



Leading the Way 2025 Tour

NEWARK POST REPORT

HIGHLIGHTING WHAT WORKS

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LETTER FROM CITIES UNITED EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR: **AN EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Dear Newark Community, Partners, and City Leadership,

On behalf of Cities United, I want to extend my sincere appreciation for the warm welcome and thoughtful engagement our team received during the Newark stop of the Leading the Way Tour, held from October 13–16, 2025. Our team returned energized by **the depth of partnership, honesty, and shared commitment** they witnessed. Newark continues to stand as a national example of what a community-driven, healing-centered approach to safety can achieve.

Across 10 sessions and more than 110 participants, Newark’s ecosystem showed up with clarity, passion, and a strong sense of collective purpose. Credible messengers, trauma-recovery partners, young leaders, educators, city agencies, community organizations, and national collaborators all contributed to meaningful and forward-focused conversations about **Newark’s ongoing work and future direction.**

Newark’s continued progress reflects years of intentional leadership and community investment, including a **significant decrease in homicides over the past decade** that stands as a testament to steady, coordinated efforts across the ecosystem. I want to especially acknowledge Mayor Ras J. Baraka, whose long-standing commitment to public safety, healing, and community empowerment has shaped **Newark’s transformation and resilience.**

As our team reflected, Newark is widely recognized as having **one of the strongest and most aligned safety ecosystems in the country**—rooted in community leadership, credible messenger expertise, data-informed coordination, and deep relationships across organizations. At the same time, partners expressed clear opportunities to strengthen communication, sharpen alignment around shared goals, and develop a public narrative that reflects the full scope of Newark’s impact.

This report lifts up those reflections and outlines recommendations that Newark can take to deepen coordination, strengthen public understanding of the model, expand young leader engagement, and more clearly connect data and practice. These steps are designed to reinforce the work Newark is already leading, while identifying targeted ways Cities United can support these next phases of alignment.

Cities United remains committed to walking alongside Newark—supporting your efforts in ways that honor your leadership, elevate your progress, and reflect the ecosystem you have built. We also recognize the strong network of national partners contributing to Newark’s advancements, and we remain dedicated to working collaboratively to uplift Newark’s model as a national example. Our commitment is to help ensure **Newark’s story—and the impact of the people driving it—continues to be seen, understood, and celebrated** across the country as we work together toward building safe, healthy, and hopeful communities.

With deep appreciation,

Anthony D. Smith
Executive Director, Cities United



INTRODUCTION

Newark, New Jersey is home to **one of the nation's most deeply rooted, community-driven public safety ecosystems**. Built over decades of organizing, credible messenger leadership, and unwavering mayoral commitment, the city's approach reflects a powerful combination of community trust, political alignment, and operational discipline. Newark's model is guided by real-time public safety and public health data, trauma-informed practice, and a shared belief that communities must lead the work to reduce violence and support healing.

This ongoing work is further guided by the **2023 Office of Violence Prevention and Trauma Recovery (OVPTR) Strategic Plan**, which outlines four strategic goals that shape the city's current direction and priorities. These goals reflect Newark's commitment to strengthening community participation, aligning public safety and public health strategies, and investing in the people and partners doing the work every day.

The Leading the Way (LTW) Tour came to Newark to **listen, to learn, and to support the city's continued progress**.

THE TOUR SEEK TO:

- Highlight effective, comprehensive public safety practices and models
- Foster cross-sector collaboration
- Amplify community-led solutions
- Enhance local capacity
- Evaluate progress and impact through the Cities United Roadmap Framework
- Assess and foster young leader engagement

Throughout Newark's LTW engagement, Cities United met with community organizers, credible messengers, young leaders, educators, trauma recovery providers, philanthropic partners, government staff, and system leaders. Engagements included strategy discussions, partner site visits, ecosystem briefings, a SWOT analysis focused on Newark's four strategic goals, and collaborative sessions with the OVPTR and Deputy Mayor's Office.

Together, the insights gathered during the stop—combined with partner reflections and Newark’s active strategic priorities—reflect a jurisdiction firmly positioned in Phase 4: **Develop Continuous Improvement and Evaluation of the Cities United Roadmap**. Newark demonstrates deep strength, clear structure, and a community-led model that continues to produce meaningful impact. At the same time, the LTW visit highlighted an important near-term window to reinforce continuity, deepen coordination, elevate narrative and visibility, and strengthen the infrastructure needed to sustain progress.

This report captures Newark’s strengths, challenges, momentum, and opportunities and provides **focused near-term recommendations to support the city’s next steps**.

UNDERSTANDING THE LOCAL LANDSCAPE

Newark's **public safety ecosystem** is the result of decades of organizing, community-based leadership, and deliberate city investment in a public health-centered approach to safety. During the LTW stop, partners used a SWOT framework to reflect on Newark's progress and challenges through the lens of the four strategic goals in the Office of Violence Prevention and Trauma Recovery (OVPTR) Strategic Plan: strengthening community participation, targeting hotspot areas, centering healing and trauma recovery, and supporting frontline partners.

A key feature of Newark's landscape is the **Newark Public Safety Collaborative (NPSC)**, a partnership launched in 2018 between Rutgers University-Newark, the Mayor's Office, and the Department of Public Safety. Through its Data-Informed Community Engagement (DICE) framework, NPSC provides accessible hotspot analysis, mapping, and problem-solving tools that help community partners, credible messengers, and system agencies align their efforts.

