



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **AARP Awards 2021 Community Challenge Grant to the Jersey City Housing Authority**

*The grant will be used to increase digital equity among public housing residents in Jersey City*

**NEW BRUNSWICK, NJ (July 28, 2021)** – The Jersey City Housing Authority has been named a recipient of a 2021 AARP Community Challenge grant, one of five grantees selected in New Jersey.

Digital inclusion is one of the Jersey City Housing Authority's main areas of focus in light of national and local data that show extreme disparities in digital access among public housing residents compared to the general population. The Jersey City Housing Authority became a participant in HUD's ConnectHome USA Initiative in late 2018 and has since partnered with organizations to provide hundreds of residents with devices and hotspots, establish on-site computer labs at four developments, and host dozens of digital literacy classes.

The AARP Community Challenge Grant will expand on the digital inclusion initiative by increasing digital equity among residents in a senior-only public housing development in Jersey City. The project will provide WiFi, smart home devices, a computer lab, and digital literacy programming to reduce social isolation, bridge language barriers and create sustainable, on-site digital programming.

"Nationally, only one-third of public housing residents have internet access, and for most that is through a cell phone connection," said Vivian Brady-Phillips, Executive Director of the Jersey City Housing Authority. "The AARP Community Challenge grant will allow 50 low-income JCHA households — some of the most isolated during the pandemic — to get connected, enabling them to access online education, utilize telehealth services, connect with family and friends virtually, and better engage in civic and political activities."

This project is part of the largest group of grantees to date with \$3.2 million awarded among 244 organizations nationwide. Grantees will implement quick-action projects to promote livable communities by improving housing, transportation, public spaces, civic engagement, and connection with family, friends, and neighbors with an emphasis on the needs of the 50-plus. Many of this year's awards support revitalizing communities adversely impacted by the pandemic and include a focus on diversity, inclusion, and disparities.

All projects are expected to be completed by November 10, 2021, and are designed to achieve one or more of the following outcomes:

- **Create vibrant public places** by improving open spaces and parks and activating main streets.

- **Deliver a range of transportation and mobility options** by increasing connectivity, walkability, bikeability, wayfinding, and access a wider range of transportation choices.
- **Encourage the availability of a range of housing** by increasing accessible and affordable housing solutions.
- **Increase civic engagement** by bringing together residents and local leaders to address challenges and facilitate a greater sense of inclusion.
- **Ensure a focus on diversity and inclusion** while improving the built and social environment of a community.
- **Support local recovery from the coronavirus pandemic** by emphasizing economic development, improvements to public spaces, and transportation services.

“We are incredibly excited to support the Jersey City Housing Authority as they work to make immediate improvements in their community to encourage promising ideas and jumpstart long-term change,” shared Stephanie Hunsinger, AARP New Jersey State Director. “Our goal at AARP New Jersey is to support the efforts of our communities to be great places for people of all backgrounds, ages and abilities.”

Other New Jersey grantees include the Borough of Red Bank, Berkeley Heights Township, Camden Community Partnership, and Northern New Jersey Community Foundation. The full list of grantees can be found at [www.aarp.org/communitychallenge](http://www.aarp.org/communitychallenge).

The Community Challenge grant program is part of AARP’s nationwide Livable Communities initiative, which supports the efforts of cities, towns, neighborhoods and rural areas to become great places to live for people of all ages. Since 2017, AARP New Jersey has awarded 804 grants and \$9.3 million through the program to nonprofit organizations and government entities across the state. View the full list of grantees and their project descriptions at [www.aarp.org/communitychallenge](http://www.aarp.org/communitychallenge) and learn more about AARP’s livable communities work at [www.aarp.org/livable](http://www.aarp.org/livable).

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### **About AARP**

*AARP is the nation’s largest nonprofit, nonpartisan organization dedicated to empowering people 50 and older to choose how they live as they age. With a nationwide presence and nearly 38 million members, AARP strengthens communities and advocates for what matters most to families: health security, financial stability and personal fulfillment. AARP also produces the nation’s largest circulation publications: AARP The Magazine and AARP Bulletin. To learn more, visit [www.aarp.org](http://www.aarp.org), [www.aarp.org/espanol](http://www.aarp.org/espanol) or follow @AARP, @AARPenEspanol and @AARPadvocates, @AliadosAdelante on social media.*

### **About Jersey City Housing Authority**

*Since its founding in 1938, the Jersey City Housing Authority (JCHA) has provided federally subsidized housing to hundreds of thousands of extremely low- and low-income families in Jersey City, the most diverse municipality in the country. JCHA is the second largest housing authority in the state, serving more than 15,000 individuals. While we are funded as a landlord, we recognize that our residents’ needs extend far beyond housing security. To that end, our Department of Resident Empowerment and Community Engagement (RECE) is committed to offering a range of assessment and referral services, and to facilitating events and programs both on and off our sites with particular focus on youth and workforce development, senior services, and digital inclusion. We achieve these aims through close partnership with more than two dozen local nonprofit and governmental organizations.*