



SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES PROGRAM

APPLICATION FOR DESIGNATION RENEWAL

Eligible Applicants:

- *Local Governments with a Sustainable Communities Designation*
- *Local Government Consortiums with a Sustainable Communities Designation*

Application must be submitted
on or before the expiration date of
Sustainable Communities designation.

Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development
Division of Neighborhood Revitalization
2 N Charles Street, Suite 450
Baltimore, MD 21201
410-209-5800
<http://dhcd.maryland.gov/>

SGSC Approved - 10.23

WES MOORE
Governor
ARUNA MILLER
Lt. Governor
JACOB R. DAY
Secretary
OWEN McEVOY
Deputy Secretary

Overview of Sustainable Communities

The Sustainable Communities Act of 2010 established a framework for reinvestment and revitalization of Maryland’s existing communities creating a single, locally designated geographic focus area. Since that time the “Sustainable Communities” designation has provided an efficient means of targeting scarce public and private resources for multiple State agency investments and prioritizations.

Purpose or Renewal and Streamlined Application

The Sustainable Communities (SC) designation must be renewed every five years. This renewal application provides an opportunity for local governments to update their existing SC action plan and report on the accomplishments made over the past five years. Through the renewal process, local governments can request additional technical assistance and highlight any areas from the original action plan for which progress must still be made.

Application Eligibility and Threshold Requirements

Local governments (municipal or county) are eligible to apply.

Eligible applicants are to reconvene their **Sustainable Communities Workgroup** to discuss the accomplishments and challenges of their Sustainable Community Action Plans in addition to any update they may like to make to the Action Plan. The applicant may choose to select new members to participate in the Workgroup. The purpose of this workgroup is to continue and reinforce working relationships and collaborations among local governmental departments and better align community development priorities and strategies. In addition, this is an opportunity to assess if the Workgroup would like technical assistance from State government agencies to implement certain action items or develop strategies to address local challenges.

Threshold Requirements

All Sustainable Community applications must meet the following threshold requirements:

1) Sustainable Community Area boundaries must be entirely within a Priority Funding Area (PFA) and should be an area in need of renewal and reinvestment that would benefit from a targeted long-term strategy.

Applicants can verify Priority Funding Area boundaries by visiting the MDP website at:

<http://www.mdp.state.md.us/OurProducts/pfamap.shtml>

2) The proposed Sustainable Community is within or near a town center or transportation center, or there is a need for financing assistance for small businesses, nonprofit organizations or microenterprises;

3) The updated Plan must be consistent with other existing community or comprehensive plans;

4) A Sustainable Communities Workgroup is re-convened and a roster of members should be provided with the application.

Applications that do not meet these threshold requirements will not be considered.

Application Submission and Evaluation

The Sustainable Community application will be evaluated based on thorough assessment of strengths and weaknesses and how well desired outcomes, strategies and action steps are connected to the local conditions.

The first page of the electronic application is the Table of Contents. This should also serve as a checklist and be used to provide corresponding tabs.

Please submit all materials (application, maps, pictures, and/or shapefiles) via email to the Sustainable Communities project management team.

Incomplete applications will not be accepted.

Deliver Sustainable Community Applications via email:

To: Carter Reitman

carter.reitman@maryland.gov

Copy: Olivia Ceccarelli-McGonigal

olivia.ceccarelli@maryland.gov

Site Visits. Follow-up Discussion, Technical Assistance

Attendance at a minimum of one application consultation session or training is mandatory for all applicants. Consult with Carter Reitman at 410-209-5849 or by email at carter.reitman@maryland.gov if you would like to schedule a meeting.

If requested, the Department can provide technical assistance to local governments to prepare their Sustainable Communities applications. When needed, the Department may offer technical assistance, in collaboration with the Maryland Department of Planning, to local governments with limited capacity to prepare their Sustainable Communities applications.

During the application review process, the review team may make site visits and/or hold meetings with applicants. In addition, applicants may be contacted by the Department for follow-up discussions prior to awards.

Approval

Approval of applications will be made by the Governor's Smart Growth Coordinating Committee on the recommendation of an inter-agency review team. The review team is coordinated by the Department of Housing and Community Development. The Governor's Smart Growth Coordinating Committee can defer the approval of a Sustainable Communities renewal to the Governor's Smart Growth Subcabinet.

All questions related to the application, please contact Carter Reitman at 410-209-5849 or by email at carter.reitman@maryland.gov or your regional project manager, found at this link: <https://dhcd.maryland.gov/Communities/Documents/SRP/PM-Map-ContactInfo.pdf>

RENEWAL APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS

The Sustainable Communities application for renewal has **three** sections:

A. Contact information, General Information, Organizational Capacity:

In this section, applicants are asked to update their contact information, provide information about demographic shifts over the past five years, discuss the strengths and weaknesses of their Sustainable Communities workgroup, and share any technical assistance needs the workgroup may have.

B. Report on accomplishments over past five years:

The report is an opportunity to reflect on any accomplishments achieved in the Sustainable Community area. It is a tool used to evaluate if the SC applicant achieved its intended outcomes and identify what state resources were used, if any, to achieve those outcomes. Renewal applicants are encouraged to discuss how priorities, actions, and objectives were or were not achieved across the Sustainable Communities plan elements, including how any of the elements may have interrelated during the five initial years of SC designation.

C. Sustainable Communities Action Plan Update:

The Sustainable Communities Action Plan details revitalization outcomes and strategies to achieve those outcomes over the next five years. Renewal applicants are encouraged to use their previous Sustainable Communities applications as a basis for their updated Action Plan. You may identify which weaknesses have not yet been addressed or which strategies have not yet been implemented. Include your revitalization priorities for the next five years, basing them on your community's current strengths and weaknesses.

SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES PLAN ELEMENTS

The table below provides a description of each subject area/element of the Sustainable Communities Action Plan. Included are examples of common strengths and weaknesses within each subject area and the types of projects that might be implemented to address said strengths and weaknesses.

ENVIRONMENT: Describes projects involving the natural environment, our use of natural resources, and our relationships to the natural environment.

