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ELIZABETH DEVELOPMENT COMPANY

Community Development Case Study

Erika Hill

Edward J. Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy

Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey

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ABSTRACT	1
ELIZABETH AND ELIZABETHPORT AT A GLANCE.....	1
EARLY BEGINNINGS AND EVOLUTION OF EDC	2
EDC – THE APPROACH, THE WORK, THE REVENUE	2
TALENTED PEOPLE BEHIND THE WORK	7
SUCCESS AND CHALLENGES.....	9
BEST PRACTICES	9
KEY LEARNINGS AND TAKEAWAY	10

ABSTRACT

This case study tells the story of the development of Elizabeth and Elizabethport through the eyes of Elizabeth Development Company (EDC). I selected EDC as my case study organization because of its close proximity to Newark and my interest in learning about how a development company operates in the context of the community development field. I admittedly approached this project with some preconceived notions about the City of Elizabeth and the work of a development company. This case study is particularly intriguing because of the relationship between the City of Elizabeth and EDC.

In my case study I intend to communicate six key things:

- Why was EDC created?
- How is it structured and different from traditional CDCs?
- What is their approach to CD work?
- Discuss challenges and accomplishments
- Unveil best practices of the organization
- Share my overall takeaways

Elizabeth & Elizabethport at a Glance

Elizabeth, the fourth largest city in Union County, located minutes from Manhattan and accessible by land, sea, rail and air, is situated in one of the most densely populated and wealthy regions in the nation, making for an ideal location for business to thrive (Elizabeth Development Company Brochure). Its unique proximity to major highways such as the NJ Turnpike, Routes 1 & 9, the Garden State Parkway and the Newark/Elizabeth International Airport makes Elizabeth a regional transportation hub for the East Coast, see figure 1 (Elizabeth New Jersey Economic Profile, 1999). Half of Newark Liberty International Airport, which handles over 30 million passengers annually and is among the world's fastest growing airports, is located in Elizabeth. Elizabeth is also known as "America's Containership Capital" (Elizabeth Development Company Brochure). It is the home to Elizabeth NYNJ Port Authority Marine Terminal which, along with Port Newark, is the most comprehensive collection of maritime cargo handling facilities on the East Coast.

Elizabeth is a dense and rapidly growing area; its 2000 population of 120,568 was expected to have grown to 125,285 by 2009 (U.S. Census Bureau). Elizabeth's location affords many middle class and upper class residents the opportunity to live within close proximity of the city center. In fact, the nearly 7 million people live within a 15-mile radius of Elizabeth earn over \$200 billion annually, with an average household income of \$80,000 (Elizabeth New Jersey Economic Profile, 1999). Despite the relatively high income within this 15-mile radius, the broader area primarily consists of middle income households earning an average income of \$35,175 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000). Elizabeth has a strong homeownership community, with 67% of the 45,078 of total housing units being owner occupied (U.S. Census 2006-2008). Historically, Elizabeth was ethnically diverse; while that diversity still remains, its racial make-up is mainly Caucasian and Latino (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000).

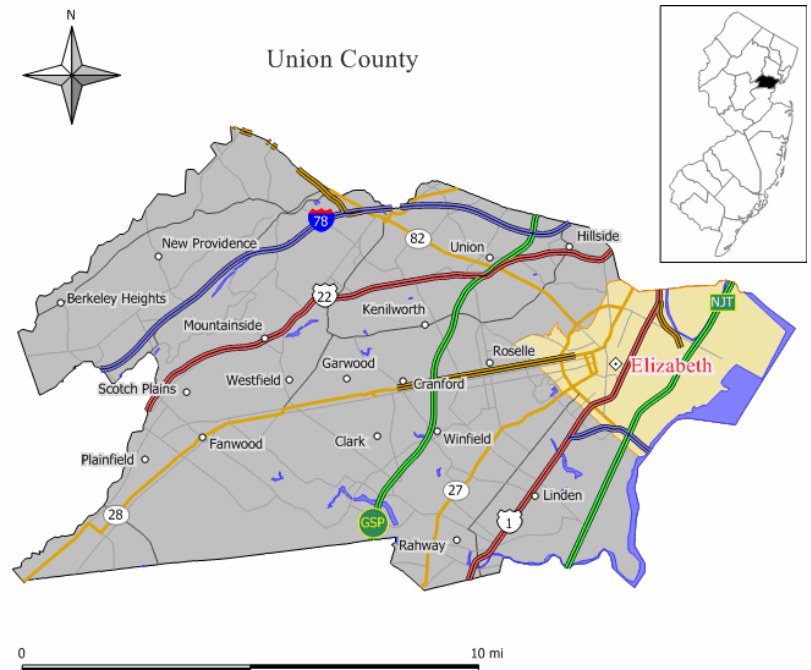
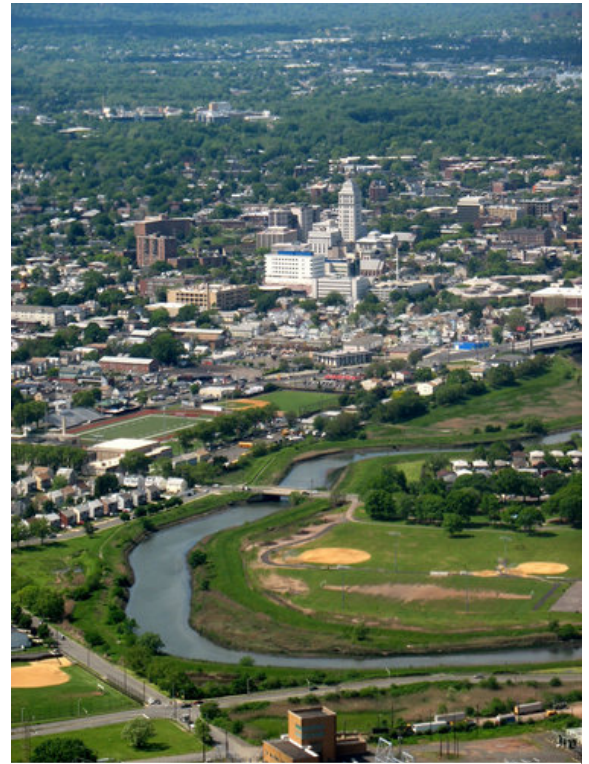


