



**IN USE ON MAIN STREET:
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT (CDBG)**

Cross-Jurisdictional Street Improvements in Pennsylvania

Facilitated by the local metropolitan planning organization (MPO), neighboring communities in Pennsylvania leveraged regional collaboration to proactively address the need for safe, accessible, inviting, and connected infrastructure networks serving those that walk, bike, use wheelchairs, and access transit. Initial federal investment awarded to the community of Bethlehem to create the Broad Street Active Transportation Plan leveraged federal investment in transportation across the region, benefitting its neighbors Allentown and Easton, including Easton's Main Street district.

The long-term expansion of vehicular infrastructure in the region had severe consequences for road safety and the viability of transit, with the most extreme impacts falling on the most vulnerable residents. To address the challenges, the community used Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) funds to support a multi-modal transportation plan, then leveraged Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) dollars to launch communities into Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A) implementation grants, which allowed for implementation of infrastructure improvement projects.

Bethlehem,
Pennsylvania

in regional collaboration
with Easton and Allentown

CDBG Non-entitlement
Community

City Population (2020):
75,781

Investment Dollars:
Around \$10 million

Project Type:
Street Improvements

“We are transforming one of the busiest corridors in our community from a street built for cars into a street built for people. A historic day for Bethlehem.” BETHLEHEM MAYOR J. WILLIAM REYNOLDS

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The city of Bethlehem applied to PA WalkWorks, funded through the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), for \$20,000 to develop the Broad Street Active Transportation Plan. Previous studies of the Broad Street corridor, a critical route connecting the cities of Bethlehem, Allentown, and Easton, had indicated the potential to provide Enhanced Bus Service (EBS). The corridor already saw over 330,000 riders annually and EBS could increase that by more than 36% to over 450,000.

The plan, completed in 2021, identified a range of needed improvements to pedestrian, bicycle, and transit infrastructure along the corridor, including:

- multimodal signal upgrades,
- bicycle lanes separate from vehicular traffic,
- bump-outs to reduce crossing distances and slow vehicle speeds,
- bus bulb-outs at EBS stops, and
- crosswalks and rectangular rapid flashing beacons,
- intersection enhancements to ensure riders can travel to and from bus stops safely.

Long-term planning prepared Bethlehem for federal grant opportunities. Because the city had a Vision Zero Plan and the Broad Street Active Transportation Plan prepared, Bethlehem was eligible to apply for design and construction funding when the federal Department of Transportation launched the Safe Streets and Roads for All Grant Program as part of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act. In December of 2023, Bethlehem was awarded \$9.9 million for the construction of the Broad Street Corridor Enhanced Bus Service Project. That work will unroll over the next several years.

In addition, regional collaboration supported federal grants for neighboring community Allentown and Easton, both receiving comprehensive safety planning grants from SS4A.

The Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) supplanted these state and federal programs to support regional success through cross-jurisdictional roadway improvements in Bethlehem, Allentown, and Easton. CDBG is proven to be a flexible tool that allows a community to spark and leverage other programs for place-based investment at both the state and federal level. Due to its flexibility, CDBG dollars can positively impact Main Streets even when they are not the primary recipients of a grant. Coordination across entities and jurisdictions is key for collective success.

PARTNERS:

City of Easton

City of Allentown

City of Bethlehem

**Pennsylvania Department
of Health**

Pennsylvania Downtown Center

Easton Main Street





**IN USE ON MAIN STREET:
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT (CDBG)**

Citywide Program Maintenance and Façade Improvements

Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) dollars are essential to the success of the Boston Main Street program. The first city-wide Main Street program, Boston Main Street leverages CDBG dollars across its network to maintain programs, and it leverages the base funding that CDBG provides with additional funding and resources to create a robust network positioned well to address specific needs across the city.

The Boston Main Street program started in 1983 when then City Councilor Thomas Menino brought the Main Street Approach to Roslindale, a primarily residential neighborhood roughly six miles south-southwest of downtown Boston. Menino, who would become Boston's mayor a decade later, expanded the Main Street vision across the city. The result was Boston Main Streets: the first urban, multi-district Main Street program in the United States. Since the early years, the city has developed a robust and widespread network of 20 independent nonprofit Main Street programs aimed at economic development and revitalization.

Today, in Boston, 16 high-impact programs in the network receive just under \$60,000 in annual CDBG funding which goes directly to salary and overhead. In addition, all Boston Main Street programs receive awards from the city's Neighborhood Development Fund, which brings funding for those 16

Boston,
Massachusetts



Accredited Main Street Program

City Population (2020):
675,647

Project Type:
Program Maintenance

“Main Street works because it is ‘self-help,’... It is not about government coming in and telling you what to do. Cities are there to lend our neighborhoods a helping hand, but each group does all the work.”

