Moving Forward
Lt. Gov. Sheila Oliver’s plans for DCA & Municipalities

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Alarm Bells Are Ringing for Property Tax Relief

They produce balanced budgets while operating under a 2% budget cap, all while responding to economic upheavals, natural disasters, reduced revenues, and evolving needs.

And that is why alarm bells blared when we learned that the State is considering the use of budget language to change the Energy Tax Receipts Property Tax Relief Fund (ETR) from a dedicated General Fund source of local revenues, which the State can only reduce at some risk to its own revenues, to another Property Tax Relief Fund aid program that the state can cut in future years to meet some other priority.

Previously, the State has done this to dedicated municipal revenues and it resulted in the above noted loss of $555 million municipal property tax relief dollars.

In 1995, not by the passage of a new statute, but instead by inserting new language in the budget, the State created the Consolidated Municipal Property Tax Relief Aid (CMPTRA) program. CMPTRA combined 12 pre-existing municipal property tax relief funding programs. Some, but not all of those, were revenue-replacement programs. They replaced revenues that had been collected locally. And some, but not all, had been funded through the General Fund.

In 1995, the League testified at State budget hearings, warning State budget-makers that because of the change, future continued municipal property tax relief funding could be placed in jeopardy.

Sadly, this warning proved prophetic. In that first year, CMPTRA was funded at $755 million. In 2001, CMPTRA’s best year, the fund provided $818.5 million. By 2010, due to cuts and the steady shift of property tax relief dollars from CMPTRA to the ETR, funding was down to $264.7 million. And this year’s budget proposal calls for the distribution of $263.3 million through CMPTRA. A $555 million decrease in municipal property tax relief in 18 years.

We cannot let the Energy Tax Receipts Property Tax Relief Fund (ETR) suffer the same fate. Like in 1995, the League has raised this alarm in budget testimony. The State Treasurer has met with League leadership, has listened, and understands these issues. Your voice will help if you contact your Legislative delegation and remind them municipal property tax relief has declined while the issue remains a voter priority.

At the League Town Crier Blog you will find a detailed analysis of the creation, evolution, and decline of CMPTRA from dedicated municipal property tax relief to a shrinking discretionary program threatened by State funding priorities other than municipal property tax relief.

For more, read this month’s Legislative Update on page 60.
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Creative Placemaking
Lincoln Park Coast Cultural District becomes a destination for residents and visitors

By Anthony Smith, Executive Director, Lincoln Park Coast Cultural District

On the heels of the City of Newark’s 350th Anniversary Celebration, Lincoln Park Coast Cultural District celebrated its 15th year as a non-profit organization. This milestone served as capstone on what I call “Lincoln Park 1.0” which was established to lead the development of the historic Lincoln Park neighborhood, along the southern end of Broad Street in downtown Newark.

What made our mission and vision distinct from other Community Development Corporations was creative-placemaking. We understood that brick and mortar without arts, culture, access to fresh food, educational institutions, places to worship, and play does not constitute a community. You need all of these things in addition to a local economy so that residents can work, buy, and circulate the dollar in their community.

**Filling the streets**

Through creative-placemaking, we attracted families and the “artsy” crowd to move into our 102 units of housing. During our aggressive building phase, we created green job training and employment opportunities for a diverse population and incorporated sustainable development standards and practices through the requirements of USGBC LEED construction. As the population grew, we created the Lincoln Park Music Festival.

Emilio Panasci of Lincoln Park Coast Cultural District (l) with Chef Sean Hassan.
A leading tourism attraction, the annual three-day weekend boasts a lineup of A-listers, legends and emerging artists from worlds of gospel to jazz, house music, R&B, and hip hop. Luke James, Adeva, Cissy Houston, Brand Nubian, Bebe Winans, Vivian Green, V. Bozeman, QTip, Ice T, Big Daddy Kane, Joe Clausell, KRS One, Fat Joe, Naughty By Nature, Lords of the Underground, Rah Digga, and more have all performed during past seasons for Lincoln Park Music Festival. The Lincoln Park Music Festival is home to one of the largest and longest-running outdoor house music dance parties in the region. On festival Saturday–House Music Day–friendly and safe crowds can swell to 29,000.

