

CITY OF LONG BRANCH, NEW JERSEY

*Office of Community and Economic Development
Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report
Program Year 2001*

INTRODUCTION

I. INTRODUCTION

The Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report is an integrated document mandated by the US Department of Housing and Urban Development that combines the former ENTERS document into a singular Program-Year-Ending report. Through the Office of Community and Economic Development the City of Long Branch uses CDBG funds and reports to the HUD Regional Office on the use and expenditures of said funds. The ensuing data will explain the requirements described in the Consolidated Plan regulations at 24 CFR 91.520 and subsequent statutes for the 2001 Consolidated Plan Program Year. This report will analyze project resources, programmatic accomplishments as well as activities implemented during the past Annual Work Plan.

Projects and services administered offer low to moderate groups the maximum benefits that are deemed available through the CDBG program and leveraged resources. This report will also assess, evaluate and comment on the progress and effectiveness of the disbursement and expenditure of Federal funds and how such financial management objectively and successfully meets priority needs and concerns of the community. In addition, recommendations and specific strategies will be included as to how program objectives can be better implemented and utilized in an effort to address community priority needs.

Finally, successful activities will be presented as a demonstration of the intent of the CDBG Program. This continuation of meeting federal mandates and setting reasonable objectives that comply with National Objectives illustrate the projected achievement that benefits the local community as well as the overall Federal Program.

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SOURCE OF FUNDING

II. SOURCE OF FUNDING

The Federal Government through the US Department of Housing and Urban Development is the sole provider of funds used in the Community Development Block Grant Program. The Office of Community and Economic Development (OCED) of the City of Long Branch oversees the administration of funds allocated for programs and services which directly benefit low to moderate income households, groups, individuals and distressed areas. The CDBG Program is operated in compliance with Federal regulations which stipulate that national objectives (i.e. benefiting low to moderate people, removal of blight or emergent community need in the absence of other resources) must be met. In addition, program parameters must satisfy financial rules established by the State of New Jersey, County of Monmouth and City of Long Branch.

Priority needs under the CDBG Program include:

1. Oceanfront Redevelopment and Development Project;
2. Safety and Law Enforcement through Community Policing;
3. Housing Rehabilitation and Housing Production;
4. Economic and Commercial Development;
5. Recreational Parks Development and Improvement Projects;
6. Sidewalk Replacement and Infrastructure Improvement;
7. First-Time Homebuyer Program;
8. Job Training and Family Self-Sufficiency Programs;
9. Community Assistance to various groups including senior citizens;
10. Public Facilities Improvement and Construction Projects;

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OTHER RESOURCES

III. OTHER RESOURCES

A. Regional Contribution Agreement

The Office of Community and Economic Development administers a Regional Contribution Agreement Program (RCA) which originated from the Mount Laurel Fair Housing Decision of 1985. The ruling exists pursuant to Section 12 of the Fair Housing Act of New Jersey P.L. 1985, C.222, N.J.S. 52:27D-301 *et seq.* and to the regulation of the New Jersey Council on Affordable Housing (COAH), N.J.A.C. 5:92-1.1, a municipality may propose to transfer up to one-half of its “fair share” housing obligation to another municipality within its housing region which is willing to accept such units.

Long Branch has such an agreement with the Township of Middletown and is in its fifth year of a five-year agreement to produce (or rehabilitate) 150 units of affordable housing. The program is available to low to moderate income households only and a property must exhibit a minimum of no less than \$12,000 in code violations. A major system problem in a property must be identified after which other minor repairs can be made. A property can receive up to \$17,5000 per unit for up to four units only.

Regional Contribution Agreement Funds total \$437,500 per year.

B. Urban Enterprise Zone

The OCED is responsible for the administration of the NJ State Urban Enterprise Zone Program (UEZ). This project is based upon a sales tax incentive program implemented by the NJ State Commerce and Economic Growth Commission. The program seeks to make improvements in designated commercial zones of urban communities. Initially, merchants must apply for certification with the NJ State UEZ Authority and must be approved to participate in the program. Qualifying merchants are allowed to charge customers 3% sales tax on retail items and taxable goods instead of the current 6% and the funds that are generated from the 3% taxes are collected by the NJ State Division of Taxation. The NJ State UEZ Authority accounts for, manages and disburses collected funds back to the qualified and participating municipalities. Municipalities must submit proposals for use of funds and must comply with the NJ Statute Chapter 27H. Department of Commerce and Economic Development C. Urban enterprise Zones, 52:27H-88, which is enabling legislation that elaborates on the Enterprise Zone assistance fund and projects for public improvement which include those construction projects as well as program services.

Recently the N.J. State UEZ Program was extended for municipalities for another 15 years. This is great news for distressed urban areas.

C. New Jersey State Department of Environmental Protection/Green Acres Program

As a municipality that uses NJ State Green Acres Funding, in the City of Long Branch all open space parcels used for recreation, passive or active, must be inventoried with the NJ State Green Acres Program.

The Office of Community and Economic Development handles such funding which is used for open-space land acquisition, parks development or improvement projects.

This past program year the OCED applied for funds to acquire land for open space/recreational use and a grant/loan for \$1,000,000.

