



Marian House Strategic Plan

2023-2025

Women Moving From Dependence to Independence



PREPARED BY
The Sustainable Innovation Co.



“

If you called me on the phone and just asked me straight out, what's the best transitional housing place to send somebody in Baltimore city? I would say Marian House...

”

Marian House resident



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Executive Summary

Marian House was founded in 1982 as a joint project of the Sisters of Mercy and the School Sisters of Notre Dame in response to the dire circumstances that befell women at the Baltimore City Women's Detention Center. Two Sisters and a lay volunteer noticed that it was difficult, if not impossible, for many of the women being released from jail to rebuild their lives as housing, employment, and support were hard to come by. The two orders of Sisters came together and founded Marian House to fill these voids and to reduce recidivism rates. Since its founding, Marian House has become a leading organization in the provision of high-quality rehabilitative services to women re-entering the community from incarceration and unstable life situations. Over the past 40 years, Marian House has grown significantly and has continuously strengthened and enhanced its program to achieve strong results.

From 2010 through 2022, Marian House implemented three bold, expansion-oriented strategic plans and accomplished or made significant progress on all of the initiatives outlined in the plans, most recently acquiring a sufficient inventory of permanent housing to ensure that the women graduating Marian House's transitional program have a place to call home, should they need one. This new 3-year strategic plan takes a look inside to ensure that Marian House is structured properly to support its programs, that those programs are prioritized and optimized, and that Marian House's finances are thoughtfully allocated to deliver the best results for the women it serves.

Our Mission

Marian House is a holistic, healing community for women and their children who are in need of housing and support services. We provide a safe, sober, loving environment that challenges women to respect and love themselves, confront emotional and socio-economic barriers, and transition to stable and independent lives.

Our Vision

Marian House strengthens our society by unlocking the potential found within the women we serve.

Our values

Marian House values the innate dignity of each human being. Within a culture of respect and understanding of the human condition, the values of patience, trust, honesty, and integrity direct all of our interactions and endeavors. Marian House is committed to equity and inclusion. We value diversity of thought and honor individual identity which includes race, color, national origin, gender identity, sexuality, class, and religion.





Strategic Direction and Goals 2023-2025

The 3-year period 2023-2025 will be a time of assessment, analysis, and optimization. Specifically, Marian House will:

- Assess, integrate, and optimize key programs: Benevolent Baskets, Electronic Health Records, permanent housing allocation, promotion of Marian House 1 services, extending admission criteria, and State of Maryland child welfare pilot
- Develop a 5-year financial plan to provide a clear roadmap for utilization of assets and support impact-based financial decision-making
- Review existing programs to validate that objectives are client-centered and mission-driven; review organizational structure and staffing levels against external benchmarks to ensure that our programs are staffed to achieve optimal outcomes
- Continue to deliver the highest quality programs and services our resources will support, while being mindful and strategic in our response to emerging program opportunities and to public policies that may affect public support for transitional housing and behavioral health services.
- Explore resource development strategies to maintain our commitment to offering transitional and permanent housing and holistic program services.
- Review the strategic plan annually to assess its efficacy and viability, ensure the goals remain relevant and cohesive, and adjust as necessary.



Goal I: Actualize Key Projects

In the 3 years since the last strategic plan, a number of unexpected opportunities have been introduced to Marian House, including Benevolent Baskets, the Women's Industrial Exchange, and a State of Maryland child welfare partnership. In order to achieve superlative results, we are focusing our efforts on the successful implementation of these and other important initiatives.

Goal II: Optimize Financial Resources

Marian House has strategically worked to build a solid financial portfolio. It is important to document these assets to ensure that they are being optimized to best support the women and children we serve today and into the future.

Goal III: Analyze Programs and Staffing

Marian House is committed to ensuring that our programs remain high-quality and transformational for our women and children and that we are staffed appropriately to continue to achieve exemplar results. Taking a step back to review these program objectives and metrics and our organizational model will ensure that we continue to advance our mission.

Detailed Strategic Plan

Introduction

This 3-year strategic plan was developed with participation of the Marian House Board of Directors, staff, volunteers, and stakeholders. We are grateful for the support and contributions of our many volunteers and staff who made the process of developing this plan both inclusive and strategic. (See Acknowledgments on pages 23 and 24)

Marian House will use this plan as our guiding framework for key strategic issues through fiscal year 2025.

We will annually develop a plan detailing actions, assignments, budget and other resource requirements to facilitate plan implementation. This plan was approved by the Marian House Board of Directors on September 21, 2022.

