



COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT

# INVESTMENTS & IMPACTS

2016 – 2020

**NEBRASKA**  
DEPT. OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

# CDBG OVERVIEW

Established as part of the Housing and Community Development Act in 1974, the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program allocates funding directly to the State of Nebraska and to the four entitlement communities (Bellevue, Grand Island, Lincoln and Omaha) from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

The Nebraska Department of Economic Development (DED) implements and oversees the State CDBG program to develop viable communities by providing Nebraskans with safe, affordable housing and infrastructure, as well as by creating quality jobs and investments through the financing of new and expanding businesses.

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


Over the past five years, 133 communities and counties have benefited from the State CDBG program, encompassing more than 97,378 low- and moderate-income individuals. The current overview highlights State CDBG program investments made in communities and counties across Nebraska.

\*Category is no longer active as of 2018.


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

- Comprehensive Development\*
- Downtown Revitalization
- Economic Development
- Emergent Threat
- Owner-Occupied Rehabilitation
- Planning
- Public Works
- Tourism Development
- Water/Wastewater

## CDBG BY THE NUMBERS: JANUARY 1, 2016 - DECEMBER 31, 2020

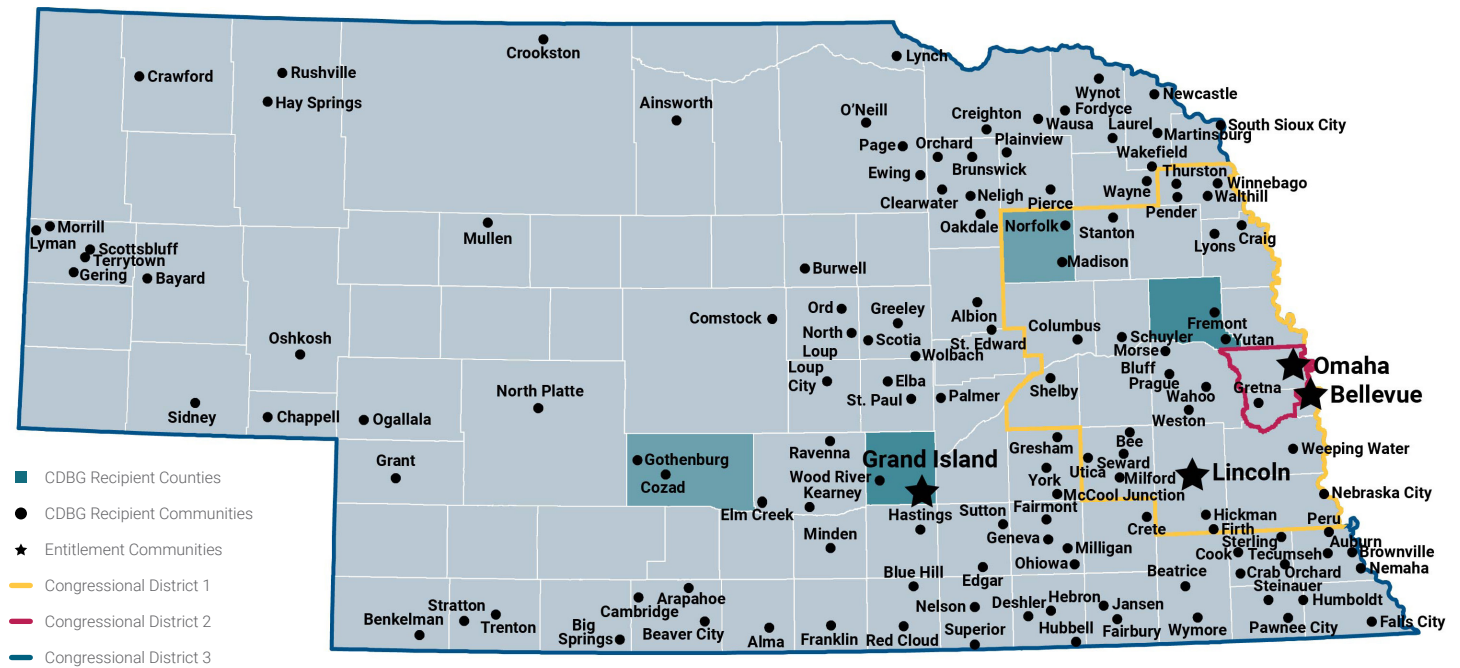
 **\$52,907,690**  
State of Nebraska  
Non-Entitlement Investments