Healthy village
Our Sustainable Health and Wellness Village showcases sustainable products and services of local and regional businesses and organizations in addition to health screenings and education sessions in partnership with local hospitals and health care providers. Included is the popular Senior Village, which caters to the senior population. A trip to the festival’s South side of the park and Kids Zone Village is always rocking with activities for children and families including skateboarding, basketball, hockey clinic, literacy area, and back-to-school readiness.

We are on two-year plan to evolve this grant and sponsorship dependent arts and culture program to a self-sustaining enterprise that will drive more tourism to the City of Newark and create long-lasting social and economic impact.

2.0 phase
Now as we enter our “Lincoln Park 2.0” phase, we have sharpened our mission and vision and returned to our roots as creative economy builders. LPCCD’s mission has always stood on the premise that arts and culture is a pathway out of poverty. The Americans For the Arts most recent Arts & Economic
Prosperity 5 (AEP5) study indicates that the City of Newark’s nonprofit arts and culture industry generates $178,328,298 in annual economic activity, which supports 4,963 jobs and enables arts non-profits and institutions to impact 2.5 million arts & culture event attendees annually.

Through arts and culture, and now by extension multimedia, we create and support the creative economy that connects an intergenerational population with career pathways for current and future employment opportunities.

For example, during Newark Celebration 350, we re-launched our Music Speaks citywide humanities program. Vis-à-vis the festival, the Music Speaks program is a free lecture, music, and multimedia arts series that celebrates the City’s place as a creative resource for residents and visitors alike.

Touching every ward in the City, programming includes music performances, DJ events, author readings, and discussions of literary work, dance events, and

“LPCCD’s mission has always stood on the premise that arts and culture is a pathway out of poverty.”
visual arts displays, such as photography and outdoor installations. Under the Music Speaks: Rock The Shot programming, we address the use of technology in art, specifically digital photography, to engage residents with professional photographers introduced populations to photography that might not otherwise be able to afford lessons or their first digital camera. Most importantly, the exposure to our professional working photography instructors shows residents a direct link to photography as a possible career option.

Similarly, in 2017 LPCCD produced its first-ever documentary short film entitled Lincoln Park Music Speaks: A Great Day In New Jersey Hip Hop, which chronicles the behind the scenes gathering of nearly 50 hip hop artists to shoot a historic photo at the Newark Museum. This program allowed youth and young adults from Essex County College to gain hands on experience working in filmed/digital media, where they can apply classroom learning and create pathways to careers in media production or just enhance and enrich their personal and professional lives.

**Sustainable arts and culture ecosystem**

While we take pride in our accomplishments and have had some successes, our survival depends on the support of like-minded funders and corporate partners especially during our “Lincoln Park 2.0” phase in alignment with the city-wide vision of Hire. Buy. Live./ Newark 2020. An investment in LPCCD helps us hire more year round part-time staff, college students and local consultants throughout the arts, build a community that can sustain small business along southern end of Broad Street, and continue in physically developing a sustainable arts and culture ecosystem. Lincoln Park Coast Cultural District is more than a festival, we are sustainable community builders.

We’ve touched nearly 750,000 people in 15 years as creative placemakers and are looking forward to the next 15 years.

Don’t forget to join us at the 13th Annual Lincoln Park Music Festival, spanning two weekends from July 27-August 4. Please bookmark the new website LincolnParkMusicFestival.com and follow us on our new festival IG @LincolnParkMusicFestival and twitter @LPCCD to stay abreast of upcoming festival season events and community engagement opportunities. For sponsorship, contact our festival director Kim J. Ford at kford@brand-whisperer.com or for vendor opportunities contact Mozell Baker at mozell@lpccd.org or call 973-242-4144.