D. Other State Funding

The OCED is responsible for administering funds for other approved projects.

E. Private Funding

Partnering with the private sector is a major component of many projects. The Oceanfront Redevelopment Project calls for some \$300,000,000 dollars and the success of the venture is largely dependent upon the aggregation of private dollars. In addition, the OCED administers other programs such as the UEZ Façade Improvement Project and the Urban Coordinating Council Program, which targets designated areas of distressed communities and seeks to make improvements in these communities. The Redevelopment Authority of the State of New Jersey administers the UCC Program.

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PROGRAMMATIC ACTIVITIES

IV. PROGRAMMATIC ACTIVITIES

A. Housing Production and Rehabilitation

The OCED is the City's lead agency in handling housing production and rehabilitation projects. All assistance is targeted for low to moderate income households. Housing needs reached critical heights as the City's Oceanfront Redevelopment Project is in full swing and has relocated over 200 people living in the Pier Village and Beachfront North Sectors. Additional families require replacement housing.

Because of increased housing demand the OCED has partnered with several developers to produce close to 100 new affordable housing units.

The OCED continues to administer the Mount Laurel Housing Rehabilitation Program which is a part of a Regional Contribution Agreement with Middletown Township. Long Branch receives funding from Middletown to produce (rehabilitate) 150 units of substandard housing. The NJ State Council on Affordable Housing oversees the RCA Program throughout the State of New Jersey.

B. Code Enforcement Activities

Improved code enforcement initiatives implemented by the City of Long Branch have more than justified the funding this department receives from the CDBG Program. In addition to property inspections, the department has helped to institute an aggressive structural demolition project that has impacted properties throughout low to moderate communities. In conjunction with the OCED, Code Enforcement continues to:

1. Identify property violations;
2. Identify structural violations;
3. Promptly respond to complaints;
4. Investigate homes and rental units and issue Certificates of Occupancy.
5. Refer needy property owners to OCED financial assistance programs;
6. Issue summonses;
7. Handle litigation cases;
8. Hold regular staff and departmental meetings;
9. Identify and process demolitions'
10. Constantly upgrade programs and evaluate them regularly to the OCED.

Over 2,060 properties were inspected the past program year and over 1,000 Certificates of Occupancy were issues in low to moderate areas.

C. Oceanfront Redevelopment Project

For the last eight (8) years, the City Administration has worked on redeveloping some 12 acres of underutilized oceanfront property. Each and every year of this endeavor progress has been made. In the past year the City successfully worked with private developers as a new beach club was completed. In addition, a developer was selected to construct some three hundred (300) new units of housing. Because the developer has applied for funding through the NJ State Mortgage and Finance Agency, a specific percentage of the new units must be affordable units and this bodes well for an already short supply of available and affordable housing units in the City of Long Branch. The Developer that was selected is charged with completing the proposal of the Beachfront North redevelopment sector. This project will see new housing, new commercial as well as new infrastructure components.

The sector of the Pier Village has also been awarded. This sector features major commercial development, residential development and the likelihood of a new pier to be constructed with state-of the art commodities such as a performing arts theater and ferry commuter service that targets points south such as Atlantic City, New Jersey. The City will break ground on this project in April, 2002.

The Beachfront South Sector is presently being negotiated and Hotel Campus and Broadway Gateway have been given a great deal of attention also. The entire project calls for over \$300 million of public and private funding.

D. Economic Development

The OCED is responsible for commercial, economic and business development as well as residential development and together they make up community development. Through the Urban Enterprise Zone Program the OCED has been better able to track business development and job creation numbers specifically with under-employed and unemployed residents. The number of businesses that participate in the UEZ Program represents about 25% of retail businesses operating in low to moderate zones. Businesses that participate in the UEZ Program are given tax incentives and other benefits to promote revenues, create jobs and enhance city services.

Economic and industrial development objectives are merged with UEZ objectives so that there is no duplication of effort and so that cumulative results can be tabulated, monitored and improved.

E. Public Works Projects

During the past CDBG Program Year, funds were spent on various infrastructure projects ranging from sidewalk repair and replacement, tree removal, new curbing, installation of conduit and electrical service in low/mod commercial areas. The downtown area of Broadway received most of the focus because the need is greatest in this area. Sidewalk repair and the installation of pavers were done on Memorial Drive between Broadway and Garfield. This area is contiguous to an elementary school and sidewalk replacement was essential to the merchants and young children alike. Completing this project added a large measure of safety as well as physical attractiveness to the area that had not any improvements in more than thirty years. Improvements were also done on Third Avenue, Sairs Avenue and Liberty Street with new curbing and tree removal. Municipal-owned parking lots will be upgraded in 2002, with funds coming from the UEZ and CDBG Programs. These improvements will continue and will receive high priority for the next five years. Business corridors such as Broadway, Third Avenue, Liberty Street, Second Avenue, Long Branch Avenue, Belmont Avenue, Fourth Avenue, Fifth and South Fifth Avenues, Rockwell Avenue, Morris Avenue, West Street and a few others all need major improvements and CDBG Funds matched with UEZ and Capital funds will bring about those improvements that are vital to business stability, economic development, job creation and retention and community viability.

