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In This Issue

FALL 2023

President's Corner	04
NJUMA at the NJ League of Municipalities 108th Conference	05
NFBPA at the NJ League of Municipalities 108th Conference	06
Financial Security is a Necessity	07
NJ Depends on Transit - It's Time to Fund it For the Long Haul	09
NJHMFA Housing Preservation Program	10
From Square Feet to Cubic Feet—Changing the Geometry of the Garden State's Agriculture	11
Urban Children at Promise or at Risk	12
Senator Booker's Roundtable	14
NJBPU'S Community Solar Program Makes Solar Affordable, Especially for Homeowners and Residents in Multi-Unit Buildings and Apartments	15
N.J. needs a flood of funding to weather catastrophic rainstorms Opinion	16
Clinton Hill Community Action (CHCA): Arts Xchange	17
Senator Wynona Lipman's Centennial Celebration Continues With Year-End Tribute and Exhibition	20
Unite Us	21
"Jumpstart" Campaign from The Housing and Community Development Network of NJ	22
NJEA Offshore Program	23
NJ Family Care Renewals	24
KEANetwork	25





ABOUT THE NEW JERSEY URBAN MAYORS ASSOCIATION

The New Jersey Urban Mayors Association (NJUMA) is housed in the New Jersey Urban Mayors Policy Center at the John S. Watson Institute for Urban Policy and Research at Kean University. The New Jersey Urban Mayors Policy Center coordinates all activities of the NJUMA and provides policy and legislative analysis. Established in 1991, the New Jersey Urban Mayors Association is dedicated to working with state and federal lawmakers and officials to develop appropriate and effective public policy measures that benefit the state's urban centers and to help lawmakers understand how public policy affects New Jersey's municipalities.

As an organization, NJUMA is comprised of 32 New Jersey urban and rural municipalities. NJUMA serves its members through meetings, policy retreats, and annual conferences which keep them informed on issues affecting their ability to provide adequate services to their residents. NJUMA also assists its members in interpreting legislation and state policy and works with the Governor's Office to assist in defining an urban policy agenda.

It uses a 7-Point Plan for Strengthening Cities, Families, and Communities as a guide for addressing the critical issues of its member cities. This plan is designed to aggressively address the areas of crime and public safety; education and positive youth development; environment and public health; family and community welfare; housing and economic development; tax reform and intergovernmental relations, and unfunded mandates.

NJUMA is a proactive organization that pursues opportunities from the government and the private sector to advance the interests of members. We are consistently exploring opportunities that will strengthen our communities and ultimately the state of New Jersey.

Editors' Note

We hope you enjoy reading our Fall 2023 edition of the Urban Mayors Press! This digital newsletter is created to highlight the impactful work of the New Jersey Urban Mayors Association (NJUMA) members and to provide resourceful information to municipalities throughout New Jersey from federal, state, and local agencies.

Submissions to the Urban Mayors Press are edited and distributed by the John S. Watson Institute for Urban Policy and Research at Kean University.

A Big Thank You to all Our Contributors!



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URBAN POLICY & RESEARCH

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PRESIDENT'S CORNER



Dear New Jersey Urban Mayors Association Members & Community Partners,

When I was installed President of the New Jersey Urban Mayors Association (NJUMA) in 2021, we were fighting for the future of our urban cities. At the time, our urban communities were experiencing higher cases of COVID-19 and our residents were being diagnosed and unfortunately dying at rapid rates. The nationwide protests following the brutal murders of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor exposed how racial and ethnic minorities, who historically face unequal access to healthcare and socioeconomic support, live a reality even more unsparingly than other populations. As I look back on that time and what has emerged from the past unprecedented years, I am more than thankful to have had our Association of Mayors. It has only been through collaboration, strong partnerships, and strong policy initiatives across our state that we could have emerged from this but it also how we can continue to create a thriving New Jersey. As I near the ending of my term as NJUMA President, I must express tremendous gratitude for your time and continued support of the Association. It has truly been an honor to work with Mayors across the state to advance our cities and I look forward to continuing our work together to move our cities forward.

In this issue, you will read about the efforts Newark has been leading to bolster economic security and create a more equitable and empowered city. You will also read how innovative leaders and organizations across our state are making tremendous strides in our urban centers and creating sustainable change.

This issue offers an abundance of resourceful information about programs and other services to support with affordable housing, workforce training opportunities, interventions for educational systems, policy changes to environmental issues facing urban communities and more. I encourage you to read about these incredible efforts and resources, engage with our incredible partners and please take advantage of the resources and valuable information that are available to your municipality.

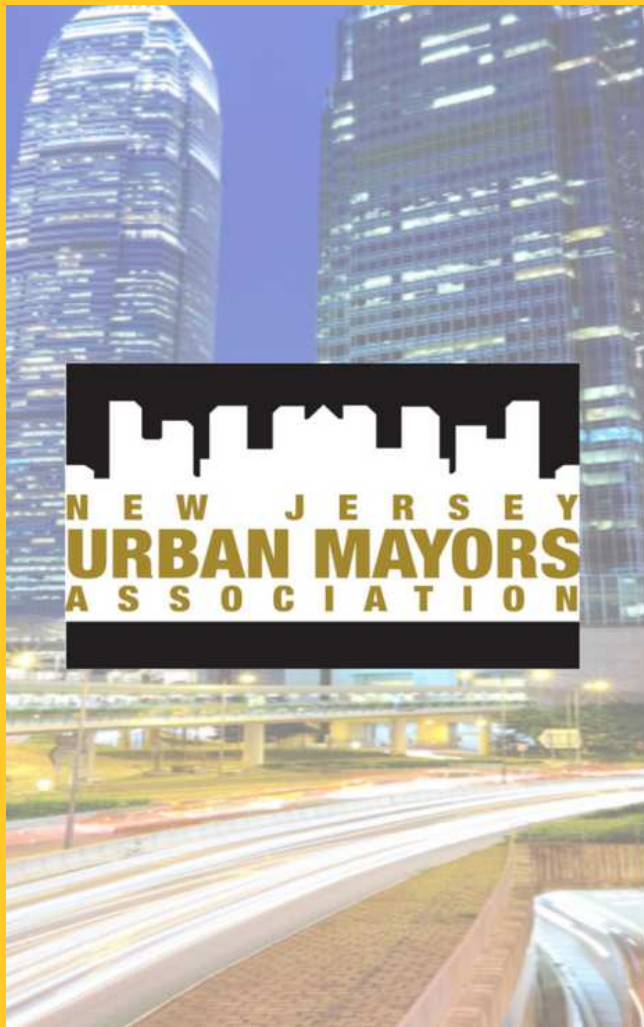
Additionally, the 108 th Annual New Jersey League of Municipalities is quickly approaching. I look forward to seeing all the Mayors on Wednesday, November 15th at our Annual NJUMA Policy Breakfast, our League session—Building Bridges: Connecting Interfaith Communities and Local Government that will include statewide and local leaders including: Rev. Dr. Charles Boyer Director, Salvation & Social Justice; Pastor, Greater Mt. Zion AME; Imam W. Deen Shareef Convenor, Council of Imams of New Jersey; Rev. Dr. Regena Thomas Former Secretary of State, New Jersey and Rev. Louis Scott-Rountree Councilmember At Large, Newark. Our day culminates with our Annual Reception, a much-anticipated celebration for our members, municipal staff, policymakers, and guests to network, celebrate successes, and express gratitude for another year of accomplishments. The League is always a great opportunity to network and discuss issues facing our urban centers and I am looking forward to seeing everyone there.

