

# **Building Hope Together: 2019 Annual Plan**

**New Britain's Permanent Work Plan to End  
Homelessness**



**Mayor Erin Stewart & the BHT Executive Committee**

**Summer 2019**



# CITY OF NEW BRITAIN

EST. 1871

OFFICE OF THE MAYOR  
THE HONORABLE ERIN E. STEWART

[WWW.NEWBRITAINCT.GOV](http://WWW.NEWBRITAINCT.GOV)

Dear Community Member:

In 2007, my father and then Mayor—Timothy Stewart—brought together members of area churches, the business community, social service agencies, government and others out of an urgent need to find shelter for struggling and homeless individuals during the winter. It was known as the *Mayor's Ten Year Plan to End Homelessness*, based off of a nationwide model.

Since then, Building Hope Together: New Britain's Permanent Work Plan to End Homelessness has helped move hundreds of individuals off the streets and into stable housing. The work plan has provided transportation vouchers, donated personal needs, provided job training and connected individuals with services they need to get back on their feet.

Within the last two years, we've eliminated chronic family homelessness in the City and have made significant strides in reducing homelessness among individuals. In 2019, through the 100 Day Challenge, we housed 44 youth between the ages of 18 and 24, marking another major accomplishment in our efforts to ensure everyone that needs a home has access to one.

These successes are major milestones for Building Hope Together: they demonstrate the power of partnerships to solve complex problems facing our community. Our multi-tiered approach to combatting homelessness has helped us forge stronger networks aimed at improving the wellbeing of struggling individuals. Recently, our focus has been on a housing-first approach to provide a stable foundation for successes in other parts of an individual's life.

Thank you for taking the time to learn more about Building Hope Together: New Britain's Permanent Work Plan to End Homelessness. To learn more about how you can help, please contact my office at 860-826-3303.

Sincerely,

Mayor Erin E. Stewart



Message from Building Hope Together Coordinator Mary Floyd:

It has been my honor to serve as the Work Plan Coordinator since it began in 2007. The Plan's goal has been, and continues to be, to eliminate homelessness in New Britain. At first, we worked to meet this goal by providing services to residents who were experiencing or at risk of homelessness.

While BHT continues to provide homelessness prevention, vocational and other direct services, it now also works in a cohesive and collaborative way to end homelessness as part of the Central Coordinated Access Network (CCAN). This collaboration of multiple agencies not only in New Britain, but of agencies in the other cities in the CCAN, results in New Britain residents facing homelessness being better served. It was as part of the CCAN that BHT was able to meet its initial goal of ending chronic homelessness.



The City of New Britain and BHT have been integral parts of this coordinated regional approach since it began in 2014. As Chair of the CCAN Steering Committee, it is my responsibility to see to it that its goals and that of BHT remain aligned. As the Work Plan Coordinator, I will continue to work to end homelessness in New Britain. Many thanks to the innumerable individuals and organizations that have supported Building Hope Together so far.

***Mary Floyd***  
***YWCA of New Britain***

# **Building Hope Together 2020**

## ***New Britain's Permanent Work Plan to End Homelessness***

- 1. History of New Britain's Homeless Plan:** Building Hope Together, the New Britain Permanent Work Plan to End Homelessness (BHT), began in the fall of 2007 as the Mayor's Ten Year Plan to End Homelessness. It was developed through a collaborative process involving New Britain's municipal, business, civic and philanthropic leaders and its non-profit service providers under the leadership of former Mayor Tim Stewart. Now in its twelfth year, and under the leadership of Mayor Erin Stewart, the re-named Building Hope Together, met its initial goal of ending chronic homelessness in December 2016 when Governor Malloy announced that chronic homelessness had been eradicated in all the CANs in our state. This does not mean there is no more homelessness in New Britain, but rather that we have established a systematic way to identify and rapidly re-house those who are chronically homeless. As of this writing, there is one verified chronically homeless individual in our CAN and he has been matched to a housing resource. With a system in place to address the needs of the chronically homeless, the Plan's goals going forward are to rapidly re-house those who become homeless so their homeless episodes are as brief as possible and to prevent individual and families from becoming homeless in the first place.
- 2. Why Did Homelessness Rise?** An initial increase in homelessness in New Britain and throughout our state can be attributed to deinstitutionalization. People with mental health issues, many of whom had never lived independently, entered the community without adequate resources to support them. Other factors leading to the rise of homelessness are the lack of jobs that provide a living wage, lack of affordable housing and behavioral health issues.
- 3. What does Building Hope do? Who are the partners?** Building Hope Together provides vocational support, homelessness prevention, transportation assistance and mental health and wellness strategies for people experiencing or at risk of homelessness. BHT works closely with the CCAN and the State of Connecticut Department of Housing (DOH) to ensure that best practices are used to develop and implement strategies to assist those facing housing challenges in New Britain. Our funding partners are: American Savings Foundation, Community Chest of New Britain and Berlin, Community Foundation of Greater New Britain, Farmington Bank, Hoffman Foundation, Liberty Bank, Melville Foundation, Okay Industries, TD Bank Foundation and Webster Bank. Our community partners include: American Job Center, Capital Workforce Partners, CCAN, CCSU, Community Mental Health Affiliates, DOH, Friendship Service Center, HRA, Neighborhood Housing Services, New Britain EMS, Prudence Crandall, Salvation Army, Veterans Inc. and the YWCA.
- 4. By the Numbers:** New Britain remains one of the poorest cities in Connecticut. Over 22% of its residents fall below the federal income poverty level compared to about 10% for the rest of the state. Almost 31% of New Britain's children live under the federal poverty level. In addition, the average rent for an apartment in New Britain is \$1200; ranging from \$770 for a studio to \$1490 for a three-bedroom apartment. With an average rent of \$1200 and an average monthly income of around \$1925, about 62% of a renters' income goes towards rent. (According to HUD, households spending more than 30% of their income on housing are considered "cost-burdened"; those spending more than 50% are "severely cost burdened" and at risk of homelessness.) The January 2019 Point in Time Count found 146 people experiencing homelessness in New Britain, 29 of whom were children.

