



# Labor & Housing

800 Michaelan Office Bldg.  
148 Martine Avenue, 8th Floor  
White Plains, NY 10601  
www.westchesterlegislators.com

## Meeting Agenda

*Committee Chair: Damon Maher*

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Monday, March 8, 2021

10:00 AM

Committee Room

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### CALL TO ORDER

Meeting jointly with the Committees on Budget & Appropriations and Planning, Economic Development & Energy

### MINUTES APPROVAL

#### I. ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

[2021-168](#)      **ACT-Amendment FY 2019-2023 Consolidated Plan Including 2021 Action Plan**

AN ACT to authorize the County to submit an Urban County Application under the Federal Community Development Block Grant, Emergency Solutions Grant, and HOME programs, including an amendment to FY 2019-2023 Consolidated Plan and to accept such Grants.

***COMMITTEE REFERRAL: COMMITTEES ON BUDGET & APPROPRIATIONS, LABOR & HOUSING AND PLANNING, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & ENERGY***

*Joint with BA & PEDE*

*Guests: Commissioner Drummond, Assistant Commissioner Zaino & Margaret Egiziaco, Director of Community Development- Department of Planning*

#### II. OTHER BUSINESS

#### III. RECEIVE & FILE

[2021-78](#)      **HON. DAMON R. MAHER: Eastchester Housing Lawsuit Information**

Forwarding articles and emails from the Fair Housing Justice Center regarding the Eastchester Housing lawsuit (formerly MT # 13134).

[2021-79](#)      **HON. DAMON R. MAHER: LoHud Article - "Westchester Suffering Housing Crisis - ESSHI Program Can Help"**

Forwarding a LoHud article entitled, "Westchester Suffering Housing Crisis - ESSHI Program Can Help." (formerly MT # 13134)

### ADJOURNMENT



George Latimer  
County Executive

February 12, 2021

Westchester County Board of Legislators  
800 Michaelian Office Building  
White Plains, New York 10601

Dear Members of the Board of Legislators:

In a continuing effort to maximize federal funding to the County, I hereby request that you enact the attached Act which would:

- 1) Authorize the filing an application to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (“HUD”) for approximately \$5,325,000 from three federal sources: Community Development Block Grant (“CDBG”) funds, the HOME Investment Partnership Program (“HOME”) and the Emergency Solutions Grant (“ESG”) Program;
- 2) Authorize the County to submit to HUD an amendment to the Five Year FY 2019-2023 Consolidated Plan (the “Plan”) consisting of an Action Plan for Fiscal Year 2021 consistent with the requirements of federal regulations. Your Board, by Act No. 2018-86 authorized the County to enter into cooperation agreements non-entitlement municipalities to participate in the programs as the first step in qualifying these municipalities to receive these funds during Fiscal Year 2021 (May 1, 2021, to April 30, 2022).

Development of the Plan began on a local level and has included extensive citizen participation. Municipalities were required to hold local hearings on their project submissions.

The Plan has been developed in consultation with members of the County Planning Board, Westchester Urban County Council and the Community Development Advisory Group, and has been the subject of a public comment period. The federal award will provide approximately \$4,000,000 from CDBG, \$1,000,000 from HOME and \$325,000 from ESG. For your information, one original and two (2) copies of the Plan and the FY 2021 Action Plan’s Project Listings are submitted herewith.

Office of the County Executive

Michaelian Office Building  
118 Martine Avenue  
White Plains, New York 10601

Email: [CE@westchestergov.com](mailto:CE@westchestergov.com)  
Telephone: (914)995-2900

[westchestergov.com](http://westchestergov.com)

Westchester County Board of Legislators  
February 12, 2021  
Page 2

Please note, I have been advised that the Planning Department has determined that under the State Environmental Quality Review Act Regulations, your Board is not required to make any determinations because this legislation is a "Type II" action. As you know, your Board may use such expert advice to make its own conclusion.

