Extending Main Street's Reach: An Evaluation of Pennsylvania's Elm Street Program

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Extending Main Street's Reach: An Evaluation of Pennsylvania's Elm Street Program

Abstract
Many residential neighborhoods of Pennsylvania's older cities and towns have seen disinvestment and outmigration, which prompted Representative Robert Freeman to develop the Elm Street program. This program recognizes the interdependence of healthy residential neighborhoods and robust downtown commercial districts and shares the Main Street Four-Points Approach's principle of comprehensive, community-based strategies for revitalization. Presently, there is one designation Elm Street community with seven other "practicing" organizations that were formerly designated. This study fills a literature gap on the Elm Street program by detailing its development while evaluating Elm Street organizations' characteristics to provide recommendations to broaden and enrich the program's utilization. Interviews were held with many involved in the program's creation to understand how the program has evolved since enactment. Elm Street managers who implement the program were also interviewed. It was apparent that specific characteristics contributed to organizations' sustainability, such as mission, organizational partnerships, funding sources, size: area and population, CLG status, and redesignation. These were evaluated to develop a set of statewide recommendations and organization best practices with the hope to encourage broader use of the Elm Street program within new communities and existing organizations.

Keywords
Elm Street, Main Street, revitalization, neighborhood, Pennsylvania

Disciplines
Historic Preservation and Conservation

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EXTENDING MAIN STREET’S REACH: AN EVALUATION OF PENNSYLVANIA’S ELM STREET PROGRAM

Hanna Stark

A THESIS

in

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Section 1: Introduction

Elm Street is a program unique to Pennsylvania that supports the revitalization of older residential neighborhoods bordering commercial business districts. Many of the Commonwealth’s urban neighborhoods have seen disinvestment, outmigration, and aftershocks of urban renewal. The Elm Street program recognizes the connection between healthy residential neighborhoods and robust surrounding downtown and commercial districts. The program shares the basic principles of the celebrated Main Street Four-Points Approach, a comprehensive, community-based strategy to revitalize downtowns and central business districts throughout the United States. Elm Street seeks to extend the reach of Main Street programs beyond the borders of downtown into the adjacent neighborhoods, recognizing their interdependence.

The Elm Street Approach is centered around five focus areas, seeking to provide a holistic planning process to achieve neighborhood revitalization and sustainability. In its administration of the program, the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED) provides access to funding opportunities and designation application oversight. DCED also contracts with the nonprofit Pennsylvania Downtown Center (PDC) to provide assessment, training, and technical assistance to Elm Street communities, in which PDC acts similarly to a Main Street America coordinating program. Enacted in 2004, the program at its peak had 35 participating communities. However, presently there is one designated Elm Street program.

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1 Bill Fontana, interview by author, February 5, 2021.
statewide, with seven previously designated organizations still practicing under the
auspices of Elm Street. Appreciation of the Elm Street program’s success and its
apparent decline due to its current low number prompted this investigation into the
program.

Despite the program’s uniqueness, there has been no scholarly evaluation of Elm
Street’s effectiveness. There is very little information written on the program at all.
Pennsylvania Representative Robert Freeman, who envisioned the program and drafted
its legislation, has published an article in *Places Journal* and wrote a white paper as a
fellow in the Knight Program in Community Building detailing his inspiration for Elm
Street.² This thesis seeks to fill the literature gap on the Elm Street program by detailing
its development while evaluating Elm Street organizations’ characteristics to provide
recommendations to broaden and enrich the program’s utilization.

To understand the Elm Street program’s history, interviews were held with
Representative Freeman, creator of the program; Bill Fontana, former Executive
Director of PDC; and Mary Means, principal at Mary Means and Associates, who
developed the program’s guideline materials. Means kindly shared unpublished
electronic documents and notes relating to her involvement. Representative Freeman
additionally toured the author through his hometown of Easton, which served as
inspiration for the program. PDC and DCED graciously disclosed data relating to annual

on Elm Street: A Case Study in the Creation of the Elm Street Program to Revitalize Older Urban
Neighborhoods in Pennsylvania.” *Knight Program in Community Building*, (March 2004).
community reinvestment statistics and Elm Street grant monies. Interviews were also held with several Elm Street managers to understand how their organizations implement the Elm Street program. Many managers gladly shared a copy of their approved Elm Street plan. After analyzing the separate organizations’ approaches, it became apparent that specific characteristics contributed to organizations’ sustainability, especially in the wake of the initial five-year designation period. These characteristics were evaluated to determine organizational best practices and recommendations to strengthen the program.

This study thus relies on self-reported data and anecdotes from stakeholders and Elm Street organizations. The author gave much effort to corroborate this information with news coverage but could not validate everything with outside sources. While there are many discontinued Elm Street programs, this study focuses on the organizations that maintain memberships with the Pennsylvania Downtown Center and the associated annual reporting obligations and does not inquire why organizations cease to participate in the Elm Street program.³

To introduce this study, Section 2 of the study reviews the program’s national and statewide context, presenting the need for a specific program focused on revitalizing a neighborhood while showcasing preceding programs that attempted to address similar concerns. Section 3 details the origin of the program legislation,

³ To the author’s knowledge there is no central list of previous Elm Street programs. It was outside the scope of this study to locate previous Elm Street managers without a central repository.
including its evolution since enactment. Section 4 addresses the Elm Street organizations’ characteristics that contribute to their sustainability, a vital component of the Elm Street Approach. The study concludes with Section 5, which provides evaluations and recommendations to strengthen the Elm Street program.
Section 2: Federal and State Contexts of the Elm Street Program

Elm Street exists to revitalize residential neighborhoods contiguous and interdependent with older commercial districts. This purpose requires the assumption that such neighborhoods have seen depreciation and decline. This section lays out the post-World War II programs such as Federal Housing Administration loans, the Interstate Highway System, and urban renewal that contributed to the rise of suburban areas and the subsequent decline of neighborhoods in older cities and towns. It also explains the rise of community-led development programs like Community Development Corporations and the Main Street program that served as precedents for the Elm Street program. Lastly, it provides a context of the state of development plans in Pennsylvania at the turn of the twenty-first century, the timeframe when Elm Street was envisioned. The section seeks to explain why the Elm Street program was needed and what earlier programs and plans laid the way for its enactment.

Post-World War II Programs

Multiple interrelated policies at the federal, state, and local government level enacted post-World War II enabled and likely hastened the decline of traditional urban neighborhoods. The Federal Housing Administration (FHA) and Veterans Association (VA) loan programs of the 1940s fundamentally disrupted the real estate system by strongly influencing and, in many cases determining the design, structure, and location
of new private development. Increasingly detailed and elaborate zoning and suburban ordinances, with provisions such as minimum acreage, side yard, and setback requirements, encouraged the construction of single-family detached housing.

