

ATLANTIC CITY

Building A Foundation For A Shared Prosperity

REPORT FOR THE PERIOD
JULY 1, 2019 THROUGH SEPTEMBER 30, 2019

New Jersey Department of Community Affairs
November 19, 2019



ATLANTIC CITY: BUILDING A FOUNDATION FOR SHARED PROSPERITY

REPORT FOR THE THREE MONTHS OF JULY 1, 2019 – SEPTEMBER 30, 2019

This is the 3rd quarter report by the Atlantic City Initiatives Project Office (“ACIPO”). This report discusses the office’s progress on key initiatives from July 2019 through September 2019. 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.

KEY DELIVERABLES BUILDING COMMUNITY CAPACITY & ADVANCING COORDINATION

During this quarter, ACIPO continued to work with stakeholders and facilitate greater collaboration among community partners as outlined in the Transition Report. ACIPO held monthly meetings among key anchor institutions at the Atlantic City Executive Council (Executive Council) and invited three new stakeholders; Ørsted, the Danish wind power company; New Jersey Community Capital, a New Jersey nonprofit lender designed to meet the capital needs of affordable housing developers throughout the state; and Atlantic City Electric / The Hispanic Association of Atlantic County represented by the appointment of Bert Lopez. These new community partners offer tremendous potential for Atlantic City and the region.

BUILDING MUNICIPAL CAPACITY

During this quarter, the New Jersey Department of Community Affairs brought in an Interim Business Administrator to work closely with ACIPO. Since the appointment of the Interim Administrator, several significant initiatives have been advanced.

- In July, the City worked with the Department of Local Government Services and Rutgers to deliver training on the fundamental structures and responsibilities of government according to the Faulkner Act. This training was delivered to the Mayor and members of City Council.
- ACIPO worked in collaboration with the Department of Information Technology and the Interim Business Administrator to bring on a new management data tool named GovPilot to the City. GovPilot is a web-based management platform developed exclusively for local governments to help them operate more transparently and efficiently. It is the goal of this initiative to make government more user-friendly and more responsive to its residents. With this tool, City Hall operations will see a complete overhaul to simplify processes and enable the municipality to provide residents with online interface applications. GovPilot launched in September and is currently working on bringing the Municipal Clerk’s Office fully online. This office is currently on track to be completed by the end of November 2019. It is projected that this project will take 12-18 months to fully implement and bring the City online.
- ACIPO has worked with the Interim Business Administrator and the Department of Human Resources to accelerate key hiring within the Planning & Development department.
- Communications between government and residents was improved through the development of a directory for all city departments. This directory is now available in hardcopy form available in the City Hall

lobby and it is also available on the Atlantic City website. The directory was last updated in 2012.

LAND USE & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The Transition Report highlighted the need to address two critical land use issues: blight and foreclosure. While the City has moved to address issues of code violations and abandoned property, ACIPO has continued to work on Atlantic City's housing challenges.

Among other things, ACIPO has worked with the NJ Housing and Mortgage Finance Agency to advance initiatives for homeownership. On August 1, 2019, Rose Farias of ACIPO moderated a panel at the Housing and Community Development Network of New Jersey's "Healthy Communities Summit". The panel discussed the work currently underway in Atlantic City and throughout Atlantic County around affordable housing and partnerships with healthcare systems and municipalities. Both AtlantiCare and Jewish Family Services participated on this panel.

On September 17th, Governor Murphy held his annual Housing & Economic Development Conference in Atlantic City. This year, the City's Director of Planning & Development and the Executive Director of the CRDA held a bus tour for attendees of the conference. On this bus tour, attendees were able to hear about new housing initiatives and see the City's actual redevelopment work in action. These efforts were done to promote housing and redevelopment opportunities in the city.

In addition to this, the newly formed Chelsea CDC held its first Home Buyer & Mortgage Informational Tour for the Chelsea neighborhood. This forum was held at Stockton University where

several potential homebuyers were educated about existing first-time homeownership opportunities as well as offered a tour of the neighborhood. This highlights the work underway by neighborhood associations such as Ducktown, Venice Park and Bungalow Park that are taking active roles in revitalizing their neighborhoods and promoting critical homeownership initiatives.

