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**In this issue  
we share outlooks  
and opinions from  
mayors around  
the state as they  
wrangle issues  
ranging from  
affordable housing  
to smart  
redevelopment  
that creates  
towns with well-  
rounded housing.**



## Will Housing Spring Forward?

**I**doubt any issue proves to be more challenging at the local level than housing and development, whether it be for the State-imposed affordable housing requirements, starter homes, or solutions to allow seniors to stay in the communities where they raised their families. Unfortunately, the State has too often not followed up on promises to provide necessary funding to support such development and the accompanying infrastructure. Instead, we are confronted with legislation to preempt local master plans and zoning instead of providing tools and resources to implement locally developed and supported planning, including creating housing options for homeless veterans. The work is far from finished.

In this issue we share outlooks and opinions from mayors around the state as they wrangle issues ranging from affordable housing to smart redevelopment that creates towns with well-rounded housing. In his 2026 Reorganization speech, Dunellen Mayor Jason Cilento noted, “Another goal for 2026 is to collaborate with planners to review our existing Redevelopment Plan, focusing on identifying suitable areas beyond the downtown core for missing middle housing. This effort would seek to promote more affordable for-sale housing options, which is essential for helping residents build equity and create generational wealth for their families while addressing our communities’ and regional housing needs beyond just the rental markets.”

Other mayors discuss their struggles to come to the best result for the Fair Housing agreements, developing their towns respectfully, and balancing the changing challenges of nature with the desire for residents to remain in their hometowns (article page 24).

The Department of Community Affairs is working with municipalities, providing training on housing suited to all stages of life and advancing affordable life cycle housing through the NJHOMES program. In the article, the experience of 10 municipalities who participated in Launchpad, a training program sharing information. “These elements were intended to reduce early-stage barriers to housing development and help municipalities move projects from concept to feasibility more efficiently,” reports DCA Commissioner Jacquelyn Suárez in this month’s UpFront Feature, *Advancing Life Cycle Housing Across New Jersey* (page 6).

As Raisa Rubin-Stankiewicz from the NJ Coalition to End Homelessness notes in this month’s article, *Turing the Tide of the Homelessness Crisis* (page 18), “Municipalities are on the front lines of responding to the crisis of rising homelessness in our state, as more of their residents, an increasing number of whom are older adults and families, do not know if they will have a safe place to sleep each night.”

This month, the League also opens its new conference website at [www.njlm.org/](http://www.njlm.org/) conference. We look forward to another exciting event and as the conference approaches, we will share more information with you on sessions, exhibits, and events on the pages of this magazine. 📌

*Michael Cerra*

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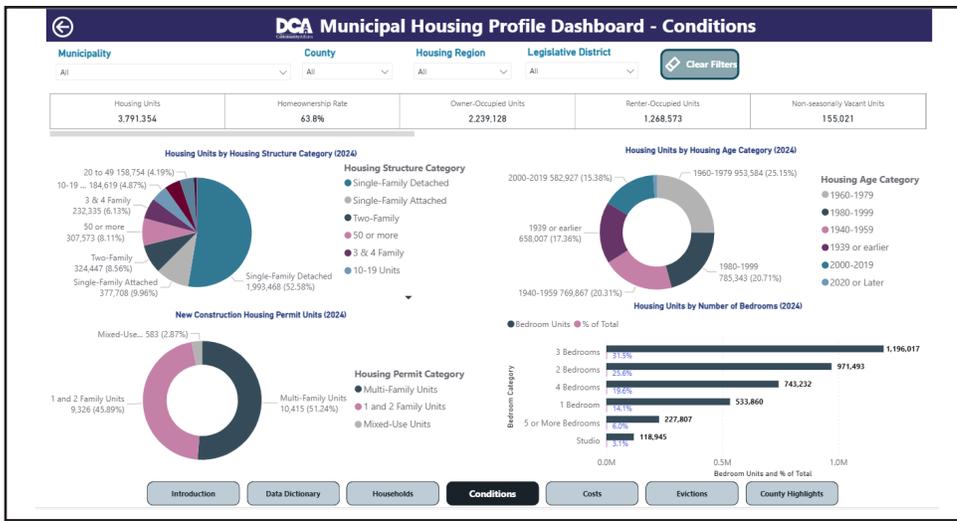
# Advancing Life Cycle Housing Across New Jersey

