



Delaware State Council on Housing

FY2025–2030 Strategic Plan

This plan was prepared by Jennifer Reitz, AICP, LEED AP, and Sarah Marshall, MPA, from the University of Delaware's Institute for Public Administration, on behalf of the Delaware State Council on Housing and in partnership with the Delaware State Housing Authority.

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Finally, we would also like to recognize the NeighborGood Partners Dover office for generously hosting the Council workshops. Their comfortable and well-equipped space allowed for much needed face-to-face time and interaction.



The Delaware State Council on Housing fully supports Equal Housing Opportunity, the principles of the United States Fair Housing Act (Title VIII of the Civil Rights Act of 1968) and Delaware Fair Housing Act (Delaware Code Title 6, Chapter 46), and the elimination of discrimination in housing based upon race, color, national origin, creed, sex, marital status, familial status, source of income, age, sexual orientation or disability.

Purpose of the Council on Housing

According to its By-Laws, the Delaware State Council on Housing “serves in an advisory capacity to the Governor, Housing Director and General Assembly on matters relating to housing in the State of Delaware.” In practice, the Council’s primary focus is on the review and recommendations of Housing Development Fund (HDF) allocations. The Council studies, researches, plans, and advises the Governor, Housing Director, and the General Assembly on matters it deems appropriate to enable the Delaware State Housing Authority (DSHA) to function in the best possible manner. Further, the Council forms a link between state government and the community and provides a forum for the public to comment on housing programs, policies, and laws. Council’s enabling legislation, bylaws, meeting minutes, agendas, and annual reports are available on the Council’s webpage at <https://www.destatehousing.com/about/council-on-housing/>.

The Council on Housing consists of 11 members appointed by the Governor. This membership must include two members from each county and two who live in the City of Wilmington. Also, three members at-large are required, one of which must belong to a tenant organization. The Council seeks to remain politically balanced, with no more than a bare majority of one major political party over the other major political party. The Council term is three years, with potential for reappointment.

Council members as of June 30, 2024, are:

- Dianne Casey
- Christel Duff
- Vandell Hampton
- Connie S. Harrington
- Lillian Harrison
- Francis Julian
- Doug Motley (Chair)
- Barbara Pool
- Jaime Saylor
- Amy Walls (Vice Chair)
- Vincent White

State code mandates that Council’s work be organized into four standing committees—Loan Review, Communications, Operations, and Housing Policy— to support the work of the Council:

1. **The Loan Review Committee** reviews HDF applications with DSHA staff prior to action by the full Council and determines which applications are ready for full Council consideration.
2. **The Communications Committee** prepares and disseminates communications to the Governor, members of the General Assembly, and the public.
3. **The Operations Committee** oversees all governance, compliance, nominating, and member services duties of Council.
4. **The Housing Policy Committee** assists the Council to review program policies concerning activities conducted by DSHA and to develop sound policy positions regarding affordable housing needs and initiatives in Delaware.

Strategic Planning Overview and Organization

As part of its commitment to addressing housing issues in Delaware, the Council on Housing develops a Strategic Plan every five years. The development of this strategic plan was well-timed. In the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, housing access and affordability remain critical issues in the State. The programs and policies managed by DSHA and its partners must continue to evolve to serve the needs of existing and future residents. The working relationship between the Council and DSHA can remain a vital partnership that benefits all.

This Fiscal Year 2025 to 2030 Plan represents a renewed energy and commitment by Council to do its part in advancing efforts to support affordable housing in Delaware. Council members are volunteers who bring their unique skill sets and perspectives to bolster affordable housing in the state. However, it is vital that as volunteers the Council makes the most effective use of its time by setting annual goals, building the knowledge and capacity of its members, and strengthening its communications with DSHA. With the recent appointment of three new Council members and DSHA staff changes, this plan is an essential step in guiding the Council's focus for the next five years.