Thanks again and please enjoy this issue of the Urban Mayors Press!

Sincerely,

Ras J. Baraka
Mayor, City of Newark
President, New Jersey Urban Mayors Association

LEAGUE OF MUNICIPALITIES CONFERENCE



**THE HONORABLE RAS J. BARAKA
MAYOR OF THE CITY OF NEWARK
PRESIDENT OF THE
NEW JERSEY URBAN MAYORS ASSOCIATION**
cordially invites you to attend the NJUMA events at
**THE 108th ANNUAL NEW JERSEY
LEAGUE OF MUNICIPALITIES CONFERENCE**
Wednesday, November 15th, 2023

New Jersey Urban Mayors Association League Session
"Building Bridges: Connecting Interfaith Communities and
Local Government"
Atlantic City Convention Center, Room 419
10:45 AM - 12:00 PM

New Jersey Urban Mayors Association Annual Reception
Fornelletto Restaurant, Borgata Hotel & Casino
1 Borgata Way, Atlantic City, NJ 08401
6:00 PM - 8:30 PM

RSVP to Tenisha Malcolm, Director of the Urban Mayors
Policy Center at njuma@kean.edu

LEAGUE OF MUNICIPALITIES CONFERENCE



The National Forum for Black Public Administrators - NJ Chapter
&
The John S. Watson Institute for Urban Policy and Research At Kean
invite you to attend a special

Breakfast Session
at

The 108th New Jersey League of Municipalities Conference

Date: Wednesday, November 15

Time: 8:00 AM - 9:30 AM

**Location: Sheraton Atlantic City Convention Center Hotel
Crown Ballrooms 1 and 2**

Join us to learn
about our partnership:
NFBPA-NJ
and
Kean University

Please scan the QR Code to register

Questions?

**Please contact Keisha Griffin at
griffkei@kean.edu**





Photo by: Office of Mayor Ras J. Baraka

Honorable Ras J. Baraka, Mayor of Newark

Financial Security is a Necessity

By Honorable Ras J. Baraka, Mayor of Newark,
President of the New Jersey Urban Mayors Association

A compassionate society must find ways to provide human necessities. When people are hungry, we give them food. When they need clothes or shoes, we have outlets where they can find them. When they live outdoors, we do our best to provide shelter.

This is the spirit of Guaranteed Income programs. When people live well below poverty levels, what they need most is money for food, clothing shelter, and other needs to sustain themselves in a safe and dignified manner. Income volatility, or unstable cash flow, adds to the stresses of living day-to-day.

Here in Newark, we are near completion of our two-year Guaranteed Income Pilot Program and preliminary results show the money we are distributing is being spent on daily essentials.

Our program began two years ago with the formation of my administration's Newark Movement for Economic Equity (NMEE), as part of our overarching 'Newark Forward' theme of building a more empowered, safer, and better-educated equitable city.

All of society's ills -- not only in our cities but our entire nation -- begin with poverty and the stress fractures it causes in our poorest neighborhoods. Our plan was to help lessen the financial burden of daily living and alleviate those stresses.

(continued on the next page)

Where the funds were allocated for the people of Newark:

Refer to the research study detailed on page eight.

- Retail sales
41.31 percent
- Food
26.6 percent
- Utilities
10.92 percent
- Transportation
8.81 percent
- Travel, Leisure and Entertainment
4.83 percent
- Financial Transactions
4.1 percent
- Healthcare and Medical
2.42 percent
- Miscellaneous Expenses
1.35 percent
- Education
.04 percent

These numbers suggest our residents know best how to use extra income when it comes in as cash and the government should trust them to do so. We conducted our guaranteed income pilot to prove that our families know what they need and deserve the dignity to prioritize those needs. They do not need more forms to fill out or categorical aid, but instead more unrestricted cash that enables them to lead self-directed lives.

Photo by: Office of Mayor Ras J. Baraka



Newark Family enjoying Guaranteed Income Information session

CONTINUED

I believe so strongly in this idea, Newark was one of the first 11 cities to sign on to this movement. We began with 30 people in a pre-pilot program and expanded it to 400 shortly after to take part in a study approved by the Institutional Review Board, the American gold standard in research methodology and program ethics.

This study is being conducted in conjunction with the University of Pennsylvania's Center for Guaranteed Income Research and Mayors for Guaranteed Income (MGI), a 100-member strong force that includes Paterson Mayor Andre Sayegh, whose city is also running their own pilot program.

The criteria set by NMEE was for people who fell 200 percent below the federal poverty line, and all had their income adversely impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Our participant's yearly income averaged \$8,750, which we would augment with \$6,000 in yearly additional income with two types of disbursement.

For spending research purposes, one group received twice-yearly payments of \$3,000. The other group was paid \$500 a month through two, bi-weekly \$250 payments.

Demographically, 82 percent of our participants were single heads of household, 67 percent had minor children in the home, 80 percent were African American and over 75 percent were women.

The results of how our participants spent their Guaranteed Income money were in line with the other 31 cities and regions taking part in the Penn, Stanford, and MGI study.

Income volatility is a national problem. According to the Federal Reserve's 2022 Economic Well-Being of U.S. Households survey, 37% of Americans lack money to cover a \$400 emergency expense. Worse, a 2022 study released by Lending Club showed that the average emergency expense has increased to \$1,400. Policies that can stabilize families, particularly low-income families with children make sense.

Our results can be found on Stanford University's Basic Income Lab website at <https://guaranteedincome.us/newark>. The website also includes the testimony of one of our residents, a 33-year-old woman named Shamonique who is a mother of four with medical complications that limit her ability to work.

Read Shamonique's story and see the results of the Stanford University's Basic Income Lab

Shamonique has been a community organizer and active in trying to improve the lives of others but was denied stimulus money during the pandemic and social security benefits.

"Mentally I felt drained and began to lose hope," she said.

When a friend told her about our pilot program, she was skeptical.

"It seemed too good to be true," she said. "However, I was desperate and hopeful enough to believe this was a program sent from God."

She said the extra money allowed her to buy her kids new school uniforms, winter coats, and boots, and adequately heat her house.