In past years, the County has received over \$229 million of non-repayable Federal funding to undertake activities such as housing rehabilitation, public improvements in designated target areas, code enforcement, and a complete array of community development activities on behalf of the municipalities participating in the program. Approval of submission of the application must occur prior to the expected March 15, 2021 submittal to HUD.

Very truly yours,



George Latimer  
County Executive

GL/NVD/jrc  
Attachments

HONORABLE BOARD OF LEGISLATORS  
THE COUNTY OF WESTCHESTER

Your Committee is in receipt of a proposed Act which, if adopted, would 1) authorize the filing of the application to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (“HUD”) for approximately \$5,325,000 from three (3) federal sources: Community Development Block Grant (“CDBG”) funds, the HOME Investment Partnership Program (“HOME”) and the Emergency Solutions Grant (“ESG”) Program; and 2) authorize the County to submit to HUD an amendment to the FY 2019-2023 Consolidated Plan (the “Plan”) including an Action Plan for Fiscal Year 2021. Your Honorable Board, by Act No. 2018-86, authorized the County to enter into Cooperation Agreements with no-entitlement municipalities to participate in the programs, as the first step in qualifying these municipalities to receive these funds during Fiscal Year 2021 (May 1, 2021, to April 30, 2022).

The Plan has been developed in consultation with members of the County Planning Board, Westchester Urban County Council and the Community Development Advisory Group, and has been subject to public comment on a local level before project application submissions, and on a County level as a whole Plan. The Federal award will provide approximately \$4,000,000 from CDBG, \$1,000,000 from HOME and \$325,000 from ESG, subject to the approval of a 2021 appropriations bill by Congress. One original and two (2) copies of the FY 2021 Plan’s project Listings have been submitted with the proposed Act.

Please note, your Committee has been advised that the Planning Department has determined that under the State Environmental Quality Review Act Regulations, your Board is not required to make any determination because this legislation is a “Type II” action. Your Committee concurs with this conclusion.

In past years, the County has received over \$229 million of non-repayable federal funding to undertake activities such as housing rehabilitation, public improvements in

designated target areas, code enforcement, and a complete array of community development activities on behalf of the municipalities participating in the program.

After thorough consideration, your Committee concurs in the County Executive's recommendation to adopt the annexed Act.

Dated: 2021

White Plains, New York

**COMMITTEE ON**  
c:/con/carp/pln/hud grant legislation fy2021

# FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT

SUBJECT: FY 2019-2023 Consolidated Plan  NO FISCAL IMPACT PROJECTED

## OPERATING BUDGET IMPACT

To Be Completed by Submitting Department and Reviewed by Budget

### SECTION A - FUND

GENERAL FUND

AIRPORT FUND

SPECIAL DISTRICTS FUND

### SECTION B - EXPENSES AND REVENUES

Total Current Year Expense TBD

Total Current Year Revenue TBD

Source of Funds (check one):  Current Appropriations  Transfer of Existing Appropriations

Additional Appropriations

Other (explain)

Identify Accounts: TBD

Potential Related Operating Budget Expenses: Annual Amount TBD

Describe: An Act to authorize the County to submit an Urban County Application under the the Federal Community Development Block Grant, Emergency Solutions Grant, and HOME programs, including an amendment to FY 2019-2023 Consolidated Plan, and to accept such Grants

Potential Related Operating Budget Revenues: Annual Amount TBD

Describe: Total expected revenue \$5,325,000; \$4,000,000 from CDBG, \$1,000,000 from HOME and \$325,000 from ESG.

Anticipated Savings to County and/or Impact on Department Operations:

Current Year: \$0

Next Four Years: &0

Prepared by: Debra Ogden

Title: Sr. Budget Analyst

Department: Budget


Date: February 11, 2021

Reviewed By: [Signature]

Budget Director

Date: 2/11/21

TO: Norma Drummond,  
Commissioner of Planning

FROM: David S. Kvinge, AICP, RLA, CFM   
Director of Environmental Planning

DATE: February 4, 2021

SUBJECT: **STATE ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY REVIEW FOR AMENDMENT TO  
FY 2019-2023 CONSOLIDATED PLAN TO INCLUDE FY 2021 ACTION  
PLAN**

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**PROJECT/ACTION:** Filing of an application to the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) for funds from the Community Development Block Grant Program, the HOME Investment Partnership Program and the Emergency Solutions Grant Program. Also, submission of an amendment to the FY 2019-2023 Consolidated Plan to HUD including the Action Plan for FY 2021 for the County's administration of HUD funds.