BOSTON MAYOR THOMAS MENINO

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communities roughly \$125,000 annually. The annual funding offers economic improvements to Main Streets throughout the urban network. Together, they contribute to downtown revitalization through:

- streetscape improvements,
- façade improvements,
- renovation for upper-story housing,
- placemaking efforts,
- public facility improvements,
- conversion of buildings for new uses, and
- multi-modal transportation.

Base funding provides core capacity and operational support, necessary for strong program Main Street program administration. The city administers other CDBG-funded programs which allow Main Street organizations to amplify their impact. For example, Main Street communities, as well as any other entity eligible for CDBG funding, can qualify for an award from the ReStore Boston Program administered through the city. The program is focused on preserving and improving historic facades and storefronts as a strategic way to increase the vitality of commercial districts and local businesses. The program offers grants for:

- finishing the outside of businesses,
- repairing and replacing storefront windows and/or doors,
- creating new signs,
- adding lighting for buildings or signs,
- removing solid, roll-down grates, and
- putting in place awnings outside businesses.

The use of CDBG in Boston demonstrates the wide impact that federal investment has in communities, both directly and indirectly. The grant program as well as the annually administered CDBG funds from the city offer Main Street programs a comprehensive set of funding streams that not only support projects to revitalize their commercial districts, but also maintain their programs and ensure that the programs are operated and sustained on an ongoing basis.

Programs in Boston's network of Main Streets have differing needs and assets, and they can use an array of resources to ensure they address the needs of their districts and advance their specific goals. CDBG is a particularly important resource given the breadth of projects it supports and the flexibility the program offers in terms of use. Dollars go not only to discrete projects like those offered by the ReStore program, but also to ensure that the programs receive essential capacity and staffing support.

PARTNERS:

City of Boston, Office of Economic Opportunity and Inclusion

City of Boston, Office of Workforce Development

City of Boston, Office of Business Development

Boston Main Streets

Boston Main Streets Foundation

Small Businesses





**IN USE ON MAIN STREET:
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Façade Improvement in Elba, Alabama

In 2018, the City of Elba created an alliance of partners to secure funding for a downtown façade improvement project. Alabama Governor Kay Ivey awarded almost \$17.8 million in Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds to communities across the state. Elba was awarded \$450,000 of this funding for downtown revitalization. The CDBG funds, combined with a local match provided jointly by the City of Elba, Main Street Elba, and Foundation 154, were used to provide façade improvements to all storefronts on the town square that faced the Coffee County Courthouse. The funds also restored the historic Elba Theater to operational condition, providing completion of the first phase of a three-part restoration project.

The process began with a team meeting to determine the best use to start downtown revitalization. That team included representatives from the city, Restoration 154, Main Street Elba, state organizations, and other non-profit organizations. Additionally, citizens wrote letters and signed a petition in support of the grant. Each property owner signed contracts to allow work to be done on their facades. Designers met with property owners to develop façade concepts. Architectural plans were developed and approved by property owners and the Main Street Design Committee. The City of Elba contracted work and administered funds.

