COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT INVESTMENTS AND IMPACTS 2011-2015

NEBRASKA Department of Economic Development
The Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program was established in 1974 as part of the Housing and Community Development Act. CDBG funding is allocated to Nebraska from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. In 1982, the Nebraska Department of Economic Development (DED) instituted a state CDBG program that provides Nebraskans with safe, affordable housing and infrastructure as well as quality jobs and investments through the financing of new and expanding businesses. Over the past five years, eight counties, 118 communities and more than 240,000 low-to-moderate-income individuals have benefited from the CDBG program.

The CDBG funds must be utilized to meet at least one of the three national objectives: benefit low-and moderate-income persons; prevent or eliminate slums or blight; or meet urgent community development needs.

**AWARDED PROJECTS 2011-2015**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Congressional District</th>
<th>CDBG Investments</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>District 1</td>
<td>$18,944,052</td>
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<tr>
<td>District 2</td>
<td>$0</td>
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<tr>
<td>District 3</td>
<td>$31,990,879</td>
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The Nebraska CDBG Program does not include the entitlement cities of Omaha, Lincoln, or Bellevue. All data included in this publication relates to all Nebraska counties and communities with a population of less than 50,000.

The Nebraska CDBG program provides funding to communities and counties in the following categories:

- Comprehensive Revitalization
- Comprehensive Investment & Stabilization
- Downtown Revitalization
- Economic Development
- Owner Occupied Rehabilitation

- Planning
- Public Works
- Tourism Development
- Water/Wastewater

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**CDBG Investments by Congressional District**

**Recipients Awarded Projects from January 1, 2011 - December 31, 2015**
With $50 million in CDBG funds, matched with over $84 million in leveraged funds totaled 272 CDBG eligible projects.

$1 CDBG = $1.66 Leverage for all CDBG Projects

Over $15 million in CDBG Comprehensive Revitalization and Downtown Revitalization investments leveraged over $14.8 million in other private and public investments.

$1 CDBG = $0.94 Leverage for Comprehensive Revitalization and Downtown Revitalization Projects

Over $8 million in CDBG Economic Development investments leveraged over $38 million in other private and public investments.

$1 CDBG = $4.78 Leverage for Economic Development Projects

629 jobs created/retained

There was a total of 54 Community Development projects between Public Works and Water/Wastewater. Over $13.7 million CDBG funds were dedicated to these projects.

Over $8 million in CDBG investments leveraged over $14 million in other private and public investments.

$1 CDBG = $1.68 Leverage for Public Works Projects

Over $5 million in CDBG Water/Wastewater investments leveraged over $11 million in other private and public investments.

$1 CDBG = $2.30 Leverage for Water/Wastewater Projects

2% Child Care Center
2% Community Center
4% Library
4% Fire Station
13% Water
28% Sewer
47% Streets

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Among the frustrated, was a group of eighth-grade students who were determined to reopen the theatre. The students brought the community together and by June 2015, they were able to reopen to the public.

Bringing the Majestic Theatre back to life was important to the community. Without it, the closest movie theatres were in Kearney (40 miles away), Hastings (86 miles away), and Grand Island (87 miles away). The students thought it was a waste of gas to drive that far to see a movie. The eighth-graders started by going to the school board, who agreed to purchase the theatre and its equipment for $75,000. This money was raised through annual lip sync competitions and selling merchandise, such as shirts and pens, imprinted with the words, “I Love LEX. One Community. One Theatre. It’s MAJESTIC.”

After the theatre was purchased from the Falkinburg family, it was turned over to the City of Lexington for renovations that included making the building handicap-accessible, a new roof, relocating restrooms in the lobby area, installing heating and air conditioning, electrical work, and a new projector and screen. Students volunteered for demolition and cleanup duties. Lexington High School students enrolled in a Principles of Construction class helped with framing and drywalling. Thanks to a $225,000 CDBG funding from DED, a $175,000 donation from the Sherwood Foundation, two awards from Dawson County Tourism, and effortless fundraising, they managed to fund more than $700,000 for the revitalization project.

The reopening of the theatre in June 2015, celebrated the 100th anniversary of the Majestic’s original opening in 1915. The premiere showing was Pitch Perfect 2. The once eighth-grade students, now graduates of Lexington High School, committed to this project all the way through their high school careers.

