborhoods and throughout New Haven in general
 - Have board to become more actively involved in fundraising and marketing
 - Improve signage on worksites and at offices
 - Use print, audio-visual, and internet media to attract funders and clients
- Strengthen relationships with city government, community partners, other non-profits, and experts in related fields
 - Avoid situations where politics determines outcomes
 - Keep external stakeholders better informed of NHS’ current services
 - Collaborate more with other housing developers, nonprofits, and the Livable City Initiative
- Improve information technology management
 - Prevent frequent system failures
 - Update website more frequently and utilize website for client tracking and marketing
 - Assess need for information technology specialist on staff
 - Create reliable centralized database
 - Increase efficiency of data entry process

- Avoid over-reliance on the executive director
- Generate succession plan
- Increase production capability and future capacity
 - Produce more housing to meet demand
 - Consider addressing demand for rental or market-rate housing
 - Respond to increasing difficulty NHS faces in obtaining blighted houses for rehabilitation
- Place greater emphasis on community building
 - Establish more extensive network of partnerships with community building organizations
 - Address current understaffing in the Community Building and Organizing department
- Make HOC classes accessible to youth as well as adults
- Develop a meaningful client feedback system
- Improve customer service
 - Ensure appropriate wait times for staff response
 - Keep all staff accessible to clients
- Offer additional post-purchase services
- Improve cohesiveness between HOC and NHS
 - Create uniform branding for NHS and HOC
 - Undertake more teambuilding activities so HOC staff feels more connected to NHS
- Encourage more interdepartmental communication
- Provide more board training
- Improve personnel management
- Reduce staff hours and workloads
- Strengthen board-staff relationships

5. Forces in the External Environment

Interview data highlighted a number of forces in the external environment that work in favor of NHS and a number of others that work against the organization.

Forces Working in Favor of NHS

- Long-time homeowners and WEB management teams dedicated to organizing and improving neighborhoods
- Demand for more affordable, rental, and market-rate housing in New Haven
- Eagerness on the part of Yale, other nonprofits, community partners, and experts in related fields (e.g. Yale Urban Design Workshop) for closer collaboration with NHS
- Economic development
 - Demand for commercial revitalization of Whalley Avenue
 - Need among small businesses for assistance with business plan development, pre- and post-loan technical assistance, façade planning, micro-loan programs, merchant studies, and/or mixed-use building development
 - Support among the small business community, economic experts, and NHS' funding partners for expansion into the field of economic development
 - “Yes, NHS should get involved in economic development. It is a key piece that is missing from its product lines”
 - “Economic development is a natural next step for NHS”
 - New revenue streams
- Socioeconomic forces
 - High energy costs and societal pressure for increased sustainability that render NHS' green initiatives timely and highly valuable to low- and moderate-income homeowners
 - Increase in both the number of properties NHS can purchase and rehabilitate and the importance of NHS loss-mitigation counseling and homeowner education because of the foreclosure crisis
 - “The HomeOwnership Center[’s services are] even more critical given the...foreclosure crisis. It’s not just the education piece, but also [confronting] the day-to-day issues that people are dealing with”
- Potential spread of Downtown renaissance to NHS' target neighborhoods
- Residents and former clients' interest in keeping abreast of NHS activities
- Neighborhood demand for more community building efforts, especially youth services and volunteer opportunities for adolescents
- Homeowners' and architects' desire for NHS to become a clearinghouse for information on skilled and responsible contractors and green homeownership resources
- Demonstrated need for a community development group with enough equity to carry out significant development projects
- Town of Hamden's enthusiasm for more NHS projects there
- NHS' track record of success
- Strong relationships between NHS and its lenders, funders, partners, and neighborhood residents

- With the physical expansion of NHS to a campus setting, the organization can become a community space for neighborhood association meetings and events

Forces that Make our Work More Challenging

- Socioeconomic forces
 - Subprime lending crisis leading to many foreclosures; residents who used to be able to afford homeownership can only afford rental now
 - Inundation of loss mitigation clients due to foreclosure crisis
 - Housing market slump
 - Energy crisis has greatly increased homeownership costs
 - Likely increase in interest rates to combat inflationary trends
 - High incidences of poverty, violence, crime, and drugs in many of our target neighborhoods
- Difficulty in obtaining both housing stock and building sites (could result in a serious shortage of inventory and underutilization of NHS' capacity)
- Exploitative absentee landlords and developers
- Preponderance of renters in New Haven
 - Fluid population, resulting in less investment in homes and neighborhoods
 - Lack of close contact among neighbors producing weak sense of community
- Tight funds
 - Competition among nonprofit organizations for limited city funds
 - Private investors able to pay far more than NHS can for properties
 - High construction costs and the need to invest in more energy-efficient technologies necessitate more revenues/subsidies
 - Difficulty in obtaining reliable contractors at affordable price
- High taxes challenging small businesses and homeowners; people in danger of losing their homes because of taxes they cannot afford
- Competition with other nonprofit affordable housing developers for markets, funds and properties
- Yale's continued expansion
- Individual detractors of the organization
- Political Environment
 - Challenge of working with governmental bureaucratic hurdles
 - Inability of non-profits to lobby as a team
 - Mixed impressions of NHS among aldermen
 - Difficulty in obtaining city-owned real estate because of city's desire to maximize the revenue from each sale
 - Limitations on Community Development Block Grant funding available to NHS