Figure 1: Map of Elizabeth, NJ
Source: Wikipedia

Elizabethport, also referred to as The Port, E-Port & Downtown, is the oldest of Elizabeth's ten community districts. Its geographic boundaries are such that it is bounded by the old Singer Sewing Machine factory and railroad lines to the northeast, the New Jersey Turnpike to the northwest, and the Arthur Kill waterway to the southeast. Elizabethport's historic housing consists of many old style colonial homes and apartment buildings. Early immigrant settlers resided in neat rows of single family homes (Elizabeth New Jersey Economic Profile, 1999). Over the years, Elizabethport's housing stock experienced decline both in public housing and single family homes. Following disinvestment, The City of Elizabeth, and their Housing Authority (HACE) in particular, set out to transform the area and "inspire hope for a new tomorrow, new homes, new living quarters and a safe and secure neighborhood" (HACE, 1999). HACE was awarded a \$28.9 million HOPE VI grant to "re-create public housing in the City of Elizabeth" (Elizabeth New Jersey Economic Profile, 1999). Using HOPE VI housing funds, HACE ordered that longstanding projects along First Street be demolished and replaced by attractive apartment complexes for low- to moderate-income residents. As of 1999, Urban Strategies' 5-year projections for this project included the construction of 400 units at scattered sites throughout the Port. 308 of these units will be constructed on the existing 14 acres that formerly housed Migliore Manor and Pioneer Homes residents. (Elizabeth New Jersey Economic Profile Magazine, 1999). This is one of many rounds of Hope VI development that has occurred in this area. To date, Elizabethport has benefited from \$90 million of HOPE VI housing development investment (www.elizabethnj.org). Brand New Day has made a significant contribution to the increased housing stock as well. Improvements to the Port's housing stock will be discussed later on in this case study.



Source: www.americantowns.com

EARLY BEGINNINGS AND EVOLUTION OF EDC

EDC was created in May 1977 with the charge to "promote the civic, economic and social welfare of the people of Elizabeth" (Elizabeth Development Corporation Certificate of Incorporation, 1977). This relationship with City of Elizabeth is unlike typical interactions between development companies and municipal government, though represents a common trend that has emerged. This partnership commenced in 1977 under the leadership of organizational President Clifford Peak and Elizabeth Mayor Thomas G Dunn.

Since its inception, EDC's mission has been re-stated as "improve the economic well being of the City of Elizabeth by providing a comprehensive program of economic development (Elizabeth Development Company Bylaws, 2005)." It is a quasi government agency in that it is a public non-profit economic development corporation with an independent Board of Trustees. Furthermore, it fits into a broader, and at times controversial, category of historical trend of quasi government agencies, referred to as agency-non-profit organizations (Kosar, 2008). Andrew Kosar explains that "the relationship of this burgeoning quasi government to elected and appointed officials is a subject of growing concern, as it touches the very heart of democratic governance. Furthermore, Kosar brings up some the tensions concerning these entities namely to whom are these hybrids accountable, and how is the public interest being protected over and against the interest of private parties (Kosar, 2008).

In the past decade, Elizabeth has embraced an economic revitalization program like none other, one that is transforming its once abandoned waterfront into a shopping and business development mecca. This program is reaching into every city neighborhood to improve the quality of life for all of Elizabeth's residents and visitors (Elizabeth New Jersey Economic Profile Magazine, 1999). EDC is so vital to the revitalization of neighborhoods and the renovation of business districts that the City of Elizabeth describes EDC as its economic arm and credits much of its success in new businesses development to EDC. Today, EDC is known as Elizabeth's "one-stop shop for economic development offering a full range of low cost, low interest financial assistance programs for businesses in or relocating to the city of Elizabeth" (Elizabeth Economic Profile Magazine, 1999).