The City has moved to return property to the tax rolls by auctioning off abandoned and foreclosed properties. The sale of 37 properties generated \$1.7 million of revenue.

In August, the Atlantic County Economic Alliance reported at the Executive Council their continued efforts to develop and invite business at the airport. The first building in the National Aviation Research Technology Park is now open and has brought on 8 new businesses which represent hundreds of new jobs. In addition, as discussed briefly below, Atlantic County continues to work with Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University to develop an apprenticeship program.

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JOB TRAINING & EMPLOYMENT

Governor's Special Counsel Jim Johnson worked with Local 54, the New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development, and casino representatives to secure funding for a jobs training program for local hires. More than 50 individuals, both adults and youths, were trained for job skills

currently in demand in the local economy. Ninety percent of the individuals trained this summer are currently retained in the positions where they were placed.

PUBLIC SAFETY

During the summer months, Atlantic City was stunned by the back-to-back deaths of four youths who died at the hands of other, gun-wielding children. These violent deaths shaped ACIPO's focus on youth and public safety this quarter. In early July, ACIPO worked with the Office of the Governor, the Office of the Attorney General, the City, the Fellowship of Clergy, the Atlantic City Police Department (ACPD) and the ownership of the Hard Rock Hotel & Casino to develop a coordinated local response.

This response involved three things: increasing levels of civic engagement; new collaborations and programming for at-risk youth; and a broader, community-based response to the challenge of youth violence.

Civic Engagement and Problem-Solving with the Neighborhood Coordination Officers. On August 14, 2019, the Atlantic City Citizens Advisory Board (CAB) held its second public meeting. Youth violence and enhancements to community policing were a major focus of the group. Community members commended the work of the ACPD's Neighborhood Coordination Officers program. While we expect to see hard data after the end of the year, anecdotal evidence, including press reports, indicates that less than four months after creating the Neighborhood Coordination Officers program, which focuses on quality-of-life issues, residents and officials have reported seeing a positive impact to the Atlantic City community. As reported in the second quarterly report, the NCO program officially started in May where officials assigned two officers to each of the city's six political wards and four to community outreach. Part of the policing initiative was to increase safety in the city while building up the

relationship between officers and the community. This initiative was funded in the amount of \$7.5 million from the Casino Reinvestment Development Authority. Over the summer, officers attended civic meetings in their assigned wards and hosted neighborhood gatherings that included cookouts, raffles and games.

New Collaborations for At-Risk Youth. One of the bigger collaborations over the summer that proved to be very successful was between Reverend Collins A. Days, Sr., the pastor of Second Baptist Church in Atlantic City, JINGOLI Co., Hard Rock Hotel & Casino, the Atlantic County Prosecutor's Office, the Atlantic City Arts Foundation and Vision 2000 Community Development Corporation. Through this collaboration, they were able to provide a unique experience for at-risk youth by creating an eight-week work program that focused on addressing those challenges in which Atlantic City's youth face every day. This project served several purposes. The first was to redirect at-risk youth in a more positive and productive direction. The second purpose was to expose youth to arts as a means for expression. The third benefit was to introduce Atlantic City's youth to their first experiences with employment. At-risk youth are often passed over for this type of opportunity and it was the goal of this initiative to reaffirm that these youths are equally as important and deserve a second chance.

Intervening to Prevent Violence. Late in June, the Governor and the Lieutenant Governor called major community stakeholders together to discuss what appeared to be a surge in violence, identify resources to combat it and begin to develop a community-based strategy to address it. This work would be in addition to the efforts already underway with ACPD and the Office of the Attorney General. Following this call, stakeholders began to consider pathways to develop a set of interventions that treated violence, in part, as a contagion, like a public health problem.

