

# ATLANTIC CITY

Building A Foundation For A Shared Prosperity

REPORT FOR THE PERIOD  
JULY 2020 THROUGH DECEMBER 2020

New Jersey Department of Community Affairs  
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# ATLANTIC CITY: BUILDING A FOUNDATION FOR SHARED PROSPERITY

REPORT FOR THE SIX MONTHS OF JULY 2020 THROUGH DECEMBER 2020

Given the challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic to continue work as usual and execute contemplated projects, the Atlantic City Initiatives Project Office (Project Office) has determined to submit a final 2020 year-end report in lieu of separate third and fourth quarter reports. Despite the aforesaid, the staff forged forward to support the work of the Atlantic City Executive Council as well as to initiate projects in partnership with individual Executive Council members. This year-end report of 2020 reflects the framework discussed in both the Atlantic City Transition Report titled Atlantic City: Building A Foundation for A Shared Prosperity that was released on September 20, 2018, and the Atlantic City Implementation Plan, released on April 23, 2019.

The Office of the Lieutenant Governor Sheila Oliver, the staff of the Department of Community Affairs (DCA) Division of Local Government Services, and the staff of the Project Office appreciate the ongoing spirit of collaboration demonstrated by the Executive Council. In particular, the banding together to meet the needs of residents and workers suffering from the effects of the pandemic and to work alongside the City administration to advance the directives of the Governor and public health advisors has been outstanding.

Progress in the third and fourth quarters of 2020 continued under the shadow of the Covid-19 pandemic. Measures begun by collaborative partnerships to contain the spread of the Covid-19 virus, address food insecurity, support access to federal and state relief for business, and assist with

housing security remained top priorities. Progress on key items in the Implementation Plan continues.

## KEY DELIVERABLES: BUILDING COMMUNITY CAPACITY & ADVANCING COORDINATION

The Atlantic City Executive Council (Executive Council) continued meeting monthly via the Zoom platform.

Despite the impact of Covid-19 to their individual organizations, members of the Executive Council joined to meet the pressing needs of residents, workers, and Atlantic City businesses. Members of the casino association joined with labor leaders, the City administration, the Casino Reinvestment Development Authority (CRDA), the school district, community groups, houses of worship, and social service agencies to provide much needed food assistance to displaced workers and city residents. Business associations collaborated with the City administration to deliver vital information to local businesses regarding special relief through federal and state loans and grants for business operations. AtlantiCare collaborated with the City and the business associations in developing health and safety protocols. The City formed a policy group under the auspices of its Office of Emergency Management (OEM) and invited members of the Executive Council and other stakeholders to join in formulating a coordinated plan for re-opening the City in accordance with a relaxation of the Governor's Executive Orders related to mitigating the spread of Covid-19 .

Newly appointed Project Office Deputy Director India P. Still worked to build relationships in the areas of workforce development, education, economic development, and public health. She forged connections with the Atlantic County Economic Alliance (ACEA), the Atlantic County Workforce Development Board, Atlantic Cape Community College, the Atlantic City School District, Rutgers's Agricultural Extension Network, and several social service and non-profit organizations.

- NJ STEM Pathways: Ms. Still spearheaded the creation of an Atlantic City cohort of the South Jersey STEM & Innovation Partnership (SJSIP). The SJSIP is one of five geographic ecosystems of the New Jersey STEM Pathways Network. The Network operates under the guidance of the Research & Development Council of New Jersey and is dedicated to creating a statewide vision for the development of a STEM-educated workforce to support and maintain New Jersey's competitive edge in science and industry. The ecosystems actively engage education, workforce development, and industry stakeholders to align interests and resources. The Atlantic City cohort launched in September 2020 and includes several members of the Executive Council, namely the Atlantic City School District, Atlantic Cape Community College, Stockton University, the Boys & Girls Club of Atlantic City, Ørsted LLC, AtlantiCare, South Jersey Industries, Atlantic City Electric, and the Greater Atlantic City Chamber of Commerce. Additional partners include the Ideal Institute of Technology, Our Lady Star of the Sea School, and the Atlantic County Workforce Development Board.

