



HANDS

HOUSING AND NEIGHBORHOOD
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Hat City Lofts Completion – Leading the Way for Neighborhood Transformation in Orange, NJ

Orange, New Jersey, June 1, 2018 – HANDS celebrated a neighborhood revitalization milestone with the completion of Hat City Lofts – the adaptive reuse of blighted factories transformed into vibrant affordable loft living and creative economy commercial space. HANDS Executive Director, Luther Flurry was joined by Congressman Donald M. Payne, Jr., the Hon. Dwayne Warren, Mayor of Orange Township, New Jersey Community Capital’s President, Wayne Meyer and HANDS Founder, Patrick Morrissy along with government officials, funders and partner organizations, residents and business owners on May 31st, 2018 at 10am in the courtyard of Hat City Lofts (formerly the F. Berg Hat Factory) at 475 South Jefferson Street, Orange, NJ.

“Throughout the United States, we are seeing a resurgence of local communities,” said Rep. Donald M. Payne, Jr. “The Hat City Lofts project is the cornerstone for Orange’s arts community. This development, which my father worked hard to boost, will help revitalize the neighborhood and make the Valley Arts District a creative hub for entrepreneurship and artistic expression.”

A recipient of the 2016 New Jersey Future Smart Growth Award, this collaborative initiative between residents, business owners, artists, religious organizations and HANDS, using an “it takes a village” approach, helped to transform a vacant, blighted and neglected hat-manufacturing industrial complex into a new, creative economy by creating 32 loft condominiums and 10 commercial arts and studio spaces. The historic 1864 and 1907 structures now house 800-1,200 sq. ft. units and feature high ceilings, large windows and open floor plans. Each condo has a new kitchen and bath(s) with new heating and electrical systems.

“The story of the Valley, and of renovating the Berg Hat Factory, is one of community. Working together, neighbors created a vision for the Valley. Working with community partners, HANDS, ValleyArts, the Township, and others are creating vibrant places for people to live, work, raise their family, meet and play,” said HANDS Executive Director, Luther Flurry. “The Berg Hat Factory was the most visible eyesore, the most pivotal property. Hat City Lofts, as it is now called, anchors the Valley. Today the Valley, and Hat City Lofts are places where artists, makers, entrepreneurs, and residents from around the world build homes, businesses and community. The neighborhood vision is being realized today.”

This property is in the Valley Arts District and is part of HANDS’ efforts to provide affordable housing to low and moderate-income families and space for small businesses as the neighborhood transforms as a hub for innovation and creativity. The adaptive reuse of this complex now serves as a catalyst to accelerate a renaissance in this neighborhood and beyond. Now revived with the energy of excited residents and makers, this project represents the completion of HANDS’ commitment to create 100 long-term affordable arts spaces as part of a plan to reinvent a former industrial neighborhood driven by a creative economy. The Hat City Lofts and adjacent Powerhouse will house over 30 full time jobs at full occupancy.

“We are thrilled to celebrate the completion of Hat City Lofts,” said Wayne Meyer, President of New Jersey Community Capital (NJCC). “We are proud to be a partner in this cornerstone project, creating this thriving center of culture, arts, and community. Congratulations to HANDS. Without their vision, perseverance, and leadership, none of this would be possible.” NJCC has had a hand in the



redevelopment of the former Berg hat factory from the beginning. The Berg was the biggest, tallest, grim reminder of both the Valley's industrial prominence and its staggering decline. After helping HANDS acquire the building with almost \$500,000 in loans, NJCC then shifted to the role of co-developer. Through its nonprofit real estate subsidiary, Community Asset Preservation Corporation or CAPC, NJCC helped HANDS both find the full financing needed and complete the construction. As the former Director of Housing at HANDS, Meyer has helped bring the project he started there, full circle—an integral piece of the entire Valley Arts District revitalization he helped to realize.

“HANDS has been a shining example of the power of collaboration and of partnership by bringing people together to create projects that make a difference in neighborhoods in places like Orange,” said Director Janel Winter of Division of Housing and Community Resources. Other speakers at the event included Congressman Donald M. Payne Jr., The Hon. Dwayne Warren, Mayor of The City of Orange Township, Maria Maio-Messano, HUD, New Jersey Field Office Director, Eileen Anderson, Senior Director for the Northeast Region of NeighborWorks America, Jeffery Crum, Director of Real Estate for CAPC, and other partner and funding supporters.

The project was funded and financed by the State of New Jersey Neighborhood Revitalization Tax Credit Program, US Department of Housing and Urban Development-Economic Development Initiative Special Project Grant, NeighborWorks® America, New Jersey Housing and Mortgage Finance Agency, Community Housing Capital and New Jersey Community Capital. Special operations support was provided and coordinated by Community Asset Preservation Corporation (CAPC).

Located centrally in the New York metropolitan area, next to Newark, and just 17 miles from New York City, Orange is an attractive Smart Growth area where people want to live and where commerce can thrive. Orange, NJ has approximately 32,000 residents and is the first urban stop along NJ Transit's Commuter rail line into NY Penn Station. A 30-minute ride to midtown Manhattan plus frequent transit to Newark make Orange a convenient and attractive place for loft living.

More about the Valley Arts District:

The fifteen-block core of the Valley have been renovated and adaptively reused as artists live/work residential units, restaurants, galleries, cafés, artisan workshops, artist studios, recording studios and a repertory theater. This area borders the strong suburban neighborhoods of South and West Orange. With Orange's Highland Avenue Train Station as the first stop after higher income suburbs like South Orange, Maplewood, and Millburn, the Valley Section is leading the renaissance of Orange. In addition to the Hat City Lofts project, HANDS has invested \$12 million in acquisition and renovation of buildings in the Valley Arts District. Home to Luna Stage Theater, Hat City Restaurant/live music venue, the ValleyArts Community Gallery, the Firehouse Gallery, Arts Unbound Workshop/Gallery (working with disabled artists and senior citizens), and much more - the Valley Arts District is fast becoming known as the place where artists, innovators, and entrepreneurs can set-up their space, flourish and prosper. Its creative energy is vibrant and diverse yet a cohesive community where locals and visitors can come to put down roots, play and stay.

About HANDS, Inc.

Housing and Neighborhood Development Services, Inc. (HANDS) was founded by a group of clergy and community leaders in 1986, with a mission to keep the neighborhoods of Orange and East Orange places where people can and do choose to raise their family and run their business. At HANDS, we amplify neighborhood voices and implement the ideas that will elevate the quality of community life. HANDS patiently invests expertise and funds in places where the private sector sees insufficient return and in projects that the public sector has not yet prioritized.

HANDS strategy is threefold: (1) Engage citizens to articulate, advocate, and create programs and goals that build on community assets and address local challenges, (2) Partner with stakeholders, community organizations and government to implement programs that elevate civic engagement and advance community goals, (3) implement a neighborhood development program that includes the acquisition and redevelopment of pivotal, eyesore properties. HANDS redevelops deteriorated one to three family homes and sells them to low and moderate income buyers prepared for homeownership. HANDS also repurposes vacant, underutilized, industrial and commercial properties for long term economic development. The success of our strategy is demonstrated by increased civic engagement, neighbor satisfaction, and private investment. HANDS has completed about 190 properties. HANDS is tax exempt under IRS 501(c)(3) and is a chartered affiliate of NeighborWorks® America.