



Building Community- Controlled Affordable Housing Through Cooperation

New York, NY

SEARCH FOR THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF UHAB

THE SEARCH

Urban Homesteading Assistance Board or “UHAB”, a not-for-profit organization dedicated to working for resident-controlled affordable housing in New York City, seeks an executive director (ED). The current executive director, Andy Reicher has announced his intention to retire in early 2023 after a long and productive tenure at UHAB. Under Mr. Reicher’s leadership UHAB has seen significant growth in services and impact within the New York City affordable housing market through the creation of and advocacy for limited equity cooperatives, a form of housing designed to empower low-income residents and stabilize monthly housing costs. In addition, UHAB’s expertise in resident-controlled housing has been sought after increasingly by other cities working to address the nation’s affordable housing crisis. This is a rare opportunity to follow a gifted leader and helm an effective, mission-driven organization as it charts its future in an increasingly complex New York City housing landscape.

Founded in 1973 on the premise that housing works best when residents are in charge, UHAB’s nearly 50 years of work has centered on supporting tenants and cooperative homeowners at every stage in the creation and preservation of resident-controlled affordable housing. UHAB also empowers residents to maximize control of rental housing and enhance their communities by creating strong tenant associations.

Specifically UHAB:

- Directly develops new homeownership opportunities in a cooperative model;
- Advocates for, and brings expertise regarding UHAB’s cooperative model both locally and nationally;
- Supports the economic and environmental sustainability of coops through shared purchasing, training and technical consulting;

- Provides homeownership lending to eliminate barriers for low income resident to purchase cooperative apartments.

The executive director serves as the chief executive officer for the organization. The new ED will be tasked with strengthening and broadcasting UHAB's vital role and unique technical expertise within New York City, building and supporting Housing Development Fund Corporations (HDFCs). The new ED will lead and learn from 35 dedicated and talented staff. The selected individual will spearhead and execute a new strategic plan, and leverage UHAB's existing programs – including affordable real estate development, co-op services and support, training, and tenant organizing and policy, and homeownership lending – and perhaps create new ones. They will bring a passion and enthusiasm for affordable resident-controlled housing, and the vision and ability to foster existing partnerships and build new ones in service of a housing model that continues to be at the forefront of creating fair, equitable and affordable housing in New York City and beyond.

UHAB's board has engaged Liz Vago Talent Strategy and Recruitment in the search for a new leader. Confidential inquiries, referrals, and nominations may be directed to Liz Vago as indicated at the end of this document.

UHAB HISTORY AND MISSION

UHAB (www.uhab.org) was founded in the midst of New York City's fiscal crisis in 1973, when inequitable housing policies and public disinvestment led to plummeting property values, and to landlord abandonment and poor living conditions for the communities of color that called redlined neighborhoods home (South Bronx, Upper Manhattan, Central Brooklyn and the Lower East Side). The City foreclosed on thousands of occupied buildings in abysmal condition without the capacity to rehabilitate them. As City housing conditions worsened, UHAB sought new solutions – to give residents the tools to rehabilitate and maintain their own cooperative affordable housing from the ground up.

UHAB advocated for self-help housing and supported “urban homesteaders” stepping up to fix their buildings when landlords and the government would not. Urban homesteaders demonstrated a resilient spirit; tenants gradually gained legal ownership of their buildings and became shareholders in HDFC co-ops, a type of collectively owned, permanently affordable housing unique to New York State. As homesteading took off as a viable, community-driven solution to the city's housing crisis, UHAB trained tenants to restore and maintain cooperative housing through the Tenant Interim Lease (TIL) Program, first established by New York City government in 1978.

UHAB worked with tenants to create new HDFC co-ops while offering ongoing education, technical assistance, and cost-saving cooperative purchase programs to existing HDFC co-ops to keep them stable, sustainable and affordable for the long term. Throughout the 1980's, UHAB developed and expanded training programs and manuals for tenant shareholders covering all facets of a building's creation and upkeep, from demolition and construction, to physical maintenance, to legal and financial training. Through a contract with NYC begun in September 1978 and on

hiatus from late 2014 through early 2021, UHAB technical assistance staff were assigned as “coordinators” for every building while in the TIL program as they became HDFCs.

As the city abandonment crisis abated in the 1990’s, and as rents began to rise, HDFC co-ops provided a safe haven to live, raise families, and age in place. More and more HDFC co-ops formed throughout the city as shareholders gained control of their buildings. UHAB was a critical resource and partner advising residents on strategies to create lasting affordable housing through training and on-going assistance in asset management and long term financial sustainability, building maintenance and capital improvement planning.

Throughout UHAB’s history, the organization has remained steadfast in its commitment to expanding New York City’s affordable cooperative housing stock. In 2001, UHAB became a qualified developer under the Third-Party Transfer program which required a nonprofit developer to serve as a sponsor before tenants could take direct control of their buildings.

