



## **LA CASA DE DON PEDRO - STRATEGIC PLAN 2013-2018**

### **INTRODUCTION: THE STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS**

This five-year strategic plan for La Casa de Don Pedro builds on the work of its previous multi-year strategic plan. In fact, its entire 40 year history of commendable service to the Lower Broadway neighborhood, to the North Ward, and to all of Newark and beyond also defines the future. As recognized and successful as any community-based multi-service and development nonprofit in New Jersey, La Casa de Don Pedro faces strategic challenges for maintaining and growing its service to people in need.

La Casa de Don Pedro's strategic plan incorporates feedback gathered from two-dozen interviews with community and city government leaders in Newark and beyond. These included interviews with La Casa's executive and program leadership, interviews with members of the La Casa board of directors. It captures insight from two retreat sessions with La Casa staff, and a retreat with La Casa board and staff members. In other words, this five-year strategic plan draws on the insights, recommendations, and commitments of La Casa's internal and external "stakeholders." The result is a high-level strategic review of La Casa's work with multi-year strategic goals serving as the basis for annual operational goals and plans with short-term and long-term tactics, timelines, and outcome metrics.

### **VISION**

This strategic plan underscores and builds on La Casa de Don Pedro's historic vision and mission to FOSTER SELF-SUFFICIENCY, EMPOWERMENT, and AND NEIGHBORHOOD REVITALIZATION. Every element in this plan responds to this organizational imperative.

### **STRATEGIC CHALLENGES**

After 40 years of operations, La Casa de Don Pedro has grown faster and larger than anyone might have ever anticipated back when it was founded. It is a story of success that has made La Casa nationally known and respected. But growth and success require constant reevaluation and adjustment to internal and external circumstances for La Casa to continue and, if appropriate, expand its impact on Newark, providing effective, targeted, quality assistance and support to people in the North End with need in Newark and surrounding areas. To boil it down to its most basic, La Casa's challenges for going forward revolve around three key points:

Like any organization that has grown in size, scope, and finances responding to the needs of Newark's lower income residents, La Casa de Don Pedro as an organization has to make sure that its operations—its internal workings, so to speak—are adequate for sustaining the gains and projected growth. In the near term, sustaining its current capacity will be of critical concern, while preparing for continued growth and opportunities. However, even the best of nonprofits find themselves with parts of their operations that need to be upgraded to keep up with expansion and diversity of programs they offer. It's entirely natural and predictable that this would be a challenge for La Casa or any similar organization and therefore is a core issue in planning for La Casa's future.

During La Casa de Don Pedro's 40 year history, the context of the national, state, and local economies have changed significantly and as a consequence, the posture of government and the availability of government programs is now different and will continue to evolve. The nation has just survived the worst economic recession since the Great Depression and has undergone substantial changes in governmental policies, programs, and funding. La Casa has to plan effectively for changes in the public and private sector economy in order to move forward.

As La Casa has grown, it has absorbed many identities, as one of the nation's top organizations serving Hispanics while committing itself to serve anyone in need and as a

nonprofit organization rooted in the North End while having programs that serve people throughout Newark and even more broadly into Essex County. Planning for the future requires addressing how the multiple pieces of La Casa’s identity fit together and are appropriately understood and appreciated internally and externally.

As a result, La Casa’s strategic planning process took on the critical issues necessary to ensure that the organization’s 40 years of accomplishment and improvement continued on a positive trajectory:

- Providing a realistic, achievable vision for La Casa in its service to the communities of Newark and beyond
- Generating a statement of broad policy directions, guiding La Casa into strengthening its current program array and allowing for addressing evolving needs with new programs and services
- Making La Casa a provider of quality programming and a model of best practices in program design and service delivery.
- Developing a program model and business plan that enhances La Casa’s long term sustainability through effective utilization and delivery of governmental programs and the development of financial diversification through additional, necessary revenue generation
- Maintaining a trajectory of program growth without losing sight of the necessity of ensuring La Casa’s “connectedness” to the community, quality of its programs and competence of its personnel
- Building alliances and partnerships with other organizations in the region to enhance services and programs needed by the communities and residents, including La Casas role as a convener of other organizations and a facilitator of policy discussions and initiatives consistent with its mission.
- Achieving a vision of building a healthy and vibrant community with La Casa serving as the agent of change.

