

The Chelsea Insider

CONNECTING THE NEIGHBORHOOD TO PUBLIC SAFETY

February 2024 Edition | Serving residents of Atlantic City from Texas Avenue to Annapolis Avenue



Pictured from left to right: Atlantic City Police Officers Mark Pincus and Anthony Alosi Jr., along with Mark Manganeli and Lou Gasparini of Rise Up AC, offering assistance to an unsheltered individual.

IN THIS EDITION...

Mental health, addiction, and homelessness affect our families and communities in deep and painful ways. Each individual has unique challenges, and the solutions are complex, long-term, and depend on institutions that can be difficult to navigate. Atlantic City has more than its fair share of at-risk individuals. The 2023 Point in Time Count, the only official data on the number of those experiencing homelessness in Atlantic City, estimates 343 homeless individuals.

In this edition of The Chelsea Insider, we examine this issue and its effect on the Chelsea community. The goal of this newsletter is to provide information, let the community know about Chelsea EDC efforts in this regard, and recommend actions that can be taken by residents and businesses.

Our priority is that every individual has a safe and supportive environment, with access to health care and other services that ensure the highest long-term quality of life possible.

There are numerous obstacles to this goal, from a national housing shortage to individuals with mental health and medical conditions.

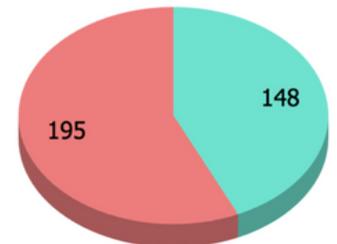
"Housing First" is a common sense approach to addressing the needs of the at-risk population by providing shelter as a first intervention. Chelsea EDC has been working tirelessly with property owners, developers, and government agencies to remove the obstacles to more housing for all members of our community.

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STATS & FACTS

In 2023, the Chelsea EDC Public Safety Team, in collaboration with the Atlantic City Police Department, led a groundbreaking initiative, collecting statistical data on crime and public safety perceptions within Chelsea. Using resident survey responses as a guide, our team employed a two-pronged strategy, tracking detailed crime data along with social factors that affect community perceptions in our district.

- Sheltered Homeless Persons
- Unsheltered Homeless Persons



2023: Number of Homeless Individuals in Atlantic City (Monarch Housing Associates, 2023)

Please see [STATS](#), Pg 2

CHELSEA ACTION

During the community input phase of the Chelsea 10-year plan, the need to address the at-risk population set the foundation for one of the Plan's 44 strategies. Strategy 2.1, Interventions for a Safe Community, calls us to "Partner with Social Service Agencies to Provide Outreach: Identify and refer individuals for health, housing, and social services focused on long-term solutions."

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EDITION

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One important question is whether the resources exist to help. From our experience, yes, but that help depends on the individual taking steps, such as applying for identification, attending recovery meetings, or accepting housing that is offered. When this is impossible due to mental health or addiction, what are the community's options? Homelessness is the furthest thing from a crime; however oftentimes, life on the streets leads to illegal behavior, such as aggressive panhandling, building encampments and sleeping on private property, and urinating in public. As a result, the financial and emotional strain on residents, businesses, police, public works, institutions, social service workers, and taxpayers is overwhelming and unsustainable.

Here are some suggestions to help the community cope:

1. Join us in advocating for non-police social service 24/7 number to get help for at-risk individuals in Atlantic City.
2. Support the organizations that provide services, rather than handing money to at-risk individuals.
3. Call 911 or the non-emergency police number and request a social worker if you see someone in need.
4. Businesses should call the police if individuals are interfering with their operations or bothering customers.
5. Provide feedback and your opinions to Chelsea EDC and elected officials.

This is a difficult topic; we have more questions than answers. We will keep asking, and we urge the community to be a part of the discussion. The solutions will take all of us working together. For now, we ask the community to contribute to the many social service organizations that do this challenging work. They can be found at www.ChelseaEDC.org/Hope.

Elizabeth Terenik, President, Chelsea EDC



Pictured: Encampment on a vacant property in the Chelsea Neighborhood

STATS

From Pg 1

In the realm of violent crime, there were 79 assaults throughout Chelsea in 2023, including 68 aggravated assaults, with 19 involving firearms. This averages to about one assault every four days in the district. Despite a surge in the summer population, Chelsea's assault rate remained stable over the year, marked by noticeable spikes on March 27 and April 2, 2023.

Addressing the social factors of safety perceptions, our spring survey revealed that unhoused populations notably impacted decision-making in Chelsea. With no homelessness data on Chelsea specifically, our team conducted 6:00 a.m. counts over 12 weeks, consistently revealing an average of 22 unhoused individuals in targeted areas.

We cross-referenced our findings with the 2023 NJ Point-in-Time Count by Monarch Housing Associates and found that our count represents 11% of 195 total unsheltered homeless in the City.

