

APRIL 5-9, 2021

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT WEEK

Updates from Fitchburg Community Development and Planning



CDBG & HOME Overview

CDBG and HOME funding is a popular, bipartisan budget item that is administered to local governments nationwide through the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

In Year 46 (the current program year), the City was awarded **\$996,222** in CDBG funds and **\$510,558** in HOME funds.

In 2001, the City's CDBG award was \$1,402,000, or \$2,083,308 in 2021 dollars, and the HOME award was \$635,000, or \$943,581 in 2021 dollars. While this funding is incredibly valuable, and helps support needs across the City, staff and subrecipients are working to do more with less.

This year, with the help of Barrett Planning Group, staff started preparing the next Five Year Consolidated Plan, which identifies priorities in the City and influences how funding is allocated in each program year. The ConPlan will be released later this year.

The following pages highlight programs supported by CDBG and HOME, as well as notes the leveraging impact of both these funds and Community Development staff, more generally.

YEAR 47 UPDATES

- Last month, the City Council voted to approve the Mayor's recommendations for CDBG funding
- A public hearing will be held on these projects on April 28
- The City will submit its plan to HUD by May 14 in advance of the July 1 program year start

The Year 47 applications brought both returning applicants and new projects to the table. In the upcoming year, CDBG funds will be invested in youth programs, small business supports, infrastructure improvements, and more!

Year 46 Program Highlights

Critical Home Repair - Habitat for Humanity



Habitat's program is a great complement to the City's Code Enforcement program. The organization utilizes a combination of skilled and volunteer labor to make critical repairs to Fitchburg homes. Many of Habitat's clients are elderly or disabled, and these repairs make the home livable for the resident.

Since becoming a subrecipient in Year 45, Habitat has completed projects in 9 homes, including 6 roof jobs. These repairs would be otherwise prohibitively expensive for the homeowners, so in addition to livability, these projects promote safety and preserve Fitchburg's housing stock

Spartacus - YMCA



The YMCA Spartacus program serves at-risk youth by providing homework help, leadership training, and teambuilding. Each year, 50 Fitchburg youth are enrolled in Spartacus. Program staff were quick to adapt to the COVID restrictions, providing online workshops and check-ins while gathering in person was an impossibility.

Downtown Coordinator Fitchburg State University

The Downtown Coordinator represents a partnership between Fitchburg State University and the City of Fitchburg. Hired shortly before the COVID-19 shutdowns,



Marissa Monteiro has been working diligently with small business owners in the downtown area to adapt to the unique challenges of this past year. Her efforts include marketing support, assistance with pandemic assistance grants, and outreach to assess the needs of the businesses.

This spring, Marissa hopes to partner with the City to launch a series of safe, outdoor events downtown.

Program Highlights

Small Business Technical Assistance NewVue Communities

NewVue Communities offers a variety of resources for area residents and businesses. Their Small Business Technical Assistance program supports fledgling and established businesses through the creation or updating of business plans, finding financial resources to launch or expand operations, and, during the COVID-19 pandemic, to navigate the overwhelming process of finding and applying for resources.

This program supported a variety of businesses in pursuing Massachusetts Growth Capital Corporation COVID-response funding. The total funding received by 46 Fitchburg businesses is \$1,875,000

Police Department Drug Enforcement and Foot Patrols

The Police Department works hard to protect the residents of Fitchburg, and that includes getting illicit substances off the streets. The Drug Enforcement and Foot Patrols program provides funding for police overtime to perform surveillance and controlled seizure of drugs, and is focused on dealers, rather than individual users. Some of this work is in partnership with the Massachusetts State Police.

This important work is a complement to their work educating the public about the dangers of illegal substances, and promotion of mental health and substance use services.

Business Loan Program - Community Development Staff



The Community Development office has a revolving loan fund, which is used to support local businesses secure gap funding for growth or other improvements. These loans are offered at a very low - sometimes 0% - interest rate, and has favorable repayment terms, including deferment, and possible forgiveness of up to 6 months of payments.

One of the local businesses assisted was Strong Style Coffee. In addition to other improvements, the loan funds were used to replace a failing espresso machine, which is, of course, the heart of any coffee shop.

In the past few years, the City has made 7 loans, supporting 7 businesses, for a total of \$315,350 in loan investment. In total, this program has leveraged over \$1,604,708 in other sources of investment.