“We never gave up. We saw the potential in it, and seeing it all now, it’s worth it. Five years is a long time to wait, but it’s worth it,” said Kevin Tobias, a Lexington High School graduate.

The theatre is now run by 15 families, part of a “cast and crew.” The families are trained in how to run the equipment and work with volunteers who help out on the weekends. The Majestic shows movies Friday and Saturday evenings, along with a matinee on Sunday afternoon. After five years, Lexington finally has its beloved theatre back.

The Tourism Development category of the Nebraska CDBG program has also provided funding to develop art centers, museums, cultural centers, and visitor centers throughout Nebraska. Between 2011–2015, 11 recipients received funding, including North Platte, Grand Island, Red Cloud and Cedar County.
The Village of Lindsay (pop. 255), took advantage of this technology and implemented a new well system whose water-blending process is controlled from a mobile device, thereby providing cleaner and safer water for the community. Nitrate levels from the old well system were registering too high, posing health risks to infants and pregnant women. A new well system was an absolute must for the community.

The total project cost for a new well and water-blending system was estimated at $629,050, of which $250,000 CDBG funds awarded by DED. The remaining $379,050 was financed by the Village of Lindsay and the Nebraska Health and Human Services Revolving Loan Fund.

The project involved multiple parts. There was the need for a new well, which would be drilled on one acre of land. A test well was drilled in 2012, deeming it adequate in quantity and quality for a municipal well. Along with the new well was the need for 7,800 feet of new water transmission main. This new main connects the new well to the existing water tank and distribution system. There was a new water-blending system installed that controls all wells, and manages both the quantity and quality of water pumped in the storage tanks and distribution system. The Village of Lindsay owns and operates the new well, transmission main, and water-blending equipment.

The mobile application of the well was installed by Hydro Optimization and Automation Solutions (HOA Solutions) of Lincoln, Nebraska. It controls all well systems via cell phones or computers. The app also lets officials remotely view any alarms, and change controls for operations and levels. The old system relied on shining lights to alert workers to problems which meant a worker needed to be on sight to see the light. Now the mobile app alerts, notifies and explains the issues through cell phones. It also remotely controls and sets the blending levels, adjusting the gallons per minute and controlling the amount of nitrates.

The community of Lindsay has had the new well system up and running since April 2015. The blending has been going well, according to Lindsay Village Clerk John Haynes. The water is safely under the maximum contamination level for nitrates, thereby improving the safety and well-being for the people of Lindsay.

The Nebraska CDBG, Water/Waste Water category, provided funding to communities to create and improve lagoons, water sewer systems, lift stations, and wastewater treatment facilities. Between the years 2011-2015, over $5.2 million was granted to 19 communities, including Bee, Harrison, Ashton, Haigler and Merriman.

The new cell phone app offers officials remote views and alarms, and the ability to change controls for operations and levels.
Downtown Revitalization Is Key To Community Success

Downtowns are the heart of every community. It is where local businesses thrive, folks are greeted with warm, hometown smiles. Downtowns historically have been a major hub for towns through the centuries. With the passage of time, downtowns age, requiring repairs and renovation. But with commitment and dedication, residents in Beatrice, Ogallala, and Scottsbluff, have been able to breathe life back into their downtowns.

Beatrice (pop. 12,157), has an energized working downtown. Located at the crossroads of U.S. Highways 77 and 136, the downtown district has enjoyed a resurgence of growth opportunities. Filled with restaurants, clothing stores, and niche businesses, Beatrice has been able to remain stable. To keep this stability and strengthen the downtown, redevelopment efforts were needed.

Improvements needed for downtown Beatrice included repaving specific streets, restoring facades of commercial buildings, and enforcing vacant building codes. In October 2011, Beatrice was awarded $350,000 CDBG funding from DED, and the downtown was able to start renovations.

