

# ATLANTIC CITY

Building A Foundation For A Shared Prosperity

REPORT FOR THE PERIOD  
OCTOBER 2019 THROUGH DECEMBER 2019

New Jersey Department of Community Affairs  
March 2020





# ATLANTIC CITY: BUILDING A FOUNDATION FOR SHARED PROSPERITY

REPORT FOR THE THREE MONTHS OF OCTOBER 2019 – DECEMBER 2019

This is the 4th quarterly report by the Atlantic City Initiatives Project Office (“ACIPO”). This report discusses the office’s progress on key initiatives from October 2019 through December 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.

Several administrative changes occurred during the 4th quarter of 2019. Jim Johnson, esteemed special counsel to the Governor and prime architect of the Transition Report and Implementation Plan, moved on to become the 79th Corporation Counsel of the City of New York. ACIPO Deputy Executive Director Rosa Farias left the ACIPO to accept an appointment as the Deputy Executive Director of the Casino Reinvestment Development Authority (“CRDA”). Lastly, India Still was selected to assume the Deputy Executive Director role at ACIPO beginning in January 2020.

## KEY DELIVERABLES BUILDING COMMUNITY CAPACITY & ADVANCING COORDINATION

The Atlantic City Executive Council (“Executive Council”) continued to meet monthly and welcomed four new stakeholders: newly appointed Mayor of Atlantic City, the Honorable Marty Small; Mr. Steve Callender, Senior Vice President, Operations for the Eastern Region for El Dorado Resorts, representing the Casino Association of New Jersey; Mr. Waseem Boraie, Vice President of Boraie Development LLC; and Ms. Kris Ohleth,

Senior Manager of Stakeholder Engagement for Ørsted, a sustainable energy company based in Denmark that is developing an offshore wind farm off the coast of Atlantic City.

- Prior to his departure, Special Counsel Jim Johnson provided testimony before the State Assembly Tourism, Gaming and the Arts Committee on November 14, 2019, in Trenton. The Committee is considering the possibility of reviewing and updating the State’s casino regulations. Mr. Johnson’s testimony centered on the gaming data from inter- and intra-state competition, the market outlook, and the benefits of capping the number of available casino licenses in New Jersey.
- Jim Johnson also was present with the ACIPO at the annual conference of the New Jersey State League of Municipalities held in Atlantic City in November 2019. The Office provided a workshop titled “Shared Prosperity for Urban Centers: The Atlantic City Model,” featuring two panel discussions. The first panel addressed the social justice initiatives developed by the Executive Council in response to the recommendations of the Transition Report and highlighted work on public safety, youth development, and community engagement. The second panel focused on the governance and economic development initiatives and shared progress on enhancing City services, municipal employee professional development, and other economic development revitalization efforts.

## BUILDING MUNICIPAL CAPACITY

During this quarter, the credit rating agencies Standard and Poor's ("S&P") and Moody's upgraded the City's bond ratings, citing the substantial work and progress made by the State oversight team toward more stable Atlantic City finances. Moody's upgraded the City's bond rating from B2 to Ba3 and assigned a stable outlook. S&P upgraded the City's general obligation bonds and gave a positive outlook for the City's overall financial performance. The City continued to make improvements in the professionalism, transparency, and morale of City employees. Mayor Marty Small established several special events, such as an Employee of the Month award and an Employee Night Out where city employees patronize a local business. These new events serve to increase employee morale.

- ACIPO worked in collaboration with the Department of Information Technology and the Interim 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 included modules for Open Public Records Act (OPRA) requests, dog licenses, tort claims, parking permits, and contract management. It is anticipated that the completed modules will go online after staff training is complete. Additional municipal departments are on pace to be

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added and the tool should be fully functional by summer 2020.

- The Implementation Plan contemplates rebuilding the capacity of the City to oversee planning and zoning matters. During the fourth quarter, the Director of Planning hired an Assistant Director and is working to fill additional open positions. The Director of Planning is also focused on streamlining processes for application and records management and improving customer relations.

## 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.
- Atlanticare and Stockton University continue to make concerted efforts to develop interest among their employees to reside in Atlantic City.
- The State enlisted the expertise of consultant Bo Kemp of the Faegre Baker Daniels firm to assist with establishing a process for holding a design competition for Bader Field. The target date for launching the competition is early spring. The design competition is a proactive approach led by the State and

City to generate novel ideas based on certain select criteria for developing Atlantic City's largest remaining tract of vacant land.. The end result will give the State and City greater choices to determine the best and highest use of the land.