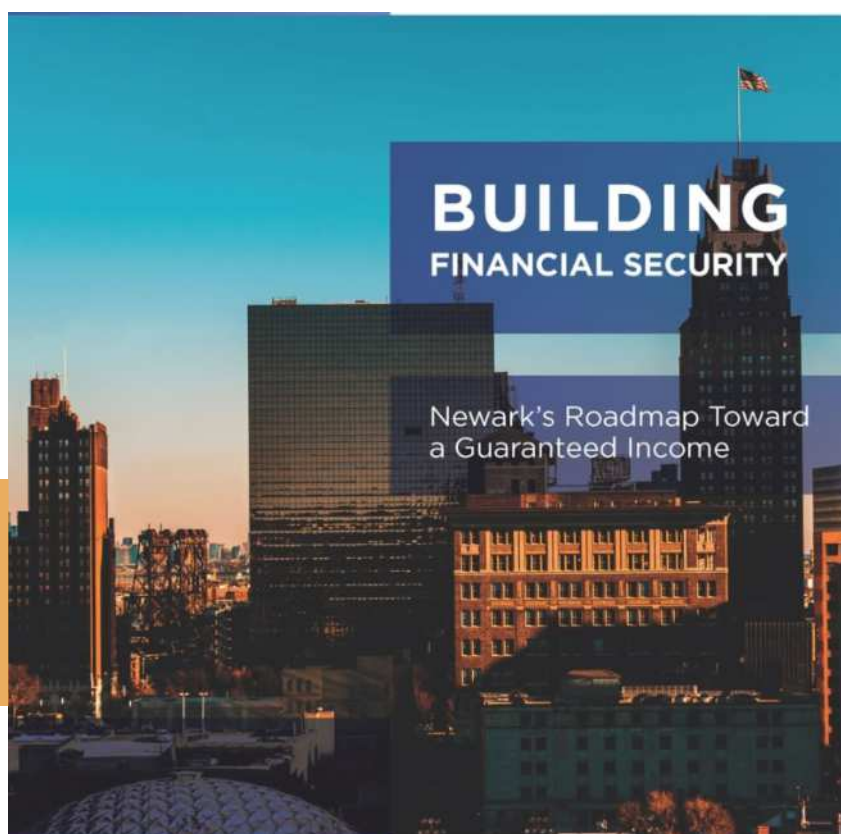
What I thought was going to be the coldest winter ever turned out to be one of the best," she said.

I am inviting my fellow Mayors to learn more and sign on to join Mayors for a Guaranteed Basic Income (MGI)!

Mayors must lead efforts to raise awareness and push policy on expanding unrestricted cash programs like guaranteed income in New Jersey. For more information on how to join, visit <https://www.mayorsforagi.org/>

Our residents deserve to have some financial breathing room as they tackle daily living expenses, and we can trust them to make the best decisions for themselves, just as they trust us to make good policies to help them.

Click here to take action



NJ Depends On Transit - It's Time To Fund It For The Long Haul

Authored by
Assemblywoman Shavonda Sumter, Chair, New Jersey Legislative Black Caucus
Mayor Ras Baraka, President, New Jersey Urban Mayors Association
Zoe Baldwin, NJ Director, Regional Plan Association

Lately, it seems like New Jerseyans who rely on public transit can't catch a break.

Unpredictable private bus service cuts, the looming threat of system-wide fare increases, and the State's failure to begin addressing the rapidly approaching fiscal cliff are destabilizing riders' lives and further straining New Jersey's already fragile transit system.

For decades, the state has failed to adequately and sustainably fund NJ Transit. The agency's role as a primary engine for economic development, as a critical component of equitable communities, and as an invaluable asset in the fight against climate change has been overlooked for far too long.

The ripple effects of investment in transit go well beyond mobility, producing tangible benefits such as reduced disparities in health outcomes and educational attainment, and increased air quality and redevelopment.

Urban legislators, mayors, and advocates employ every tool possible to keep our communities healthy, sustainable, and vibrant. Affordable and reliable transit brings us immeasurably closer to all three.

Every time you see a bus or a train, we want you to see a literal vehicle for economic mobility. We want you to think about how it is filled with people who have access to gainful employment and education only because of that service. We want you to think about how many local bus riders are essential workers who are forced to miss a day's wages or pay for an expensive private ride when their buses don't show up on time. And we want you to think about how those transit stations represent development opportunities to help attract new residents and businesses and to grow our municipal tax bases

As representatives of and advocates for transit riders and the vibrant communities they support, we cannot overstate that fixing NJ Transit is not an option, it is an imperative - literally. The State has just about eight months before the next state budget when the agency starts slipping off the edge of a fiscal cliff that balloons to nearly \$1 billion in Fiscal Year 2026.

And that number just maintains the status quo. We also need to factor in the cost of emergency stabilization service for recently canceled and at-risk bus routes such as the discontinued A+C lines in Jersey City and Coach USA O.N.E. bus service through East Orange, Orange, South Orange, Newark, and Elizabeth, and ensure we have contingency funds available for future cancellations. Ultimately, New Jersey should be aiming to expand transit access to meet our environmental, equity, and economic goals, but first, we must triage.

Our urban centers need immediate action to protect them from further service cuts because our residents rely on this service for more than just work - they use it to get to school, see family, and access critical services such as the Veterans Hospital. And that's an important note - many young students and their parents use the transit network to get to school every day. It's a safe bet that with less service, absenteeism for K - 12 students will skyrocket, especially in lower-income communities.

We need to treat our current scenario like the emergency it is. And we cannot address it solely through fare increases on riders. The State needs to identify funding sources that are both recurring and growing in order to ensure riders don't end up back in this same precarious place in a few years.

Now is the time to dig in and make our values clear.

We care about low-income families and working-class New Jerseyans who rely on public transit. We care about the environment. We care about making this a state where people of all backgrounds can live, work, and thrive whether or not they have access to a car. We will not stop working until equitable and sustainable solutions are finally in place.





Melanie R. Walter
New Jersey Housing and Mortgage
Finance Agency

Photo by: NJHMFA

NJHMFA to Use \$80M in Coronavirus Relief Funds for Urban Affordable Housing Preservation Program

Submitted by New Jersey Housing and Mortgage Finance Agency

TRENTON — New Jersey Housing and Mortgage Finance Agency (NJHMFA) has received \$80 million in federal American Rescue Plan (ARP) funds awarded to the State of New Jersey to support the preservation of affordable housing in New Jersey’s cities. NJHMFA will dedicate these funds to rehabilitate and increase the supply of affordable housing in designated municipalities across the Garden State.

On June 30, New Jersey Gov. Phil Murphy signed P.L.2023, Chapter 77, which established the Urban Preservation Program within NJHMFA. Part of a broader package of housing affordability laws signed that day, the funding bill was sponsored by Assemblyman Benjie Wimberly and Assemblywoman Verlina Reynolds-Jackson.

