



*State of New Jersey*  
DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
NEW JERSEY STATE PLANNING COMMISSION  
PO Box 820  
TRENTON NJ 08625-0820

CHRIS CHRISTIE  
*Governor*

GERRY SCHARFENBERGER, Ph.D.  
*Director*

KIM GUADAGNO  
*Lieutenant Governor*

**MEMORANDUM TO:** Members, State Planning Commission

**FROM:** Gerry Scharfenberger, Director

**DATE:** April 17, 2012 

**RE:** City of Asbury Park 2012 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 July 11, 2011, the City submitted its third biennial report (distributed previously) detailing the status of its PIA efforts. During this Biennial review no PIA changes were requested, thus this memo serves as a brief summary of the city's progress on PIA items and its continued revitalization in general.

As the biennial report demonstrates, over the past two years, Asbury Park has continued to make progress on its revitalization, with the adoption of The Washington Avenue Redevelopment Plan and the drafting of numerous planning documents.

The City has initiated a number of planning initiatives and fostered a number of projects resulting in continued economic redevelopment within its borders. Examples include partnerships between the City and non-profit affordable housing developers to create new affordable for-sale residential units on previously vacant land. The continued growth of the arts in the City with a new independent theater set to open; a recording, mastering, and music instruction facility under construction; and the planned renovation and the reopening of the historic "Upstage Club", an after-hours coffee house once frequented by some of New Jersey's famed musicians. The City has acquired a number of vacant parcels along Springwood Avenue which have lay fallow for decades and has issued a request for qualifications for redevelopers of this historic thoroughfare. Within the waterfront, the City is once again seeing interest in residential development, with the approval of a twenty-eight unit townhouse development just this year.

The Office for Planning Advocacy and its State agency partners in the Plan Endorsement process have reviewed the biennial report and accompanying submissions 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.

### **Land Use**

Springwood Avenue Redevelopment is progressing well, with a redeveloper agreement signed for the almost 30,000 square foot project. This will include a senior center, commercial space and eight affordable rental units. Financing is in place and the project will be completed sometime in by the Summer of 2012.

Other sections of the Springwood Avenue Redevelopment area are receiving attention, including the creation of a new public park. In addition, the settlement of litigation with a previous redeveloper is allowing the City to take the steps necessary to reassess its previous redevelopment plan.

City bulk and other land use ordinances are continually reviewed for improvement and the modernization process is substantially complete.

*Items Completed to Date: A4*

### **Housing**

Although Asbury Park had never been obligated to complete a Fair Share Plan under the State's affordable housing rules; the Council on Affordable Housing's (COAH) third round "growth share" methodology suggested that Asbury Park might have an obligation. After authorization by the Mayor and Council, Asbury Park completed its Housing Element and Fair Share Plan. While both plans were completed, due to uncertainty over the third round rules, the Fair Share plan has not been submitted for Substantive Certification.

In addition, the Department of Planning and Redevelopment, lead agency for most planning projects in the city, has worked on a number of other housing projects. The Department is spearheading "Operation Westside", a program to redevelop scattered parcels in the STARS redevelopment area into affordable housing.

A Green Building Checklist has been prepared for application to redevelopment in City redevelopment areas. It is being considered for adoption.

Waterfront zoning is being reassessed to potentially allow for investment in property by existing land owners while allowing for a wider variety of uses. A Waterfront Redevelopment Concepts Plan has been prepared by the City to support this effort. The City is working closely and cooperatively with the waterfront redeveloper to address changes that may be necessary to the waterfront plan to reflect current economic realities.

*Items Completed: B1, B2, B3, B5*

### **Transportation**

The City, recognizing that increasing tourism and visitation is important to the City, has worked with Monmouth County to implement "Shorelink Shuttle", three \$1 ride shuttle bus routes to encourage Asbury Park visitation without requiring a car. The routes meet NJ Transit trains as they arrive, and bring visitors back to stations on a regular basis.

The City received a \$180,000 grant for capital improvements to the James J. Howard Transportation Center and work has been completed.

*Items Completed: C11*

### **Infrastructure**

Asbury Park has received \$15 million from the Environmental Infrastructure Trust for infrastructure projects including curbs, sidewalks, ramps and some sanitary sewers and storm drains, allowing the City to add to its previously completed street and infrastructure enhancement work which included wayfinding and other signage. Utility work by New Jersey American and New Jersey Natural Gas is occurring simultaneously.

*Items Completed: D2, D6*

### **Intergovernmental Coordination**

Flowing from the MOU the City Housing Authority signed with the City, the Authority drafted the Washington Avenue Redevelopment Plan. While the area has been a redevelopment area for many years, a redevelopment plan was never drafted for the area. In addition to gathering input from local residents to formulate a vision, the plan proposes numerous strategies and guidance for improving the area.

*Items Completed: F4*

### **Historic Preservation**

A draft Historic Preservation ordinance has been prepared by the City and included in its set of PIA deliverables.

*Items Completed: G1, G7*

### **Economic Development & Additional Items**

While the City is known for its musical tradition, it has an increasingly strong performance and visual arts community. In order to further enhance artistic endeavors in the City, the council recently enacted a street performance ordinance for the regulation of these activities, and in conjunction with that the City implemented a "free culture zone" on the boardwalk, obviating the need for permits in that area.

Mayor and council also created a Public Art Committee to review and consider applications for the creation of public art in the City.

Over the years Asbury Park has received a number of planning awards; since the last biennial review the City received the 2009 Planning Merit Award Honorable Mention for the Asbury Tower Rehabilitation.

### **Recommendation and Conclusions**

The City has completed virtually all specific tasks laid out in the Planning and Implementation Agreement (PIA). Remaining actions consist almost entirely of ONGOING activities to which the City continues to demonstrate a dedication. This dedication is producing results, from the new residential projects occurring throughout the city to the number of shows and events occurring in Asbury Park such as the Bamboozle music festival and the very popular annual July 4th fireworks celebration.

State agencies remain committed to assisting Asbury Park in its efforts to create a better City. As our office moves forward on adopting a new State Plan, the work the City has done will be recognized as changes are made to state planning programs.