Native American Housing Circle

JANUARY 2021- 2023 STRATEGIC PLAN

Prepared by

seven sisters
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT GROUP, LLC
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Facilitators
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I. Executive Summary

Between October 30, 2020 and December 1, 2020, the Native American Housing Circle’s staff and partners participated in four virtual planning sessions to develop key strategic directions to guide the organization’s work over the next three years from 2021 to 2023. Prior to the sessions, 13 interviews were conducted and 21 survey responses were received from key stakeholders to gather information to inform NAHC’s strategic thinking.

These sessions included a combination of facilitated discussions, individual and group reflections, brainstorming and small group exercises. Over the course of the virtual planning sessions, participants came to a consensus on the following mission, vision, and values statements as well as the five strategic directions below for their work in the coming one to three years. NAHC staff will work over the next few months to operationalize their strategic directions into annual work plans.

**Vision:** A strong Native-led voice for culturally responsive housing to support stability and healing.

**Mission:** To advocate for and create affordable housing opportunities and direct services for Native American people experiencing homelessness and housing instability in the Denver Metro area.

**Values:**
- Native-Centric Approach: Led by the Native values of respect, compassion, and generosity.
- Collaborative: Creating and leveraging culturally responsive partnerships and resources.
- Community driven: Responsive to identified needs.
- Innovation: Focused on transformational approaches and outcomes.
- Equality: Striving to achieve economic and racial justice.

**NAHC’s Strategic Directions for 2021 to 2023**
- Capitalizing on equity opportunities
- Aligning and operationalizing capacity
- Expanding financial resources
- Strengthening community connections
- Driving collective action
II. OVERVIEW OF PLANNING PROCESS

This plan summarizes the results of a multi-phase process led by the NAHC planning team (Johnny McCraige, Lucille Echohawk, and Tara Manthey) and supported by Seven Sisters Community Development Group, LLC (Seven Sisters).

Phase I: Data Collection and Analysis
Seven Sisters worked with the NAHC planning team to incorporate the following data sources into the planning process:

Organizational Documentation Review: The consulting team reviewed written background documents provided by NAHC to develop a snapshot of the current state of NAHC’s work.

Interviews: The consulting team conducted 13 targeted interviews with key leaders recommended by NAHC’s planning team to collect feedback about NAHC’s future and their suggestions for topics to consider during the planning process.

Survey: The consulting team conducted an online survey of internal and external stakeholders that explored current performance, community perceptions, and possibilities for future direction. The survey also included an in-person component to gather input from community members with lived experience.

Strategic Planning Virtual Session: Seven Sisters led four virtual planning sessions with NAHC staff and partners. These sessions included discussing the information gathered in advance from stakeholders, a review of the NAHC’s history, creating NAHC’s vision, mission and values statements, and visioning sessions to chart a course for the next three years.

NAHC’s objectives for the planning sessions included:
- Connecting as a group
- Gaining an understanding of NAHC’s historical narrative
- Absorbing and discussing the stakeholder data gathered
- Creating NAHC’s vision/future
- Developing vision, mission and values statements
- Identifying contradictions/barriers to NAHC’s vision
- Creating strategies for NAHC’s future
- Identify goals under each strategic direction
- Identify activities for confirmed goals; and
- Prioritize goals to determine what should be included in the first year.
**Phase II: Drafting**
Seven Sisters worked with NAHC’s planning team to prioritize goals from the virtual planning sessions and to draft this report summarizing the planning process.

**Phase III: Refining and Creating a Work Plan**
Seven Sisters finalized NAHC’s strategic goals and report based on feedback from the vetting process, then will work with Johnny McCraigie and others as needed to refine a one-year work plan for 2021 from the content generated during the virtual strategic planning sessions.

