

Suburban Solutions:

Bridging Policy & Practice in Unsheltered Homelessness

NAEH LA - Session 2.09
26 Feb 2025
4:15pm to 5:30pm



What we'll be talking about:

This session explores how suburban municipalities can effectively address unsheltered homelessness through collaborative approaches between state policy, local government, and service providers.

Leaders from New Jersey share how they've aligned state initiatives, CoC planning, and local political will to create compassionate, sustainable, and scalable solutions.

We'll also be learning how highlighted suburban municipalities overcame common barriers to implement no-barrier services and rapid housing responses as part of a broader state strategy to reduce unsheltered system inflow into a large urban center (City of Newark).

Learning Objectives:

Participants will learn strategies for aligning state policy, CoC planning, and municipal initiatives to create effective responses to unsheltered homelessness in suburban communities, including specific examples of how New Jersey restructured state programs and funding to support local engagement with unsheltered populations.

Participants will identify practical approaches for building political will and community support for unsheltered initiatives in suburban settings, examining real-world examples of how elected officials successfully navigated community concerns while implementing compassionate homeless services.

Participants will explore methods for developing and implementing no-barrier services that meet both political and operational needs, including specific strategies for adapting urban solutions to suburban contexts while maintaining program effectiveness and community support.

Key Takeaways:

- 1) Ending homelessness requires strategic alignment across multiple levels: state policies must harmonize with Continuums of Care and county coalitions, while maintaining programmatic flexibility to accommodate local political realities and resources.
- 2) Suburban homelessness demands distinct solutions from urban models. These approaches must balance two core messages: that homelessness is both morally unacceptable and practically solvable within suburban communities.
- 3) Low-barrier services can thrive in suburban settings when programs actively engage the community and address misconceptions with evidence-based data. This includes confronting common myths, such as the false assumption that all people experiencing homelessness have mental illness.

Our Panel



Dean Dafis, Esq.