 **222**  
Projects

 **97,378+**  
Low- and Moderate-Income  
Individuals Assisted

 **133**  
Communities and  
Counties Impacted

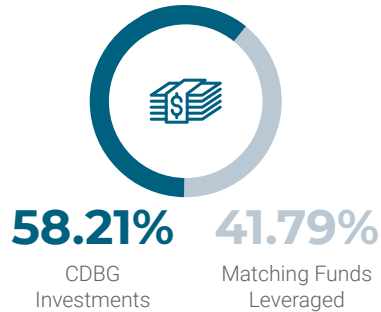
*For the non-entitlement area, the Nebraska Department of Economic Development makes CDBG funds available to Nebraska counties and communities with a population of less than 50,000. All information contained in this publication pertains to the non-entitlement area.*



# INVESTMENT SUMMARY: 2016-2020

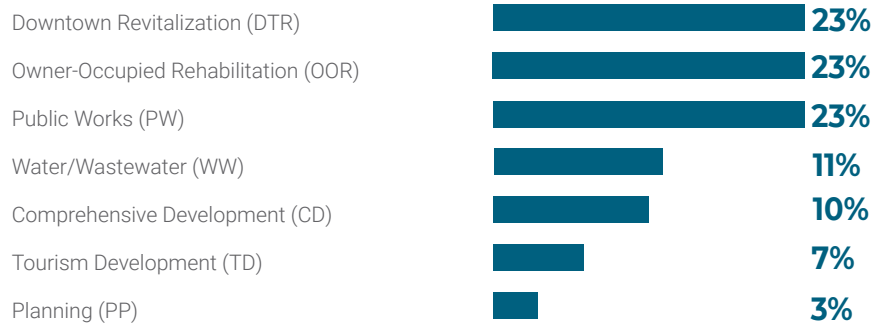
## CDBG & OTHER INVESTMENTS FOR ALL PROGRAM CATEGORIES

\$52.9 million in CDBG funds leveraged over \$37.9 million in matching funds to enable 222 projects.



## CDBG ALLOCATIONS BY CATEGORY

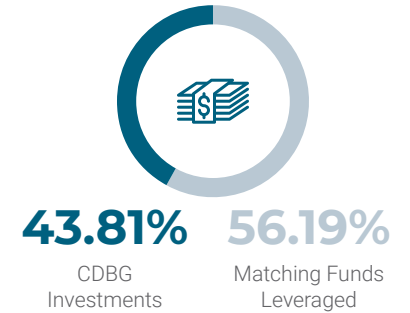
The CDBG program allocates funding to address one or more of the following goals: provide decent housing, provide a suitable living environment and expand economic opportunity. The State also ensures that within each category one of the following outcomes is met with each funded activity: improved availability/accessibility, improved affordability and improved sustainability.



## INFRASTRUCTURE & PUBLIC FACILITY IMPROVEMENT INVESTMENTS

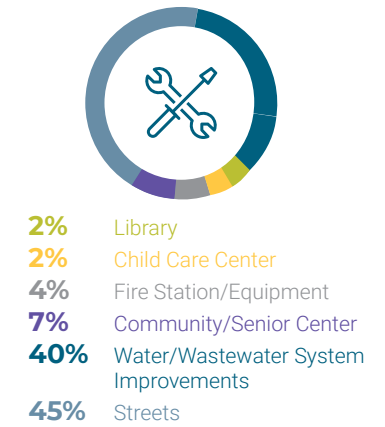
Over \$18 million in CDBG infrastructure and facility improvement investments leveraged more than \$23.2 million in public and private investment.

\$1 CDBG = \$1.28 leveraged for Public Works and Water/Wastewater projects.



## INFRASTRUCTURE & PUBLIC FACILITY IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS

A total of 57 projects focused on infrastructure and public facilities within the CDBG categories of Public Works and Water/Wastewater.



## HOUSING REHABILITATION

Over \$12 million in CDBG funding has been invested to address housing needs since 2016. Today, 132 homes have been rehabilitated, benefiting low- and moderate-income households. In all, the funding will support the rehabilitation of 442 homes.