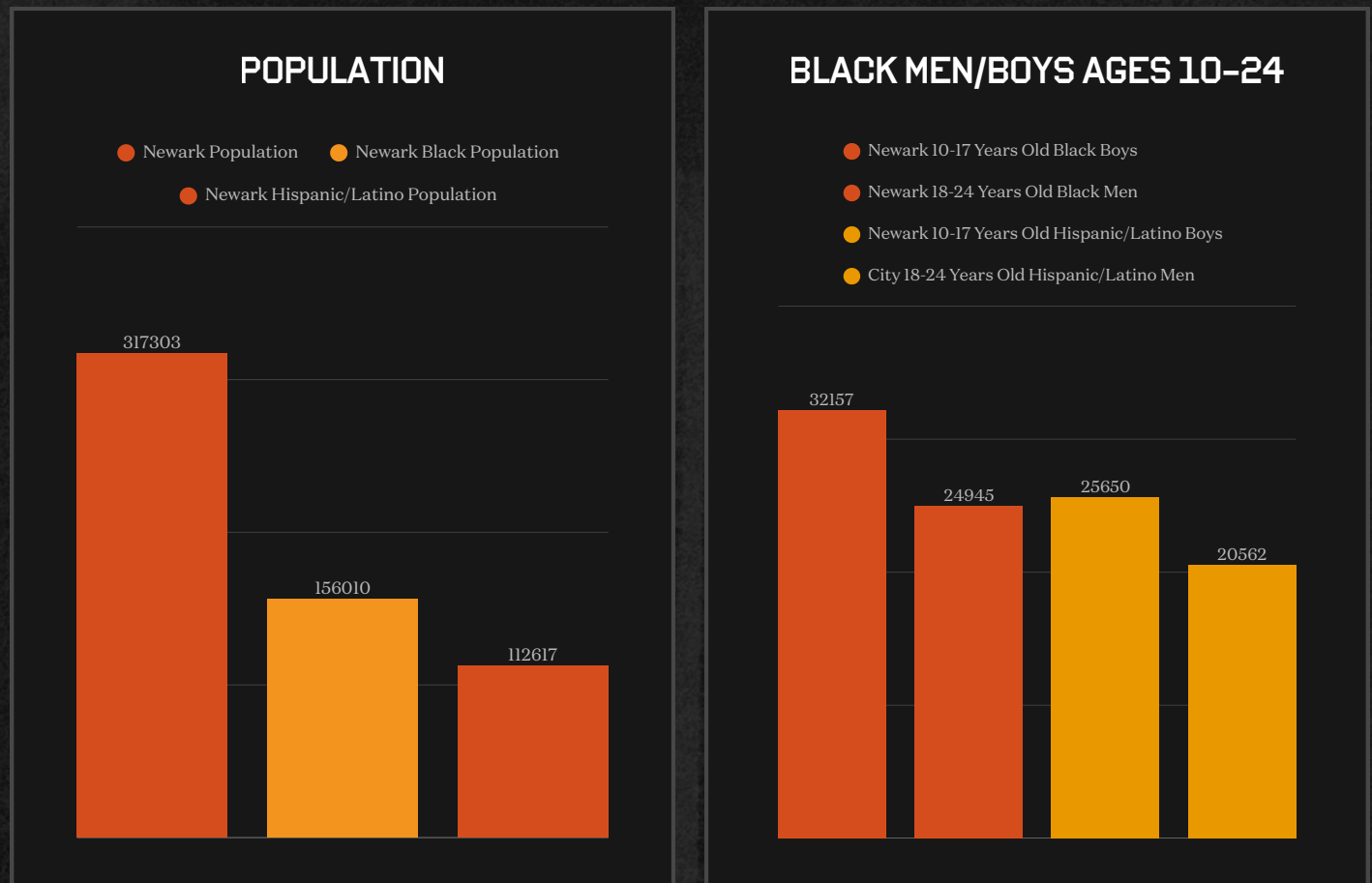
The sections that follow draw on this context and are organized around four interrelated themes: Newark's grounded strengths, persistent challenges, emerging momentum, and **strategic considerations for sustaining and scaling its public health-centered, community-led safety model.**

Grounded Strengths: A Legacy Rooted in Community Leadership, Organizing, and Collective Care

Newark's public safety work is grounded in three interconnected strengths that surfaced consistently during the Leading the Way stop: **a long-standing movement-rooted history of community leadership**, strong alignment between community partners and City Hall, and a culture of consistent, trusted presence in neighborhoods most impacted by violence. Together, these strengths form the backbone of Newark's safety ecosystem and reflect the city's deep commitment to community-led, healing-centered public safety.

Newark's current infrastructure is built on decades of organizing and collective care. The Newark Anti-Violence Coalition (NAVC)—formed in 2009—led weekly vigils and rallies in response to shootings for 155 consecutive weeks, an effort widely documented in local reporting and organizational histories. Many of today's practitioners, including city leaders and community-based partners, trace their grounding to that movement. As one partner shared during the stop, “We didn’t wait for a grant to start this work—people were already in the streets making sure our folks were not forgotten.” This **lineage** still shapes Newark's definition of credibility, its community norms, and the deep trust residents place in organizations that have been present through multiple generations of change.

Newark's **demographic landscape** underscores the importance of these strengths. With approximately 305,000 residents, including a large population of young residents and roughly one-quarter of households living below the poverty line, the city faces socioeconomic pressures that heighten the stakes of **prevention, intervention, and trauma recovery**. Newark's strengths—its community-driven model, its trusted presence, its alignment across partners—offer a **stabilizing framework** in a context shaped by economic hardship, housing instability, and the concentration of trauma within certain neighborhoods.



These strengths are also reflected in Newark's **long-term violence trends**. The city recorded 112 homicides in 2013 and 50 homicides in 2022, a reduction of more than 50 percent over the decade. In 2023, Newark reported 47 homicides, the lowest number in more than 60 years. Partners and local reporting attribute this progress to sustained collaboration across credible messengers, trauma-recovery providers, intervention teams, and city leaders—what they describe as **“the work showing up together.”** These outcomes do not eliminate harm or trauma, but they illustrate the impact of Newark's coordinated, **community-led approach**.