Housing Highlights

HOME Program Highlights



Part of the Community Development mission is to improve resident quality of life by improving the quality of housing and keeping housing affordable. Though funding is limited, these goals are achieved by providing property repair for income-eligible, owner-occupied families through our homeowner rehab program; providing funding matches for development of affordable housing; and undertaking strategic planning, policy, and systems change work to accomplish goals using data driven decision making.

The pandemic had a real impact on the homeowner repair program, and activity was paused for several months. However, over the last 10 years, this program has assisted:

- 136 units in 88 properties
- 49 owner-occupied homes through the homeowner repair program
- 14 rental units in owner-occupied homes
- 10 homebuyer developments with community partners

The program also created 41 HOME Program units of affordable rental housing in 7 rental projects. Of those properties, a total of 292 total units were created with 57 units of market rate housing. The remaining 194 units are affordable through other sources

Housing Policy and Systems Change Efforts

In addition to the HOME program, the Community Development and Planning Department works to improve the systems and policies to increase quality housing options across the City. These efforts including chairing the Neighborhood Improvement through Code Enforcement (NICE) Task Force, the establishment of zoning changes, such as the 40R Smart Growth District, and the creation and promotion of the Housing Development Incentive Program (HDIP), which provides Gateway Cities with a tool to develop market rate housing while increasing residential growth. This program (pictured) has seen its first new development this spring - the Crescent Street Townhome project, This project received a local tax incentive and a \$375,000 state tax credit through the HDIP program.



The newly developed Crescent Street Townhomes

COVID-19 RESPONSE

- Launched Small Business Emergency Grant Program
- CARES Act Funding
- Assistance to the Most Vulnerable Residents

After the announcement of business closures in March 2020, the Community Development Department immediately started a process to create the Emergency Business Grants and started accepting applications shortly thereafter. The addition of the CARES Act funding expanded the program and helped to sustain businesses as the restrictions continued throughout 2020.

CDBG subrecipients made their own quick pivot, and adapted to new ways of providing services. Most subrecipients were able to continue services in a remote way.

CARES Act Funding

With the CARES Act, the Federal government created a relief package for communities across the country. The purpose of this funding was to mitigate the effects of COVID-19, based on the community's individual priorities. It was determined that municipalities would receive support in the form of CDBG funds. As soon as these funds were announced, Community Development staff started planning with the Mayor's office and local organizations to determine the greatest needs of the residents.

When the first round of funding came in, the City quickly determined that direct assistance was vitally important, and allocated \$230,000 in rent and utility assistance and \$150,000 in small business grants. Another \$70,000 is being used to support a Community Health Worker and Health Navigators, which help direct residents in need to the appropriate resources.

With the second round of funding, the continuing restrictions motivated the City to allocate an additional \$200,000 in business assistance. \$115,000 was added to the homeowner and renter assistance fund. Between the 2 rounds, the City has also allocated over \$50,000 to address food insecurity.