In addition to this, the CAB also expressed strong concern about the rise in youth violence. As a result, on August 19, 2019, ACIPO coordinated a trip to the City of Newark where 20 members of the community traveled together to learn more about violence reduction programs. The group included: Jim Johnson and members of ACIPO Michael Epps and Elijah Langford; members of the Citizens Advisory Board, including Board President Joyce Mollineux, Steven Young, Constance Days-Chapman and Christian Moreno-Rodriquez; members of the police department, including Deputy Chief James Sarkos, Lieutenant Wilbur Santiago, Sergeant Monica Coursey, who is director of the Police Athletic League, and officers Autumn Mason and Syed Shah; municipal officials, including City Council President Marty Small; and community leaders LaToya Dunston, Vincent McDaniel, Floyd Tally, LuQuay Zahir and Kashawn McKinley. The group visited two different facilities in Newark and met with the men and women who worked with community members to decrease violence and its effects on community members. The objective of the tour was to bring the lessons learned back to Atlantic City and craft a model which works best locally to begin to address youth violence and policy-informed trauma practices. Following this trip, Attorney General Grewal announced a grant program for regional trauma centers. ACIPO began working with AtlantiCare and other stakeholders to establish a trauma center in Atlantic City. If the grant application is approved, the trauma center would better enable AtlantiCare to remove barriers to care for survivors of violent crime and improve victims' services, particularly for underserved victims, and to break cycles of violence.

YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

The most effective strategies for empowering communities involve a plan for the development of its future generations. Atlantic City is home to 10,000 residents 18 years old and younger. According to census data, more than a third of the

children in Atlantic City live below the poverty level. The Atlantic City Initiatives Project Office began to address issues specific to youth with the intention of increasing after school programs that have been cut as a result of the fiscal crisis affecting Atlantic City. Increasing access to summer employment and internships opportunities were also cornerstones to our work during this quarter even as we continued to develop a citywide strategy to address the needs of youth comprehensively.

As an initial step, ACIPO utilized the Developmental Assets Profile ("DAP") assessment tool, which was designed and administered by the Search Institute with the support of the Atlantic City School District. The DAP measured the internal strengths and external supports for Atlantic City's youth. It also measured their growth within key areas over a specified period. The survey results were shared with school system leadership and community organizations and families to enable all to understand the needs of our children more clearly. After the survey was administered, consultants from the Search Institute worked to help the community develop a programmatic response to identified deficits seen in survey results.

One of the key findings from the DAP survey was that the city's youth had significantly less constructive activities during after school hours. Through this data, ACIPO collaborated with stakeholders to identify additional resources and funding for summer youth activities as well as quality internship opportunities for high school and college-aged students.

SUMMER INTERNSHIPS

Atlantic City must do more to develop its next generation of leaders. Many communities use after school programs and summer jobs to develop young talent. They provide internships and apprenticeships as a means for youth to obtain job opportunities that provide growth potential and empowerment.

ACIPO, along with several key stakeholders, was able to take the first significant steps toward this goal. This summer, the new internship program provided 45 paid internship opportunities for college-aged students as well as 60 additional opportunities for local high school students. Employers that participated this summer included: AtlantiCare, Stockton University, the City of Atlantic City, Atlantic Cape Community College, and Volunteers of America.

In addition to this, a contribution from concert promoter Live Nation provided critical funding for this initiative. Within City Hall, several offices participated by giving students real-life experiences in city government operations. These offices included the Mayor's Office, ACIPO, planning and development, and recreation.

AtlantiCare was able to provide our student interns with exclusive opportunities with placements in the human resource department, diversity and inclusion division, pediatric community outreach services division, information technology division, addictions and behavioral health, and maternal fetal medicine. The interns acquired tremendous exposure to, and experience with, the region's leading healthcare provider. AtlantiCare ultimately extended the internship opportunities for some of our students, which only invigorated their desire to continue to participate in the program next year.