Municipalities successfully complete inaugural  
NJHOMES training program

*Jacquelyn Suárez, Commissioner, NJ Department of Community Affairs*



**T**he New Jersey Department of Community Affairs (DCA) has taken a significant step forward in advancing affordable life cycle housing through the development of the New Jersey Housing Opportunities for Municipal Equity and Success (NJHOMES) program. The NJHOMES program is designed to address one of the most persistent challenges facing municipalities: translating affordable housing policy goals into actionable, community-supported projects that meet the needs of residents at all life stages.



## Advancing Life Cycle Housing

2025, participants engaged during weekly training sessions, in-person workshops, and virtual office hours. The intensive schedule allowed local officials to move step by step through the housing development process while receiving real-time feedback and support from DCA experts. The cohort will continue to meet for additional training and mentorship through September 2027.

The NJHOMES initiative began with Launchpad, a unique competitive opportunity offered to 10 municipalities to participate in an intensive collaborative learning community. The program offered enhanced technical assistance, mentorship, training, and funding to support the municipalities' ability to develop their affordable housing planning and projects. Together, these elements were intended to reduce early-stage barriers to housing development and help municipalities move projects from concept to feasibility more efficiently.

### NJHOMES Launchpad Recipients:

- East Amwell Township
- East Orange City
- Evesham Township
- Fairfield Township (Cumberland)
- Far Hills Borough
- Mendham Township
- Montclair Township
- Palisades Park Borough
- Salem City
- Stafford Township

The NJHOMES Launchpad participants were selected through a Request for Participation process. Collectively, these municipalities reflect the diversity of New Jersey's housing landscape, encompassing urban centers, suburban communities, and more rural areas.

On September 17, 2025, the Launchpad cohort gathered for the first time, making introductions, discussing their unique goals and challenges, building trust, and beginning their training. From that date through October 29,

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## Advancing Life Cycle Housing

### Training Curriculum Highlights

The NJHOMES curriculum began with an Affordable Life Cycle Housing session exploring housing needs across different life stages, emphasizing inclusive strategies that support residents from young adulthood through aging in place.

The group examined the benefit of Public-Private Partnerships and highlighted housing as a tool for economic development. They discussed how affordable housing investments can support local economies, workforce stability, and neighborhood revitalization.

Subsequent sessions focused on Groundwork and Planning and Community Engagement, highlighting the importance of early preparation and meaningful public involvement.

The Project Development module offered a comprehensive overview of the housing development process, including planning, regulatory considerations, and implementation timelines.

The session focusing on Financing Affordable Housing featured the capital funding available to make affordable housing projects feasible.

The NJHOMES curriculum explored the use of Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) and gave participants practical insight into policy design, zoning considerations, and implementation strategies for ADUs.

The training series concluded with Local Housing Programs and Partnerships, which emphasized the role of collaboration, and cross-sector engagement, including leveraging resources beyond construction that may increase housing stability and enhance the lives of community residents. The discussion featured various DCA programs, including eviction protection, lead abatement, and utility assistance.

Throughout the program, weekly office hours were conducted via Microsoft Teams, ensuring that participants had ongoing access to technical assistance and the opportunity to discuss hot topics like faith-based housing development partnerships.

The NJHOMES training program received outstanding feedback from participants, with an average success rating of 4.89 out of 5 stars. Municipal staff praised the quality of instruction, the relevance of the curriculum, and the accessibility of DCA experts.