Suburbanization flourished as new construction in cities struggled to meet these standards to achieve FHA insurance. The new FHA and VA practices also led to the “redlining” of many urban neighborhoods deemed risky due to their African American populations. The FHA and other lending institutions refused to insure mortgages to residents within these sections until the 1970s. Redlining also contributed to white flight, where white residents with the means to do so left the city for the surrounding suburbs. Many of the new suburban subdivisions financed with FHA mortgages included racial covenants, denying African Americans the opportunity to leave cities or gain generational wealth through homeownership. Such Federal Housing Administration and Veterans Association practices profoundly transformed the patterns of residential construction and ownership, diminishing only in 1968 when Congress passed the Fair Housing Act.

Simultaneously, the Interstate Highway System development during the 1950s and 1960s encouraged outmigration from urban neighborhoods to the blossoming

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7 Freilich, From Sprawl to Smart Growth.
suburbs and their associated sprawl. The extensive highway system provided the infrastructural seeds for suburban shopping centers and malls at its interchanges. When the system was constructed through cities, many urban communities were destroyed and displaced. Additionally, millions of taxpayer dollars funded highway construction without any corresponding investment in cities' public transportation. The Interstate Highway System facilitated the growth of the suburban sprawl, as well as the deterioration and even destruction of urban neighborhoods.

The most detrimental of the myriad of federal programs was urban renewal. Urban renewal sought to address social and economic issues with the demolition of areas deemed blighted. Clearance of slums demolished long-established neighborhoods and vast numbers of housing units that were never replaced. The public housing projects constructed as part of urban renewal, often of housing typologies alien to what had previously existed, were primarily concentrated in urban areas, accelerating cities’ economic and racial segregation. Erie, Reading, Altoona, and Easton are a few Pennsylvania communities that underwent urban renewal projects that ultimately failed.

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9 Ibid.
10 Ibid.
Outmigration, disinvestment, and urban renewal contributed to urban neighborhoods’ decline and instead encouraged suburbanization across the Commonwealth.

The Rise of Community-Led Development Organizations

In reaction to the failure of federal, top-down programs, many community-centered and community-led initiatives formed. Throughout the 1970s, organizations created by private citizens began to tackle local revitalization. Community Development Corporations (CDC), Community Action Agencies (CAA), Business Improvement Districts (BID), and other community nonprofits gained prevalence after the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974, which provided Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) to state governments to distribute to local municipalities.11 The goal of CDBG’s was to redistribute federal monies from fragmented federal programs into local governments, which presumably had a better understanding of local needs. In 1977, the Carter administration developed, and Congress enacted, the Urban Development Action Grant (UDAG) program focused on inner-city areas in extreme economic distress.12 The legislation stated that UDAG funds should go to

“severely distressed cities and urban counties to help alleviate physical and economic deterioration through reclamation of neighborhoods having excessive housing abandonment or deterioration, and through community revitalization in areas with population outmigration or a stagnating or declining tax base.”13

12 Ibid.
In 1979, the Ford Foundation followed suit and established the Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) to give community development initiatives monetary and technical assistance. LISC achieved funding from foundations, banks, and private corporations. CDCs, BIDs, and CAAs were collectively encouraged and strengthened by LISC, which altered community redevelopment’s direction and structure. Local development organizations still received some federal funds however, they were distinct from the earlier federal programs. The community-led programs directed funds directly to areas of economic distress at the discretion of local leaders instead of federal officials.

As the momentum for grassroots community redevelopment organizations grew, the National Trust for Historic Preservation (NTHP) initiated the Main Street Project to combat abandonment and deterioration in traditional downtowns. In 1977 Mary Means, then the NTHP’s Midwest Regional Office Director, developed a three-year pilot program. Three communities, Galesburg, IL, Hot Springs, SD, and Madison, IN, were chosen “to learn how to preserve a downtown’s heritage while sparking reinvestment.” These communities were not large urban areas but rather of modest populations, respectively 38,000 residents, 5,000 residents, and 13,000 residents, that saw a decline due to broad social forces. Each city was assigned a full-time Main Street Manager to coordinate project activities, engage in community outreach, and raise

14 von Hoffman, “The Past, Present, and Future of Community Development.”
funds from local businesses. The pilot recognized that downtown revitalization needed a comprehensive strategy. A replicable framework, the Main Street “Four-Points Approach,” was developed, focusing on the integrated application of four key elements:

1. Organization: Creating a strong foundation for a sustainable revitalization effort, including cultivating partnerships, community involvement, and resources for the district.
2. Design: Supporting a community’s transformation by enhancing the physical and visual assets that set the commercial district apart.
3. Promotion: Positioning the downtown or commercial district as the center of the community and hub of economic activity while creating a positive image that showcases a community’s unique characteristics.
4. Economic restructuring: Focusing on economic and financial tools to assist new and existing businesses, catalyze property development, and create a supportive environment for entrepreneurs and innovators that drive local economies.

This asset and place-based community development relied on local buy-in, connecting stakeholders and existing community organizations to re-establish and maintain the vitality of historic commercial cores. The National Main Street Center’s mission was to “strengthen communities through preservation-based economic development in older and historic downtowns and neighborhood commercial districts.”

A second pilot project began in 1980, testing the Four-Points Approach and its ability to be coordinated with state-level programs. The program needed to be broad and flexible enough to accommodate very different statewide contexts and limit

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16 Gerloff, Scott. “Main Street: The Early Years.” Forum Journal 9, no. 3 (Spring 1995).
18 Ibid., 6
19 Ibid., 4.
reliance on state and local regulatory mechanisms. Colorado, Georgia, Massachusetts, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, and Texas worked with the National Main Street Center to build appropriate capacity to deliver technical assistance to thirty local demonstration communities. This effort laid the foundation for a nationwide network of statewide coordinating programs. Today forty states have coordinating programs, including the Pennsylvania Downtown Center, that partner with the National Main Street Center to provide support and training to Main Street communities.

This centralized organization within the Main Street Program differs from earlier, more geographically specific revitalization organizations like CDCs, BIDs, and CAAs. Together these community-based efforts to combat municipal decline laid a framework for the Elm Street Program.

