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Executive Director

MEMORANDUM

To: State Planning Commission
From: Benjamin Spinelli, Executive Director
Date: May 20, 2009
Re: City of Asbury Park 2009 Biennial Monitoring Report

On May 18, 2005, the State Planning Commission (SPC) approved the Plan Endorsement petition submitted by the City of Asbury Park. As required by N.J.A.C 5:85-7.12 et seq. and the City's Planning Implementation Agreement (PIA), on April 23, 2009, the City submitted its second biennial report (distributed previously) detailing the status of its PIA efforts. Enclosed is a draft revised PIA for consideration.

As the biennial report demonstrates, over the past two years, Asbury Park has seen a lot of activity in terms of both planning and development. The City has adopted two redevelopment plans, received Brownfield Development Area designation, partnered with private entities for affordable housing development, secured funding for upgrades to the transportation center, and watched its boardwalk come back to life. The Office of Smart Growth and its State agency partners in the Plan Endorsement process have reviewed the biennial report and accompanying submissions—in tandem with the previous biennial report—and found that the City has maintained its commitment to fulfilling the PIA. The following summarizes the actions taken by the City to address its PIA and notes any items proposed to be modified.

Land Use

While many of these items were completed prior to the previous biennial review, much work has been done on those items due within the past two years and those within ongoing timeframes. Since the 2007 biennial review, the City has designated areas in need of redevelopment and adopted redevelopment plans in accordance with N.J.S.A. 40:12A for Main Street and Springwood Avenue. The City formed a steering committee of diverse interests (residents, business owners, City officials, and State representatives) to guide the process, resulting in a plan that embodies the principles of transit-oriented development and fulfills the requirements of items A5 and A6. An RFP for a redeveloper or redevelopers was recently issued. The Amended Springwood Avenue Plan, meanwhile, seeks to revitalize a historically important neighborhood and was an effort spearheaded by the residents themselves. The Plan was subsequently awarded distinctions from the New Jersey Planning Officials and the Monmouth County Planning Board. Several mixed use projects are already underway to implement the plan, many of them including affordable housing units. The long-awaited senior citizens center (item A16) will be located in this area within a building consisting of ground floor retail and upper level affordable housing units. During this time, the City also adopted an ordinance to minimize the visual impact of telecommunications equipment (A3).

Comments from the Department of Environmental Protection expressed concern with the implementation of item A7. However, it is believed that the 2008 designation of the Springfield Avenue Brownfield Development Area will facilitate clean up of sites in this area so that they may be put to productive use. State agencies will continue to offer support as the City looks to remediate contaminated areas across the municipality, data on which was provided to the City prior to Plan Endorsement and remains available. The City will further address environmental justice and general sustainability issues through the green building design guidelines on which it is collaborating with the Municipal Land Use Center and through its participation in the Sustainable Jersey program. It is recommended that the City review the program's Diversity and Equity action category to address any outstanding environmental justice concerns.

Items Completed to Date: A2, A3, A5, A6, A9, A15

Time Extensions Needed: A4. The City has done some work on this item, but it remains to be completed. A new deadline for completion is suggested for December 2009, with draft ordinances presented to the City Council by September 2009.

Housing

Though Asbury Park is awaiting the completion of its Housing Element and Fair Share Plan, an impressive amount of affordable housing continues to be built within its borders. Two current projects include for a total of 29 affordable units in the Springwood area, in addition to market rate development slated for the corridor. Both of the recently-adopted redevelopment plans require the inclusion of affordable housing units for all projects per Council on Affordable Housing (COAH) standards. In addition, the City has modified development regulations in the previously-designated STARS redevelopment area to improve the feasibility of housing development. The City is aware of its affordable housing obligation—the majority of which consists of its rehabilitation share—and continues to address it despite not having a Housing Element and Fair Share Plan. These items are expected in final draft form by the middle of June.

Items Completed: None, though good progress is being made on the items and the spirit of each item continues to be met.

Time Extensions Need: B1, B2, B3, B5. These items all pertain to the Housing Element and Fair Share Plan, which is expected shortly from the City's consultant on the project. As such, an extension for adoption is proposed until December 31, 2009, with draft work products due by June 15, 2009.