**442**  
Homes to be Rehabilitated



*Left to right: NGage Executive Director Trevor Lee; Beatrice Area Chamber of Commerce Executive Director Angie Bruna; Gage County Supervisor Erich Tiemann; Mayor Stan Wirth; NGage President Andrea Schafer; Mainstreet Beatrice President Danielle Fairbanks; City Administrator Tobias Tempelmeyer; Mainstreet Beatrice Executive Director Michael Sothan.*

## **BEATRICE SELECTED FOR 2020 GOVERNOR’S SHOWCASE COMMUNITY AWARD IN RECOGNITION OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, IMPACTFUL USE OF CDBG FUNDS**

**SUCCESSFUL PARTNERSHIPS AND A CLEAR VISION FOR THE FUTURE LED TO BEATRICE’S SELECTION AS NEBRASKA’S 2020 GOVERNOR’S SHOWCASE COMMUNITY.**

In Beatrice, “Stake Your Claim” is more than just a catchy slogan. It’s the product of a community coming together to pursue a concrete blueprint for economic growth and a higher quality of life.

**“ The Mercantile is a terrific example of the engagement and citizen involvement you can often expect to see when a city invests in downtown revitalization. The CDBG program has been a tremendously valuable tool in our economic development efforts.”**

STAN WIRTH, MAYOR

In 2014, local stakeholders including the City, Gage County, NGage, the local Chamber, Beatrice Public Schools and others united to form a vision — a common branding strategy that they felt reflected the determination, pride and spirit of progress embodied in the community.

“Our accomplishments have been the result of a communicative and collaborative effort,” said Mayor Stan Wirth. “The fact that we were able to come together as a group focused on economic development explains the success we’ve been able to achieve and the inroads we’ve been able to make with business, industry and quality of life in our city.”

Together, the group was able to pinpoint common areas essential to Beatrice’s growth and competitiveness: areas like available, affordable housing; a vibrant downtown; quality schools and the growth of the skilled workforce. Elements that could promote new opportunities and foster a sense of community pride.

Thanks to this all-hands-on-deck approach, Beatrice’s achievements over the past five years alone have been laying the foundation for long-term, sustainable growth.

For example, with support from two rounds of CDBG funding for downtown revitalization — administered by the Nebraska Department of Economic Development — a sweeping façade improvement program has brought new vibrancy to the city’s historic commercial district while sparking the growth of local businesses. Since 2016 alone, approximately 60 businesses have opened, relocated or expanded in downtown Beatrice, and are serving to attract families and young professionals to the area. In fact, by recent figures, CDBG-funded downtown improvements have sparked more than \$3 million in local investment since 2018.

The renovation of the historic Mercantile Building is a marquee example of Downtown Beatrice’s recent progress and new vibe. A 21,000 square foot building from the 1950s that was vacant and nearing the point of demolition, the Mercantile was recently purchased by local citizens and renovated into an attractive commercial space that now houses multiple businesses.

“The Mercantile is a terrific example of the engagement and citizen involvement you can often expect to see when a city invests in downtown revitalization,” said Wirth. “The CDBG program has been a tremendously valuable tool in our economic development efforts.”

On the housing front, the construction or rehabilitation of dozens of new homeowner and rental units since 2016 — with over a hundred more now planned or underway — has been making room for new families and the city’s fast-growing workforce, who are attracted by growing job opportunities. In a unique example, a donation to the City of the former Beatrice Community Hospital building and grounds enabled the creation of 10 single-family homes and 16 units for senior residents; other creative housing solutions have ranged from upper-level downtown development to “tiny home” rentals.

Outdoor and recreational amenities have also been a priority, with the citizen-led “Beatrice On the Move” coalition helping the city achieve its goals for pedestrian- and bike-friendliness. The completion of the 35-plus-mile Standing Bear Trail, for example — which runs all the way to Marysville, Kansas — has attracted hikers and touring cyclists from throughout the region.

Meanwhile, the city’s industrial growth has made headlines, with corporate standard-bearer *Site Selection* magazine naming Beatrice America’s



Beatrice, April 2020.

#14 micropolitan for capital expansion projects in 2018, and number one in Nebraska. The multi-million-dollar investment of local job creator Exmark Manufacturing exemplifies the type of new activity that is proving the success of the community’s business attraction and economic development efforts.