This category includes projects focusing on (but not limited to): the quality of land, water, and air; watershed maintenance and preservation; tree canopies and green spaces; climate change mitigation and adaptation; energy conservation; green infrastructure; stormwater infrastructure and management; water and sewer capacity; recycling, pet waste, and organic waste programs; the mitigation of environmental hazards; and parks and recreation.

ECONOMY: Describes projects centered on economic growth and management.

This category includes projects focusing on (but not limited to): business attraction & retention; improving and maintaining the health of business districts, downtowns, and main streets; commercial vacancy reduction; workforce attraction and retention; employment/job training; marketing, branding, and tourism; improving or creating economic impact of cultural and historic assets; providing technical and financial assistance to businesses; commercial building acquisition, rehabilitation and/or adaptive re-use; and creating a sense of place and vibrancy through streetscaping and beautification.

TRANSPORTATION: Describes projects involving the way people in your community get from place to place.

This category includes projects focusing on (but not limited to): access to transit corridors; pedestrian safety and accessibility; sidewalks; alternative modes of transportation, such as bikeways and trails; public transit, such as bus and rail; carpooling; proximity to transportation centers; parking; and road conditions.

HOUSING: Describes projects involving the homes in which people in your community live and which make it easier for them to find and stay in a place to call home.

This category includes projects focusing on (but not limited to): affordability; increasing homeownership; increasing rental housing; diversifying the kinds of housing available; improving housing conditions (interior or exterior); housing programs; aging in place; preventing foreclosures; and reducing residential vacancies.

COMMUNITY HEALTH & QUALITY OF LIFE: Describes projects concerned with public health, community culture, and the day-to-day life of community residents.

This category includes projects focusing on (but not limited to): improvement of public safety and the reduction of crime; libraries; educational facilities and programs; health and wellness facilities and programs; senior facilities and programs; youth facilities and programs; facilities and programs for the disabled; civic amenities, access to quality food options; collaborations with faith-based organizations; arts and entertainment education; and homelessness prevention, services, and facilities.

LOCAL PLANNING & STAFFING CAPACITY: Describes projects concerned with a local government's ability to plan for the community's future and to meet the current needs of residents.

This category includes projects focusing on (but not limited to): updating zoning ordinances or land use; updating municipal/local policies, taxes, fees, etc.; increasing local government staff capacity; and updating planning documents like sector plans or comprehensive plans.

SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY ACTION PLAN UPDATE

The Sustainable Community Action Plan (SC Plan or Plan) is meant to be a multi-year investment strategy – a strategic set of revitalization initiatives and projects that local partners believe will increase the economic vitality and livability of their community, increase prosperity for local households and improve the health of the surrounding environment. The Plan should be flexible enough to be updated regularly and renewed every five years as the community envisions new goals. The priority initiatives and projects identified in the action plan are your priorities for improving the livability of community places -- residential, commercial, or other public or private properties – and the sustainability of new work, retail, recreational and housing opportunities for residents. At the same time, the plan should only discuss the strategies that will impact the geographic area targeted for revitalization so that resources have the best opportunity to have the intended effect. These projects can also be designed to reduce the environmental impact of the community through water and energy resource conservation and management strategies. In this way, the Plan can be a road map for local stakeholders as well as State agencies to work together to create a more livable and sustainable community.

All communities submitted an SC Plan when the community earned its original designation. Some applicants may want to take advantage of the designation renewal process to outline new strategies, set new priorities, or reaffirm existing strategies for their Sustainable Community. Changes to SC Plans may reflect changes in external factors affecting the community or changes in the priorities of the applicant.

Action Plan Guidance

The Action Plan is comprised of six sections: . Follow the guidelines below to fill out the matrix.

- 1) **For each section, pinpoint essential strengths and weaknesses of your community.** Example Transportation: Strength - Good sidewalk connectivity. Weakness - Insufficient amount of downtown parking.
- 2) **Based on those strengths and weaknesses, formulate specific outcomes that address the most pressing issues or greatest potentials. Include a means of measuring the success of said outcome.** Example Economy: Outcome – Expand broadband fiber optics in Town. Progress Measure - Linear measurement of fiber laid and number of residential and business connections.
- 3) **After defining the outcomes, list detailed strategies (break down to several action steps if needed) that will serve as the means to achieve those goals.** Example Economy: Strategy - Increase number of Town sponsored events □ Develop with community input, a series of weekend events that the Town could host.
- 4) **List potential partners that can support the successful implementation of these strategies through different types of resources.** Example Economy: DHCD (Community Legacy program), Small Business Administration (Services and financial assistance) etc.

CHECKLIST AND TABLE OF CONTENTS

APPLICANT: Town of Bel Air

NAME OF SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY: Bel Air

Please review the checklist of attachments and furnish all of the attachments that are applicable. Contents of the application should be tabbed and organized as follows:

- Section A - Sustainable Community Renewal Applicant Information**
 - [Applicant Information](#)

- Section B – Sustainable Community Renewal Report (Projects, Strategies and Partners)**
 - [Part 1: Qualitative Assessment](#)
 - [Part 2: Competitive Funding](#)

- Section C – Sustainable Community Renewal Action Plan Update (Matrix)**
 - [Action Plan](#)

- Section D – Sustainable Communities Workgroup Roster**

- Section E – Signature Letter (acknowledging Disclosure Authorization and Certification)**
 - [Disclosure Authorization](#)

- Section F – Additional Files:** The following contents should be included:
 - If requesting a boundary modification, map in pdf format and a GIS shapefile of the proposed Sustainable Community boundary
 - Photos (jpeg format) of your aforementioned accomplished projects of the last five years

SECTION A - SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY RENEWAL APPLICANT INFORMATION

Name of Sustainable Community: Bel Air			
Name of Applicant: Town of Bel Air			
Applicant's Federal Identification Number: 52-6000775			
Applicant's Street Address: 39 N. Hickory Ave			
City: Bel Air	County: Harford	State: MD	Zip Code: 21014
Phone Number: 410-638-4523	Fax Number: 410-879-9225	Web Address: www.belairmd.org	

Sustainable Community Application Local Contact:

Name: Stephanie Zahn		Title: Grants Coordinator	
Address: [REDACTED]	City: Bel Air	State: MD	Zip Code: 21014
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]

Sustainable Community Contact for Application Status:

Name: Kevin Small		Title: Director of Planning	
Address: [REDACTED]	City: Bel Air	State: MD	Zip Code: 21014
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]

Other Sustainable Community Contacts:

Name: Angela Robertson		Title: Director of Economic Development	
Address: [REDACTED]	City: Bel Air	State: MD	Zip Code: 21014
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]

(1) Sustainable Community Boundary and Description

(1) Are you requesting any changes to your Sustainable Community boundary? Describe why or why not?