Ensuring that La Casa maintains and develops the organizational “infrastructure”

necessary for running a diverse, multifaceted operation and supports the development of staff and managers to be an effective team of change agents dedicated to the achievement of La Casa’s mission and vision

- Developing mechanisms for La Casa’s constant self-improvement and learning, envisioning La Casa as a “learning organization”
- Positioning La Casa as generating effective public policy advocacy for local, state, and federal levels of government

### **CROSS-CUTTING STRATEGIC THEMES AND PRINCIPLES**

As approved by the La Casa de Don Pedro board of directors, the following are the strategic issues that flow throughout this strategic plan and in one manner or another are reflected in every element of the plan:

1. Continue to excel in executing an integrated service delivery system that enables families to achieve economic self-sufficiency.
2. Become recognized as a premier evidenced-based, data driven organization focused on the provision of services responsive to human development and self-sufficiency.
3. Position La Casa as a regional leader and change agent through strong communication and advocacy efforts.
4. Become the employer of choice for recruiting and retaining a highly creative, committed and caring staff.
5. Continue building an organizational infrastructure that enables La Casa to build its management capacity to efficiently and effectively manage its services, programs, facilities and day to day operations.

6. Grow and strengthen La Casa’s fund development in order to diversify the organization’s funding base including employing entrepreneurial initiatives to advance its fiscal wellbeing and growing La Casa’s annual budget from \$15 to \$20 million.

## I. STRATEGIC GOALS

### 1. Administrative Goals

- Address the liquidity needs and declining net assets by stopping the hemorrhaging from the development work, improving revenues and controlling expenses.
- Execute an integrated service delivery system that enables constituents to better access and achieve our mission (strategies and tactics including regular needs assessments, development and improvement of a robust and user-friendly organizational database, meaningful collaborations and partnerships with other organizations, researching and implementing program models keyed to best practices, improvements in La Casa de Don Pedro facilities)
- Strengthen organizational infrastructure to build management capacity to efficiently and effectively manage services, programs, and facilitate day to day operations
  - Develop succession plans for senior management and supervisory positions
  - Develop recruitment and retention plan across all units and levels
  - Develop a leadership development plans for current and future La Casa management team
  - Offer staff inter-agency leadership development opportunities
  - Set high standards and expectations for La Casa management and staff

- performance, provide ongoing training, and support and recognize outstanding performances - a “learning organization”
- Become recognized as a practitioner and leader of evidence-based, data driven organization focused on provision of services responsive to human development and the mission (operate La Casa as a “learning organization”; establish research, development, and information sharing unit with the capacity to capture and use data for better integration and evaluation of program service delivery
- Strengthen fund development infrastructure to diversify funding base, advance fiscal well-being and improve the financial position;
- Undertake meaningful and relevant program activities based on positive, defensible economic foundations (build on organizational strength and inter-program synergies to explore and implement entrepreneurial opportunities).
- Improve grant and contract management and support to the operational units
  - Regularly review and revise La Casa’s fiscal policies and procedures
  - Provide training to the divisional management teams related to fiscal matters concerning grants and contracts
  - Strictly monitor fiscal performance on all grants and contracts
  - Disseminate relevant and appropriate internal and external fiscal information through “dashboard” reports for the board of directors and fiscal health monitoring tools
  - Review, improve, and update procurement policies, procedures and forms
- Develop a facility maintenance plan utilizing a centralized facilities maintenance crew and capital improvement plan for the facilities.

### 2. Early Childhood Education goals

- Improve the quality and expand La Casa de Don Pedro’s Early Childhood Education Program to serve 400 children.
- Implement challenging, engaging, developmentally appropriate, culturally and linguistically responsive, comprehensive curriculum that promotes positive outcomes for all preschool children, with a focus on developing competent staff by strengthening skills and addressing weaknesses.