One of the biggest successes was the Fifth Street project that entailed the renewal of Fifth Street, between Court and Ella streets. This included redesigning the right of way and putting in new curbs and bump outs. A brick mural was introduced, portraying two different scenes. One side details Gage County’s homestead heritage and the other side reflects the business community and early Beatrice. Another addition was a historically accurate clock, similar to one found downtown during years past. Traubel's Popcorn Stand was reopened on Fifth and Court after being closed for over 25 years. Julie’s Hotdog Stand also occupies Fifth Street during the lunch hour. Angle parking was installed on both sides of the street. The area has become a place where people look forward to interesting, fun events every third Thursday. This could be anything from a music arts festival to a salute to local auto racing.

The Fifth Street project was completed in November 2013. An abundance of life has been brought back to the street. Driving through the area you notice people ordering at the food stands, relaxing, and enjoying the space. It has brought people together and made a great place to celebrate. Beatrice continues to make strides toward a bright future.

Ogallala (pop. 4,606), has a bustling downtown. Directly intersected by Interstate 80, creates high traffic for the town. To accommodate this activity, functionality was a needed addition to make the town viable for residents and visitors alike. Ogallala also wanted to provide drive through traffic with a visually appealing site when entering the town.

In December 2011, Ogallala was awarded $350,000 CDBG funding by DED. With funds available, the town was now able to achieve a level of convenience and create better access to parking. To bring a fresh look to downtown, business owners made improvements to their worn out facades. Along with the renovations, Ogallala added an outdoor pavilion named Rendezvous Square. Designed by Olsson Associates, the pavilion became a new venue for the town to use for festivities such as concerts, farmers’ markets,
To beautify the downtown, matching funds were made available to all business owners to replace worn out facades, windows, and other exterior features to make their businesses more pleasing and inviting. Excitement was generated throughout town for the revamping of businesses downtown. Over 40 businesses took part in this project, doing everything from adding new signage to completely rebuilding their businesses. The local movie theatre added digital signs, replacing its old marquee, which previously had to be manually updated by the staff. Awnings were added to buildings, such as Hight’s Tavern, which created an inviting and unique appearance. Some businesses, such as Runza, have included apartments in the upper stories of the building. In total, 25 additional units of living were added. There was also a contest held where dual purpose sculptures were created, also serving as bike racks. Around six were made, ranging from a water fountain, to coffee cups, to a box of fries.

The revitalization has been a great success for Scottsbluff, bringing new life to the downtown area. It now has a more lively appearance, and is more functional for everyone. The town will continue to make improvements to bring a higher standard of living to the community.

The towns of Beatrice, Ogallala and Scottsbluff are part of the many towns updating and improving their downtowns throughout Nebraska. With the help of the CDBG program, and the commitment and dedication of communities, downtowns will continue to thrive and achieve great success which benefits the entire community and state.

Over $7.3 million has been awarded to develop Downtown Revitalization projects in 24 communities across the state. In the past five years, communities such as: Gothenburg, Holdrege, Chadron, and Madison have received funding from the CDBG program.

In the summer of 2014, the project was completed. Since then the town has made great use of Rendezvous Square. They held a successful BBQ contest at the pavilion and hosted multiple concerts. The revitalization project has created a great atmosphere for the community and anyone travelling through town to enjoy.

For Scottsbluff (pop. 15,023), maintaining a current and appealing appearance for their downtown was very important. They believed that some of the buildings were becoming an “eyesore” to the community and visitors alike. It was decided that the downtown area needed to be renewed.

In 2011, Scottsbluff was awarded $350,000 CDBG funding by DED. Along with that, over $595,000 in private investments and fundraising was appropriated for the project. Numerous projects were completed in Scottsbluff’s downtown area including the installation of a public restroom. Another project was the addition of a permanent awning over the Farmers’ Market area. This helped create a permanent spot for the weekly farmers’ market to be held. To incorporate more space, parking downtown was changed from parallel to angle parking. A noticeable difference made to the downtown was renovation on Broadway Street. It was reduced from four lanes to two, with the addition of a turning lane, which made it more pedestrian friendly. Traffic signals and lights were also removed. These improvements changed the atmosphere of the area, slowing down the traffic and making the street quieter.

For the annual Ogallala Rendezvous Festival. It was created to incorporate the alleys and connect them together, creating a pedestrian friendly accessible area.

Over 40 Scottsbluff business owners took part in the downtown revitalization to make their businesses more pleasing and inviting.