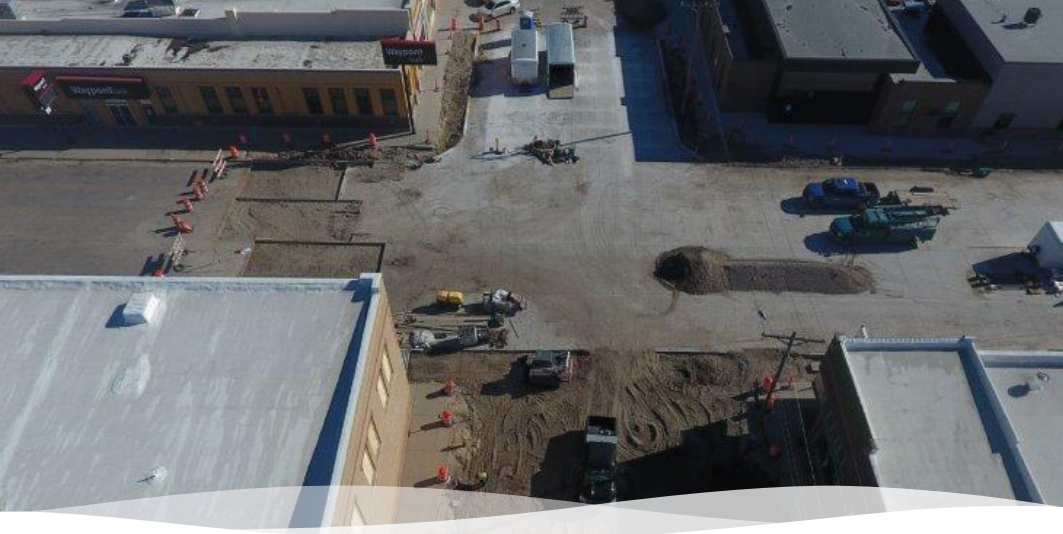
The list of achievements continues, whether it’s a state-of-the-art fire station funded with overwhelming support from a local bond measure; expansive renovations to Southeast

Community College’s Beatrice Campus; or early workforce initiatives that are preparing local youth for the in-demand careers of tomorrow. Wirth feels it’s the result of a city coming together to look ahead and think big; proof that a community can make big strides when it is willing to put a little skin in the game.

“Winning the Governor’s Showcase Community Award is a tremendous achievement that validates how hard we’ve been working to not just sustain ourselves as a community, but to become something even better for tomorrow,” he said. “We look forward to building on this momentum as we continue to stake our claim.”



**2020 marks the 20<sup>th</sup> year the Nebraska Department of Economic Development has highlighted Showcase Communities. Beatrice joins 21 other communities that have been recognized.**



## CDBG PROGRAM HELPS SMALL COMMUNITY ACHIEVE BIG GOALS

Downtown revitalization, funded in part by the CDBG program, is helping citizens and local leaders in Cambridge (population 1,143) create a more thriving community.

For a town of only 1,143, Cambridge has a little something for everyone — whether you prefer cafes and boutiques or golfing and outdoor recreation.

“Rural communities have to survive and thrive,” said Kandra Kinne, City Clerk/Treasurer. “It’s just a fact of life that young people are going to move away for college; they have to have a reason to come back and take a job or raise a family. We’re working hard to make our community a place that has a ton to offer from a quality of life standpoint.”

Thanks to the CDBG program, Cambridge is now one step closer to its goals, recently completing a downtown revitalization (DTR) project that’s brought major improvements to the heart of the community.

“The businesses also got involved and were really creative, themselves. It was a blast to see our local pharmacist on the corner on Friday mornings filming Facebook Live videos, or going to a boutique’s back door sale that literally took place in an alley.”

KANDRA KINNE, CITY CLERK/TREASURER

“The public and the City had discussed livening up the downtown area for quite some time,” Kinne said. “We want it to be as inviting as possible in order to attract visitors and drive traffic to our local businesses.”

Today, those who visit downtown Cambridge are greeted right off the bat by a newer appearance and fresher vibe.

“Parts of the area have gone from cracked sidewalks and chipped curbs to new streetlighting and pavement, with everything just looking more up-to-date and less worn out,” Kinne said. “That’s going to serve as a catalyst for the future development of our community.”

Other fixes have made it just plain easier — and even safer — to get around.

“We repaired a drainage issue that caused a lot of standing water after a heavy rain or snowmelt,” she said. “That was a huge fix. We also added wheelchair accessible curb ramps to make navigating much easier for our seniors and people with disabilities.”

The project, years in the making, likely wouldn’t have been possible without a \$425,000 grant through the CDBG program, administered by the Nebraska Department of Economic Development (DED).

Before even applying to CDBG, Kinne said, Cambridge opted first to enroll in DED’s Leadership Certified Community (LCC) program. After achieving its LCC certification, Cambridge was ready to submit a successful application under CDBG’s DTR funding opportunity.