**With respect to the State Environmental Quality Review Act and its implementing regulations 6 NYCRR Part 617, the Planning Department recommends that no further environmental review is required because the project/action:**

- DOES NOT MEET THE DEFINITION OF AN "ACTION" AS DEFINED UNDER SECTION 617.2(b)**
- MAY BE CLASSIFIED AS TYPE II PURSUANT TO SECTION 617.5(c)(26):**  
routine or continuing agency administration and management, not including new programs or major reordering of priorities that may affect the environment.

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**COMMENTS:** The submission of a Consolidated Plan every five years and an Action Plan every year are prerequisite routine administrative procedures that are required by HUD in order for the County to administer HUD funds for housing and community development programs. Environmental reviews are conducted for the specific projects in the annual Action Plan at the time that they are to be funded. Funds will not be released by HUD until all environmental review requirements pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act have been met. Additionally, environmental reviews pursuant to the State Environmental Quality Review Act will also be undertaken prior to state or local approvals for each individual project where applicable.

cc: James Carpinello, Senior Assistant County Attorney  
Anthony Zaino, Assistant Commissioner  
Claudia Maxwell, Associate Environmental Planner

An Act to authorize the County to submit an Urban County Application under the Federal Community Development Block Grant, Emergency Solutions Grant, and HOME programs, including an amendment to FY 2019-2023 Consolidated Plan, and to accept such Grants.

BE IT ENACTED BY the Board of Legislators by the County of Westchester as follows:

Section 1. The County of Westchester (the "County") is hereby authorized to file an application, including all understandings and assurances contained therein and an amendment to the FY 2019-2023 Consolidated Plan, including an Action Plan for Fiscal Year 2021, as required by Federal regulations, as an Urban County, to the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development for the purpose of undertaking a Community Development Program pursuant to the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974 as amended, and the Housing and Urban/Rural Recovery Act of 1983.

Section 2. The County is hereby authorized to receive a grant of approximately \$5,325,000 from the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development for the purpose of implementing the Community Development Program.

Section 3. The County Executive, or his authorized designee, is hereby authorized and empowered to take all action necessary or appropriate to effectuate the purposes of this Act.

Section 4. This Act shall take effect immediately.



**Damon R. Maher**

Legislator, 10<sup>th</sup> District  
Chair, Labor & Housing



**Committee Assignments**  
Budget & Appropriations  
Parks & Recreation  
Planning, Economic Development & Energy

**MEMORANDUM**

TO: Benjamin Boykin, Chair, Board of Legislators

FROM: Damon R. Maher, Legislator – 10<sup>th</sup> District

DATE: December 3, 2020

RE: Eastchester Housing lawsuit

Please add the attached emails and articles from the Fair Housing Justice Center, Inc. regarding the Eastchester housing lawsuit for referral as correspondence to the Planning, Economic Development & Energy and Labor & Housing committees.

**From:** Craig Waletzko  
**Sent:** Friday, November 13, 2020 12:01 PM  
**To:** Burton, Lisa <lmb9@westchestergov.com>  
**Cc:** Maher, Damon <drm7@westchestergov.com>; Bateman, Marianne <mfb9@westchestergov.com>  
**Subject:** RE: Eastchester lawsuit

Thanks for supplying your email addresses. I have added you all to our mailing list and will send copies of the newsletter re the Eastchester case, as well as our latest monthly Interfaith Action Network newsletter which has some more updates on our work and fair housing issues in general.

Thanks again for reaching out.