The plan is presented in three sections.

- **Section I** presents the Marian House Organization Identity Statement. The organization identity elements that distinguish Marian House include our mission statement, 10-year vision statement, values statement, definitions of our primary audience for program support, and our supporting partners. These identity elements provide the context for this strategic plan.
- **Section II** presents the strategic planning process in detail to demonstrate the scope of input into the plan and thorough process to identify the key challenges facing Marian House along with the most relevant and impactful solutions
- **Section III** presents the strategic direction, goals, and objectives that will guide Marian House through fiscal years 2023-2025.

I. Organization Identity Statement

Background: The Marian House Organization Identity Statement was first developed and approved in the 2010 Strategic Plan. As we developed this new strategic plan, it was important that we immersed ourselves in Marian House's mission, vision, and values to ground ourselves and provide context for our decisions. We remain committed to these statements and rely on them to guide our organization, staff, and board.

Mission Statement

The remarkable difference we aim to make in the world

Marian House is a holistic, healing community for women and their children who are in need of housing and support services. We provide a safe, sober, loving environment that challenges women to respect and love themselves, confront emotional and socio-economic barriers, and transition to stable and independent lives.

Meaning Behind the Mission Statement

Holistic, healing community for women and their children who are in need of housing and support services

Marian House provides shelter and homes for families of women and children who are in a period of crisis and transition, who may suffer from trauma, mental health disorders, physical and sexual abuse, addictions and/or previous incarceration. The program, steeped in a spirit of loving compassion, offers a caring environment where families receive help with life-impacting services including shelter, food, clothing, therapy, recovery, finances, education, employment, and more, in a safe, community environment that fosters self-reflection and self-improvement.

Provide a safe, loving environment

Marian House offers a tranquil space and protective environment for women and children, many of whom have never experienced the warmth and compassion of a home with a routine, responsibilities, and expectations. The program is grounded in compassion for others, personal responsibility, and belief in the goodness of humanity – that no matter her circumstances, each woman matters as a human being and deserves well-being and success.

That challenges women to respect and love themselves

Marian House supports women as they confront barriers to growth in self-esteem, providing them with tools and experiences needed to build self-confidence and self-worth.

Confront emotional and socio-economic barriers

Marian House supports women in responding to their hardships by helping them strengthen their attitudes, mental health and outlook on life. We also guide them in developing or enhancing skills that will enable them to find meaningful work through employment or the creation of a business that puts them on a path to competitive wages and benefits.

Transition to stable and independent lives

Marian House offers women the opportunity to change and to create a fresh start. Women who complete our program leave with a new-found health and a sense of self-worth, confidence, and drive that sets the foundation for financial well-being and personal fulfilment.

2029 Vision Statement

Meaningful results we are committed to achieving in a decade

For program graduates, residents, and our organization in 2029, we envision:

...that Marian House will continue to create an environment for women and children, where they are accepted and learn to maximize their potential, become more stable and secure emotionally, and begin a path toward financial stability.

...that Marian House will work tirelessly to ensure safe, stable, affordable housing is available for women who successfully complete the transitional program.

...that Marian House will continue to be a strong, driving force behind systemic improvements that enable more women and children to move from crisis and transition by accessing the help they need to heal and recover.

...that Marian House will have successfully advocated for the public policy changes essential to providing services with long-term impact.

...that Marian House remain accredited and continue to offer a strong program that sets a standard for services and support for women and children who are homeless.

...that Marian House will continue to have strong leadership and a fully active and engaged board of directors that supports its work.

...that Marian House will have a strong, broad network of supporters who contribute to the healing and recovery of women and children and to our organization's continued success.

Values

Ideals that guide our actions

At Marian House our values guide the way we want our residents, our staff, our partners, and the community to experience Marian House - as a compassionate, responsive, just, and effective organization. In addition, through our program we teach these values to our residents and support them in adapting these values to their own lives.

Marian House Values Statement

Marian House values the innate dignity of each human being. Within a culture of respect and understanding of the human condition, the values of patience, trust, honesty, and integrity direct all of our interactions and endeavors. Marian House is committed to equity and inclusion. We value diversity of thought and honor individual identity which includes race, color, national origin, gender identity, sexuality, class, and religion.

Primary Customer

Programs and services are organized to respond to the needs, wants and aspirations of this group.