Councilmember
Maplewood Township



Kasey Vienckowski

Senior Associate
Monarch Housing
Associates



Delia Hamlet

Councilmember
City of Summit



Michael Callahan

Director
Office of Homelessness
Prevention



Pam Baker

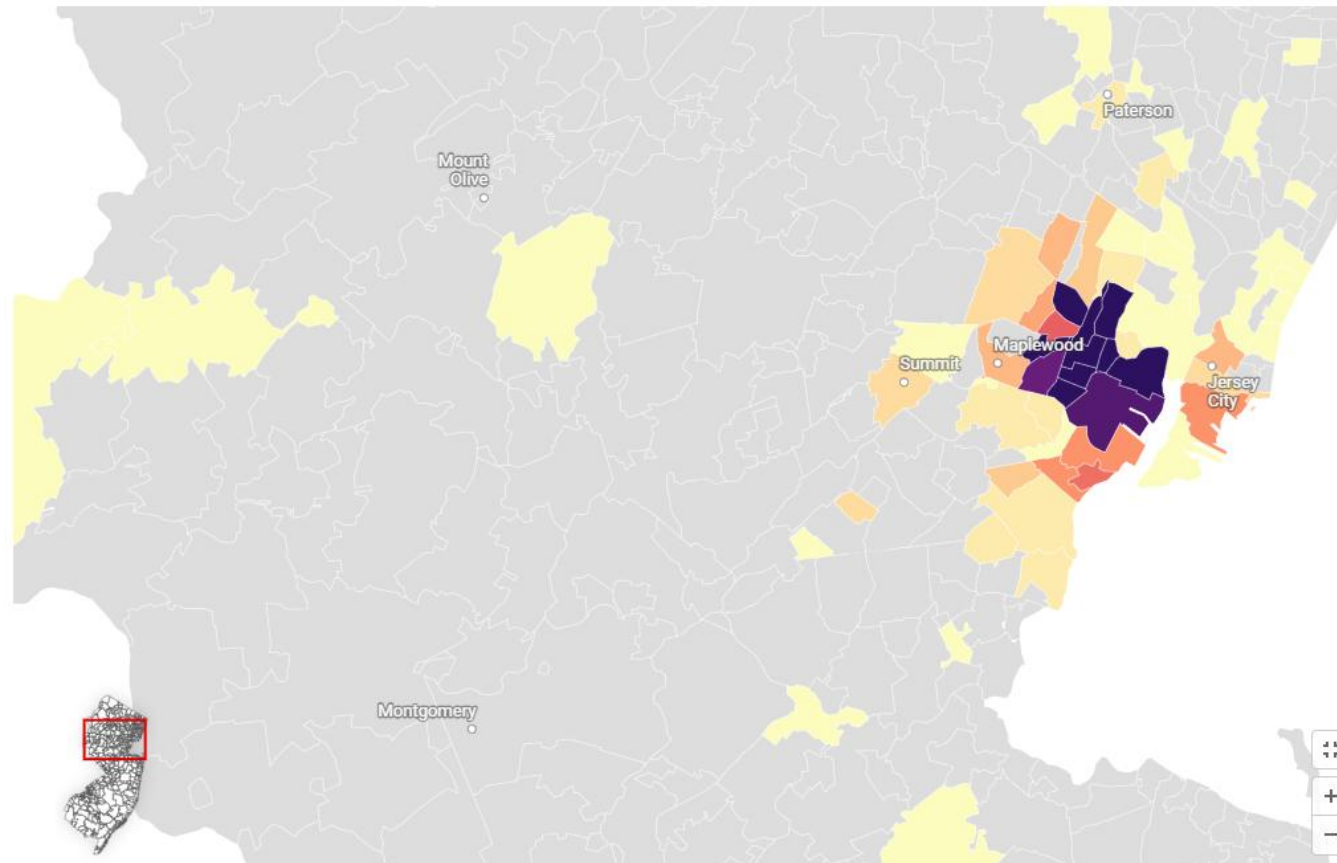
Chief Impact Officer
Collaborative Support Programs of NJ

What about Newark?

City of Newark: Newly Unsheltered (2025) Inflow - CYTD 1.1 to 2.9.25

Map shows inflow to unsheltered outreach provider operating in Newark where a person newly homeless had a minimum of 1 unsheltered contact in 2025.