II. OVERVIEW OF PLANNING PROCESS

Interview Summaries
Between September 28 and October 9, 2020, Seven Sisters interviewed 13 individuals identified by the Native American Housing Circle team to discuss seven key questions about NAHC’s future. The following individuals were interviewed:
> Colleen Echowhawk, Executive Director, Chief Seattle Club
> Lucille Echowhawk, Senior Advisor, Denver Indian Family Resource Center
> Rick Garcia, Department of Local Affairs
> Carey Hawk, Coordinator, Denver Indian Health and Family Services
> Patrick Kills Crow, Consultant, Denver Indian Family Resource Center
> Robin Kniech, Member At Large, Denver City Council
> Polly Kyle, Senior Aide to Councilwoman Robin Kniech
> Adrianne Maddux, Executive Director, Denver Indian Health and Family Services
> Johnny McCraigie, Coordinator, Native American Housing Circle
> Gracie Tyon, University of Denver
> Aron Wahkinney, Program Manager, Denver Indian Health and Family Services
> Marsha Whiting, Board Chair, Denver Indian Family Resource Center
> Diana “Dede” Yazzie, President, Native American Connections

Each interview was conducted by Zoom and lasted approximately 45 minutes. A detailed summary of the interview responses appears in Appendix A. Here are selected highlights from the interviews:

- **Recommendations for Making the Planning Session Beneficial**
  - Establish our collective vision and create a plan to achieve it.
  - Set organizational priorities about the types of housing services to be provided.
  - Develop an informed approach to our work.
  - Decide on an organizational structure and a decision-making process.
Unique Contributions NAHC Has Potential to Make
- Bring a Native voice to Denver’s housing space.
- Bring an Indigenous perspective to solving housing challenges. Tap into partnerships.
- Take advantage of the disciplinary diversity of our stakeholders.

Opportunities on the Horizon
- Create a sustainable nonprofit.
- Partner with tribal governments.
- Promote the opportunity to develop Native-owned assets.
- Explore permanent supportive housing (PSH) and other types of housing opportunities.
- Establish our credibility.
- Capitalize on potential opportunities after the election.

Possible Landmines
- Breaking into an established ecosystem.
- Creating a sustainable business model.
- Building organizational capacity.
- Maintaining unity from within.
- Complying with federal fair housing laws.
- Navigating structural racism.

Potential Partners
- Federal partners
- State and local partners
- Intermediaries
- Other Native organizations
- Individuals

Accomplish in First Two Years
- Hire additional staff.
- Create the organization’s foundation.
- Build board and board committees.
- Expand expertise and capacity within staff.
- Engage the Native community.
- Reflect Native values.
- Network with allies.
- Become policy advocates.
- Prove ourselves.
- Acquire property.
- Start providing services.
Survey Summaries
Between September 28 and October 9, 2020, Seven Sisters conducted an online survey with thirteen respondents, which was a 68 percent response rate. A detailed summary of the survey responses is in Appendix C. Here are some highlights from survey respondents about recommended priorities for NAHC:

- Provide housing services.
- Identify funding/resources.
- Focus on organizational development and determine goals.

With assistance from in-person surveyors, Seven Sisters also surveyed eight community members with lived experience. A detailed summary of the community responses is also part of Appendix C. Here are some highlights from the community survey:

- 88 percent of respondents said it was “Very Important” to receive services from a Native-led organization that supports cultural values.
- 75 percent of respondents said housing resources could be more responsive to Native people by having “more flexibility” and “culturally specific support services.”
- 75 percent of respondents said their access to housing could be improved with more “second chances” and “Native community engagement.”

IV. A LOOK BACK: WALL OF WONDER

Participants set the context for the virtual strategic planning session by collectively creating a “Wall of Wonder” that captured the group’s accomplishments and significant milestones. Participants revisited the origin story of NAHC and noted events from 2018–2020. A copy of the “Wall of Wonder” can be found in Appendix A. While processing the Wall of Wonder, the participants shared the following reflections:
There has been a lot of community collaboration. I see that reflected in the timeline.

I’ve seen a lot of our people lose their lives from the ‘90s until now. This should have happened a long time ago. Even now, two Native elders passed away. That could have been prevented.

Seeing these post-its is a reminder that I am here for them. No one cared for them.

After 2020, there is lots of excitement. We have committed, high-level people. We have lots of new voices.