For the purposes of designing effective programs and services, Marian House defines its primary customer group as women and children in crisis and transition who may suffer from trauma, mental health disorders, physical and sexual abuse, addictions, and/or previous incarcerations that have left them homeless, unemployed, and/or separated from their families.

Supporting Partners

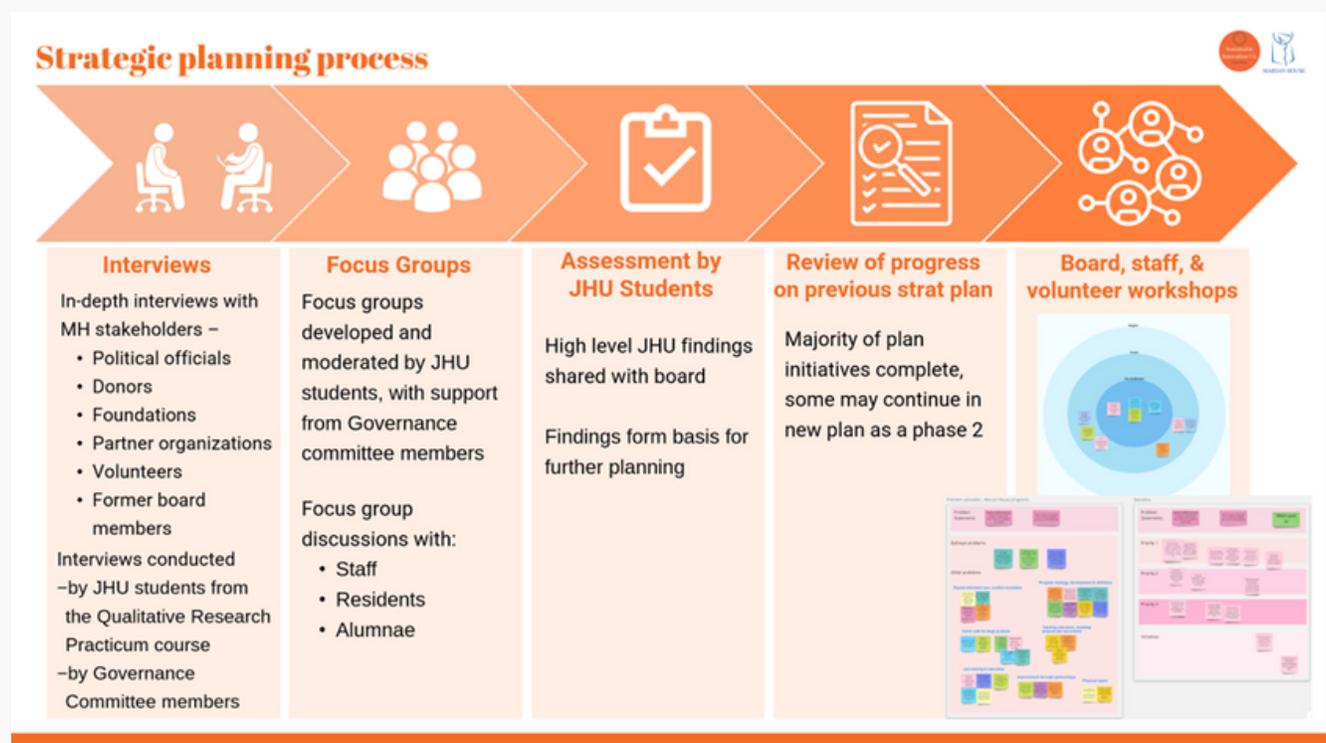
Concepts that express our sense about how change happens

Just as important as our primary customers, supporting partners are also essential to the success of Marian House. These are community resources that have the power to influence the mindset, behavior, and institutional and systemic practices that perpetuate homelessness. Marian House supporting partners include the following:

- Marian House staff
- Marian House Board of Directors
- School Sisters of Notre Dame
- Sisters of Mercy
- Marian House alumnae
- Foundations
- Individual donors
- Corporate donors
- Local, state, and national government agencies
- Elected officials
- Employers
- Peer community organizations
- Volunteers
- Neighbors
- Landlords
- Vendors

II. 2022 Strategic Planning Process

The direction, strategies, and initiatives included in this plan were developed with the assistance of the consulting firm the Sustainable Innovation Co. and the qualitative research graduate students from the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health. Design-thinking was the basis for this process, focusing on clearly understanding the client need or problem state in order to develop relevant and meaningful solutions. From these solutions the strategic plan initiatives were built. This entire deliberate and comprehensive process started in November 2021 and took us 9 months to complete.