EDC-The Approach, The Work, The Revenue

At its inception this "self-created" development company focused as a purely traditional development company, approaching projects from how they could use their "brick and mortar" expertise to positively impact the city of the Elizabeth. Within this framework, the first couple of decades of work focused on the facilitation of greater economic development for the city. Moreover, EDC initially focused on small to large loans in two areas: 1) Small Business Loans and 2) Small Development type projects. Additionally, EDC's role was to conduct a pre-city involvement and preliminary redevelopment analysis. This preceded the current norm of municipal government doing

some initial analysis about feasibility of redevelopment followed by the enlistment of a development company. This initial framework was very successful and gave rise to EDC's managing of the City's Urban Enterprise Zone program.

Urban Enterprise Zone (UEZ) is a statewide program designed to "promote sustainable growth by helping businesses succeed in city neighborhoods" (EDC Brochure, 1999). EDC's responsibility with the UEZ is to recruit new businesses to join the program, operate the program and allocate the funds obtained from this program as a cyclic operational revenue stream. This program is multi-faceted and includes six sub areas which businesses can take advantage of. Key benefits of this program include:

- Sales tax exemption on most businesses related expenses
- Reduced 3.5% sales tax (Retailers can charge half the state's sales tax on most items)
- Corporate tax credits
- Below market rate loans
- Sign and facade grants
- Unemployment insurance rebates

Businesses relocating to Elizabeth stand to save anywhere from \$1,000 to \$1 Million depending on which UEZ sub programs they participate in. The table below shows how there are varied ways for businesses to take advantage of these savings:

Program	Saving Ceiling
Loan Pool-Provides below market loans to large commercial and industrial projects located in UEZ.	50% of project costs or \$1million, whichever is less
Commercial Loan-Designed to support small business development and expansion. Market rate loans that can be used for the purchase of fixed assets, construction and renovation projects	90% of projects costs or \$50,000
Micro-Enterprise Loan/Grant-Offers below market fixed rate loans and grant assistance to small businesses looking to start or expand	\$15,000 (60% loan, 40% direct grant)
Working Capital Loans-Provides established Elizabeth businesses with access to below market rate loans, short-term financial assistance for inventory, marketing and soft costs	90% of project costs or \$10,000
Façade Improvement-Provides funding to eligible businesses to make façade improvement such as awnings, new doors, painting, window repair and exterior lighting	50% match of the project costs or \$6,000
Signage Grant-Provides eligible businesses with grants towards cost of installing new lights, new signage, channel lettering and lawn signs	\$1,000

