

THE CITY OF SUMMIT

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CITY HALL 512 SPRINGFIELD AVENUE SUMMIT, NJ 07901

News Release

For immediate release

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Summit, NJ Gains National Attention for Successful Homelessness Initiative

SUMMIT, NJ, March 20, 2025 – Summit, NJ, is setting the stage for the future of homelessness solutions, gaining national attention for its innovative approach at the National Alliance to End Homelessness conference. Highlighted on a bipartisan panel titled "Suburban Solutions – Bridging Policy & Practice in Unsheltered Homelessness," Summit's success story is now a model for how suburban municipalities can tackle homelessness through effective collaboration. Experts and leaders, including Summit Councilmember Delia Hamlet and others, discussed how integrating state policy, local government initiatives, and community service providers can drive real, sustainable change in addressing homelessness within a community.

In June 2024, when Mayor Fagan's Homelessness Task Force was first established, the city had 25 individuals experiencing homelessness. Through a coordinated, results-oriented effort led by Summit's Mayor Elizabeth Fagan, Councilmember Delia Hamlet, and key community partners, 20 of those individuals have already been placed in stable housing, received employment, or accessed rehabilitation services. This remarkable progress reflects the commitment of a broad coalition of stakeholders, including local police, non-profits, volunteers, and community leaders working together to enhance both the quality of life for those in need and the safety of the city as a whole.

Councilmember Delia Hamlet, who was part of a bipartisan panel at the conference, shared her reflections on the initiative's success and the challenges faced in addressing homelessness. "When I was elected in 2022, it became clear that despite numerous charitable organizations in Summit offering vital services, our previous efforts to end homelessness had not achieved lasting results. The number of individuals successfully transitioning out of homelessness remained low. We knew it was time for a more focused, collaborative approach," said Hamlet.

The panel, titled "Suburban Solutions – Bridging Policy & Practice in Unsheltered Homelessness," included notable figures such as Democratic Maplewood Councilmember Dean Dafis, Esq., Mike Callahan, Director of the New Jersey Department of Community Affairs (DCA) Office of Homeless Prevention, Pam Baker, Chief Impact Officer of Collaborative Support Programs of NJ, and Kasey Vienckowski, Team Lead for Homelessness Planning at Monarch Housing Associates. Rich Uniacke, a key collaborator in the 'Summit Sprint' initiative, was also in attendance.

The Mayor's Homelessness Task Force took a data-driven approach to solve the crisis, creating a "By-Name List" (BNL) that identified 25 individuals who had been chronically homeless, some for over four years, and many facing complex mental health and health challenges. Rather than relying solely on temporary charitable outreach, Summit shifted its focus to a housing-first model, providing targeted solutions and holding service providers accountable through daily stand-ups and weekly case conferencing.

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Summit's collaborative approach, supported by local organizations like Bridges Outreach, Atlantic Health, and the Summit First Aid Squad, quickly gained the attention of state officials. When Councilmember Hamlet reached out to Mike Callahan at the DCA Office of Homeless Prevention to request additional resources, the response was swift. Summit was awarded Rapid Rehousing funds, which, combined with resources from local partners like PROCEED's HPRP funding, enabled the city to transition many individuals into permanent housing.

"This isn't just about charity—it's about making a real, measurable impact," Hamlet emphasized during the panel discussion. "Our efforts are focused on ensuring that people are not only provided a roof over their heads but are also supported in rebuilding their lives through stable housing, employment, and healthcare."

Summit's work is a testament to the power of cross-sector collaboration. By aligning the efforts of local government, nonprofits, and community volunteers with state resources, Summit has created a scalable model that other suburban communities across the country are now looking to replicate. The success of the "Summit Sprint to End Homelessness" shows that with the right partnerships, data-driven strategies, and a commitment to long-term solutions, communities can make a profound difference in the lives of those experiencing homelessness.

As Summit continues its work, leaders like Mayor Fagan, Councilmember Hamlet, and the entire Homelessness Task Force remain dedicated to providing pathways to stability and permanent housing for every individual in need, ensuring a safer, more compassionate community for all.

More information on the City of Summit is available at cityofsummit.org.

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