We thoughtfully engaged a wide variety of stakeholders across the Marian House ecosystem: staff, residents, alumnae, current and former board members, political officials, donors, volunteers, foundation representatives, and partner organizations, through individual interviews, focus groups, and workshops. The interview and focus group findings were synthesized by the JHSPH team and formed the basis for the board, staff, and volunteer workshops.

Strengths and Opportunities Categorization

Using data captured during the individual interviews and focus group sessions, the first output was to clearly define what Marian House is doing well.

Interviews & focus groups – what we’ve heard so far....

What are Marian House’s strengths?



 <p>Clear mission – staying true to mission, not chasing funding</p>	 <p>Strong, effective leadership/Katie is a powerhouse!</p>	 <p>Quality facilities</p>	 <p>Invested, qualified staff</p>	 <p>Committed, stable Board of Directors</p>
 <p>Excellent fundraising</p>	 <p>Solid reputation with potential clients</p>	 <p>Successful program – comprehensive with great results</p>	 <p>Building a sense of community</p>	 <p>Charism & community/formation</p>

From there we looked for areas of opportunity which were grouped into 3 buckets: staff capacity and roles, financial support and fundraising, and operational program updates:

Marian House’s challenges fall into three major “buckets”

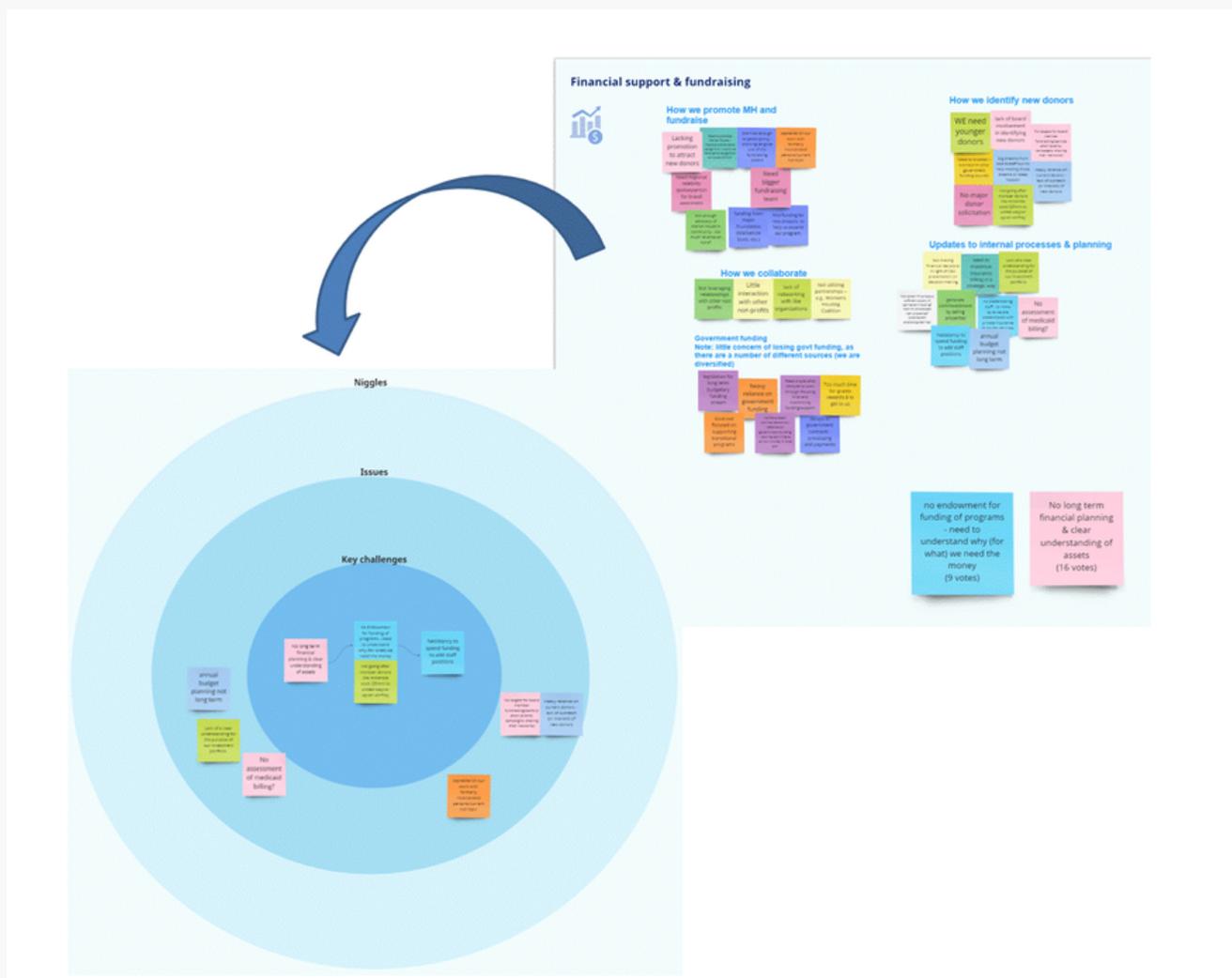


Workshop 1: Challenges

The first workshop saw Marian House board, staff, and volunteers providing their inputs on the major problems across the three major buckets:

1. Marian House staff capacity/roles
2. Financial support & fundraising
3. Marian House program changes/updates (operational)

Participants were split into three groups, one for each bucket and spent time ideating on what they saw as the individual problems. Once all of the problems were captured, the groups reviewed these and prioritized them on the bullseye to identify the most significant challenges at the center.



Workshop 1: Voting

At the end of the session, the key challenges (center bullseye) for each group were captured and voted on by all participants to identify which of these were the most important.

The number of people who voted for each challenge is shown below.

1. Marian House staff capacity/roles

- Transition period to big organization - unsure how to lead, fundraise, diversify skills - 7
- Lack of staff bandwidth to implement new programs - 9
- Make the transition while preserving the essence of MH and MH core members - 1
- Hard to address challenges, staffing, structure without systematic information, data - 2
- Program has expanded without staff - 2