*The Shift to Neighborhoods as a Planning Concept*

The aforementioned programs and organizations focused broadly on the citywide scale or specifically on commercial cores. Little emphasis was placed solely on the revitalization of residential neighborhoods. Clay Phillips’ 1979 book, *Neighborhood Renewal: Middle-Class Resettlement and Incumbent Upgrading in American Neighborhoods*, was a very early proponent of focusing on revitalization at the neighborhood scale. He recognized that “within the central city, however, is a more

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20 Gerloff, “Main Street: The Early Years.”
21 Dono et al., *Revitalizing Main Street*.
interesting disparity between the increasing levels of investment in many downtown areas and the continued decline in investment in residential neighborhoods.” Clay referenced a 1975 Urban Land Institute survey that found that 65% of cities were experiencing renewal in older areas, but many were without architectural or historical distinction. Instead, it was “the area’s village ambience - the smaller scale of its buildings, its convenient location, and its moderate population density” that attracted new residents. Clay found that neighborhoods led many of these revitalization efforts, not explicitly with government tools. He argued that government should work directly with citizens in neighborhood revitalization. Clay saw early on that government collaboration could assist in the revitalization of deserving residential neighborhoods.

Similarly, in 2000, William Peterman’s Neighborhood Planning and Community-Based Development: The Potential and Limits of Grassroots Action explores how grassroots approaches, rather than traditional centralized, top-down planning notions, can bring about neighborhood redevelopment. He puts less emphasis on the creation of neighborhood plans but encourages changing urban policies or programs that contributed to the blighted neighborhood and creating opportunities for reinvestment. Peterman concludes that there are more failing neighborhoods than successful, and

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23 Ibid. 3
there have been limited effective grassroots strategies so far, requiring greater attention to this issue.

In 2012, the What Works Collaborative, a partnership of Brookings Institution’s Metropolitan Policy Program, Harvard University’s Joint Center for Housing Studies, New York University’s Furman Center for Real Estate and Urban Policy, and the Urban Institute’s Center for Metropolitan Housing and Communities, developed a white paper entitled “Building Successful Neighborhoods.” It analyzed existing policies and strategies for neighborhood improvement while creating a plan for future research on the topic of neighborhood revitalization. The goal was to encourage a new neighborhood policy agenda, showing that there is still a deficiency in planning at the residential neighborhood scale.

**Pennsylvania Enters the Twenty-First Century**


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25 Tatian et al., “Building Successful Neighborhoods.”
26 Hylton, *Save Our Land, Save Our Towns: A Plan for Pennsylvania.*
report, in 2005, the Conservation Fund and the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources authored *Better Models for Development in Pennsylvania: Ideas for Creating More Livable and Prosperous Communities.* These publications recognized and celebrated Pennsylvania’s cultural landscapes, both agricultural and industrial, and the small towns fundamental to them.

A common concern among these reports was the unchecked sprawl occurring across the state. Hylton provided a comprehensive overview of post-1950s sprawling development trends and the decline of Pennsylvania cities and towns. He pleaded that “we don’t even have real towns to all home anymore. Instead, we have colorless subdivisions- like Orchard Hills or Fragrant Forests- named for the things that were destroyed when they were built.” Hylton argued that a comprehensive state plan should focus on building communities through reallocating zoning powers.

Pennsylvania contains a complex patchwork of over 2,500 general-purpose governments, including 67 counties, 56 cities, 961 boroughs, 91 first-class townships, and 1,457 second-class townships, as well as 501 school districts. Although a challenge given this administrative complexity, Hylton claimed a regional planning approach would encourage coordinating state agencies, local municipalities, and school districts

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29 Hylton, *Save Our Land, Save Our Towns,* 14
30 Ibid., 123.
towards a common goal of preserving, protecting, and vastly improving Pennsylvania.\textsuperscript{32} Hylton recognized that “some of the loveliest towns in Pennsylvania... have mixtures of homes, stores, and offices that are dense enough to support walking and public transportation.”\textsuperscript{33} These characteristics were precisely what Elm Street sought to revive.

In 2003 the Brookings Institution’s \textit{Back to Prosperity} reached similar conclusions, finding that Pennsylvania’s older cities and towns had declined while much of the state’s growth occurs in outlying newer suburbs. Despite very low population growth, 2.5 percent between 1982 and 1997, Pennsylvania’s amount of developed land grew by 47 percent.\textsuperscript{34} This growth pattern resulted in high vacancy rates in older municipalities, and in turn, this depressed property values and tax revenues. The report recommended regional governance collaboration and state agency cohesion. It called for a statewide vision for economic development and land-use planning, similar to Hylton’s call for a comprehensive plan.\textsuperscript{35} The report also encouraged reinvestment and redevelopment in older urban areas as central to economic development.\textsuperscript{36}

Building on the Brookings Institution’s report, \textit{Better Models} (2003) presented principles for better development without destruction of community character and natural resources, such as: conserve natural and scenic assets, maintain a clear edge, build livable communities, preserve historic resources, respect local character in new

\textsuperscript{32} Hylton, \textit{Save Our Land, Save Our Towns}, 44.  
\textsuperscript{33} Ibid. 59  
\textsuperscript{34} “Back to Prosperity: A Competitive Agenda for Renewing Pennsylvania.” 10  
\textsuperscript{35} Ibid. 11  
\textsuperscript{36} Ibid. 12
construction, and reduce the impact of the car.\textsuperscript{37} The report argued that these models allow for economic development while maintaining natural and historical integrity.\textsuperscript{38}

These three publications collectively shared and articulated disappointment and frustration with Pennsylvania development models entering the twenty-first century. The Elm Street program addressed many of the same concerns voiced in these reports regarding suburbanization and the lack of a statewide approach to encourage appropriate revitalization, development, and maintenance of the smaller cities and towns that contribute to the character and identity of Pennsylvania.

\textsuperscript{38} Ibid. 6.
Section 3: Origin of the Elm Street Program

Representative Freeman’s Legislation

The Elm Street program’s first stirrings resulted from a panel discussion at the 2001 Pennsylvania State Association of Boroughs conference. The conference highlighted upcoming state legislation that would be of interest to borough officials. In Pennsylvania’s local government structure, boroughs represent the category of small towns. One of the half dozen State Senators and State Representatives on the panel was Representative Robert Freeman, D-136th District, Northampton County, a district containing multiple boroughs. In preparing for his presentation, Freeman noticed a gap in the Main Street Program’s purview. Focusing solely on commercial districts, Main Street neglected the interrelated health and stability of their surrounding residential neighborhoods. Freeman believed “no commercial core can continue to prosper unless the residential neighborhoods that ring that core are also stable, healthy and successful in their own right.”