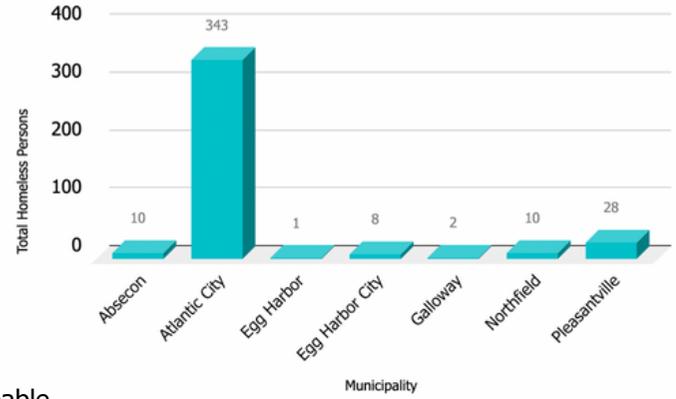
The data also exposed Atlantic City's total unsheltered homeless population significantly surpasses neighboring municipalities like Pleasantville with 28 and Egg Harbor Township with only one. Over the course of the year, we will continue to gather data, looking for solutions to chronic homelessness in Chelsea and Atlantic City.

ACTION

From Pg 1

We learned quickly this was no easy task, and would take a lot of time and resources. Over the past three years we have worked with many of the City's social services, as well as the Atlantic City Police Department and the Atlantic County Prosecutor's Office to help at-risk individuals. These agencies have an extremely difficult job.

In November 2022, Chelsea EDC contracted with Rise Up AC to engage with at-risk individuals and connect them with services or with their families. Rise Up AC works after business hours, on weekends, and on holidays. They also work with Chelsea EDC funded detail officers to offer services, nutritious food, health care, and rehab opportunities. In 2023, Rise Up AC engaged individuals in Chelsea, and their work resulted in 30% of those individuals receiving housing or a bed in a care or rehab facility, or returning to family.



ECONOMIC IMPACT

To follow up on concerns from Chelsea's merchants on the challenges they face from the at-risk population, we researched the economic impact. Costs related to an unhoused population come in various forms, from lost revenue for businesses near homeless encampments to increased public works costs to clean up public spaces. Unfortunately, the connection between homelessness and diminished economic development appears to be poorly researched overall.

One economic aspect of homelessness that has been well studied is the cost of unhoused populations on local healthcare systems. A National Institutes of Health (NIH) article notes that spending more on housing for the homeless can result in savings overall, due to the tremendous cost of treating unhoused populations in hospital emergency rooms rather than primary care.

Based on expense data from NIH and early projections of the unhoused population in Chelsea by CEDC, we estimate the costs of unhoused individuals in the Chelsea community could easily exceed \$400,000 annually for health care alone. Importantly, this figure does not account for lost revenue from businesses, increased police and public works expenses, or the cost of reduced tourism in the district, which have yet to be adequately studied. Given the broad nature of the unmeasured expenses, the total cost of homelessness in Chelsea could exceed \$1 million annually.

For the full Chelsea EDC report written by Bluestone Services, see www.ChelseaEDC.org/Bluestone.

Become a proactive citizen and...



Choosing to support social service organizations with your donations is a more impactful choice than giving money directly to individuals. These organizations are skilled at addressing broader social issues like poverty and education gaps. They can implement effective programs, reach more people, and ensure lasting positive change. With transparent reporting, they provide donors confidence in the impact of their contributions.

By backing these organizations, you play a vital role in fostering long-term solutions and building a better society. Contributing to social service causes is straightforward with Chelsea EDC. Their platform allows everyone to easily support various needs, from helping at-risk individuals to contributing to mental health initiatives. By choosing a cause that resonates with you, making a direct contribution becomes effortless. Chelsea EDC empowers everyone to make a positive impact on the issues that matter most.

Scan QR code or visit www.ChelseaEDC.org/Hope, to find more information.



Ways to report Safety Concerns/Emergencies

Emergency Number	911
Non-Emergency Number	(609) 347- 5780
Anonymous Tips	Text "ACPD" and your message/tip to 847411
Suicide & Crisis Lifeline	988
NJ Health & Human Service Resources	211

Business Spotlight

GROWTH AND INNOVATION ON ATLANTIC AVENUE

Celebrating over two decades of success, Atlantic Income Tax & Immigration Services stands as a beacon of resilience and commitment, spearheaded by the visionary leadership of Ms. Endry Abreu and her esteemed partner, Mr. Cesear Diaz.

With a focus on Tax Preparation, Federal & State IRS ITIN, Immigration Services, and Notary Public Services, Ms. Abreu and Mr. Diaz have been instrumental in providing vital support to our community. Looking ahead, Ms. Abreu and Mr. Diaz envision an exciting expansion that reflects their deep-rooted commitment to both business and community development. Plans include the establishment of the "Cup & Sandwich Cafe," offering an authentic taste of Dominican cuisine on the first floor, along with the development of two rental units on the second floor, and aspirations to add two more stories to provide much-needed residential housing.

Their ambitious vision encapsulates the spirit of innovation and progress that defines Atlantic Avenue. As local entrepreneurs, they embody the transformative power of small businesses in driving economic growth and vitality within our community.

If you require assistance in locating resources for your business such as facade enhancements, grants, or navigating through city regulations, please don't hesitate to reach out to us at info@ChelseaEDC.org.



Pictured: Ms. Endry Abreu and her partner, Mr. Cesear Diaz.

Chelsea EDC is a non-profit organization established in 2019 to increase economic opportunity in the Chelsea neighborhood of Atlantic City. Since then, we have been asking what would make the neighborhood better. Your answers make up 44 strategies outlined in the Chelsea 10-year Plan. In 2021, we started putting the Plan's strategies into action through exciting community events, impactful beautification and public safety programs, significant grants for homebuyers and businesses, local business marketing and promotion, and connecting residents with career opportunities. We hope you noticed our work and even participated in our programs!

For more information, www.ChelseaEDC.org/Plan



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