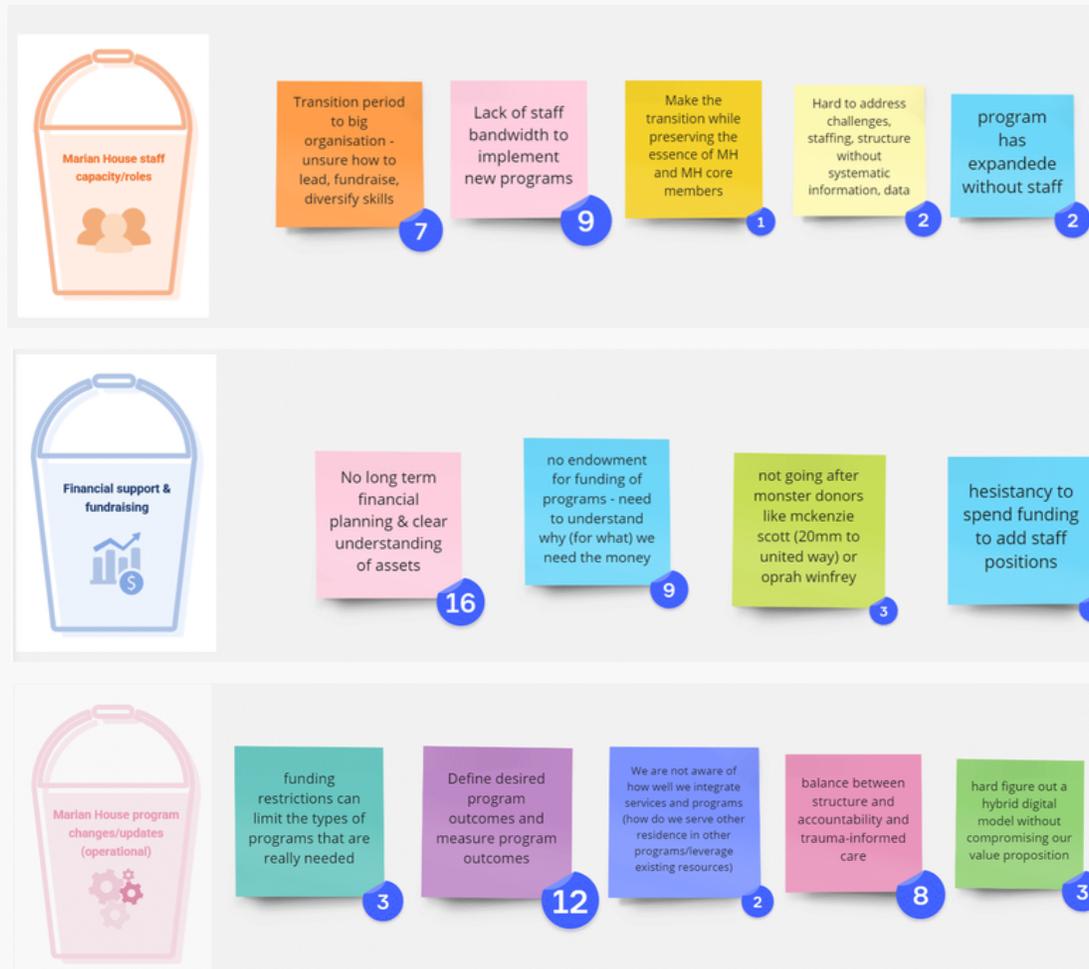
2. Financial support & fundraising

- No long term financial planning & clear understanding of assets - 16
- No endowment for funding of programs - need to understand why (for what) we need the money - 9
- Not going after monster donors like MacKenzie Scott (20mm to united way) or Oprah Winfrey - 3
- Hesitancy to spend funding to add staff positions - 3

3. Marian House program changes/updates (operational)

- Funding restrictions can limit the types of programs that are really needed - 3
- Define desired program outcomes and measure program outcomes - 12
- We are not aware of how well we integrate services and programs (how do we serve other residents in other programs/leverage existing resources) - 2
- Balance program structure and accountability and trauma-informed care - 8
- Hard figure out a hybrid digital model without compromising our value proposition - 3

Workshop 1: Prioritization



The voting at the end of workshop 1 identified the following as the key challenges facing Marian House:

1. Marian House staff capacity/roles

- Lack of staff bandwidth to implement new programs
- Transition period to big organization - unsure how to lead, fundraise, diversify skills

2. Financial support & fundraising

- No long-term financial planning & clear understanding of assets
- No endowment for funding of programs - need to understand why (for what) we need the money

3. Marian House program changes/updates (operational)

- Define desired program outcomes and measure program outcomes
- Balance program structure and accountability and trauma-informed care

First Draft Strategic Initiatives

The solutions from workshop 2 were reviewed and synthesized by the Sustainable Innovation Co. team, who used this output to draft a set of strategic initiatives that cohesively reflect the participant input during the sessions.

Grouping	Type	Initiative
MH Programs	Key Initiative	Deliver trauma informed care
	Description/step	Train and deliver “Trauma informed care” within our existing program
MH Programs	Description/step	Incorporate conflict resolution services in comprehensive behavioral health services
	Key Initiative	Deliver project initiatives
	Key Initiative	Complete Electronic Health Records implementation
	Key Initiative	Develop a marketing plan for Benevolent Baskets program that grows the program
	Key Initiative	Develop objectives for WIE building, create plan and staffing to achieve
	Key Initiative	Promote MH1 services to permanent and family program clients to drive engagement by residents; assess barriers to use currently