- 5. How do we get our data?** Demographic information specific to New Britain is from city-data.com and rentcafe.com. Data on homelessness in New Britain and in our CAN is provided by CCEH and DOH.
- 6. What have we accomplished?** Beginning in 2009, the Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing Program (HPRP) prevented homelessness for 252 imminently at risk households and rapidly re-housed 44 additional households through the provision of rental and security deposit payments made directly to landlords. Case management services were available to all HPRP clients. Funding for HPRP ended when federal stimulus dollars were fully expended in 2011. In 2013, with funding from the Community Foundation, the Work Plan's Homelessness Prevention Program (HPP) began. It has helped 76 residents remain in their homes including 20 residents in 2019.

Forty-four new units of decent, affordable housing have come on line since October 2008. In the fall of 2019, Howey House, a project created by the Plan's Housing Committee, began to provide 11 additional units of permanent supportive housing for people who are chronically homeless for a total of 55. This project is operated by the Friendship Service Center (FSC).

Twenty units of transitional housing for veterans came on line on Arch Street in June 2015. These units are operated by Veterans Inc. whose staff serve on the Plan's Executive and Housing Committees.

One hundred sixty-six people who were homeless or imminently at risk found jobs through the Plan's Employment Committee and the activities of the Coordinator from October 2008 until the Committee disbanded in the fall of 2018. Ninety of them were employed at that time. The Plan's focus will now be to provide resources to support clients/residents of employment specialists/housing providers who have educational and vocational goals.

BHT's Path to Employment Program provided 218 individuals with necessary items for them to get or keep jobs; its Bus Pass Program provided transportation for 607 people to get to an employment or training opportunity and its Fresh Start Program enabled 181 households to purchase items for their apartments as they moved from shelters to independent housing.

BHT serves New Britain residents. The data listed above is for BHT. The CAN (comprised of the cities of Berlin, Bristol, New Britain, Plainville and Southington) have housed two hundred and eleven homeless households since it began.

**State of CT, Coordinated Access Networks:** The Coordinator served as the Co-Chair of the New Britain Continuum of Care (CoC) until it was subsumed into the CCAN in 2017. The CoC successfully renewed all HUD funded permanent supportive housing programs in New Britain from 2008 until it was dissolved. In addition, HUD awarded the New Britain Housing Authority 50 Section 8 Housing Choice Vouchers for family reunification. Our CAN began in July of 2014, the first CAN in the state. The State of CT provides data and technical support to our CAN. Journey Home has provided infrastructure for our CAN since 2018. Journey Home's Executive Director and the Plan's Coordinator are Co-Chairs of the CAN's Steering Committee.

- 10. New Focus on Homeless Youth:** Connecticut has a goal of ending youth homelessness by 2020. The local and statewide Youth Engagement Team Initiatives (YETIs) have been meeting to develop steps on how to accomplish that goal. A cornerstone of that endeavor is the Connecticut Youth Homelessness Rapid Results Institute 100 Day Challenge. Work on the 100 Day Challenge began in March when the leaders and stewards met. The goal of the challenge: **In 100 days, we will safely and stably house 40 unaccompanied youth and young adults between the ages of 16-**

**24...80% of whom will be actively engaged with one or more of the following supportive services: health, education, employment and stat/local government resources.**

The CCAN's 100 Day team met and exceeded that goal by housing 44 such youth; becoming the first CAN in the state to meet its goal.

On August 10<sup>th</sup>, the team celebrated the end of the 100 Day challenge with an event held at OIC. Work on ending youth homelessness will continue with a Sustainability Workshop on August 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup>, throughout the end of 2019 and into 2020 so that no youth is forced to couch surf nightly or live in an unsafe environment.