of distinct persons newly entering into homelessness in 2025



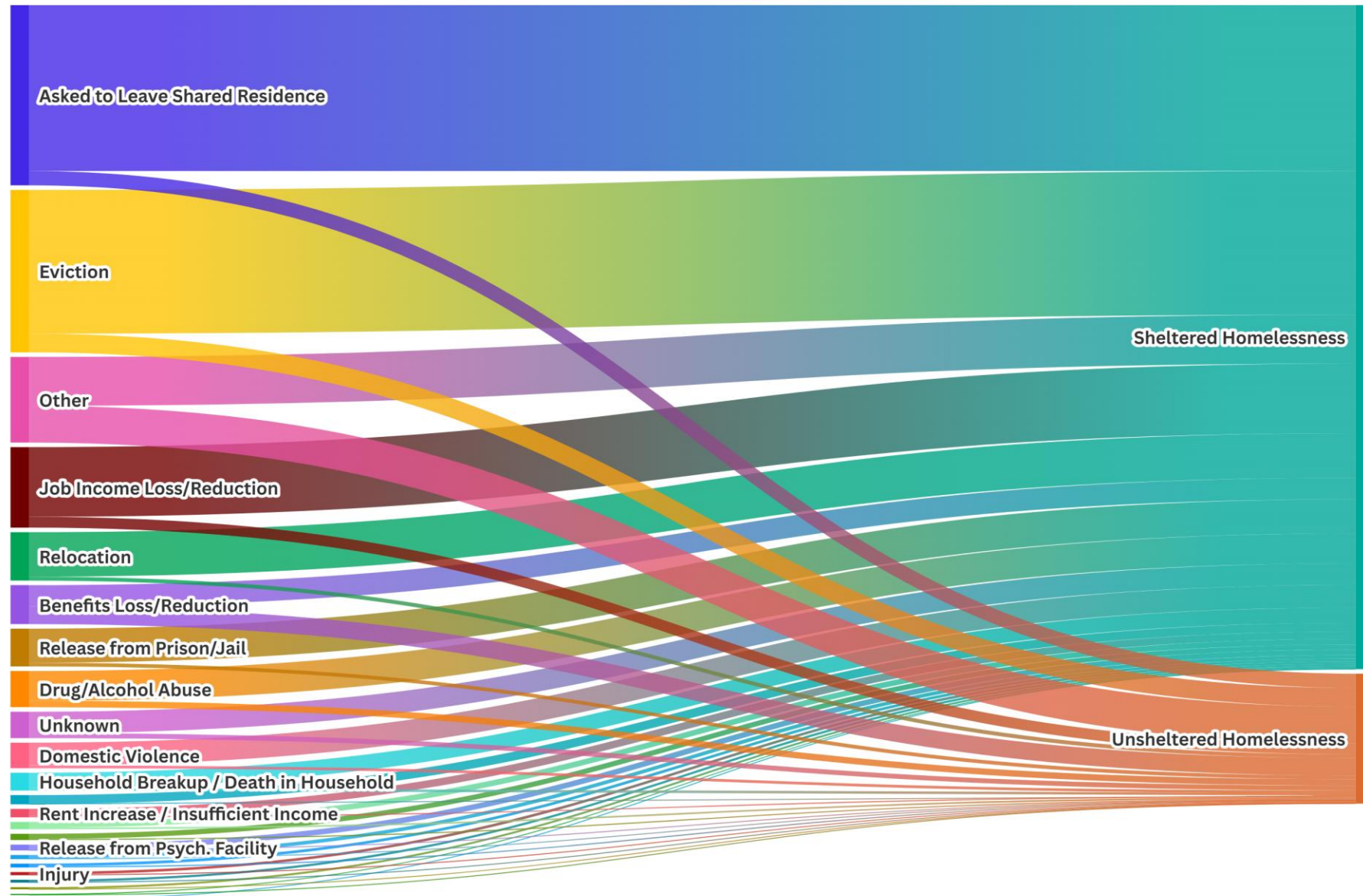
Map: OHP/DCA • Source: NJ HMIS & DCA • Map data: © Esri, TomTom North America, Inc., United States Postal Service • Created with Datawrapper



We cannot end homelessness in our urban centers without addressing the suburban and rural feeder systems.