Craig Waletzko, Community Engagement Coordinator  
Fair Housing Justice Center, Inc.  
30-30 Northern Blvd, #302  
Long Island City, NY 11101  
(212) 400-8207  
Fax - (212) 400-8203  
[cwaletzko@fairhousingjustice.org](mailto:cwaletzko@fairhousingjustice.org)  
[www.fairhousingjustice.org](http://www.fairhousingjustice.org)



Housing Justice Center <fhjc@fairhousingjustice.org>  
**Sent:** Friday, November 13, 2020 12:04 PM  
**To:**  
**Subject:** [ML] Newsletter  
**From:** Fair: Opening Acts - November 9, 2020: FHJC's Case Alleging Racially Discriminatory Residency Preferences Moves Forward

November 11, 2020



[Donate Now!](#)

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# Opening Acts

The Newsletter of the Fair Housing Justice Center

## FHJC's Case Alleging Racially Discriminatory Residency Preferences Moves Forward

### FEDERAL COURT RULES AGAINST TOWN OF EASTCHESTER; DENIES MOTION FOR SUMMARY JUDGMENT

On September 28, 2020, the Honorable Judge Vincent L. Briccetti denied the Town of Eastchester's motion for summary judgment in full. On October 15, Judge Briccetti read his decision over the phone to the parties. A copy of the transcript of that telephonic hearing is available [here](#). This decision allows the Fair Housing Justice Center (FHJC) to proceed with its case against the Town for racial discriminatory housing practices.

#### Case Background

On November 21, 2016, the FHJC filed a lawsuit in federal court alleging that the predominantly white Town of Eastchester in Westchester County, New York uses discriminatory residency preferences that suppressed minority participation in the Town's Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program and in senior housing developments; denying housing opportunities to African American and Latinx populations; and perpetuating residential racial segregation.

The Town's Housing Choice Voucher Program used a residency preference that caused applicants who did not already live or work in the Town to remain on a waiting list until all residents had been

admitted. Judge Briccetti noted that "as of June 2017, the resident waiting list had 25 names, while the non-resident waiting list had 616 names."

The Court noted that "although the Town's Section 8 housing program defined "residents" to include those who worked in the Town, the Town did not advertise this fact to prospective program participants." The Court pointed to FHJC's undercover testing investigation saying:

"In 2008, Plaintiff had a tester applicant inquire about the Town's Section 8 program. During a recorded call, the tester was told by a Town Section 8 office employee that non-resident applicants faced an eight-to-ten-year wait, while resident applicants typically waited eight months to a year maximum. Plaintiff further states the tester was not told that the residency preference could be claimed by someone working in, but not yet living in, the Town.

In February 2016, a second tester was told the non-resident applicant wait time was ten to fifteen years, while the wait time for residents was much shorter. According to Plaintiff, this tester, like the first, was not told that he could qualify for a residency preference if he worked in the Town."

In his decision, Judge Briccetti cited the testimony of Eastchester's Section 8 Program Administrator who stated that "the Town had never received approval from HUD of the Town's use of residency preferences in its Section 8 program." In February 2016, the Section 8 Program Administrator informed HUD by email that the Town utilized a resident wait list and a non-resident wait list, and that the Town wished to close the non-resident wait list. In response, a HUD representative stated the Town's request had to be reviewed by HUD's fair housing office to ensure the Town did not run into any fair housing issues. The Town's Section 8 Program Administrator replied in an email. "LOL ... yes, I agree. I don't need to be front page of the news ... 4th page is ok ... not front!"

Rather than bring its Section 8 program into compliance with fair housing laws, the Town decided to abandon its Section 8 program and the State of New York assumed responsibility for the program, removed the residency preferences, and reordered the waiting list by date of application in 2019.