“We need to be prepared to meet the housing needs of our residents,” said Assemblywoman Verlina Reynolds-Jackson. “All New Jerseyans deserve access to safe, affordable housing. The Urban Preservation Program will help make this possible in cities like Trenton by restoring existing multi-family buildings and turning

them into desirable affordable housing. This is critical, and it will ensure our residents are able to find a home in their community that fits their budget.



Aerial shot of Newark

Photo by: NJHMFA

The agency has between now and December of next year to allocate the money set aside in the FY 2024 budget from the state’s Coronavirus State Fiscal Recovery Fund. The vehicle for the disbursement of these funds, the Urban Preservation Program (UPP), will permit developers to apply for funding to renovate existing apartments or to build new apartments to replace existing but dilapidated affordable housing. In exchange, developers commit to keeping the housing affordable for 45 years. Designated urban preservation municipalities will meet criteria including minimum population and housing density. UPP funds will be distributed to private for-profit and nonprofit housing developers and public housing authorities capable of developing and managing multifamily housing developments.

According to data compiled by the Public and Affordable Housing Research Corporation and the National Low Income Housing Coalition, state and federal programs provide assistance to 146,000 affordable rental homes and apartments for extremely low-income New Jerseyans. That may sound like a lot, but there is a shortage of more than 250,000 affordable homes statewide. We can’t build our way out of that deficit, so it’s critical to embrace all viable means of ensuring the preservation and production of affordable housing in our state.

That’s where the Urban Preservation Program comes in. Of the currently available units, it is estimated that seven percent, or about 10,750, will lose their affordability restrictions within the next five years, with 80 percent of those units needing immediate investment to keep them accessible and affordable. We cannot afford to lose those affordable homes, particularly in our major cities, which are already experiencing widespread gentrification and investor acquisition within established residential communities. In these challenging housing markets, it all, as it so often does, comes down to money.

“The Urban Preservation Program will help New Jersey cities keep neighborhoods affordable to the residents who already live there as well as to those seeking new opportunities within their borders while revitalizing longstanding affordable housing stock and its host communities,” said NJHMFA Executive Director Melanie R. Walter. “We thank Governor Murphy, the Late Lieutenant Governor Oliver, our legislative partners, and our stakeholders for providing the resources to meet this critical affordable housing need at such a pivotal time.”

By supporting the rehabilitation and construction of affordable housing units across New Jersey’s cities, the UPP initiative aims to address housing disparities, reduce homelessness, and contribute to economic stability. Successful stabilization and preservation of affordable housing spurs community development and improves the quality of life for residents and neighbors alike.

NJHMFA looks forward to partnering with New Jersey’s cities to make decisive and impactful investments in affordable housing that create a more equitable and prosperous future for the people of New Jersey.



From Square Feet to Cubic Feet – Changing the Geometry of the Garden State’s Agriculture

Submitted by G. Lamont Blackstone, CRX Principal G. L. Blackstone & Associates LLC

As previously reported in this medium by Mayor Hector Lora, the city of Passaic has adopted an ordinance supporting the introduction of vertical farming. Otherwise known as “controlled environment agriculture” (CEA), that endeavor is a form of urban agriculture conducted within buildings.

And elsewhere in the New Jersey tri-state area of DE, NJ, and NY, Delaware State Representative Sherry Dorsey Walker has likewise been an advocate for CEA in her state. Additionally, Harlem’s congressman, Adriano Espaillat, reintroduced the Harvesting Knowledge Act in July 2023, legislation that aims “to help prepare the next generation of leaders in agriculture.” Thus, political leadership is sprouting in the region to encourage this innovation. Consequently, my firm is exploring—with a team of economic development visionaries—vertical farming in the Hudson Valley of New York, an area already rich in conventional farming.

Of course, Newark became the tri-state region’s ground zero for this innovation by hosting the advent of AeroFarms and its aeroponic vertical farming technology. What I had witnessed of that venture several years ago (as a financing consultant to the operator’s landlord) has evolved into one of the most prominent vertical farming players in this emerging industry. And technology-forward operations elsewhere in the USA and Europe are establishing footprints on the East Coast. In fact, Europe may offer some of the most intriguing advances in this sector.

The geometry of vertical farming can be contrasted with legacy agriculture, which requires the extensive utilization of horizontal space—vast acres of irrigated land.



G. Lamont Blackstone, CRX, is an award-winning commercial real estate consultant and economic development practitioner. He is also board chair of Project REAP, the nation’s leading diversity and inclusion initiative serving the commercial real estate sector.

Photo by: G. Lamont Blackstone, CRX.

Using the vertical dimensions of commercial properties such as under-utilized warehouses, vacant big box stores, or even office buildings (perhaps the most vertical of structures), crops are cultivated in stacked files within a climate-controlled environment using a variety of modern technologies.

To illustrate the potential in office space, a major corporation is collaborating in Wisconsin with a local vertical farming operation. Rockwell Automation, a Fortune 500 company and global provider of automation technology, has announced plans to work with a technology startup to build an automated, indoor 7,300-square-foot hydroponic vertical farm by the summer of 2024. That facility will be housed on the fourth floor of Rockwell’s headquarters offices in Milwaukee. Reportedly a new technology developed by Fork Farms, the farm operator, will provide localized HVAC and power.

While vertical farming ventures differ in their technologies and their product focus (e.g., leafy greens, herbs, strawberries, and/or tomatoes), the common thread is produce grown using systems such as hydroponics, aeroponics, artificial intelligence, and LED lighting. These factors of production are assembled to control the growth cycle of crops in year-round conditions, often in locations proximate to dense population clusters. A prime example is the 100,000 square-foot vertical farm that opened recently in Compton, CA by Plenty, a California operator.

Therefore, what biology (i.e., the COVID virus) and technology (i.e., e-commerce digital platforms) have taken away from the spatial location of economic activity, botany and engineering innovations may well give back, thereby rescuing some of those empty spaces in New Jersey office buildings, warehouses, and shopping centers. This is the trajectory of vertical farming as an adaptive reuse solution for vacant commercial space.

Urban Children at Promise or at Risk

Submitted by Ana I. Berdecia
Director for Center for Positive Development for Urban Children

Some scholars/practitioners focus on at-risk children or youth and base interventions on their vulnerabilities rather than their strengths. The Center for the Positive Development of Urban Children at the John S. Watson Institute for Urban Policy and Research at Kean University examines the vulnerabilities and resiliency of urban children to advance their health, well-being, and educational outcomes as we connect and uplift the voices of educators, school leaders, and other community stakeholders. We focus on children at promise and at risk—the whole child and what supports are needed to help them reach their full potential positively. How can we eliminate the barriers that lead to promise and eliminate at-risk experiences for urban communities?