System Inflow: Causes of Homelessness in New Jersey 2024 - 1.1 to 12.31

New Homelessness Only - (1st Episode) in 2024



Source: DCA & NJ HMIS

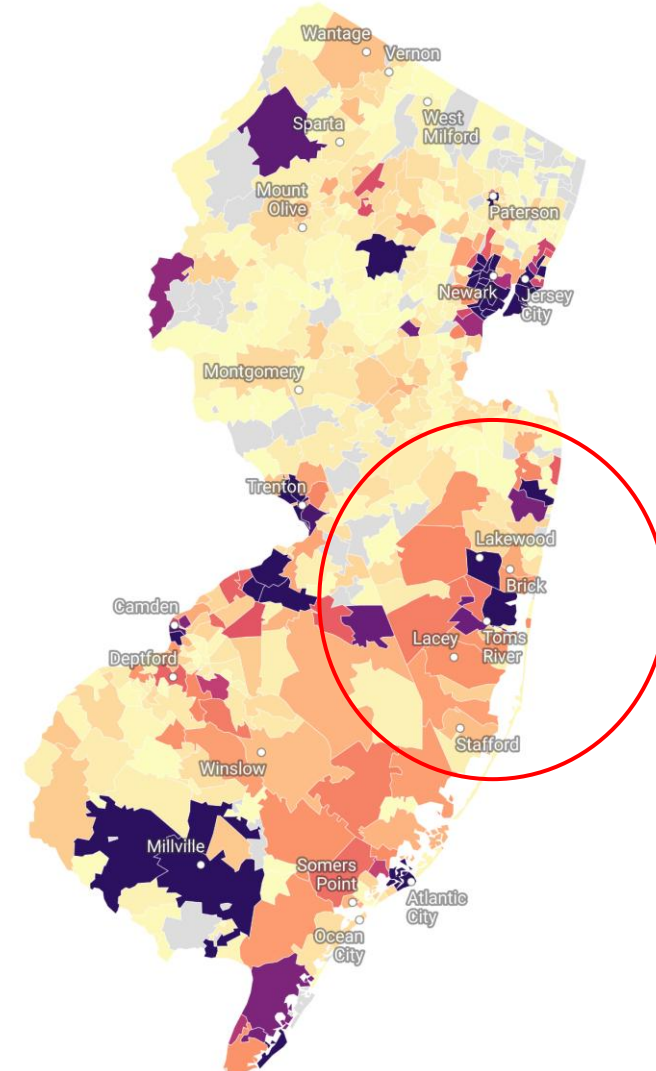
Pivoting a system

- Ocean County had highest density and census of homeless encampments of all counties in NJ in 2024.
- Arguably, the most challenging political dynamics of any rural and suburban area in NJ
- Homelessness, its causes, and who was providing services to resolve that homelessness was a major issue in at least 3 large municipalities
- Following Grants Pass, criminalization efforts were stopped in 2 out of 3 municipalities
 - Without continued progress, risk remains high

2024 NJ Homelessness System Inflow: By ZIP

Map shows the place (ZIP) where a person new to the system in 2024 previously lived prior experiencing homelessness in the last year.

of distinct persons entering homelessness in 2024 by ZIP of last permanent address



Map: DCA/OHP • Source: DCA/OHP & NJ HMIS • Map data: © Esri, TomTom North America, Inc., United States Postal Service • Created with Datawrapper



2014 EHG Formation

CoC Lead Agency

CoC Executive Board is non-profits Board



2014-2021

System Strategic Planning

Oversight of implementation of Coordinated Entry and Code Blue



2021 County Awards Homeless and Housing Insecurity Program (ARP funds) EHG- fiscal/oversight entity

Development of county's first
Emergency Shelter

Expansive low-barrier RRH
program

City of Summit



Summit, NJ

Demographics & Population

Total Population	22,253
Median Age	41.2
Bachelor's Degree or Higher	74.8%

Housing & Income

Median Household Income	\$171,331
Median Home Value	\$912,400
Owner-Occupied Housing Rate	76.2%

Transportation

Average Commute Time	38.4 minutes
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Operation Summit Sprint

- Politically divisive issue in 2023 & 2024 election cycle
- High quality By-name List (BNL) of 25 long-term (>80% of persons length of homelessness >4 years), chronically unsheltered persons with high acuity and multiple co-morbidities
- Lessons learned from past efforts (and failures) used to drive task organization and lines of effort
 - Drew clear distinction between charity and a focused, intentional effort
- Daily standups, weekly case conferencing, and council report outs to special task force drove both accountability for services and outcomes
- Able to stave off punitive measures (e.g., hostile architecture & criminalization) by building in public, showing progress, and re-prioritizing resources and views on homelessness



■ ■ **Summit Volunteer**
■ ■ *First Aid Squad*



Operation Summit Sprint

Results:

- Approaching functional zero for chronic unsheltered homelessness in Summit
- Increased community capacity (to include faith-based organizations) to respond to Code Blue and emergent overnight sheltering needs
- Standardized case management practices to prevent splitting and increase housing outcomes
- Permanent Triage Team aligning City:
 - Mental health services
 - Substance-use services
 - Foundation \$ to support unfunded gaps or pilots (master leasing)
 - Leveraging long-term case management services to ensure non-reoccurring/recidivism