The Town of Bel Air is not requesting any changes to the Sustainable Community boundary. The current boundaries are within a Priority Funding Area and encompass downtown Bel Air and surrounding areas, including the Main Street and the Arts and Entertainment District.

Sustainable Communities Renewal Application - Section A

- (2) If yes, Include the following in as an attachment:
- PDF or JPEG of modified Sustainable Communities boundary map,
 - GIS shapefiles of modified Sustainable Community boundary (mapped to the parcel boundary),

(3) Approximate number of acres of entire SC Area: 220 acres

(4) Existing federal, state or local designations:

- ✓ Main Street
- ✓ Local Historic District
- ✓ Arts & Entertainment District

- (5) Describe the SC Area's current demographic trends (with respect to age, race, household size, household income, educational attainment, number of housing units, or other relevant factors). How have demographics changed in the last five years?

The population of Bel Air has slightly increased from 10,333 in 2015 to 10,715 in 2021. The median age is 44.9 years old with 82.8% of the population identifying as white and 3.6% identifying as African American. The median household size is 2.12 and has a household income of \$64,036. Nearly 40% of the Town's residents have earned a bachelor's degree or higher.

The Town's housing stock is mostly concentrated in single, detached homes, which represent approximately 40% of all housing. Housing units total 4,970 with only a slight increase in the past five years as most of the available land inventory has been built out.

(2) Organizational Structure, Experience and Public Input:

- (3) Describe any changes to the Applicant's organizational structure. Specifically, how has membership of the Sustainable Communities Workgroup changed in the last five years? Who are/were the leaders, and how will/did the Workgroup advisor or staff manage implementation of the SC Area Plan?

The Sustainable Communities Workgroup has expanded over time to include representation from the Historic Preservation Committee and the Planning Commission. Key Town departments, including Economic Development, Planning and Public Works, as well as the Town Administrator and the Bel Air Downtown Alliance, continue to play an important role in implementing the SC Action Plan.

- (4) What have been the strengths and challenges of the capacity of the Sustainable Communities Workgroup with respect to implementation of the SC Plan?

The Sustainable Communities Workgroup is structured to include a core group of very involved members while also including a larger group of community stakeholders. This allows for a streamlined decision-making process while also ensuring consistency of policy over time.

Objectives from the updated Sustainable Communities Action Plan will be included

Sustainable Communities Renewal Application - Section A

in the Town's 2024 -2029 Strategic Plan and will appear as action items along with other initiatives.

- (5) How did residents and other stakeholders in the community provide input to the Sustainable Communities Action Plan update? On which existing local plans (comprehensive plans, economic development plans, sector plans, etc.) is the Sustainable Communities Action Plan based?

The Sustainable Communities Action Plan update is based on the 2022 Comprehensive Plan for the Town of Bel Air. Goals and objectives regarding sustainable practices are interwoven throughout the entire source document and these elements served as the basis for the Sustainable Communities Action Plan and were included as measurable actions, policies, and programs. Community stakeholders provided input into the Action Plan update during the six-month long planning process which began in January 2023. As part of the Comprehensive Plan process, community input was solicited through presentations at Town board meetings, public forms, and postings on the Town's website.

- (6) Would you like any technical assistance from State agencies to help expand the capacity of your SC Workgroup or implement your SC plan? Please describe with which revitalization strategies you would like assistance.

The Town of Bel is not requesting any technical assistance at this time; however, we will work closely with our Program Manager to ensure the successful implementation of our Sustainable Communities Action Plan over time.

SECTION B - SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY RENEWAL REPORT

PART I: QUALITATIVE ASSESSMENT

Purpose:

The purpose of this assessment is to capture significant projects/ improvements that have been completed since the approval of your local government’s Sustainable Communities designation.

In relation to the goals stated in your local government’s Sustainable Community Action Plan, **please highlight at least three major accomplishments from the last five years**, including how you achieved them. When writing your narrative, consider the questions below and refer to the six elements discussed in the General Information section of this document (page iv) – Environment, Economy, Transportation, Housing, Quality of Life, and Land Use/Local Planning.

- 1) **Outcome:** Which outcomes identified in your Sustainable Community plan were you able to achieve?
- 2) **Projects:** Which projects did you implement in order to achieve the outcome? Also indicate when you started and completed these projects.
- 3) **Partners:** With whom (i.e. state agencies, local stakeholders) did you partner to complete projects?
- 4) **Impact:** What kind of measurable impact did the achieved outcome have on your community? Are there other intangible benefits?
- 5) **Photos:** Please also include pictures that depict your accomplishments.

[EXAMPLE] Descriptive Narrative: Please list the most significant accomplishments that apply

Example – Accomplishment 1

Outcome: Improved stormwater management

Projects:

Project 1: Stormwater Retrofit Plan – In October 2014, the Town Council approved the Town’s stormwater retrofit plan which outlines various strategies and capital budget expenditures over the next five years. Strategies include reducing the amount of impervious surface in the community and improving stormwater management. One of the plan recommendations is to pass an ordinance that assesses an environmental protection fee on municipal permits.

Project 2: Green Streets – The Town added green elements to approximately 600 linear feet of roadway that had been experiencing severe flooding. Specifically, bioswales were constructed and trees were planted.

Partners:

Chesapeake Bay Trust – provided technical assistance

MD DHCD – provided financial assistance in form of a Community Legacy grant (totaling \$50,000).