In City Hall, interns held a range of opportunities within municipal offices. In ACIPO, the interns had a firsthand look at operations by attending the Executive Council meetings. They had direct exposure to the City's special event process by participating in the planning of the Latino Festival. They also assisted in the planning of the first and second ward town hall meeting, the creation of the youth advisory board, and many other operational

projects. The interns had access to meetings that involved state and local government officials and they were also asked to participate by providing feedback on various issues surrounding Atlantic City's youth. The Mayor's Office and the Planning

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and Development Office were also departments that hosted interns where each assigned intern experienced the inner working of their respective offices. Their direct access to different levels of government was the first experience of its kind for many of the interns.

Atlantic Cape Community College also answered the call to create new opportunities for students. They created an opportunity for one intern who was charged with managing the school's photography and videography work over the summer. They allowed the intern to schedule meetings and plan photoshoot sessions. This allowed the intern to see firsthand how a professional photographer and videographer would conduct business. After the summer, the intern expressed to the ACIPO team that their experience was amazing and how grateful he was because it showed him how to be on time, dress professionally and take charge when needed.

Volunteers of America were assigned several interns over the summer and created very dynamic experiences for our students. In addition to the experience of helping an institution accomplish its daily work, VOA also introduced the interns to very complex social issues that many had not experienced including imprisonment, mental and physical health issues, and homelessness

among others. The internship grounded the students, but it also taught them many basic life lessons such as understanding the complexities of how to effectively help vulnerable populations. More generally, interns learned about problem solving where the stakes are high and resources are limited. Many of the interns commented that their favorite experiences were in assisting families obtain housing or helping individuals who had been recently released from jail obtain employment. They expressed that if more young people saw the outcome of certain life decisions and the struggles of those adulthood issues early on in life, they would probably take things a lot more seriously.

Stockton University also offered interns a unique opportunity this summer. At Stockton, college students had an opportunity to learn more about university operations. The participants reported that their internships were a valuable experience because it provided them insight on how bigger institutions operate and an opportunity to observe the inner workings of several departments. It also provided interns the ability to see what type of qualifications they would need in order to obtain employment.

Most of the participants were public or non-profit institutions. The goal for the coming summer is a higher level of private support for the program.

ADDITIONAL SUMMER PROGRAMMING

During the last quarter, ACIPO learned that Atlantic City has a structural aspect to its labor market that more than likely makes the challenge of raising children even greater. In most communities across the state, based on recent census data, one household in ten has a wage earner that leaves for work daily in the afternoon/early evening. Atlantic City is an outlier, in the extreme. In Atlantic City, three households out of every ten has a wage earner that leaves for work after noon. What that means for the youth of Atlantic City, specifically during

the summer months, is that a significant number have very limited parental or adult oversight in the late afternoon and early evening hours. This is only exacerbated by the lack of productive activities available for youth over the summer months.

ACIPO took steps to work with the City to address this challenge and was successful this summer in obtaining additional funding opportunities from DCA and CRDA totaling \$231,772, which went to supporting summer youth programming for roughly 447 youths.

Through these efforts, the Boys & Girls Club was able to obtain grant funding in the amount of \$100,000 from DCA. These grant dollars were used to fund programming that focused on enhancing the overall landscape of opportunities for Atlantic City's youth. The Boys & Girls Club divided these funds between the club's two locations. The funding for the Sovereign Avenue site was utilized to allow an additional 33 children to use the facility and its assets and become camp members. Despite this additional funding several students remained on a waiting list. The second Boys & Girls Club location, which features a new teen center, was able to host basketball tournaments, hire additional staff, and for the first time ever, open its facility on Saturdays. This was significant because over the summer the Atlantic City Board of Education's facilities were closed on Saturdays and so was the City's recreation program. The evening basketball tournament brought in 132 additional children.

Stockton University in collaboration with the Atlantic City Police Athletic League (PAL) was also successful this summer in obtaining grant funding from the CRDA in the amount of \$131,772. These funds were used to engage 300 youths across the city in enrichment activities. These activities included art instruction for school children ages five to 18 years of age. Other programs provided opportunities for children to develop skills in problem solving and team work as well as improve

attention span and the ability to focus on single tasks. The goal of these programs was to increase access to high-impact, hands-on learning experiences. Atlantic City's youth were able to use community rooms at Maryland Avenue, Stanley Homes Village and Busby Village, and activities at the Noyes Arts Garage.