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- Social Services Summits: The Project Office oversaw the convening of the social service agencies in Atlantic City. The agencies meet on a quarterly basis; the third quarter meeting was held on August 26, 2020 and the fourth quarter meeting occurred on December 2, 2020. In August, the agencies met the newly appointed director of the City's Health and Human Services Department, Dr. Wilson Washington, and City Health Officer Dr. Kifle Mihrete. Dr. Washington laid out his vision and general priorities for the office. In December, the group discussion focused on the problem of homelessness. Dr. Washington shared that he was crafting a comprehensive strategy for addressing the homelessness issue.

## YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

- The pandemic curtailed the original plan to replicate and double the youth participation of 2019's summer youth work program. Most of the stakeholders who participated in the 2019 program weren't able to offer the same opportunities while obeying social distancing requirements. However, Jingoli Enterprises was able to partner with Pastor Collins Days of Vision 2000 and the CRDA to offer a summer program in 2020 that was safe and meaningful for the youth participants.
- The Project Office worked with local stakeholders including Atlantic Cape Community College, Rutgers Agricultural Extension Network, and the Atlantic County Economic Alliance in creating new educational programs for youth.

## CIVIC INFRASTRUCTURE

- Ducktown NRTC Project: DCA's Neighborhood Revitalization Tax Credit (NRTC) Program is designed to foster the revitalization of New Jersey's distressed neighborhoods. The Ducktown NRTC revitalization plan includes a variety of activities that are the result of eight years of engagement with residents and businesses. Revitalize Ducktown was adopted as an element of the Atlantic City Master Plan.

Ducktown Community Development Corporation, in partnership with the Atlantic County Economic Alliance, has qualified for potential NRTC FY 2021 funding. With this resource, the Ducktown Plan, which was completed in 2019, can begin in full stride. The Ducktown NRTC revitalization plan is a collaborative effort between the Ducktown Neighborhood Steering Committee comprised of residents, community leaders, business owners, and representatives from local institutions, the City, and the public at large. Key elements of the plan include: a housing rehabilitation program; workforce and small business recovery; technical assistance for grant and loan applications and business plans; youth job readiness; partnership with the Boys & Girls Club of Atlantic City to continue a STEAM Lab Program; park revitalization plan; streetscape improvements; and a multicultural summer camp.

- Chelsea Neighborhood Planning Grant: ACDEVCO and the Chelsea Neighborhood Association applied for a planning grant to DCA in July 2020. The application was approved in September and the partnership was invited to submit a list of proposed projects. In December, DCA notified the partnership that it qualified for participation

in the program for the 2021 cycle. The specific amount awarded is yet to be determined.

- Stockton University Expansion: ACDEVCO and Stockton University moved forward in October 2020 with a groundbreaking for Phase II of Stockton's dormitory facilities for its Atlantic City campus. The location for the six-story dorm facility is Atlantic and Providence avenues. When complete, it will provide an additional 416 beds for students.
- Atlantic City Housing Authority Planning Grant: In September 2020, the Atlantic City Housing Authority (ACHA) applied to the U.S Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) for a Choice Neighborhood Planning Grant. The Executive Council provided eight letters of support for the application, in addition to one supplied by the Office of the Lieutenant Governor. In December 2020, HUD announced that the ACHA was one of 11 recipients nationwide selected for the grant. ACHA's \$450,000 grant will facilitate the development of an implementation plan for revitalization

In September 2020, the Atlantic City Housing Authority (ACHA) applied to the U.S Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) for a Choice Neighborhood Planning Grant.

projects in and around Stanley Holmes Village and the Westside neighborhood. ACHA and development partner The Michaels Organization will work in cooperation with HUD. HUD determined that the Westside neighborhood is primed for opportunity as it centrally located.

- **AtlantiCare Medical Arts Pavilion:** The CRDA committed \$15 million in funding and land valued at \$3 million to support the expansion of AtlantiCare in Atlantic City. The new 70,000-square-foot medical arts pavilion will house an urgent care facility, a maternal and fetal health clinic, a dialysis center, and classroom space for medical students and resident physicians.
- **WIND Institute:** The Wind Council, convened pursuant to Governor Murphy's Executive Order No. 79 to develop a plan for creating a Wind Innovation and New Development (WIND) Institute, released its final report in April 2020. The WIND Institute will be a main hub for research, education, workforce training, and innovation related to the expansion of the wind industry throughout the state. On September 16, 2020, the City Council of Atlantic City adopted a resolution in support of the siting of the WIND Institute in Atlantic City. The action of the City Council was followed by Mayor Marty Small, Sr. submitting a formal letter addressed to Governor Murphy and Lieutenant Governor Oliver on October 7, 2020, appealing for Atlantic City as the selected location of the Institute.
- **Chelsea Neighborhood NRTC Project:** The revitalization of neighborhoods is critical to an overall vibrant, economically healthy, and safe city. Atlantic City benefits from having strong community organizations with a long history of vested interest and efforts in maintaining thriving neighborhoods. The Chelsea Economic Development Corporation launched its plan to apply for the DCA's NRTC Program beginning with a series of town hall presentations and listening tours with Chelsea residents to garner feedback and input for the application.