	Key Initiative	Document and assess permanent housing supply and current need; enhance management plan for all permanent housing units; create estimate of when we will run out of units
Finance & Fundraising	Key Initiative	Improve plan for turnover of units as soon as notice of vacating is given (to avoid having periods with empty beds)
	Key Initiative	Develop 5-year financial plan
	Description/step	Create a long-term financial plan for Marian House - including impact-based financial decision making (spending money and allocating time to higher impact activities)
Finance & Fundraising	Description/step	Create clear understanding & statement of what we are fundraising for (e.g., endowment for funding of programs) – targeted giving
	Description/step	Assess and document all assets, consider purpose for investment portfolio
Finance & Fundraising	Key Initiative	Maximize Medicaid & insurance billing
Finance & Fundraising	Description/step	Assess Medicaid billing to ensure we are strategically optimizing, consider staff credentialing to bill private insurers
	Key Initiative	Involve board and staff in increasing donor roles and fundraising, set targets beyond personal giving
Staff capacity & roles	Key Initiative	Review programs, metrics, & staffing
	Description/step	Define desired objectives for existing programs - Validate that program objectives are client centered and mission-driven - determine measures to assess performance against desired outcomes - Identify and address any staffing gaps
	Description/step	Optimize organizational structure - Analyze organizational structure of MH - compare to other organizations with similar profiles and match to functional work responsibilities & clarify goals (Analyze what is working, Think about it, Discuss it internally, Compare to other peer orgs)
Staff capacity & roles	Key Initiative	Develop program to improve communications and staff morale
	Description/step	Obtain staff feedback and identify ways to retain current staff (Listen to feedback-Communicate solutions-Recognize & reward)
	Description/step	Review and improve communications - Scale communications - how do we communicate intentionally - internally & externally

Second Draft Strategic Initiatives

A session was held on July 11, 2022 with the senior staff to review the draft initiatives from the workshops to ensure that nothing major was overlooked and that the initiatives proposed aligned with the programmatic direction of the organization.