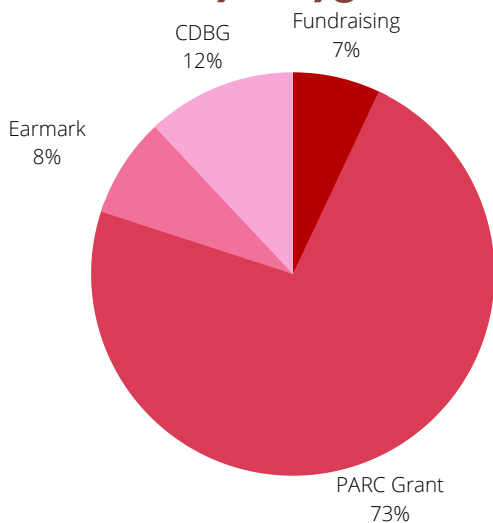


Leveraged Resources

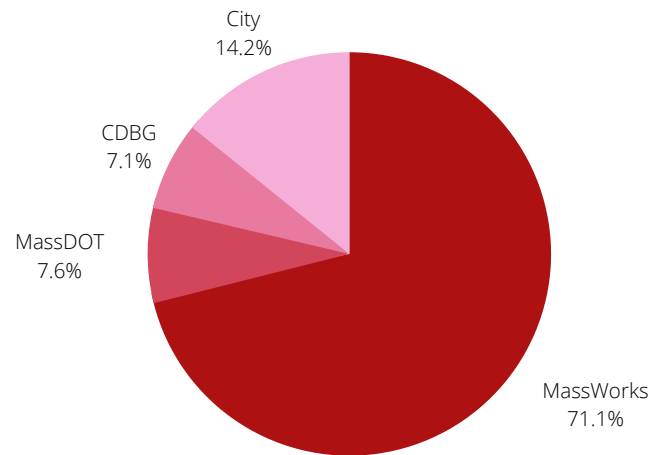
With reductions in funding and the increasingly-competitive nature of grant funding, the leveraged dollars from CDBG, HOME, and other City investment make much larger investments possible.

Over the last 10 years, CDBG and HOME funds have leveraged over \$100 Million

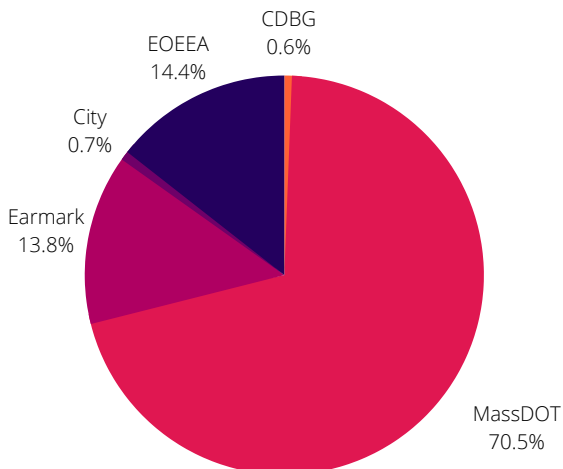
Sam Pawlak Community Playground



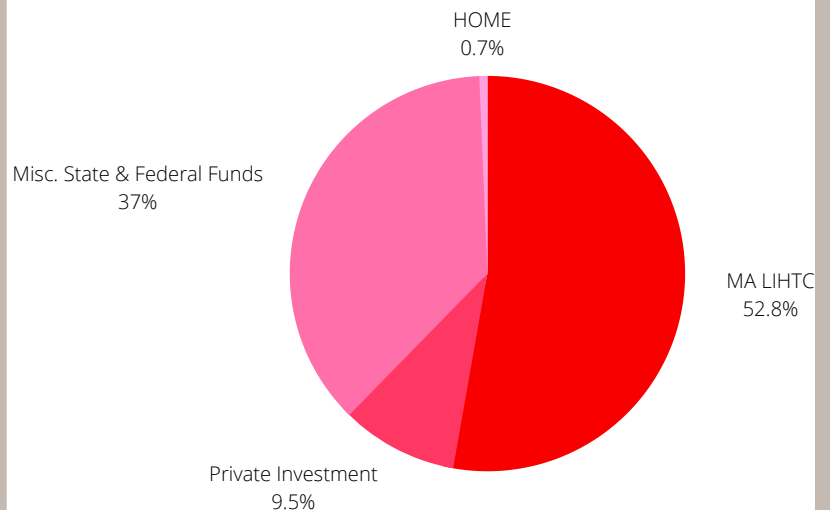
Main Street & Boulder Drive Project



Twin Cities Rail Trail



Yarn Works Apartments



Grant Administration & Leveraged Funds

A portion of CDBG and HOME funds pays for the staff administering these programs, and allows staff to apply for other grants for the City.

The following grants are just some of those that were successfully acquired through the efforts of Community Development Staff in the last 5 Years:

- MassWorks - Main & Boulder Project (\$3,000,000)
- MassWorks - River Street (\$3,050,000)
- Gateway Housing (\$275,000)
- Twin Cities Rail Trail
 - Department of Transportation (\$11,640,000)
 - Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (\$2,381,688)
- PARC - Pawlak Playground (\$400,000)
- Complete Streets (\$618,964)
- Brownfields Remediation (\$317,000)
- Liabilities to Assets (\$239,900)
- MassTrails (\$39,687)
- Neighborhood HUB Phase I (\$27,000)
- MassDevelopment TDI (\$825,000)
- First & Railroad Park - PARC and EPA Grants (\$261,203)
- Shared Streets and Spaces Grant (\$53,295)
- TDI Challenge Parking Grant (\$45,000)

Your Community Development and Planning Staff

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