



News from the Office of  
**ERIE COUNTY EXECUTIVE MARK POLONCARZ**

**NEWS RELEASE**

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**POLONCARZ, OFFICIALS JOIN IN SUPPORT OF NATIONAL COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT WEEK**

*Congressman Higgins joins County Executive, Mayor Szymanski in Lackawanna to review CDBG-funded revitalization projects*

*Poloncarz, Casilio, elected officials voice support for CDBG-funded Rural Transit Service in Clarence visit*

**ERIE COUNTY, NY**— Erie County Executive Mark C. Poloncarz was joined by partners in government from many levels and numerous localities today as he traveled across Erie County as part of National Community Development Week, both recognizing the wide variety of projects made possible by Community Development Block Grant ("CDBG") funds and also celebrating the community-enhancing effects these projects have. CDBG funding is facing potential complete elimination in the recent proposed FY 2018 federal budget, which would halt millions of dollars of infrastructure improvements that benefit the 34 consortium municipalities across the county. Poloncarz was joined by Congressman Brian Higgins (NY-26) and City of Lackawanna Mayor Geoffrey Szymanski in a morning visit to Dona Street in Lackawanna, where the former Lincoln School is slated for 2017 demolition thanks in large part to \$300,000 in supporting CDBG funding.

"Here in Lackawanna and all across Erie County, CDBG funds are used to build stronger communities and a better quality of life for all. CDBG projects help municipalities to reinvigorate their community centers and business districts, eliminate blighted buildings and improve infrastructure," **said Erie County Executive Mark C. Poloncarz.** "This funding leverages funding supplied from each consortium community and assists them in completing projects that are important and specific to them and their residents, and it has been incredibly effective in energizing community development in Erie County."

**Congressman Brian Higgins, a member of the House of Representatives Budget Committee said,** "Federal Block Grant funding supports community-driven initiatives that reach into the core issues impacting neighborhoods. From road reconstruction and vacant housing restoration to senior services and small business assistance, the Community Development Block Grant program is administered effectively and locally to best serve the needs of residents and build stronger neighborhoods. White House proposals to cut or eliminate CDBG funding is backward thinking, will cost local taxpayers more in the long-run and hurt efforts to grow jobs and rebuild struggling communities."

The deteriorated building at 100 Dona Street in Lackawanna has been vacant for over 10 years and has been condemned. Future plans for the site after asbestos abatement and demolition include affordable housing with the construction of 25-30 single family homes for low income tenants/owners.

In a later visit to the Town of Clarence Senior Center, Poloncarz was joined by Clarence Supervisor Pat Casilio, other elected officials, and concerned seniors to review CDBG-funded improvements to the Center and also discuss the importance of the Rural Transit Service, a CDBG-funded transportation service that links seniors in outlying areas of the county to the programs and services they need. At the Center, improvements included new entrance doors and a new push button automatic entry along with the reconstruction of the vestibule area, which made the entranceway fully ADA compliant. In 2015, the Rural Transit Service celebrated its 25<sup>th</sup> year of service in Erie County. During that time RTS has helped over 5,000 individuals needing transportation with approximately 250,000 trips. In 2016 alone the service provided 10,347 trips, and was funded solely through \$267, 421 in CDBG funding.

**Poloncarz added,** "CDBG funding makes it possible to provide fully accessible public facilities for seniors and also provide the means to get them around the county for appointments and to meet the other needs of their lives. These are just two ways that these funds have a direct positive impact by keeping people connected and improving their quality of life. I am urging all residents to contact their Congressional representative to voice their support for this vital funding."

Erie County receives over \$3,300,000 in federal funds each year through the CDBG and Home Investment Partnership ("HOME") grant programs under the Department of Housing and Urban Development ("HUD"). The Erie County Community Development Consortium is comprised of all of Erie County minus the Towns of Amherst, Tonawanda, Cheektowaga, Hamburg and the City of Buffalo. Those communities also receive HUD Community Development funding separate from Erie County.

Within the past two program years, CDBG funding has leveraged multiple community-enhancing projects across Erie County. Over \$2.2 million has been invested in public infrastructure improvements such as road repair, water/sewer line replacement, sidewalk replacements, and drainage improvements; nearly \$400,000 has been invested in public facility improvements such as senior centers and making public buildings ADA compliant; and over \$2.2 million has been invested in housing rehabilitation improvements for low-income homeowners and that includes lead remediation if necessary.

### **Background:**

Since 1985 National Community Development Week has been held during March or April each year and has been an opportunity for CDBG Grantee communities to showcase various successful projects that were funded with CDBG dollars. The CDBG program provides grants to over 1,200 state and local governments and funds activities such as housing rehabilitation, business assistance, senior services, and infrastructure – to name a few. These activities are primarily targeted to low-income and moderate-income persons and households. Every \$1.00 of CDBG leverages another \$3.65 in other funding; bringing additional resources to communities that support jobs, businesses and, most importantly, the people who live there.

The CDBG Coalition is a network of 22 national organizations dedicated to the support and funding of the CDBG program. CDBG was enacted in 1974 under the Housing and Community Development Act. It remains one of the most important resources for state and local governments and their partners to use in devising flexible solutions to meet community development needs.

CDBG Coalition members include the U.S. Conference of Mayors, National Association of Counties, National League of Cities, National Community Development Association, Council of State Community Development Agencies, National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials, National Association for County Community and Economic Development, National Association of Development Organizations, American Planning Association, Local Initiatives Support Corporation, Habitat for Humanity International, Feeding America, YWCA USA, Enterprise Community Partners, Rebuilding Together, National Recreation and Park Association, National Association of Regional Councils, National Urban League, International Economic Development Council, Heartland Alliance, The Trust for Public Land, and National Development Council.