

ANNUAL REPORT

MUNICIPAL DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

1988 - 1989

STAFF (as of 6/30/89)

William M. Kuehn, Jr., Director

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

The Municipal Development Office serves as staff to a wide range of committees and agencies. The Office traces its origins to the early 1970's when it served as staff to the Municipal Development Committee. By 1975, Harbor Improvement, Inland Wetlands and Watercourses Agency and the Community Development Block Grant Programs had been added to the staff responsibilities. Additional staff assignments including, from time to time short-term committee functions, have resulted in the increase of the staff to five (5) full-time members. The following are highlights of activities of some of the major permanent committee assignments.

MUNICIPAL DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE - Stephen T. Gionfriddo, Chairman

This standing committee of the Common Council dealt with a variety of matters in its role as a clearinghouse for Council Action and a development arm of the City. The Committee considered actions for the implementation on ongoing special projects in the City and introduced five wide-ranging new concepts affecting its quality of life in areas ranging from Downtown promotion and development, to open space conservation and urban forestry, to affordable housing.

On behalf of ongoing projects, the Committee:

- . issued requests for proposals for the adaptive reuse of the Danforth Pewter Shop; parcel MDC-2 and the Washington/Broad Street parking lot;
- . considered proposals for the Golf Course;

- . finished demolition and updated estimates for Green-Rapallo parking lot and municipal office expansion;
- . considered requests for the disposition and management of several parcels of City owned land.

Several new concepts were introduced to the City through the Municipal Development Committee which will be pursued next year. The Committee:

- . suggested and supported the creation of a Local Housing Partnership as permitted under PA 88-305 of the Connecticut General Statutes in order to facilitate the provision of more affordable housing in Middletown;
- . introduced the concept and, with the Park & Recreation and Conservation Commissions supported the creation of a \$5 million dollar fund for the acquisition of Open Spaces to be funded by a referendum in November;
- . introduced the concept of Urban Forestry to Middletown and supported the City's application to the State to become the designated municipality for their pilot project;
- . with the Chamber of Commerce and CBB, supported the idea of having facilitated workshops on Downtown Promotion;
- . worked with representatives from the State Departments of Public Works and Judicial toward the development of a combined courthouse in the Downtown CBD;
- . under the Summer Youth Conservation Corps program, oversaw clearing of brush and debris at the Scionti property, painting of the Middletown Boathouse and installation of stone dust at the Snow School playing field.

HARBOR IMPROVEMENT AGENCY - Edward J. Dzialo, Jr., Co-Chairman

Sebastian Timbro, Co-Chairman

The Agency, in cooperation with other City departments, oversees and makes recommendations to the Common Council on all projects which impact the Riverfront. In the past year, the Agency worked with the Army Corps of Engineers and DEP in the planning for streambank protection projects along River Road at Eastern Drive and at the wellfields; Wesleyan University on the design for the expansion of their boathouse; and, Northeast Utilities and DOT on the continued beautification of Route 9 in conjunction with plans to widen the southbound lanes. In addition, the Agency made recommendations to DEP concerning the speed limit on the River; considered a Harbor Management Plan; facilitated the creation of the Flood and Erosion Control Board; and allocated monies from the General Fund toward the local share of the Army Corps project.

The Agency also amended the Riverfront Development Plan to eliminate commercial or residential development on the State's 30 acre parcel, pursued acquisition of key parcels of land in conformance with the plan, and prepared and received a grant from the Connecticut River Trust for future improvements along the riverfront.

INLAND WETLANDS AND WATERCOURSES AGENCY - Anthony Fazzino, Chairman

The Inland Wetlands and Watercourses Agency is responsible for the administration of Public Act 155 of the 1972 General Assembly, as amended. That legislation requires controlling activities in regulated soils (wetlands) and along streams and rivers (watercourses). The Agency regularly meets on

the first Wednesday of each month.

