

# ATLANTIC CITY

Building A Foundation For A Shared Prosperity

REPORT FOR THE PERIOD  
JANUARY 2020 THROUGH MARCH 2020

New Jersey Department of Community Affairs  
July 2020





# ATLANTIC CITY: BUILDING A FOUNDATION FOR SHARED PROSPERITY

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## REPORT FOR THE THREE MONTHS OF JANUARY 2020 – MARCH 2020

This is the 1st quarterly report of 2020 by the Atlantic City Initiatives Project Office (“ACIPO”). This report discusses the office’s progress on key initiatives from January 2020 through March 2020. This report reflects the framework discussed in both the Transition Report titled Atlantic City: Building A Foundation for A Shared Prosperity, released on September 20, 2018, and the Implementation Plan, released on April 23, 2019.

This quarter was marked by the unprecedented Covid-19 pandemic. Although the disruption diverted much of the focus and energy toward immediate relief efforts, progress on key items in the Implementation Plan continues. As a testament to the importance of the Atlantic City Executive Council, the City administration and other members of the Council worked collaboratively to address the impact wrought by the virus, from business interruption to heightened food insecurity of the community.

### KEY DELIVERABLES

#### BUILDING COMMUNITY CAPACITY & ADVANCING COORDINATION

With the exception of the March meeting, the Atlantic City Executive Council (“Executive Council”) continued to meet monthly and welcomed one (1) new stakeholder: Ms. Donna Danielson, General Manager of Tanger Outlets.

Despite the impact of Covid-19 on their individual organizations, members of the Executive Council joined together to meet the pressing needs of

Atlantic City businesses, industry employees and residents. Members of the casino association joined with labor leaders, the City administration, the Casino Reinvestment Development Authority (“CRDA”), the Atlantic City 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 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 Order No. 107.

Newly appointed ACIPO 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 University’s Agricultural Extension Network and several social service and non-profit organizations.

Additionally, Ms. Still joined the leadership team of the South Jersey ecosystem of the New Jersey STEM Pathways Network, a statewide initiative

managed by the Research & Development Council of New Jersey to create a cradle-to-workforce pathway to connect STE(A)M education to workforce development.

## BUILDING MUNICIPAL CAPACITY

- The City administration proactively activated the Office of Emergency Management (OEM) to develop 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 enforce the Governor's Executive Order No. 107, and the establishment of two (2) City-managed Covid-19 testing sites. Essential City 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 Atlantic City Department of Information Technology swiftly provided City employees with portable devices, conducted trainings as needed and enabled a smooth transition to virtual meetings of the City Council, boards and commissions, and City departments. The Mayor 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 spearheaded a food assistance program for senior citizens.
- ACIPO worked in collaboration with the Department of Information Technology and the 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 are in progress to be completed during the spring and early summer of 2020.

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- The Implementation Plan contemplates rebuilding the capacity of the city to deliver improved health services for city residents. The Office of Human Resources conducted a search to hire a new full-time Health Officer, as required by state statute. The target date for completing the search process is the end of May.
- The City's first class of 15 employees completed the Certified Public Manager's course delivered by Rutgers University-Newark's School of Public Affairs and Administration. The program participants attended class over a 10-month period, completed weekly assignments, readings and periodic assessments. To successfully graduate, each participant was required to complete a capstone project that would benefit their department.

## LAND USE & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The 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.

- On December 17, 2019, the City conducted another auction of abandoned and foreclosed properties to return vacant property to the tax rolls. The sale of 171 properties generated an anticipated \$1,520,000.00 in revenue. The City Solicitor's office is working through the closing process on all properties.
- 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.
- The Mayor's Office developed a 10-week small business academy in partnership with Atlantic Cape Community College, Stockton University Small Business Development Center, New Jersey Economic Development Authority, the New Jersey African American Chamber of Commerce and the Latin American Economic Development Association ("LAEDA"). Throughout the course, participants would gain business advice from developing a business plan to making full-fledge pitches for capital funding. The academy was set to launch in April but was postponed due to Covid-19.
- 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 New Jersey Department of Community Affairs ("DCA")

Neighborhood Revitalization Tax Credit funds, beginning with a series of town hall presentations and listening tours with Chelsea residents to garner feedback and input for the application.

- To further reduce blight, the City and the 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. The CRDA developed a conversion 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.

## PUBLIC SAFETY

- The Neighborhood Coordination Officers (NCO) program continues to receive positive feedback from the community. Based on the community's request, the Citizens Advisory Board opened discussions with the CRDA to increase the number of officers in the program.
- The Citizens Advisory Board continues to meet monthly and It held its fourth public meeting on Wednesday, December 11, 2019. In that meeting, Atlantic City Police Chief Henry White informed the board as well as community members attending that crime was down 37% in Atlantic City.
- Additional meetings of the board featured an appearance by Atlantic County Prosecutor Damon Tyner and discussions on community preparedness for the Covid-19 pandemic.

## YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

The Youth Advisory Board met on several occasions during the first quarter. Their goal entering this year is to complete a master plan. The master plan is set to serve two purposes: first, to create common and cohesive metrics for institutions to use for the children across Atlantic City and second, to begin sharing information with and including the Mayor and City Administration in the discussions.

The Youth Advisory Board met with Mayor Marty Small Sr. on February 12th, 2020, to have a robust conversation. In that meeting, the Mayor presented a plan regarding recreation that encompassed many of the board's wants and desires. The result of that meeting was the beginning of a partnership of the board and the Mayor's administration. The two parties agreed to collaborate with supporting the Mayor's vision and agreed to meet monthly for updates surrounding the youth and to advance suggestions from the board to the Mayor on things they see possible. Their next meeting was canceled due to Covid-19.

topics. A survey of the group revealed that they appreciate having the summits and would like to continue meeting on a quarterly basis. They also expressed interest in initiating pilot projects to bring innovative solutions to ongoing challenges. The next summit will occur in the summer.

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## CIVIC AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The ACIPO continued its community outreach efforts and conducted a summit of social service agencies active in Atlantic City. The meeting was held on March 11, 2020, at the Old Soldier's Home. Thirty-three participants representing 20 agencies were in attendance. The group met for over two hours and had roundtable discussions on two