Transportation

Many of the transportation items that have been due to date have been addressed through the Main Street Redevelopment Plan, which both takes advantages of this corridor's proximity to the James J. Howard Transportation Center and recommends development standards that would make it more pedestrian friendly. Other improvements have been made to enhance mobility between neighboring communities, and the City continues to work with the City of Neptune to determine the feasibility of jitney service between these two communities and possibly their neighbors. In addition, the City was recently awarded an \$180,000 Centers of Place grant that will fund capital improvements for the transportation center. Transportation items will continue to be met through redevelopment plan implementation and the City's intention to pursue Transit Village designation.

Items Completed: C1, C2, C6, C7, C9

Time Extensions Needed: None, but amendments to the language and timeframe of C8 are recommended to better reflect Department of Transportation intentions.

Infrastructure

The City had addressed many of these items by the time of its 2007 biennial review, having adopted a Stormwater Management Plan and Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan, as well as assessing infrastructure capacity in conjunction with its redevelopment plans. Presently, the City's Urban Enterprise Zone (UEZ) is coordinating efforts to improve wayfinding in the central business district. Item D6 will need attention in the future, and State agencies will work with the city to identify potential sources of funding and addressing infrastructure capacity concerns as needed.

Time Extensions Needed: D3. The City would like to prepare and adopt a capital improvement program within next two years. The proposed date of completion is roughly a month prior to the deadline for the

next biennial report, March 31, 2011. The timeframe for item D2 is proposed to change to “ongoing” to better reflect the nature of the activity.

Items Completed: D1

Economic Development

As economic development is a continuous effort, many of these items have “ongoing” timeframes within which the City continues to address this issue. Certain aspects of the Main Street Redevelopment Plan were based on a market analysis that identified commercial sectors in which “leakage” was occurring—that is, city residents were going elsewhere for these services. The City can now use this information to attract specific businesses. This effort will be complemented by the UEZ’s aforementioned planned wayfinding improvements. As a means of meeting resident employment needs, since receiving Plan Endorsement, the City has established an active employment resource center. In addition, the city continues to draw new businesses and support existing ones through its extensive marketing and unique cultural events. Asbury Park should now focus on attracting resident-accessible living wage jobs.

Time Extensions Needed: None.

Items Completed: E1

Intergovernmental Coordination

The City has made good progress on all items included in this section of the PIA, fostering relationships between often disparate City agencies. It also continues to work with its neighbors on various planning projects, with Deal, Wesley Lake, and Neptune City involved with local transportation and mobility initiatives. In addition, representatives from several State agencies sat on the steering committee for the Main Street Redevelopment Plan.

Time Extensions Needed: None.

Items Completed: F1

Historic Preservation

Many items in this section will be more of a focus in the coming two years. OSG has spoken with Asbury Park’s Director of Planning and Redevelopment about how the City might address these items, including an extensive program of community outreach to build support and the formation of partnerships with local preservation organizations. The City has a draft of item G1, which will be proposed for adoption at the same time as item G7. It is imperative that the City continues to be proactive in its preservation effort. State agencies will make a point of increased monitoring of these items over the next two years with technical assistance provided as necessary.

Time Extensions Needed: G1, G7. These items are proposed to be extended to allow for substantial public outreach for preservation efforts, with draft ordinances due for City Council consideration by October 2010.

Items Completed: G2

Recommendation and Conclusions

The City continues to make excellent progress on its PIA, not just generally meeting deadlines and performing the required activities, but also assuming creative, complementary work that enhances the PIA items. OSG is recommending that the SPC modify the noted language and provide extensions as proposed to allow for additional time on which to work on these items. All items to be extended are those that are either in progress or for which the City has proposed a schedule for undertaking the necessary tasks. Given the work that has been completed to date, it is expected that the next two years will be focused primarily on completing the housing items, furthering historic preservation efforts, and continuing implementation of the redevelopment plans. State agencies remain committed to assisting Asbury Park with these endeavors and commend the City for its diligence and perseverance in both fulfilling the PIA and working towards meaningful community revitalization.