Conrail Property and Community Gardens

The Conrail Property Improvement Project is one that set a precedent for other seemingly hard-to-do projects that had stymied the City Administration for years. This former abandoned, strip of right-of-way was a source of trouble and an area of neglect. In addition, it served as a conduit for criminals and transients as contiguous homes and properties were often vandalized and burglarized. There were several cases reported where people were even assaulted and had purses snatched. Offenders often used the right-of-way to elude the police as the corridor's course spanned more than ten inner-city blocks, reaching a length of nearly one mile. The many streets, driveways, cul-de-sacs, alleyways and properties that interfaced perpendicularly to the right-of-way, made the area an ideal escape route for any petty thief or criminal. The community cried out for a remedy to be implemented and in response, the OCED and the Administration with the support of the Mayor and City Council was able to acquire the property and initiated changes to correct the problems.

Consolidated Railway Corporation sold the property to the City for one dollar and the OCED presented a plan of improvement starting in 1994 that continues today. The property had to be cleaned, fenced and top soil brought in, in order to effect a well-manicured and improved property. In

addition, flower gardens and vegetable gardens were added. The project started in the area of Seventh Avenue and improvements changed the negative perception of the area overnight. Each year more of the right-of-way is improved upon as the plan calls for the clearing of trees, brush and growth, fencing and landscaping. Walkways, security lighting, a flagpole and monuments will be added as funds allow.

The continuance of the community Gardens Project is very likely with a specific objective to shift the focus to the permanent improvement of garden sites. Incessant vandalism plagued the project somewhat during the past Program Years so a modification of the plan is necessary. Garden areas will be fenced, signage and irrigation systems installed and high-yielding, very prolific produce planted to maximize the benefit of the areas and the harvest. Community garden sites remain and Liberty Street and Monmouth Avenue, at Sairs Avenue and Avery Street and Seventh Avenue. New Gardens are planned for Jackson Woods (flowers only) and Adam “Bucky” James community Center (4-H Club).

G. Assistance to Community Facilities

There are various public agencies in the City of Long Branch that offer services and benefits to residents that help to meet OCED and CDBG Program objectives. During the times of public hearings involving the concerned citizens of the community, the many needs of these facilities are solicited and prioritized. With the help of a CDBG Advisory Committee, recommendations for funding are submitted and allocations are set aside for eligible agency needs.

The list of agencies which receives funding includes:

1. Long Branch Free Public Library
2. Long Branch Senior Center
3. Adam “Bucky” James Community Center

Providing help to the library was instrumental in meeting educational needs by allowing groups better access to computer literacy. Other improvements helped to upgrade heating and central air. In addition, the security was enhanced by installing a book theft alarm system and reading space was increased by adding partitions to build a new classroom.

Educational, recreational cultural and social needs were met by various low/mod groups at Adam “Bucky” James Community Center. The OCED shares programs with the Long Branch Housing Authority which has an entire gamut of services of its own and the Community Center is the venue that hosts the programs. Partnering with the LBHA in delivering the programs and services has proved to be an extremely positive and efficacious

tactical move appreciated by the many residents who participate in the programs and services.

H. Property Improvements

Approximately four years ago the OCED brainstormed with the Department of Code and the Administration to forge a plan that would improve the appearance of streets, neighborhoods and communities. A deteriorating housing stock left many eyesores and this contributed to many of the problems that were made explicitly in the public forums held.

Through the CDBG Program an allocation for a more aggressive demolition program was established and with the help of the Health Department, Municipal Court, Fire , Planning, Building and the City Legal Departments, clearance was made to implement a more expeditious and less bureaucratic Demolition Program. The problem was the fact that many structures were privately owned and the amount of time it took to identify the property, contact the owner, file the complaint, prosecute the owner and finally raze the eyesore was, at best, time consuming and highly ineffective.

The cooperation of the Court system to allow for the property owner's response while expediting the case by obtaining the proper authorization and permits has made the project one of the most effective in addressing spot blight and new housing. Once a lot has been cleared, a lien is attached and in most cases the deed to the property is either given to the City, sold to a private entity or scheduled for foreclosure after the required two-year period. This makes for a quick turn-around in removing unsafe, dangerous structures and to make way for new housing.

I. Park Development Projects

As part of the overall community development plan, a major component is the inclusion of developing recreational facilities and play areas. The benefits that a community can gain by paying attention to this component is very far reaching and will have great significance in stabilizing communities.

The essential growth of the young is very dependent on recreational and social pastimes, so it is important to engage children in productive and wholesome activities that positively impact and mold their lifestyles.

To this end the OCED is very committed to the development of recreational parks and playgrounds. The project that stands out most and has been the paramount endeavor for the last 15 years is the Jerry Morgan Memorial Park Replacement Project.

In 1983 Jerry Morgan Park was scheduled for improvements. As a matter of due diligence, samplings of the area were taken and tests revealed contaminants in the soil. The park was closed immediately and the City of Long Branch was charged with finding a replacement site to construct the park.