Children at Promise have their basic needs met, connect to a loving network of adults who see their potential, and encourage them to dream about a better future. “The first 1,000 days from conception to age two are increasingly being recognized as critical to the development of neural pathways that lead to linguistic, cognitive, and socio-emotional capacities that are also predictors of labor market outcomes later in life” (Manuelyan Atinc, Gustaffsson-Wright, 2003). The most compelling policy tool we have “to fight poverty and reduction of inequality” is early childhood programs and other community inventions. Early childhood programs provide quality prenatal care, proper nutrition, information on breastfeeding benefits, regular wellness visits that monitor growth, immunizations, and supported parenthood. Economists have proven that for every \$1 of investment in helping kids from low-income families access high-quality early education; we yield \$16 in benefits to society. What happens after third grade? What supports of promise are needed in elementary, middle, and high schools and beyond?

Educational scholars also agree that college and career readiness is not a high school issue but the grades often referred to as the “forgotten middle.”

Early Childhood Development: The Promise, the Problem, and the Path Forward

More on "The Forgotten Middle"

Our focus and interventions must start earlier. “Less attention, it seems, has been paid to the importance of the upper elementary and middle school and their role in preparing students for life after high school. Research shows that the progress toward college and career readiness that students have made by eighth grade is crucial to their future success” (ACT, 2008). Pre-adolescents and adolescents need mentoring programs, academic support (before, during, and after school), and apprentice programs/education reforms that support college and vocational options (trade schools and technical training). The ideology of “university for all” is shifting. They won’t all go to college, and students need preparation for the world of work.

We need to promise champions at every level from early childhood, elementary, middle school, high school education, and beyond to support the future workforce. We should carefully look for children’s brilliance and nurture it. Mayors, what issues do you see that impact the children at Promise in your community? Would you help me create an urban children’s policy agenda? For more information, contact me at aberdecia@kean.edu

Ana I. Berdecia, M.Ed. & Certified Coach. Is the director of the Center for the Positive Development of Urban Children and has over 35 years of experience in the social service and education sectors. Ana earned a Master's in Education with a concentration in early childhood, a BA in Sociology with a minor in Women's Studies, and a post-graduate certificate in Infant Mental Health. She has worked at the Watson Institute for 18 years.

“ We should carefully look for children’s brilliance and nurture it. ”

-Ana I. Berdecia, M.Ed. & Certified Coach



KEAN

Center for The Positive Development of Urban Children

The Center for the Positive Development of Urban Children (CPDUC) of the John S. Watson Institute for Urban Policy and Research at Kean University offers an integrated approach to improving the quality of life for urban children. The Center utilizes best practices, professional development, policy analysis and research to examine the vulnerabilities and resiliency of urban children to improve their health, well-being and educational outcomes.

Working Together to Benefit Urban Children

Our research focuses on young children ages 0-3, students in pre-K to twelfth grade, parents, teachers, school leaders and community stakeholders. The Center focuses on various policies and initiatives across New Jersey that leverage additional support in the state through policy briefs and studies; and serves on task forces and boards that directly influence public policy that affects children, families and the workforce in the education and social service sectors.

Urban transformation begins with listening to multiple stakeholders, reflecting on what we learn, and together, creating purposeful solutions that change lives and create opportunities for urban children to succeed in school and beyond.

Signature Programs

The New Jersey Cultural Competency and English Language Learners Institute and Mentoring Program

This program has a 14-year history of collaborating with educators to train, empower, and support them to become innovative cultural change agents. It offers a three-day professional development series to assist teachers in examining their own biases, planning for courageous conversations about the value of diversity in their own classrooms/schools, and adopting culturally and linguistically instructional strategies that support academic success while valuing students' cultural wealth. After the learning institute, teachers are assigned a cultural mentor who provides coaching and on-site technical assistance to create a culturally responsive learning environment that supports diverse students learning English.

Leadership Institute

After providing culturally responsive training to teachers for nine years, we developed this program to prepare leaders to take on the role of interim cultural coaches for their staff. This helps to sustain the program's principles after our mentors have completed the mentoring cycle. Principals, vice principals, supervisors, and master teachers attend a two-day professional development series like the teachers' institute with an added intensive coaching module that prepares leaders to coach their teachers using reflective questions and assessment tools. Both programs utilize cultural simulations to allow participants to dig deeper into the lives of our diverse population and English language learners.



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Policy and Research Focus Areas

The scope of our current policy and research work intends to:

- Elevate the visibility of the childcare industry as an economic driver for New Jersey.
- Engage leaders in government, business and education sectors to fortify the early childhood continuum from infant rooms to third grade and throughout the K-12 system.
- Support the hiring of a culturally and linguistically diverse workforce for schools to meet the needs of diverse students learning English as a second language.
- Sponsor culturally responsive professional development that is inclusive of the cultural/linguistic wealth each student brings to the learning table and can have courageous conversations about race.
- Promote the infusion of socio-emotional approaches and health practices that support both children and caregivers, focusing on the whole child and the whole educator/caregiver.
- Foster best practices to minimize toxic stress and close the learning gaps in urban children.
- Encourage school leaders to confront systematic racism and inspire their staff to address disparities.
- Endorse the adoption of coaching and mentoring practices at all levels of the educational and social service fields.
- Identify and support pathways for youth and young adults to have exposure to career pathways for working with children and families.



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Senator Booker Hosts Community Violence Intervention Summit, Announces Bicameral Legislation to Break the Cycle of Gun Violence

Submitted by New Jersey Urban Mayors Association

NEWARK, N.J. - U.S. Senator Cory Booker hosted a Community Violence Intervention Summit with urban mayors in New Jersey as part of his 2023 Jersey Summer Road Trip, an action-driven journey seeking to receive congressionally directed funding for critical projects in N.J., to address the ongoing issue of gun violence. During the summit, Senator Booker introduced the *Break the Cycle of Violence Act*, a bicameral legislation aimed at providing federal grants for evidence-based gun violence intervention and community-based prevention programs.

The summit brought together government leaders and leaders from New Jersey-based community violence intervention (CVI) organizations that have previously received federal grants to strengthen their initiatives. This summit was cohosted by the New Jersey Urban Mayors Association at the New Jersey Institute of Technology. Several urban mayors were present at the event, including Mayor Ras J. Baraka of Newark, currently the city that is nationally leading the implementation of strategies to combat gun violence, who discussed Newark's success in reducing gun violence through community-oriented intervention programs.