Impact: The implementation of the projects had a significant impact on the community by improving stormwater runoff. The streets with the newly constructed bioswales no longer experience flooding.

Descriptive Narrative: Please list the most significant accomplishments that apply.

Accomplishment 1:

Outcome: *Improved Transportation*

Projects:

Project 1:

Ma & Pa Heritage Trail- Completion of the middle segment of Ma & Pa Heritage Trail through Town was achieved in 2022 through partnership with Harford County on acquisition of right-of-way, addition of amenities and provision of Town public right-of-way to bridge gaps in the access for pedestrians and for cyclists. This required monetary investment from the Town and hours of staff time to service stakeholders and property owners. A crosswalk was added at North Main Street to connect the existing section of the Ma and Pa Trail to the new section. The crosswalk includes a traffic island and a pedestrian crossing light.

Project 2:

Bike Routes – In 2020, the Town received grant funding from HEAL Communities to install pavement graphics and signs to direct bike riders away from busy thoroughfares to safe routes along low traffic roads. Local roads have been augmented with 72 sharrow pavement decals, 41 bike route signs and 42 directional signs to direct riders to future County pathways and roads designated for cycling.

Project 3:

Pedestrian Safety – A workgroup of stakeholders and agency officials convened in 2019 to address vehicle speeds, pedestrian awareness, and potential conflicts between the two. This effort continued a study performed by Maryland State Highway Administration in partnership with the Town in 2014 with improvements completed in 2020. Several studies have been performed in cooperation with SHA and Harford County over the past ten years and the workgroup has used these reports to guide their work. The activity of the workgroup was interrupted by Covid19 in 2020, however, the Town has revived this effort in 2023.

Partners:

Harford County
Maryland State Highway Administration
Ma & Pa Heritage Trail Association
Bel Air Downtown Alliance
Baltimore Metropolitan Council
HEAL Cities and Towns Campaign of the Mid-Atlantic

Impact:

The projects listed above have provided a variety of choices for alternative transportation throughout Town. The size of Bel Air allows for walking, biking, and other forms of accessibility without using an automobile.

Accomplishment 2:

Outcome: *Improved Environment & Social Contact*

Projects:

Project 1:

Chesapeake Sensory Plaza – Bel Air utilized several grants to design and construct a hands-on play experience to educate children on the ecosystem of Chesapeake Bay. Water is provided through several hand pumps and directed through the play area by child-controlled equipment such as adjustable dams and sluices. Graphics and pavement markings reinforce the Chesapeake Bay theme. This play area has been very popular with our members of our community.

Project 2:

Stream Restoration – Plumtree Run has received restoration work along several points as it flows through Bel Air. This restoration includes vegetative armoring of the stream channel, lengthening of the watercourse to slow down the velocity and reforestation of the area around the stream. The areas include Plumtree Park, Atwood Road and the area between MD Route 24 and Tollgate Road. The Town plans to continue this effort in future years.

Project 3:

Shamrock Park – Investment in providing inclusive play for children has been achieved at Shamrock Park Playground. This playground has received a poured rubberized play surface to allow for unimpeded access to all equipment. Additional ‘inclusive’ equipment has been added to the children’s experience to make sure the access for play is all-encompassing. Existing equipment has been upgraded to provide a greater comprehensive opportunity for kids and a variety of involvement.

Partners:

The Drescher Foundation
Greater Bel Air Community Foundation
American Water Charitable Foundation
American Rescue Plan Act
Maryland Department of Natural Resources

Impact:

Each effort outlined above has provided an opportunity for residents to enjoy the natural environment in Bel Air, access amenities not previously reachable and preservation of natural amenities that are limited in an urban environment such as Bel Air.

Accomplishment 3:

Outcome: *Improved Economy*

Projects:

Project 1:

Armory Marketplace- The Armory Marketplace Incubator Program was established in 2018 and provides new and emerging businesses with storefront space and the resources to learn and grow. The highly competitive program offers entrepreneurs a reduced lease rate for a maximum of three years. The below market rate allows the business owner to strengthen their financial assets while focusing on developing and expanding their business. The incubator program provides guidance for business foundations, networking opportunities, coaching, and marketing and technical assistance. After the entrepreneur graduates from the program, the Economic Development Department offers knowledge and advice during the process of relocating to a commercial space located in Town.

Project 2:

Market Study- In FY23, a market study was completed by Valbridge Property Advisors to provide Bel Air with a proactive analysis of market demand. This market study provided critical information about our business landscape to inform decisions on future projects, determine opportunities for growth in our community through gap analysis, and advise our strategic marketing. The project was completed using a three-pronged approach which included engagement with local stakeholders, data collection and analysis, and recommendations based on aggregated data which identified tools for the Town to use to develop its economic development strategies. The study also included information from greater Bel Air, as the area outside of town limits also impacts opportunities in the Town of Bel Air. In this study, four key areas of the market were identified: healthcare, government center, retail, and arts/culture. Bel Air's strengths, challenges and opportunities were identified, and recommendations were made for business recruitment, retention, arts and entertainment, and hospitality.

Parking Study- In FY23, a parking study was completed by Mead and Hunt. The parking study provided research and analysis for parking use and regulations for the Town of Bel Air, including an inventory analysis for the downtown area and research on residential needs. This study reviewed the scope of the present supply of parking throughout downtown and documented the use and adequacy of existing parking facilities and examined if demand for parking in the Town of Bel Air exceeds capacity. Information was gathered from key stakeholders regarding parking capacity and perceptions of parking availability throughout Town.

Project 3:

Public Art Tour- During fiscal year 2021, the Bel Air Public Art Tour was enhanced by the development of an ArcGIS story map to create a 38-piece Public Art Tour that includes 23 pieces of art in a two-mile self-guided walk and 15 additional pieces accessible within a short drive. When the Public Art Tour was first launched in 2018, users accessed a one-page PDF map on our website, or they picked up a tri-fold brochure from our Visitor's Center. While this was a great start, we decided to create a more interactive experience utilizing the ArcGIS story map. The story map is mobile friendly and guides users through our public art while providing details on each piece such as a photo, description, artist name, sponsoring organization and year installed. The self-guided Public Art Tour is a wonderful outdoor activity for families, visitors and team building experience for businesses and school groups.

