



# Ground breaks on housing for homeless

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STAFF WRITER

NEW BRITAIN - After years of trying to find the right site and funding, city and state officials, local service providers and philanthropists celebrated the ground-breaking Wednesday of 11 units of permanent supportive housing that will go a long way in helping New Britain's chronically homeless population.



Mayor Erin Stewart, third from left, leads city and state officials, and donors, in breaking ground for an 11-unit permanent supportive housing building for the chronically homeless. | Lisa Backus | Staff

The North Oak Neighborhood Revitalization Zone area embraced the idea of “Howey House.” “We welcomed it,” said Joe Girgenti, who chairs the Housing Committee for the North Oak NRZ. “I wanted to be here to welcome them and thank them for doing this in our neighborhood to help rebuild our neighborhood. We’ll give them all the support they need.”

The project will put a new building at the intersection of North Street and Erwin Place with 11 efficiency and single-bedroom units and common areas for chronically homeless men, women or veterans who have a disabling condition and have experienced homelessness continuously for a year or more, or have had at least four bouts of homelessness in the past three years.

Case management and services will be provided by the Friendship Service Center which runs an emergency shelter, soup kitchen, and transitional and supportive housing for homeless individuals. The building is expected to be complete in about a year.

“It’s been a long time in coming,” said Ellen Perkins Simpson, the executive director of the Friendship Center. “One of the things that today we’re most excited about is that people from the neighborhood have come over and everyone has been so gracious.

State officials announced last year that the Friendship Center received \$2.14 million for the project and the rest was collected from city federal housing funds, a challenge grant offered by the American Savings Foundation, and other donors such as Webster Bank and Greg and Barbara Howey.

The building was named after Greg Howey, the former chairman of the board of Okay Industries who for years worked with both former Mayor Timothy Stewart and Mayor Erin Stewart to mitigate homelessness in the city by heading up the executive committee of the mayor’s plan to end homelessness. “I’m inspired about what we’ve been able to do to help the homeless,” Howey

told the crowd of dozens which included state Department of Housing Deputy Commissioner Nick Lundgren.

The Connecticut Coalition to End Homelessness last week issued the results of a Point In Time Count done in January that indicated that the city had 12 chronically homeless individuals who were staying in shelters or on the streets. Chronic homelessness in New Britain has been dramatically reduced in the past two years with dozens of people receiving housing through state-funded vouchers. Three years ago, volunteers who feed the homeless had estimated that nearly 100 people were living on the streets, many of whom had been chronically homeless for years.

“Housing is a stabilizing force,” said Mayor Erin Stewart who credited her father Timothy Stewart and Howey for making a commitment to end homelessness in the city 10 years ago. “I’m proud to have my hand on one of those shovels.”

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