

SUSTAINABILITY IS THE CRUX OF CAPE MAY'S FUTURE

The City of Cape May is known as “The Nation’s Oldest Seashore Resort” and has been designated as a National Historic Landmark district by the U. S. Department of the Interior. With a permanent population of 3,800 residents, the City plays host to 45,000 vacationers during the summer weekends. This popularity is caused by an economic rejuvenation over the past 40 years, primarily due to the incorporation of the arts, history, culture, recreation, and sustainability into our community’s development. Coupled with a model program of a public-private partnership, Cape May has seen the progressive growth of our annual economy into a 10.5 months season, as opposed to the standard 12-week season in most seashore resorts. In this arrangement, City-owned property is leased on a long-term basis for one dollar per year with eight non-profit organizations responsible for the renovations, operations, and maintenance.

COMMITMENT TO SUSTAINABILITY

Cape May has intertwined our long-range planning agenda with our long-term financial and capital planning programs to create a comprehensive and systematic sustainability approach for our City over the next two decades. Cape May is poised to attain Sustainable Jersey Program Certification at the Silver Level in the fall of 2011. This accomplishment recognizes the educational and practical projects spearheaded by the City’s Environmental Commission over the past 20 years. Recently, solar panels have been installed on the City’s Public Works and Beach Patrol Headquarters buildings and are projected to be erected on the roof of the new, 20,000 square foot Convention Hall that is now under construction on the beachfront. Scheduled to open on Memorial Day weekend of 2012, our new Convention Hall is designed to the Silver LEEDS level, and represents a vital economic development initiative that will expand Cape May’s niche as a premier tourist destination. This \$10.5 million project, which is being funded by Cape May taxpayers and the CRDA, will serve as a community center but will offer the opportunity for conferences, small conventions, and performing arts events.

The City’s Green Team has positioned the City to receive public and private grant funding for upcoming sustainability projects. An energy audit of all City-owned buildings and Cape May Elementary School has been performed. Consequently, the Public Works building and City Hall have been retrofitted with energy efficient lighting and HVAC system. During 2010 and 2011, the City is already realizing \$70,000 in grants and \$105,000 in rebates for installation of energy conservation measures. The Green Team has recently submitted a grant application for a demonstration project at the Cape May Elementary School to install a small wind turbine to reduce the energy costs of the school, provide a new educational component for the school’s growing sustainability curriculum, and extend the City’s use of alternative energy.

WATER SUPPLY AND CONSERVATION

During the period from 1995 to 1998, City Council planned and financed the installation of a reverse osmosis, two million gallons per day, water desalination plant accompanied by two new wells drilled into the brackish 800 foot Atlantic City sands aquifer. This capital project was financed totally by grants and low-interest loans. As the only desalination plant in New Jersey, our facility provides 2.0 million gallons of our maximum 3.4 million gallon daily capacity. This facility has moved Cape May's status from a water dependent utility to an independent, regional water supplier.

City Council is now conducting a feasibility study to determine the comprehensive status of the 700,000-gallon Madison Avenue Water Tank. Primarily, City Council is reviewing whether the tank should be restored or replaced based upon projected future needs. The City has already achieved a \$2.1 million grant and low-interest funding agreement with USDA.

Cape May is installing water meters with encoded registers and radio frequency automatic meter reading and leak detection for all 3,889 accounts. Currently, the completion rate is 94%. This initiative reduces labor costs since City employees will not be reassigned for one week on a quarterly basis to conduct the on-site reading of individual meters. Also, the leak detection feature should ensure more timely identification of unknown leaks and thus conserve water, especially in seasonally occupied homes.

OPEN SPACE AND PARKS SYSTEM

The City collectively strives to implement our long-range strategies to achieve our community-based vision and goals that are emphasized in the City's Master Plan and the Vision Statement phase of the Plan Endorsement process. Therefore, the City is in the process of acquiring and preserving 78 acres of pristine environmental wetlands in East Cape May as a wildlife sanctuary. Under a settlement agreement, the City of Cape May will become an owner and managing partner of the 78-acre wildlife sanctuary at a cost of \$4.4 million that will be covered totally by grants.

Through the long-range planning process and coordinated capital planning, the City has now coordinated funding through a grant and the City's capital fund for phased upgrades and improvements to Rotary Park, which is adjacent to our three-block long Washington Street Pedestrian Mall in the downtown historic area. The focus is on transforming Rotary Park into an even more attractive, diversified, and accommodating to host a wider array of community-oriented cultural, artistic, historical, recreational, and social events.

The City has recently been awarded a grant from the NJDEP Green Acres Program for property acquisition at the Lafayette Street Open Space project that is located along the main entranceway to Cape May near the downtown historic area. Through a variety of public-private partnerships, the objective is to unite, for programming purposes, the 38 acres of open space into a year round, comprehensive active and passive recreation complex with educational and environmental amenities. The Rotary Park and Lafayette

Street Open Space projects have been planned by our community members of all ages during open public meetings as part of the City's partnership agreement with the Temple University School of Environmental Design during the past two years. During 2011, our Shade Tree Commission received a special State award for maintaining Cape May as a "Tree City U.S.A." for 30 consecutive years.

INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENTS

Over a three- year cycle, Cape May has successfully attained \$1.2 million in N.J. Small Cities CDBG grant funds to ensure compliance with ADA requirements. Primary focus has been on providing full access and related amenities on our Promenade and beaches for our local and visiting disabled and elderly citizens.

During the past two years, the City has continued substantial progress on necessary USDA-funded sanitary sewer improvements and street reconstruction on 14 separate roadways. By utilizing USDA grant and low-interest loan funds, and then coupling these monies with dollars from the City's general capital and water and sewer utility capital programs, the City has been able to replace aging infrastructure and roadways with state-of-the-art technology and materials in the most cost-effective manner with significantly lesser impact on our taxpayers and ratepayers.

CONCLUSION

The accomplishments achieved and the challenges that have been overcome are possible only by the cooperation, dedication, commitment, and hard work of the residents and business people who comprise our Cape May community. Their involvement, input, direction, and work ethic are the key ingredients that give Cape May the quality of life that motivates all of us to live and/or work in this National Historic Landmark City and encourages visitors to seek Cape May as a premier tourism destination.

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