DSHA retained the University of Delaware's Institute for Public Administration (IPA) to assist the Council in this planning process. As part of the planning process, the Council on Housing met internally for three strategy sessions to develop the plan on February 16, March 20, and May 15, 2024. These IPA-facilitated sessions focused on:

- Barriers to implementation
- Process review and improvement
- Identifying stakeholders and their relationship to Council
- The Council's role in advocacy
- The relationship between Council and DSHA.

The draft plan was reviewed and approved by the full Council at a public meeting on October 8, 2024. This Plan is framed around four overarching goals. Section one details the goals and objectives for each of these priority areas. The Action Plan outlines specific strategies with responsible leads and progress indicators that set forth measurable and specific targets for each task. Finally, the Implementation Timeline depicts how the Council, through these strategies, can build capacity and achieve its goals over the five-year planning horizon.

Mission and Vision

Mission

The Council on Housing’s mission is to advance Delaware’s housing by improving the availability of and access to safe and affordable housing for low- and moderate-income Delawareans.

We carry out this mission by informing and advising the Governor, Delaware State Housing Director, Legislature, and the public on housing matters. This includes:

- Researching and reviewing housing and housing needs
- Evaluating alternatives
- Presenting recommendations
- Advocating to meet housing needs in Delaware
- Providing citizen input into operation of DSHA, and particularly to the Housing Development Fund
- Increasing citizen input and ensuring transparency in the use of public resources directed to housing.

Vision

All people in Delaware shall have access to affordable and appropriate housing.

In pursuing this vision, the Council on Housing will be a respected advocate whose guidance is sought on affordable housing issues. Council members will be fully informed and competent advisors on affordable housing matters in Delaware and will be actively engaged in all aspects of the Council’s work.

Overarching Goals

- 1.** Foster a well-rounded, competent, diverse, and self-directed Council on Housing membership and committee structure.
- 2.** Ensure that the Housing Development Fund (HDF) is being used effectively and efficiently for the development and preservation of quality affordable housing in Delaware.
- 3.** Speak with a single, coherent, and nonpartisan voice to improve the availability of and access to safe and affordable housing.
- 4.** Provide thoughtful and ethical consideration to housing policy.

Priority Area 1: Optimal Council Operations

Goal: Foster a well-rounded, diverse, competent, and self-directed Council on Housing membership and committee structure.

Objectives

- 1.1. Develop the skills and knowledge of new Council members so that they can make informed contributions to the work of Council.
- 1.2. Continually build Council’s understanding of housing policy, programs, and best practices.
- 1.3. Operate active committees and Council with clear annual goals and workplans.
- 1.4. Promote a Council membership that is complete and represents a diverse range of backgrounds, experiences, and professional expertise.

Priority Area 2: Effective and Efficient Use of Housing Development Funds

Goal: Ensure that the Housing Development Fund (HDF) is being used effectively and efficiently for the development and preservation of quality affordable housing in Delaware.

Objectives

- 2.1. Work closely with the Delaware State Housing Authority (DSHA) to provide meaningful feedback on fund allocation and programming as early as is feasible in the policy development and application review processes.
- 2.2. Use available information and data to better understand the impact of HDF funds.

Priority Area 3: Effective Advocate

Goal: Speak with a single, coherent, and nonpartisan voice to improve the availability of and access to safe and affordable housing.

Objectives

- 3.1. Develop a clear and consistent advocacy framework for Council members.
- 3.2. Create and share common messaging for Council-endorsed policies and programs.

Priority Area 4: Housing Policy Consideration

Goal: Provide thoughtful and ethical consideration to housing policy recommendations.

Objectives

- 4.1. Prepare Council for current housing policy discussions and legislative activity.
- 4.2. Engage with diverse groups of stakeholders who are involved in and/or impacted by housing issues.

Action Plan

Priority Area 1: Optimal Council Operations

Goal: Foster a well-rounded, competent, and self-directed Council on Housing membership and committee structure.

1.1. Develop the skills and knowledge of new Council members so that they can make informed contributions to the work of Council.