6. Our Mission

NHS is committed to revitalizing New Haven's neighborhoods by developing affordable homeownership opportunities for low-income families; offering financial assistance to homebuyers and homeowners interested in reinvesting in their homes; stimulating commercial revitalization by strengthening local small business; providing comprehensive homebuyer education and counseling services; and promoting community building and organizing in targeted neighborhoods.

Our Vision

NHS envisions New Haven as a place where low- and moderate-income residents have the skills and resources to purchase and maintain homes in safe, vibrant neighborhoods. NHS strives to provide homeowners with these skills and resources, and works with residents to produce communities of engaged and empowered neighbors.

Our Values

NHS has historically embraced the following values in our role as a nonprofit housing developer and a provider of homebuyer education to New Haven residents:

- Provide homeowners and prospective homebuyers with the best possible product at the lowest possible price.
- Provide our clients with the most comprehensive and comprehensible educational programs so that they will be knowledgeable consumers in the housing marketplace.
- Treat our clients with honesty and integrity at all times, and be respectful in all our interactions with the general public.
- Provide our clients with as much information as possible with regard to their rehabilitation projects or the process of purchasing a home.
- Be responsive and attentive to the needs and concerns of the neighborhood residents we serve.

7. Our Future Direction

■ Improving Our Current Products and Services

Ramping up Real Estate Development

Conversations with our external stakeholders made clear that there is a strong demand for high-quality affordable housing units despite the recent slump in the housing market. At the same time, the weakened housing market and increased energy costs and property taxes have reduced the number of people for whom homeownership is a viable option. In recognition of these obstacles, some of NHS' internal and external stakeholders have expressed interest in NHS development of multifamily rental housing. Given the high cost of construction and the limited funds available to NHS, some stakeholders have also urged NHS to consider a greater emphasis on market-rate housing.

Although some of our stakeholders disagreed about which type of housing NHS should be developing as a primary focus, they generally agreed that we should continue to concentrate NHS' rehabilitation and construction projects in New Haven rather than expanding our geographic market to include Hamden and West Haven. They also strongly supported the continued expansion of NHS' RDP initiative.

NHS board and staff agree that our production of both rehabilitated and newly constructed affordable housing units should be increased significantly over the next five years. No decision has been reached as to whether or not NHS should purchase or develop rental units. As of now, however, NHS is not in the rental business, though the organization may occasionally own short-term rental units. While NHS is not strictly opposed to undertaking market-rate projects, increasing the quantity and quality of affordable housing units remains a priority since it remains a critical element of NHS' mission. NHS development efforts will be concentrated in the City of New Haven, but the organization will not refuse to pursue attractive projects outside the city limits. NHS is proud of the focused and comprehensive approach to neighborhood revitalization embodied by our RDP initiative, and has already begun to expand the RDP to include a section of Winchester Avenue. At the same time, the RDP is continuing in the Blake Street area.

Goal:

To increase the quality and quantity of affordable housing units available to low- and moderate-income individuals and families in the City of New Haven.

Objectives:

- 1. Strategically target areas of New Haven in need of increased affordable housing and neighborhood revitalization efforts.**
- 2. Acquire blighted and dilapidated houses and rehabilitate them for purchase by low- and moderate-income first-time homebuyers.**
- 3. Assist low- and moderate-income first-time homebuyers with the purchase of homes requiring rehabilitation.**
- 4. Help low- and moderate-income families to obtain attractive financing for the purchase of their homes.**
- 5. Motivate local residents and other property owners to reinvest in their properties.**

Expanding the Impact of the HomeOwnership Center

External and internal stakeholders alike lauded the HOC as an essential complement to NHS' development work, distinguishing NHS from other area affordable housing developers. Through its education and counseling services, the HOC helps equip residents with the knowledge and fiscal capacity to become long-term homeowners. Our stakeholders felt that in light of the sub-prime crisis, rising property taxes, and soaring energy costs, we must commit even more of the organization's resources to the HOC's services. Loss mitigation and pre-foreclosure counseling were underscored as areas deserving special attention, but not at the expense of any of the other HOC offerings.