*Downtown Cambridge.*

“That felt like a lot of really hard work finally paying off,” Kinne said.

Cambridge Economic Development Executive Director Melissa Jackson said the community’s thorough planning and preparation helped Cambridge anticipate and deal with bumps in the road. For example, when severe flooding in other parts of the state reduced the availability of contractors — thus delaying construction and lengthening the time that downtown businesses were difficult or inconvenient to reach — the City, the local Chamber and her organization teamed up to mitigate the economic impact.

“Since we were all working as a team toward the same goals, we were able to find creative ways to encourage citizens to keep patronizing downtown establishments during the construction,” Jackson said, pointing for example to a promotion that encouraged people to buy gift cards to local businesses that economic development would then match.

“The businesses also got involved and were really creative, themselves,” she said. “It was a blast to see our local pharmacist on the corner on Friday mornings filming Facebook Live videos, or going to a boutique’s back door sale that literally took place in an alley.”



*Work underway in Cambridge.*

Kinne said that today, with the bulk of the project completed, the years-long, monumental effort has sparked the urge to do more from local leaders, citizens and business owners.

“There’s so much potential. We really feel that this was just phase one,” she said. “There are still about two blocks that we’d like to tackle, then the sky’s the limit. Our community is thankful for the CDBG program, which has really enabled us to make a huge step forward toward the vision we have for Cambridge.”

## NEW SKATE PARK HELPS RAMP UP TOURISM IN NORFOLK

**In Norfolk (population 24,424 ), a CDBG-funded project is attracting visitors from throughout the Midwest.**

If you build it, they will come. Ramps and half-pipes included.

“The entire first week of the grand opening, we were flooded with skaters from all over the state,” said Norfolk native Anthony Thompson.

Thompson is referring to the recently completed Norfolk Skate Park, which his nonprofit 501(c)3, Good Life Action Sports, worked for five years to bring to fruition, in collaboration with the City, and with support from a \$425,000 CDBG Tourism Development grant.

It was 2015 when Thompson and a group of fellow avid skaters first approached Norfolk City Council for help revamping Miracle Skate Park — a crumbling local mecca with a surprising connection to the town’s past.



**\$16.87 million in CDBG funding invested throughout the state helped to revitalize neighborhoods and downtown areas in 31 communities.**



Norfolk Skate Park.

“Norfolk is the birthplace of Johnny Carson, and one of his last personal contributions to the city was \$30,000 to build our original skate park,” Thompson said.

Seeing the project for more than face value, councilmembers — including present-day Mayor Josh Moenning — embraced the idea with enthusiastic support.

“We really focus on developing quality of life here in Norfolk,” Moenning said. “We consider it a strategy for economic development and long-term growth. It’s increasingly important that communities our size can be competitive in what they have to offer. The base level of amenities that make a community an attractive place to live is what’s going to propel growth into the future.”

After receiving a pledge of \$125,000 from the City, Thompson and his group formed a nonprofit, holding local skate demos, selling t-shirts and promoting community awareness to raise the necessary funds. The Carson Foundation donated an additional \$5,000 in support of the burgeoning project.

“This park really honors Johnny’s legacy in Norfolk as much as anything,” Thompson said.

Meanwhile, the community and the nonprofit envisioned multiple improvements over the previous design, including building the park out of concrete to make it more resilient to harsh Nebraska winters, adding restrooms and erecting bleachers to accommodate local and out-of-town spectators.

Project leaders also made sure the new skate park would be available for anyone to enjoy.

“There aren’t nearly enough sports facilities that are designed to accommodate people with unique mobility needs,” Thompson said. “Sports like wheelchair motocross are exploding in popularity, and we wanted to be able to provide that option for the users of our facility.”

Equipped with a vision, the partnership applied for a CDBG Tourism Development grant through the State of Nebraska.

“Ultimately, this project, as well as others in Norfolk, probably couldn’t have happened without CDBG assistance,” Moenning said. “We certainly recognize the tremendous value of the program in our community.”

After a competitive bidding process, the City was able to land California-based Spohn Ranch — the nation’s oldest and best-known designer of skate parks, with ties to household names like Vans and Tony Hawk — to draw up blueprints.

“These guys are the best of the best,” Thompson said. “We were pretty psyched to be building literally a world-class skate park right here in Norfolk, Nebraska.”

When the park celebrated its grand opening in July 2020, some skateboarders and BMXers had traveled hundreds of miles just to catch some air on the latest Spohn Ranch creation.

