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NEWS RELEASE

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Governor Expands Urban Assistance Program

Gov. Christie Whitman today announced that five urban areas will be added to a state program that coordinates funds and services to revitalize city neighborhoods.

Areas of Perth Amboy, Plainfield, Irvington, Neptune and Pleasantville have been designated to receive wide-ranging assistance from the state's Urban Coordinating Council (UCC).

The Governor created the UCC early in her administration to work with urban areas to implement neighborhood-based plans and strategies for revitalization. It includes representatives from all state departments and agencies. Through the New Jersey Redevelopment Authority (NJRA), the UCC helps coordinate government, private sector and non-profit resources to meet needs identified by the communities in their redevelopment plans.

"These neighborhoods will now have one-stop shopping for the services they need to fulfill their plans," said Gov. Whitman. "The five new neighborhoods will be added to the list of 11 urban areas now receiving assistance from the UCC. The UCC has helped those areas realize hundreds of millions of dollars in investments.

The new UCC areas include:

Perth Amboy -- The designation will allow the city and non-profit organizations, including the Cathedral Community Development Corporation, to build on improvements already being made to the area. The UCC plan includes the creation of new housing and recreational opportunities.

Plainfield -- The community, through a coalition of non-profit groups called Partners for Progress, has worked with the city to develop a neighborhood strategy that focuses on a number of key issues, including housing, education, recreation, public health, safety, business development, and arts and culture.

Pleasantville -- Flooding is a major concern of this primarily residential neighborhood. The flooding issue has led to disinvestment by property owners and significant deterioration of the housing stock. The community will work with the state and the private sector to return financial stability to the neighborhood.

Irvington -- The neighborhood is adjacent to the existing UCC neighborhood in Newark. The plan for the area includes converting abandoned properties into affordable housing, reducing crime and creating additional recreational opportunities and facilities.

Neptune -- The municipality and a local empowerment council are working together to address issues in the neighborhood, including deteriorated and abandoned housing. The neighborhood is adjacent to the existing UCC neighborhood in Asbury Park.

"The UCC has shown that the best ideas for improving neighborhoods come from the communities themselves," Gov. Whitman said. "We are supplying the tools to nurture those plans and empower people to reach their goals."

The benefits of UCC designation include:

- Priority consideration in applications for grants.
- Services and technical assistance from departments of state government through "inter-agency teams."
- A state-funded community director, who serves as an on-site manager.
- State assistance in coordinating government, private sector and non-profit resources.

"We look forward to working as partners with the newly- designated UCC areas," said Department of Community Affairs Commissioner Jane M. Kenny, who chairs the UCC. "These are communities that have a strong vision for what they want their neighborhoods to achieve."

The 11 UCC areas already in existence include neighborhoods in Camden (2), Elizabeth (2), Trenton, Newark, New Brunswick/Franklin, Long Branch, Vineland, Jersey City and Asbury Park.

Gov. Whitman said that the NJRA staff is also working with urban neighborhoods that have not received the UCC designation. The UCC recently completed a comprehensive "Guide to New Jersey Services" that lists all of the assistance programs available to urban communities. The guide can be accessed through the Department of Community Affairs' web site at:
<http://www.state.nj.us/dca/dcahome.htm>.