The author had the pleasure and privilege to meet Representative Freeman in his hometown of Easton, which served as inspiration for the program. Freeman’s enthusiasm and passion for the program were evident as he showcased his childhood neighborhood, the West Ward. His experience growing up in a diverse, pedestrian-

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39 Freeman, “Ending the Nightmare on Elm Street: A Case Study in the Creation of the Elm Street Program to Revitalize Older Urban Neighborhoods in Pennsylvania” 3.
40 Jordan, “State House Unanimously Passes Elm Street Program; Northampton County Democrat’s Bill Would Help Neighborhoods.”
friendly, mixed-use neighborhood was influential when developing a program to save those qualities in similar neighborhoods across the Commonwealth. He reminisced on walking seven blocks to downtown Easton as a child, highlighting the interconnectedness of residential and commercial districts. As he developed his proposal, Freeman landed on the name of Elm Street for the new program. This inspiration came from Geography of Nowhere (1993) by James Howard Kunstler, who coined the name Elm Street as Main Street’s residential counterpart. After Freeman unveiled his concept to the Borough Association, the process began of transforming it into a bill.

In September 2001, Freeman’s Elm Street bill, HB 1934, was part of a broader anti-blight legislation package referred to the House Urban Affairs Committee. The package moved out of committee and passed the House with unanimous votes. Unfortunately, the bill languished in the Senate as the state was facing a budget deficit, and Republican leaders were unwilling to spend money on new programs. Luckily, Ed Rendell ran for governor in 2002 and included Elm Street in the comprehensive plan on which he campaigned. After Rendell’s victory, Freeman reintroduced his bill, now HB 500, in February 2003. He incorporated a few editorial changes to garner Republican support, and the bill had over eighty bipartisan supporters in the House. In Rendell’s early March 2003 budget address, he proposed $5 million in Elm Street funding. Many

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41 Freeman, “Ending the Nightmare on Elm Street” 4.
42 Ibid. 7.
43 Ibid. 8.
non-traditional moves by Republican leadership occurred surrounding the year’s budget, which resulted in a record time approval. In approving Rendell’s original budget, Elm Street’s funding was secured even before the program’s implementation legislation was enacted.

In the new legislative session, HB 500 was swiftly referred to the Local Government Committee and moved to the House floor. A Republican Representative raised a few concerns over the bill’s language, which resulted in an amendment prohibiting Elm Street funding from being used to convert farmland to residential, commercial, or industrial uses, and an amendment requiring Elm Street neighborhoods to have been in existence since before 1961. Freeman agreed with both amendments. The bill again passed the House unanimously in June 2003.

The bill moved quickly through the Senate Urban Affairs and Housing Committee, but the Senate did not bring it up for a vote until January of 2004. Republican leadership proposed several amendments, two of which Freeman opposed. The first would have placed a sunset provision in the legislation, having the program expiring after five years unless renewed by the legislature. Freeman negotiated the period to seven years. The second amendment would have prohibited allocating more than 15% of the program’s funding to municipalities in any one county. The goal was to ensure that urban counties would not monopolize the funding. Freeman was able to

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44 Freeman, “Ending the Nightmare on Elm Street” 9.
raise the cap to 20%. On January 21, 2004, the Senate passed HB 500 unanimously. Governor Rendell signed it into law in February, becoming Act 7 of the 2004 session.

(See Appendix A for the full text of Act 7.)

**Program Overview**

Freeman’s legislation called for the Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED) and the Pennsylvania Downtown Center (PDC) to jointly administer the Elm Street program. To qualify for designation, the legislation stated a community must be “a defined geographic area which has consisted of buildings and structures for housing individuals and families which has existed as a residential neighborhood since before 1961.” The residential neighborhood must also be within 1/2 mile from “a Main Street Program project or an existing commercial district.” The applicant had to provide evidence of support by residents, merchants, and government officials. A 10% match for any awarded grants was also required.

The program aimed to assist communities’ economic development through a local organization dedicated to neighborhood revitalization. The organization was required to be led by a full-time professional neighborhood coordinator, the Elm Street Manager, who oversaw various stakeholders’ efforts to create and implement a revitalization plan. Additionally, the Manager was tasked with reviewing the condition of

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45 Ibid. 10.  
46 “Elm Street Program Act – Enactment”. Section 1  
47 Ibid. Section 3(a).
community assets and local zoning and land use plans to foster neighborhood vitality. The program was structured to provide grants to participating municipalities for a five-year period, after which the communities’ Elm Street designation would sunset unless officially renewed. The legislation laid out three types of grants: operational, reinvestment, and planning. The operational grants could be used to cover the administrative costs of hiring an Elm Street Manager. Reinvestment grants could be used for infrastructure and structural improvements such as streets, trees, and building facades. Planning grants could be used to market the neighborhood, leverage additional investments, promote homeownership, achieve consistency with existing revitalization plans, and address blight, crime, employment opportunities, and public services.

After the legislation’s 2004 enactment, the program started rapidly. DCED prepared guidelines, reviewed applications, and awarded the first grants. These initial program guidelines identified five program areas, drawing on provisions in the legislation while using the Main Street Four-Point Approach as a model. DCED designed these five elements to give applicants a clear understanding of the Elm Street Program’s objectives:

1. Organization: to build consensus and cooperation among the groups that play roles in designated Elm Street neighborhoods
2. Promotion: to market the identifying characteristics of the Elm Street neighborhood to potential residents, investors, new businesses, tourists, and others
3. Design: to enhance the Elm Street neighborhood’s physical appearance by capitalizing on its distinctive assets and traditional layout
4. Neighborhood Restructuring: to strengthen the quality of existing residential housing stock of the Elm Street neighborhood while diversifying the type and income mix to ensure a balanced environment.

5. Clean, Safe, and Green: to enhance the real and perceived level of safety, cleanliness, and quality of passive and active recreational opportunities in the Elm Street district.

The first four of these points corresponded to Main Street’s Four-Point Approach, with Organization, Promotion, and Design remaining consistent and Economic Vitality transformed for Elm Street to Neighborhood Restructuring. Clean, Safe, and Green was a new point exclusive to the Elm Street program.48

However, DCED considered these as short-term guidelines to launch the program, and in April 2004, PDC contracted Mary Means and Associates (MMA) to further develop the Elm Street program.49 MMA’s work covered two phases. The first phase focused on program development and early tools, products, and activities. DCED’s five program areas provided the foundation for the Elm Street Approach. Despite Means creating the Main Street approach, she further tailored the points to reflect Elm Street’s distinctive needs. MMA transformed DCED’s five points from Organization, Promotion, Design, Neighborhood Restructuring, and Clean, Safe, and Green to Sustainable Organization, Image and Identity, Design, Neighbors and Economy, and Clean, Safe, and Green. MMA designed a flexible approach as each Elm Street neighborhood was

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49 The author had the privilege of interviewing and receiving many uncatalogued and otherwise inaccessible electronic documents from Mary Means detailing MMA’s work for Elm Street. The following sections are built on this archive of sources, including notes, email communications, and draft documents.
different and likely to identify its own priorities. However, the expectation was that all
neighborhoods would address each of the approach’s five points.

