Executive Director Report

Highlights for March 2021 Board Meeting

A. Administrative

* COVID Response:
  + The construction sites continue to struggle balancing the number of Home Team members allowed on site. Even before COVID, the site supervisors had a hard time turning away Home Team in order to keep safe numbers. COVID has reduced our numbers even further requiring more discipline in this area. Group interest is on the raise which is great from a fundraising standpoint but even further reduces the number of Home Team spots.
  + The North Store is on track to re-open in April!!! The team has done an amazing job rehabbing the space to provide a better customer (and volunteer) experience and represent our brand in a more professional light. Spending $10K on a space we don’t own was a difficult decision, but the improvement in staff and volunteer moral and the anticipated approvals from customers will be worth it.
  + Work from home agreements are still in place for the Development Department. Family services now as 2 people in the office 5 days a week; accounting has one person each day; and there is always someone at the front desk. Rick and Teresa rotate between home, office and sites.
* Racial inequity conversations (DEI):
  + Dr. Ursuline Bankhead PhD provided a volunteer training in February which was only attended by 7 Home Team members. This gave pause to the staff in holding the second part of the series “Respectful Workplace” until we could discuss the possibility of making such trainings a requirement to being a Home Team Member. After much discussion, we have decided to make it a requirement but also being sure we have options to make training easily accessible. In April, we will hold the “Respectful Workplace” training (which will include some DE&I discussion) and video tape it. This recording will be made available to all Home Team who could not make the live presentation with a follow up survey to assess that key points have been understood. Any Home Team member who has not completed the training by the end of FY21 will not be allowed to register on site. We fully expect that some Home Team will decide not to volunteer under these conditions, but we as an organization, believe that treating ALL people with respect and dignity needs to be made a priority by staff and volunteers.
  + The DE&I committee now includes 3 staff members, an AmeriCorps member and 3 board members. A few other board members attend meetings when they can. The mission of the group is ***The Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion team's purpose is to advance Habitat for Humanity Buffalo's mission by promoting diverse and equitable strategies and best practices that are inclusive to all. Our team's vision is for Habitat Buffalo to be an ally and advocate for the families and communities we serve.***
* Facilities Analysis Task Force, working together with key staff, created a report on that outlines the optimum prototype facility for each area of our business. This report was given to a commercial realtor who is looking for spaces for the task for to consider as a replacement for the North Store. The key obstacle in this process will be price point. Can we find a new space that guarantees the same net profit in order to fund operations at the same level?
* Staff Changes:
* New Hires and Promotions:
  + Welcome aboard Conni Hollis! Conni started on March 15th as our new Accounting Manager. She will be in the office Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday while the temp will work in the office Thursdays and Fridays. Conni’s first priorities (after onboarding and orientation) will be to update cash flow and assist Rick and Teresa in creating the FY22 budget.
  + Family Services Coordinator position has been filled. Tammylin Budniewski will start Monday March 22 assisting Laura Martin, our Family Services Manager, process applications for both the Homebuyer Program and the Critical Home Repair Program, as well as, expand our Homebuyer Education Program and strengthen relationships with current homeowners. This will allow Laura to concentrate on getting families ready for their house closing, facilitating the sales of our mortgages and managing those properties in rental status.

B. Partnerships:

* We closed on our first CHDO project on 3/17. This was a fully funded house with the Matt Urban Center in the Town of Cheektowaga.
* Our second CHDO partnership is through the MOU stage and moving on to construction contracts, designs and permitting. These will be two fully funded homes through the Lackawanna Housing Development Corp. on Center Street.
* The FBCLT homes about 2 and 6 weeks away from CofO. We have had issues with the Land Trust not honoring our signed MOU requiring several negotiation meetings to find an equitable solutions for both organizations. In the end, they have agreed that the original MOU is in fact their best option. We are proceeding with SONYMA closings on both homes.
* Niagara Falls is no longer interested in a fee for services arrangement. They feel they have new board members who are capable of providing them the support they need. Our Family Services Office will finish the closing on Linwood with them (the house we provided grant support and construction management for a fee) but will have no other obligations to them after that.
* The West Side Neighborhood Association is donating a house to us in the Black Rock/Riverside neighborhood. We are in the process of them paying back bills and us doing search and survey.