### 3. Youth, Family, and Health Services goals

- Design and deliver an comprehensive “cradle to college/career” services for youth and their families (building on the Parent-Child Academy and La Casa’s Infant Toddler Care and Pre-K programs)
  - Provide a continuum of programs from PCA & Pre-K program to the Afterschool Enrichment.
  - Improve funding and expand the Youth Empowerment Service (YES) and Newark Youth Leadership Program (NYLP) to serve a greater number of youth with more intensive and expanded intervention strategies.
  - In conjunction with the Newark Public Schools, develop options for the “drop out student” population by providing alternative education opportunities for the youth 14-19 years of age.
  - Make use of a robust data collection process and data to allow for tracking La Casa’s youth from cradle-to-career as well as other participants to improve programming and measure outcomes.
  - Establish a Family Success Center or other comparable program to the northeastern sector of the La Casa service area.
- Strengthen and integrate health services within La Casa and target communities
  - Build on La Casa’s healthcare initiatives and the Affordable Care Act to expand and solidify La Casa’s role in the evolving healthcare field,

and to increase access for primary healthcare services for underserved individuals and families.

- Involve community leaders, local agencies, and businesses in La Casa’s health efforts, through partnerships with local food providers and participation in building community gardens.

### 4. Personal Development goals

- Support Comprehensive Immigration Reform and assist clients obtain citizenship and assimilate into the society
  - Promote Comprehensive Immigration reform, and prepare to assist undocumented immigrants with their particular circumstances to navigate the actual laws and policies
- Promote the financial well-being of residents through work and business opportunities.
  - Expand case management, basic education, job placement, and retention services.
  - Expand job placement services for underemployed and low-wage earners.
  - Diversify funding streams by serving Out of School Youth and other service populations.
  - Work with current employer relationships to expand and build on on-going job placement of diverse work force.
  - Identify and target new business in the local market with a focus on mid-range employers and new entries into the Newark Metro market for job placements.
- Support clients to obtain meaningful employment
  - Work with existing and new employment centers to develop relevant training programs including “on the job” training – with

government subsidized stipends and “earn and learn” with employer supported training.

- Establish a relationship with or create a Temporary Job Placement business to serve as a vehicle to provide employment opportunities for clients with poor or no employment histories.
- Work with other well established business development entities in Newark and Essex County such as Brick City Development Corp, Rutgers University’s Small Business Development Center, the Regional Business Partnership, the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce of Essex County, and others to align the case management and basic education programs and strategies to encourage small business development.
- Connect the food service industry with La Casa’s Food Service program to customize job training with the potential to contribute to the growing food and hospitality industry as well as institutional employers.

#### 5. Community Improvement goals

- Provide comprehensive energy assistance program services
  - Maintain and strengthen collaboration and contractual relationship with the New Jersey Department of Community Affairs for weatherization services and coordinate with others to integrate weatherization with other programs and objectives, such as healthy homes or broader targeting of weatherization work to other populations and initiatives.
  - Focus on having knowledgeable & qualified staff to provide culturally competent, effective and efficient information, outreach, intake and processing services.

#### 6. Community and Economic Development goals

- Support community revitalization through planning, community building, redevelopment and economic activities.
  - Pursue the implementation of La Casa’s Lower Broadway Plan with a range of housing types to meet the needs of a diverse population inclusive of improving the existing housing.
  - Use La Casa’s development arm to provide development expertise to other organizations and pursue joint venture opportunities consistent with La Casa’s mission and priorities.
  - Ensure that La Casa becomes a leading first-time homebuyer and foreclosure counseling provider.

## II. IN SUMMARY

The strategic plan is a framework for La Casa’s directions in the next five years. It is not inflexible, but adapts to opportunities and changes in the environment. However, it is not self-implementing. The specific departmental goals, objectives, strategies, tactics, and measures will be followed by work plans directed by the senior management and staff as well as program participant input as a prelude to operationalize the goals and ideas in the plan. We anticipate that the result of this plan will be the continuation and growth of La Casa de Don Pedro as a vital contributor to the health of this community and all of Newark at a time when the role of organizations like La Casa is needed more than ever.