

Office of the Governor

NEWS RELEASE

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Governor Highlights Revitalization in Urban Communities

Gov. Christie Whitman today stressed her commitment to revitalizing New Jersey's cities and urban communities, visiting Plainfield, Hillside and Jersey City. The Governor toured a private community development center and an urban produce market, awarded a \$350,000 grant aimed at feeding New Jerseyans in need, and highlighted changes in building codes to encourage rehabilitation of abandoned buildings.

Gov. Whitman visited the Black United Fund Health and Human Services Community Center Complex in Plainfield and recognized the important role that private organizations must play in the redevelopment of New Jersey's cities and communities. The community center, which is supported entirely through private funds, includes a full-day pre-school and kindergarten program, as well as athletic, religious, cultural and academic programs.

"Here in New Jersey, we are giving urban communities the tools they need to reach their potential and fulfill the dreams of their citizens," said Gov. Whitman. "And partners like the Black United Fund of New Jersey, with its special emphasis on providing recreational and educational opportunities for children, are helping us make a real difference, one neighborhood at a time."

Gov. Whitman was joined by Community Affairs Commissioner Jane Kenny for the announcement of a \$350,000 state grant to the Community Food Bank (CFB) of New Jersey to help expand the organization's capacity to deliver food to families throughout 18 New Jersey counties. They made the announcement during a tour of the CFB's 280,000-square-foot warehouse in Hillside. The expanded CFB program will include a large commercial kitchen and an increased distribution network. The CFB already distributes approximately 14 million pounds of food and groceries to New Jersey families each year.

"We are pleased to help the Community Food Bank and its network of charities and volunteers in expanding services to families in need," said Gov. Whitman. "Every day, the folks at Community Food Bank make a difference in people's lives. This grant will help ensure that more Garden State families, and especially our children, have a meal on the table and a little more peace of mind."

Later in the day, the Governor stopped in on the urban farmers' market at Journal Square in Jersey City. The Governor highlighted the importance of sharing the abundance of Garden State produce with every city and every community across the state. Farmers from throughout New Jersey travel to the market to sell their Jersey Fresh produce. The market, which is in the midst of its fourth season, was founded by the Jersey City Economic Development Corporation and the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey.

Gov. Whitman and Commissioner Kenny also highlighted one of the state's newest tools in redeveloping urban areas when they toured a Jersey City structure that is under renovation thanks to New Jersey's pioneering building rehabilitation standards. The new standards, incorporated as the Rehabilitation Subcode in the state's Uniform Construction Code, remove costly disincentives to rehabilitating existing structures while maintaining high standards to ensure safety. The rules, which took effect January 5, have attracted national interest as an effective tool in reducing project costs and encouraging redevelopment without compromising safety.

"This is a powerful tool for promoting investment and redevelopment activity in our urban centers and beyond," said Gov. Whitman. "As we see here in Jersey City, these standards are helping to create jobs and stimulate economic activity by cutting out the red tape and unnecessary costs that were once associated with renovating buildings."

The Governor and Commissioner Kenny toured 203 Academy St., where the rehab subcode has saved 25 percent of the potential costs in converting the abandoned building into a senior citizen center, housing 24 low and moderate income seniors, and a day care center for up to 100 children. The building had stood vacant for eight years.

"This building will resume its productive life, contributing to the neighborhood, rather than detracting from it, contributing to the tax rolls, rather than standing as a public safety concern," said Commissioner Kenny. "The new standards reflect some of the Governor's top priorities - economic development, jobs, affordable housing, urban revitalization and regulatory reform."