

The Chelsea Insider

CONNECTING THE NEIGHBORHOOD TO PUBLIC SAFETY

March 2024 Edition | Serving residents of Atlantic City from Texas Avenue to Annapolis Avenue



The former Masonic Temple, vacant since 2000, owned by the Trust of Mark Nicoletti, of King of Prussia, PA.



2639 Pacific Avenue, vacant for years, owned by Spiro Trupos, of Atlantic City, NJ.



106 Albion Place, and the vacant property next door, sold in 2021 by CRDA to Liberty Hudson Holdings, of Rutherford, NJ.

IN THIS EDITION...

How do you feel when you walk or drive Pacific Avenue near California, or around the former Atlantic Club or Masonic Temple? These Chelsea locations are dominated by vacant, neglected properties. At every Chelsea EDC public input session since January 2020, residents said they want streets and lots to be free of litter, owners of run-down properties to take responsibility, and to live in a culture of neighborhood pride.

“Blight” is a word used to describe neglected properties. To be clear, Chelsea is not blighted. Rather, there are blighted properties in Chelsea. The effects are devastating: increased crime such as vandalism, trespassing, and drug dealing and use; increased public works and police expenses; and reduced property values.

How does blight happen? Decades of money and resources leaving the city (disinvestment), inconsistent code enforcement, and difficulty getting loans

to develop are the main reasons. As blight increases, responsible homeowners move, often replaced with out-of-town landlords. According to a February 5, 2023 Press of Atlantic City article, “Atlantic City has New Jersey’s fourth highest percentage of residential housing owned by corporations and institutions.” These corporations are not available to respond to frequent problems such as litter, graffiti, and trespassing.

In this edition, the Chelsea Insider explores blight and shares recent success stories. We explain the cooperative efforts by Chelsea EDC and government agencies, and suggest actions the community can take to create neighborhood pride. Our team will continue to make this a top priority, but reversing blight requires your participation.

By: Elizabeth Terenik, President
Chelsea EDC

CHELSEA ACTION

We’re excited to share our efforts to enhance the Chelsea neighborhood, following our 10-year plan strategies.

- Strategy 2.1 is to work with residents to advocate for targeted code enforcement to ensure vacant, abandoned, and other nuisance properties are maintained and remediated.
- Strategy 4.2 is to revitalize abandoned and vacant properties for new housing.

Chelsea EDC is working with code enforcement officers to tackle code violations and uphold property standards. In 2023, we reported 117 violations, with 83 resolved. We help residents to use the GovAlert App to report any issues or violations they encounter.

Our recent Waste Bin Upgrade events resulted in the distribution of 129 new bins with neatly stenciled addresses. We work with government agencies to ensure all streetlights are working, identifying

and reporting 91 streetlights in need of repair, with 58 successfully restored, making the streets safer and brighter. We covered up graffiti in 80 locations, preserving the aesthetic appeal of our streets and deterring further damage.



Chelsea EDC 2nd Waste Bin Event.

ECONOMIC IMPACT

The primary economic impact of blight is lower property values. The loss in property taxes becomes a burden on the rest of the taxpayers. We found that most of the blighted properties are not for sale, and if they are, the price is unreasonably high. We also learned that for several properties, legitimate offers to buy the properties have been declined.

However, over the past few months, the combination of code enforcement and one-on-one communication with the property owners has led to some progress. The Chelsea EDC team serves as an extra set of eyes on enforcement and meets with code officers weekly to provide details, photos, and follow-up. Monthly meetings with several city departments to discuss more complex derelict properties have also helped.

The city's Department of Licensing and Inspections, led by Director Dale Finch, is requiring owners of blighted property to sell, demolish, or rehabilitate, with fines assessed by the courts for failure to act.

Chelsea EDC is encouraging absentee landowners who hold vacant property to sell; connecting buyers and sellers; and assisting developers of large projects to apply for grant funds.

Knowing there is much more work to be done, recent successes include:

- Demolition of several dilapidated buildings on Trenton Avenue, including a foundation left from a house fire over 15 years ago.
- Roof and electrical repair on the Masonic Temple.
- One of the boarded-up properties on Pacific near Texas is under contract.
- In February, NJEDA grants were awarded in the amounts of \$2.7M for community space at the former ACE Hardware at Arctic and California Avenues, and \$604,000 for a Mudgirls pottery studio and community space at 3711 Ventnor Avenue.
- Chelsea EDC hosted a meeting for government officials and property owners in the area of Pacific and California Avenues and several initiatives are underway.
- Chelsea EDC signed a contract with a builder who will purchase a lot and construct a new single-family home on a longstanding vacant lot at Fairmount and Iowa Avenues, to be sold to a Chelsea home buyer (pending city approvals).
- Through the Chelsea Homebuyer grant program, eight (8) former renters in the neighborhood now own their own homes.



Construction plan of a new single-family home at Fairmount & Iowa Avenues.



One of 42 Chelsea EDC street clean-ups.