Table 1: UEZ Program

Source: In the Zone Newsletter, 2007

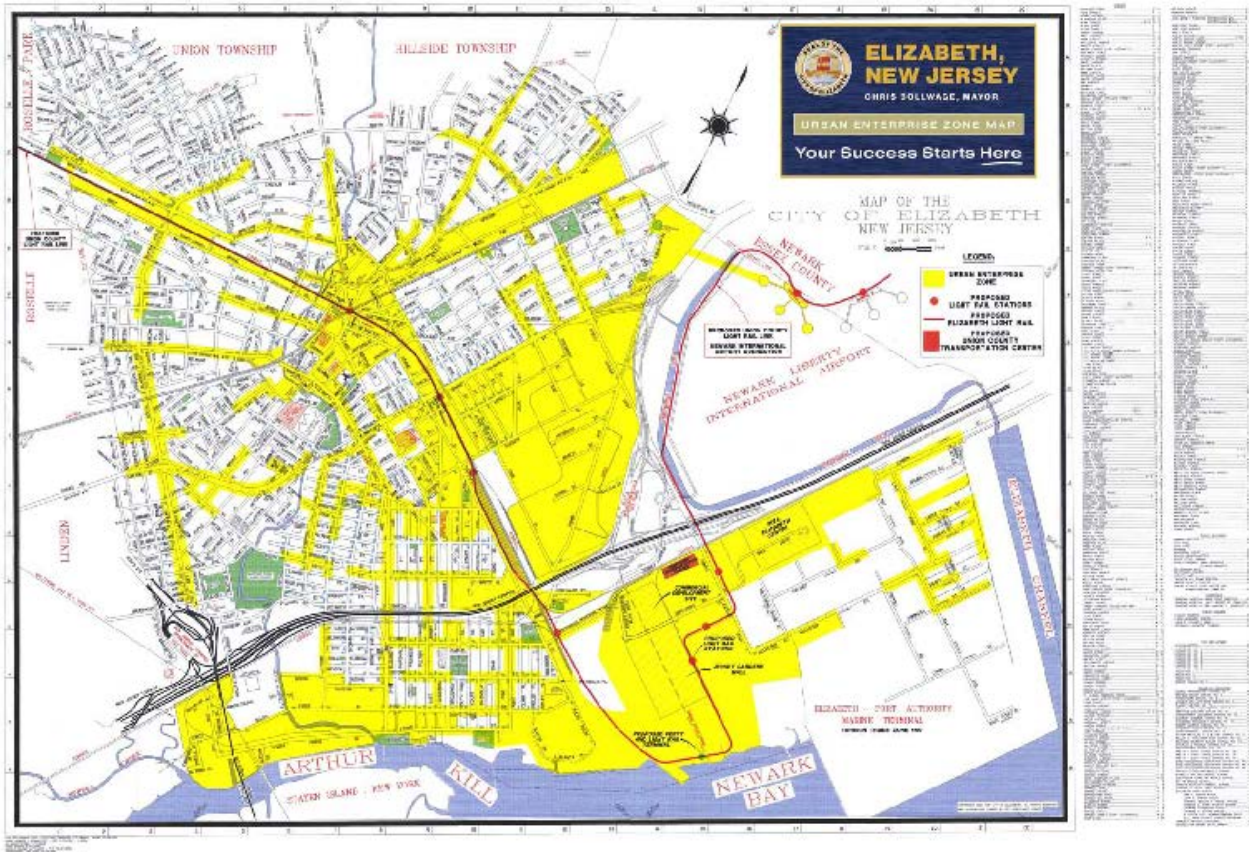


Figure 2: Urban Enterprise Zone Map
Source: www.elizabethnj.org

Although UEZ has been and continues to be the organization's "cash cow", over time its work has grown to include a community development component. Now seen as the "leader and go to" organization in the city for this type of work, EDC pursues a holistic approach to community development and prides itself on participating in strategic collaborations. EDC wears many hats in its community development work which include: Convener, in that they bring local non-profits, residents and other stakeholders together to discuss community needs; Funder, in that they issue grants/loans to organizations to execute community work; Developer, they have the capacity to physically construct brick and mortar structures; Collaborator, in that they join efforts with other organizations to do more comprehensive projects and lastly a Community Resource, in that they contribute to organizational capacity by assisting organizations with finding and completing grant applications and providing other technical assistance.

EDC approaches all projects by assessing "what is doable" (William O'Dea, 2010). Leadership follows a methodological and rather simplistic approach which commences with a needs assessment (see figure 4), followed by looking at a project's initial and operating costs and then determining how much debt the project can support. If the project maximizes resources

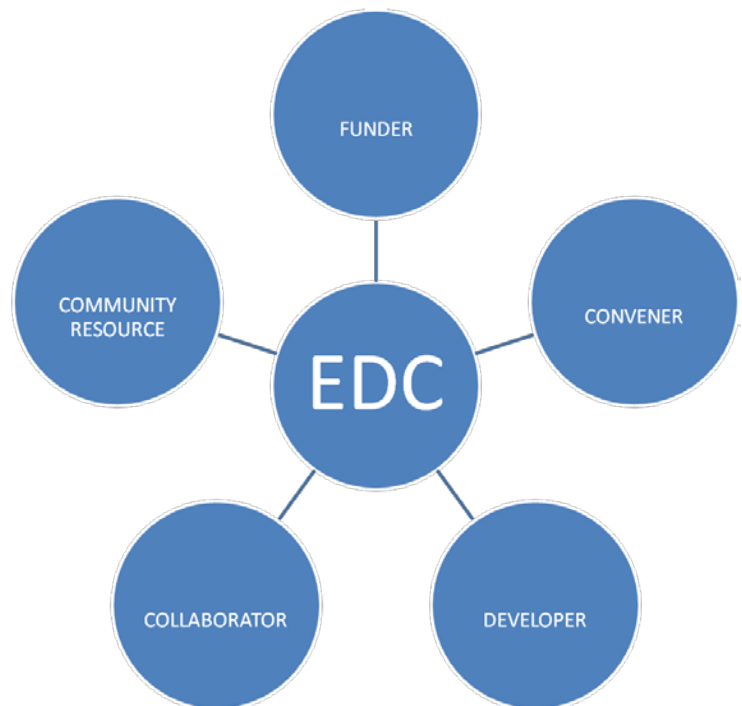
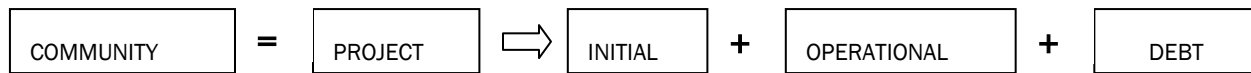


Figure 3: EDC's Roles in the Elizabeth Community

and adequately supports the debt being incurred, they will go with it; however, if the project appears overleveraged and does not maximize resources, EDC will not move forward with it. Bill O'Dea compared two projects, one which cost \$120,000 per unit scattered sites with 4 stories being constructed over the course of 10 years and the other which cost \$200,000 per unit singular site that is 10 stories and built all at once. Bill O'Dea explained that the \$120,000 per unit scattered sites is a better deal because it maximizes resources.