Partners

Valbridge Property Advisors
Mead & Hunt
Key Stakeholders
Bel Air Arts and Entertainment District
Maryland State Arts Council
Bel Air Cultural Arts Commission

Impact

The implementation of the projects had a significant impact on the community by determining opportunities for growth, providing research and analysis for parking use and developing economic development strategies for downtown Bel Air.

Descriptive Narrative: Please use this section to describe any major outcomes or projects from your last Sustainable Communities Action Plan that have NOT been accomplished and why.

Outcome: Maximize street tree plantings for potential canopy credits for storm water management

Narrative: The Tree Committee oversees the implementation of the Town’s Tree Plan as part of the Tree City USA Program. The committee's primary focus is to identify locations for tree planting, to plan and implement street tree and park projects throughout the town, and to assist local citizens by providing information concerning care and planting of trees in the neighborhoods.

Unfortunately, the Town was unable to maximize street tree plantings for potential canopy credits. Our total urban tree canopy decreased from 37% to 35% due to the emerald ash borer infestation that killed many ash trees in Town. The emerald ash borer is an invasive, wood boring insect that has killed hundreds of millions of ash trees across the Country.

The Public Works Department is in the process of planting trees of a different species to replace the ash trees that were destroyed. Our community partner, the Bel Air Downtown Alliance received grant funding from the Drescher Foundation to plant more trees in the northern end of downtown Bel Air.

Outcome: Implement traffic calming and pedestrian safety measures

Narrative: The creation of a “complete street” that accommodates pedestrians, cyclists and motor vehicles requires a well-designed right-of-way and coordinated infrastructure. Consequently, complete streets are easier to create during the design phase of new subdivisions. The Town has been limited to the development of two new subdivisions in the last decade and both are on cul-de-sacs and, therefore, not complete street oriented. Limited, established rights-of-way and the costs associated with redesign and construction of existing rights-of-way have prohibited any opportunity to create a “complete street” corridor in the Town. The location of overhead transmission lines and the need to accommodate on-street parking have all but eliminated the possibility to retrofit the Town’s older residential neighborhoods. The Town is taking advantage of the Thomas Street corridor along Plumtree Park to create a complete street design. This right-of-way offers sufficient width and is not constrained by residential parking or extensive utilities. It is hoped this corridor project, which will offer improved pedestrian and bicycle access to the Ma & Pa Trail, will be ready for construction in FY2024.

The Town of Bel Air, in partnership with Harford County, was unable to implement traffic calming and pedestrian safety measures. Although, some improvements have increased pedestrian safety, there are still many protocols that need to be developed. The Town of Bel Air partnered with the City of Havre de Grace and the City of Aberdeen to receive \$140,000 in funding through the U.S. Department of Transportation to develop a traffic safety plan. The plan will analyze existing conditions and historical trends that will provide a baseline level of crashes involving fatalities and serious injuries. The goal is to create a traffic safety plan that will prevent roadway fatalities and serious injuries.

***Outcome:* Reduce visual and sensory blight through landscape, architectural and graphic solutions**

Narrative: The Town of Bel Air was unable to reduce visual and sensory blight through landscape, architectural and graphic solutions due to the absence of a property maintenance plan. Once the Public Works Department develops a property maintenance plan, the Town will be able to implement projects in the downtown area that enhance view of public byways. The plan will provide property owners with criteria for existing property maintenance requirements and will maintain architectural review requirements.

The goal of the Façade Improvement Program is to improve the exterior and interior appearance of buildings in the Town's commercial areas to attract new businesses, maintain existing businesses and create an attractive downtown area. The Façade Improvement Program has been expanded to a full building improvement program to include, HVAC, plumbing and electrical projects. Although, the Downtown Alliance has increased the amount of funding available for façade projects, not all the funding is being utilized. The Town of Bel Air and the Downtown Alliance need to encourage more businesses to apply for façade funding. Motivating more businesses to utilize façade funding will help reduce visual blight and will make Bel Air a more desirable place to live, work and visit.

To help improve the visual landscape and utilize property more effectively, the Town of Bel Air has developed a Green Concept Plan for Burns Alley. Burns Alley is an alley located between Pennsylvania Avenue and Courtland Place and consists of approximately one acre of impervious land. The project will create a walkable destination, access to existing restaurants and shops, new commercial spaces, improved traffic flow, increase tree canopy and pervious surfaces.

Part II: Competitive Funding

Use the rows below to list competed funds sought for sustainability or revitalization projects since receiving Sustainable Communities designation.	Source (federal, state, foundation, etc.)	Amount Received	If no funding was received, what technical or other assistance from the state would help with future applications?	Other Notes
Community Legacy (CL): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Phase 2 – Armory Marketplace ● Phase 3 – Armory Marketplace ● Phase 4 – Armory Marketplace ● Phase 5 – Armory Marketplace ● Armory A/V System Upgrade ● Courthouse Square-Phase I 	DHCD	\$175,000 \$150,000 \$175,000 \$150,000 \$0 \$200,000	FY13: CL – 1305 FY14: CL – 1406 FY15: CL – 0027 FY17: CL – 00046 FY18: Additional guidance during application & site visit regarding minimum funding requirements. FY19: CL-00052	
Strategic Demolition Fund (SDF): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Courthouse Square Phase II 	DHCD	\$100,000	FY22: SDF-00030	
Community Safety & Enhancement Program:	MDOT			
Maryland Bikeways Program:	MDOT			
Sidewalk Retrofit Program:	MDOT			

