

ANNUAL REPORT - 1982-1983

MUNICIPAL DEVELOPMENT OFFICE---William M. Kuehn, Jr., Coordinator

Municipal Development Committee, Vincent J. Loffredo, Chairman

Over the past fiscal year, this standing Committee of the Common Council dealt with various matters in its continuing role as a clearinghouse for Council action. The following highlights are indicative of the Committee's activities:

- . During the final construction stages of the Ferry/Green Street parking area, the Committee authorized minor revisions to the parking lot layout and certain change orders to complete the program.
- . The Committee and its staff analyzed the present parking system in the parking arcade, Columbus Plaza and Washington/Broad Street parking areas. Following a temporary parking program in late 1982, the Municipal Development Committee after meeting with Chamber of Commerce officials and the Parking Authority, authorized a new parking system and program for the Columbus Plaza and Parking Arcade areas to include the reinstallation of parking booths with electrical systems, lighting and time clocks. The Municipal Development Committee views these changes as ones which can and should be modified as conditions warrant in the future.
- . The Municipal Development Committee approved plans of the Middlesex Realty Holding Company for Parcel MDC-1 and recommended to the Common Council formal designation of the developer with construction to begin in early 1984.

- . The Committee advertised the North End Meetinghouse for developer interest and secured a reuse appraisal to assist in evaluating responses. After reviewing plans and schedules, the Committee recommended developer designation of St. John's Square Associates for the restoration of the North End Meetinghouse project together with the Kabatznick building, the latter being purchased privately with Municipal Development staff assistance.
- . The Committee continued monitoring the Danforth Shop restoration. During the year, construction included excavation and installation of a foundation and certain storm water improvements. The Committee continues to seek funding for the completion of the restoration.
- . The Committee authorized the installation of new trash receptacles along Main Street between College and Washington Streets. These were installed by the Public Works Department with monies from the Economic Development Fund.
- . In June, 1983, the Committee began to review a proposed demolition ordinance for historic buildings.
- . The Committee viewed, with success, the completion of the first year's Youth Conservation Corps program which resulted in landscaping improvements along Route 9 and in the Kennedy Tract. For its second year, the Committee arranged for partial implementation of the Storch Report at Veteran's Park. The Committee also approved a logo for the Youth Conservation Corps program.
- . The Committee resolved a request to purchase uneconomic remnants of City owned property to adjacent land owners.

Inland Wetlands And Water Courses Agency, J. Stephen Murphy, Chairman

The Inland Wetlands and Water Courses Agency is responsible with administering Public Act 155 of the 1972 General Assembly controlling development along streams and those areas of the community designated by soil type as wetlands.

During the last fiscal year, the Agency met on eight occasions approving nine permits. The Agency also initiated legal action on two property owners who illegally filled and altered wetlands. The City Attorney's office aided in this effort.

In administrative actions, the Agency, in December, 1982, adopted revisions to its regulations as recommended by a consultant. These recommendations resulted from the remapping of the wetlands and the development of a storm drainage plan for the City. Additionally, the Agency reviewed and recommended to the Common Council a revised Memorandum of Understanding to be signed with the Soil Conservation Service providing for technical assistance in various developmental matters.

Harbor Improvement Agency, Edward J. Dzialo, Jr., Chairman

Several projects initiated during the previous fiscal year with the State of Connecticut bore fruit in 1982-1983. One is the change in exit signage along Route 9 from "William Street" to one which reads "deKoven Drive/Harbor Area". Also, after negotiating a lease with the State of Connecticut for a strip of land along the eastern embankment of Route 9, the Public Works Department constructed a thirty space parking lot to be used for patrons to Harborpark.

The Common Council conferred formal developer designation upon Frank Maratta, Jr. for the conversion of the old Yacht Club building to a restaurant. After signing a lease in November, 1982, the developer worked continuously in the restoration project with an anticipated opening in the early fall of 1983.

Harborpark continues to be the site of major events such as the Eighth Annual Head of the Connecticut Regatta (October 10, 1982), Showcase X (June 19, 1983) and 3 on the River (July 7, 8 and 9, 1983). The latter event brought an estimated 11,000 spectators to Harborpark for an outdoor concert and fireworks.

As a result of funding made available under the Federal Emergency Jobs Bill, the City applied for and received monies for landscaping improvements to Harborpark and for a strip of land in the vicinity of the Roth Well Fields. These construction projects will be undertaken during the fall of 1983.

Vacant Buildings Study Committee, Vincent J. Loffredo, Chairman

The Vacant Buildings Study Committee was created by action of the Common Council and later charged with the responsibility for preparing plans and specifications for the upgrading of the Stillman Municipal Annex. Faced with the high cost estimates for the upgrading of the Stillman facility, the Committee looked to other alternatives for municipal space. The Committee voted to recommend to the Common Council that the City not spend additional money in converting Stillman for municipal annex purposes. In November, 1982, the Vacant Buildings Study Committee, after exhaustive analysis of availability for alternate space, voted to recommend the discontinuance of Stillman as a municipal annex and to market the building for private development. With that, the Vacant Buildings Study Committee authorized the preparation of a developer's kit. On June 9, 1983, the Committee heard presentations from

two prospective developers and unanimously voted to recommend that the proposal submitted by Rak Realty Inc. be accepted by the Common Council in order that the former Stillman School could be renovated to twenty-eight apartment units. City functions would be moved to the now vacated Spencer School on Westfield Street.