Number of people “at highest risk” of being directly impacted by gun violence in the city:

312

(CVIEcosystem.com)

Estimated cost for a fatal shooting in Newark

\$2.188M

(<https://costofviolence.org/reports/newark-nj/>)

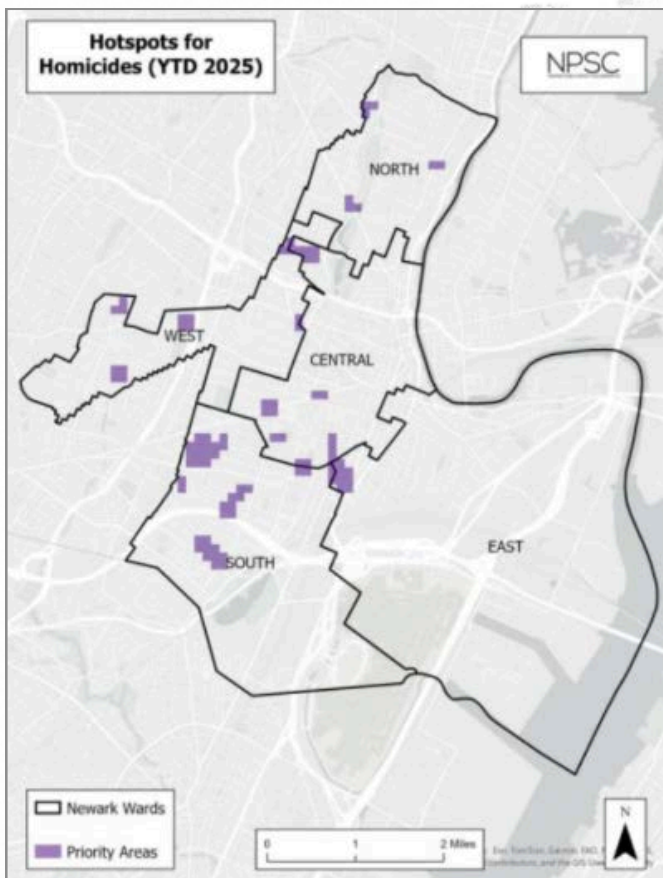
Number of violent crimes

Violent crime rate per 100,000 residents

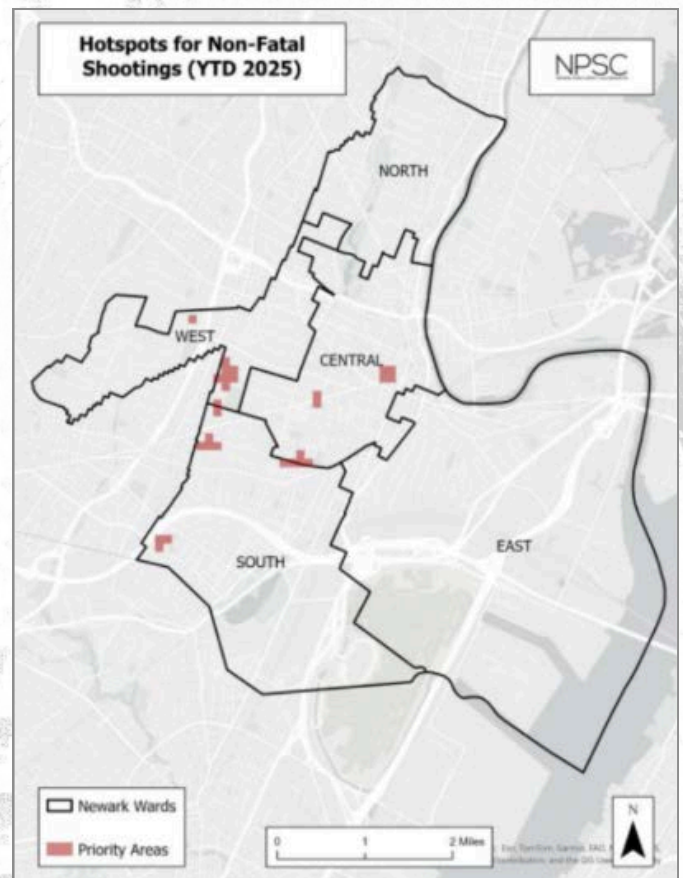
Murder Rate per 100,000 residents

City	1,519	498	17
State	20,564	221	3
Country	1,253,813	374	6

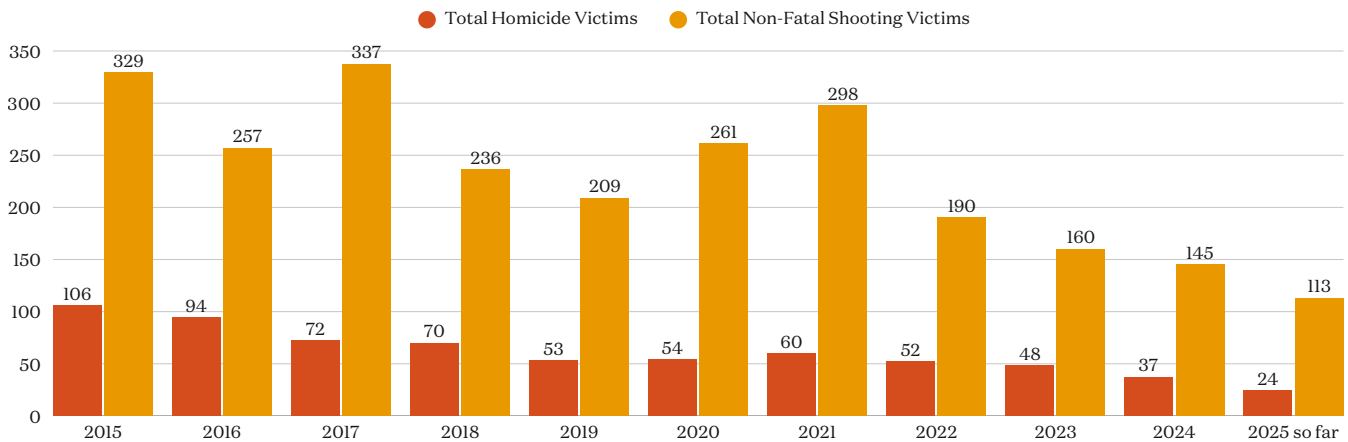
**HOTSPOT MAP FOR HOMICIDES
(YTD 2025)**



**HOTSPOT MAP FOR NON-FATAL
SHOOTINGS (YTD 2025)**



NEWARK HOMICIDES & FATAL SHOOTINGS



In addition to these ecosystem-wide strengths, LTW participants identified several assets during the SWOT activity that further demonstrate Newark’s capacity for community-led safety.

- **Community partnerships and collaboration**
- **Trained professionals and credible messengers**
- Wraparound services, trauma recovery, and victim support
- Public-private partnership capacity
- Community engagement and resilience
- Diversity, art, and cultural assets
- History of strong leadership and presence

A defining expression of Newark’s **grounded strengths** is its culture of **consistent presence**.