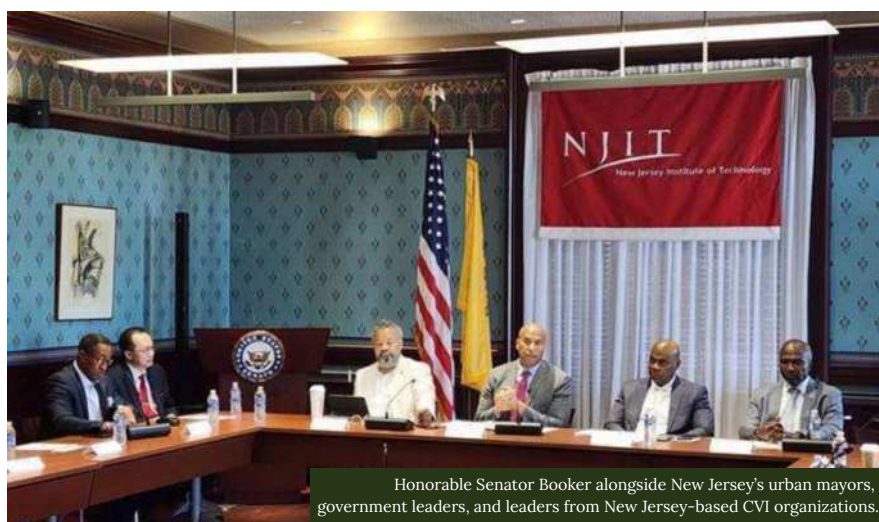
During this discussion, several topics were prioritized including the impact that gun violence has on Black and Brown community members and the costs of gun violence in the country which amount to close to \$280 billion per year. It also highlights how the *Break the Cycle of Violence Act* aims to fund programs that have successfully reduced gun violence in various communities, such as Richmond, California, and Massachusetts.

The Act would provide federal grants to community-based, nonprofit organizations and eligible units of local governments in areas with high homicide rates and compelling needs to address gun and group-related violence. The five billion dollar grant funding over eight years would be used for violence reduction initiatives, including hospital-based violence intervention programs (HVIP), evidence-based street outreach programs, and group violence intervention strategies. This bill was then presented by U.S. Representative Steven Horsford (D-NV), Chairman of the Congressional Black Caucus, to the House of Representatives. Which then focused on establishing several national offices and committees that would address the ongoing gun violence that threatens the peace and progress of so many of our communities.

[Read the Full Press Release for the Break the Cycle Act Here](#)

“We must take **immediate action** to address the gun violence epidemic that continues to rip families apart and ravage neighborhoods across our state and across the country... through innovative and evidence-based policies, we can curtail gun violence and save countless lives. This bicameral legislation will invest federal resources in community-based violence intervention and prevention programs that are proven to reduce gun violence, so we can confront this crisis head-on and keep our communities safe.”

- U.S. Senator Cory Booker (D-N.J.)



Honorable Senator Booker alongside New Jersey's urban mayors, government leaders, and leaders from New Jersey-based CVI organizations.

Photo by: Tenisha Malcolm, Director of Urban Mayors Policy Center

NJBPU'S COMMUNITY SOLAR PROGRAM MAKES SOLAR AFFORDABLE, ESPECIALLY FOR HOMEOWNERS AND RESIDENTS IN MULTI-UNIT BUILDINGS AND APARTMENTS

Submitted by Christine Guhl-Sadovy, President, New Jersey Board of Public Utilities

The New Jersey Board of Public Utilities (NJBPU) recently approved a permanent Community Solar Energy Program (CSEP) following a very successful two-year pilot program.

The Program will give more New Jersey residents, particularly people living in urban communities or who cannot afford the cost of solar installation, an opportunity to benefit from cost savings and access to clean energy through solar power, while helping protect the environment.

Community solar offers residents an option to purchase solar power from a list of registered community solar subscriber organizations in their geographic area. To help connect residents with subscriber organizations, NJBPU and Sustainable Jersey also launched the Community Solar Project Finder, an online search by zip code tool to locate community solar projects serving their community.

Since Governor Phil Murphy and the Legislature created the Community Solar Pilot Program in 2018, the Board has approved 150 projects totaling 243 megawatts (MW) of capacity. To date, 35 of those projects, totaling 55 MW, have reached commercial operation and provide over 7,000 New Jersey households the benefits of solar power, including financial savings. The Board expects more than 80 additional projects to begin serving customers within the next several months.

One of the key priorities for NJBPU is to ensure clean energy is affordable and accessible to all New Jerseyans, regardless of their income and socio-economic status. At the heart of it, community solar is about unlocking access to clean energy, especially in urban areas where many residents are renters and roof space for solar is limited. This program is a win-win for New Jersey residents and communities. I encourage Mayors and other elected officials to reach out to NJBPU to learn more about the program and how it can benefit your community.

The permanent community solar program builds on the success of the pilot program in advancing equity within the solar sector and requires all community solar projects to serve a minimum of 51 percent low and moderate-income (LMI) subscribers. The Board has also ensured that community solar subscribers will be guaranteed a minimum discount on their utility bills. Projects must state a guaranteed bill credit discount of no less than 15 percent in their registration, which will apply for the duration of customers' subscriptions.

Municipalities can help to promote community solar to their residents, including those who rent, do not have a roof suitable for solar, or cannot afford an installation. In addition, all projects applying for the CSEP must engage the communities they will serve and receive a letter of support from the municipal government, ensuring local backing and benefits. Municipalities interested in hosting their own community solar project can review Sustainable Jersey's How-To Guide to learn about getting started and supporting local solar jobs and energy savings.

The Board will open the CSEP application window in November 2023. The Board will open a second application period in the summer of 2024. New projects will be sited in all four major utility service territories, and in its initial launch, the permanent program will support enough community solar projects to enroll about 30,000 New Jersey subscribers.



CHRISTINE GUHL-SADOVY
PRESIDENT, NEW JERSEY BOARD OF PUBLIC UTILITIES

Click here for more information on our solar and other clean energy programs or visit njcleanenergy.com.

Photo by: New Jersey Board of Public Utilities

N.J. needs a flood of funding to weather catastrophic rainstorms

Submitted by New Jersey Future

Authored by Lindsey Sigmund

From flash flood warnings and commuting delays to mudslides and a state of emergency declaration, New Jersey experienced the latest in the series of anxiety-inducing rain storms last month.

July storms have triggered flash floods, severe storms, and marine watches and warnings that have impacted every corner of the state, and dropped torrential rain throughout the Northeast region.

New Jersey is a coastal state, with many streams and rivers running across our landscape, so we are no strangers to flooding. So, why are rain events like we saw this month still taking us by surprise?

Our roads, homes, businesses, stormwater systems, and other critical infrastructure were not built to function in the heavy rain events we have been experiencing. Just two inches of rain can have catastrophic consequences. These flooding events underscore the need for water infrastructure investments, and to build and upgrade our infrastructure using climate-informed data. We need to rethink what flood risk means; recent heavy rains demonstrate certain flooding areas have not previously flooded so severely, nor do they currently fall within our mapped floodplains.