Action Item	Lead(s)	Outcomes/Indicators
a. Onboarding: Revive and update the onboarding process for new Council members. Council will provide these resources to new members upon appointment by the Governor. DSHA will schedule an orientation briefing with staff.	Operations DSHA	Onboarding is scheduled within the first 30 days of new council member appointment.
b. Mentoring: Identify an experienced Council member to serve as “board buddy” or mentor for each new member on their committee.	Operations	Experienced Council member checks in once a month with board buddy for a minimum of six months.

1.2. Continually build Council’s understanding of housing policy, programs, and best practices.

Action Item	Lead(s)	Outcomes/Indicators
a. Brainstorm and prioritize a list of training topics and potential speakers needed to build the knowledge base of COH members.	Committee Chairs Council Chair	List of desired training topics and potential speakers developed at annual meeting and shared with committee chairs.
b. Develop and implement a yearly training and education plan, including desired presentations for COH committee meetings, stakeholder events, and routine training opportunities.	Operations Policy	3-4 internal trainings and/or presentations per year. 100% of council members attend one external training per year.
c. Increase council members’ awareness of the training activities and meetings of other committees, particularly training opportunities and guest speakers.	Committee Chairs	Committee meeting calendars (with relevant topic/speakers) will be shared with all Council members.

Priority Area 1: Optimal Council Operations

Goal: Foster a well-rounded, competent, and self-directed Council on Housing membership and committee structure.

1.3. Operate active committees and Council with clear annual goals and workplans.

Action Item	Lead(s)	Outcomes/Indicators
<p>a. Set an internal, in-person <u>annual meeting</u> at the start of the fiscal year to review progress on strategic plan goals and set workplan for coming year.</p> <p><i>(Refer to Appendix A for complete list of agenda items.)</i></p>	Council Chair Operations	<p>Annual meeting is held within first two months of the fiscal year (July or August).</p> <p>Yearly work plans for each committee.</p>
<p>b. Appoint new members to a Council committee(s) in a timely manner.</p>	Council Chair	Committee assignment is provided within 60 days of onboarding.

1.4. Promote a Council membership that is complete and represents a wide range of backgrounds, experiences, and professional expertise.

Action Item	Lead(s)	Outcomes/Indicators
<p>a. Maintain an updated Council list with an inventory of skill and experience areas.</p>	Operations DSHA	Update inventory with new members within 60 days of onboarding.
<p>b. Develop a list of skills and backgrounds needed or desired to complement the current Council. Review and revise as vacancies arise.</p>	Operations	Provide recommendations to DSHA regarding desired qualifications for new members within 60 days of notice of vacancy.
<p>c. Encourage citizen referrals to the Governor to help fill Council vacancies.</p>	All	Broadened pool of applicants

Priority Area 2: Effective and Efficient Use of Housing Development Funds

Goal: Ensure that the Housing Development Fund (HDF) is being used effectively and efficiently for the development and preservation of quality affordable housing in Delaware.

2.1. Work closely with DSHA to provide meaningful feedback on fund allocation and programming as early as is feasible in the policy development and application review processes.

Action Item	Lead(s)	Outcomes/Indicators
<p>a. Strongly encourage Council members to attend and participate in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Internal meetings regarding HDF supported programs, when invited - All relevant public DSHA meetings. 	Loan Review	<p>Increased and earlier collaboration with DSHA in application reviews.</p> <p>A minimum of one COH member attends each such meeting; reports out to committee/Council at next meeting.</p>

2.2. Use available information and data to better understand the impact of HDF funds.

Action Item	Lead(s)	Outcomes/Indicators
<p>a. Work with DSHA to receive and review preliminary allocation reports for relevant programs during the internal DSHA loan review process.</p>	Loan Review DSHA	<p>Review overview of bi-annual preliminary loan allocations on relevant programs from DSHA when provided (QAP-typically July/August; tax credit when available each year).</p>
<p>b. Incorporate an ongoing summary report into regular Loan Review Committee meetings and Council meetings where projects are reviewed.</p>	Loan Review DSHA	<p>Provide available program and project status updates at each loan review and COH meeting.</p>
<p>c. Work with DSHA to receive a summary of annual trends and LIHTC preliminary outlook (based on the LIHTC allocation cycle) as part of the COH Annual Meeting.</p>	Loan Review DSHA	<p>Increased understanding of housing and funding trends through annual reviews and updates.</p>

Priority Area 3: Effective Advocate

Goal: Speak with a single, coherent, and nonpartisan voice to improve the availability of and access to safe and affordable housing.