Credible messengers and trauma-recovery partners described showing up at scenes, schools, vigils, and healing spaces as a shared expectation—one rooted in decades of community leadership. “People listen to us because we’ve been here,” an outreach worker shared. “We show up, we stay, and we don’t disappear when things get hard.” This value is reinforced by coordinated tools like Safe Passage, Rapid Response, and high-risk intervention teams, which residents see repeatedly across corridors and neighborhood spaces.

Newark’s strengths—shaped by history, partnership, and consistent community presence—demonstrate the jurisdiction’s capacity to **sustain and advance its public safety vision**. This foundation offers stability in a landscape marked by economic and social pressures. It also provides a strong starting point for addressing the challenges surfaced during the LTW stop.

HOMICIDE VICTIMS 2015–2025

Male: 597
Female: 73

Age:
10–17 – 26
18–24 – 133
25–40 – 319
41–59 – 119
60+ – 29

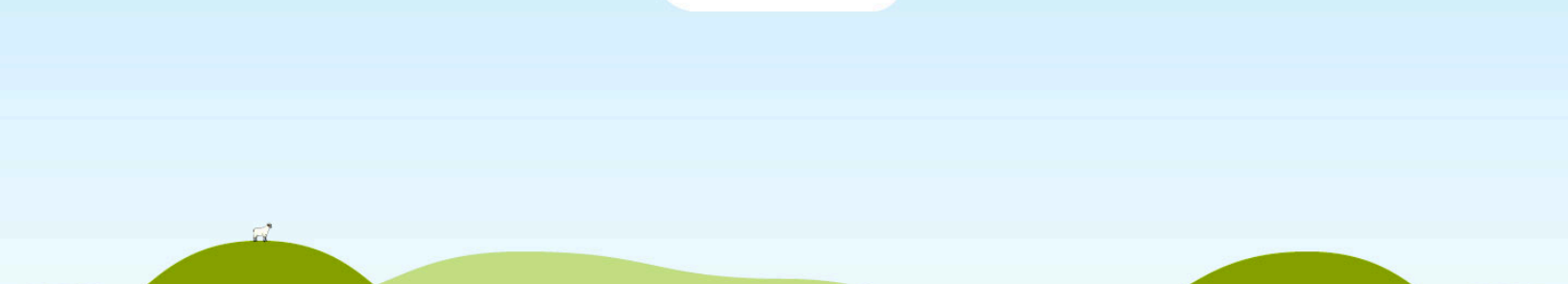
Race:
Black: 555
Hispanic: 28
Indian: 2
White: 45
Other/unk: 40

NON-FATAL SHOOTING VICTIMS 2015–2025

Male: 597
Female: 73

Age:
10–17 – 26
18–24 – 133
25–40 – 319
41–59 – 119
60+ – 29

Race:
Black: 555
Hispanic: 28
Indian: 2
White: 45
Other/unk: 40



PERSISTENT CHALLENGES: NAVIGATING ENGAGEMENT GAPS, CULTURAL DIVIDES, FUNDING INSTABILITY, AND COMMUNICATION BARRIERS

Despite Newark's deeply rooted **safety ecosystem**, LTW participants surfaced several persistent **challenges** that hinder the jurisdiction's ability to maintain momentum and advance long-term impact. These challenges emerged consistently across LTW discussions, SWOT reflections, and young leader sessions. Taken together, they reveal areas where the ecosystem's strengths are stretched by uneven system participation, structural inequities, cultural divides, and the realities of sustaining frontline and youth-centered work.

A major challenge noted across sessions was **uneven engagement** from essential system partners, particularly members of city council and some school-based partners. Reflections such as “system partners are less engaged” and concerns that “Council does not seem to have a full understanding of the work” reflected gaps in shared context and participation. Young leaders added another dimension, describing how institutions intended to support them often feel disconnected or siloed. This reflects not lack of interest, but **inconsistent participation and clarity** across systems—leaving OVPTR, credible messenger teams, and community-based organizations to shoulder coordination roles that should be shared more broadly.

Cultural divides also surfaced as a meaningful challenge. Practitioners raised concerns about growing gaps in trust, access, and communication between long-established Black communities and newer Latino immigrant residents. These divides influence who accesses programs, how information circulates, and how young residents experience belonging and safety across neighborhoods. Young leaders described how crossing ward boundaries—North, South, West, and Central—can carry social risks or perceived tensions, limiting movement and reinforcing neighborhood silos. These dynamics complicate the jurisdiction's ability to advance **shared healing-centered strategies** and fully realize the vision of community-wide participation outlined in OVPTR's strategic plan.

Partners also expressed concern about **funding instability**, noting that uncertainty around federal, state, and philanthropic investments threatens the continuity of frontline and young adult-centered efforts. While ARPA was mentioned as one factor, partners consistently emphasized the broader issue: the ecosystem relies on funding streams that are time-limited, restricted, or insufficient for core needs such as staffing, stipends, food, and trauma-responsive supports. These concerns reflect the ongoing strain faced by organizations responsible for providing **consistent presence, engagement, and crisis response**—work that becomes harder when long-term financial stability is unclear.

Another challenge centered on **communication gaps** and **uneven shared understanding** across the ecosystem. Participants pointed out that not all stakeholders, particularly newer system partners, some public officials, and even young people, have a full understanding of Newark’s movement history or its **public health-centered approach to safety**. “Not everyone knows the historical context... how do we educate and bring everyone up to speed?” one partner asked during the SWOT discussion. Young leaders echoed this concern, noting they often do not know what programs, jobs, or safe spaces are available. These gaps limit **unified messaging**, hinder cross-system coordination, and reduce awareness of supports that could strengthen prevention, opportunity, and youth engagement efforts.

MOMENT THAT MATTERS

During the LTW Young Leader session, a young person described the constant awareness she carries when moving through school, work, and her neighborhood, saying, “I’m not scared, but anything can happen.” The room’s response indicated that this feeling resonated deeply with her peers. This moment highlighted a **critical challenge** echoed throughout the stop: despite Newark’s documented reductions in violence, **felt safety** remains uneven, especially for young residents navigating social divides, neighborhood boundaries, and limited safe spaces. Their reflections underscored the need for strengthened coordination, clearer communication, and increased investment in **youth-centered strategies** that address both structural inequities and lived experience.

