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MassDevelopment's TDI program awards \$1.625m in grants for small-business support

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Attleboro, MA MassDevelopment has awarded \$1.625 million in grants to 13 organizations for small-business support programs in Gateway Cities that will fund projects such as storefront improvements, marketing campaigns, technical assistance, and more. The grants were awarded through MassDevelopment's Transformative Development Initiative (TDI) Local program, which funds locally developed and managed small-business support programs tailored to the specific needs of individual communities.

"Our small businesses are crucial investors in our economy and workforce, contributing to the development of an inclusive economy in Massachusetts," said secretary of economic development Yvonne Hao, who serves as chair of MassDevelopment's board of directors. "With grants from the Transformative Development Initiative program, we empower small business owners and entrepreneurs to continue to grow and bolster our Gateway City downtowns.

"These grants will help small businesses improve storefronts, revitalize vacant spaces, and welcome customers for dining, shopping, and more in our Gateway Cities," said MassDevelopment president and CEO Dan Rivera. "We look forward to seeing how this funding strengthens downtown neighborhoods and commercial corridors across Massachusetts."

The Transformative Development Initiative (TDI) is MassDevelopment's signature place-based economic development program for Gateway City downtowns and commercial districts. TDI uses an accelerator model, committing resources for a defined period to real estate development, small business stability and growth, arts and cultural amenities, placemaking, and targeted technical assistance and planning. This work is laid on a platform of community engagement and partnership development; the agency requires that cities assemble a cross-sector partnership to apply, and over the course of the program works to make the partnership more representative of the neighborhood and use it as a platform to grow sustaining, working relationships. Since 2015, MassDevelopment has invested \$38 million in TDI districts through tools such as technical assistance, real estate investments, grant programs, and fellows who work in the districts. That investment has directly influenced over \$151.3 million in public and private investments in the districts, and assisted in securing an additional \$241.2 million. Injecting social and financial capital in TDI districts generates a multiplier effect, circulating resources locally, which ultimately stimulates further economic activity in Gateway Cities.

First added to the TDI "toolkit" in 2017, in response to local partners demonstrating the need for direct funding for small-business support, TDI Local supports local market development by fostering

business, resident, and property-owner engagement, building community identity, and improving the public realm in TDI districts.

Awarded projects:

Downtown Attleboro Business Association (Attleboro, Mass.) – \$125,000

This grant will support two subgrant programs: the TDI District Flood Victims Grant will assist businesses impacted by the September 2023 flood by covering expenses for physical costs not addressed by insurance; and the Business Led Public Space Activation Grant will help businesses implement collaborative projects that boost visitor engagement, business engagement, and ownership of the public realm.

Town of Barnstable & Downtown Hyannis Community Development Corporation (Barnstable, Mass.) – \$125,000

This grant will support the Hyannis Façade Improvement Program, which helps businesses fund new signage, awnings, and other exterior physical improvements.

Bristol County Chamber Foundation, Inc. (Fall River, Mass.) – \$125,000

This grant will help sustain and expand organizational capacity and business revitalization efforts aimed at creating new downtown activity and a vibrant retail core through the Viva Fall River Maker Space and Selvedge SouthCoast initiative at the Gather @ 44 Troy space. Funds will be leveraged to continue the organizational development of Viva Fall River and evolve the Maker Shop concept with other partner organizations and implement Selvedge SouthCoast as a new textile-based makerspace, classroom, and design center.

Holyoke Chamber of Commerce (Holyoke, Mass.) – \$125,000

This grant will help enhance the appeal of the district by supporting high-impact, low-cost improvements, including the activation of vacant surface lots and the maintenance of trash containers and pickup.

Lawrence Partnership, Inc. (Lawrence, Mass.) – \$125,000

This grant will convert the underutilized alley at 427 Essex Street into a venue for community events and rotating vendor space for emerging entrepreneurs. Specifically, funds will be used to conduct physical revitalization, install public Wi-Fi and enhanced lighting, and support business owners in addressing marketing and technological challenges.

Community Teamwork, Inc. (Lowell, Mass.) – \$125,000

This grant will be used to strengthen a number of key ground-floor businesses in Lowell's Acre

neighborhood. The Lowell TDI Partnership will work with the Entrepreneurship Center at Community Teamwork, Inc. to do a deep assessment of selected business, identify actionable recommendations to increase profitability, and use grant funds to contract vendors to implement those recommendations.

Lynn Main Streets, Inc. (Lynn, Mass.) – \$125,000

This grant will fund five to seven storefront improvement projects at local businesses in the TDI district. The initiative aims to ensure high-quality outcomes and maintain district identity and continuity.

Community Economic Development Center of Southeastern Massachusetts, Inc. (New Bedford, Mass.) – \$125,000

This grant will fund direct business assistance for local businesses, aiming to enhance visibility, and help offset startup costs for new businesses. Additionally, the funds will be allocated to create a comprehensive marketing plan aligned with district branding, showcasing the area as a food and cultural destination.

The Downtown Pittsfield Cultural Association, Inc. (Pittsfield, Mass.) – \$125,000

This grant, supplemented with \$50,000 by the City of Pittsfield, will fund flexible financial support to 12 established North St. businesses that simultaneously undergo business counseling focused on operations, e-commerce, marketing, or financial recording. Additionally, this grant will be used to market the district and strengthen collaboration between businesses and theaters by helping drive pedestrian traffic to participating venues before and after shows.

City of Revere (Revere, Mass.) – \$125,000

This grant aims to support long-term business stabilization and address the challenges of commercial displacement by providing seed funding for a neighborhood small-business-led organization. The funding also aims to shift perceptions of the district and introduce customers to the diverse business community using storytelling tactics, including social media and storefront improvement funds, which will complement the city's Storefront and Signage Improvement Program.

Martin Luther King, Jr. Family Services, Inc. (Springfield, Mass.) – \$125,000

This grant will support the renovation of a vacant space in the heart of Mason Square into a community café, creating an essential “third space” for community-driven collaboration. The space layout will facilitate community participation in local projects and include programming, events, and more.

City of Taunton (Taunton, Mass.) – \$125,000

This grant aims to address challenges faced by the small business community via a storefront improvement program that includes signage improvements, window displays, and marketing plans.

Worcester Common Ground, Inc. (Worcester, Mass.) – \$125,000

The Worcester TDI Partnership will use this grant to further revitalize the Pleasant Street district through investment incentives for commercial properties, technical assistance services to improve storefront design, and a branding and marketing campaign to attract more visitors.

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