Elba,
Alabama



Affiliate Main Street Program

City Population (2020):
3,508

Investment Dollars:
\$650,000

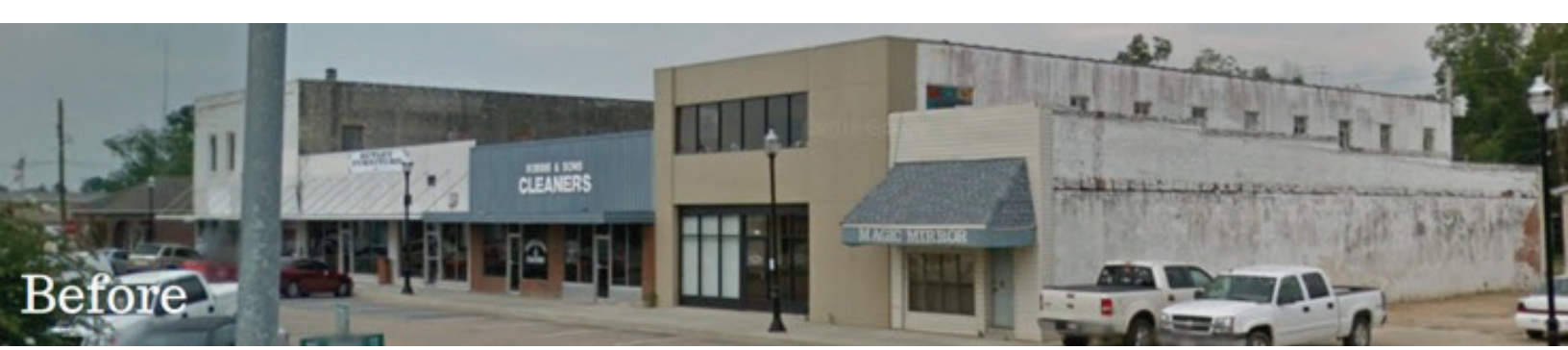
Investment Dollars from CDBG:
\$450,000

Project Type:
Façade Improvement

“...the key to community and economic development of our beloved city is downtown revitalization.” ELBA MAYOR MICKEY MURDOCK

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Before



After

The CDBG funds complemented existing funding for improvement to the courthouse that Coffee County Commissioners had previously allocated, creating a total investment in downtown Elba of \$1.1 million. The Elba Mayor is a strong proponent of downtown revitalization and using resources, including those available from federal sources, to bring life and vibrancy back to the downtown district. The façade improvement project and larger downtown revitalization project demonstrates the ways in which federal resources can be used in tandem with funding secured at the local and state level to generate a larger impact in a place-based project.

PARTNERS:

Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs

City of Elba

Main Street Elba

Restoration 154

Foundation 154

Southeast Alabama Regional Planning and Development Commission

Southern Engineering, Inc.



After

PHOTOS COURTESY OF MAIN STREET ALABAMA



Before

“As many of you know and experienced, downtown Elba was the place citizens gathered, visited and shared stories, shopped, and participated in commerce... Saturday in downtown Elba was where it happened. We believe this is the beginning of making Elba vibrant and appealing again.” ELBA MAYOR MICKEY MURDOCK



**IN USE ON MAIN STREET:
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Downtown Revitalization in Ottumwa, Iowa

In communities across the country, climate adaptation is of increasing importance. The City of Ottumwa has aggressively implemented downtown revitalization efforts over the last decade, leveraging Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding to help create both a lively and resilient downtown area. But it didn't stop there: the city's CDBG-funded projects have spurred additional investments that have made downtown Ottumwa a vibrant destination.

Over a decade ago, the city secured CDBG funding to invest in infrastructure that promoted vibrance and created resilience to changing climate impacts. By improving the streetscape and activating public space in Ottumwa's Main Street district, the city brought life back into downtown Ottumwa, and created a space that could withstand weather events. For example:

- The Canteen Alley project, a public-private creative placemaking venture with support from the city, Legacy Foundation and Principal Financial, transformed a previously underutilized public space with new tables, benches, lighting, vegetation, and art, as well as stormwater management features.
- On East Main Street, streetscape improvements brought wider sidewalks, bump-outs, mid-block crosswalks, permeable pavers, vegetated bioretention cells, public art, LED lighting, trees, and sustainability education.

Ottumwa,
Iowa



CDBG Non-entitlement
Community

Accredited Main Street Program

City Population (2020):
25,529

Investment Dollars:
\$16 million

Investment Dollars from CDBG:
\$7.2 million

Project Type:
Downtown Revitalization

“CDBG funds not only provided a huge economic impact in our district. It was also the catalyst for us to create long lasting partnerships, leverage additional private investments that showed quick transformational results that sparked community pride.”

FRED ZESINGER, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR MAIN STREET OTTUMWA

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These changes created a more enjoyable space for users and strengthened the downtown's resilience. Infrastructure changes have focused specifically on mitigating threats from environmental change and severe weather events. For example:

- CDBG disaster recovery (CDBG-DR) funds transformed Jefferson Street Parking Lot from a decaying asphalt cap over a coal power plant to a vibrant and green lot with trees, grasses, a permeable paving.
- CDBG-DR also funded five green roof projects, bringing vegetation reducing stormwater.

The city also deployed CDBG funds to improve downtown buildings. The city and private investors partnered on the "Market on Main" building a property which became the Ottumwa High School Career Campus to serve over 400 students in career and technical education courses. The Campus provides an opportunity to collaborate with Indian Hills Community College and strengthens the bond between the school system and downtown community.