■ ■ **Summit Volunteer**
■ ■ *First Aid Squad*



Maplewood Township



Maplewood Township, NJ

Demographics & Population

Total Population	25,726
Median Age	39.8
Bachelor's Degree or Higher	71.5%

Housing & Income

Median Household Income	\$156,292
Median Home Value	\$662,300
Owner-Occupied Housing Rate	72.4%

Transportation

Average Commute Time	41.2 minutes
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The Local Why

Empathy /
compassion

Local government
solving local
problems

local public
health duty

Local Barriers

Political Will

Not everyone aligned at first: “Why not go to the county?” and “What if this brings us more unhoused people?”

“Is this something local government should be doing, or paying for?”

“We don’t have shelters like urban centers”

RFP Process

Stigma: Business owners, residents



Holistic Solutions

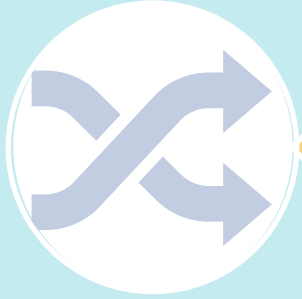


Local Provider /
Street Outreach /
Supportive
Services

Local Public
Health Officials



Unique, Tailor-Made Solutions



Integrated with existing local resources



Implemented by and overseen by local public health officials



Fit local and individual's needs

WHAT HAVE WE PROVIDED SO FAR?



**12 Peer Wellness
Respite referrals**



**16 Community
Wellness Center
Connections**



**9 Transportation
Services**



**12 Diversion
Referrals**



**7 Housing
Applications**



**7 DMV
Appointments**



**7 Food
Assistance**



**5 Food Stamp/Cash
Applications**



**5 Anchor
Applications**



**1 Resume
Assistance**



**1 Relocated
Items for Library**



**1 SSI Card
Application**



1 SSI Benefits



DIVERSION SERVICES



 **Maplewood, NJ**

To date, 12 Diversion Referrals have been made.

3 have been completed & processed

4 Referrals for Security Assistance

1 GED assistance referral received

3 unable to reach but will continue to follow up

- All 3 families were provided backrent assistance
- Legal assistance was also provided
- 1 Lockout was reversed to allow for re-entry into their unit

- 1 will be processed and moving in on Nov. 15th
- 5 individuals are actively looking for units and will be processed once ready

How Our Teams Deliver Services



Outreach should be intentional and it should be focused on what that person sees as being their need - not what you think the need is.



All our services are delivered and made possible by successful relationship building with the person we serve.



We use a low barrier approach and promote a Housing First culture throughout the agency and outreach teams.

How Our Teams Deliver Services



We assist all individuals regardless of active substance use or mental health challenges and incorporate harm reduction services whenever possible.



Have consistency and NO over promising - this is a very common issue that we see often.



Never give up on the person served and continue to try and engage until successful.



No photos - this can be extremely harmful to your relationship.

WE PARTNER AND WORK COLLABORATIVELY WITH OTHER PROVIDERS, CITY, COUNTY, AND STATE PARTNERS TO ENHANCE RESOURCES AND END HOMELESSNESS RAPIDLY.

- Creating a plan that everyone follows and having ongoing meetings to review the residents and their progress.
- Using creative rehousing plans that lead to more permanent housing solutions.
- No coercion by using the fear factor and intimidation - such as enforcement - and create as safe as a space possible. This is already stressful enough.
- A “Yes” is all you need; we move from camps to housings. IF THEY ARE READY, SO ARE WE!



How Does This Work in an Encampment?

Hear our Monmouth and Ocean County encampment successes!

How Can We Help



We provide innovative solutions to help persons served prevent or end their homelessness as quickly as possible.



CSPNJ also assists with housing readiness - much needed documentation and ID services, social services connection, phone assistance, and linkage to all other services such as medical, mental health and detox/substance use linkage.

We do not turn anyone away no matter how challenging the case may be.

Questions?