Means knew that coordinated action would most like be sustained long-term with a robust organization, so a “Sustainable Organization” was at the center of the approach. MMA defined a Sustainable Organization as one that would get results and visibly make a difference; be entrepreneurial and have diversified funding sources; partner with organizations/agencies in housing, public works, employment, and other concerns; attract and retain volunteers and garner in-kind donations; have credibility within the neighborhood and the community at large; and be at the table when the neighborhood is involved in important initiatives. This organization could be formed specifically for the Elm Street program or be an existing organization with a related mission; MMA did not lay out any technical requirements in the Elm Street approach. The ultimate, long-term goal of the Elm Street program was to enable local neighborhood revitalization leaders to achieve results, demonstrate worth, and build a sustainable program through a recognized and sustainable organization.

“Image” referred to how the neighborhood is viewed by non-residents, while “Identity” described how residents view or feel about their neighborhood. A neighborhood’s image often impacted the perceived desirability and the level of investment in the area. Identity was more closely tied to whether residents became engaged in their community, whether they desired or planned to stay, and whether they invested in updates and repairs to their properties. Image and identity could be
improved by hosting events, distributing neighborhood information, seeking positive media coverage, or hosting awards.

“Design” encompassed the character of a neighborhood, including architecture, site plans, and streetscape. Streetscape improvement projects, revolving loan funds, matching grants, or rehabilitation guidelines could improve the design element. The design of a neighborhood should signal the distinctive character of the community.

“Neighbors and Economy” referred to the underlying economic factors that influence neighborhoods’ health. Neighborhoods may require interventions to stabilize aspects of their economy, such as special homeownership programs, gap financing for housing rehabilitation, employment training, and partnerships with nearby business organizations.

“Clean, Safe, and Green” related to how pleasant people perceived a neighborhood to be. Interventions for improving cleanliness, safety, and greenness included community watch programs, volunteer clean-up efforts, and community gardens.

After MMA recommended these modifications to the Elm Street approach, they developed a planning process to achieve Elm Street grants and designation from DCED. The ideal sequence was to receive a planning grant, then Elm Street designation, and lastly, residential reinvestment grants. The threshold for acquiring a planning grant was low to make the Elm Street Program accessible to a wide variety of neighborhoods. A planning grant of up to $25,000 funded a planning process that was required to address
all Elm Street Approach elements. MMA asserted that planning was an opportunity to engage residents, property owners, and community institutions to develop a common understanding of the neighborhood, a shared vision for what it needs to become, and a plan to get there. An Elm Street Plan focused on physical features and their relationship to social and economic conditions and must be rooted in a robust community-based vision.

While DCED did not require a format for an Elm Street Plan, recognizing that each neighborhood has specific issues and priorities, MMA did develop a standard checklist to facilitate the planning process. An Elm Street Plan must address all five elements of the Elm Street Approach; have been developed with extensive and ongoing community participation of neighborhood residents and property owners; have been developed within the past five years; contain a 5-year action plan with clearly delineated roles and responsibilities for implementation; and address the sustainability of the Elm Street organization after the Commonwealth’s financial support sunset. There was an explicit goal of ensuring the applying organization had the resources to reach maturity during its five-year designation period and continue without state support. The sequence of recommended steps in MMA’s planning process was: getting organized, gathering information, analyzing information, setting goals, testing emerging ideas, committing to action, and sustaining revitalization. Interested communities could develop an Elm Street Plan without a DCED planning grant, as long as it addressed the five required elements.
Elm Street designation required an Elm Street Plan that met a rigorous set of standards, and not all communities that received planning grants earned Elm Street designation. An application for designation had to include the process that developed the action plan; commitments of matching funds; allotment of funds for the manager; a strategy to use Residential Reinvestment Grants; and a preliminary plan for organizational sustainability after the Commonwealth’s support. If DCED granted designation, organizations received technical assistance and training from PDC, networking opportunities with other Elm Street managers, operational funding for up to five years, and priority consideration for Elm Street Residential Reinvestment grant funding.\textsuperscript{50} Initially, $225,000 was available in operational grants over five years for administrative costs, including those associated with hiring a manager.

PDC and DCED were committed to monitoring Elm Street neighborhoods’ success, so MMA established a monitoring and indicator system. The role of indicators was to make the evaluation of a complex system, like neighborhood revitalization, understandable or apparent. Effective indicators helped communities quantify where they are, how far they have come, and what changes were needed to reach their goals. MMA linked the monitoring system to each of the five elements of the Elm Street Approach. There were different required, recommended, and optional measurements that assessed the program’s effectiveness. Elm Street organizations had to follow annual

\textsuperscript{50} “New Communities: Program Guidelines.” Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development, August 2008. 15.
reporting guidelines to describe the program’s effect on the neighborhood in qualitative and quantitative means. Each organization was required to collect and report annually for the five active designation years and the five years following. (See Appendix B for monitoring and indicator system.) Unfortunately, there is no system in place that enforces routine reporting or regulates the validity of the reports. It is also not apparent what, if any, actions PDC or DCED would take if an organization does not meet its set goals.

To assist with resource creation, PDC formed a Program Development Committee and an Elm Street Advisory Committee to provide MMA with constructive insights and guidance as development occurred. The Program Development Committee met monthly and served as a sounding board for program initiatives while fostering cross-agency cooperation. It featured state-level policymakers, such as the Governor’s Office, PDC, DCED, PA House of Representatives, Center for Rural Pennsylvania, and Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency. Within this committee, PDC formed a Policy Working Group to provide feedback as well. The larger Elm Street Advisory Committee met quarterly and sought to foster community and organizational networking. It brought together a wide range of perspectives, including Pennsylvania Nutrition Advocates, Alliance for Better Housing, Pennsylvania Commission on Crime & Delinquency, Pittsburgh Partnership for Neighborhoods, and Cumberland County Redevelopment Authority. MMA hosted working sessions of the committees during the six months of Elm Street’s formative period.
Phase Two of MMA’s work, beginning in fall 2004, was centered on training and technical assistance. A framework for how PDC could provide technical assistance to designated neighborhoods was also created. MMA developed a core curriculum and resource manual to train designated communities. MMA’s work was foundational in developing the Elm Street Program, and some of its components survive in the current program iteration.

Political Influences on the Evolution of the Program

As the Elm Street program relied on state funding allocations, it was deeply intertwined with state politics. After enactment in 2004, the Elm Street program entered the existing DCED New Communities Initiative, joining Main Street and Enterprise Zones. This bundle of DCED programs had a unique line item in the state budget within Community and Economic Development. For the first five years of Elm Street, the state allocated steady funds to the New Communities appropriation. $18 million was awarded from 2004-05 to 2007-08, with $7 million each going to Main Street and Elm Street and $4 million to Enterprise Zones.