Over 40 Scottsbluff business owners took part in the downtown revitalization to make their businesses more pleasing and inviting.
Brehmer Manufacturing Prospering, Expands Even During Tough Economic Times

Big things come in small packages could not be more true for Brehmer Manufacturing in Lyons, Nebraska (pop. 814). Back in 1971, when Brehmer was founded, all they started with was a light post and a stick welder.

Today the company does work in 27 different countries and its products are designed for a wide range of industries and business sectors, including agriculture, livestock, truck equipment, truck sales, tire recycling equipment, and custom manufacturing. Brehmer prospers even during tough economic times because of its niche markets.

In 2013, the company was awarded $255,000 in CDBG funding from DED to expand its facility. The remaining balance, $569,480, was funded by the company through equity and a loan from First National Bank Northeast of Lyons.

In April 2014, Brehmer Manufacturing began constructing an 80’ x 125’ addition, renovating its warehouse, installing new paving, making road improvements, purchasing new manufacturing equipment, and eventually hiring ten full-time employees. The company is not new to growth as this is the ninth expansion. Brehmer currently employs 68 full-time and part-time employees. Prior to this expansion, the company had 44 baseline employees.

“We are already planning for the next addition and hope to begin work on it within the next three years,” said Joe Brehmer.

Lyons residents fully support the company and the overall impact it continues to have on the community.

“Their innovation is always fascinating,” said Brooks Larsen, Vice President of First National Bank Northeast. “They don’t have boundaries on their design. Sometimes we create [our own] boundaries, but Joe just expands.”

The company is not new to growth as this is the ninth expansion. Brehmer currently employs 68 full-time and part-time employees.

Brehmer Manufacturing ribbon-cutting event celebrated latest expansion project with tours and product displays.

$8.1 million of CDBG funding has been awarded toward Economic Development projects throughout the state between the years 2011-2015. A total of 18 recipients received CDBG funding to further develop businesses within their counties and communities including Lincoln County, McCook, Scotts Bluff County and Norfolk.
A House Isn't Just A Place To Hang Your Hat

Houses are what make a community, and a place to call home. Keeping homes in good condition is not only important to the health and well-being of homeowners, but vital to the community as well.

Attractive, functioning homes make towns more presentable to visitors, improve the quality of life, and increase economic sustainability. Most importantly though, keeping homes up to standards gives residents safe, comfortable and great places to live in.

In the town of Plainview (pop. 1,217), officials made it a priority to revitalize multiple houses, which helped rejuvenate the community.

In 2012, Plainview was awarded a $224,868 Owner Occupied Rehabilitation grant from DED. Along with this, $15,875 CDBG funding was provided to 34 Nebraska communities from the Owner Occupied Rehabilitation category from 2011-2015. Sutherland, Fairbury, Aurora and Perkins County are just a few of the recipients that received part of the $7.8 million funds during the past five years.

The repairs and adjustments to the homes made a world of difference for the families who lived in them especially in terms of safety. One family with five children had experienced great stress and worry when their furnace stopped working and they had no available money to replace it. Through this program, the family was relieved to acquire a new furnace. Another family with two young children added two new rooms to their home but were unable to complete the work which left exposed wiring. These and other hazards were cleaned up, providing a safer setting for the children.

The housing projects began in April 2013, and finished up in March 2015. Most of the projects took anywhere from six to 15 months to complete, from the start of the application process to completion. Overall the program was successful in providing ten families of Plainview with more secure, safe and updated homes.
Walthill’s New Fire Station Serves Dual Purpose

Over 70 years ago, Walthill (pop. 769), built its first fire station. After all those years, a building can go through quite a bit of wear and tear, and its uses can be outdated. This was the situation for the town of Walthill and their fire department. The fire and rescue buildings were no longer able to provide functionality. The town was in need of a new station.

There were numerous problems with the old fire station. One main drawback was that the old station did not have enough room for parking the vehicles, which included two rescue units, three grass rigs, two pumpers, and one tanker. To fit in the building, all vehicles were parked at angles making it nearly impossible to quickly exit during emergency calls. Also, because there was no insulation in the building, there was a $700 monthly gas bill to pay during winter. Mold in the building permeated the firefighters’ gear so a dehumidifier operated nonstop during most of the summer to keep moisture levels tolerable.

