Dear Community,

As we all continue to try to find normalcy during uncertain times and through an ongoing pandemic, BHA remains committed to finding innovative ways to face the challenges of our work. Our vision and our mission to house people in safe, quality, and affordable housing is unwavering in spite of a rising rental market, a housing shortage crisis, significant barriers to utilization of our vouchers, and federal funding challenges. Although we still have a long way to go, I want to take this time to highlight some of our accomplishments from 2021 while we continue to look ahead.

My journey with BHA started in January 2021. As I reflect on that foundational year, I am amazed at the many changes that have taken place. We have new leadership throughout the agency and two new key positions, a Landlord Liaison and a Communications Manager. Having individuals in these roles ensures our approach to service focuses on our customers as we strive to better understand and meet the needs of our residents, voucher program participants, landlords, and community stakeholders. We also started a Resident Advisory Board so residents of our properties can help us identify their needs and provide us with direct feedback. We recognize that our number one partnership is with those who we are here to serve.

We have adopted customer service standards built on the values of respect, compassion, responsibility, and professionalism and have committed ourselves to improving how our customers experience working with us.

With this in mind, we know we wouldn’t be able to serve without an engaged workforce. Our diversity, equity, and inclusion (DE&I) initiatives were expanded to include an ambassador team who is active not only within BHA’s scope of work but throughout the community. They are constantly reviewing and improving our policies and creating ways for our staff to connect on a more meaningful level. Members of this team have presented our work to our Board of Commissioners and other community partners. They also work closely with our agency-wide engagement committee to connect staff with more opportunities to serve the community. As we learn more about ourselves through a DE&I lens, we will be able to work better together and be intentional about our impact as we fulfill our mission.

I also can’t say enough about how our community partnerships are one of our most valuable assets. BHA continues to build strong alliances with local agencies and non-profits such as Housing Kitsap, Kitsap Community Resources, Kitsap Mental Health Services, Kitsap Public Health District, Kitsap Regional Library, several other non-profit organizations, local churches and local government agencies including the City of Bremerton and Kitsap County. As we move towards the goals that we have set for ourselves, we know that our accomplishments will happen faster and better when we work with our community. We participated in several large projects in 2021 and I know these wouldn’t have been possible without our partners.

I know our list of goals and projects we want to accomplish is ever-growing. There are so many things we want to do that often exceed our available capacity. I want to thank our residents, our voucher holders, our program participants, our community partners, our employees and our Board of Commissioners for working with us and for trusting in us.

Jill Stanton
Executive Director
Board Secretary
BHA was allocated 38 Emergency Housing Vouchers in 2021. This was the first program of its kind that provided additional funds for housing location and focused on housing the homeless or those at risk of homelessness. This program required that we partner with other agencies to ensure that the vouchers are equitably distributed and provided to underserved populations. By holding information sessions and collecting survey data, we were able to work together to identify which organizations would refer households into the program. Those organizations took the lead on providing housing navigation and case management. We are now in the process of evaluating the successes and the challenges of this program so we can better support all of our voucher holders in finding homes.

As we noticed our large families, particularly in our Emergency Housing Voucher program, were experiencing additional challenges in finding units to rent that fit their needs beyond cost, we identified a grant opportunity to increase the amount of larger bedroom units in our portfolio. We took an innovative approach to increasing our affordable housing stock by purchasing 5 large newly built homes in the Bay Vista Development. We were successful in obtaining $1.5 million dollars from the Washington Department of Commerce and we were able to contribute an additional $1 million dollars from our reserves for this important project. The families were able to move in almost immediately and are thriving in their neighborhoods.