Anthony Smith, Executive Director, Lincoln Park Coast Cultural District, was part of the original 1999 charrette, or planning session, during his tenure as legislative aide to Central Ward Councilwoman Gayle Chaneyfield Jenkins. He officially joined Lincoln Park Coast Cultural District in 2006 as Director of Community Engagement and in 2014 became Executive Director.

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**Growing a Neighborhood**

LPCCD’s mission and vision of building a sustainable arts & culture district in the historic Lincoln Park neighborhood continues to actualize in partnership Project U.S.E. (Urban Suburban Environments) and the most recent iteration of the Lincoln Park Community Garden, inclusive of a Literacy Garden where community members will be able to borrow books, and sit in a beautiful green space to read.

The Lincoln Park Community Garden started in 2008 and launched in Summer 2010 behind the Lincoln Park Church Façade and now resides at West Kinney Street and Nevada Street in Lincoln Park.

Most recently, Lincoln Park Coast Cultural District’s Community Garden was recently among the 10 recipients of the second annual Whole Foods’ Whole Cities Foundation Fresh, Healthy Food Access grant program. In December 2017, 28 groups applied for the second annual Whole Cities Foundation Fresh, Healthy Food Access grant and in March 2018, only 10 organizations were awarded grants.
From its earliest days, moving around and through New Jersey has been a critical part of the state’s DNA. Stagecoaches passed through its communities, then trains, and then the suburban commuters’ cars and trucks and SUVs journeyed from homes to offices in the state and in neighboring states. Keeping communities moving through attractive spaces continues to be a worthwhile pursuit today.

In this issue, we look at how communities such as Newark’s Lincoln Park have transformed themselves starting at street level. By enacting creative-placemaking efforts to get folks onto the streets and sidewalks and to stay out and mix with their neighbors, events and infrastructure have combined to reinvigorate this area as arts are used as a tool to tempt residents and visitors alike.

The NJ Department of Agriculture shares insights and tips on starting Farmers Markets—a way to get people out and about in their neighborhoods, opting for healthy foods and healthy lifestyles.

Yet for neighborhoods to truly succeed, there needs to be more than fun, there needs to be safety. In a report from Rutgers University’s Alan M. Voorhees Transportation Center, they show that even with infrastructure in place, people will hesitate to walk to their destinations if they fear high crime rates—and they share policy implications to consider to make your town safer and streets welcoming to all.

Also in this issue, we kickoff coverage of the 103rd Annual League Conference with the June Preview. We’ll share a preliminary schedule, exhibitors list, and useful tips to get your planning started. As we enter our summer hiatus, we hope you stay in touch with us through our redesigned website, www.njslom.org, and reach out to let us know what you’d like to read about—or write about—this fall, by emailing your ideas to aspiezio@njslom.org.

Time Capsule: Street Scenes

Report Cites Need for Design to Promote Community Beauty
In October 1958, NJ Municipalities published a report about the growing concern of community design, noting, "Municipal governments throughout the country are being urged to adopt a new planning device called a ‘community design plan’ to help improve the looks of their communities."

AD LOOK: Sign of the Times
An ad from the October 1958 issue shows off the interest in new and improved street signage for style and substance in communities.

New Jersey’s Crumbling Infrastructure
In the April 1983 issue of NJ Municipalities, the state of streets was a serious source of concern as Alan J. Karcher, Speaker, NJ General Assembly noted, “2,676 lane miles—or 26%—of the state’s highway lane miles require immediate repair.” A crumbling bridge support is shown above.

Fight for the Transportation Trust Fund
In the June 2005 issue, Plainsboro Mayor and (now) League Past President Peter Cantu wrote in defense of the Transportation Trust Fund, noting, “we can and we must rally our local residents to join and support the battle. This means organizing public education programs on what transportation means to everyone in our daily lives—from economic and environmental health, to the safety of our families, and indeed, to our overall quality of life.”
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Mildred C. Crump, Council President, City of Newark

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