The town came together in support of the new fire station. Various donations and fundraising activities occurred throughout the community. A $100,000 donation was made by a local family in honor of their father. The CharterWest Bank of Walthill committed $50,000 to the project.

The local fire department held a chili feed, and developed a brochure describing the project. Walthill Public School worked with the village and held a fair housing poster contest for the new station. A fundraising thermometer was provided by the bank, which influenced and encouraged a lot of the larger donations. Total local donations reached $183,904. The Village was also awarded $350,000 CDBG funding from DED in October 2012. With a U.S. Department of Agriculture loan, the fundraising was complete and construction began on the new fire station in May 2013.

The new building, completed December 2013, finally offered the space and amenities that had been lacking for many years. The new station featured two drive-through doors, and houses all of the fire-fighting vehicles, including two rescue squads. A new meeting/activity room holds a maximum of 90 people—nearly three times the previous capacity of 35. The kitchen area offers valuable storage space. The new hall is handicapped accessible in accordance with the American with Disabilities Act, has a fully-wired sprinkler system, and is energy efficient from its special roof to the large ceiling fans and radiant heat in the bays.

The firemen relocated to the new fire station in January 2015. Slight adjustments were made as the firemen settled into their new surroundings. The building’s dual purpose as a community meeting area has been used time and again. The new station has become an important hub of activity and safety for the town.

In addition to developing public facilities such as libraries, fire stations, and community centers, the CDBG Public Works category also provides funding to help communities with infrastructure projects such as street improvements and storm sewers. Over the past five years, $8.5 million of CDBG funding was granted to 35 projects throughout Nebraska. Of these 35 projects, 30 projects focused on improving the infrastructure within the community. Wilcox, Phillips, South Sioux City and Taylor are just a few communities that received CDBG funding.
In Nebraska, recognition comes in the form of the annual Showcase Community Award, which goes to the community that has demonstrated best efforts and accomplishments during a five-year period, with a primary focus on CDBG projects. In 2015, the award went to Lexington, Nebraska (pop. 10,230). Lexington exhibited a dedication to growth and a better future through an approach that embraced forward thinking.

Lexington focused its development efforts mainly on the downtown. One revitalization project involved the Majestic Theatre. The city was awarded $225,000 in CDBG Tourism Development funds in 2013 to undertake the extensive renovation project. Through boundless fund raising by students and residents, an additional $700,000 went toward the renovations. The plan to unveil the “new” Majestic Theatre during its 100th anniversary celebration in the spring of 2015, went off without a hitch. The first movie shown was *Pitch Perfect 2*. (More information on this project can be found on page 6.)

Along the same line as the theatre renovation, downtown districts bring life to communities, which is why Lexington began a downtown revitalization project in 2009 to assist 20 businesses. Along with $350,000 in CDBG funding, the community raised $466,000 in matching funds and investments. Multiple organizations, including RDG Planning and Design, Lexington City Council and Administration, Dawson Area Development, Main Street Lexington, Lexington Community Foundation, and other local businesses committed time and effort to this revitalization.

Another significant project for Lexington was construction of the Lexington Fieldhouse activity and recreation center completed in October 2015. Supported with the Civic Community Financing funding from DED, the new Fieldhouse will be a beehive of activity, hosting year-round sporting events.

Numerous non-CDBG-related projects were undertaken in Lexington, as well, including the New Neighborhoods Initiative that led to the development of 12 single-family rentals, eight senior owner-occupied units, and six single-family owner-occupied units. Two more single-family owner-occupied units are under construction and seven additional build-ready lots are pending development.

Lexington has not only helped grow and develop its own community, but has also helped surrounding communities including Cozad and Gothenburg. Congratulations are well-deserved for Lexington, which has demonstrated the ability to bring the entire community together to not only improve standards, but reignite a passion and pride for hometown living.
INVESTMENTS AND IMPACTS

Ansley, (Population: 432), New Water Treatment Facility
Benefits 275 Low-Moderate-Income Persons

DED awarded $350,000 in CDBG funds to the village of Ansley to build a new wastewater facility to replace its outdated system. Ansley also received $1,028,000 through the Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality’s State Revolving Loan Fund. In all, the Village of Ansley received about $1,378,000 to complete its water project. This project served all residents, including 275 low-to-moderate-income residents.