CDBG funds have also rehabbed the facades of approximately 20 historic buildings in the Main Street district, preventing demolition of many buildings on the south side of East Main Street. The city was a pilot community for the Iowa Economic Development Authority (IEDA) in its exploration of upper-story housing redevelopment as a potential designated use of CDBG housing funds. The Ottumwa Pilot Project, which added over 20 units of upper-story housing in vacant units to the Main Street District, served as the model to bring upper-story housing into the regular fold for IEDA's CDBG Housing Rehab fund.

In addition to the direct beneficiaries of the improvements, there is a renewed confidence in downtown Ottumwa for other investors. The city and private stakeholders have invested \$16 million in downtown revitalization efforts in Ottumwa—CDBG funds are \$7.2 million of this total. CDBG support brought attention and work to make downtown Ottumwa vibrant once again. Small projects that began to activate public spaces and create resilience ballooned into a full downtown revitalization effort. The dollars have not only improved buildings, streetscapes, and public spaces in the Main Street district, but they have also ushered in a new era for downtown Ottumwa—one that offers entertainment, housing, events, and business to residents and visitors.



PARTNERS:

City of Ottumwa, Iowa Economic Development Authority (which administers CDBG), Area 15 Regional Planning Commission, Main Street Ottumwa, Main Street Iowa, Ottumwa Regional Legacy Foundation, property owners, and other funding partners including, Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship, Alliant Energy, Greater Ottumwa Partners in Progress, National Endowment for the Arts, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Principal Financial, and Ottumwa Area Arts Council.



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Economic Development and Historic Preservation Loan Programs

In many Main Street communities, older and historic buildings in disrepair need investment opportunities for adaptive reuse and rehabilitation. Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) dollars can be a vital resource to preserve historic buildings in Main Street communities. The City of Sheboygan used dollars to not only enhance community assets in the Main Street district, but also set up an economic development loan program to spur activity and ensure that the community is poised for growth.

To incentivize the revitalization of its downtown district, the city of Sheboygan set up two complimentary programs: the Economic Development Loan Program and the Historic Preservation Grant Program. These programs were established exclusively using CDBG funds and used for projects downtown. The goal of the Economic Development Loan Program is to promote employment and business opportunities, particularly in downtown Sheboygan. Growing businesses and/or industries within the city are eligible for the program, and each recipient must create new jobs, of which 51% or more must be for low or moderate income (LMI) individuals. The loans may be utilized for the purchase of land, new construction, and the purchase or installation of new equipment. The city will

Sheboygan, Wisconsin



**CDBG Entitlement
Community**

Affiliate Main Street Program

**City Population (2020):
49,929**

**Investment Dollars:
CDBG and Tax Increment Finance
Funds depending on incremental
revenue**

**Investment Dollars from CDBG:
\$800,000 in combined CDBG
funds**

**Project Type:
Loan Programs**



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Maverick's Barber Shop
 Historic Preservation 5-year
 forgivable loan
\$54,000
 Façade renovation

Business Development Loan
\$120,000 (3% Interest,
10 year loan)
12 new FTE, LMI jobs created
 Redevelopment of a building
 and vacant lot on Sheboygan's
 Riverfront into restaurant

provide below market interest rate loans to qualified borrowers for a term of 10 years. Recipients are eligible for loans at a rate of \$25,000 per new full-time equivalent (FTE) job created. The loans can cover up to 50% of total cost of project, all of which are funding using federal CDBG dollars.

In addition to the Economic Development Loan Program, the Historic Preservation Grant Program promotes façade renovation of historic buildings, conservation of valuable architecture, and preservation of the city's ethnic and cultural history as reflected in its historic structures. Priority was given to properties located within Harbor Centre District (downtown), and those that are designated as architecturally or historically significant by the City's Architectural and Historical Intensive Survey report. To be eligible, recipients must use an improvement design prepared by an historic preservation design professional, and the end product must reflect original design, materials, and the character of the building.

The city also maintains a Revolving Loan fund for loans up to \$50,000. Created in 1987, the fund is self-sufficient based on the amount of money each year that revolved back into the fund, which is typically around \$300,000. During difficult economic times, funds were used outside the downtown.

Paired with the economic development loan program, and the historic preservation grant program, CDBG dollars have breathed new life back into downtown Sheboygan. These programs do not simply focus on preserving the existing building stock, but they go a step further to ensure that Sheboygan's Main Street is equipped for the 21st century, positioned to grow and invite life back into the downtown area.



PARTNERS:

- City of Sheboygan**
- Sheboygan County Economic Development Corporation**
- Sheboygan Business Improvement District**
- Local Lenders**
- Architects and Engineers**
- Wisconsin Department of Administration, Division of Energy, Housing and Community Resources**