In 1995 a replacement site was located, but hurdles had to be cleared with the Department of Environmental Protection and the State of New Jersey Green Acres Program. Permission to finally go forward with construction was granted in June of 1999. In April of 2002, there will be a ribbon-cutting ceremony to open the newly constructed Jerry Morgan Memorial Park.

The OCED has been the lead agency with this project and the plans call for the construction of a 1.2 million dollar park right in the middle of the City's low and moderate community. The park features a softball field, basketball court, fitness trail, tennis courts, horse shoe pits, gazebo, bocce ball courts, bleachers, restrooms, toddlers lot, playground area, senior citizen passive recreation area and many, many more amenities. The area encompasses nearly three acres of outdoor recreation space. This facility is a state-of-the-art construction piece with activities planned for all people and all age groups of the community.

J. Recreation Activities

As a supplement to the recreation program in Long Branch, the OCED annually supports projects and services administered by the Recreation Department. Support is given to programs such as college field trips for disadvantaged youth, summer field trips to fairs and camps, youth sports leagues such as Little League and basketball, youth award ceremonies, field days, special tournament events and other recreation-related activities. This assistance has been essential in meeting objectives to provide recreation to low/mod groups.

K. Public Service Projects

Financial assistance is provided to those services that rated a high priority level according to studies conducted and surveys completed during Citizen's Participation Meetings. Crime Prevention, Fire Prevention, Job Training and Community Assistance (for miscellaneous projects) all received priority ratings. The following summations will depict the highlights of these activities.

1. Crime Prevention

The CDBG Program allocated \$60,000 toward Community Policing and crime prevention the past year. This project is extremely important as the perception that Long Branch is unsafe has hin-

dered economic development and growth for many years. With a new focus on enforcing the law coupled with community policing strategies, perception is turning around, the economy is improving and crime has been drastically reduced. All categories of crimes committed show a reduction in crime from 1994 to the present. The CDBG Program allows for foot and bicycle patrols in commercial and high-crime areas and also brings the force up to maximum manpower. Crime statistics are provided in the “Exhibits” section.

2. *Fire Prevention*

Fire safety and prevention are commonly very poignant concerns because the potential loss of lives or property can be devastating. In meeting the objective to have “0” loss of lives and an emergency response vehicle ready at all times to handle fires in low/mod areas for the past year, a fire truck was purchased and is garaged on Union Avenue, which is located in a low/mod zone in the City.

The Fire Department responded to 1,586 calls in 2001. Of these, 48 were fires that required investigations. Roughly 1/3 or 530 alarms occurred in HUD zones. There were no fire-related fatalities in 2001.

In addition, the fire department and its volunteers do regular seminars with senior groups and others, warning about the dangers of fire.

3. *Job Training*

Since the implementation of welfare reform laws, the need for job training is more important than ever before, especially for the underprivileged. Troubled youth and single-parent females are at a distinct disadvantage for finding gainful employment, a job that pays well enough to support a home, car and family. Since welfare assistance will no longer be an option, the need to train young people and to help endow them with life survival skills must be made part of all community development programs. The OCED has implemented such a plan with the Long Branch Housing Authority. The ACCEPT (Adult Child Care Empowerment Program Training) seeks to identify those in need and to give them formal class-room type training and teaching and to subsequently place them in a work environment upon completion of the training which is a 10 to 12 week program (three or four hours per session). This program has been very successful the last three years, with 90% of those who start completing the program and approximately 80% being

placed in an occupational capacity. The past program year saw a change in the ACCEPT Program and Housing Authority administration. However, a new Economic Development Program Director and a new Executive Director have pledged to put the ACCEPT Program back on track.

4. *Community Assistance*

The philosophy associated with this category was derived from the submission of proposals from various groups requesting assistance for causes that offered benefits to low/mod community groups. The gamut included projects for single mothers with children, cultural events and parades, group outings and trips, outreach and food programs, community meetings and other causes. Assistance was provided for the following groups:

- a) Public Library activities;
- b) ZEYBRAH, Inc.;
- c) Holy Trinity Basketball League;
- d) All Nations Street Festival;
- e) Activities at Adam “Bucky” James Community Center;
- f) Long Branch Recreation/Senior Center activities;
- g) Dolphin Swim Club.

I. Miscellaneous Items

1. General Administration

Part of the mission of the OCED is to offer and oversee projects, programs and services that create maximum benefit to low and moderate households within the City of Long Branch, NJ. In order to efficiently carry out this mission, the CDBG Program and OCED have to their credit the positions of Director Jacob L. Jones, Assistant Director of Industrial Development Barry Stein, Program Analyst Elisabeth Cook, and Housing Coordinator Ken Gaines. The cooperation of Mayor Adam Schneider, the City Council, Administration, all City Departments, outside agencies and others help to make the CDBG Program what is and all are committed to making it work better for the low and moderate residents who live in the community.