Newark’s **structural realities** further intensify these challenges. The jurisdiction’s unemployment rate remains higher than the statewide average, median household income lags significantly behind New Jersey’s median income, and disparities in educational attainment create additional barriers to stable opportunity pathways. These systemic inequities heighten demand for youth-focused supports, trauma recovery, and family stabilization—and they create added pressure on the very organizations most affected by funding and engagement gaps.

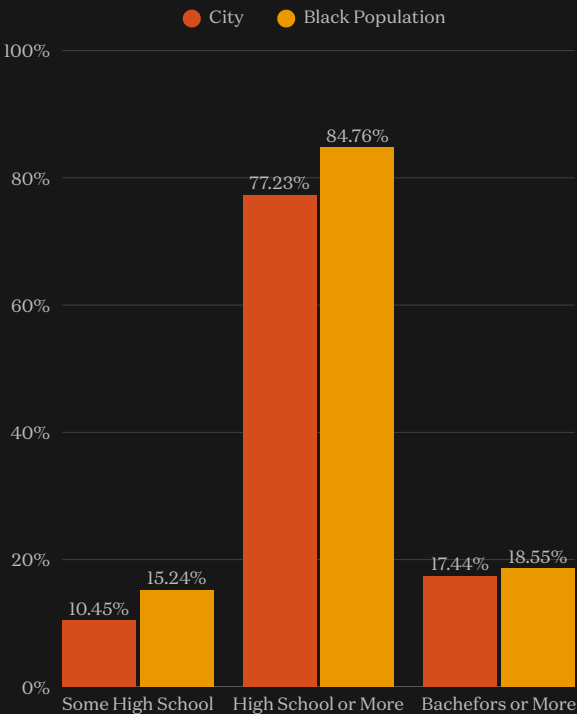
In addition to these themes, LTW participants elevated several **challenges** during the SWOT activity that had not yet surfaced directly in earlier discussions.

These included:

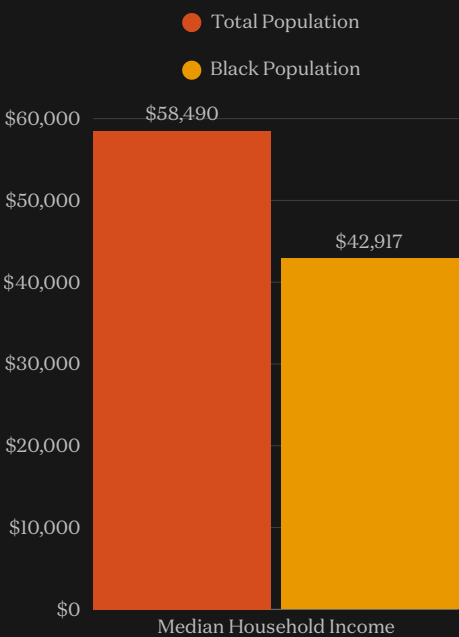
- **Burnout among frontline teams**
- The need for **intentional succession planning**
- Gaps in **youth-friendly spaces** across neighborhoods

Although these challenges represent real pressure points for Newark’s ecosystem, they also highlight clear areas of **opportunity** for strengthening the work. Addressing these issues—through deeper system engagement, clearer communication, and sustained investment—will position the jurisdiction to **build on its progress**. The momentum emerging across Newark’s partners demonstrates that the groundwork for these next steps has already begun.

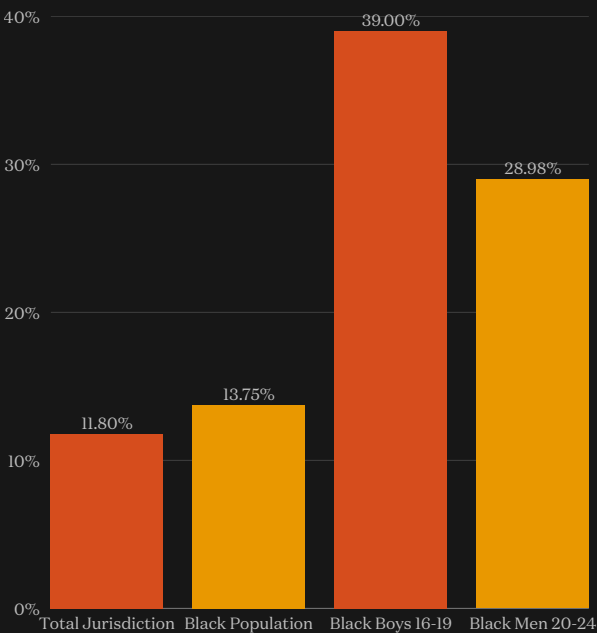
EDUCATIONAL LEVEL



MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME



UNEMPLOYMENT RATE



EMERGING MOMENTUM

Deepening Alignment, Elevating Young Leader Voice, and Strengthening Newark's Ecosystem

Even amid the challenges surfaced during the LTW stop, Newark partners and young leaders highlighted several areas of **meaningful momentum** that reflect a jurisdiction continuing to learn, adapt, and build forward. These emerging strengths fall across four areas: **strengthened coordination and role clarity** among partners, increased **young leader readiness** for formal leadership roles, deeper integration of **healing-centered and trauma-informed practices**, and growing alignment around the four strategic goals of the OVPTR Strategic Plan. Together, these developments illustrate a system that is not stagnant but actively expanding its **capacity, cohesion, and shared purpose**.

Partners described growing **clarity around ecosystem roles** and “lanes” as an important source of progress. During the LTW stop, partners referenced seven core ecosystem lanes—such as outreach and credible messengers, trauma recovery and healing supports, Safe Passage and school-based safety, youth opportunity and workforce pathways, community engagement, systems coordination, and policy or advocacy—that together form Newark's safety infrastructure. The “**seven ecosystem lanes**” discussion helped partners see not only where their work fits, but how it connects across the ecosystem. Several also noted that **hotspot analysis and mapping** from the Newark Public Safety Collaborative (NPSC) support this clarity by helping partners understand patterns, needs, and shared priorities in real time.