Figure 4: Project Feasibility



EDC's other program is the Neighborhood Revitalization Tax Credit (NRTC). NRTC is designed to foster the revitalization of New Jersey's distressed neighborhoods. The program offers business entities a 100 percent tax credit against various New Jersey state taxes. Credits are provided to business entities that invest in the revitalization of low- and moderate-income neighborhoods in eligible cities. Sixty percent of the tax credit funds must be used for activities related to the development of housing and economic development. The remaining balance may be used for complementary activities such as the provision of assistance to small businesses, removing barriers to self-sufficiency, and promoting the integration of mixed-income neighborhoods. In order to qualify for this tax credit investment, a not-for-profit entity must choose a neighborhood, prepare a neighborhood revitalization plan and submit the plan to the Department of Community Affairs (DCA) for approval. Once DCA has approved the plan, the entity can then prepare and submit a specific project for DCA approval, which will include implementation strategies and demonstrate how the project will specifically use the tax credit investments (www.state.nj.us/dca). Using the funds received from these state credits, EDC is able to allocate funds to local non-profits in need of resources.

Highlighted Project-Neighborhood Revitalization Tax Credit (NRTC) and Elizabethport

The Neighborhood Revitalization Tax Credit (NRTC) project in Elizabethport is an excellent example of how EDC pursues strategic collaborations to maximize the impact of their work. EDC combined its NRTC resources with additional funds from the Wachovia Regional Foundation to facilitate the Neighborhood Revitalization Implementation of the Port. EDC led the collaborative Neighborhood & Community Revitalization effort, which was successful due to the establishment of key partnerships with local non-profits and other entities, including Brand New Day, Elizabethport Presbyterian Church, Proceed, Inc, Housing Authority of City of Elizabeth (HACE) and private developers, each of which provided their expertise. It is a mixed-use project which includes 3,750 feet of commercial space and four stories of 30 units of age-restricted low-income senior housing. EDC intends to move into the commercial space once it is done. The building, to be located on First Street across from a recently completed HOPE VI Project and adjacent to another Brand New Day Project, will have a community room for residents and will be the first LEED certified building in Elizabethport. The overall outcomes will include the construction of a new school, 600-700 affordable housing units and 400-500 market rate housing units. Brand New Day also provides homeownership counseling and financial literacy training. Elizabethport Presbyterian Church is in the process of creating a childcare and service center which is currently 57% complete and will be done by May 2011 (WRF Second Year Report First Quarter Report, 2010). Proceed Inc's IDA program has made progress as well. Currently they have 32 eligibility forms and this quarter three participants have completed their homeownership goal. In addition, EDC intends to assist Inner Development in bringing an urban supermarket to the area by helping to assess project financials and determine eligibility for New Market Tax Credits (WRF Second Year Report First Quarter Report, 2010). Below are before and after photos for some of these proposed projects (WRF Second Year Report, 2010).

Urban Supermarket



Before



Proposed

Senior Housing



Progress (Oct. 2010)



Proposed

Market Rate Housing



Before



Proposed

EDC has also been instrumental in other aspects of Elizabethport's transformation, particularly as a facilitator of mutually beneficial outcomes for the community. For example, in one instance, residents requested the construction of a library and while resources were found available to construct the library, there was no one to staff it. EDC convinced the city's public library to come in and staff the library. In a second instance, Elizabethport Presbyterian planned to develop a community health center, but in order to "make the economics work" the church needed a tenant. Concurrently, the City of Elizabeth was planning a health center that would have required them to invest a great deal of money in order to renovate the designated building and make it usable. Recognizing the needs of both entities, EDC convinced the city to move its health care center to the Elizabethport Presbyterian building. The community health center's new centralized location now enables community residents, including Elizabethport Presbyterian's senior population, to have their health care needs easily accessible.

While EDC and others were working on this project, ground had broken with Jersey Gardens mall as well. EDC's initial involvement in Jersey Gardens mall stemmed from its administration of the UEZ program. EDC contributed several millions of UEZ dollars to support the mall's infrastructure. Anchor stores like IKEA greatly benefited from UEZ savings and thus were more attracted to establish their store there. At the request of Mayor Bollage, UEZ resources were also leveraged to support the marketing of the mall (www.jerseygardens.com). The October 1999 opening of the Jersey Gardens generated more than 5,000 new jobs for the area. To maximize this employment opportunity for the benefit of local residents, City of Elizabeth, Union County Government, Union County College, and numerous community agencies joined with Glimcher Development Corporation and EDC in a public/private-sector partnership to establish the Retail Skills Center (Elizabeth New Jersey Economic Profile Magazine, 1999). Elizabeth's Retail Skills Center is a one-stop employment facility that provides recruitment, training, customer service certification and job placement services. Since opening its doors, the Center has assisted more than 200 businesses in the region and trained more than 8,000 area residents (Elizabeth Development Company Brochure). The NRTC project in Elizabethport, in conjunction with the development of the Jersey Gardens, represents a "perfect economic development situation" for the City of Elizabeth and Port. Though not intentionally planned together, EDC's involvement in both contributed to tremendous economic development growth for the city.