## BUILDING MUNICIPAL CAPACITY

The City's Office of Emergency Management (OEM) proactively developed a plan to manage and oversee the City's response to the Covid-19 crisis. Among other actions, this included the procurement of adequate personal protection equipment (PPE) for City employees, implementation of health and safety protocols, staffing changes to abide by the Governor's Covid-19 Executive Orders, and the establishment of three (3) City-managed Covid-19 testing sites. Essential personnel continued to report on-site in shifts to ensure continuity of daily operations and the delivery of constituent services, while other City employees performed work tasks from home. The City's Division of Information Technology swiftly provided City employees with portable digital devices, conducted trainings as needed, and enabled a smooth transition to virtual meetings of the City Council, City boards and commissions, and City departments. The City's OEM created a weekly newsletter issued via the Atlantic City Police Department to provide continued updates on the City's response to the Covid-19 crisis, and the Mayor's Office spearheaded a food assistance program for senior citizens.

The Project Office worked in collaboration with the City's Division of Information Technology and the City Business Administrator to continue the rollout of the GovPilot data management tool. GovPilot is a web-based management platform developed exclusively for local governments to help them operate more transparently and efficiently. Modules have been built for the City Clerk's office and City Solicitor's office. Among the first modules completed and now available online include modules for GIS, Open Public Records Act (OPRA) requests, dog licenses, parking permits, vital records, marriage licenses, report-a-concern, and landlord registration. Modules related to construction, licenses and permits, and zoning and planning were also completed in 2020.

The Atlantic City Implementation Plan contemplates rebuilding the capacity of the city to deliver improved health services for city residents. The City hired two key employees, Dr. Wilson Washington and Dr. Kifle Mihrete, to staff the Health and Human Services Department. Dr. Washington was appointed the director of the department and Dr. Mihrete was appointed as the health officer, satisfying a state-mandated requirement.

The City selected the second cohort of City managers for the Certified Public Manager's course delivered by Rutgers University- Newark's School of Public Affairs and Administration. The City managers will attend class over a 10-month period through July 2021, complete weekly assignments, readings, and periodic assessments. To successfully graduate, each participant is required to complete a capstone project that would benefit their department.

The Certified Public Manager program is part of an ongoing endeavor to build municipal capacity. The program covers such areas as quantitative techniques, communication, problem solving and decision making, strategic thinking, analytical thinking, administrative law, budgetary process, management information systems, personal and organizational integrity, managing work, leading people, developing self, systemic integration, and change leadership.

- **Municipal Employee Training:** Municipal employees have received training on topics including: Harassment in the Workplace, HIPAA, Employee Orientation, New Front-Line Supervisor Training, and Performance Management.

A software program called 1Huddle is being considered as a component of Customer Service, Confidentiality, Business Courtesy, and Diversity training modules.

An Implicit Bias training took place the week of March 9, 2020. Online sexual harassment training was made available to employees. The City of Atlantic City purchased additional training modules from NEOGOV in support of the City's Human Resources Department.

- **Health Grant:** Atlantic City's Department of Health and Human Services received a \$100,000 grant from the New Jersey Department of Health. The grant is funding a study of patterns of overdose deaths in the Atlantic City community.

The Atlantic City Health Department has created an Overdose Fatality Review Team which is analyzing the circumstances surrounding fatal overdoses.

The Atlantic City Health Department has created an Overdose Fatality Review Team which is analyzing the circumstances surrounding fatal overdoses. The team is conducting multi-agency/multidisciplinary reviews of all data available concerning overdose fatalities. The team includes officials from across Atlantic County in order to identify regional trends and evaluate strategies to decrease deaths. The team is establishing policies and procedures for pooling all available information on overdose deaths while maintaining all required confidentiality.