Another area of momentum is the increasing **readiness and leadership of young leaders** across Newark. During the LTW sessions, young leaders expressed growing confidence, ownership, and desire to directly influence safety strategies and opportunity pathways. Statements such as “We want real roles, not just invitations” and “Let us help shape the decisions” reflected an emerging **leadership pipeline** eager to support and strengthen Newark's public health approach to safety. Partners recognized this momentum and described opportunities to **formalize young leader participation**—through advisory roles, stipends, leadership development, and deeper integration into OVPTR's implementation work.

Momentum is also visible in Newark's continued expansion of **healing-centered and trauma-informed practices**. Community partners, credible messengers, and trauma recovery providers described new alignment around grief support, crisis response, and **community healing spaces**. Several highlighted strengthened connections with faith leaders, neighborhood organizations, and local initiatives focused on mental health, highlighting a shared understanding that **healing is foundational**—not supplemental—to long-term safety. This progress reflects traction on OVPTR's goal of **centering healing and trauma recovery** as core components of the jurisdiction's public-safety strategy.

Finally, partners described growing **alignment and appetite for cross-ecosystem collaboration**, particularly around implementing Newark’s **public health-centered model**. Across sessions, participants spoke about a renewed commitment to move together, share information more proactively, and use Newark’s **strategic goals** as a common reference point. Reflections such as “We’re learning how to be more intentional together” and “People want to collaborate more than ever” captured the energy that partners described as building across organizations, wards, and roles.

MOMENT THAT MATTERED

During a LTW tour meeting, a partner shared a recent experience in which multiple organizations—credible messengers, trauma practitioners, and community groups—coordinated quickly to support a family following a neighborhood incident. “Everyone played their part without needing to be asked,” the partner noted. This moment illustrated the **momentum partners** described throughout the stop: a growing ability to **respond collectively, communicate quickly, and reinforce shared responsibility** during moments when residents need them most. It reflected a deepening alignment that partners believe will strengthen Newark’s safety ecosystem moving forward.

In addition to the themes highlighted above, LTW participants elevated several areas of **momentum** during the SWOT activity that reflect growing readiness for deeper coordination and implementation aligned with OVPTR’s four strategic goals. These areas point to where partners see **energy, opportunity, and collective interest** in strengthening Newark’s ecosystem.

- **Expanding young leader leadership and advisory structures**
- **Growing interest in cross-partner collaboration**
- Strengthening alignment around **workforce and opportunity pathways**
- Increasing appetite for elevating **Newark’s public-safety narrative**

Together, these areas of momentum underscore a jurisdiction actively **aligning its work** with OVPTR’s strategic goals and building toward stronger **coordination, deeper engagement**, and a more **unified, healing-centered ecosystem**.

STRATEGIC CONSIDERATIONS

Building Continuity, Strengthening Infrastructure, and Advancing Newark's Long-Term Vision

Newark partners emphasized several **strategic considerations** essential for sustaining and scaling the jurisdiction's **public health-centered safety model**. This subsection builds on the strengths, challenges, and momentum identified earlier, offering forward-looking insights into what is needed to **deepen alignment** across the ecosystem and advance Newark's long-term vision aligned with the four strategic goals of the OVPTR Strategic Plan. These considerations are not new themes, but rather the next stage of work partners identified as necessary to **strengthen continuity, clarify roles, and sustain community-led progress**.

A central theme lifted across sessions was the need for **durable coordination structures** that remain stable through leadership changes, staffing transitions, and shifting funding environments. Partners noted that Newark's ecosystem is strong because of the individuals doing the work, but long-term success requires **shared governance mechanisms, consistent interagency processes, and clear expectations** for how decisions are made across prevention, intervention, and healing-centered strategies. This theme resonated deeply in a jurisdiction where educational and economic outcomes—such as a high school graduation rate that trails the statewide average—underscore the importance of **sustained supports for young leaders** moving through school, workforce pathways, and community life. Partners emphasized that sustaining the **Newark Public Safety Collaborative (NPSC)** and its community-facing data infrastructure is a key part of this work, ensuring Newark maintains **transparent hotspot analysis, shared problem-solving tools, and accessible data** for community partners over time.

Partners also discussed opportunities to further **elevate young leader participation** in ways that build on earlier reflections. Previous sections captured young leaders' desire for meaningful roles and partners' recognition of their readiness to contribute. Here, the focus shifted toward **strengthening the long-term infrastructure** needed to support that involvement—such as compensated advisory roles, structured decision-making pathways, and clearer expectations for how young leaders contribute to OVPTR's strategic goals. As one partner shared, “Young people shouldn't just be invited in; they should already have a seat built for them.” This reflects a broader understanding that **elevating young leader leadership** requires intentional structures, not just interest.

Another strategic consideration centered on advancing a **coordinated, whole-ecosystem communication strategy**. Earlier subsections highlighted communication gaps and growing appetite for unified messaging. To build on this momentum, partners emphasized the need for a **communication framework** that supports alignment across agencies, organizations, and neighborhood groups. This includes **shared language about Newark's public health model, transparent messaging about available supports**, and consistent channels for engaging residents and young leaders. Strengthening communication infrastructure was viewed as essential for **increasing system buy-in, elevating Newark's narrative**, and reinforcing progress aligned with OVPTR's four goals.

MOMENT THAT MATTERS

During a strategy session, a partner posed a question that reflected a shared concern across the group: “If any of us leaves tomorrow, does the work stop? Who is the next us?” The question underscored a **critical strategic need**—long-term sustainability requires **structures for succession planning, institutional memory, and shared ownership** so the work continues regardless of staffing or leadership transitions.

Finally, partners emphasized the importance of **long-term, flexible investment strategies** that stabilize frontline capacity and reduce reliance on time-limited grants. While earlier sections elevated **funding instability** as a challenge, partners here focused on forward-looking approaches—such as **diversifying funding sources, strengthening public-private partnerships**, and building **administrative capacity** to support scaling. This shift toward long-term planning highlights the ecosystem’s readiness to move beyond immediate needs and invest in the **infrastructure required for Newark’s healing-centered model**.