CHELSEA STRATEGY

Chelsea EDC has been “doing our part” to maintain cleanliness and orderliness throughout the neighborhood. Turns out our work is critical to reversing physical and mental health conditions that can result from blight. Reported in the May 2015 American Journal of Public Health, a study found that besides the obvious economic effects of blight, the condition creates “toxic stress” in residents. Toxic stress is the body’s response to a threat, either real or perceived, resulting in an increase in heart rate and the stress hormone cortisol. These effects have been linked with negative health and learning outcomes. The good news is the study also found that “urban greening” (cleaning lots, planting new grass and trees, and other simple improvements), reverses these effects. Participants’ heart rates were significantly lower when walking past a greened vacant lot compared to walking past a non-greened lot.”

Kondo, Michelle C., Jaime M. Fluehr, Thomas P. McKeon, and Charles C. Branas. “Urban Green Space and Its Impact on Human Health.” *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* 15, no. 3 (March 3, 2018): 445. “Urban Greening: A Solution to Blight and Toxic Stress? PennIUR,” n.d. <https://penniur.upenn.edu/publications/urban-greening-a-solution-to-blight-and-toxic-stress> (May 2015).

So far, Chelsea EDC has held 42 clean-up and block makeover events. We have worked with the city to remove over 20 dead trees and planted 60 new ones. We repaired sidewalks, improved landscaping, and installed planters. Check out our Speak Up page to learn how you can reverse blight!

Become a proactive citizen and...



GovPilot/GovAlert: Report Concerns

Click on the Report-A-Concern icon on the [ACNJ.gov](https://www.acnj.gov) homepage or download the GovAlert App on your phone to have Geo-location capabilities.



CitiStat: Open to the public for the opportunity to address quality of life and safety issues with the directors of city departments

Next Meeting Date - April 3, 2024 at 5:00 PM at the Stockton University's John F. Scarpa Academic Center located on 3711 Atlantic Avenue.



Chelsea EDC: Send your message, opinion, or concern directly to us. We will take action or refer to the proper agency.

Please include your name and contact number to Info@ChelseaEDC.org

VOLUNTEER TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE



Chelsea EDC's Arbor Day: Come plant trees with us to make an impact!

Friday, April 26, 2024. More information to come!

Chelsea EDC - Sunday Community Clean Ups: Every Sunday starting March 31st you can come volunteer from 11:00 AM to 1:00 PM. There will be FREE food!



Stockton University - 3rd Annual Community Clean-Up and Party in the Park
Saturday, April 27, 2024

8:30 AM - 3:00 PM

<https://stockton.edu/atlantic-city/community-day-24.html>

Business Spotlight

STILL GOING STRONG AFTER 40 YEARS IN THE COMMUNITY

Trenton Avenue Pharmacy has shown resilience over 40 years, staying open and adapting through the pandemic, and rebuilding after Hurricane Sandy. They are your local community pharmacy, located at 3803 Ventnor Avenue, on the corner of Trenton Avenue. In the same way that a good neighborhood is built by the community it serves, Trenton Avenue Pharmacy is shaped by the unique community it serves.

The original pharmacy owner, Ronald Sorr, still works there occasionally. Respect and kindness have always been his hallmarks when dealing with customers. He is the kind of pharmacist who knows you and your family by name. Staff members are friendly and committed to providing personalized care to patients beyond simply filling prescriptions.

Chintan Shah, Pharmacist in Charge, purchased the business seven years ago and continues to offer exceptional customer service. "We are considered a solution for patients, care providers, doctors, and nurses", said Shah. "We hire from the community. We accept most medical insurance plans. We are open Monday - Friday from 9:00 A.M. to 6:00 P.M. and Saturday from 9:00 AM to 2:00 PM."

Trenton Avenue Pharmacy is also proud to announce that Good Neighbor Pharmacy ranked us "Highest in Customer Satisfaction with Chain Drug Store Pharmacies" in the J.D. Power 2023 U.S. Pharmacy Study. They are grateful to have become your #LocallyLoved pharmacy!

The community is proud to have such a well-established and stable business in Chelsea, and all of Atlantic City is invited to support the only locally-owned pharmacy. You will be impressed with the personalized service, and parking right out front!



Trenton Avenue Pharmacy's staff at 3803 Ventnor Avenue.

Chelsea EDC is a non-profit organization established in 2019 to increase economic opportunity in the Chelsea neighborhood of Atlantic City. Since then, we have been asking what would make the neighborhood better. Your answers make up 44 strategies outlined in the Chelsea 10-year Plan. In 2021, we started putting the Plan's strategies into action through exciting community events, impactful beautification and public safety programs, significant grants for homebuyers and businesses, local business marketing and promotion, and connecting residents with career opportunities. We hope you noticed our work and even participated in our programs!

For more information, www.ChelseaEDC.org/Plan



MAJOR FUNDERS



Fulton Bank



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WWW.CHELSEAEDC.ORG/THECHELSEAINSIDER
TO LET US KNOW WHAT YOU THINK OF THE NEWSLETTER!

YOU CAN ALSO FIND THE SPANISH AND ENGLISH DIGITAL
VERSIONS OR LISTEN TO OUR PODCAST.