The Fatality Review Team's work is consistent with the recommendations of the Transition Report. The grant award will be effective through September 31, 2021

- The Mayor's Office developed a 10-week small business academy in partnership with Atlantic Cape Community College, Stockton University's Small Business Development Center, the New Jersey Economic Development Authority, and the New Jersey African American Chamber of Commerce. Throughout the course, participants will gain assistance from developing a business plan to making full-fledge pitches for capital funding. The academy was set to launch in April 2020 but was postponed due to Covid-19. It is scheduled to begin in the first quarter of 2021.

## LAND USE & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The Atlantic City Transition Report highlights the need to address two critical land use issues: blight and foreclosure. The report also cites the need to increase available housing stock to attract new residents.

Work on revising the City Master Plan is a priority project and continues to progress. The targeted date for completion of a first draft is early June 2021.

- **Planning and Development:** The City's Department of Planning and Development is nearing the completion of an updated master plan which endeavors to be inclusive, comprehensive, and strategic in the engagement and representation of the city's residents and stakeholders. When implemented, the master plan is expected

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to yield equitable revitalization, growth, and sustainability in Atlantic City's neighborhoods and to strengthen the city's position as a viable regional economic engine.

City Planning Director Barbara Woolley-Dillon will hold a series of public meetings on the master plan and will post the plan on the City's website after final edits.

Director Woolley-Dillon and City Assistant Planning Director Jacques Howard presented an overview of the master plan to Executive Council members on December 15, 2020. Director Woolley-Dillon advised that meetings with local neighborhood civic associations regarding the neighborhood planning aspect of the master plan will occur.

- **Rooming Houses Initiative:** To further reduce blight, the City and CRDA collaborated to address the proliferation of rooming houses in the city. The Mayor's Office established a code enforcement review board to aggressively address violations. CRDA developed a plan to convert rooming houses to affordable housing units. The CRDA board approved allocating \$1.2 million for the conversion program to cover approximately four (4) projects. The funds provide incentives for developers to convert the rooming houses into better quality housing and mixed-use projects.
- **Trump Plaza Demolition:** Atlantic City's Law Department aggressively engaged Icahn Enterprises, which owns the shuttered former Trump Plaza Hotel and Casino on the boardwalk. The long-closed building has become a safety hazard with debris falling onto the street and boardwalk. On March 16, 2020, the City filed an Order to Show Cause against the owner of Trump Plaza to have the structure demolished as quickly as possible because it posed



an imminent danger to residents and visitors. On April 9, 2020, Superior Court Judge Julio Mendez agreed with the City and found that the structure did pose an imminent danger and ordered that the structure be demolished. Judge Mendez further ordered that the Trump Plaza owner submit a plan to the Court within 45 days of the ruling addressing a demolition schedule. The Court and the City agreed to monitor the progress of the Trump Plaza owner to ensure that an expedited demolition schedule was met. Ultimately it was determined that the building would be imploded. The parking garage and one hotel tower would remain intact. By year's end the implosion was scheduled for the middle of February 2021. The remaining tower and the parking garage will be renovated. The project, to include cleanup, is scheduled to be completed by June 10, 2021.

## PUBLIC SAFETY

The Citizens Advisory Board canceled the March 2020 meeting due to the pandemic and reconvened in April 2020. The Board reviewed crime statistics during the time of Covid-19. Mirroring a national trend, incidents of domestic violence were higher than usual. The Board also noted that youth seemed to be staying out later in the evening than in pre-Covid times. Lastly, the anonymous 911 hotline, TIP 411, has been working well. Flyers announcing this new resource have been posted around the city.

- Short-Term Rentals and Group Homes: Atlantic City residents were growing increasingly more outraged that Airbnb's and group homes were operating in their neighborhoods. The City filed a lawsuit to stop the unauthorized operation of group homes in the city. Also, City Planning Director Barbara Woolley-Dillon revised the zoning ordinance to reflect that short-term rentals are a conditional use in Atlantic City.
- City Council approved the contract with Host Compliance, a software platform that will help the City handle short-term rental registration, tax collection, and enforcement. On November 13, 2020, City Council issued a new short-term rental ordinance on first reading. Second and final reading of the short-term rental ordinance occurred on December 16, 2020.