As a result of this session, two initiatives were added:

- Integrate the State of Maryland pilot program with child welfare into family program
- Review admission criteria to consider placements for: older women, women not able to work - assess potential volume, determine fit within (or changes required to) existing program

One initiative was removed, as it was determined that it was identified due to a misunderstanding of the job training program, rather than a failure of that program (all women who want jobs are able to find jobs). There will be an education session for the board to on the program to fill this knowledge gap.

- Assess and enhance job training and employment services, including working with board members to identify potential employers

Final Draft Strategic Initiatives

Marian House Board Leadership met to review the second draft initiatives. Slight updates were made to combine the Women's Industrial Exchange objective with the permanent housing objective (in the Marian House programs section) and to combine the communications objective with the building community objective (in the Staff capacity & roles section)

The updated initiatives were shared with the board of directors by email, and an opportunity to discuss this final draft and the changes made by staff was provided during a board "Fireside Chat" on 21 July 2022. No additional changes were put forward, and the draft was finalized for presentation and approval at the Marian House Board meeting.

The Marian House Board of Directors approved the final strategic plan on September 21, 2022. The strategic plan has been handed over to the Marian House CEO, Katie Allston, and the Board Chair, Karen Albert, for implementation.

The initiatives below reflect the final set approved by the board.

Grouping	Initiative
MH Programs	Train and deliver "Trauma informed care" within our existing program and incorporate conflict resolution services in comprehensive behavioral health services
MH Programs	Deliver the following project initiatives
MH Programs	Complete Electronic Health Records (EHR) implementation
MH Programs	Integrate the State of Maryland pilot program with child welfare into family program
MH Programs	Develop a marketing plan for Benevolent Baskets that grows the program
MH Programs	Promote MH1 services to permanent and family program clients to drive engagement by residents; assess barriers to use currently
MH Programs	Document and assess permanent housing supply (including residential & other space at WIE) and current need; enhance management plan for all permanent housing units; create estimate of when we will run out of units
MH Programs	Improve plan for turnover of units to maximize in use time
MH Programs	Review admission criteria to consider placements for: older women, women not able to work - assess potential volume, determine fit within (or changes required to) existing program
Finance & Fundraising	Develop a 5-year financial plan to enable impact-based financial decision making; assess and document all assets, define purpose of investment portfolio
Finance & Fundraising	Create clear statements of purpose for fundraising
Finance & Fundraising	Further involve board and staff in increasing donor roles and fundraising
Finance & Fundraising	Optimize Medicaid and insurance billing
Staff capacity & roles	Define desired objectives for existing programs - Validate that program objectives are client centered and mission-driven - determine measures to assess performance against desired outcomes
Staff capacity & roles	Optimize organizational structure - Analyze organizational structure of MH - compare to other organizations with similar profiles and match to functional work responsibilities & clarify goals, identify and address any staffing gaps
Staff capacity & roles	Investigate and implement methods to build community amongst staff; review and improve communications with a view to communicating intentionally both internally & externally

III. 2023 - 2025 Strategic Plan

3-Year Strategic Direction Fiscal Years 2023-2025

The 3-year period from 2020-2022 saw a lot of expansion of Marian House, while it was managing through the unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic. The beginning of the current strategic planning period sees the US bouncing back from the worst of COVID, it is experiencing slowed economic growth, though unemployment numbers remain low. The period from 2023-2025 will be a time for Marian House to complete key projects, while spending time analyzing and assessing its programs, organizational structure, and financial resources. The plans built from these reviews will set a considered foundation from which Marian House can move forward confidently. Marian House will continue to deliver the highest quality programs and services which its resources will support, while being mindful and strategic in its response to emerging program opportunities and public policies that may affect public support for transitional housing and behavioral health services. Marian House will explore resource development strategies to maintain its commitment to offering transitional and permanent housing and holistic program services.

3-Year Goals and Objectives 2023-2025

Goal I: Actualize Key Projects

In the 3 years since the last strategic plan, a number of unexpected opportunities have been introduced to Marian House, including Benevolent Baskets, the Women's Industrial Exchange, and a State of Maryland child welfare program. In order to achieve superlative results, we are focusing our efforts on the successful implementation of these and other important initiatives.