HOC housing counselors are already operating beyond capacity because of the increase in demand for pre-foreclosure counseling since the onset of the sub-prime mortgage crisis. Regrettably, this trend is likely to continue into the near future. In light of these realities, board and staff agree that NHS must increase the HOC's housing counseling capacity. NHS will hire additional housing counselors, as needed, once the Lab is completed and NHS has sufficient space to house new staff. These new counselors will not only help the HOC to handle the increase in pre-foreclosure counseling clients, but will also ensure that there is sufficient staff to continue to provide the HOC's other services. The HOC also will work to mitigate the effects of the foreclosure crisis in New Haven by

emphasizing financial responsibility in the Center's educational curricula and warning our clients about the dangers of subprime lending.

The New Haven HomeOwnership Center will soon be moving to its new home at 30 Hudson Street. With expanded office space, NHS will increase the size of the HOC's staff by adding additional housing counselors. The new HOC offices will allow every housing counselor to have his or her own office under the same roof. Additional off-street parking will be provided for both NHS and HOC clients. All of these developments will strengthen the cohesiveness of the staff and improve the work environment in the NHS and HOC offices. Since the new HOC office will be incorporated into our existing campus (which also includes the Lab), NHS and the HOC will enjoy a greater presence in the community than ever before.

The HOC offers all its classes and counseling in Spanish and English, and now has three Spanish-speaking housing counselors to facilitate these services. The HOC's services will not be limited to any geographic market, and will instead be made available to residents throughout the region.

Goal:

To ensure that prospective homebuyers and existing homeowners have the knowledge and financial resources necessary for sustainable homeownership.

Objectives:

- 1. Hire additional housing counselors to serve the needs of our clients.**
- 2. Focus on loss mitigation and pre-foreclosure services, while remaining committed to pre- and post-purchase homebuyer education and counseling.**
- 3. Increase the level and effectiveness of our post-purchase homebuyer education through the use of the Home Improvement and Energy Conservation Laboratory.**
- 4. Adapt our pre- and post-purchase homebuyer education curricula in response to external environmental threats to homeownership.**
- 5. Improve the HOC's customer service and work environment by housing all HOC staff in 30 Hudson Street following its renovation as an office.**

Increasing our Community Building and Organizing

Neighborhood residents, other nonprofits, and our community and funding partners all stressed the need for more community building efforts in New Haven's neighborhoods. And nearly every stakeholder we interviewed cited crime, violence, and drugs as being among the greatest challenges confronting our target neighborhoods. Our stakeholders called upon NHS to help residents address these issues by connecting them to one another, aiding existing community associations, and empowering them to become advocates for their own needs. External stakeholders and neighborhood residents in particular urged NHS to get involved in youth programming.

As the creation of the Community Building and Organizing line of business two years ago demonstrated, NHS firmly believes in the importance of strengthening the sense of community within our neighborhoods and is eager to help residents organize neighborhood associations, events, and projects. NHS will expand our network of partnerships with resident leaders and community building organizations to increase the effectiveness of our efforts. Since community building requires initiating and sustaining contact with many people and participating in numerous organizations and events throughout our neighborhoods, our Community Building and Organizing initiatives will also utilize volunteers from the neighborhoods. While NHS board and staff both believe that initiating youth programming as a service would be too great a departure from the organization's mission, NHS will recruit adolescents from local high schools, churches, and youth organizations as community building volunteers.

Goal:

To help resident leaders motivate their neighbors to become more actively engaged in their communities.

Objectives:

- 1. Strengthen existing partnerships with resident leaders and other community building organizations, and develop new neighborhood associations where appropriate.**
- 2. Establish a cohesive cadre of volunteers who can effectively contact residents and motivate them to participate in neighborhood meetings and events.**
- 3. Help resident associations become self-sustaining, so that they can continue to organize neighborhood projects and events.**

Reviving the Utilization of the Revolving Loan Fund

NHS is committed to helping its clients to acquire and maintain their homes. Diligent home maintenance strengthens community pride and motivates other residents to reinvest in their homes. Many homeowners, including former NHS clients, cannot afford to keep their homes in pristine condition because of high taxes, rising energy costs, high-priced mortgages, and a variety of other expenses. NHS created its Revolving Loan Fund in 1981 to provide our clients with money for downpayment assistance and home improvement projects; however, in recent years the loan fund has had little activity.