3.1. Develop a clear and consistent advocacy framework for Council members.

Action Item	Lead(s)	Outcomes/Indicators
a. Work with DSHA to develop an advocacy framework for COH members, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Defined and approved strategies for advocacy. - Understanding the difference between advocating for Council versus individually. - How to advocate as Council on behalf of DSHA. - Transparency regarding sharing individual opinions in public that do not align with Council and/or DSHA policies. 	Comm	Defined advocacy framework developed.
b. Review framework, including defined opportunities for advocacy, as part of onboarding and Annual Meetings.	Comm Operations	Advocacy framework reviewed yearly and updated as needed.

3.2. Create and share common messaging for Council-endorsed policies and programs.

Action Item	Lead(s)	Outcomes/Indicators
a. Work with DSHA to identify shared messages.	Comm Policy	Strategy to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Annual Report - Annual Meeting with Governor - JFC Presentation - Bond Bill Presentation - OMB Presentation
b. Work with DSHA to develop COH process for communicating with appropriate legislative bodies regarding policy positions.	Comm Policy	Advocacy Plan for outreach to legislature.

Priority Area 4: Housing Policy Consideration

Goal: Provide thoughtful and ethical consideration to housing policy recommendations.

4.1. Prepare Council members for current and emerging housing policy discussions and legislative activity.

Action Item	Lead(s)	Outcomes/Indicators
a. Ensure a significant portion of annual Council training sessions focus on deepening understanding of current and emerging DSHA housing programs and policies.	Policy	Schedule training opportunities/speakers to inform COH about DSHA programs and policies.
b. Review regular legislative updates available from DSHA and provide summaries to Council at large, especially during the legislative session.	Policy Loan Review	Provide timely policy updates to the Council during the legislative session.

4.2. Engage with diverse groups of stakeholders who are involved and/or impacted by housing issues.

Action Item	Lead(s)	Outcomes/Indicators
a. Encourage COH members to attend stakeholder meetings as a representative of Council—meetings can include annual meetings, events, conferences of stakeholders in the housing community (ex., Home Builders Association of DE, DE Association of Realtors) and share key points with Council membership.	Operations All Council	Members self-report activities to DSHA; summary added to COH agenda quarterly. 100% of members attend at least one external meeting annually.
b. Invite stakeholders to speak to Council as part of Council training and stakeholder feedback sessions.	Policy Operations	Invite at least one external guest speaker per year as part of the training program.
c. Identify a process for documenting and sharing stakeholder feedback with Council and DSHA.	Comm	New process identified and implemented, with yearly revisions as needed.
d. In partnership with DSHA, seek feedback from stakeholders to help identify barriers to program access, gaps in services, awareness issues, etc.	Comm	Establish process and guidelines for soliciting stakeholder feedback.

