



**For Immediate Release**

**MAYOR BOOKER AND NEWARK/URBAN ESSEX TASK FORCE LAUNCH  
“NEIGHBORHOOD PRESERVATION PATROL”  
TO HELP RESIDENTS FIGHT FORECLOSURE**

*More than 50% of Homeowners don't know there are options to prevent foreclosure*

**Newark, NJ – April 5, 2008** – Mayor Cory A. Booker announced today the first of a series of outreach events sponsored by the Newark/Urban Essex Foreclosure Task Force to increase public awareness about avoiding foreclosure. At today's event, volunteer crews formed “Neighborhood Preservation Patrol” teams in each of Newark's five wards. The teams fanned out to remove illegally posted “We Buy Houses” advertisements, distribute information door-to-door to warn residents away from foreclosure “rescue” scams and other irresponsible loan products, and to encourage anyone facing mortgage difficulties to contact a qualified housing counselor.

The announcement rounded off an afternoon of neighborhood outreach that involved ten organizations, including two youth groups, participating in the outreach event. The teams canvassed neighborhoods that have experienced high numbers of foreclosure filings, the first legal step in the foreclosure process. City of Newark Code Enforcement officials accompanied several of the teams in order to monitor the location of illegally posted “We Buy Houses” signs as part of an ongoing effort to cite and fine the companies that post the signs.

“The outreach effort we're launching today will get the word out to people facing foreclosure that help is available – and that real help does not come from companies advertising on telephone poles,” said Mayor Booker. The Mayor spoke at a home that was lost to foreclosure, but is now being redeveloped as affordable housing by Episcopal Community Development, one of the Taskforce members and a patrol sponsor. The home is located at 858-860 South 12<sup>th</sup> Street.

“This neighborhood – like urban neighborhoods all over the country – has been targeted by aggressive marketing by irresponsible brokers and lenders whose appetite for profit led us into the current mortgage crisis. Our residents are now fighting back, arming themselves with information that can save their homes and neighborhoods. We are proud to be co-sponsoring a Taskforce that is working to address this critical issue which is affecting our community,” he continued.

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The City is working with Essex County and other partners to identify funds that will support expanded capacity for local counseling services. Essex County is leading the state in foreclosure filings and in Newark, there were 991 subprime and “Alt-A” mortgages in foreclosure proceedings in February 2008 alone. The City has partnered with NeighborWorks America and the Housing Preservation Foundation’s HOPE hotline. This hotline is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week and can provide initial assistance to callers before referring them to local organizations for face-to-face follow-up.

“More than 50 percent of homeowners in trouble do not know that they can talk to a housing counselor; or that lenders offer workout options. The sooner you reach out for assistance, the more options are available to you. If you are having trouble paying your mortgage, now is the time to reach out and call 888.995.HOPE,” said Deborah Boatright, Northeast District Director, NeighborWorks® America. “There is NO charge to use the Hotline. And that is a vital part of our message today—any company or any telephone solicitor that offers to help you for a fee is not acting in your best interest.”

Leaflets distributed to residents today identified three local counseling agencies that are accepting clients facing foreclosure problems: ACORN Housing, Brand New Day, and Tri-City Peoples Corporation. All three have counselors certified by the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to assist residents in crisis due to foreclosure.

For Lamar Davis, 70 and Alvornia Davis, 74, this help is long awaited and were happy when the task force referred them to Legal Services of Essex County. The couple, both in their 70s, have been Newark homeowners since 1978 but after their lender convinced them an adjustable rate mortgage would be a good option them, they are now facing foreclosure on their home.

“Our mortgage rate went up from 10 percent to 13 percent. We are already on a fixed income of social security and pension benefits, so when our monthly payment jumped to more than \$3,000 a month, we got behind in our bills,” said Alvornia Davis. “We are sharing our story so that ordinary people and political leaders will see the pain and destruction caused by these predatory practices, and make sure other people’s lives aren’t ruined by them.”

The “Neighborhood Preservation Patrol” initiative grew out of the Newark/Urban Essex Foreclosure Task Force, a coalition of more than 30 organizations that has been meeting regularly since November 2007 to formulate a collective response to the mounting rate of foreclosures in this area. The group, co-convened by the City and Essex County, includes non-profit counseling agencies, advocacy groups, legal service organizations, researchers and private sector allies. In addition to supporting counseling services, the Task Force also supports efforts to reclaim properties already empty due to foreclosure, pushes for better workout options for local residents with lenders, and serves as a forum for communication among the different entities working on foreclosure prevention and intervention.

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**ORGANIZATIONS in the  
NEWARK/URBAN ESSEX FORECLOSURE TASK FORCE**

City of Newark  
Essex County Housing and Community Development  
City of East Orange  
Township of Irvington  
HUD  
NJHMFA  
NJ Division of Banking and Insurance  
NeighborWorks America  
New Jersey Citizen Action  
New Jersey Institute for Social Justice  
Housing and Community Development Network of New Jersey  
Newark NOW  
La Casa de Don Pedro  
Episcopal Community Development  
Unified Vailsburg Services Organization  
HomeCorp  
HANDS  
ACORN Housing  
New York Federal Reserve Bank  
Legal Services of New Jersey  
Essex-Newark Legal Services  
Cornwall Center, Rutgers Newark  
Bloustein School Studio, Rutgers New Brunswick  
Enterprise Community Partners  
Victoria Foundation  
Freddie Mac  
FDIC  
New Community Corporation  
Brand New Day  
Tri-City Peoples Corporation  
Seton Hall Legal Clinic