### Broadening Opportunities to All Municipalities Throughout the State

In spring 2026, DCA will be launching the Affordable Building Club (ABC), offering this 12-part training program to all state municipalities. The participation of the diverse NJHOMES Launchpad cohort ensures that lessons learned through NJHOMES training will be applicable across a wide range of local contexts and challenges. ABC will provide registrants with video learning sessions for independent study at the participant's convenience, followed by a monthly virtual convening for directed group discussion, questions, and to provide support and encouragement.

Municipalities interested in future participation should email: [diane.riley@dca.nj.gov](mailto:diane.riley@dca.nj.gov).

## NJHOMES Training Videos



### About DCA

Meet the leaders and divisions providing planning and housing supports within the Department of Community Affairs.

**Video:** <https://bit.ly/46XTRMZ>



### DCA Data Resources

An overview of the valuable housing and data resources available to help you plan and improve your communities.

**Video:** [https://youtu.be/OyF4N\\_7O9mU](https://youtu.be/OyF4N_7O9mU)

**Slide Deck:** <http://bit.ly/4qPkyux>



### Life Cycle Housing 101

An introduction to key terms and concepts of affordable life cycle housing and why it matters to the community.

**Video:** <https://youtu.be/Tfa9yAH4RIM>

**Slide Deck:** <https://bit.ly/30lvanr>



### Project Development 101

An introduction to the development process, key participants throughout development, and how local officials can support housing development in every phase.

**Video:** <https://youtu.be/bw5EiD00FNl>

**Slide Deck:** <https://bit.ly/4kFUWl9>

## Part of a Broader Housing Strategy

NJHOMES builds on a series of major housing initiatives. In March 2024, landmark affordable housing legislation was signed to support municipalities in meeting their housing obligations.

In October 2024, DCA released updated affordable housing calculations to help municipalities plan for the next decade.

Since 2018, DCA has provided more than \$225 million in housing funding, creating nearly 1,300 units of affordable rental and homeownership opportunities through the State's Affordable Housing Trust Fund, the National Housing Trust Fund, and the NJ Healthy Homes initiative.

Most of these projects range from 1 to 24 units, reflecting a focus on smaller-scale, community-integrated housing—an approach closely aligned with the NJHOMES life cycle model.

Administered by DCA's Division of Housing and Community Resources, NJHOMES exemplifies DCA's commitment to strengthening communities through affordable housing, supportive services, and technical and financial assistance. The NJHOMES program stands as a promising model for empowering municipalities and advancing equitable, sustainable housing solutions across New Jersey.

Spring 2026 NJHOMES training sessions will be offered to all municipalities 📌

@ For more information about the New Jersey Department of Community Affairs, visit [www.nj.gov/dca](http://www.nj.gov/dca) or follow the department on social media.

Details about NJHOMES are available at: <https://nj.gov/dca/dhcr/offices/njhomes.shtml>.



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## Legislative Resources

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# nj NOW

## On the Move: Legislative Action

Despite the weather interrupting some plans this winter, the League's leadership and members gathered to participate in state-level events and planning sessions for the years' legislative efforts.

The League's current and past Presidents and officers, other local government leaders, and League staff gathered at the League HQ on January 13 prior to Gov. Phil Murphy's final State of the State address. League President Mayor Sean Elwell of Elsinboro then proceeded to the capital building to attend the address.



L to R: NJLM Deputy Director Lori Buckelew, NJLM Past President Mayor Al Kelly of Bridgeton, NJLM Executive Board Member Mayor Mike Stanzilis of Mt. Arlington, NJLM 1st Vice President Mayor Jeff Martin of Hamilton (Mercer), NJLM Past President Mayor Bill Pikolycky of Woodbine, NJLM President Mayor Sean Elwell of Elsinboro, NJLM Past President Mayor Christian Bollwage of Elizabeth, NJLM Past President Mayor Tim McDonough of Hope, NJLM Executive Director Michael Cerra.



President Elwell at the State of the State address.



League Legislative Staff on State of the State day: Legislative Counsel Sadayah Q. DuRant-Brown, Director of Government Affairs Paul Penna, and Legislative Analyst Erin Knoedler.