The first threat to the appropriation came from the financial crisis of 2008. The Commonwealth had a projected $3.2 billion deficit, prompting significant budget cuts.

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51 “The New Communities Program supports three separate programs under one appropriation: the Enterprise Zone Program, the Main Street Program, and the Elm Street Program. These programs provide communities with the tools to integrate the revitalization of downtowns, surrounding neighborhoods and industrial/manufacturing areas.” “New Communities: Program Guidelines.”
Pennsylvania Senate Republicans proposed a 2009-10 budget that eliminated all funding for DCED’s New Communities Initiative.\textsuperscript{52} In response, Governor Rendell cut the New Communities appropriation from $17.7 million to $10 million. The program saw a significant decrease in funds for the last two fiscal years of Rendell’s term due to the state’s precarious financial situation. (See Appendix C for allocation history.) Thankfully, one aspect of the program’s vulnerability, its expiration clause in Section 6 of Act 7, was repealed in October 2008, ensuring that Elm Street would continue.\textsuperscript{53}

Following Governor Corbett’s election in 2011, a new DCED program, Keystone Communities, incorporated three discontinued appropriations, Housing and Redevelopment Assistance, Pennsylvania Accessible Housing, and the New Communities Initiative.\textsuperscript{54} While not uncommon for a new governor to change the nomenclature for program initiatives, merging these former separate appropriations resulted in a steep decrease in funding. They went from a combined $27.8 million in 2010-11 to only $12 million in the final 2011-12 budget, a decrease of 57%.\textsuperscript{55} Within this new arrangement, a community wishing to undertake some form of revitalization could be designated as a Keystone Community, joining Main Street, Elm Street, and Enterprise Zones.

\textsuperscript{52} Scott, Jason. “State Senate Slashes Community Funding in Proposed Budget.” The Sentinel, June 3, 2009.
\textsuperscript{53} P.L.1417, No.115
The new organization of the Elm Street program within Keystone Communities drastically altered how DCED awarded grants. For all Keystone Communities designations, four grants were now available: Planning, Implementation, Accessible Housing, and Keystone Community Development, including Façade, Development, and Public Improvement Subgrants. The former residential reinvestment and operations grants were no longer available to Elm Street organizations. The lack of operational funds fundamentally hurt Elm Street’s goal of creating a sustainable organization, as there was no longer funding to support communities’ full-time professional managers. At the program’s peak during Rendell’s governance, there were 35 designated communities, with more in the planning process. This amount was never sustainable as there would not have been enough reinvestment or implementation grant monies for that many communities.

However, the elimination of operational or reinvestment grants made more money available for Keystone Community Development grants. Façade grants of $5,000/property and up to $250,000/community were available to stimulate private investment in properties, foster an attractive environment, and preserve the architectural heritage of properties and communities. $500,000 was available for development grants to fund a variety of physical improvements. Public Improvement

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57 Fontana, interview.
grants were available up to $500,000 and $300,000 for Accessible Housing grants.\textsuperscript{58} Elm Street was fortunate compared to other Keystone Community designations in that, rather than a dollar-for-dollar match, Elm Street needed only a 10% match from local, private, or public sources. The match could also be reduced or waived if it would impose a hardship. DCED determined a hardship if the municipality was “financially distressed” under the Municipalities Financial Recovery Act, or if the match would exceed 5% of the municipality’s operating budget, or if 20% of the municipality’s population falls below 150% of the federal poverty level.\textsuperscript{59}

In 2014, a budget impasse occurred, and funding for the Keystone Communities programs was proposed to be eliminated. Thankfully, Secretary of DCED Alan Walker successfully advocated saving the programs.\textsuperscript{60} Nevertheless, the allotment further decreased by 45.6%, from $11.3 million to $6.125 million. This was a record low line-item appropriation. Governor Tom Wolf won election in 2015 and proposed a record high allotment of $21 million for the Keystone Communities Programs.\textsuperscript{61} During the 2015 Senate Appropriations Committee hearings, Senator David Argall (R) advocated on behalf of the Main Street and Elm Street programs, proposing that Keystone

\textsuperscript{58} “2011-12 PA Keystone Community Program Guidelines.” Bellefonte, PA: Centre County Planning and Community Development Office, November 2011.

\textsuperscript{59} Act of July 10, 1987 (P.L. 246, No. 47), Under Act 47, DCED has a responsibility to assist Pennsylvania municipalities that are experiencing severe financial difficulties in order to ensure the health, safety and welfare of their citizens.

\textsuperscript{60} Fontana, interview.

\textsuperscript{61} “Governor Wolf’s 2015-16 Budget Address.” CenterPiece: Pennsylvania Downtown Center’s Quarterly Newsletter, Spring 2015.
Communities be given $25 million. Unfortunately, the 2015-16 enacted budget saw only a 3.3% increase to Keystone Communities line-item. In 2016, Wolf again proposed a high appropriation for Keystone Communities, and this time the funding saw a 92% increase to $12.2 million. Curiously, from the 2017-18 budget onwards, Wolf only proposed $6.375 million for the line-item, but the enacted budget was increasingly larger, ranging from a 10-26% increase over the years. An explanation for this change in the proposed and enacted budgets was the provision of “walking around money” for WAM projects and programs. WAM provided funds for local projects, governments, and community groups that fell within the mission of Keystone Communities to “support local initiatives such as the growth and stability of neighborhoods and communities; social and economic diversity; and a strong and secure quality of life.” However, WAM projects did not go through the application process set forth by DCED, inherently having less rigor in planning, implementing, and monitoring than MMA had devised for the Elm Street program. Instead, projects were earmarked in legislations, seemingly increasing the line-item appropriation, but no additional grant monies were made available to DCED.

In January 2021, after nine months of the coronavirus pandemic, DCED announced a COVID-19 Relief- Supporting Elm and Main (SEAM) program to provide

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63 Fontana, interview.
64 “Keystone Communities Program Designations: Program Guidelines.” Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development, June 17, 2019. 1
financial assistance to community revitalization organizations dedicated to community and economic development in older and historic downtowns, commercial districts, and neighborhoods. Up to $50,000 per community was available to support salary and benefits for support staff and operations costs, including rent or mortgage, utilities, and recovery and resiliency costs such as internet meeting service licenses, equipment purchases, off-site/cloud data storage, and cybersecurity.65 SEAM resembled the original operational grants of Rendell’s tenure, and for the first time in ten years, Elm Street programs once again could temporarily put funds towards paying their manager.