During the last fiscal year, the Agency met on thirteen (13) occasions and issued twenty-one (21) approvals and four (4) denials. Additionally, the Agency dealt with ten (10) cease and desist issues and conducted several reviews of proposals in neighboring communities or State sponsored work.

When the Connecticut General Assembly adopted major amendments to the Wetlands Law in 1987, it signaled a renewed mandate to communities to revise their regulations and step up enforcement. To that end, the Agency spent considerable time during the fiscal year in reviewing, hearing and amending its regulations.

The pace of development application activity diminished somewhat since the high point of the mid-1980's. However, the increasing unavailability of good development property requires diligence in protecting the wetlands and watercourses if they are to be part of the City's open space system as Middletown enters the 21st Century.

CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE - William Pillarella, Chairman

The Citizens Advisory Committee advises the Mayor and Common Council on matters concerning the City's Community Development Block Grant Program which is funded annually by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. The City receives its annual level of funding notification from HUD in early Spring; subsequently, the Citizens Advisory Committee holds a public hearing which affords citizens the opportunity to comment on the proposed use of

funds. The hearing also allows organizations the opportunity to apply for funds for projects which will principally benefit individuals/families of low and moderate incomes.

The City received a total of \$815,000 for the 1988 and 1989 Community Development Block Grant Program years. The 1988 and 1989 grant funds were used to undertake fourteen different activities including the continuation of the City's Residential Rehabilitation Loan Program. The accomplishments achieved during the year under the auspices of the Citizens Advisory Committee included:

- . The enclosure of walkways at the Sbona Tower elderly housing complex.
- . The rehabilitation of 106 housing units accomplished through the issuance of low interest loans to property owners under the City's Mixed Use and Residential Rehabilitation Loan Programs.
- . The continuation of funding to the Community Health Center and St. Vincent DePaul Place resulting in the delivery of health care and shelter services to 863 lower income individuals.
- . The completion of the Shepherd Home Transitional Living Facility renovations project in November 1988. The Shepherd Home residence offers single rooms, meals and support service for up to 70 homeless individuals.

MIDDLETOWN REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY - Henry S. Novicki, Chairman

To administer a wide variety of urban renewal activities, the Agency enjoys the Redevelopment powers authorized by the Connecticut General Statutes.

During the past fiscal year, the Agency's activities involved: remaining parcels to be developed in both the Center Street and Metro South Urban Renewal Projects; the on-going Middlesex Mutual Assurance Company Development Project (MMA); and, early planning for a North End redevelopment effort. The following are highlights of the year's activities:

- . Concerning the Center Street Project, the Agency signed a two year extension with the current owners of the parcel on the southwest corner of Court Street and deKoven Drive for the construction of a 27,000 square foot office building atop 100 parking spaces on two levels.
- . During the year, the Agency witnessed the construction and opening of the River's Edge condominium project of 102 units between Metro Lane and Union Street. At a special meeting of May 18, 1989, the Agency issued a Certificate of Completion to the owner.
- . After a lengthy design process, conceptual approval for the former County Lane area was agreed to by principals of MMA, Farmers & Mechanics Savings Bank, Connecticut Bank & Trust, Liberty Bank and the Redevelopment Agency.
- . Following a series of land transfers on October 11, 1988, MMA controlled the property necessary to begin the construction of the 1,100 space multi-level parking garage. During the Fall months of 1988: an archaeologist was brought on-site to investigate the former Danforth properties; the former Polish Falcon's Hall on Court Street was demolished; and, the William Atkins House on College Street was razed. County Lane was formally closed in December, 1988 and garage excavation begun in early 1989.
- . The "Topping Out Ceremony" of the twelve (12) story MMA Corporate Center was held on March 30, 1988. At the close of the fiscal year, the Agency

was advised the Corporate Center would be ready for occupancy by MMA during the Fall of 1989.