- Work on revising the City Master Plan is a priority project to occur during the first and second quarters of 2020. The targeted date for completion is early June.
- The New Jersey Economic Development Authority (“NJEDA”) launched a Small Business Services unit designed to provide technical and low-cost financial resources to small businesses. Such additional resources can strengthen existing Atlantic City small businesses as well as entice new businesses into the community. Diversifying the economy is critical to Atlantic City’s long-term economic health and to marketing the City to potential residents.
- New Jersey Department of Community Affairs (“DCA”) Deputy Commissioner Rob Long facilitated a committee comprised of state and local stakeholders to review the issue of property tax relief for Atlantic City homeowners. The committee met weekly and discussed the need for immediate relief and long-term structural changes. Findings and/or recommendations of the committee will be shared with the Governor and Lieutenant Governor.
- The DCA is allocating \$20 million of Community Development Block Grant Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) funds to repair Atlantic City infrastructure damaged

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by Superstorm Sandy. Additionally, the City plans to expend \$3.5 million in road repairs, commencing in 2020. It also received funding for making repairs to the Venice Park and Penrose Canal bridges. Lastly, the City will commence bulkhead repair work in the Chelsea neighborhood.

- 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 announced its plans to apply for the DCA Neighborhood Revitalization Tax Credit funds. Authentic City Partners announced that it will continue revitalizing

the section known as the Orange Loop by adding housing and landscaping.

- To further reduce blight, New Jersey Community Capital is targeting three neighborhoods for in-fill housing. The new Atlantic City Historical Preservation Commission is surveying properties eligible for placement on the National and New Jersey Registers of Historic Places and for associated tax credits.

## JOB TRAINING & EMPLOYMENT

- The New Jersey Casino Control Commission (“CCC”) hosted a meeting to explore possible post-incarceration employment opportunities in the casino industry. Working together with the New Jersey Division of Gaming Enforcement (“DGE”) and the State Legislature, certain individuals

may become eligible for employment in Atlantic City's largest industry. Providing rehabilitative services and support to previously incarcerated individuals helps the individual to become independent and a productive member of society. Re-entry programs can have multiple positive ripple consequences throughout the community in the areas of public health, safety and security, neighborhood vitality, and family stability.

## PUBLIC SAFETY

- Along with increasing the presence and visibility of community police officers through the Neighborhood Coordination Officers (NCO) program, it is important to address the issue of street violence on numerous fronts. To this end, Atlanticare submitted a grant application to the New Jersey Office of the Attorney General for a hospital-based violence intervention program. Under the grant, nine hospitals will be selected for up to \$2 million dollars in grant funding. If selected, Atlanticare will commit \$500,000 in match funds. Under the program, gunshot or stabbing victims will be immediately paired with a caseworker and a Masters-level behavioral health expert for violence intervention counseling. An additional component of the grant involves the hospital linking with local community social service organizations to provide holistic services to support the violence intervention counseling.
- The Citizens Advisory Board held its third public meeting on Wednesday, December 11, 2019.

## YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

The Youth Advisory Board met on several occasions during the fourth quarter. The Board is focused on establishing a master plan for the group. This plan is 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 completed a thorough evaluation of the current issues that exist in the City's recreation program and is prepared to pitch solutions to the Mayor's administration. Going forward into Year 2 of the Implementation Plan, it will seek to collaborate with the City Administration to begin solving some key issues surrounding the city's youth.

## PUBLIC HEALTH

- Atlanticare will offer much needed family planning services within Atlantic City, a service that has been lacking for many years. It is also working with Shoprite to address food insecurity issues, particularly determining how to ensure access to quality food items to the elderly, and other homebound residents not in the vicinity of the planned supermarket in the city.
- Stockton University is reviewing the data collected from two separate health surveys administered by Atlantic County and Atlanticare. It is planning a summit between public health students at Stockton and Atlanticare.

## CIVIC AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The ACIPO continued its community outreach efforts and conducted a town hall for the 3rd and 4th wards on November 13, 2019. The meeting occurred at the Dr. Martin Luther King Complex. State and local elected officials, civic associations, and representatives of interested stakeholders were present to hear from community members. Approximately 50 community members attended and engaged in spirited discussion of challenges and concerns within their respective wards.