We can attribute a lot of that to Johnny.

Excited to develop a five-year plan and having that is spaced over five years. We have done intelligent work. I’m excited about the evolution.

We should look at this annually, and look at staff and budget numbers to see how things have grown.

V. OUR STATEMENTS: VISION, MISSION, AND VALUES

Using information from the data-gathering process, Seven Sisters draft vision, mission, and values statements for NAHC. Participants discussed and refined these drafts and came to a consensus on the following organizational identity statements:

Vision: A strong Native-led voice for culturally responsive housing to support stability and healing.

Mission: To advocate for and create affordable housing opportunities and direct services for Native American people experiencing homelessness and housing instability in the Denver Metro area.
Identify opportunities revealed by the COVID pandemic and increased focus on racial injustices.

Create organizational infrastructure.

Build capacity through fundraising, training, technical assistance, and coaching.

Gather best practices and approaches from other organizations serving Urban Indians.

Develop a fundraising plan to ensure sustainability.

Build relationships with the Native community in the Denver Metro area through outreach and direct services.

Develop a community-driven advocacy plan.

Prioritize relationship-building efforts within NAHC.

Formalize and align a collaborative network of external stakeholders/allies.

Craft NAHC’s messaging to reflect a strategic, unified approach.

Appendix D presents details about the participants’ thought process for creating and getting to the five strategic directions. Similarly, Appendix E includes additional details about how participants arrived at the strategic goals and one-year prioritization.
Annual Work Plan
Based on this strategic planning process, NAHC is poised to create its first annual work plan, which will be finalized in early 2021.

VII. CONCLUSION

Reflections from the four virtual planning process, members shared the following:
- Pre-work was critical to get everyone on the same page
- We need more time during for the virtual sessions
- Overall, it went very well
- People’s voices were heard
- Process was inclusive and could see comments reflected on Jamboard
- Good focus on structural issues
- Jamboard was fun, we were doing it in silence but felt collaborative, it was neat to see what people remembered about their contributions
- Very collaborative, due to innovative facilitation
- Enjoying the foundational process, but excited to get where the rubber meets the road
- That we can continue to think big as a community to address the root causes that our communities face, no band-aids to have

By the end of the session, it was clear that NAHC’s planning team was committed to building the organization’s capacity to implement the ideas that emerged during the strategic planning session to benefit the Native American people experiencing homelessness and housing instability in the Denver Metro area. The team reflected that the session provided them with the opportunity to reconnect and develop a good road map for their future.

VIII. APPENDIX

A. Wall of Wonder
B. Interview Summaries
C. Survey Summary
D. Getting to NAHC’s Strategic Directions and Goals
E. Year One Prioritization
Vision
A strong Native-led voice for culturally responsive housing to support stability and healing.

Mission
To advocate for and create affordable housing opportunities and direct services for Native American people experiencing homelessness and housing instability in the Denver Metro area.

Values
- Native-Centric Approach: Led by the Native values of respect, compassion, and generosity.
- Collaborative: Creating and leveraging culturally responsive partnerships and resources.
- Community driven: Responsive to identified needs.
- Innovation: Focused on transformational approaches and outcomes.
- Equality: Striving to achieve economic and racial justice.

NAHC’s Strategic Directions

Capitalizing on Equity Opportunities
- Identify opportunities revealed by the COVID pandemic and increased focus on racial injustices.

Aligning and Operationalizing Capacity
- Create organizational infrastructure.
- Build capacity through fundraising, training, technical assistance and coaching.
- Gather best practices and approaches from other organizations serving Urban Indians.

Expanding Financial Resources
- Develop a fundraising plan to ensure sustainability.

Strengthening Community Connections
- Build relationships with the Native community in the Denver Metro area through outreach and direct services.
- Develop a community-driven advocacy plan.

Driving Collective Action
- Prioritize relationship building efforts within NAHC.
- Formalize and align a collaborative network of external stakeholders/allies.
- Craft NAHC’s messaging to reflect a strategic, unified approach.