With storm severity increasing and previously rare storm events becoming more common due to climate change, the effects and damages wrought by storms are set to increase, unless we adjust our course.

A great deal of effort and funding is dedicated to visible infrastructure like roads, bridges, and homes, yet our invisible infrastructure remains an afterthought. July's severe storms stress the necessity to dedicate more funding quickly in order to ensure basic public safety and health. What we prioritize now will yield continuing protections for people and infrastructure, and provide economic benefits for generations to come.

Read about the significant funding required to meet our statewide needs, the anticipated impacts of NJDEP's Inland Flood Protection Rule (which went into effect in August), and the expected release of subsequent phases of NJ PACT (Protecting Against Climate Threats), due later this year in the full online edition.

[Read the full-length op-ed online here](#)



Photo by: New Jersey Future

Street Flood in Camden, NJ

This op-ed, authored by Lindsey Sigmund, Mainstreaming Green Infrastructure program manager at New Jersey Future, was originally published in August 2023 via NJ.com. As flooding worsens due to climate change and aging infrastructure, it is more important than ever to update New Jersey's outdated stormwater infrastructure. Urban communities with a large amount of impervious cover are at a greater risk of flooding and need significant funding for water infrastructure upgrades. The second phase of NJ PACT is expected to be announced later this year and will address coastal regions. [Read the full-length op-ed online here.](#)

Arts Xchange

Submitted and written by
Dr. Alice Terrell-Bryant, Director of Communications & Storytelling
Clinton Hill Community Action

The audience broke into loud applause as all eyes were fixed on the artist, and art was celebrated in Clinton Hill. Malik Whitaker, a visual artist and life-long resident of Newark, inspired and amazed young and old alike with his art and an inspirational speech about the impact of art.

“We are exchanging trauma for drama. We are exchanging hurt and pain for joy and art. This cultural collaboration is lifting the Clinton Hill neighborhood and creating a sense of excitement that has not existed in quite some while,” said Mia X Johnson a single mother of three, Clinton Hill resident, artist, and Clinton Hill Community Action’s ArtsXchange Program Assistant.

Clinton Hill Community Action (CHCA) is a nonprofit organization that engages residents and partners to revitalize the Clinton Hill neighborhood in Newark. New Jersey Performing Arts Center (NJPAC), the state’s premier arts venue, named CHCA its first community arts hub.

The goal of this collaboration between NJPAC and CHCA is to shine a spotlight on local talent and nurture the creativity of residents of all ages and abilities. The pilot launched on April 27, 2023, at the Belmont Runyon School with a sold-out kickoff. NJPAC acknowledges that this is the beginning of a long-term commitment. Together, CHCA and NJPAC — with the assistance of residents and professional producers — are co-creating two arts events per month with and for the community. The South Ward ArtXChange is a springboard to expand more community-based arts hubs throughout the City, bringing NJPAC’s premier programming closer to home for city residents.

Together with NJPAC, CHCA has held eight curated arts events planned by and hosted by neighborhood residents. There is something for everyone. The kickoff event featured the Belmont Runyon chorus, Malcolm X Shabazz Dance ensemble, and Grammy Award-winning producer Jerry ‘Wonda’ Duplessis. Since then there has been Music Day, a Juneteenth Festival, a playwright class, Jazz in the Street, and a playwright festival.

Mayor Ras J. Baraka has honored his pledge to revitalize the City of Newark through the arts and the vibrancy they bring. “In Newark, we speak many languages, but the language of art transcends them all,” said Mayor Baraka. “Art provokes us and coaxes us into examination and new perspectives. It sparks curiosity and inspires exploration of the unknown. It instills awe and wonder within us, plunges the depths of our human feelings, and renews us with hope and resolve. For as long as Newarkers have belonged to each other, we have communicated through art and become a community through art. This important partnership with Clinton Hill Community Action showcases how the arts express who we are in Newark, and where we are going.”

Residents will have the opportunity to engage in cultural activities at four locations - Gant-Gilbert Arts Collective (505 Clinton Avenue), Belmont Runyon School, Mildred Helms Park, and The Clinton Hill Early Learning Center (30 Demarest St).

The Geraldine L. Dodge Foundation has provided additional funding which will allow Clinton Hill Community Action to further support the arts and engage the broader community in producing a creative placemaking plan for the neighborhood, crystalizing the broader plan for leveraging the arts as a tool for community development.



Get involved!

www.clintonhillaction.org

Dr. Alice Terrell Bryant

Director of Communications & Storytelling

208 Chadwick Avenue

Newark, New Jersey 07108

Phone: 201-228-0757

Email: storytelling@clintonhillaction.org



The people of Newark enjoy Jazz in the streets.
Photo by: Clinton Hill Community Action.



The people of Newark enjoy Jazz in the streets.
Photo by: Clinton Hill Community Action.



Honorable Mayor Ras J. Baraka greets the crowd at a CHCA event.
Photo by: Clinton Hill Community Action.

“We are exchanging trauma for drama. We are exchanging hurt and pain for joy and art. This cultural collaboration is lifting the Clinton Hill neighborhood and creating a sense of excitement that has not existed in quite some while...”

- Mia X Johnson

music

“Art provokes us and coaxes us into examination and new perspectives. It sparks curiosity and inspires exploration of the unknown. It instills awe and wonder within us...” (cont. below)



Violinist. Photo by: Clinton Hill Community Action.

ArtsXchange Kick off Belmont Runyon School Chorus.
Photo by: Clinton Hill Community Action.



Visual artist - Malik Whitaker.
Photo by: Clinton Hill Community Action.

"...plunges the depths of our human feelings, and renews us with hope. For as long as Newarkers have belonged to each other, we have communicated through art and become a community through art. This important partnership with Clinton Hill Community Action showcases how the arts express who we are in Newark, and where we are going." - Honorable Mayor Ras J. Baraka

UNITY

Senator Wynona Lipman's Centennial Celebration Continues With Year-End Tribute and Exhibition

Submitted and written by
Celeste Bateman & Sophie Cipolla



Senator Wynona Lipman

The Wynona Lipman Project and Blue Butterfly Arts & Media, a New Jersey-based arts advocacy nonprofit, announce the continuation of the Centennial Celebration honoring the life and contributions of Senator Wynona Lipman (1923-1999).

On Saturday, November 18, 2023, the New Jersey Historical Society will host the opening of the exhibit *Stronger Than Steel: The Wynona Lipman Story* at 1:00 PM, followed by a talk and book signing by DC Bureau Chief for *The Griot* April D. Ryan at 2:00 PM. The Centennial Celebration will conclude on Saturday, December 2, 2023, with a public screening of the documentary helmed by award-winning producer and director Celeste A. Bateman.

