

## Seth's Opening Remarks at N. 4<sup>th</sup> Ribbon Cutting

Today, just 13 months after we held our last ribbon cutting event in Highland Park, we are cutting the ribbon on our 26th property. In these buildings we have 54 individual homes. These buildings are spread over 5 counties, in 8 municipalities. We are currently working on 4 more distinct projects—these in New Brunswick, Long Branch and 2 more in Monmouth County, with a total of 20 homes, collectively, in those projects.

Every project we consider is driven by the belief that every town in New Jersey ought to be a place where people of various socio-economic classes can have a chance to live and thrive. No town, by virtue of costs of living, should be an impossibility for an entire socio-economic class of people.

Great towns are diverse towns—and as long as we have a system where family compensations, and multigenerational wealth, is so unequally distributed—commitment to affordable homes is one of the ways to serve as a corrective. Highland Park, like so many of the other 565 municipalities in this state, is an expensive place to live and a wonderful place to live.

Projects like this happen through partnership. RCHP-AHC is a particularly well organized and committed non-profit developer—but the financial commitments from national, state, county and private sources are necessary. And financial commitment is related to heart-commitment. I need to say, today, that one of the places I am most encouraged, in my interaction with government, is around the matter of housing. There are people throughout the various layers of government involved in housing who care about equity in community.



In 2017 RCHP-AHC learned about the National Housing Trust Fund. This was Housing and Urban Development money distributed through our state's Department of Community Affairs. The fund was to help small developers purchase and rehab properties and each unit would come with a voucher that was tied to that unit. It felt as if the fund was created for developers like us. You see before you the 6th property, and the 12th, 13th, 14th and 15th home that we've created with NHTF as the lead funder. Thank you, HUD, for the NHTF!

Additionally, Middlesex County HOME, the housing branch of the county, has again made the Housing First Capital Trust Fund available to us. So many times, over the years, we've counted on this fund, and others from the county, to supplement a lead grant from the state.

Finally, NJ Community Capital, with the leadership of underwriter Ron Wong, helped us both with acquisition and permanent financing. You have been a great partner!



Pictured: Ron Glynn, Nancy Pinkin, Seth and Julian Fowler

We, at RCHP-AHC, cannot thank you enough, HUD, DCA, Middlesex County Commissioners, RCA, for prioritizing housing funds that allow us, a small builder born from a church, to participate in the renewal of all things—one home at a time.

I want to take the time to thank a few key partners today in this work who were not mentioned above.

-Firstly, Jim Zarra, the project developer for RCHP-AHC, is, hands down, the reason this project came to be. Jim has committed to RCHP-AHC now since 2010 and he is the primary reason for what has been the endless forward momentum in new home development for our priority populations.

-Secondly, to Lori Freedman, who will painstakingly make decisions about who gets to live here, and then will offer ongoing support for tenants to help them integrate into this community, we give you thanks in advance. Lori has already been working hard on elements of this project, but when Jim 'hands off the keys' he'll really be handing them to Lori. Thanks in advance.

-To Harry Pangemanan and the RCHP-AHC maintenance team. Hopefully, with so much of this being new construction, you won't be called on much—but Harry and his team will soon assume the maintenance responsibility as they have for all our properties.

-To Kurt Ludwig, our trusted architect on so many beautiful buildings, thank you and your team for your attention and Care. Thank you.

-To Brown and Glynn, our favorite builders, who have teamed up with us on 8 major projects now, thank you for tremendous work on this house.

-To HP Borough, to Mayor Foster and council and to the building department and all departments that oversaw our design and kept a careful watch through the granting of a Certificate of Occupancy, thank you.

-To Coming Home NJ, to Eileen and Frances, who were so supportive of this project, and all our projects. Thank you.

-To Meghan Davie at Middlesex County Division of Health and Human Services, and Melissa Belamy, head of Housing and Community Development for the County, and to the County Commissioners you serve. Thank you.



-I would like to thank and hold up the memory of our late Lieutenant Governor Sheila Oliver, and all at DCA, for generously supporting the lead grant for this house. To Julian Fowler, Senior Underwriter, and Lorissa Luciano, DCA Housing Project Administrator, thank you.

-To the 'back of the house' team at RCHP-AHC, especially Sharon Buck, who has managed the finance side of our development projects, for the past few years, thank you.

-To the RCHP congregation, who continue to pray for, to encourage and to dream big dreams for a better world. Thank you.

-Finally, to the RCHP-AHC board, thank you for giving me, and the staff at AHC, the green light to continue seeking opportunities, in partnership with nation, state and county funders, to keep increasing the number of affordable homes across the state of New Jersey.

Mr. Rob Roesener, President of the Board

Mayor Elsie Foster

Mr. Julian Fowler, DCA

Ms. Melissa Bellamy, Housing First Capital, Middlesex County Div. Of Health and Human Services

Ms. Eileen O'Donnell & Francis O'Toole Coming Home.