The Court's decision also referred to the Town's involvement in Sleepy Hollow Apartments, a 117-unit HUD subsidized development for low-income seniors. In 1975, prior to obtaining funding from HUD, the Town entered into an agreement with Sleepy Hollow's developer, requiring priority for renting apartments to Town residents. The agreement also provided that the Town, not Sleepy Hollow, would determine applicants' eligibility for occupancy. From 1978 through 2005, the Town's Section 8 office oversaw Sleepy Hollow's waiting list and applicant eligibility. By 2005, over 95% of Sleepy Hollow's 100-plus tenants were white, with one Black tenant. In 2005, HUD sent a letter to the owner of Sleepy Hollow directing the owner to suspend use of the residency preference, stating that such preference "could have a disparate impact on African-Americans and Hispanics as they have significantly lower representation in the preference areas when compared to the Housing Market Area," namely, Westchester County.

The Town also adopted a residency-based preference system in its zoning code for mixed-income multi-family senior housing, in which a minimum of 15% of units are rented or sold to senior citizens earning less than 80% of the area median income for Westchester County. Under the Town's Zoning Code, first preference is granted to Town residents, followed by immediate-family members of current and former residents, followed by Westchester County residents, and finally all other applicants. For current and former residents, the Zoning Code requires priority based on length of residency as well. The Town further required that a developer file and record a covenant on any senior housing development to ensure that the priority system is administered correctly. Failure to comply with the residency preferences is punishable by fines and imprisonment. The Court noted that FHJC's expert, Justin Steil, found that these preferences again favored white households over non-residents more likely to be African-American or Latinx households.

On November 4th, 2009, the Town Board held a public hearing to discuss amending its Zoning Code to permit senior housing development in the Town. During this meeting, a Town resident voiced his opinion that the proposed law was a "major concern" because it would welcome a "H.U.D. project" to the Town. The resident further stated his concern that a new development "might turn into a Sleepy Hollow, where we lose control of what we have." In response, Town Supervisor Anthony Colavita stated any senior housing permitted by the new law would be for "Eastchester, Tuckahoe, and Bronxville residents only." Supervisor Colavita noted the Town would not use federal funding for senior housing, and stated that if a developer "took HUD money, they therefore couldn't comply with our zoning code, and therefore they couldn't build a building and wouldn't get permission."

In September 2013, at a public Planning Board meeting to discuss a proposed senior housing development application, a Town resident said the development would turn the Town into "a Bronx neighborhood." Another resident stated, "more Section 8 people will come in," and "we're going to have the first project in Eastchester. That's what it looks like to me, it looks like a housing project." The resident further stated, "these people" would move in and "there goes our neighborhood." He also said, "Do you want this to become the Bronx again? ... This is not New Rochelle. This is not Yonkers. We don't want this. If we wanted that, we would live there--where it's much cheaper."

About a month later, Supervisor Colavita sent a letter to Town residents to address concerns expressed in "numerous phone calls and inquiries" that he had received about senior housing applications. Supervisor Colavita noted that several residents had expressed having heard rumors that prospective senior housing developments would become housing projects for "nonresidents," and he noted: "ALL OF THE ABOVE IS COMPLETELY FALSE," and that the development application was "for a brand new fair market" apartment building for our Eastchester, Bronxville and Tuckahoe senior citizens." Colavita then noted the Town's residency preference: "Eastchester, Tuckahoe and Bronxville seniors have priority over all others. Though it is extraordinarily unlikely, in the event there are no Eastchester, Tuckahoe and Bronxville seniors in need of an apartment, then immediate family members of our town residents ... have next priority."

#### Key Findings in Decision

The Court held that even though the Town closed its Section 8 program after FHJC filed its lawsuit, FHJC's claims are not moot. The Court reasoned, "... that the Town has no current desire or need to re-establish a Section 8 program does not demonstrate, as a matter of fact and law, that its implementation of a housing voucher program with a residency preference cannot reasonably be expected to recur. For these reasons, Plaintiff's claims are not moot."

The Court also considered whether FHJC has a right to bring this lawsuit. Judge Briccetti affirmed FHJC's standing with the following statement:

"It is well settled that a non-profit fair housing organization, like Plaintiff, may sue on its own behalf for injunctive relief, declaratory relief, and for damages for diversion of resources and frustration of its mission....Indeed, "the Supreme Court and the Second Circuit have repeatedly found that organizations that have conducted investigations into alleged violations of the FHA have suffered an injury-in-fact and have standing under the FHA.

