

SENATE URBAN AFFAIRS & HOUSING COMMITTEE
THE FUTURE OF PENNSYLVANIA MAIN STREET AND ELM STREET PROGRAMS
Public Hearing
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Testimony of Jeffrey A. Feeser
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Good Morning! I'm Jeffrey Feeser, Director of Housing and Community Development for Schuylkill Community Action (SCA). SCA is the implementing agency for the City of Pottsville *Elm Street Program*.

As you are aware, the Elm Street Program is a statewide initiative that focuses on residential revitalization in neighborhoods that are in close proximity to, or adjoin, the commonwealth's municipalities' downtown districts. The Elm Street Program is funded by the PA Department of Community and Economic Development. Several elements of the Elm Street Program were supported by the PA Downtown Center—an influential and active proponent for community revitalization.

The City of Pottsville and SCA have been involved in the Elm Street Program since 2005. A planning grant and five operating grants to employ a full-time Elm Street Manager facilitated the planning and administrative processes of the Elm Street Program. Two Residential Reinvestment grants from the PA Department of Community and Economic development provided combined funding of \$530,000 for necessary infrastructure improvements (streets, sidewalks, curbs and lighting); façade improvements for homeowners; demolition; and greenspace initiatives (development of two community parks). Grants from the PA Downtown Center totaling \$130,000 provided funding for home renovation assistance projects for lower-income homeowners; downpayment assistance grants for homeownership; two summer intern programs; and a Demonstration grant for Gateway Signage. The PA Downtown Center was also instrumental in providing training opportunities and technical assistance.

Oftentimes I believe pictures speak louder than words. I offer the following PowerPoint presentation so you can visualize the major impact the Elm Street Program has had in the northern gateway to the City of Pottsville:

- North Centre Street Sidewalk and Curb Replacement
sidewalk and curb replacement – 2,280 linear feet of curbing and 2,120 square yards of sidewalk, installation of street lights, and planting of trees
- Pocket Park
acquisition of two blighted parcels, demolition of two vacant buildings, and development of community park and parking area
- Gateway Signage
repair of immense concrete wall, demolition of blighted commercial structure (private), and installation of 'Welcome to Pottsville' mural
- Overlook Park
acquisition and development of community park

- North Centre Street paving
paving of the '600' and '700' blocks of North Centre Street, approximately 750 linear feet including line painting
- Demolition
demolition of a vacant and blighted residential duplex
- Nichols Street Sidewalk and Curb Replacement
sidewalk and curb replacement – 957 linear of curb and associated sidewalk
- Private Investment
L&K Construction - \$2.35m – SAM building and parking lot – located at corner of Nichols Street and Terry Reiley Way – Elm Street provided funding for some of the installation of curbs and sidewalk (2012)
L&K Construction - \$6m – office building – located on Terry Reiley Way (2006)
Maroons Sports Bar & Grill – major renovation project including bar and restaurant
- Barefield Recreation Center
\$4.5m community and activity center
Elm Street providing funding for cement for sidewalks and provides volunteers for maintenance of the grounds

The Elm Street Program has provided numerous contracts for economic opportunity. Over ten different contracting opportunities were offered for procurement during the Elm Street Program including contracts for demolition, sidewalk and curb replacement, street resurfacing, park development, masonry work, signage, etc. Several of the contracts which exceeded \$25,000 provided employment at State Prevailing Wage rates. In addition, procurement of materials and supplies were quite substantial throughout the Program providing opportunities for local vendors.

The Elm Street Program was a virtual godsend for the City of Pottsville and their revitalization efforts within the City. Improved infrastructure, housing renovation/ repair assistance, greenspace development, signage, and beautification have made a substantial impact and improvement in the northern gateway of the City. Great strides have been taken in revitalizing the City of Pottsville in recent years through the Elm Street Program. It is quite evident that programs such as Elm Street and Main Street have made a substantial impact on renewing the vibrancy of many diverse communities.

I thank you for this opportunity.