The Atlantic City PAL provided opportunities for an additional 87 children at PAL summer camp. The camp provided students with theoretical and hands-on learning experiences in a multitude of performing and visual arts disciplines by offering educational and one-of-a-kind workshops in a personalized setting. The camp was open Monday through Friday and offered dance, theatre, athletics, computers, musical performance, S.T.E.M, mentoring, aquatics, robotics, and field trips.

CREATION OF YOUTH ADVISORY BOARD

ACIPO held its first Youth Advisory Board meeting on July 31, 2019. The Youth Advisory Board is a group of stakeholders who provide direct services, instruction and recreation to youth every day. The board includes some of the top leadership from the Atlantic City Boys & Girls Club, PAL, Atlantic City Board of Education, Pathways, Atlantic Cape Community College, Stockton University, ACIPO, NAACP, Vision 2000, AtlantiCare, and the City's recreation department, as well as community leaders, mentors, educators, and representatives of community groups and youth athletic clubs. The goal of the group is to take the findings of the DAP, the experience of the summer internships and summer programming, and the collective wisdom of the participants to create a comprehensive strategy for the city's youth in order to fulfill the Transition Report's recommendation to build a pathway for success

for each child born and raised in Atlantic City. The Youth Advisory Board is scheduled to issue the comprehensive strategy in early December.

CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT

The summer months are always ideal months to offer cultural activities that promote community and unity throughout the city. On July 20, 2019, the second of a three-part concert series was held in the historic Gardner's Basin as part of CRDA's continued commitment to cultural awareness events.

After a hiatus of 12 years, the third quarter saw the return of the Atlantic City Latino Festival on September 25, 2019. The Latino Festival was a day-long event at Bader Field, which was made possible through the collaboration of the City of Atlantic City, CRDA, DCA, ACIPO, the Hispanic Association of Atlantic County, and Organization Azteca.

The festival featured live Latin music, arts and crafts vendors, and activities for both adults and children, plus a variety of authentic Latin-American food vendors and refreshments. In addition to this, 50 non-profit organizations throughout the greater

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Atlantic City area participated in the day's events. Among other things, they provided free health and wellness screenings, community support information, and various other community-based resources. The event was free to the public and drew an estimated crowd in excess of 7,000 people throughout the day. The general feedback from the Hispanic community after the event was that for the first time in a long time, the Hispanic community

felt included, empowered and inspired to participate and support a cultural event sponsored by the City and focused on their community.

CIVIC AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Following a very successful city-wide town hall and the first ever Spanish language town hall, ACIPO continued to build on its previous work by conducting smaller community-based town hall meetings. The purpose of this format was to promote a more focused, neighborhood-based and granular approach to solution gathering. The first of these community town hall meetings was held on September 24, 2019, at the Uptown School Complex. This meeting was focused on the residents of the First and Second Wards. The event was planned in coordination with the First Ward Civic Association, the Bungalow Park Civic Association and citizens of the Marina District. The event was attended by approximately 75 residents who engaged in very lively and robust discussions. At this meeting we saw residents taking a more direct approach to problem solving and we continued to see an eagerness to stay involved. ACIPO will continue to hold smaller town halls through the remainder of the year with the goal of covering all six wards. These meetings will be memorialized, and the data will be shared with the community once all forums are complete.

As the end of the summer months approached, ACIPO held its first BBQ on August 20 with the students in the internship program and the Atlantic City Executive Council. This effort was taken to acknowledge the great work of our summer interns and promote greater exposure to community role models. It has been ACIPO's mission to promote joy through community and fellowship in all of its initiatives. This event was no different and at this gathering students were able to interact with key community stakeholders in Atlantic City and put into action the skills they learned over the summer.