The League's Legislative Committee met in Princeton for the year's first meeting on February 6. The group discussed bills of immediate concern to local governments to determine the League's future legislative advocacy. Shown above: The Taxation and Finance subcommittee discusses bills in consideration in the Legislature.



NJLM Executive Board Members Mayor Paul Medany of Deptford and Mayor Elsie Foster of Highland Park with President Sean Elwell in the General Legislation subcommittee.



NJLM Past President Mayor Brian Wahler chairs the Land Use subcommittee attended by a variety of officials and experts including NJLM Executive Board Member Mayor Brad Cohen of East Brunswick.



NJLM Immediate Past President Mayor Paul Tomasko of Alpine chairs the Inter-Municipal subcommittee gathering.



President Elwell presides at the first Legislative Committee meeting.

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## From the Desk of...NJMMA: Going Places: Career Opportunities in Municipal Management

Sonia Alves-Viveiros, MPA, QPA, President, New Jersey Municipal Managers Association; Business Administrator, Township of Edison

*Note: This is the first of a series of articles from the League's Affiliate organizations discussing career paths within their professional realm.*

**M**unicipal management is often described as a profession you grow into rather than simply step into. In New Jersey, it offers a career path that is challenging, rewarding, and deeply connected to the communities we serve.

**GETTING THERE:** There is no single doorway into municipal management, but some entry points provide especially strong preparation. From my own experience, the Clerk's Office stands out as one of the best places to begin. It offers exposure to governing body operations, statutory requirements, and the day-to-day realities of public service. That foundation often becomes the launching point for advancement into department leadership, assistant or deputy administrator roles, and ultimately the position of municipal administrator or manager.

### **EDUCATION & EXPERIENCE:**

Successful municipal managers blend experience with education. An MPA degree has become a key credential for those aspiring to senior leadership. Professional certifications such as Qualified Purchasing Agent (QPA) and Certified Municipal Finance Officer (CMFO/CFO) are equally important, particularly for individuals entering the field with a business or administrative background. These credentials strengthen operational knowledge and prepare professionals for the financial and regulatory demands of modern local government.

**COMPENSATION:** Compensation in municipal management reflects the scope of the role. While salaries vary by municipality, the average compensation for senior municipal administrators in New Jersey is approximately \$180,000. This level of compensation aligns with the responsibility of

overseeing municipal operations, budgets, personnel, and long-term strategic planning.

Through professional development, networking, and mentorship, NJMMA remains committed to supporting those who choose this path and to strengthening local government for the communities we serve.

At NJMMA, we see this progression every day through the experiences of our members. Well-trained and passionate professionals at the helm of local government can balance the needs of residents, staff, and stakeholders, ensuring that public services remain both cost-effective and high quality. NJMMA's mission to support, educate, and connect municipal managers across New Jersey has never been more relevant. Whether you are in your first year as a municipal manager or bringing decades of experience to your role, NJMMA exists to provide resources, training, and professional networking opportunities needed to thrive. NJMMA offers professional development to enhance our collective knowledge base, and foster connections between current and retired administrators, ensuring that no one in our profession must face challenges alone.

NJMMA currently represents 276 members and 14 corporate partners. Of those members, 198 are full members, serving as municipal administrators, managers, assistant administrators, or deputy managers. The remaining members include department heads, retirees, students, early-career professionals, and life or honorary life members.

For those considering municipal management as a career, it is a profession that demands dedication but offers the opportunity to make a lasting, visible impact. 

 For more information NJMMA, visit [www.njmma.org](http://www.njmma.org).

# NJMMA Events

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### **10 Budget, Ethics, and Procurement Updates**

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### **12 Management Workshop Series-Financial Management: Reporting: State Documents**

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### **19 Management Workshop Series-Financial Management:**

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## NJ Knowledge Answers:

1. Judy Blume
2. Molly Pitcher
3. Clara Barton
4. Joyce Kilmer (Whose first name was Alfred)
5. Connie Chung
6. Celia Cruz
7. Whitney Houston



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