

## The UrbanNEST Network

### Network Charter (Est. August, 2023)

#### Mission Statement

We revitalize Waterbury neighborhoods by empowering underrepresented youth to become advocates for positive community change.

#### Vision Statement

Our vision is to create a future where all young individuals in Waterbury have access to safe, affordable housing, and thriving, clean neighborhoods. We envision a community where underrepresented youth are empowered to advocate for their rights, shape their own futures, and become leaders in addressing housing issues. Through collaboration, education, and activism, we aspire to build a city that values the voices and contributions of its young residents, ensuring equitable opportunities for all.

#### Goals and Objectives

1. Advocate for Affordable Housing
  - Meet with local city/state government officials to invest in affordable housing initiatives.
  - Collaborate with housing organizations and developers to increase the availability of affordable housing options.
  - Raise awareness about the importance of affordable housing, and the impact it has on youth, through campaigns and community outreach programs.
2. Organize Events and Campaigns
  - Coordinate regular neighborhood cleanup events where young people can actively participate in improving their communities.
  - Educate community members about waste management, recycling, and sustainability practices.
  - Collaborate with local authorities to address specific environmental issues in our neighborhoods.
  - Participate in local/statewide/national affordable housing and community revitalization advocacy campaigns.

#### Activities and Initiatives

1. Education Programs
  - Participate and conduct workshops on youth financial literacy, budgeting, and responsible renting/buying practices.
  - Provide informational sessions on tenant rights and legal procedures related to housing issues.
2. Advocacy Campaigns
  - Organize public forums or town hall meetings where young individuals can voice their concerns about housing and community development.
  - Create social media campaigns to share stories and experiences of youth who have been impacted by the housing crisis.

- Collaborate with other youth organizations and community leaders to strengthen advocacy efforts.
3. Community Engagement
- Organize fundraisers or charity events to support affordable housing initiatives, network lead events, and network member stipends.
  - Collaborate with local schools and universities to raise awareness among students about housing issues.
  - Participate in local events such as street fairs, festivals, or parades to engage with the wider youth community.

### **Leadership and Governance**

#### 1. Executive Team

- Establish a diverse team of youth representatives, professionals, and community stakeholders.
- Ensure that the executive team reflects the demographics of the target audience.

#### 2. Committees

- Form committees dedicated to specific areas like policy research, event planning, outreach programs, etc., allowing members to actively participate in decision-making processes.

### **Membership and Recruitment**

#### 1. Membership Criteria

- Open membership for individuals aged 16-24 residing in Waterbury who are passionate about housing and community development.
- Members must commit to attend monthly meetings (2<sup>nd</sup> Friday/month, 5:30-7:00 pm), and prepare adequately for the meetings to make informed decisions. Both in-person or virtual attendance are acceptable.
- Members commit to 3-5 NEST volunteer hours per quarter.

#### 2. Recruitment Strategies

- Establish partnerships with local schools, universities, and community centers to promote the network.
- Host recruitment events where potential members can learn more about the network's goals and objectives.

#### 3. Roles

##### A. Co-Advisors

- Leadership and Coordination
  - Provide overall leadership and direction to the network in line with its mission and goals.
  - Coordinate with network members, committees, and volunteers to ensure effective implementation of initiatives.
- Strategic Planning
  - Develop long-term strategies and action plans to address housing issues, and neighborhood revitalization efforts as it relates to youth.
  - Set goals, monitor progress, and make necessary adjustments based on the evolving needs of local youth.
- External Relations

- o Represent the network in meetings with local officials, community leaders, business owners, and other stakeholders.
    - o Build partnerships with organizations that align with the network's objectives.
    - o Advocate for policy changes at local and state levels.
  - Meeting Facilitation
    - o Organize regular meetings for network members, committees, and general membership.
    - o Prepare agendas, facilitate discussions, and ensure productive decision-making processes.
  - Communication and Public Relations
    - o Serve as spokespersons for the network in media interviews or public engagements, with support from NEST staff liaison.
    - o Oversee communication channels such as social media platforms, website updates, newsletters, etc., to keep members informed about activities and progress.
  - Fundraising and Financial Management
    - o Collaborate with network members and the NEST staff liaison to develop fundraising strategies to support organizational initiatives.
    - o Ensure responsible financial management, with support from NEST staff liaison, by monitoring budgets, expenses, grants opportunities, etc.
  - Mentoring and Support
    - o Provide guidance and support to network members or project leads.
    - o Mentor young advocates within the group by offering advice on leadership development or personal growth.
- B. Executive Team
- Secretary
    - o Record minutes during meetings and maintain accurate documentation of discussions, decisions, and action items.
    - o Manage communication channels such as emails, correspondence, and official letters, social media channels.
    - o Assist co-chairs in organizing meetings and disseminating relevant information to members.
  - Treasurer
    - o Maintain financial records, including budgeting, expense tracking, and financial reporting.
    - o Coordinate fundraising efforts and explore grant opportunities to support the organization's initiatives.
    - o Ensure compliance with financial regulations and procedures.
  - Outreach Coordinator / Social Media Influencer
    - o Develop outreach strategies to engage with the target audience (16-24 year olds) in Waterbury.
    - o Collaborate with local schools, universities, community centers, and youth organizations to promote membership and participation.
    - o Plan and organize recruitment events or awareness campaigns to expand the committee's reach.
    - o Experience using social media is highly desirable.



The UrbanNest Network is a volunteer youth program supported by NEST.

NEST, formerly known as Neighborhood Housing Services of Waterbury, builds strong neighborhoods and communities of choice through affordable and comprehensive housing development, financial education, and furthering home and community ownership.

NEST is a non-profit, HUD certified organization that was founded in 1980 with the purpose of revitalizing neighborhoods and creating homeownership opportunities throughout the city of Waterbury. Our purpose reflects the organization's embrace of a broad range of business lines and programs to meet its objectives of community revitalization and individual economic empowerment.

NEST serves low-to-moderate income individuals & families in Waterbury and 20+ other communities in Western Connecticut, including Danbury, Naugatuck and Torrington.