Such injury-in-fact can be caused by, for example, expenditure of staff time and resources to investigate and respond to the Defendant's discriminatory practices, diverting such resources away from other activities the organization could otherwise conduct. Even at the summary judgment phase, "only a perceptible impairment of an organization's activities is necessary for there to be an injury in fact. Here, the record evidence suggests Plaintiff has been harmed by the Town's Section 8 housing practices and its enactment and enforcement of its senior housing law. The record suggests Plaintiff has, for years, diverted resources to investigate the Town's housing practices, which has frustrated Plaintiff's mission."

Judge Briccetti concluded "Simply put, Plaintiff has set forth sufficient allegations and evidence suggesting it has suffered an actionable injury in fact."

On whether the FHJC had presented enough evidence to proceed with its case under a theory of "disparate impact" liability, the Court found that evidence provided by FHJC "raises questions of fact as to whether the Town's residency preference will have an adverse disparate impact on Black and Hispanic renters and buyers." Indeed, FHJC's expert, Justin Steil, "hypothesized, based on a statistical analysis and population demographics, that the Town's senior housing residency preference is highly likely to create an adverse impact based on race and ethnicity." For example, Steil notes that "Assuming a randomized applicant pool that reflects the demographics of Westchester County -- the marketing region identified by Defendant itself -- the likely application pool for senior housing...in Eastchester will be 70 percent white and 30 percent nonwhite. But with the Town's residency preference..., the recipients of such housing would likely mirror the demographics of the Town age 55 and over: namely, 91 percent white and 9 percent nonwhite, even under the most conservative estimates."

The Court also considered the FHJC's claim of intentional discrimination. Citing the comments referenced earlier from public hearings and meetings and actions taken in response to those comments by Town Supervisor Colavita, Judge Briccetti concluded "a reasonable factfinder could conclude that the Town was motivated, at least in part, by its residents' fears of racial integration when it enacted the senior housing law and residency preference."

**FHJC Executive Director Fred Freiberg**, "We are pleased with this decision and hope that it will spur the Town of Eastchester to negotiate in good faith to reach a fair resolution of this case. The federal Fair Housing Act prohibits predominantly white suburban communities like Eastchester from adopting and enforcing policies in land-use, zoning or affordable housing programs that effectively exclude or limit access to housing opportunities based on race or national origin."

The FHJC is represented by **Diane L. Houk** with the law firm of **Emery Celli Brinckerhoff Abady Ward & Maazel LLP**.

The mission of the Fair Housing Justice Center (FHJC), a nonprofit civil rights organization, is to eliminate housing discrimination; promote policies and programs that foster open, accessible, and inclusive communities; and strengthen enforcement of fair housing laws in the New York City region.

FHJC's investigation in this case was supported with funding from a Private Enforcement Initiative (PEI) grant received from the Fair Housing Initiatives Program (FHIP) administered by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

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## Fair Housing Justice Center

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[Visit our website](#)

[Email us today](#)

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Fair Housing Justice Center | 30-30 Northern Blvd., Ste. 302, Long Island City, NY 11101

[Unsubscribe 1mb9@westchestergov.com](mailto:Unsubscribe_1mb9@westchestergov.com)

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Sent by [fhjc@fairhousingjustice.org](mailto:fhjc@fairhousingjustice.org) powered by



**Damon R. Maher**

Legislator, 10<sup>th</sup> District  
Chair, Labor & Housing



**Committee Assignments**  
Budget & Appropriations  
Parks & Recreation  
Planning, Economic Development & Energy

**MEMORANDUM**

TO: Benjamin Boykin, Chair, Board of Legislators

FROM: Damon R. Maher, Legislator – 10<sup>th</sup> District

DATE: December 3, 2020

RE: Supportive housing

Please add the attached article from LoHud dated November 19, 2020 entitled “Westchester Suffering Housing Crisis- ESSHI Program Can Help” for referral as correspondence to Budget & Appropriations, Labor & Housing and Social Services committees.