### **Building Hope 2020** **Objectives and Goals**

**Our goal is to ultimately eliminate homelessness in New Britain. Understanding that people will occasionally experience homelessness we want to make sure to have a response that is a coordinated system of diverting crisis, and rapidly returning people to stable housing.**

#### **1. Increase Leadership, Collaboration and Civic Engagement**

*Strategies:*

Council Resolution

Mayor's Challenge

Community Events to increase awareness and build engagement

Community Conversations

Continue active participation in Coordinated Access Network

Participation in 100 Day Challenges

#### **2. Strengthen Capacity Through Data Collection**

*Strategies:*

Participate in PIT and Youth Counts

Review DOH By Name List Weekly Status Reports

Encourage participating community agencies to review and analyze HMIS data

#### **3. Improve access to Stable and Affordable Housing**

*Strategies:*

Identify people experiencing homelessness through outreach efforts

### **Building Hope 2020** **Objectives and Goals**

Intervention- Diversion and Prevention as the first line of defense

Security deposits

BHT prevention funds

Bridge people from homelessness to housing

CMHA Bridge

Rapid Re-housing dollars

Use RRH for the majority of people experiencing homelessness

Utilize PSH only for the most vulnerable and chronic population

Utilize CAN housing matching meetings to address the needs of people on the By-Name list  
Use VISPDAT and SPDAT to determine which of the individuals and families not matched  
to housing at present need RRH vs. PSH  
Move people from PSH to mainstream subsidized housing when appropriate  
Research state subsidies on LIHTC for development projects  
Increase city's supply of affordable housing  
Fresh Start funding

**4. Increase Economic Security to reduce financial vulnerability to homelessness**

*Strategies:*

Increase access to mainstream resources  
Refer to SOAR, SSDI, SSI, medical insurance, food stamps  
Increase financial literacy  
Instruct in budgeting and financial scams  
Increase employment  
Refer to AJC, HRA, CMHA employment specialists  
Provide job seekers with necessary items  
Path to Employment Program

**5. Mental Health & Wellness**

*Strategies:*

Improve mental health and stability  
Refer to visiting nurse and community- based case management  
Integrate primary and behavioral healthcare services with homeless assistance programs and housing  
Continue working with the police department to connect homeless individuals with services and treatment

***BH2020 YOUTH FOCUS***  
***A Coordinated Community Response***

Youth homeless is one of the most underreported subpopulations as they “hide in plain sight” couch surfing, engaging in risky behaviors to keep their housing and are often unwilling to talk with volunteers. The 2019 Youth Count found 44 homeless and unstably housed youth. The CSDNB reports that this number is vastly undercounted.

**Objectives:**

- A) To get the City of New Britain to the point where there few/no youth experiencing homelessness
- B) To create a system in New Britain where youth experiencing homelessness are quickly connected to safe and stable housing opportunities including permanent housing options.
- C) Participate in 100 Day Youth Challenge to identify and rapidly re-house homeless Youth \*

## **Goals:**

- 1.) Identify
  - a. School District McKinney-Vento Homeless Students
  - b. Youth Count
  - c. Referrals from community agencies (JRB, Police, after school programs)
  - d. Youth Navigator will outreach to homeless youth
- 2.) Prevention & Diversion
  - a. Family Reunification
  - b. Build better connections between DCF and Youth Services
  - c. Encourage youth in DCF care to remain connected after age 18
  - d. Shelter
- 3.) Services
  - a. Support for LBGTQ Youth
  - b. Counseling Services for identified homeless youth
  - c. Access to food and clothing
  - d. Employment (AJC, OIC, HRA, CMHA employment specialists)
  - e. Path to Employment
- 4.) Housing
  - a. Bridge people wherever possible from Permanent Supported Housing to mainstream subsidized housing
  - b. Rapidly Rehouse people to avoid chronic homelessness
- 5.) System Maintenance
  - a. Build system capacity
  - b. Create a sustainable structure for future homeless youth
  - c. Partner with the YETI/CAN

**Conclusion:** Going forward Building Hope Together, the New Britain Permanent Work Plan to End Homelessness, will continue to cooperate with and be an integral part of the CAN and its regional approach to ending homelessness. It remains imperative, however, that its mandate of combating homelessness in New Britain continues. Even though there were no unsheltered families and a significant reduction in homeless single adults (down 9% from the 2018 count) there were 15 homeless families in shelters and 100 homeless single adults in New Britain according to the 2019 Count, all of whom need permanent, affordable housing.

## Acronym Key

AJC: American Job Center

BHT: Building Hope Together

CAN: Coordinated Access Network

CCAN: Central Coordinated Access Network

CMHA: Community Mental Health Affiliates

CoC: Continuum of Care

CWP: Capital Workforce Partners



DOH: Department of Housing

FSC: Friendship Service Center

HPP: Homelessness Prevention Program

HPRP: Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing Program

HUD: Department of Housing and Urban Development

PSH: Permanent Supportive Housing

RR: Rapid Re-housing

SSDI: Social Security Disability Income

SSI: Supplemental Security Income

SOAR: SSI/SSDI Outreach Access and Recovery

YETI: Youth Engagement Team Initiative