2. Program Income

The Office of Community and Economic Development received income in the form of repayment obligations as a result of a discontinued business loan program (Project Restore). The City received approximately \$5,200 from several outstanding loans. In addition, reimbursement for demolitions totaled \$10,750. The

OCED has also rectified problems previously encountered with the accounting and expenditure of Program Income. At the end of the past program year a total of some \$15,950 in repayments were accumulated in a dedicated account. The total amount will be used for the first completed project. The expenditure of Program Income will continue to be input into IDIS and future receipts of any repayments, regardless of the amount, will appear in the reimbursement request. With this procedure, the OCED is in compliance with CDBG regulations and should have no further complications with the disbursement of Program Income.

3. Monitoring

Federal Regulations stipulate that CDBG Entitlement grantees must monitor subrecipients and relevant allocations in order to ensure federal compliance with the expenditure of program funds. National Objectives must be met and equal and fair opportunities must be affirmatively utilized for procurement of federal projects. The Office of Community and Economic Development closely monitors all subrecipients and/or agencies receiving financial assistance, and the OCED staff regularly visits sites and projects that are ongoing. Any and all reports that are done during a visit are communicated with the subrecipient and written reports are made available as well.

The OCED will be responsible for enforcing and monitoring procedures relevant to the expenditure of federal funds for low and moderate groups to ensure that:

- Needed housing assistance and supportive services are available;
- The use of all funds is consistent with the priority needs tables contained in the consolidated Plan;
- Recipients are in compliance with applicable regulations regarding the disbursement of federal funds;
- Record keeping and financial management systems are provided to maintain documentation on program compliance and disbursement of federal funds in accordance with applicable law;
- The information submitted to HUD is correct and complete.

Key components of the monitoring procedure should include the following or an approved equivalent:

Grant Application Proposal

Grant Application/Proposal

Recipients should be required to submit a project schedule and budget. The Grant Agreement is the contract specifying the activities to be completed and the conditions which must be met in order to carry out the activities. The Agreement should also specify the project liaison. Communication and consultation between the OCED staff and the liaison should occur on a regular basis.

Record Keeping

OCED staff should monitor to ensure that proper accounts, fiscal records and supporting documentation, bank statements and other pertinent data are established, maintained and made available by the receiving agency.

On-Site Visitations

Regular on-site visits are conducted. Additional visits may include technical assistance, project pre-construction conferences, interim monitoring and close-out monitoring. The close-out monitoring should include a review of financial records, cash disbursements and an evaluation of program objectives. Such visits should be scheduled in writing and followed up with a letter to the agency. The letter should elaborate on the results of the visit and specify concerns or recommendations regarding the project.

Site visits from the past year included the Long Branch Senior Center, Long Branch Housing Authority, ZEYBRAH Cultural Parade, the Dolphin Swim Club, Long Branch Recreation Programs and all funded projects.

4. Affordable Housing

The City of Long Branch is committed to providing affordable housing to low to moderate groups who are in need. This philosophy has been apparent since the late 1930's and 40's when the concept of public housing was embraced by City officials. Recognizing the shortage of affordable units the City supported the construction of some seven hundred (700) units of public housing through the years.

Current needs illustrate that a shortage of affordable units has become a national as well as local problem. Through Regional Contribution Agreements, the City of Long Branch has eradicated code violations in over 300 low to moderate households over a five-year period. Another 100 units will be addressed within the next two years. The present administration supports affordable housing initiatives and through the OCED has partnered with non-profits and for-profit corporations to produce 26 new units in the last two years, is currently working on another 18 scatter-site units and is proposing to build another 48 additional units since property acquisition has been achieved. These activities represent new housing units in Long Branch that have reached unprecedented numbers. In addition, special attention has been given to Special Needs groups and the city has collaborated with the Monmouth County Board of Social Services to help identify available units and financial assistance for those with special needs.

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ASSESSMENTS AND OTHER ACTIONS

V. ASSESSMENTS AND OTHER ACTIONS

Assessment of Three to Five Year Goals and Objectives

The Five-Year Consolidated Plan defined priority community needs such as crime prevention, housing rehabilitation, housing production, parks development, job training, health care, recreation and commercial development. Annual Work Plans have been designed to specifically respond to these needs and to address concerns discussed in Citizens' Participation Forums. Substantial progress has been made in most of these categories with the help of Federal Funds. Objectives have been met in housing programs, crime prevention, code enforcement, economic development activities, recreation activities, job training/child care initiatives and other areas. Without the assistance of CDBG dollars, Monmouth Medical Center built a health care facility on Broadway and this has been a tremendous help to low and moderate groups residing in this locality.

The completion of Jerry Morgan Memorial Park, improvements to the health care facility and renewed partnerships with developers and the Long Branch Housing Authority reveal a very optimistic picture for the successful achievement of short and long range objectives.

Continuum of Care

The homeless needs of residents within the City have been addressed with non-federal funds. For the most part, emergency or transitional housing is handled by the County of Monmouth or the State of New Jersey. The Office of Community and Economic Development handles emergency shelter needs with an allocation from local funds and in some instances funds that are reimbursed to the City from the New Jersey Department of Community Affairs. Shelter is provided on a temporary basis for any emergent need declared by the City's health, Code, Police or Administrative Offices. Fire victims are usually excluded because other resources are usually available for such emergencies. People who require more permanent housing are referred to the County.