“I met a van full of skaters all the way from Michigan who said they try to hit every Spohn Ranch park in the country,” Thompson said. “For non-skaters, I like to compare it to golf; golfers love to travel to different courses, and they want to experience the best.”

Now, with spring approaching, the park is about to see its first full season of use — and Good Life Action Sports has no shortage of plans to bring in users and spectators from across the region.

“We have ideas in the works for local, state and regional competitions,” Thompson said. “We’re trying to build something much larger than the state of Nebraska has ever seen in terms of action sports.”

Above all, Thompson says he and his group are focused on the positive impacts the park can offer the community.

“Skating and wheeled action sports are more popular every day, and we have an opportunity not only to attract people to Norfolk, but to make a difference in people’s lives,” he said, referring for example to slated wheelchair-focused events and a planned youth mentoring and outreach program. “It’s a way to reach out to the community and make a difference in people’s lives, through skateboarding.”



**\$3.58 million in CDBG funds have been invested into Tourism Development projects since 2016.**





Lt. Gov. Mike Foley (fourth from left), Sun Theatre Executive Director Roxanne Converse-Whiting (fourth from right) and others break ground on the Sun Theatre renovation project.

## SMALL-TOWN GEM ATTRACTING TOURISTS AND SERVING MORE PATRONS THAN EVER THANKS TO CDBG TOURISM DEVELOPMENT GRANT

Thanks to the CDBG program, a historic theater in the town of Gothenburg (population 3,489) is finally accessible to anyone and everyone.

Gothenburg's Sun Theatre was built as an opera house in 1909, converted to a cinema in the 1920's, and — minus a few short pauses — has offered a source of affordable movies and live entertainment for residents throughout the surrounding, primarily rural region ever since. But it wasn't until recently that this storied piece of the past could say it truly offered something for everyone.

“The support received from DED and the CDBG program was a difference-maker for this project. It's something Gothenburg is truly proud of, and adds to what makes this community a great place to call home.”

ROXANNE CONVERSE-WHITING, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR  
REVITALIZE THE SUN THEATRE PROJECT

Gothenburg resident Roxanne Converse-Whiting is executive director for the Revitalize The Sun Theatre project. Her group was formed in the 2010's with one primary goal in mind: to finally make the Sun fully accessible to people with mobility needs or concerns.

“Our goal was to create a more accommodating environment for all patrons and ensure that the theater was a place anyone could enjoy,” she said. “We show classic movies for the residents of our assisted living facility, for example, and getting visitors with age and mobility concerns safely in and out can be a challenge. This project was necessary to help remediate that and other issues, resulting in a more enjoyable experience for everyone.”

Wider entryways, a bigger lobby, wheelchair seating in the auditorium and accessible bathrooms made up some of the list of improvements for which Converse-Whiting was primarily put in charge of planning and fundraising. She was well aware her group was in for a challenge.

“There was a lot to be done, and we knew we were going to need the support of the entire community.”

And the community did not disappoint. In fact, residents turned out in spades to show their support for the project, donating \$100,000 in only two years to help cover the more than \$500,000 total price tag. A local Dancing with the Stars competition was among the fundraising events to draw a crowd, raising around \$35,000 on its own.

“I think everyone knew what this project meant to the community,” Converse-Whiting said, noting that apart from increasing the Sun's accessibility, the remodel would help attract people to the downtown — not only locals, but visitors from out of town. This increased business would, in turn, allow the Sun to serve even more patrons, by helping operators keep ticket costs low.

“We exist to serve the entire community, which includes a lot of young families and the elderly on fixed incomes,” she said. “Maintaining reasonable prices is a big part

of our mission. We knew this project would help us more easily sustain that over the long term.”

Yet despite so much local support, Converse-Whiting said the renovations might never have gotten off the ground without support from the Community Development Block Grant program, under which the State awarded the project \$425,000 through its Tourism Development funding opportunity.

“The community had just come off of a huge fundraising effort to build a YMCA, and citizens can only do so much. Without external support, I’m not sure it would have been feasible at that time to raise the level of funds we needed to begin these renovations,” she said.

By the spring of 2020, The revitalization of The Sun was underway. Further enhancing its tourism appeal, a number of efforts were made along the way to preserve and enhance the theater’s historic look and feel. This included, for example, installing a replica of the original 1920’s ticket booth in the front lobby; maintaining elements of the original, cloud-painted auditorium ceiling; and displaying historic artifacts that were found during the renovation. More work to come will include completing an ornate dome in the auditorium ceiling, which will be decorated with a painting of the sun to commemorate the historic theater’s new dawn.