Opportunities raised during the SWOT activity reinforced these strategic considerations and surfaced additional areas where partners see **readiness for alignment and investment**:

- Strengthening workforce and career-pathway alignment for young leaders
- Enhancing collaboration with schools and system partners
- Expanding structured opportunities for young leader participation
- Increasing administrative and backbone support for ecosystem coordination
- Improving communication systems and data-sharing processes

Together, these strategic considerations reflect a jurisdiction preparing for its next stage of growth—one that requires **strengthened structures, clearer governance pathways, intentional communication**, and **sustained investment** to support Newark’s **healing-centered, community-led safety ecosystem**.

NEWARK: SAFETY & EQUITY SNAPSHOT

Newark is a city of approximately **305,000 residents**, shaped by **rich cultural diversity, long-standing community leadership**, and decades of neighborhood-led organizing. The jurisdiction continues to navigate deep structural inequities that influence opportunities, safety, and wellbeing—conditions that Newark’s public health-centered model seeks to address through prevention, healing, intervention, and community-driven support. The following indicators provide context for Newark’s current safety and equity landscape:

- **Population:** ~305,000 residents
- **Black Population:** ~47%
- **Latino Population:** ~37%
- **Young Leader Population:** ~28–30% under age 25
- **Poverty Rate:** ~24% of residents live below the federal poverty line
- **Median Household Income:** ~\$42,000 vs. ~\$97,000 statewide
- **Education:** High school graduation rate ~81%, below the statewide average
- **Homicide Trend:** 112 homicides in 2013 → 50 in 2022 → 47 in 2023 (lowest in 60+ years)
- **Nonfatal Shootings:** Downward trend in recent years (VERIFICATION NEEDED)
- **Geographic Concentration:** Higher safety and coordination needs identified around school corridors and neighborhoods in the North and West Wards, including areas experiencing historical disinvestment and concerns raised around Barringer High School (VERIFICATION NEEDED).
- **Economic Context:** Nearly half of Newark households earn under \$50,000 annually

- **Governance & Coordination:** The Newark Public Safety Collaborative (NPSC), formed in 2018 through Rutgers-Newark in partnership with the Mayor's Office and Department of Public Safety, operates a multi-sector coordination model that aligns data analytics, community-partner collaboration, credible messengers, trauma-recovery providers, and neighborhood-based outreach around Newark's four OVPTR strategic goals.
- **Young Leader Engagement:** Young leaders increasingly shape engagement spaces, leadership conversations, and community organizing efforts, with growing interest in structured advisory roles.
- **Community Assets:** Newark Community Street Team (NCST); Office of Violence Prevention & Trauma Recovery (OVPTR); Brick City Peace Collective; Newark Public Safety Collaborative (NPSC); credible messenger and outreach organizations; trauma-recovery practitioners; faith-based partners; Rutgers–Newark collaborations; neighborhood-based community groups; reentry and workforce-alignment partners.
- **Data & Community Co-Production:** The Newark Public Safety Collaborative (NPSC), housed at Rutgers-Newark, uses a Data-Informed Community Engagement (DICE) model to democratize safety data, support hotspot analysis, and empower community partners to co-produce public safety solutions.
- **National Technical Assistance Partners:** Cities United; NICJR; Robert Wood Johnson Foundation–aligned partners; federal TA partners connected through CVI and DOJ-funded initiatives; and national training, research, and technical assistance organizations supporting Newark's public-safety ecosystem.

RECOMMENDATIONS & OPPORTUNITIES FOR CITIES UNITED SUPPORT

The following **recommendations** outline immediate actions Newark can take over the next **6–12 months** to **strengthen communication, improve alignment**, and deepen implementation of the four **strategic goals** in the Office of Violence Prevention and Trauma Recovery (OVPTR) Strategic Plan. These recommendations draw from **LTW session feedback, transcripts, post-survey responses**, and internal CU team reflections.

Newark has made significant progress in building a **coordinated, healing-centered** ecosystem grounded in **community leadership, credible messenger expertise, trauma-recovery supports, data-informed coordination**, and strong cross-sector relationships. As one CU team member shared during the debrief, “Newark has the pieces in place—the work now is pulling the story together so everyone can see the impact they’re making.” The following actions are designed to help Newark **accelerate this momentum**.

1. Develop a Shared Communication Strategy

Create a unified and accessible communication approach that helps partners, residents, and national stakeholders understand Newark’s model, its impact, and how the ecosystem works together.

LTW participants and post-survey feedback consistently noted that Newark’s public health-centered safety model is strong in practice but not consistently communicated. Stakeholders often receive fragmented information, leaving many unsure how the model works, who is involved, and how progress is being made. A shared communication strategy would reinforce transparency and strengthen confidence in the work.

CU Opportunities to Support:

- Provide a sample communication framework Newark can adapt for internal and external use.
- Share examples from other jurisdictions demonstrating clear ecosystem communication strategies.

2. Create a Public Overview of Newark's Safety Ecosystem

Help residents, partners, and funders understand how Newark's ecosystem works and why it is effective, defining partner roles, lanes, and coordination structures in a way the whole community can understand.

Across LTW sessions, partners elevated the need for a simple, public-facing overview of Newark's safety ecosystem. Although Newark's model is frequently praised for its innovation, many stakeholders—even those engaged in the work—struggle to explain how the system is structured or why it has contributed to reductions in violence. A public overview would strengthen coordination and elevate Newark's narrative locally and nationally.

CU Opportunities to Support:

- Provide templates Newark can use to share this model with families, funders, and community members.
- Offer guidance on translating complex structures (lanes, roles, coordination mechanisms) into accessible language.

3. Identify Funding Pathways for Sustainability

Develop a collaborative, long-term funding strategy that aligns partners around shared investment priorities and sustains Newark's prevention, intervention, and healing-centered infrastructure.

Funding concerns surfaced repeatedly during the LTW stop, including transitions away from ARPA and the need for sustained investment in community partners. While Newark's ecosystem is strongest when organizations coordinate efforts, partners noted the absence of a shared roadmap for long-term resource alignment.

CU Opportunities to Support:

- Provide Newark with a curated list of aligned federal, state, and philanthropic funding opportunities.
- Share a sample collaborative funding framework from other jurisdictions to support Newark's planning.