The Committee studied a reuse facility analysis concerning Woodrow Wilson Middle School and Eckersley Hall by soliciting preliminary developer interest and architectural advice. It was determined that the structures are adaptive for reuse purposes and will be marketed in 1984 for developer interest.

Plans and specifications for the removal of the Hall House were completed by staff. Action was deferred until such time that development of the track is resolved by the Board of Education.

Economic Development Task Force, Ralph H. Shaw II, Chairman

Early in the fiscal year, the Task Force reviewed and approved a scope of services for the retention of consulting assistance in studying the developmental potential of the block bounded by College, Broad, Court and Main Streets. After inviting eleven consulting firms to submit proposals, a recommendation was made and accepted to hire a consortium of consultants headed by Halcyon Ltd. of Hartford. Through the winter months, the consultants met with the Task Force monthly and prepared a series of development alternatives for the block. Finally, the consultant prepared a developers' kit which was offered for developer interest in the Spring of 1983. For a variety of reasons, there was no developer interest at that time. The Task Force decided to reconsider the development of the block at a later date.

In the course of studying the College/Court area, the consultants advised the Task Force that UDAG eligibility under the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development was a key financial tool. The City of Middletown re-applied for UDAG eligibility and received approval thus insuring the potential eligibility of future economic development projects.

Following the defeat of the Richards Brook Industrial Area referendum in November, 1982, the Task Force conducted an inventory and considered alternatives to future industrial areas for businesses seeking up to five acre tracts. Reconsideration for industrial development is a continuing priority of the Task Force in keeping with its Economic Development Strategies report.

The Task Force, in May, 1983, reviewed staff recommendations for improvements to the North End including: provision of new off-street parking facilities to accommodate anticipated new residential development; and, neighborhood aesthetics.

Citizens Advisory Committee, Mary Schmidt, Chairman

The Citizens Advisory Committee is responsible for making recommendations to the Mayor and Common Council on matters concerning the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development funded Community Development Block Grant program. Highlights of the past year are as follows:

- . The City of Middletown filed with the Connecticut Department of Housing an application for \$1.0 Million Dollars over two years for a comprehensive program, mostly residential rehabilitation activities. The City of Middletown scored the highest among all the competitors for comprehensive project approval by being awarded 907 points out of a possible 1,000.

- . Received approval from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development for an amendment to the 1978 Small Cities Grant for the disposition of a parcel at the corner of Green and Main Streets for developer purposes.
- . Solicited bank participation in a lump sum draw program and upon approval of the Common Council, signed an agreement with the Liberty Bank for Savings for monies received under the 1982 and 1983 Small Cities Program.
- . Signed contracts with Equity in Housing, Inc. , the Greater Middletown Community Corporation and the Housing Authority for administering various aspects of the 1982 Small Cities Grant.
- . With approval from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, an amendment to the 1982 Small Cities Grant will allow for \$65,000 to be reprogrammed to the 634 Main Street project.
- . Recommended to the Mayor and the Common Council that the Greater Middletown Preservation Trust be brought into a contractual arrangement in order to assist both the City and developers in the use of the Mixed Use Program and the Economic Recovery Tax Act of 1981.
- . Retained appraisers and consultants to begin the appraisal process for the 634 Main Street project.
- . As a result of a prior contract with the Greater Middletown Preservation Trust to prepare an application for the Main Street Historic District, the State Historical Commission, on March 17, 1983, recommended to the Department of Interior the creation of a Main Street Historic District. The District became effective on June 30, 1983. That action became the

triggering mechanism for several major restoration projects waiting in the wings, specifically, the Caulkins Auto building and the North End Meetinghouse/Kabatznick buildings.

Housing Task Force, Howard Byrd, Chairman

The Housing Task Force was created by action of the Common Council in September of 1982 to study the housing needs of the community and to pay particular attention to the condition of housing and affordability of units in the North End. The Task Force first met on October 28, 1982 and agreed that it was necessary for consulting assistance. With an appropriation provided by the Common Council, the staff of the Midstate Regional Planning Agency was retained to assist the Task Force in its studies. The Task Force created from its membership a series of subcommittees to study financial/government opportunities; housing opportunities; and, the North End.

The subcommittees spent the early part of 1983 developing their committee reports while the consultant prepared an overview of housing opportunities and problems on a city-wide basis. On May 23, 1983, the Housing Task Force conducted a public hearing on the draft report. Following modifications, a final report will be offered for discussion with the governing body during the 1983-1984 fiscal year. It is intended that a plan be adopted to serve as a guide for dealing with housing problems for a wide spectrum of Middletown's population.