With the majority of the work completed by September 2020, the Sun reopened its doors for the first time — this time to all patrons. Nebraska Lieutenant Governor Mike Foley and State Senator Matt Williams were among the numerous people in attendance at the grand reopening celebration, which featured a showing of Forrest Gump.

“This project is a terrific example of the positive impacts happening across Nebraska with support from the Community Development Block Grant program and the Department of Economic Development,” the Lieutenant Governor remarked in a press release following the event. “It’s also a testament to the people and leadership of Gothenburg, who have shown a commitment to growing and improving the community on behalf of all its citizens.”

Today, locals and out-of-towners alike are able to visit the Sun Theatre to catch a movie, see a live production or even enjoy a concert.

“The support received from DED and the CDBG program was a difference-maker for this project,” Converse-Whiting said. “It’s something Gothenburg is truly proud of, and adds to what makes this community a great place to call home.”



## CDBG SUPPORT HELPS VILLAGE BUILD LASTING LEGACY

Funding from the CDBG program helped Utica (population 922) come together to achieve a vision for the future.

Joyce Schriener has a theory about how you get villagers in rural Nebraska to attend a town meeting.

“If you feed them, they will come,” she said. “So that’s what we did.”

Schriener is referring to a town hall meeting the Village held in 2017 to discuss plans for Utica’s future. She and a group of townspeople had just attended a training course through the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, called “Marketing Hometown America,” and were ready to bring their ideas home for discussion.



**7 communities and 1 county have been assisted with Tourism Development funds since 2016.**

**“ We wanted to honor the veterans in and around Utica by placing a monument and flag in the downtown area.”**

JOYCE SCHRINER, COMMUNITY MEMBER

“We got everyone together,” she said. “We talked about our town’s strengths, what made us unique and why people would want to move here. But we also discussed things we felt needed to be changed.”

The fruits of that and subsequent talks led the villagers to agree on their first priority.

“We felt that before we could make Utica grow we needed to address problems in our downtown,” Schriner said.

Over the years, the condition of Utica’s commercial district had slowly deteriorated, causing shades of blight that ranged from severe standing water and drainage issues to streetlamps that needed updating. Sidewalk improvements were also needed to improve mobility and accessibility for people with disabilities.

“It was not the downtown we envisioned that would be appealing and attractive to visitors,” Schriner said.

Together, the village formed a downtown revitalization plan that not only addressed major concerns, but whose crown jewel would give outsiders a reason to visit Utica for generations to come.

“We wanted to honor the veterans in and around Utica by placing a monument and flag in the downtown area,” she said.

With the townspeople in agreement, the Village sought funding to improve the downtown street and sidewalks through the CDBG Public Works opportunity, administered by the Nebraska Department of Economic Development.

“Our residents went the extra mile with local fundraising, but this project wouldn’t have been possible without CDBG support,” Schriner said.

Jonathan Jank is President and CEO of the Seward County Chamber & Development Partnership (SCCDP), which supported Utica during its application for CDBG funding. A countywide organization, including Utica, SCCDP is on a mission to grow Seward County by working together to achieve local and regional goals.

“Downtown revitalization is the type of project that can inspire communities to further invest in themselves,” Jank said. “I think CDBG is an absolute gift for our rural towns in Nebraska and nationwide. When the State chooses to honor communities by selecting them for funding, it really gives them a shot in the arm.”

Utica complemented its \$146,250 CDBG award with grassroots fundraising efforts like biscuits and gravy breakfasts, Windsor Lion dinners and soup and sundae suppers. But most impactful was its decision to sell custom-engraved bricks, inscribed with the names of friends, loved ones and former soldiers, which now pave the ground around the new Veteran’s memorial – itself adorned with picturesque greenery and a proud American flag.

“It’s a reason for people to come back to Utica,” Schriner said. “People love to come and find mom and dad’s brick.

Kids want to find grandma and grandpa’s. Brick orders were received from across the country, from Florida, to Connecticut to South Dakota, to California to Colorado, and many from the different towns of Nebraska.”

Meanwhile, downtown Utica has regained the vibrancy of its former days, with the drainage and blight issues a thing of the past. The town is ready to unite once again, around a homecooked meal, to discuss plans for the future.

“People who have not been back in a while are struck by the difference,” said Schriner. “All because we were able to come together as a village to pursue a vision we could agree on, and because there was a resource like CDBG that could help us make it happen.”