Recognizing the need for a planned approach to redevelopment and renewal activities in the North End, the Redevelopment Agency and the City's administration solicited proposals from consulting firms. A subcommittee of the Agency interviewed consultants and recommended the hiring of DeCarlo & Doll of Hamden as its consultant. At year's end, the City/Consultant contracts were being prepared to allow project initiation in July, 1989. The project boundaries are: Washington Street, on the south; Main Street and North Main Street on the west; and, the Mattabasset and Connecticut Rivers on the north and east.

In June, 1989, the Mayor met with the Redevelopment Agency to encourage a Government Center concept for providing a new combined courthouse facility, expansion to City Hall, a new Police Station and additional off-street parking.

SHEPHERD HOME BUILDING COMMITTEE - William O. Roberts, Chairman

In September 1987, the Mayor, with the consent of the Common Council, established this nine member Committee to oversee the rehabilitation of the Shepherd Home building located on the grounds of the Connecticut Valley Hospital. The City signed a renewable lease with the State Department of Mental Health in March 1987 for a minimum six year use of the building at the cost of \$1.00 per year with the provision the structure be used as a transitional housing facility. The City of Middletown and the Greater Middletown Community Corporation secured grants totalling \$1.1 Million Dollars from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and the State

Department of Housing to renovate the structure.

Carrying out its mission to ensure the opening of the facility in Fall 1988, the Committee witnessed the completion of the renovations project and opening of the Shepherd Home Transitional Living Facility in November 1988.

The Shepherd Home, managed by the Mercy Housing and Shelter Corporation, has since afforded 111 homeless adults the opportunity to live in a residence which provides single rooms, meals and support services.

In March 1989, the Common Council appointed a nine member body, the Shepherd Home Liaison Committee, to oversee the Mercy Housing and Shelter Corporation's management of the residence.

NORTH END TASK FORCE - William Corvo, Chairman

The North End Task Force was created in 1987 to review the situation in the North End and make recommendations to the Common Council for its improvement. Subsequent to the delivery of its comprehensive report in June of 1988, the Task Force has remained active working with both the Council and Redevelopment Agency toward the implementation of their recommendations. The Task Force acts as liaison to several commissions and continues to meet with the Council, DeCarlo & Doll (the consultants to the MRA), and various private groups interested in the North End.

MIDDLETOWN HOUSING PARTNERSHIP - Sebastian J. Garafalo, Chairman

The Middletown Housing Partnership was established by City ordinance in August 1988 to assess the City's local housing needs with the objective of making housing affordable and available to every City household.

The impetus for the creation of the Partnership, was the passing of the Connecticut Housing Partnership (Public Act No. 88-305) Program, which authorizes the issuance of increased State funding to towns and cities which meet the provisions of the program and ultimately increase the number of affordable housing units within their community.

In May 1989, the Partnership submitted a housing report to the State of Connecticut, Department of Housing which included the identification of a local need to increase the number of affordable rental units and provide financial assistance to first time home buyers.

In the coming year, the Partnership will work on implementation of projects which meet better the housing opportunities available to our City's low and moderate income households.

URBAN FORESTRY BOARD - J. Stanley Watson, Chairman

"Urban Forestry" was a new term to emerge in 1988-89. Concerned with the plight of urban trees, staggering statistics on their losses, and relatively low priority given their care in most of Connecticut communities, the State of Connecticut, through the DEP Bureau of Forestry and UCONN Extension Service,

set out to look for a municipality whose forest and management practices were "typical" in which to conduct a pilot project. Middletown, with the support of the Mayor, Council, and several commissions, applied for, and was designated the recipient of this honor in April. With State funds and matching in-kind contributions from the City, Middletown embarked on a project to develop a computerized inventory and management plan for its urban forest, and to have "The Forest City" qualify for status as a "Tree City USA" by Arbor Day 1991. An ad hoc Board to see the City through the project was appointed in May and met three times this year to define their goals, objectives and time lines, and to start the process of hiring a consulting arborist/forester to complete the inventory and management plan.