Other Actions

The Office of Community and Economic Development has, throughout the past year, made an extra effort to meet with diverse groups throughout Long Branch. Meetings were held with local housing authority officials to discuss various concerns such as job training, employment opportunities, housing rehabilitation projects, first-time homebuyer grants, parks development projects, abating lead-base paint hazards, testing of suspected lead-base paint chips in Section Eight housing, bilingual proposals concerning economic development activities, public education opportunities, housing improvements, fair housing and other important community topics. Community participation, in addition, was the driving force behind the formatting of the Consolidated Action Plan 2001. These topics, addressed in

the Annual Work Program for 2001, will be evaluated via this CAPER 2001 report.

Affordable Housing

The OCED continues to be the lead agency of the City to partner with non-profits and for-profits to provide new affordable housing. The OCED also continued to offer several housing rehabilitation programs focusing on the abatement of existing code violations particularly to major systems in homes. Property improvement strategies were implemented as a result of canvassing and researching problems in local neighborhoods. Resident groups met with staff of OCED and many of the problems have been addressed through current OCED Programs. Where once vacant and unkempt lots existed, new homes and improved walkways and sidewalks now adorn neighborhood streets. Some twenty-six (26) new affordable housing units were completed the past program year and another 66 new units have been proposed to construct.

Eliminate Barriers to Affordable Housing

The OCED, among other things, is charged with providing information to the community about Fair Housing opportunities and eliminating existing barriers to the same. The OCED distributes Fair Housing information and periodically covers the subject in public forums.

The OCED investigated several complaints made the past program and was able to resolve each one. The OCED remains committed to informing the public of its Fair Housing opportunities and to removing barriers when and where possible within the Long Branch community.

Evaluate and Reduce Lead-Base Paint Hazards

In all of the OCED housing rehabilitation programs a vital component of the application process is the dissemination of pertinent literature admonishing and advising the potential hazards of lead-base paint. Brochures are sent to every applicant discussing lead-base paint as well as possible funding sources for the reduction of lead paint in the home. The OCED has partnered with the City's Health Department and Public Housing Authority to dovetail efforts with testing lead in private Section Eight housing, to screen children and to provide information to parents and property owners about safeguarding their families and property from the hazards of lead-base paint.

The OCED through its partnership with the local housing authority, tests residential units for lead-base paint in collaboration with the City's Health Department.

Reduce the Number of People Below the Poverty Level

OCED supported job training and self-sufficiency programs in collaboration with the Long Branch Housing Authority and the Long Branch Housing Authority De-

partment of Community Development. Eliminating poverty starts with the proper training of youth and proper preparation of young people to do well in school and other training facilities. The OCED supports the proposal to build a community/youth activity center in partnership with local fire departments. Activities such as after-school tutoring and mentoring will be implemented to assist in this endeavor. The OCED will also support training for adults and work with individuals in a local Job Bank Association (an association that provides temporary work and on-the-job training for unemployed and the underemployed resident).

The OCED supported economic development activities such as making improvements in distressed commercial zones to improve business and to create jobs. These endeavors proved to be effective in lowering unemployment and helping to raise median household income. In addition, the OCED provides a list of available jobs to those in need as information is submitted to the office. The OCED joined with the local housing authority to monitor the placement of people in working environments and offered assistance in abating social problems such as transportation, child care, healthcare and other concerns that traditionally prevent individuals from promptly and regularly getting to work.

Improve Public Housing and Resident Initiatives

The OCED regularly meets with the Executive Director, Board of Commissioners and residents of the local housing authority. Topics such as housing improvement, drug prevention, crime reduction, tenant patrols, job training, family self-sufficiency, resident involvement, summer jobs and training, lead-base paint screening, testing and abatement as well as other concerns were discussed. The City has instituted career opportunity sessions and job fairs to encourage those who are motivated to seek gainful employment and meaningful careers. The OCED advocates “grassroots” planning and troubleshooting to motivate residents, make them feel a part of the process and effect those changes that will comprehensively improve the quality of life for all local housing authority tenants.

Overcome Gaps in Institutional Structures and Enhance Coordination

The OCED has collaborated with local educational and health institutions to facilitate the delivery of better services for the benefit of low to moderate groups. Monmouth University has implemented a volunteer program that gives young students an opportunity to work in the Long Branch community to assist with clean-up projects, childcare projects, tutoring and mentoring programs, planting community gardens, beautification projects, implementing recreational programs and much more. The OCED meets regularly with Brookdale Community College as the OCED Director serves on the Advisory Board to discuss educational needs and social needs that are provided for residents to the Long Branch community. The Director serves on boards with the Chamber of Commerce, Community Bank, Monmouth-Ocean Development Council, Long Branch Housing Authority Advisory Board, National Association of Housing Rehabilitation Officials, Downtown New Jersey, Long Branch Tomorrow and other boards to help define and re-

solve problems and needs of the local community. These collaborative efforts have helped to overcome gaps in institutional structures and have enhanced coordination between all involved groups.

Ensure Compliance with Program and Comprehensive Planning Requirements.