*Downtown Utica.*



**\$12.37 million has been invested into Public Works infrastructure projects across the state since 2016.**

# HOMES, COMMUNITIES TRANSFORMED THROUGH CDBG PROGRAM

## Grant (population 1,345)

Low- and Moderate-Income Households Served: 8

Sometimes the most essential home repairs are the hardest to afford — especially for families living on a single income. A grant of \$252,000 from CDBG's Owner-Occupied Rehabilitation (OOR) program has served eight low- and moderate-income households since 2018, and is helping to foster more peace of mind and a better quality of life for families who lack the resources for costly but necessary home improvements.

Stories of residents in Grant who have benefitted from the OOR program include a single mother and Veteran working two jobs just to make ends meet, whose home received upgrades including new and energy efficient windows, new insulation, paint and other exterior improvements. These improvements have not only made her family's home more safe, comfortable and affordable, but will help preserve her investment for years to come.

"For citizens and families in Grant and across the state of Nebraska, the result of the CDBG OOR program isn't just better homes and brighter neighborhoods, but a more promising future," said City Superintendent Edward Dunn.

## Deshler (population 817)

Low- and Moderate-Income Households Served: 19

In Deshler, the CDBG OOR program, including a recent grant for \$265,000, has supported the rehabilitation of 19 homes on behalf of low-to-moderate income residents since 2013 alone. Today, an application for additional funds could impact at least 10 more. Deshler has worked side-by-side with Southeast Nebraska Development District (SENDD) to apply for and implement OOR funding. The goal is to help the community preserve and revitalize its housing stock while making the dream of home ownership a reality for families and the local workforce.

"Deshler is home to several vital businesses, industries and two schools. To assist them in staying prosperous and thriving, the community has to provide housing for its employees," said Mayor Julie Deepe. "Partnering with SENDD and using the Owner-Occupied rehab program enables Deshler to assist future homeowners with repairs and energy efficient upgrades to their homes." She added, "Homeownership is a dream for many people. When that dream is realized, it is great to know there are programs available to help maintain our properties."

## Trenton (population 514)

Low- and Moderate-Income Households Served: 6

Transforming a home can transform a life. Just ask Amy Thelander, Executive Director of Southwest Nebraska Betterment Corporation. She's seen firsthand how funding through the CDBG OOR program not only enhances the appearance and vitality of neighborhoods, but often leads to better outcomes for at-need individuals and families — including vulnerable groups like the elderly and people with disabilities. In Trenton for example, an OOR grant of \$189,000 in 2017, which supported the revitalization of six homes, also resulted in major accessibility improvements to the dwelling of a wheelchair-bound elderly couple.

"With support from the CDBG program, we were able to greatly improve their quality of life by making it much easier for them to navigate inside their residence," Thelander said, citing improvements ranging from wider doorways and new flooring to easier access to kitchen appliances. "It's really satisfying when you're able to see your work make such a difference. We're incredibly grateful for what we're able to achieve with support from the CDBG program."

## Falls City (population 4,156)

Low- and Moderate-Income Households Served: 70

Falls City recently completed its fifth round of CDBG-funded owner-occupied rehabilitation — this time, with support from a grant of \$252,000 — with the program having impacted nearly 70 low- and moderate-income and/or vulnerable residents to date. Yet with nearly 30 applications for OOR support received in 2019 alone, community leaders in Falls City know there's still much work to be done to address local housing needs and opportunities.

Mayor Shawna Bindle says she's seen the impact of the OOR program firsthand, and is eager to get to work completing even more home rehabilitations. Quality, safe, affordable housing, she says, is an essential ingredient for vital and prosperous communities and families.

"Falls City is a great community in which to live and raise a family," she said, citing safe neighborhoods, a good healthcare system and other amenities. "The one thing that has stood out is our need for more quality housing. The CDBG Owner-Occupied Rehabilitation housing grant program has helped to rehabilitate numerous homes within Falls City, and has allowed many families to stay in their homes while preserving affordable, sustainable housing stock. Falls City is a replicable model of a successful revitalization effort, thanks to a strong sense of community and the CDBG program."

*Downtown Beatrice.*



# NEBRASKA

Good Life. Great Opportunity.

**Nebraska Department of Economic Development**  
301 Centennial Mall South | Lincoln, NE 68509

[opportunity.nebraska.gov](http://opportunity.nebraska.gov)