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Water Quality Revolving Loan Fund:	MDE			
<p>Other Funding Programs: <i>examples are U.S. HUD Community Development Block Grants (CDBG), or grants from USDA, EPA, Appalachian Regional Commission, Chesapeake Bay Trust, Maryland Heritage Areas Association, Preservation Maryland, Safe Routes to School, Maryland Rural Development Corporation, Maryland Energy Administration, Maryland Department of Natural Resources, etc.</i></p> <p>*Please add more rows if necessary</p>				
<p>CDBG</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Repaving: N. Kelly Avenue • Repaving: N. Kelly Avenue • Repaving: N. Kelly Avenue & Reed Street • Repaving: Reed, S. Atwood & S. Kelly Ave. • Armory Marketplace • Armory Marketplace ● Repaving Hall Street and Old Orchard Road ● Repaving Howard Street 	Federal	<p>\$36,826.00</p> <p>\$38,180.00</p> <p>\$39,617.00</p> <p>\$40,542.58</p> <p>\$39,935.00</p> <p>\$40,164.65</p> <p>\$53,109.52</p> <p>\$40,359.00</p>	<p>FY13</p> <p>FY14</p> <p>FY15</p> <p>FY16</p> <p>FY17</p> <p>FY18</p> <p>FY21</p> <p>FY23</p>	
<p>DNR – Project Open Space: Community Parks & Playgrounds</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plumtree Park Improvement Project ● Homestead Park Improvement Project ● Office Street Pocket Park 	State	<p>\$200,000</p> <p>\$115,000</p> <p>\$60,464</p>	<p>FY13</p> <p>FY21</p> <p>FY22</p>	
<p>DNR – Chesapeake & Coastal Bays Trust Fund</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plumtree Run Stream Restoration • Plumtree Run Stream Restoration: Phase III 	State	<p>\$411,595</p> <p>\$0</p>	<p>FY17</p> <p>FY18: Additional guidance on MS4 requirements</p>	

Sustainable Communities Renewal Application - Section B

<p>Maryland Energy Administration –Smart Energies Communities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement cost effective energy efficiency projects in town-owned facilities • Replacing a gas-powered vehicle with an electric vehicle 	State	\$34,000	FY16	
		\$10,000	FY20	
<p>DHCD – Operating Assistance Grants – Main Street Improvement Program</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operating expenses: Armory Marketplace 	State	\$15,000	FY17	
<p>DHCD- Community Safety Works- Business District Improvement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Security cameras for parking garage and steel barricades 	State	\$100,000	FY23	
<p>U.S. Department of Transportation- Safe Streets for All</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Action plan to increase safety and efficiency of the roadways, bike routes and pedestrian paths in Bel Air, Maryland, Aberdeen, Maryland and Havre de Grace, Maryland 	Federal	\$140,000	FY23	
<p>Chesapeake Bay Trust</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation of the Burns Alley Green Concept Plan to create a walkable destination, improved traffic flow, access to existing restaurants and shops, tree canopy, permeable services, and water quality practices 	Foundation	\$14,850	FY22	

Sustainable Communities Renewal Application - Section B

<p>Dresher Foundation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outdoor furniture for Office Street Pocket Park • Plumtree Park and Chesapeake Sensory Plaza improvements • Handicap inclusive features and ADA pathway for Shamrock Park Playground 	<p>Foundation</p>	<p>\$17,500</p>	<p>FY22</p>	
		<p>\$20,000</p>	<p>FY19</p>	
		<p>\$50,000</p>	<p>FY23</p>	
<p>USDA- HEAL (Healthy Eating Active Living)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 74 sharrow (share the road) pavement decals 	<p>Federal</p>	<p>\$10,000</p>	<p>FY20</p>	
<p>Greater Bel Air Community Foundation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Armory Marketplace- permeable pavers, ADA fencing and landscaping • Landscape and signage for Chesapeake Sensory Plaza • Shamrock Park- ADA pathway and playground equipment 	<p>Foundation</p>	<p>\$25,000</p>	<p>FY17</p>	
		<p>\$15,000</p>	<p>FY19</p>	
		<p>\$15,000</p>	<p>FY23</p>	
<p>American Water Charitable Foundation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chesapeake Sensory Plaza- nature park and water feature • Shamrock Park- ADA pathway and playground equipment 	<p>Foundation</p>	<p>\$150,000</p>	<p>FY19</p>	
		<p>\$25,000</p>	<p>FY23</p>	

SECTION C - SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES ACTION PLAN

Town of Bel Air

Example Section

<u>Strengths</u>	<u>Weaknesses</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Insert bulleted list of strengths (provide some detail as to why and how this is a strength in your community) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Insert bulleted list of weaknesses (provide some detail as to why and how this is a weakness in your community)

<u>Desired Outcomes and Progress Measures</u>	<u>Strategies and Action Items</u>	<u>Implementation Partners</u>
<p>Outcomes should be considered end results of actions and strategies. Based on the strengths and weaknesses, identify the strengths on which you would like to build and the challenges you would like to address.</p> <p>Progress Measure: What will you use to measure success toward outcome? Is it quantifiable or qualifiable?</p>	<p>Identify strategies that will help your community to achieve each identified outcome to the left. If applicable, break down each strategy into specific action items that outline different steps of the strategy. Specify how you are planning to achieve the desired outcomes.</p>	<p>Which community stakeholders need to be involved to realize each action step and strategy? Name specific public and/or private sector partners.</p>
<p>Example Outcome 1: Code violations and complaints are reduced in the Sustainable Community residential areas.</p>	<p>Example Strategy A: Review and revise, as needed, code compliance program to reduce frequency and number of residential code violations. Example Action 1: Complete analysis of code violations over the past five years to determine areas, both geographically and topically, for which code violations are most frequent.</p>	<p>Maryland Department of Planning, Maryland Department of Housing, County Planning Department, local homeowners' association</p>

Sustainable Communities Renewal Application - Section C

<p>Example Progress Measures: Code violations reduced by 25% in Sustainable Community residential areas</p>	<p>Example Action 2: Conduct outreach program to determine barriers to code compliance. Example Action 3: Analyze code compliance program for potential inefficiencies and opportunities for proactive engagement. Example Action 4: Pursue façade improvement funding to assist low-income homeowners overcome barriers to code compliance.</p>	
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Environment

This section describes projects involving the natural environment, our use of natural resources, and our relationships or access to the natural environment.