Here is a link to the article:

<https://www.lohud.com/story/opinion/2020/11/19/westchester-suffering-housing-crisis-esshi-program-can-help>



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**OPINION** *This piece expresses the views of its author(s), separate from those of this publication.*

## **Westchester is suffering a housing crisis. ESSHI program can help | Opinion**

**Richard Nightingale** Special to the USA TODAY NETWORK

Published 6:00 a.m. ET Nov. 19, 2020

This week marked an important milestone in a more than \$40 million transformational investment to benefit one of Westchester's most underserved communities whose members face new challenges and threats at this unique moment in New York history.

The roof was placed on Dayspring Commons, a state-of-the-art, 63-unit affordable residential building in the Nodine Hill neighborhood of Yonkers. The project is part of Westhab's larger vision, which includes a major renovation to the former Good Shepherd Presbyterian Church building next door to create the Dayspring Community Center.

This "Dayspring Campus" marks a new chapter of opportunity in Nodine Hill. It will feature comprehensive youth and adult education programs, year-round after school and summer youth programming, vocational training and employment counseling, family programming, a food pantry, and more. It will provide a pathway to college, living-wage careers, and long-term success for individuals who want to make positive changes in their lives, but need support to do so.

It took a village of public and private investors to make the Dayspring vision possible. A key component was the Gov. Andrew Cuomo's 15-year commitment to combat homelessness across New York: The Empire State Supportive Housing Initiative (ESSHI). If the Cuomo administration is to continue the success it has so far realized in combating homelessness across New York and protecting some of our most vulnerable residents, it's imperative that this program continue.

**For subscribers:** Yonkers' Nodine Hill to get affordable housing, revamped community center

**More:** Yonkers-based developer sees green with proposed eco-friendly affordable housing building

ESSHI funds supportive housing, which, for the past three decades, has provided an affordable place to live and on-site services for homeless individuals. In Nodine Hill, it will fund services and rental subsidies for 37 formerly homeless families, including 25 young parents and their children.

ESSHI has been a tremendous success, creating more than 4,600 units of supportive housing across the state in the last four years, including in parts of New York where secure funding for this type of housing previously did not exist. However, of the governor's 2016 commitment for 20,000 units, only 6,000 have been funded. Without a new five-year commitment in this year's budget for the next 7,000 units, this successful program will end. And so will the hope of transforming more lives and more communities.

New York faces a massive, multibillion dollar budget gap as a result of the economic fallout wrought by the ongoing coronavirus pandemic, but funding for capital projects is a long-term investment in the health and well-being of our communities. The up-front investment in supportive housing saves money in the long run, decreasing the need for homeless shelters and reducing reliance on emergency public safety and health care services.

A 2013 study of homeless, disabled New Yorkers placed in supportive housing created following the 2005 New York/New York III Supportive Housing Agreement found that taxpayers saved a net average of \$10,100 per person per year, with an average \$77,425 per tenant per year savings realized from individuals who moved out of state-operated psychiatric facilities.

As our state continues to grapple with COVID-19, as well as the persistent inequities that plague our society and deny opportunities to people of color, we are seeing some alarming trends as homelessness, joblessness and hunger are on the rise. We simply cannot afford to end successful programs like ESSHI that invest in underserved communities and give formerly homeless households a fighting chance.

Supportive housing also helps protect both vulnerable New Yorkers and members of the broader communities in which they reside from getting infected with COVID-19 by keeping people off the streets and out of crowded shelters. Safe, secure housing with independent apartments makes social distancing and quarantines—if necessary—easier to accomplish.

This week's topping off was the harbinger of more good things to come. Next spring, we will cut the ribbon on Dayspring. At that moment, we will officially welcome 63 families to their new home and hundreds of neighborhood residents to their new community center. We only

hope we can replicate this effort in the future, continue the push to end homelessness, and give everyone in our community the opportunity to thrive for many years to come.

*Richard Nightingale is the president and CEO of Westhab.*