C. Neighborhood Revitalization Initiatives (NRI)

* The April 15th deadline for Construction to give up Barry as the interim construction project manager is almost here. Barry will return to NRI with his first priority being to finalize the CHR business plan and FY22 budget and begin soliciting applications in order to meet our grant goals of 10 repairs before next February.

D. Site Selection: (See Dashboard)

* The press event with the COB for the demolition and rebuilding of 33 Brunswick in Hamlin Park historic preservation district still has not happened. We will present to the historic preservation board in the next two weeks in the hopes of getting an approval on design and materials so we can move to permitting and rehab this eye sore and bring it back to productive use.
* We have several rehabs and lots being donated to us:
  + Florence – a lot in West Seneca donated by an individual to Veterans One Stop. In partnership, our goal is to qualify a Veteran Family for this house.
  + Esser – lot in Black Rock/Riverside donated by Westside Neighborhood Association
  + Bernard – a rehab in South Buffalo which the Western NY Law Center negotiated for Bank of America to release its interest in the property under the condition that the homeowner donate it to Habitat.
  + Hopkins Street – lots near our offices in South Buffalo being donated by siblings that inherited the property from their deceased mother.

E. Development: (See Dash Board and report)

* The Thursday night tastings were such a hit that 4 more were added to Tuesdays and Wednesdays. We anticipate that between the Beer Books and the Virtual Tastings that the House that Beer Build will raise $70K.
* The IUE-CWA granted us another $80K for Critical Home Repair and ask that we submit a second grant for an additional $25K to build handicap ramps (Aging in Place projects also fall under CHR).
* The First Niagara Foundation awarded us $25K for homebuilding.
* We won the RFP from the WNY LISC office for $150K to build 5 houses in the Masten neighborhood.
* On a disappointing note, both Kaleida and Rich Products have pulled back their house sponsorships for this cycle.

F. Volunteer Services: (See dashboard)

* See notes under operations regarding Home Team on the construction site and trainings.

G. Construction: (See Dashboard)

* The 2021 Build Schedule shows an increase in production so we can complete 15 homes in FY22. These homes are made up of mostly new builds and modular and some rehabs already in inventory.
* See notes under operations regarding managing Home Team numbers

H.         Family Services: (See Dashboard)

* Delinquencies continue to slightly increase but not at the rate we had predicted at the beginning of COVID (see dashboard)
* AHC opened the rehab grant so closings on all completed houses are underway. The goal is to have them all closed by the end of May.
* See notes under operations on new Family Service Coordinator

I. ReStore

* The North Store will open in April with a new and improved look. I am very proud of this team and the growth they are showing in leadership, management, and accountability of their department.
* The team tackled an 800,000 sq ft deconstruction of a bio medical lab on the West Side of Rochester. A Buffalo resident and owner of a Buffalo based property developer gave us this opportunity after our realtor approached him about property for our ReStore relocation. Part of the staff spent 2 weeks loading as much as we could into a storage unit before the closing of this property took place. A record breaking sales week ($21,500) was the result after several truck loads of the deconstruction products were put on the South Store floor.
* See Facilities Task Force update

J. Finance: (See Financials)

* Welcome aboard Conni Hollis our new Accounting Manager. See Operations for more.
* Current Priorities are:
  + 18 month cash flow
  + FY22 Budget
  + 3 year Budget
  + More sophisticated house budgets and accurate job cost reports
  + Draw-down requests and answering questions to FHLB grant projects as well as final LISC properties.
  + AHC New Build Grant Submittal