4. Formalize Young Leader Roles Across the Ecosystem

Ensure young leaders have structured, compensated pathways to influence decision-making; build clear and consistent avenues for young leader contribution; and expand opportunities for young leaders to help drive implementation across the four strategic goals.

Young leaders consistently expressed that they “don’t always know where to plug in,” and partners noted wide variation in how they are integrated across programs and neighborhood spaces. Newark has engaged and motivated young leaders as well as supportive partners—the next step is establishing clear expectations, pathways, and compensation models.

CU Opportunities to Support:

- Provide sample advisory role descriptions and compensation models Newark can adapt.
- Share tools for integrating young leaders into strategy implementation and feedback cycles.

5. Align Data, Strategy, and Outcomes

Link data insights to Newark’s strategic goals; strengthen ecosystem-wide data integration; and ensure Newark’s data infrastructure supports evaluation, decision-making, and strategy refinement.

Although Newark has robust data capacity—especially through hotspot analysis and mapping—LTW participants noted that these insights are not consistently connected to the four strategic goals or used to drive implementation. Strengthening this alignment will help Newark demonstrate impact, refine strategies, and ensure that data and practice reinforce one another.

CU Opportunities to Support:

- Develop a sample data-to-goals alignment guide showing how existing indicators can be mapped to the strategic plan.
- Share examples from other jurisdictions demonstrating how community-partner, university, and public-system data are integrated into strategic plan implementation.

Conclusion:

A Call for Aligned Action

Newark's progress is the result of years of **community leadership, credible messenger expertise, trauma-informed practice**, and consistent **investment in a public health approach to safety**. The LTW engagement affirmed what partners across the jurisdiction already know: Newark has built the **foundation for an ecosystem** that **centers healing, aligns action across organizations**, and responds to community needs with urgency and coordination. The next phase of work requires **aligning these strengths** within a **shared strategy** that is clearly communicated, grounded in data, and sustained over time.

Newark's four **strategic goals** offer a clear pathway for deepening this alignment. Partners consistently expressed their commitment to building on these goals while strengthening the **communication, coordination, and storytelling** needed to demonstrate progress and ensure that every resident—especially young leaders—understands how Newark's model works and how they can contribute to it. The **momentum** identified during the LTW stop reflects a jurisdiction ready for continued growth: stronger **integration of young leaders, clearer communication across systems, more intentional use of data**, and increased **unity across organizations** that share responsibility for safety and healing.

Cities United remains committed to supporting Newark through these next steps. The opportunities outlined in this report represent targeted, **achievable actions** that can strengthen the ecosystem over the next 6–12 months and reinforce Newark's long-term **public health-centered vision**. As one partner shared during the LTW stop, “We all play a part in this—this work moves when we move together.” That collective resolve is Newark's greatest strength.

By advancing **aligned action**—across community partners, city leadership, young leaders, data experts, and national collaborators—Newark is well positioned to **deepen its impact** and continue building a **safer, healthier, and more hopeful future** for all residents.

APPENDIX

Referenced Quotes & Attribution

- “We didn’t wait for a grant to start this work—people were already in the streets making sure our folks were not forgotten.” (Community Partner, Strategy Session)
- “The Mayor calls in from wherever he is to compare the OVPTR numbers with the police numbers. That kind of leadership pushes everyone to stay accountable.” (System Partner, Public Safety Strategy Meeting)
- “We adjusted before something happened. That’s what this ecosystem can do.” (Outreach Partner, Community Coordination Session)
- “People listen to us because we’ve been here. We show up, we stay, and we don’t disappear when things get hard.” (Credible Messenger, Community Safety Workshop)
- “We don’t always know where to plug in.” (Young Leader, Youth Leadership Engagement Session)
- “We’re doing the work, but we need stability to keep going.” (Grassroots Partner, Ecosystem Partner Discussion)
- “This model works because we are connected—but if the communication slips, the whole thing can get shaky.” (Participant Summary, Session Notes)
- “Newark has built something powerful—now the question is how we carry it forward without losing what makes it work.” (Cities United Team Member, Internal Reflection)
- “The work in Newark is special. People are aligned in ways you don’t often see nationally.” (Cities United Team Reflection)

Key Data Points Referenced in Report

- **Population:** ~305,000 residents (Source: U.S. Census Bureau, ACS)
- **Black Population:** ~47% (Source: ACS)
- **Latino Population:** ~37% (Source: ACS)
- **Residents Under Age 25:** ~28–30% (Source: ACS)
- **Poverty Rate:** ~24% (Source: ACS; OVPTR Strategic Plan (2023))
- **Median Household Income:** ~\$42,000 (vs. ~\$97,000 statewide) (Source: ACS)
- **High School Graduation Rate:** ~81%, below statewide average (Source: NJDOE)
- **Long-Term Homicide Trend:** Sustained decrease over the past decade (Source: Newark Public Safety Data; NPSC References)
- **Hotspot Geography:** Highest needs in North and West Wards, including school corridors (e.g., Barringer High School) (Source: NPSC Hotspot References; LTW Session Transcripts)

APPENDIX

Sources of CU Team & LTW Jurisdiction Member Feedback

- **LTW Session Transcripts (October 13–16, 2025)**
 - Community Violence Prevention Strategy Session
 - Newark Public Safety Strategy Meeting
 - Community Engagement Meeting
 - Community Safety Workshop
 - Youth Leadership Engagement Session
 - Young Leader Workshop Overview
 - Community Violence Reduction Meeting
- Elected Officials Meeting
- Newark Safety Strategy Meeting
- Community SWOT Analysis Session
- LTW Daily Reflection Forms (Newark)
- LTW Post-Visit Survey Responses (Newark)
- Internal Cities United Team Reflections
- **Supplemental Materials Reviewed**
 - 2023 OVPTR Strategic Plan
 - Newark Public Safety Collaborative (NPSC) hotspot and mapping references
 - Uploaded SWOT visuals, flip-chart notes, partner activity sheets
 - Leadership Dialogue notes and participant summary sheets
 - Young Leader Engagement documentation
 - Pre-stop working agenda & briefing materials





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