Section 4: Elm Street Organization Characteristics

One of the Elm Street approach’s core elements is creating a sustainable organization within each Elm Street neighborhood. As state funding appropriations shifted and eliminated operational grants, it became even more crucial for an Elm street organization to have stability in leadership, governance, finances, and staffing. As neighborhood revitalization is a long-term, and in many ways ongoing, process, the organization must have a high organizational capacity with vision, program effectiveness, relationship-building capabilities, resource growth, and operations. Without a sustainable organization, an Elm Street program will not survive following its five-year designation period.

In many cases, Elm Street organizations operate in neighborhoods where community investment has been lacking. It is plausible for established community development organizations or social service agencies from outside the Elm Street neighborhood to act as the catalyst for the early stages of the implementation effort. However, the development of a neighborhood-based organization is integral to the Elm Street Approach and not only a tactical tool. That said, many communities do not have the human or financial resources to sustain both a downtown revitalization organization and a similar neighborhood revitalization corporation. In these cases, the ideal solution is for the two organizations to develop a plan to combine their revitalization efforts.

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Current Elm Street Organizations

As of March 2021, there was only one designated Elm Street organization, the Spanish American Civic Association, serving the residents of southeast Lancaster. There are seven other “practicing” Elm Street organizations. These organizations’ Elm Street designation has sunset, but they still actively follow the Elm Street Approach and annually report the Elm Street Program Measurement and Performance Evaluation Matrix to DCED. These “practicing” communities are: the Community Action Development Corporation of Allentown, the City of Bradford’s Office of Economic & Community Development, Building Our Pride in Chambersburg, Inc., the Sisters of St. Joseph Neighborhood Network (Erie), the Lewisburg Neighborhoods Corporation, Pennsylvania Interfaith Community Programs Inc. (Gettysburg), and the United Neighborhood Centers of Northeastern Pennsylvania (Scranton). (See Appendix D for maps of the Elm Street organizations). The sustained success of these seven practicing organizations is very instructive, as they have prospered following their initial designation period, theoretically offering insights into what creates a sustainable organization and offering examples that legitimize the assumptions behind the program’s sunset provision. It is worth noting that the City of Bradford is the only municipality that administers an Elm Street Plan, creating unique and specific circumstances separate from the other nonprofit Elm Street organizations.

Seven of the eight Elm Street managers were contacted for this thesis; Pennsylvania Interfaith Community Programs Inc. was unavailable. Six interviews were
held, and the City of Bradford’s Office of Economic & Community Development coordinator manually filled out a survey of the interview questions. The interviews intended to evaluate whether the concept of creating a sustainable organization as part of the Elm Street Approach was effective in these seven organizations. (See Appendix E for the interview questions.)

From these conversations, specific characteristics emerged that correlated with sustainable Elm Street organizations. Mission, organizational partnerships, funding sources, size: area and population, and redesignation were determined to contribute to the various organizations’ successes and distinguishing characteristics. One additional characteristic, Certified Local Government status, was not discussed during the interviews but was notable. The following sections of this section will summarize these categories, highlighting distinguishing Elm Street organizations. (See Appendix F for a table compiling the Elm Street organization characteristics.)

**Mission**

The mission of Elm Street organizations broadly falls into two camps, social services or community redevelopment. Of the organizations in this study, three are community redevelopment oriented and four focus on social services. Social services are classified as nonprofit organizations fulfilling a broad range of public services beyond neighborhood revitalization. Community redevelopment organizations focus more
narrowly on economic development strategies to improve the conditions of communities.

As an example of a social service agency, the United Neighborhood Centers of Northeastern Pennsylvania’s (UNC) mission is “to work together with neighbors to provide services and create opportunities that empower individuals and build strong, interdependent communities.”67 To enact its mission, UNC has five departments: Community Services, Children and Teens, Community Education, Community Revitalization, and Community Health and Aging. UNC owns three childcare centers, a summer camp in Tunkhannock, a healthy aging campus, an art center, and a community development corporation that runs six housing projects.

Their Community Revitalization department oversees the organization’s Elm Street plan alongside other neighborhood revitalization initiatives, such as a farmers’ market. When the South Scranton neighborhood, the target of the Elm Street program, began improving, UNC moved their administrative office there.68 This move integrated their revitalization work into UNC’s other focus areas. Currently, UNC’s Department of Community Education offers free adult literacy and English as a Second Language classes out of their South Scranton facility. The organization has a much broader focus, but Elm Street supports its efforts of creating better communities throughout Scranton.

Similarly, Sisters of St. Joseph Neighborhood Network, Spanish American Civic

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68 Chrissy Manuel, interview by author, December 17, 2020
Association, Building Our Pride in Chambersburg, Inc. have social service-oriented missions.

On the other hand, Lewisburg Neighborhoods Corporation (LNC) is an organization that solely focuses on neighborhood revitalization. In 2004, the Borough of Lewisburg and Bucknell University formed the Lewisburg Neighborhood Task Force to study the effect of Bucknell’s housing policies on the borough’s neighborhoods.69 One of the task force’s recommendations was to create a neighborhood development corporation to spearhead long-term revitalization. Their report also identified Elm Street as a possible funding source for this new organization. These recommendations led to the formation of the Lewisburg Neighborhoods Corporation, which achieved Elm Street designation for the Bull Run neighborhood. The nonprofit’s mission is to

“maintain an administrative framework for planning neighborhood improvements; to be an advocacy group for Lewisburg neighborhoods; to plan for long-term reinvestment while preserving historic aspects of the community; to facilitate public/private communication and cooperation to strengthen community ties and improve neighborhood appearance, property values, safety, and quality of life; and to work in partnership with the Borough of Lewisburg to secure funds and to identify, prioritize, and oversee the implementation of neighborhood projects.”70

While long, it clearly concentrates on facets of neighborhood revitalization. With a narrower scope, LNC can concentrate intensely on specific aspects of the Elm Street Approach. Clean, Safe, and Green initiatives, like a greenway plan and flood impact task

69 Samantha Pearson, interview by author, December 15, 2020
force, are a primary focus of the organization. This specificity can be achieved due to the Elm Street organization’s focused mission, which is also seen in the Community Action Development Corporation of Allentown and the City of Bradford’s Office of Economic & Community Development.

**Organizational Partnerships**

Another distinguishing characteristic between Elm Street organizations is their level of partnerships with other organizations. Partnerships range from religious institutions, Main Street programs, universities, municipalities, and other nonprofits. The classification of the Elm Street organization contributes to their partnerships as the organizations that are nonprofits will partner with their municipalities, while the City of Bradford OCED is more likely to partner with nonprofits.

The most natural partner for Elm Street organizations is the corresponding Main Street organization. In Representative Freeman’s vision for the Elm Street program, he saw the two organizations having a symbiotic relationship, with the success of both hinging on the other. When MMA developed the Elm Street program guidelines, they encouraged that one organization implement both Elm Street and Main Street approaches. They further suggested having the Elm Street manager serve as an assistant to the Main Street manager.