"This exhibit will present an in-depth examination of the impact Senator Lipman had on the State of New Jersey in the 20th century and beyond, and it's a show that people will remember and cherish for years to come," curator Mansa K. Mussa stated. The exhibit will inform and inspire attendees about the greater context in which Senator Lipman worked on behalf of our communities.

The exhibit opening will be followed by a talk and book signing by Washington, DC Bureau Chief of *The Griot* April D. Ryan at 2:00 PM at Nico's Kitchen at the New Jersey Performing Arts Center. Ms. Ryan, whose most recent book *Black Women Will Save the World: An Anthem* will be on sale at the event, is an acclaimed journalist and award-winning author with over 25 years of experience as a White House Press Correspondent and political analyst. With a groundbreaking career spanning five presidential administrations, coupled with her valuable perspective as the only African-American female reporter from the White House, she is a trailblazer with a unique lens to shed light on the political careers of women like Senator Lipman.

She was the Senator Wynona Lipman Chairholder (2017-2018) at the Center for American Women in Politics (CAWP) at the Eagleton Institute of Politics, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, NJ.

In addition to influencing individuals such as April Ryan in the fight for justice, Lipman's legacy has laid the foundation for organizations to continue the meaningful work that she started. Wynona's House, an Essex County Child Advocacy Center at 185 Washington Street in downtown Newark, is one of the organizations highlighted in the Senator's Centennial Celebration events.

"The Wynona Lipman Project will ensure that present and future generations know how meaningful and transformative Sen. Lipman's life and legacy are to our work in the child welfare and community service spaces, and how youth will see much of themselves in her," Wynona's House CEO Dominic Prophete shared. "Sen. Lipman left us a blueprint on how to listen to one another, support our community, and 'speak the truth' to those who make decisions that impact our daily lives."



The Griot April D. Ryan
Washington, DC Bureau Chief



NJ CONVENING UNITE HEALTHCARE AND COMMUNITY LEADERS TO TACKLE SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH

Submitted by Unite Us
Written by Roseline Atte

NEW JERSEY, OCTOBER 20, 2023 - The convening on October 13th, organized by Hackensack Meridian Health and Unite Us, was a significant milestone in transforming healthcare in New Jersey. Bringing together leaders from hospitals and community-based organizations, the event aimed to address the social determinants of health, which include the conditions in which people live, work, learn, worship, and age, and to discuss how community stakeholders can collaborate to enhance the well-being of communities throughout the state and eliminate disparities for New Jersey residents.

“Hackensack Meridian Health was honored to host this important event and gather with like-minded organizations that share our dedication to addressing social determinants of health,” said Nicole Harris-Hollingsworth, EdD, MCHES, vice president of Social Determinants of Health at Hackensack Meridian Health. “Coordination and collaboration are key to tackling the social hurdles preventing our communities from experiencing their best health. We look forward to turning this fruitful conversation into action that will benefit all New Jersey residents.”

The event's main objective was to explore innovative strategies for collaborative SDoH screening and needs assessment approaches. Attendees had engaging discussions and shared their experiences and insights about the challenges posed by SDoH. The importance of standardized SDoH documentation, equitable access to social resources, and reduced health disparities were also highlighted.

A significant outcome of the event was the formation of specialized workgroups that transformed insights and recommendations into actionable plans. These workgroups focused on specific facets of DoH and served as catalysts for change. Their progress and findings will be presented at the next convening scheduled for January 2024.

“When leaders from different sectors come together to discuss how care delivery can be transformed to address individuals' unmet needs, it is truly amazing to see what can happen,” said Roseline Atte, Customer and Community Success Associate Director at Unite Us. “Coordinated care with a shared goal of improving community health can profoundly impact the well-being of individuals and their communities.”

The convening achievements were the result of the shared commitment and passion of all the participants. It was inspiring to see their dedication to improving the health and well-being of their communities. As we aim for better healthcare access and improved SDoH outcomes, the NJ Convening on Increasing Hospital-Community Partnerships serves as an excellent example of the power of collective determination and collaboration.



#HouseNJ

Join the Campaign!

Submitted by The Housing and Community Development Network of NJ



JUMPSTART TO HELP BIPOC DEVELOPERS EXPAND AFFORDABLE HOMEOWNERSHIP

The Jumpstart Program developed by the Housing and Community Development Network of NJ (the Network), with the support of NJ's Department of Community Affairs, provides comprehensive training and certification for quality affordable housing production.



PROGRAM DETAILS

Utilizing experts in the field to serve as trainers and consultants, Jumpstart participants will receive comprehensive training, stepping through all phases of the development process including planning, acquisition, financing, project management and more. Participants will also learn about developing a business plan, marketing tools, community outreach, and preparation of potential homeowners through housing counseling.



Multi-year program focusing on homeownership development to help close NJ's racial wealth gap.



Available to nonprofit community developers with a focus on Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) developers



Supported by the NJ Affordable Housing Trust Fund and facilitated by Rhonda Coe, of R.B. Coe Consulting LLC.



TO APPLY, VISIT:
www.hcdnnj.org/jumpstart.com

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PROGRAM OVERVIEW:



10 Hours
Environmental Justice



15 Hours
Offshore Wind Fundamentals



30 Hours
OSHA 30 Hr. Certification



10 Hours
10 Hour Site Safety Training



75 Hours
Hands-on Construction Skills Training



10 Hours
Professional Development



\$1,500 Stipend
Participants will receive \$1,500 upon completion of the entire program



TRAINING LOCATION

The Salvation Army Newark Westside Corps 699 Springfield Avenue Newark, NJ, 07103



ELIGIBILITY

- Must be a New Jersey resident
- Must be ages 18 and older
- Must undergo an interview



INFO SESSION SCHEDULE

October 19th: 1PM-2PM (Virtual)
October 27th: 1PM-2PM (In-Person)



PROGRAM SCHEDULE

- Monday - Friday 9AM-3PM
- November 6th - December 20th
- 6 Weeks

APPLY HERE:



<https://tinyurl.com/NJEJAOSW>
@ NJOSW@soulfulsynergy.org

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- 3** Complete and sign the renewal packet and send it back on time.

Return your renewal packet 30 days after receiving it. *If you miss the deadline to return your renewal packet, you have 90 days to be reconsidered.* If you need help completing your packet, contact NJCA for assistance.

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If you no longer qualify for NJ FamilyCare, you may enroll, within 120 days, in a low cost health coverage plan through the ACA marketplace. 9 out of 10 people who apply qualify for financial assistance to reduce their health care costs.

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Contact New Jersey Citizen Action for FREE assistance renewing your NJ FamilyCare or enrollment in the GetCoveredNJ marketplace. Call us at (888) 654 - 3893 or email us at GetCovered@NJCitizenAction.org



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**Submissions for our Winter 2023 issue are due December 1.
To contribute to the next edition, contact Keisha Griffin
at watson@kean.edu**

To learn more about NJUMA, visit us at

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