Given the tremendous emphasis that NHS places upon developing high-quality and attractive homes, we must reinvigorate our loan fund so that our clients will be better able to keep their homes functional and beautiful for years to come. Rejuvenating the loan fund will also increase the extent of NHS' impact by making loans to homeowners who are not former NHS clients and allowing them to beautify their homes as well. NHS will also help potential loan recipients to take advantage of our Home Maintenance and Energy Conservation IDA and other organizations' loan programs that motivate participation in home maintenance and home improvement projects. NHS' decision to separate residential lending and financial assistance into its own line of business demonstrates our commitment to providing additional financial resources to existing homeowners for such projects.

Goal:

To revive the NHS Revolving Loan Fund to help homeowners revitalize their neighborhoods by properly maintaining their homes.

Objectives:

- 1. Reevaluate the terms and conditions for receiving loans and articulate them for clients in brochures and on the NHS website.**
- 2. Establish pilot loan programs to provide financial incentives for reinvestment.**
- 3. Reach out to former NHS clients as potential revolving loan recipients.**
- 4. Ensure that the loan fund is adequately capitalized to meet the projected increase in demand for new loans.**

Generating Additional Revenue

NHS' stakeholders realize that the improvements and expansions planned for the next five years will only be possible if the organization generates increased revenue. Stakeholders have recommended that we augment our fundraising by better publicizing NHS' many services and achievements, and encouraging contributions from new donors. In addition, various stakeholders have noted that NHS can now qualify for grants targeted at environmental conservation and commercial revitalization projects.

NHS is confident that board and staff can generate sufficient additional revenue to sustain our various additional and expanding product lines. However, identifying revenue streams and writing grant proposals are extremely time consuming, and NHS must mitigate the additional strain that this will put on our resource development specialist. NHS will continue to utilize the services of a Dwight Hall Urban Fellow to lessen the existing staff's workload, and will assess the need and organizational capacity for recruiting additional part-time resource development assistance. In addition, NHS will increase the organization's visibility through prominent projects and increased publicity in the hope of attracting larger donations from a greater number of sources.

Goal:

To identify new funding sources and amplify existing revenue streams in support of programmatic growth and improvement.

Objectives:

- 1. Reapply for grants NHS currently receives as soon as we are eligible to do so.**
- 2. Identify and apply for new grants.**
- 3. Research and apply for grants directed at energy conservation and commercial revitalization initiatives.**
- 4. Assess the need and capacity for part-time staff to assist with identifying and applying for grants.**
- 5. Increase NHS' visibility throughout the City and region to attract new donors and encourage current supporters to make larger contributions.**

■ Expanding Our Products and Services

Home Improvement and Energy Conservation Laboratory

Many of our external stakeholders believe that the Home Improvement and Energy Conservation Laboratory, opening in October 2008, will be an invaluable resource for low- and moderate-income homeowners struggling with skyrocketing energy costs. They view the lab as an important complement to the HOC's existing homebuyer education programs.

NHS will use the Lab as both a green demonstration model and the home of hands-on home-improvement and energy conservation classes. These classes will not only help participants save money and reduce their environmental impact, but will also allow them to learn about energy-efficient techniques and technologies in an interactive environment. NHS will consider training additional staff members and/or hiring a new staff person to teach these classes. We intend to use the opening of the Lab to place our organization at the forefront of energy conservation efforts in New Haven, and we will continue to pursue funding from environmentally-focused individuals and organizations.

Goal:

To promote energy-efficient living strategies that increase the affordability and sustainability of homeownership.

Objectives:

1. Offer classes on energy-efficient technology and homeownership strategies.
2. Demonstrate the cost savings of energy-efficient living.
3. Increase NHS' visibility throughout the Greater New Haven area as a leading producer of green housing to attract a wider swath of issue-oriented donors.

Goal:

To provide NHS clients with hands-on skills that they can use to save money in their homes.

Objectives:

1. Utilize the hands-on exhibits to teach participants how they can undertake simple maintenance projects on their own.
2. Demonstrate the cost savings of undertaking various projects independently, rather than calling a contractor.

Home Maintenance and Energy Conservation IDA Program

As noted earlier, our stakeholders were very enthusiastic about NHS' burgeoning commitment to educate our clients about the benefits of energy conservation. NHS' stakeholders also felt that we should increase our efforts to help first-time and existing homeowners maintain their homes.