UHAB is the City’s largest developer of affordable housing cooperatives. Since 2002, over 96 buildings (1,720 units) have passed through UHAB’s pipeline of moderate to gut renovation projects. Focusing on the conversion of occupied distressed rental properties into limited-equity cooperatives, UHAB puts as much energy on people development and empowerment as it does real estate development. With tenant participation, agency recognition and support, and the hard work of UHAB real estate partners in the for-profit and not-for-profit world, UHAB co-op development projects boast a 99% success rate.

Today, UHAB’s work continues to be guided by the principle of democratic community control – that people can collectively steward their own affordable housing to strengthen their neighborhoods. Through the past half century of democratic community control, UHAB has expanded and adapted to meet the needs of a changing city. UHAB gives small loans to first-time homebuyers; develops affordable co-ops; and works with rent-stabilized tenants to combat landlord harassment and build tenant power. UHAB is proud of its record to date of creating over 30,000 apartments owned and controlled by their resident shareholders.

UHAB remains consistent and steadfast providing concrete tools for resident empowered affordable housing. Other organizations have come and gone over the years, especially when cooperative housing was out of fashion, but UHAB endures, has survived the lean years and thrives. UHAB is leading resident controlled affordable housing into the 21st century.

LEADERSHP AND ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

UHAB is a robust, staff empowered organization led by the executive director and managed with an executive management committee that includes a deputy director, and directors of fundraising and communication, and finance and administration. Programmatic areas include: affordable housing development, co-op preservation, member services, organizing and policy, and training. UHAB currently employs 35 overall staff, with a mix of long-term employees and consultants, and employees newer to the organization.

UHAB is governed by a fifteen-member board of directors with representatives from the sectors UHAB engages to successfully pursue their affordable/resident managed housing mission. Many board members have served UHAB for many years and provide a considerable degree of continuity and stability in board membership. Over the last several years the board has thoughtfully expanded to better reflect the diverse communities UHAB serves, to provide fresh, diverse perspectives, and to strengthen and expand functional expertise.

THE ROLE

The new executive director will be a leader in the affordable housing field and will have experience in assessing development opportunities, and with an understanding of the diverse issues entailed in creating and sustaining affordable cooperative housing. The new ED also will bring leadership experience with resident and housing policy advocacy in New York City or similar urban environment. This individual will have management experience in a complex non-profit organization with various fee for service programs similarly centered around affordable housing that serves low-income residents.

They will lead, along with board and staff, the overall planning and oversight of co-op development and preservation projects, seeking new opportunities to broaden the base of affordable resident-controlled property in the city. They will also oversee the long-term health and operations of UHAB, expanding programs and projects to maintain and grow life-changing programming for resident shareholders. In addition to the technical expertise UHAB provides, the ED will also need to have a sharp focus on affordable housing policy. This leader will build and sustain strong partnerships with local, state, and federal organizations and officials, and advocate convincingly for UHAB's mission and projects. UHAB's small size relative to its impact means the ED must be a visible external leader. And as a strong internal manager, the ED will communicate openly, supporting staff, and working collaboratively with them to set priorities, delegate responsibility, and achieve goals. UHAB's strong, capable staff are the organization's greatest asset, so the new ED will have a great team to work alongside.

KEY OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

LEAD THE DEVELOPMENT OF A NEW STRATEGIC PLAN TO GUIDE UHAB INTO THE FUTURE

UHAB's leadership transition calls for reflection about the way forward. The new ED must initially assess and learn about UHAB's comprehensive service and development portfolio while concurrently and in close collaboration with the board, staff, and other stakeholders, convene conversations around the future of affordable housing in the city and UHAB's important, actionable role. The new plan will articulate both an ambitious, aspirational vision for UHAB's unique and valued role over the next five to ten years, but also set explicit actionable and measurable goals. This will build on the strategic planning process initiated five years ago when UHAB embarked on expanding its board of directors and developing its racial justice lens.

CONTINUE TO STRENGTHEN UHAB'S RELATIONSHIP WITH LOCAL LEADERS AND FORGE NEW PARTNERSHIPS LOCALLY AND NATIONALLY

New York City has a complex set of real estate market pressures, guidelines and subsidy programs, especially when it comes to affordable housing development. UHAB's founding is rooted in the New York City financial and housing crisis in the 1970's when abandonment and the associated threat of urban renewal provided opportunities for the self-help housing movement to thrive. Over the years, UHAB-led development and technical guidance has grown and the ED and other organization leadership has built close, productive relationships with City government and partner organizations. UHAB is a strong partner to NYC's Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD). UHAB's technical expertise and long-term relationships have been integral to building affordable housing stock. HPD, like many organizations, has recently seen a profound turnover in leadership and staff, the new ED will build on UHAB's legacy, renewing and supporting existing relationships, and forging new effective connections and partnerships.

Nationally, UHAB's work has been recognized for the profound role it plays in New York City's affordable housing market. The ED has served as an advisor to other cities looking to create limited-equity co-ops as well as state and federal governments primed by the current housing crisis to support and replicate UHAB's innovative work. The new ED must be a visionary, passionate communicator and strategist, building on this important legacy finding new ways to expand UHAB's work across the United States.

