



NEWARK LAUNCHES *NEWARK HOPE VILLAGE*, AN INNOVATIVE CONTAINER SHELTERING PROGRAM FOR RESIDENTS IN NEED
Low-barrier, low-threshold sheltering program allows homeless and at-risk residents to come-as-they-are

Newark, NJ – March 8, 2021 – Mayor Ras J. Baraka; Sakinah Hoyte, City of Newark’s Homelessness Czar; Mike Loganbill, VP and COO of Homes 4 the Homeless; and Craig Mainor, Executive Director of United Community Corporation launched ***NEWARK Hope Village*** today. The innovative 90-day program using converted containers to shelter residents who are at-risk or without addresses is located at **79 Newark Street in Newark**.

The facility of seven containers will shelter 24 homeless individuals from the Penn Station corridor. The containers, which have been converted into code-compliant modular residences, consist of 20 dorm-style rooms, and two utility structures with private shower rooms and a multipurpose structure. The rooms have simple furnishings including a heater, bunk bed with extra storage and a small dresser. Funding is being provided by the CARES Act, the Essex County Division of Community Action through the State of New Jersey Code Blue Grant, and the City of Newark.

“Many of our residents without addresses have been traumatized by the system that was created to serve them,” Mayor Baraka said. “Housing is the key, but we must first re-establish trust with those who have been scarred. ***NEWARK Hope Village*** will provide a welcoming atmosphere, where our most vulnerable have an opportunity to re-engage in services in a safe and therapeutic shelter. I will continue to work on pioneering strategies to end homelessness in our city in partnership with public, private, and non-profit partners.”

NEWARK Hope Village is a no requirements-come-as-you-are safe sleeping village where people experiencing homelessness can have access to shelter and supportive services including assistance with transition to permanent housing. Designed to attract individuals that are shelter adverse and have been disengaged from traditional shelters and supportive homeless services, the service model aims to transition chronically homeless individuals through targeted street outreach to an atmosphere within the village that can promote healthy living and a continuum of social service supports.

This container shelter village is the first of its kind, in the City of Newark, and one of a few charitable container projects addressing homelessness in the United States to meet the International Code Council (ICC) building codes for safe human habitation.

“Mayor Baraka is committed to imploring targeted strategies to re-engage our chronically homeless populations into services, and always through collaboration. This was truly a joint effort with many partners bringing forth collective resources to address this critical issue. Our service model taskforce aimed to leverage the safe and tranquil village atmosphere, with the various service provision offerings including: substance abuse and behavioral health services, intensive case management and housing navigation to promote healthy living and ultimately a smooth transition to permanent housing,” said Ms. Hoyte.

Various agencies convened weekly, to tailor a unique service model, in preparation of the pilot launch. Led by the City of Newark’s Office of Homeless Services, agencies included United Community Corporation, Bridges Outreach, Inc., the Mental Health Association of Essex Morris, *the* Northern NJ Medication-Assisted Treatment Center of Excellence (COE), Integrity House, Essex County Division of Community Action, and the Essex County Continuum of Care.

The design of ***NEWARK Hope Village*** and its spaces are critical to the program’s overall success. They have partnered with Newark natives Andre Leon and Robert Ramon of the Rorschach Collective to paint the village in bright hues, and warm, vibrant gradients.

Collaborating designers Chantal Fischzang, Assistant Professor, Rutgers University - Newark and Rebecca Pauline Jampol, Co-Director, Project for Empty Space, have created a visual system that radiates the initiative’s mission throughout. Using language and iconography emphasizing care, their design magnifies warmth and welcome. Upon checking into a residence, one will be greeted with positive messages on floors and walls, and receive outerwear and a toiletries package, designed with affirming language.

“It is an honor to work in a city that supports all of its residents and is creatively developing thoughtful and truly helpful space for under-the-radar communities,” said Chantal Fischzang and Rebecca Pauline Jampol.

The village launched with the help of the United Community Corporation, Homes 4 the Homeless, Custom Containers 915, the Essex County Division of Community Action, the Newark Housing Authority, New Jersey Department of Community Affairs, Project for Empty Space, Rorschach Collective, Project My Brother’s Keeper, and UCC YouthBuild. Newark Working Kitchens will serve lunch to the residents each day of the program.

The idea for this model of rapid-response housing was first proposed by Ms. Hoyte, the City’s former COO Natasha Rogers, and California-based non-profit, Homes 4 the Homeless. Homes 4 the Homeless is composed of volunteer designers, builders, and advocates for tiny house communities as rapid-response, transitional housing to help with disaster relief and chronic homelessness.

With more than 290,000 residents, Newark is the largest city in New Jersey and like many cities, shelter space is limited. The COVID-19 pandemic has added an urgent need for non-congregate housing with each resident having their own private space and through ***NEWARK Hope Village***, the City is adding shelter space for both homeless individuals and those displaced by disasters, such as fires or flooding, or in need of “Code Blue” winter shelter.

“We are proud to be part of such a rapid response to help people who are living outside in the cold,” Homes 4 the Homeless Founder Steve Schneider said. “When people are freezing to death, each day matters. Having the right team in place gives you the ability to do things that wouldn’t normally be possible, and in this case, we are solving this problem quickly and efficiently. It has been truly remarkable to see how all the support has come together.”

The designers at Homes 4 the Homeless chose modular steel structures for their robust construction because they are secure and have the capability for rapid deployment and redeployment. The structures were manufactured and built to code by Custom Containers 915 – based out of El Paso, Texas – with a timetable of under 90 days from contract to delivery. Homes 4 the Homeless has and will continue consulting with the City of Newark on project management, design, budgeting, site planning, contracting the manufacturing, furnishing the units and identifying supportive services.

United Community Corporation (UCC), the community action agency of the City of Newark is incorporating the community into its case management, supportive services and local outreach in partnership with the service model taskforce convened to develop the programmatic services. These agencies will work collaboratively through a comprehensive low-barrier service model to work to transition residents from shelter to home.

We are 100-percent in on this project,” UCC Executive Director Craig Mainor said. “Our mission is to help the plight of the poor in this city and help them move from desperate situations to stable opportunities. That’s what we do. I’m honored to be able to partner with the city on an issue as important as homelessness. We are ready to move mountains in order to end poverty in the City of Newark.”

Bloomberg Associates consulted on this project and will help to measure the pilot’s success, at no cost to the City. The Newark Housing Authority partnered with the City to provide housing vouchers for the shelter residents. If proven successful and philanthropic donations are substantial, the City will aim to add containers to the inventory and retrofit the current containers into housing.

Corporate and philanthropic partners interested in contributing to the ***NEWARK Hope Village*** container sheltering program, to help house Newark’s homeless, please contact Sakinah Hoyte at hoyses@ci.newark.nj.us or Kevin Callaghan at callaghank@ci.newark.nj.us.