Implementation Timeline

Council on Housing Strategic Plan Implementation Timeline, Fiscal Years 2025–2030			LEGEND																			
#	Action Item	Lead(s)	FY 2025				FY 2026				FY 2027				FY 2028				FY 2029			
			J 1st	A 2nd	S 3rd	O 4th	J 1st	A 2nd	S 3rd	O 4th	J 1st	A 2nd	S 3rd	O 4th	J 1st	A 2nd	S 3rd	O 4th	J 1st	A 2nd	S 3rd	O 4th
1.1a	Onboarding: Revise and update the onboarding process for new Council members.	Operations & DSHA	[Timeline grid showing activity for item 1.1a]																			
1.1b	Mentoring: Identify an experienced Council member to serve as "board buddy"	Operations	[Timeline grid showing activity for item 1.1b]																			
1.2a	Brainstorm and prioritize a list of training topics and potential speakers	Committee Chairs & Council Chair	[Timeline grid showing activity for item 1.2a]																			
1.2b	Develop and implement a yearly training and education plan	Operations & Policy	[Timeline grid showing activity for item 1.2b]																			
1.2c	Increase council members' awareness of the training activities and meetings	Committee Chairs	[Timeline grid showing activity for item 1.2c]																			
1.3a	Set an internal, in-person annual meeting at the start of the fiscal year	Council Chair & Operations	[Timeline grid showing activity for item 1.3a]																			
1.3b	Appoint new members to a Council committee(s) in a timely manner.	Council Chair	[Timeline grid showing activity for item 1.3b]																			
1.4a	Maintain an updated Council list with an inventory of skill and experience areas.	Operations & DSHA	[Timeline grid showing activity for item 1.4a]																			
1.4b	Develop a list of skills and backgrounds needed or desired to complement the current Council.	Operations	[Timeline grid showing activity for item 1.4b]																			
1.4c	Encourage citizen referrals to the Governor to help fill Council vacancies.	All	[Timeline grid showing activity for item 1.4c]																			
2.1a	Strongly encourage Council members to attend and participate in internal & public DSHA meetings	Loan Review	[Timeline grid showing activity for item 2.1a]																			
2.2a	Work with DSHA to receive and review preliminary allocation reports	Loan Review & DSHA	[Timeline grid showing activity for item 2.2a]																			
2.2b	Incorporate an ongoing summary report into regular Loan Review Committee meetings and Council meetings.	Loan Review & DSHA	[Timeline grid showing activity for item 2.2b]																			
2.2c	Work with DSHA to receive summary of and/or participate in the annual (January) trends report/meeting.	Loan Review & DSHA	[Timeline grid showing activity for item 2.2c]																			
3.1a	Work with DSHA to develop an advocacy framework for the COH	Comm	[Timeline grid showing activity for item 3.1a]																			
3.1b	Review framework, including defined opportunities for advocacy, as part of onboarding and Annual Meetings.	Comm & Operations	[Timeline grid showing activity for item 3.1b]																			
3.2a	Work with DSHA to identify shared messages.	Comm & Policy	[Timeline grid showing activity for item 3.2a]																			
3.2b	Work with DSHA to develop COH process for communicating with appropriate legislative bodies regarding policy positions.	Comm & Policy	[Timeline grid showing activity for item 3.2b]																			
4.1a	Ensure a significant portion of annual Council training sessions focus on deepening current DSHA housing programs and policies.	Policy	[Timeline grid showing activity for item 4.1a]																			
4.1b	Review regular legislative updates available from DSHA and provide summaries to Council at large.	Policy & Loan Review	[Timeline grid showing activity for item 4.1b]																			
4.2a	Encourage COH members to attend stakeholder meetings	Operations & All	[Timeline grid showing activity for item 4.2a]																			
4.2b	Invite stakeholders to speak to Council as part of Council training and stakeholder feedback sessions.	Policy & Operations	[Timeline grid showing activity for item 4.2b]																			
4.2c	Identify a process for documenting and sharing stakeholder feedback with Council and DSHA.	Comm	[Timeline grid showing activity for item 4.2c]																			
4.2d	In partnership with DSHA, seek feedback from stakeholders to help identify barriers to program access, gaps in services, awareness issues, etc.	Comm	[Timeline grid showing activity for item 4.2d]																			

Appendix A: Annual Meeting Components

Effective July 2024

- Council
 - Review/re-commit to strategic plan
 - Council schedule
- Committees
 - Roles, Assignments
 - Define yearly goals for committees
 - Committee scheduling
- Discuss List of Training Topics desired
- Logistics
 - Updating contact information
 - Conflict of Interest
- Review Preliminary Allocations/Outlook on Relevant programs (HDF, QAP, LIHTC)