While construction is underway for Elizabethport projects, EDC intends to duplicate the same approach in Midtown Elizabeth. Midtown Elizabeth, where EDC is currently headquartered, is a flourishing downtown shopping district containing over 120 retail establishments ranging in size from a major department store on Broad Street to a tiny shoe repair shop on East Jersey Street (Elizabeth New Jersey Economic Profile Magazine, 1999). The area is centered on Broad St near the county courthouse and is readily accessible by train, bus and automobile. As of 1999, Midtown Elizabeth Redevelopment Project had "completed a new \$.8.6 million, five story, 585 space parking deck which the city of Elizabeth expects

to clear the way for a "much anticipated \$100 million redevelopment project that has taken years of planning and cooperation among many levels of government" (Elizabeth New Jersey Economic Profile Magazine, 1999). Thus far EDC has bought and renovated the Old Union County Trust Bank. EDC intends to have commercial use on top. This project created 30 jobs. Additionally, this past year they provided funding for the renovation of the First Presbyterian Church on Broad Street. The renovation will enable the church to provide services to the community including direct services to homeless population, job training and prisoner re-entry services. EDC is also working hard to keep Shoprite headquartered in Elizabeth and thus preserve the jobs that the supermarket provides to the city.



EDC is able to administer these programs and initiatives through its diverse portfolio of revenue streams, including privately raised, programmatically generated and locally/ federally allocated funds. EDC's specific sources of revenues are: Urban Enterprise Zones Program (UEZ), Community Development Block Grants (CDBG), Neighborhood Revitalization Tax Credits (NRTC), New Market Tax Credits (NMTC), Developer Fees and Private Fundraising.

Talented People Behind the Work

Elizabeth Development Company is able to execute such a large bill of work in Elizabeth due to their excellent staff and board of trustees. This team of professionals is very diverse and has afforded them the opportunity to efficiently and effectively move development projects from concept to completion. EDC has a total of 13 people on staff. As indicated by Figure 5, each of the organizational categories has sub areas. The Policy and Program side has three key programs: Urban Enterprise Zone (UEZ), Financial Programs which houses the loan, New Market Tax Credits and their Facade Program and lastly Program Implementation & Social Services. The Deputy Executive Director also reports to Executive Director on the three areas he directly oversees. In fact, for the last 30 years, EDC has made a concerted effort to facilitate the linkage for businesses between the necessary financing and development tools to support the successful transformation from an idea to a brick and mortar building. EDC's organization structure is divided in two categories: Policy and Programs and Administration with each led by a Deputy Executive Director William O'Dea and Daniel Devanney. The organizational and community commitment of EDC's leadership and staff is evident in the leadership tenures of 17 years and 15 years respectively and 10 year tenure for some staff. Staff commitment signals strategic recruitment and retention efforts on the part of EDC. In fact, in hiring managerial staff they seek out industry experts and require a college degree and masters degree or an equal number of years of practical experience in the appropriate field - i.e. Development, Banking, Community Relations, Business Management (William O'Dea, 2010).