This category includes projects focusing on (but not limited to): the quality of land, water, and air; tree canopies and green spaces; green infrastructure; habitat improvement, climate change mitigation and adaptation; nuisance flooding,; stormwater infrastructure and management; water and sewer capacity; energy conservation; recycling, pet waste, and organic waste programs; the mitigation of environmental hazards; and parks and recreation improvements.

<u>Strengths</u>	<u>Weaknesses</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Stream restoration and environmental preservation ● Successful farmers market ● Member of “Tree City USA” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Insufficient tree canopy ● Not enough green space downtown ● Improve appearance of Bel Air public space

<u>Desired Outcomes and Progress Measures</u>	<u>Strategies and Action Items</u>	<u>Implementation Partners</u>
<p>Outcome 1: Increase green space</p> <p>Progress Measures: number of trees planted and parks that are created</p>	<p>Strategy A: Implement the Burns Alley Green Concept Plan which will create a walkable destination that will include improved traffic flow, access to existing restaurants and shops, tree canopy, permeable services, and water quality practices.</p> <p>Strategy B: Create pocket park on Bond Street</p> <p>Strategy C: Plant trees of a different species to replace the ash trees that were destroyed. Utilize grant funding from the Dresher Foundation to plant more trees in the northern end of downtown Bel Air.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Chesapeake Bay Trust ● Harford County Government ● Sheriff’s Department ● The Bel Air Downtown Alliance ● Dresher Foundation
<p>Outcome 2: Improve water quality and conservation</p> <p>Progress Measures: treated impervious surface treated area</p>	<p>Strategy A: Improve education and awareness about storm water management by installing storm drain medallions to help keep harmful pollution out of storm drains and the Chesapeake Bay</p> <p>Strategy B: Work with Harford County to place restrictions on Winters Run Watershed</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Bel Air Downtown Alliance ● Keep America Beautiful ● Department of Housing and Community Development

Sustainable Communities Renewal Application - Section C

	Strategy C: Utilize clean up kits and grant funding to clean up Main Street and Bond Street	
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Economy

This section is centered on economic growth and management.

Strengths and weaknesses might focus on the following: business attraction & retention; improving and maintaining the health of business districts, downtowns, and main streets; commercial vacancy reduction; workforce attraction and retention; employment/job training; marketing, branding, and tourism; improving or creating economic impact of cultural and historic assets; providing technical and financial assistance to businesses; commercial building acquisition, rehabilitation and/or adaptive re-use; and creating a sense of place and vibrancy through streetscaping and beautification.

Strengths

- Low commercial vacancy rate
- Development of Armory Complex, including the Armory, Armory Park & Armory Marketplace
- Development of Work Alli, a coworking space that supports Bel Air's businesses and cultural community

Weaknesses

- Blighted properties
- Lack of incentives to rent commercial space
- Abundance of non-taxable space
- Lack of hotels and short-term rentals

Sustainable Communities Renewal Application - Section C

Desired Outcomes and Progress Measures	Strategies and Action Items	Implementation Partners
<p>Outcome 1: Reduce blighted properties</p> <p>Progress Measures: number of projects, number of rehabilitations</p>	<p>Strategy A: Demolition of blighted buildings to create additional housing and commercial properties</p> <p>Strategy B: Change in code to allow incentives to reduce vacant buildings</p> <p>Strategy C: Continue façade improvement</p> <p>Strategy D: Develop Property Maintenance Plan</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Harford County Government ● Department of Housing and Community Development ● Bel Air Downtown Alliance
<p>Outcome 2: Improve marketing, branding and tourism</p> <p>Progress Measures: number of followers on social media and number of individuals attending events</p>	<p>Strategy A: Hire new public relations employee</p> <p>Strategy B: Create annual marketing campaign</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Visit Harford ● Bel Air Downtown Alliance ● Rockfield Manor ● Maryland Tourism Council ● Economic & Community Development Commission

Transportation

This section describes the way people in your community get from place to place.

Strengths, weaknesses and outcomes can focus on: access to transit corridors; pedestrian safety and accessibility; sidewalks; alternative modes of transportation, such as bikeways and trails; public transit, such as bus and rail; carpooling; proximity to transportation centers; parking; and road conditions.

Sustainable Communities Renewal Application - Section C

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Abundance of public parking in downtown Bel Air ● Connectivity to Ma & Pa Trail- safe areas for pedestrians to walk 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Lack of pedestrian safety at crosswalks and intersections ● Lack of adequate bikeways ● Inadequate mass transit system

Desired Outcomes and Progress Measures	Strategies and Action Items	Implementation Partners
<p>Outcome 1: Increase pedestrian and bike safety</p> <p>Progress Measures: number of injuries and/or accidents</p>	<p>Strategy A: Work with Harford County to implement pedestrian and bike safety plan</p> <p>Strategy B: Utilize MDOT grant to create an action plan to improve pedestrian safety</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● City of Aberdeen ● City of Havre de Grace ● Harford County ● United States Department of Transportation
<p>Outcome 2: Improve alternate transportation and expand Ma & Pa Trail</p> <p>Progress Measures: number of pedestrians utilizing the trail</p>	<p>Strategy A: Enhance streetscape on George and Thomas Street to connect downtown Bel Air and Harford Mall to the Ma & Pa Trail. The project will allow a safe passage to the shopping mall and will encourage walking, resulting in a healthier community.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Bel Air Downtown Alliance ● Economic & Community Development Commission

Housing

This section focuses on the homes in which people in your community live and efforts which make it easier for them to find and stay in a place to call home.

Strengths, weaknesses and outcomes might focus on the following: affordability; increasing homeownership; increasing rental housing; diversifying the kinds of housing available; improving housing conditions (interior or exterior); housing programs; aging in place; preventing foreclosures; and reducing residential vacancies.

