

HRI Community Investment Plan 2023-2026 Executive Summary

Homeowner's Rehab Inc was founded in 1972 to support low- and moderate-income homeowners in Cambridge. HRI began in the 1980s to acquire and build affordable rental housing in Cambridge, and today owns more than 1675 rental units. Over the past five years, HRI has shifted from exclusively serving the Cambridge community to a more regional focus. HRI has a longstanding commitment to the construction and preservation of affordable housing, a robust resident service program, and assistance for low- and moderate-income homeowners through our Home Improvement Program (HIP). As a result, HRI is focused on the following goals through our Community Investment Plan:

Our Goals

Goal 1: Ensure access to safe, stable housing for HRI communities.

Increase and maintain the pool of affordable housing available to low- and moderate-income residents in HRI's communities by (a) increasing the development and rehabilitation of affordable housing units, (b) providing individualized housing stabilization services to residents served by HRI, and (c) bring newly acquired CASCAP properties up to HRI building and staffing standards.

Goal 2: Promote equity.

Through (a) real estate development, (b) individualized housing stabilization services, and (c) stakeholder engagement, work to reduce systemic barriers including housing access, educational and economic opportunity, and health disparities faced by HRI residents.

Goal 3: Continue sustainable development practices.

HRI has long sought to provide housing for lower income households in Cambridge and nearby towns where the market rent is prohibitively unaffordable, including for extremely low-income households earning 30% of Area Median Income. To advance HRI's commitment to decarbonization and green development, we will (a) continue the use of Passive House and other sustainable construction practices, (b) install new solar panels on HRI buildings to limit reliance on the electrical grid by our properties, (c) continue deep energy retrofits of properties in the HRI portfolio.

Goal 4: Increase operational capacity.

Increase operational capacity needed to support organizational goals, such as increasing staff, formulating marketing and fundraising plans, improving data collection and evaluation, and updating technology and financial systems.

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Our Strategy

Goal 1: Ensure access to safe, stable housing for HRI communities

(a) Real Estate

- Complete permitting, design, and financing for new affordable rental property at 1627 Mass Ave. This project will add 29 affordable family units to HRI's real estate portfolio, in a transit-rich area of Cambridge near Harvard Square.
- Identify at least one additional real estate development opportunity for new housing units.
- Continue capital planning for the existing HRI portfolio, prioritizing decarbonization activities, and other renovations designed to preserve long-term viability of our properties.

(b) Resident Services

- Completion of emergency rental assistance funding applications
- Screening for benefits such as utility assistance, SNAP, and employment opportunities.
- Referrals to community providers.

(c) Home Improvement Program

Provide loans and technical assistance for Cambridge homeowners to preserve low- and moderate-homeownership, and help owners maintain and increase their equity in their homes, in an increasingly unaffordable housing market.

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Goal 2: Promote equity

(a) Real Estate

- Adding affordable family housing near 1627 Mass Ave., an extremely high-cost neighborhood of Cambridge, will increase economic and racial diversity in that neighborhood.
- Develop a robust housing development pipeline to increase the number of affordable rental opportunities for low- and moderate income, BIPOC, and immigrant communities in the high-opportunity city of Cambridge.
- Increase access for vulnerable communities to sustainable design that supports health and climate resiliency.
- Establish agency standards for MBE/WBE participation in development projects, as well as labor hours for BIPOC and women workers.

(b) Resident Services

- Provide on-site screening and application assistance for benefit programs such as SNAP, MassHealth, unemployment, and childcare vouchers. Given that the majority of HRI residents live at or below 50% of area median income, these resources are essential to stability.
- Promote equity and economic empowerment through connection to employment training programs, individualized job search assistance, individual development accounts (IDAs) for those interested in purchasing a home, student loan workshops, and college scholarship opportunities.
- Bridge the racial equity and poverty gaps in education through out-of-school-time opportunities such as homework help and computer labs, one on one tutoring, and mentoring programs.
- Increase access to language justice through translation and interpretation for Resident Services programming and hiring bi-lingual staff reflecting the populations that HRI serves.

(c) Home Improvement Program

- Increase access to home rehabilitation loan products for low-income homeowners including those with disabilities, older adults, and BIPOC community members.
- Provide technical assistance to ensure successful home rehabilitation and connection to critical community resources.

(d) Increase Operational Capacity

- Increase the recruitment of candidates for the Board, committees, and staff to reflect our residents' wide-ranging identities.
- Augment HRI's ability to reach members of diverse communities with an improved website, social media presence and marketing materials.
- Identify opportunities to direct HRI's business to companies and vendors owned by members of historically marginalized communities.

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Goal 3: Continue sustainable development practices

- Install solar energy on additional HRI rooftops through our ongoing partnership with Resonant Energy.
- Continue deep energy retrofits on appropriate properties.
- Develop sustainable buildings using Passive House and other construction technology including the use of green and sustainable materials.

Goal 4: Increase Organizational Capacity

HRI has, historically, had an extremely lean staffing model. As the organization builds new units, increases Resident Services capacity, and expands our geographic footprint, it is essential that operational capacity grows to support the organization's work. Activities to increase HRI's operational capacity include:

- Hiring staff in key operational positions.
- Upgrading technology, including the agency website.
- Developing comprehensive marketing material.
- Developing and implementing an overall organizational fundraising plan.
- Completing a new five-year strategic plan.
- Increasing the use of data collection and evaluation in all aspects of HRI's work.

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