Particular emphasis is placed on community participation in determining program objectives and meeting National Objectives of the CDBG Program. Planning for the Annual Work Program requires many hours and frequent meetings with low to moderate groups and all proposals must meet CDBG National Objectives. Monitoring and evaluating the performance of the program is done regularly with adjustments being made as necessary. The CAPER will illustrate some of the results of Community Planning and compliance with National Objectives.

It is understood that with the CDBG Program sundry services and projects are implemented far more so than any other City funding source short of the Capital Operating Budget. While the Annual Work Plan is the closest thing to a community “elixir” or “panacea” it will never be all things to all people in need. There are under-served needs in the City that, while difficult, must be addressed. The City advocates and supports Special Needs housing provided by the County and municipalities such as Neptune, where referrals are made for people with HIV. Housing production, which is the construction of new affordable housing units, is another such program. The OCED has partnered with a non-profit and a private developer with the support of the Mayor and City Council to deed vacant city-owned lots to the project. The Housing and Mortgage Finance Agency of the State of New Jersey provides a subsidy to the developer and quality homes are built and sold at affordable prices. Six such units have already been built and twenty-eight more units are scheduled to be constructed.

The OCED also monitors and handles complaints relative to furthering affirmative fair housing policies. The OCED also assists with preparing grants for open space preservation, emergency relocations, lead-base paint information, community policing strategies with the local housing authority, beautification projects (free seeds for flowers and vegetables), training for emergency home repairs, Redevelopment relocations for families (Oceanfront Redevelopment Project), job referral service to the unemployed or underemployed and help with other community concerns. A major property improvement initiative was introduced and implemented by the OCED and has had a major impact on the Long Branch community.

Citizens’ Comments

Feedback from City residents and groups who share in the CDBG has been extremely positive. The programs receive overwhelming support, however, some concerns were raised regarding CDBG funds supporting the police, code enforcement and staff positions. The concerns were addressed and where possible,

allocations for public service projects were reduced and redirected such that they provided the greatest public benefit. Issues regarding buying homes, credit worthiness, property improvement, assistance to improve historic buildings, job training and commercial development have been some of the most talked about topics. The Five-Year Consolidated 2000 plan addresses all of these subjects, while Annual Work Programs directly address the needs.

The OCED staff meets with members of the City of Long Branch Portuguese Club and other ethnic groups. Plans were discussed regarding the involvement of members of the Portuguese Community in community activities. It was agreed that there should be greater ethnic representation in public forums as well as participating in many City events such as the All Nations Street Festival (which takes place in the summer), Community Gardens, ZEYBRAH multi-cultural activities, Columbus Day Parade and other events. In addition, many members of the Portuguese and Hispanic communities have taken advantage of housing rehabilitation funds. Other Portuguese and Hispanic community leaders who were contacted and participated in the City forums and other meetings include Isaiah Calderone, Administrator, Brookdale Community College, Reverend Carmen Rosario of the Prince of Peace Hispanic Church, Gylmar Simoes, president of the Portuguese Club and editor of "Latino USA", a local Latino newspaper, and many other Portuguese and Hispanic residents who avidly support the CDBG Program. These groups and individuals took part in planning the 2002 CDBG Work Program.

Description and Nature of Change in Program Objectives

Program objectives remained the same for OCED and the City of Long Branch relative to the CDBG Annual Work Plan. Redevelopment, Housing Production, Infrastructure Improvement, Community Policing, Fire Prevention, Housing Rehabilitation, Economic Development all remain high priorities and will continue to be addressed by the OCED and the City of Long Branch. However, a greater emphasis has been placed on Oceanfront Redevelopment and Economic Development.

Annual Work Plan Implementation

The Annual Work Plan was implemented and carried out according to objectives defined in the Five-Year Consolidated Plan. In addition, all certifications were followed, all listed resources were obtained and utilized. When necessary, certifications of consistency for HUD programs were pursued in a fair and impartial manner and in no way did any planned activity hinder the implementation of the Consolidated Plan.

Demolition, Acquisition and Rehabilitation Activities

Activities relative to use of CDBG funds caused no displacement of any person or family. All demolitions were done to abandoned structures and rehabilitation was done through RCA (Regional Contribution Agreement) funds. Future projects,

should they call for resident displacement, will be handled in compliance with Federal regulations including the Uniform Relocation Act (URA) or Section 104(d) of the 1974 Community Development Act.

Program income generated from the CDBG Program is explained under Programmatic Activities, #2 Program Income.

Job Creation

No federal dollars were spent for the creation of low to moderate jobs, however, through the Urban Enterprise Zone Program, which is administered by the OCED, job creation and retention as well as business relocations are key components of the program. To the best of knowledge of the OCED staff, jobs made available for low to moderate residents must be offered and filled by merchants who participate in the UEZ Program. The OCED in conjunction with the State Department of Commerce and Economic Growth keeps records of the hiring and all other jobs that are created by the program. Special skill jobs are also announced and training is provided by the State of New Jersey and some local businesses.

The Assistant Director of Industrial Development meets regularly with merchants and business groups and closely monitors and reports on job retention and job creation activities. Such activity is reported in IDIS.