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Optimal balance of housing types (i.e. single family, apartments, etc.) ● Stable housing condition and value ● High demand for apartments and condominiums 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Limited affordable housing ● Lack of age-appropriate housing ● Lack of transient, temporary and visitors housing

Desired Outcomes and Progress Measures	Strategies and Action Items	Implementation Partners
<p>Outcome 1: Increase visitor accommodations</p> <p>Progress Measures: number of units available for visitors</p>	<p>Strategy A: Convert large Victorian houses into Bed & Breakfast facilities</p> <p>Strategy B: Create special zoning designations for short-term rentals</p> <p>Strategy C: Complete market study to show site selectors that we have market for visitor accommodations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Private landowners
<p>Outcome 2: Increase affordable housing</p> <p>Progress Measures: housing prices, average income, % of aging population</p>	<p>Strategy A: Purchase underutilized properties (such as parking lots) and redevelop into apartments and condominiums for empty-nesters and young professionals</p> <p>Strategy B: Research possible locations for senior housing, retirement centers and assisted living facilities to create an inventory of structures which would allow seniors to age in place</p> <p>Strategy C: Provide incentives for affordable housing for all ages through development regulation amendments and tax abatement</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Harford County Government ● Private landowners ● DHS- Office on Aging

Community Health and Quality of Life

This section is concerned with public health, community culture, and the day-to-day life of community residents.

This category includes projects focusing on (but not limited to): improvement of public health including improving community design to promote healthy behaviors such as walking and strengthening community support and connectedness through health and wellness programs and facilities that create inclusive communities. These projects may include built environment, indoor spaces, outdoor environments such as increasing community gardens and access to services including educational facilities and programs; health and wellness facilities and programs that serve multi-generations; senior facilities and programs; youth facilities and programs; facilities and programs for the disabled; civic amenities, access to quality food options; collaborations with faith-based organizations; arts and entertainment education; and homelessness prevention, services, and facilities. Projects should include community engagement that includes participation in the selection of strategies and outcomes, progress reports, and evaluation.

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Seat of Harford County- governmental, commercial, financial, retail ● Active Arts & Entertainment District ● Host wide variety of events and festivals ● Improved security through use of lighting and visibility ● Low crime rates ● Farmer’s Market ● Attractive neighborhoods ● Vibrant downtown area ● Historic structures- Courthouse Square, Armory, etc 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Lack of diversity (82.8% Caucasian) ● Lack of post-secondary opportunities ● High volume of traffic; congestion ● Increase in retail theft

Desired Outcomes and Progress Measures	Strategies and Action Items	Implementation Partners
<p>Outcome 1: Enhance security and safety of community</p> <p>Progress Measures: crime rate</p>	<p>Strategy A: Utilize DHCD grant to install security cameras in parking garage to deter crime</p> <p>Strategy B: Host quarterly meetings with Taverns to ensure safety and discuss any issues</p> <p>Strategy C: Utilize license plate readers to track criminals involved in retail theft scheme</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● BADA ● Harford County Government ● DHCD
<p>Outcome 2: Provide a Community Center space for local organizations, businesses and residents to come together and hold events</p> <p>Progress Measures: number of attendees and feedback from participants</p>	<p>Strategy A: Utilize Bel Air Armory to host wide variety of events to increase community engagement and provide entertainment to community members</p> <p>Strategy B: Create marketing campaign to increase awareness of rental opportunities at the Armory and to promote community events at the Armory</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● DHCD ● Harford County Government
<p>Outcome 3: Enhance Town services to target underserved communities</p>	<p>Strategy A: Utilize grant funding to identify underserved communities and their needs</p> <p>Strategy B: Leverage community partners to assist in needed services</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● ARRAP ● Harford County Government

Progress Measures: Survey community members		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LASOS
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Local Planning and Staffing Capacity

This section is concerned with a local government’s ability to plan for the community’s future and to meet the current needs of residents.

Strengths, weaknesses and outcomes might focus on the following: updating zoning ordinances or land use; updating municipal/local policies, taxes, fees, etc.; increasing local government staff capacity; and updating planning documents like sector plans or comprehensive plans.

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completed Comprehensive Plan 2022 • Strong neighborhoods • Form based regulations have been expanded 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Majority of available land inventory built out • Limited land for development

Desired Outcomes and Progress Measures	Strategies and Action Items	Implementation Partners
<p>Outcome 1: Create more stable relationship between commercial and neighborhood development</p> <p>Progress Measures: Increase in plan approval and building permit applications for redevelopment</p>	<p>Strategy A: Change zoning code so there is transition in form-based development</p> <p>Strategy B: Leverage existing development with innovative land use options</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bel Air Downtown Alliance • Harford County Government
<p>Outcome 2: Create more opportunities for in-fill development</p> <p>Progress Measures: Increase in tax base</p>	<p>Strategy A: Redevelop underutilized parking lots into productive commercial or residential space and mix use developments</p> <p>Strategy B: Enhance underutilized parcels to maximize potential under development code</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Harford County Government • Private landowners • Commercial developers

Sustainable Communities Renewal Application - Section C

IMPLEMENTATION PARTNERS KEY

BADA – Bel Air Downtown Alliance

CAC – Cultural Arts Commission

DHCD – MIP – Department of Housing and Community Development – Main Street Improvement Program

DNR – Department of Natural Resources

ECDC – Economic and Community Development Commission

GO-CCP – Governor’s Office of Crime Control & Prevention

MDE – Maryland Department of the Environment

MDOT – Maryland Department of Transportation

MHT – Maryland Historical Trust

MSAC – Maryland State Arts Council

SBDC – Small Business Development Center

SHA – State Highway Association

USDOT- United States Department of Transportation

USDA- United States Department of Agriculture

CDBG- Community Development Block Grant

LASOS- Linking All So Others Succeed

Sustainable Communities Renewal Application - Section C

AARP- American Association of Retired Persons

Sustainable Communities Renewal Application - Section D

Town of Bel Air

Sustainable Communities Workgroup

Eddie Hopkins	Town Administrator
Angela Robertson	Director, Economic Development
Chris Street	Chair, Economic & Community Development Commission
Steve Kline	Director, Public Works
Jeffrey Campbell	Chair, Historic Preservation Commission
Jenny Falcone	Executive Director, Bel Air Downtown Alliance
Kevin Small	Director, Planning
Charles Moore	Chief of Police
Stephanie Zahn	Grants Coordinator