3-Year Objectives

1. Train and deliver "Trauma informed care" within our existing program and incorporate conflict resolution services in comprehensive behavioral health services
2. Deliver on the following project initiatives:
 - a. Complete Electronic Health Records (EHR) implementation
 - b. Integrate the State of Maryland pilot program with child welfare into family program
 - c. Develop a marketing plan for Benevolent Baskets that grows the program
 - d. Promote MH1 services to permanent and family program clients to drive engagement by residents; assess barriers to use currently
 - e. Document and assess permanent housing supply (including residential & other space at WIE) and current need; enhance management plan for all permanent housing units; create estimate of when we will run out of units
 - f. Improve plan for turnover of units to maximize in use time
 - g. Review admission criteria to consider placements for: older women, women not able to work - assess potential volume, determine fit within (or changes required to) existing program

Goal II: Optimize Financial Resources

Marian House has strategically worked to build a solid financial portfolio. It is important to document these assets to ensure that they are being optimized to best support the women and children we serve today and into the future.

3-Year Objectives

1. Develop a 5-year financial plan to enable impact-based financial decision making; assess and document all assets, define purpose of investment portfolio
2. Create clear statements of purpose for fundraising
3. Further involve board and staff in increasing donor roles and fundraising
4. Optimize Medicaid and insurance billing

Goal III: Analyze Programs and Staffing

Marian House is committed to ensuring that our programs remain high-quality and transformational for our women and children and that we are staffed appropriately to continue to achieve exemplar results. Taking a step back to review these program objectives and metrics and our organizational model will ensure that we continue to advance our mission.

3-Year Objectives

1. Define desired objectives for existing client programs
 - a. validate that program objectives are client-centered and mission-driven
 - b. determine measures to assess program performance against desired outcomes
2. Optimize organizational structure
 - a. analyze organizational structure of Marian House
 - b. compare to other organizations with similar profiles
 - c. match structure to functional work responsibilities & clarify position goals
 - d. identify and address any staffing gaps
3. Investigate and implement methods to build community amongst staff; review and improve communications with a view to communicating intentionally both internally & externally

2023-2025 Strategic Planning Process

The Sustainable Innovation Co. facilitated this strategic planning process utilizing its strategic planning methodology, focused on a design-led thinking process, and informed by input from the Marian House CEO and a majority of the members of the Board of Directors. Essential initial input to this process was delivered by the Johns Hopkins University School of Public Health qualitative research practicum course students, who performed the majority of the one on one interviews and focus groups. The JHU SWOT and project report are available as separate documents.

Board of Directors/CEO Strategic Plan Implementation Partnership

This strategic plan is intended as an internal management guide for the Marian House Board of Directors, CEO, and staff as they work together to implement the plan goals and objectives. Successful implementation of this strategic plan requires a consistent commitment and shared leadership between the Board of Directors and the CEO to work strategically, efficiently, and effectively with Marian House resources. To support implementation of the strategic plan from 2023-2025, the Board of Directors and CEO will:

Track & Improve Performance

- Board of Directors, at each board meeting, reviews strategic plan implementation progress to stay abreast of accomplishments and barriers to success with each goal. CEO provides reports to the Board which reflect progress toward achieving the strategic plan goals.
- Board of Directors uses the plan as a framework for assessing annual performance of the CEO.
- CEO uses the plan as a framework for assessing annual staff and consultant performance.

Align Financial Resources

- Annual operating budget supports actions to advance strategic plan goals and objectives.
- Board of Directors and the CEO consider and pursue sources of funds to support new strategic initiatives.

Update the Strategic Plan

- Staff regularly seeks input from stakeholders.
- Board of Directors takes stock of the external and internal environments and reviews and updates the strategic plan as needed.
- Board of Directors considers the need for a comprehensive review and new strategic direction for Marian House beginning in 2022.

Review the Operating Procedures and Capacity of the Board of Directors

- All members of the Board of Directors are actively involved in Marian House.
- Board of Directors does a strategic review of its skills and fills any gaps necessary to support implementation of the plan.
- Board of Directors reviews its operating procedures to ensure alignment with the strategic plan.
- CEO uses the plan to inform new staff recruitment

Acknowledgements

Marian House extends its heartfelt thanks to the Johns Hopkins School of Public Health students, Marian House board members, staff, and volunteers who actively participated in creating this important roadmap to guide our work for fiscal years 2023-2025.

Board of Directors Participants

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Dependence to Independence*

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