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SELF EVALUATION

VI. SELF EVALUATION

The challenge to meet specific objectives and goals as determined by the needs expressed in the Annual Work Plan is one that is dutifully accepted. Overall, it is felt that most of the needs were met particularly with the Oceanfront Redevelopment Project and Jerry Morgan Memorial Park.

Housing needs continue to abound and the OCED has responded by adding a housing rehabilitation allocation component to the 2002 CDBG Budget. This should make up for the successfully completed Wall Township Regional Contribution Agreement Project that recorded 150 completed units of housing, and the nearly completed Middletown Township RCA (135 units).

The OCED will continue to survey the senior residents to make their needs a vital part of the planning process and this same procedure will be applied to youth groups and low/mod groups. The OCED will increase its efforts to include local housing authority residents in programs and to improve outreach to other disadvantaged ethnic groups and individuals who populate the community. The OCED will endeavor to better communicate to achieve a broader and more comprehensive base for assistance to those in need.

Economic development is extremely vital and more must be done to ensure that job creation and retention in Long Branch will show greater numbers. Economic viability is the theme of 2002 and the CDBG Program must reflect this in its planning. In addition, the infrastructure projects will continue along with public service initiatives such as crime and fire prevention. Public works projects will also be done as they address the need for parks development, new housing, clean open space areas and improved facilities.

We are happy with the overall results of the current program but far from being satisfied with what can be done. We realize that while we may need to work harder, we absolutely must work smarter. This is the pledge of the OCED, and to this end we enter the 21st century optimistically. With the continued support of the local Administration, the County, State of New Jersey and HUD, we will bring about a better Long Branch specifically for those who need it most.

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THE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT PROGRAM 2001 REPORT

The Community Development Block Grant Program Year 2001 Report

Relationship of Expenditures to Priority Needs – The Annual Work Program was administered according to objectives established for the same. Priority needs were met and projects that were not necessarily completed did gain significant progress.

Redevelopment of underutilized areas on the oceanfront and areas around the Broadway corridor will receive more attention as these areas represent some 262 acres of low/mod zones in desperate need of improvement.

Low/Moderate Income Benefit – 100 percent of federal funds used to operate and administer the CDBG Program offered benefits to low/mod groups, low/mod individuals or low/mod areas in Long Branch.

Amendments and Other Changes to Programs –

Completion of Planned Actions to:

Pursue All Resources Identified in the Plan, Certify Consistency for Local Applicants for HUD Funds and Support Consolidated Plan Goals – There were no major deviations from the Year 27 Annual Work Plan or the Five-Year Consolidated Plan. The Program followed stated objectives with very minor changes. Any and all changes remained in compliance with Federal Objectives. The majority of the planned actions were completed and leveraged resources were obtained and used according to plan. The Office of Community and Economic Development did insist, receive and signed off on certifications presented by applicants who demonstrated consistency with National Objectives and stated objectives in the Five-Year Consolidated Plan.

National Objective Failures – The program illustrated compliance with National Objectives.

Actions Taken to Avoid Displacement – CDBG funds were not used for acquisition of land in a designated redevelopment zone, nor were funds used for construction in a redevelopment zone. There was no displacement as a result of use of CDBG funds.

Compliance with Uniform Relocation Act (URA) – This act did not apply this past program year.

If Jobs Were Filled with Over-Income People-

What Was Done to Give Low/Moderate Income First Priority? List Job Titles Created/Obtained and Those Made Available to Low/Mods. Describe training for Low/Moderate Income Persons – There were no jobs filled with over-income people. Through the Urban Enterprise Zone Program administered with State funds, job creation and job retention numbers are monitored. A report of this program and other statistics relative to low/mod jobs and training is available in the OCED. The Assistant Director of Industrial Development will also produce a report in the Annual Work Program.

For Limited Clientele Activities, If Any: The Nature of The Group That Allows Assumption of More Than 51% Low/Mod – Under this category, CDBG funds were used to accommodate a youth group on a cultural/educational tour.

Rehabilitation Accomplishments and Costs:
Units Completed for Each Type of Program;
CDBG Expenditures for Rehabilitation;
Other Funds Invested;

Delivery Costs – The OCED, through a Regional Contribution Agreement with the Township of Middletown, spent some \$500,000 on housing rehabilitation the past Program Year. CDBG funds were not used for housing rehabilitation. There were no other funds invested nor were there any delivery costs.

Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy Area:

Progress Against Established Benchmarks – The City of Long Branch has several major revitalization strategies; the Oceanfront Redevelopment Plan, the Broadway Corridor Revitalization and Redevelopment Plan, the UEZ Five-Year Strategy and the UCC (Urban Coordinating Council) Plan. All of these plans designate a specific area in need of improvement and propose to develop housing, infrastructure, commercial, recreational, educational, social and cultural components. The Five-Year Consolidated Plan targets low/mod assistance but also dovetails with the other strategies. Considerable progress has been made with all of the plans and in addition to implementation, much construction is underway.

CDBG Financial Summary Attachments:

Reconciliation of Cash Balances;

Program Income, Adjustments and Receivables – These documents are included in this report.