BROADEN REVENUE SOURCES AND SUPPORT FUNDRAISING IN ORDER TO ENSURE THE CONTINUED SUPPORT FOR THE SUSTAINABILITY OF RESIDENT-CONTROLLED HOUSING IN NEW YORK CITY

The ED will work with the board of directors, staff, and the broader community to set the long-range development strategy for the organization. UHAB has in the past endured periods of fiscal constraint, but is currently in a stable financial position. It has a history and ethos focused on impact rather than building large surpluses or an endowment. To fund future limited-equity co-op growth and support associated resident programs, to anticipate and plan for changes for development in New York – and potentially fund new projects nationally, the new ED must strategize around the possibility of increasing the organization's reach by broadening revenue sources and fundraising. With the vision and energy of a mission-driven entrepreneur, the ED will critically evaluate new revenue streams and collaborations. They will oversee the organization's financial performance and establish policies and procedures to ensure that it continues to operate in a fiscally responsible manner.

EVALUATE AND EXPAND EXISTING PROGRAMMING AND DEVELOP NEW SERVICES TO SUPPORT HOUSING STABILITY AND ACCESS TO OPPORTUNITY FOR RESIDENTS

UHAB offers life-changing programming, focused on homeownership, tenant empowerment, and community building. Here too, the ED will work with staff and the board to identify how to nurture and grow services to maximize their benefits. The ED will provide advisory oversight for the design and delivery of shareholder and tenant services programs to enhance existing, successful programs and identify new ones. Leading with an understanding of issues facing co-op boards and shareholders, UHAB must be customer-focused and creative to ensure appropriately tailored

programming. The new ED will also effectively articulate UHAB's value to external constituencies. The ED will be culturally competent, with a working knowledge of the communities the organization serves and the structural problems they face politically, socially, and economically.

EXPAND UHAB'S POLICY AND ADVOCACY FOCUS

UHAB has received national attention for its commitment to developing sustainable, affordable housing; they are the technical leader and subject matter expert in limited-equity cooperative housing. Over time UHAB has focused more on providing technical resources and on affordable housing development, and less on informing housing policy and structural change. Now that New York City (and the nation) is in the throes of a 21st century housing crisis where costs have skyrocketed and housing availability is scarce, the time is ripe for UHAB to recalibrate and balance priorities to reclaim their policy voice to ensure that resident-controlled affordable development continues as a viable housing option in the city.

ENRICH AND GROW PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES WITHIN UHAB AND PROVIDE CLEAR PATHWAYS FOR STAFF GROWTH

UHAB describes itself as a people development organization. The communities and residents it serves are diverse in race, ethnicity, income, age, abilities/disability, and household structure. It is essential that UHAB's internal makeup mirrors the organization's mission and the population it serves. The board and staff of UHAB are committed to increasing diversity and recognize that there is still work to be done. The organization sees the need to reflect the communities it serves at every level. The ED will mindfully and intentionally create pathways for professional development within the organization and will recruit staff and board members who bring depth and breadth of professional and lived experience. It will be incumbent upon the next ED to devise opportunities for greater opportunity and diversity among all stakeholders and to increase the focus on diversity, equity, inclusion, and access in their internal and external operations.

KEY QUALIFICATIONS AND CHARACTERISTICS

The UHAB Board will focus their search on professionals who are accomplished in the field of affordable housing, ideally with experience in limited-equity or other resident-controlled housing development. While there is a preference for candidates with knowledge and networks in New York City, the search committee encourages the interest of candidates whose expertise and relationships have been developed in other urban markets. While no candidate will embody all of them in equal measure, the successful candidate will bring many of the following qualities and qualifications:

- A deep and demonstrable commitment to UHAB's mission and values
- Ten years related experience, including progressively more responsible experience, in affordable real estate development and preservation, maintaining strong, sustainable support and advocacy for resident-controlled properties, and community-serving programs
- Senior leadership experience at a similarly complex organization; the capacity to recruit, retain, develop, and inspire diverse high-performing teams

- Successful experience working with diverse constituencies such as public officials, private businesses, community residents, and others
- A demonstrated understanding of and commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion in the affordable housing field, to reduce historical and institutional barriers which have excluded and disadvantaged people
- Strong working knowledge of government and private sources of affordable housing finance and policy
- A comprehensive understanding of urban communities and a passionate commitment to the success of cities
- Excellent written and oral communication skills; a nimble forward-thinking leader who relishes working with current housing trends, and sees challenges as opportunities to reimagine and tackle a growing affordable housing crisis
- Demonstrated coalition building skills, experience identifying new revenue streams, and support, including fundraising

APPLICATIONS, INQUIRIES, AND NOMINATIONS

Applications, as well as inquiries and nominations can be directed electronically and in confidence to: Liz Vago, lizvagotalentstrategy@gmail.com.

UHAB is an equal opportunity employer committed to ensuring diversity in its workplace, and candidates from diverse backgrounds are strongly encouraged to apply.