Executive Director Report

Highlights for September 2021 Board Meeting

A. Administrative

* COVID Response:
  + We are back to wearing masks 100% regardless of vaccination status if you are indoors. If you are outside on the construction site you do not have to wear a mask.
  + We have not REQUIRED vaccination but we did ask people to provide confirmation of vaccination status.
  + There is a discussion underway with HFHI on whether our federal grant dollars (AmeriCorp Members, AHC and Capacity Building Grant) will come with the requirement of 100% vaccination for staff. Currently, we do not but that may change.
* Racial inequity conversations (DEI):
  + The DE&I Committee presented to the leadership team offering up 5 improvement areas in which over 90 DE&I tactics were bucketed. The team will now put action plans around the buckets and work with the departments on implementing the plans. The board items will not be addressed by staff but turned over to the Board to address (See attached).
* Facilities Analysis Task Force:
  + The Task Force reviewed 17 properties, visited 5, and provided a recommendation moving forward (see attached). In a nutshell, we identified one location (Niagara Falls Blvd Mall) which needs some structural changes and improvements to be considered viable. Dave Sutton provided architectural plans for those changes and now the landlord needs to come back with a lease price for the next 10 years. Once we have a concrete number, we can do a more accurate scenario planning. If the committee feels one or more scenario is realistic, we will present to the board. If no scenario is realistic, we will ask the broker to keep looking. Regardless, we are signing another 1 year lease for the North ReStore to give us more time.
* Staff Changes:
  + Construction continues to have staffing difficulties. In June, we were staffed appropriately (5 supervisors, 1 field manager, 1 coordinator) to build 15 houses. Understanding that once site supervisors were fully trained, and the program changes were made, a construction project manager would be hired to take over. As of September 24, we are down 2 supervisors (one poached and one terminated) and the staff training is not progressing at the pace we had hoped questioning our ability to produce 15 houses this fiscal year.
  + Fallon Burroughs, former AmeriCorps Member and Construction Material Expediter, is back with us as a part-time Office Admin. At her 90 day review, if performance remains consistent, we will offer her a full-time position. Additional responsibilities will include supporting construction and daily operations.
  + The ReStore is now fully staffed!!!! We also kept a part-time position to provide back up for people out sick, on vacation and for the managers to complete administrative functions and training programs.

B. Partnerships:

* The Fruit Belt Community Land Trust partnership has taken another turn. For those of you who are new– the partnership originated in 2018 when the Land Trust had no money and no real estate development experience. Habitat entered into an MOU with the Land Trust to build 2 homes, provide mortgage-ready homebuyers and the mortgage product. The Land Trust would provide a ground lease to the homebuyer and educate the potential families on the Land Trust model and requirements of the ground lease.

The Executive Director and Board Chair who negotiated the MOU and educated the potential homebuyers left the Land Trust organization and the new leadership disagreed with the fully executed agreement and defaulted on the MOU. Realignment discussions were underway until the potential homebuyers sat through a new and very different land trust orientation with the new leadership and decided they were unwilling to sign the land lease. I made the decision NOT to enforce the homebuyer house selection agreement that they signed for the Rose Street homes and allow them to select new Habitat addresses.

In order for the Land Trust to sell these homes to qualified buyers by the due date of their grants, Habitat will now sell the homes to the Land Trust. We are expediting completion on two other Habitat homes for our families to move in to. Habitat will be fully paid for time and materials including our donated volunteer labor and administrative time. Habitat can be proud to have built two more homes on the East side of Buffalo for low-income families, albeit not families that completed the Habitat homebuyer program.

C. Neighborhood Revitalization Initiatives (NRI)

* Three repair projects have been completed this quarter. Eight more will be completed in next quarter and a total of 15 by FYE.
* A new Cornell Fellow presented her recommendations on policy changes and partnerships that Habitat should concentrate on in terms of a new demand on affordable housing post-COVID. Some of the recommendations are reasonable given our resources, while others will be deferred until our repair program is fully functioning and COVID variants are not affecting our production and ability to do community outreach.

D. Site Selection: (See Dashboard)

* We close on 3 properties with the Land Bank – 179 Westminster and 1554 & 1556 East Delavan in Cheektowaga.

E. Development: (See Dash Board and report)

* We received the Capacity Building Grant from HFHI. This grant will provide funding for a new position over a three year period plus an additional $5K for training. Board approval is needed tonight in order to proceed with this grant.
* Bank of America awarded us again this year for $17,500
* HFHI awarded us a whole house sponsorship based on our participation in a pilot program to increase black homeownership.
* AARP awarded us $15,000 for our Home Team Volunteer Program which provides opportunities for senior citizens.
* Leaders Build has been adapted to the COVID environment and will no longer be an indoor build day but an outdoor breakfast featuring Mayor Brown as the keynote speaker.
* The Hammers and Ales committee continues to discuss a live event for 2022 versus another virtual event. The Beer Books are on track for a November release with an additional 200 to sell.

F. Volunteer Services: (See dashboard)

G. Construction: (See Dashboard)

* In addition to the staff changes discussed above, the build schedule continues to change to adapt to supply chain issues and the lack of reliable subcontractors. A changing build schedule not only affects the budget and cash flow but potentially puts grants at risk. Constant monitoring and adjustment is necessary.

H.         Family Services: (See Dashboard)

* 18 families are now matched with homes soon to be completed for the next construction cycle.
* We are not soliciting new families or processing applications to adjust to the slower build schedule. The goal is to move families through the program within 18-24 months. Accepting too many families will promote families idling too long in the program.

I. ReStore

* The North ReStore has picked up customer count and sales in recent months, but the South ReStore is still out performing the North ReStore.
* The staff is working with Development to create a marketing campaign to increase traffic to the stores while John Leberman is concentrating on larger corporate donations and possible new deconstructions.
* See Facilities Task Force update

J. Finance: (See Financials)

* We are currently advertising for a Controller position and also have a temp book keeper helping Conni 3 days a week
* Current Priorities are:
  + 3-year Budget
  + Audit
  + House Build Scenario Planning
  + 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.