Aurora, (Population: 4,465), Owner Occupied Rehabilitation
Benefits 7 Low-Moderate-Income Households

Aurora has become a prime location for technology, transportation, logistics and supply chain management solutions. Aurora was awarded $225,689 in CDBG funding to rehabilitate seven owner occupied residences. These funds assist low-to-moderate-income wage earners. Such renovations improve the health and safety of individual residences. Also, each owner occupied home helps to stabilize a neighborhood and typically increases the aesthetic appearance of that area. According to project administrator Judy Petersen “Seven homes in total were assisted through the City of Aurora program, and all of them were able to save on future major, costly repairs that they probably would not have been able to complete without a program like this.”

Benkelman, (Population: 983), Owner Occupied Rehabilitation
Benefits 9 Low-Moderate-Income Households

Previously successful housing rehabilitation programs and the ongoing exhibited need for more such rehabilitation work prompted Benkelman officials to apply for, and ultimately receive $255,000 CDBG funds in the Owner Occupied Rehabilitation category. The City of Benkelman leveraged the CDBG funds by securing additional funding from the U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Development and other weatherization funds. As a result they were able to make two units handicapped accessible and complete nine units in total, exceeding the original eight home estimate.

Central City, (Population: 2,921), Owner Occupied Rehabilitation
Benefits 6 Low-Moderate-Income Households

Central City was awarded $193,994 in CDBG funding to address deteriorating properties within the community. Funds were used to rehabilitate six owner occupied residences of persons earning low-to-moderate-incomes. Such renovations improve the health and safety of families, stabilize neighborhoods, and generally increase an area’s aesthetic appearance. Project Administrator Judy Petersen, explained that such renovations “improved not only the appearance of their homes, but also the physical structures, and eliminated health and safety concerns related to wiring, smoke detectors, handrails, and lead-based paint. They also were able to cut their utility costs thanks to added insulation and the elimination of leaking fixtures.”

Fairbury, (Population: 3,942), Owner Occupied Rehabilitation
Benefits 8 Low-Moderate-Income Households

Documented need and strong community support resulted in much needed Owner Occupied Rehabilitation activity for homeowners in Fairbury. The City was awarded $267,748 in CDBG funds to rehabilitate eight households at or below 80% of area median income levels. The funding of basic structural rehabilitation to meet safety and reliability standards, resulted in homes with an added 20-year projected viability period.

Hastings, (Population: 25,093), Business Expansion
40 Jobs Created Primarily Benefiting Low-Moderate-Income Persons

DED awarded $705,000 in CDBG Economic Development category funding to the City of Hastings. In turn the City provided $700,000 to the Hastings Economic Development Corporation (HEDC) which loaned the funds to Dutton-Lainson Company. The company used the funds to acquire another business and expand its existing operations in Hastings. The total project budget was $5,856 million and created 40 new jobs. Dutton-Lainson exceeded these project requirements.

Jansen, (Population: 119), Updates to the Sewer System
Benefits 92 Low-Moderate-Income Persons

DED awarded $350,000 in CDBG funds to the village of Jansen to line portions of its existing sanitary sewer system, install new service connections, and replace sewer mains where needed. Jansen also received $312,000 from Nebraska’s Clean Water State Revolving Program for a total of $662,000 in funding. This project served all of the residents of the community, including 92 low-to-moderate-income residents.

Loup City, (Population: 1,020), Street Improvements
Benefits 547 Low-Moderate-Income Persons

DED awarded the City of Loup City $350,000 in CDBG funds in the Public Works category. More specifically, the city used the funds to pave more than five blocks of existing asphalt streets and install integral curbing and gutters. The city also received $213,480 in additional funding through bonds. The total amount of funding the city received was $563,480. This project served all of the residents of the community, including 547 low-to-moderate-income residents.

Taylor, (Population: 174), Street Improvements
Benefits 149 Low-Moderate-Income Persons

DED awarded the Village of Taylor $298,707 in CDBG funds to undertake a public works project. Taylor paved 12 blocks of streets with asphalt, installed integral curbing, and created three ramps to meet requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act. The Village contributed $212,467 from its street fund to meet the project’s $511,147 total. This project benefited 149 low-to-moderate-income residents.