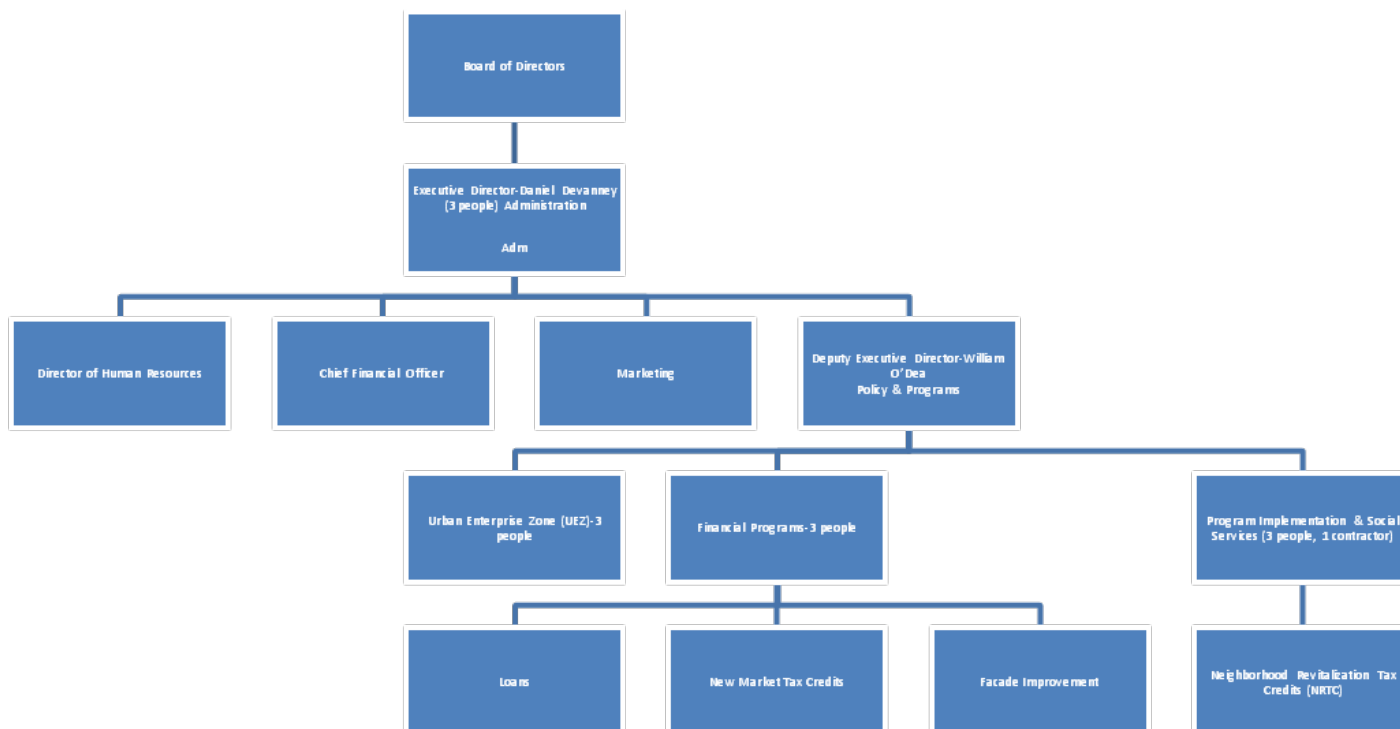


Figure 5: EDC Organizational Chart

EDC has an independent Board of Trustees which serves as an advisory body to the organization. In particular, per the bylaws, the Board is “responsible for the election of the Officers and Directors of the Corporation and shall be involved with such business as is deemed necessary and appropriate for the continued successful operation of the corporation, including amendment of the corporate by-laws (Elizabeth Development Corporation Bylaws, 2005).” The Board of Trustees is not authorized to make or initiate any organizational policies (William O’Dea, 2010). Overall Board makeup must be reflective and representative of the City of Elizabeth. Specifically, the board must include representatives from at least two of the following four groups:

- Private sector lending institutions
- Business or community organizations
- Private sector business interests (including retail, office, service, industrial, professional, etc.)
- City of Elizabeth government

In addition to this requirement, multiple representation of a single company is permissible. However, there is a 10% cap on the total number of votes a single entity can possess (Elizabeth Development Corporation Bylaws, 2005). Individuals wishing to serve on the board must submit a resume and be “endorsed” by a current trustee who is in good standing. Board of Trustee votes on the nominations and then selected trustee members are appointed to the board and serve a 3-year term.

EDC’s leaders are held accountable and receive overall direction by its Board of Directors. They are charged “with the responsibility to effectuate the administrative and procedural operations of the Company; including issues concerning personnel policies, budget and finance, and contract approval” (Elizabeth Development Company Bylaws, 2005). According to the bylaws they have the “general power to control and manage the affairs and property of the Corporation, and have full power, by majority vote, to adopt rules and regulations governing the operation of the corporation” (Elizabeth Development Company Bylaws, 2005). This governing body also has oversight for payment and distribution of revenues received by the organization. The Board must have 6 to 10 elected members from the Board of Trustees. Similar to the Board of Trustees, the Board of Directors composition must be representative of the city of Elizabeth. In fact, the bylaws explicitly state that this diversity must be both in terms of business entities as well as individual demographic characteristics such as cultural, racial and ethnic background (Elizabeth Development Company Bylaws, 2005). EDC’s Board of Directors serve a term of at least one year and no member can serve more than two consecutive one year terms in the same office.

Success and Challenges

Defining organizational success is often difficult. Should an organization focus on physical outputs, whether or not they have made life- or community-changing outcomes and/or the things have gained the organization notoriety? William O'Dea's measurement of success is twofold. He looks at project completion and EDC's "value-added," that is whether or not projects would have gotten done without the involvement of EDC (William O'Dea, 2010). For example, during our interview he shared that on one project EDC found grant money and made subordinate loans using creative financing, without which the project would have been stuck (William O'Dea, 2010). This was an example of a project success. In addition, he felt that the evaluation and financial feasibility/efficiency of the project is another indicator of success. In this situation efficiency represents minimal subsidizing of the project. He explained that from this vantage point he discussed his litmus test as 1) determine the compelling need and 2) identify the best way to address the need using the least amount of subsidy and complete the project. In his mind any project where this "ideal mix of elements" exists is yet another indication of organizational success (William O'Dea, 2010). While this is an internal perspective of success, externally the work of EDC has not gone unrecognized locally or nationally. In fact EDC has received several accolades for its work in Elizabeth. Some of the awards and recognition to date include:

- Won state and national acclaim for both its highly successful Urban Enterprise Zone and its innovative community development initiatives in the City's Elizabeth port neighborhood.
- Leads the state in terms of participants in UEZ programs with nearly 1100 participating businesses
- Ranked #1 in nation for Elizabeth's UEZ by the National Association of State Development Agencies (NASDA) was also named the best
- Helped generate more than \$2 billion (since inception) in new economic investments in Elizabeth that have helped put thousands of area residents to work.
- Provided more than \$50 million in additional funds for reinvestment into the Zone via the 3½ percent reduced retail sales tax benefit (Elizabeth, NJ Economic Profile Magazine, 1999).

This massive reinvestment includes funding for additional police, elaborate streetscape beautifications and enhanced infrastructure improvements, as well as many other economic development programs designed to help businesses succeed in Elizabeth.