The Home Maintenance and Energy Conservation IDA Program will address both of the above-mentioned stakeholder concerns. The IDA will provide first-time homebuyers as well as existing homeowners with matching grants of up to \$5,000 for home maintenance and/or energy conservation improvements on houses they are either purchasing or already own. The program will complement work done in the Lab by providing families with financial incentives to apply what they have learned. Our 2007-08 allocation of IDA matching funds has been reserved by existing participants, and we will begin making matching grants in November 2008. We intend to apply for additional matching funds the next time they are made available by the State Department of Economic and Community Development.

Goal:

To provide low- and moderate-income first-time homebuyers and existing homeowners with financial assistance for investments in home maintenance and energy conservation.

Objectives:

- 1. Provide matching grants of as much as \$5,000 to first-time and existing homeowners at or below 120 percent of the AMI for the New Haven-Meriden Metropolitan Statistical Area.**
- 2. Reach out to post-purchase clients as potential IDA participants.**
- 3. Increase NHS' visibility throughout the city and region as a leader in affordable greening to attract new donors and motivate current donors to make larger contributions.**
- 4. Apply for additional funding from the State Housing Trust Fund to expand the number of households benefiting from the IDA program.**

Economic Development

NHS' board, staff, and external stakeholders have all identified economic development as crucial to the long-term vitality of our neighborhoods. Many of our stakeholders have asserted that the commercial revitalization of Whalley Avenue is a natural next step in NHS' revitalization efforts. Our stakeholders

were not always in agreement as to what services NHS should consider providing to stimulate the commercial revitalization of the Whalley Avenue corridor, but almost all of them believed that developing mixed-use buildings was certainly within NHS' capabilities. Many of our stakeholders pointed out that entering the field of economic development could open up a number of new revenue streams in the form of fee-for-service income and additional grants to NHS.

NHS is confident that our expertise in neighborhood development and our extensive knowledge of our community's needs position us to effect positive change for small businesses on Whalley Avenue. As such, we expect considerable overlap between our Community Building and Organizing and Community Based Economic Development lines of business. The organization is currently considering multiple initiatives intended to stimulate the commercial revitalization of Whalley Avenue. NHS will either hire a consultant or bring an economic development specialist on staff, and also will conduct extensive conversations with city experts in the field to determine what steps NHS should take to strengthen local small businesses. We understand that we must increase NHS' sources of revenue to support this programmatic expansion. We expect that economic development grants and fee income will help to defray costs, but we are aware that the organization will still need to raise additional funds to support our new services.

Goal:

To revitalize targeted sections of the Whalley Avenue corridor through partnerships with economic development experts, local small businesses, and the residential community.

Objectives:

- 1. Hire a consultant or create a staff position to determine how NHS should assist local small businesses, and then guide NHS through the implementation of the new services.**
- 2. Undertake conversations with economic development experts in the City and in other organizations about opportunities for partnerships on existing economic development and commercial revitalization projects.**
- 3. Become more involved in the Whalley Avenue Special Services District and the WEB Management Team's current revitalization efforts.**
- 4. Facilitate contact between neighborhood residents and small businesses.**
- 5. Apply for grants and explore additional funding opportunities in support of economic development and commercial revitalization projects.**

8. Conclusion

Neighborhood Housing Services of New Haven is committed to expanding the organization's output over the next five years in our existing principal lines of business:

- Affordable housing development
- Homebuyer education and counseling (including both pre- and post-purchase programs)
- Community Building and Organizing, including an expanded focus on resident leadership development

NHS is also committed to providing additional assistance to first-time homebuyers and current homeowners by reinvigorating our Revolving Loan Fund, expanding our Home Maintenance and Energy Conservation IDA Program, and opening the Home Improvement and Energy Conservation Laboratory. NHS intends to develop new services to promote economic development and commercial revitalization along the Whalley Avenue corridor. NHS will increase the organization's fund raising capacity to support the expansion of our program services. NHS' work will remain focused on the City of New Haven, but the organization will consider undertaking selected projects in surrounding municipalities on a case-by-case basis. We intend to work on our own projects 90 percent of the time and collaborate with other organizations 10 percent of the time.

NHS has decided to redefine our existing lines of business so that they accurately reflect the organization's focus. It is our intention to allocate NHS' time, energy, and financial resources over the next five years to the restructured business lines as follows:

- Homeownership Preservation Services: 10%
- Homeownership Promotion Services: 25%
- Community Based Economic Development: 10%
- Community Building and Organizing: 15%
- Real Estate Development: 30%
- Lending and Loan Portfolio Management: 10%

NHS embraces the hard work and commitment on the part of our stakeholders, who have played an indispensable role in the creation of this strategic plan. It is our sincere hope that this plan will serve us well for the next four years as we undertake exciting new challenges and commit ourselves to protecting the health and vitality of New Haven's neighborhoods.