Despite over 30 years of success and progress, EDC's work has not been without challenges. During the early stages of some of their project collaborations partners were mistrustful and skeptical of fairness and doing business with the state. Garnering political support on the state and federal level was slightly challenging as well (William O'Dea, 2010). Generally speaking, making private, for profit projects work is extremely difficult because there is less justification for requesting more subsidies. To date the only way the organization has been able to make for profit projects work is using NRTC and NMTC. Private projects are dependent on these two sources because without them these projects just wouldn't be possible. Mr. O'Dea cited two current examples where this is the case, one which concerns building a supermarket which it purchased at 2 million and is now worth \$1.4 million. The other example concerns a hotel that has an \$8 million dollar ERGG grant but still has a \$3 million gap. EDC have been trying to find other money or ways to help them close that gap some more but it has been extremely challenging. Until the gap is filled the project is at a standstill. The current economic climate brings with it its own challenges such as having to do more money with less. Two perfect examples of this are with the UEZ and affordable housing resources. In a booming economy "UEZ generates annual revenues of \$10 million for projects" (William O'Dea, 2010). With this revenue EDC was able to administer loans to things like extra duty police officers in the port, infrastructure, one stop center at Jersey Gardens Mall. This year there was no new money so the organization has been operating off of their reserves. In terms of affordable housing, the pot of resources has significantly shrunk, making it highly competitive for organizations (William O'Dea, 2010). This too poses a challenge given the national shortage of affordable housing stock and thus hindrance to EDC's ability to produce more affordable housing units.

Best Practices

During the course of this research I uncovered some best practices that I feel other organizations can benefit from. I found the information to be helpful as I think about my future career endeavors. Some of the best practices I learned were:

- Need to conduct an objective community asset analysis
- Most distressed neighborhoods have the remnants to be revitalized they just need help and assessment is the key
- Organizations should focus on their expertise; if an organization has to work on something it is not expert at, it ends up diverting its attention and resources to do the other stuff (i.e. development) and it often is not as good. Organizations that temporarily shift focus run the risk of losing the funding and support for those services that they are good at

- Patience is important because projects are hard to finance
- Project planning should include lofty goals but reasonable expectations. Must effectively “manage expectations as well”. Included in these expectations are feasibility of projects and identifying partners.
 - Prioritization and determination of what is doable is necessary
 - Projects via collaborations have a higher propensity of being successful, one entity doing everything is not successful
- If willingness to subsidize exists, anything can be done. Emphasizes the importance of political will in project support.

KEY LEARNINGS AND TAKEAWAY

Visiting with William O'Dea and reading over the various literatures that I found I learned a great deal. I now have a better understanding about the Elizabeth Development Company, its work and contribution to the City of Elizabeth. Furthermore, I have acquired a clearer understanding about how development projects are assessed and ultimately come to fruition. Some key things that I took away from this research are:

- EDC is unlike some other development companies in its approach, focus and execution, it seems very “socially motivated”
- Neighborhood transformation and revitalization takes time, approximately 10-15 years
- Relationship Building and Spheres of Influence are very important in this type of work
 - EDC 's relationship with the City plays a role in its ability to do projects
 - EDC's strong relationship with banks facilitates project financing that others might not be able to get.
 - EDC reports that some banks will only do business if EDC is involved in the project
- Understanding and leveraging assets and/or expertise of community partners is crucial to any neighborhood work
- Reasonable expectations must be set at the onset of any development projects
- EDC takes on a macro-level view in that EDC looks at needs of the city not just what EDC needs. Projects focused on full scope needed to revitalize including wrap around services for the intended population
- In collaborating with others there has to be mutual trust so that each party understands the role of one other and trust in the fair distribution of resources
- EDC's increases the odds of projects making it to completion. “EDC takes you from the roulette table (30:1) to the black jack table (50:50)” (William O'Dea, 2010)

Overall I found learning about the Elizabeth Development Company very informative. Prior to conducting research on this organization the only thing I knew about Elizabeth, NJ was that there were toxic waste plants along the NJ Turnpike that I passed in route to visit my grandmother. I have a new appreciation for Elizabeth, NJ and more specifically for the work that EDC has done to transform the area. EDC's holistic approach is commendable given some development company's propensity to focus on profit maximization. EDC has made lasting changing in areas like the port as evident by the various projects they have worked on. I found it interesting that the organization serves as a “convener” at times. In fact this role reminded me of the role that my previous employer, United Way of Metropolitan Atlanta plays in the community. It takes great rapport and transparency effectively facilitated stakeholder meeting. Although I enjoyed learning about the organization, I do still find the relationship with the City slightly confusing. In speaking with William O'Dea he clearly articulated the work that EDC has done for the city, but as I read the literature provided to me and visited the website, the lines became blurry. It is unclear how EDC really is a separate entity when in communications outcomes are explained in terms of what the “City of Elizabeth” has done for its residents. With that being said, I feel like being a “quasi-governmental agency” does have its drawbacks. Some of the drawbacks included the accountability to its constituents. Additionally, organizations like EDC that operate as quasi-government entities are constrained in how information is communicated. Serving as a more like a government agency successes are conveyed more in terms of the “city” and not necessarily attributed directly to the entity. This assignment was very eye opening and contributed to my expanded perspective of community development organizations.

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