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The City of Bradford’s Office of Community and Economic Development contains both their Elm and Main Street programs. Initially, they had separate managers, but today one staff person performs both Main and Elm Street manager requirements.\textsuperscript{72} Currently, there are no nonprofit examples of one organization encompassing both programs. Instead, many Elm Street nonprofit organizations collaborate with their respective Main Street organization. Lewisburg Neighborhoods Corporation works closely with the Lewisburg Downtown Partnership, at one time sharing office space. Similarly, Building Our Pride in Chambersburg and Downtown Chambersburg work together on many initiatives. It is worth noting that both are smaller communities which may facilitate more partnership opportunities.

Another common partnership is between Elm Street nonprofit organizations and their respective municipalities. As discussed in the following subsection, municipal governments can receive Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) and distribute them to nonprofits. CDBGs are one benefit that Building Our Pride in Chambersburg receives from their close relationship to their borough. The Borough’s Community and Economic Development office also works with both the Elm and Main Street program, for example, on an ambitious current project to purchase a defunct strip mall within the Elm Street neighborhood. This partnership formed the Southgate Shopping Center Redevelopment Initiative with hopes to transform the area into a mixed-use residential

\textsuperscript{72} Sarah Matzner, email to author, January 14, 2021
This scale of a project could not be achieved without collaboration. The Spanish American Civic Association partnered with the City of Lancaster throughout their Elm Street planning process to facilitate community engagement.74

Elm Street organizations smartly partner with large neighboring institutions such as universities and religious organizations. The Lewisburg Neighborhoods Corporation has worked with Bucknell University students and professors on many initiatives. Student interns provide essential support to their part-time executive director. The Spanish American Civic Association of southeast Lancaster has partnered with Millersville University in applying for various grants.75 The Sisters of Saint Joseph Neighborhood Network in Erie is affiliated with the Sisters of Joseph of Northwestern Pennsylvania, a religious ministry. Given this association, the Neighborhood Network has enjoyed frequent partnerships with various churches within its Elm Street neighborhood of Little Italy.76 Finding larger institutions within Elm Street neighborhoods strengthens the organizations’ ability to carry out its Elm Street plan.

Frequently there are other nonprofits with a community with which Elm Street organizations can collaborate. Many have related missions such as preservation, social services, or urban redevelopment that allow them to increase the primary Elm Street

organization’s reach. In Allentown, the designated Elm Street neighborhood, Old Allentown, benefits from a partnership between the Old Allentown Preservation Association and the Development Corporation of Allentown as the neighborhood is also a local historic district. The United Neighborhood Center in Scranton is affiliated with the United Way of Lackawanna and Wayne Counties, which advances their social service mission to a broader audience. The City of Bradford frequently collaborates with a nonprofit, the Downtown Bradford Revitalization Corporation. This partnership allows the Elm Street program to benefit from DCED’s Neighborhood Partnership Program, which it is otherwise ineligible for. Partnering with like-minded nonprofits opens Elm Street to a broader audience and allows greater efficiency.

Funding Sources

As referenced in the earlier chapter, funding allocations to DCED to administer Elm Street grants vary every fiscal year. The resulting financial instability impedes creating the sustainable organizations envisioned in Elm Street. To become sustainable, it is crucial for Elm Street organizations to be adept at locating other funding sources. Successful neighborhood organizations must be willing and able to draw financial support from many sources, public, private, and foundation. Frequently Elm Street organizations apply for grants from the federal government, state agencies, and private philanthropies. These three categories of funding sources are described below. It can be read as an indicator of a successful and sustainable organization to achieve competitive
grants after state funding has ceased. Few grants outside of DCED Keystone Communities consider Elm Street designation as a criterion in the award process.

Federal monies are passed down to Elm Street organizations via DCED through community development block grants (CDBG). The federal Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) provides funds for DCED to further allocate to local governments within the state. CDBG funds can go to infrastructure improvements, housing rehabilitation, public services, community facilities, or planning. As the City of Bradford is the only municipality that administers an Elm Street Plan, their CDBG funds can be directly allocated to their Office of Economic and Community Development. Building our Pride in Chambersburg, on the other hand, partners with the Borough of Chambersburg to administer their Elm Street Advisory Council to receive CDBG funds. It is common to couple grants from multiple sources to achieve Elm Street projects.

State agencies across Pennsylvania offer grants that can be used to advance specific Elm Street projects. However, Elm Street designation is not considered and given a priority for grants outside DCED’s Keystone Communities program. The Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) offers grants that align with many Clean, Safe, and Green initiatives. DCNR contributed $250,000 to Lewisburg Neighborhoods Corporation’s Bull Run Greenway Plan, and PennDOT committed $1

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77 The borough contributed $175,000 in CDBG funds to the Mike Waters Park renovation project and leveraged $150,000 from the PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR). Taylor, Vicky. “BOPIC Will Manage Elm Street Program.” Public Opinion, January 20, 2016.
million as part of their Transportation Alternatives Set-Aside Program.\textsuperscript{78} In 2020, the Pennsylvania Council of the Arts gave $100,000 to the Spanish American Civic Association (SACA) as a pilot of their Creative Communities Initiative.\textsuperscript{79} These state grants are typically project-specific and target one component of an organization’s Elm Street approach.

Two other state programs redistribute funds from specific industries into grants. The Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency’s Pennsylvania Housing Affordability and Rehabilitation Enhancement Fund (PHARE) receives five million dollars annually in Marcellus Shale impact fees to encourage affordable housing in the counties where there are gas wells. The City of Bradford used PHARE alongside DCED’s Neighborhood Partnership Program (NPP) to fund two affordable housing projects.\textsuperscript{80} Similarly, the Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority (ECGRA) redistributes 0.5% of the annual gross revenue from casinos to invest in projects and initiatives that stimulate economic development.\textsuperscript{81} The Sisters of St. Joseph Neighborhood Network (SSJNN) received over

\begin{footnotesize}
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  \item \textsuperscript{78} This program seeks to encourage non-vehicular transportation modes and includes pedestrian, bicycle, and public transportation enhancements. “Bull Run Greenway Final Plan - Lewisburg Neighborhoods.” Accessed April 21, 2021.
  \item \textsuperscript{79} The initiative aims to enhance “livability, economic development, and community connectedness” through arts-based projects. SACA hopes to bring together artists in Southwest Lancaster to develop creative placemaking, performing art events, and community art education projects. Stairiker, “Southeastern Sector of Lancaster City Receives $100,000 Creative Community Initiative Arts Grant.”
  \item \textsuperscript{80} Sarah Matzner, email to author, January 14, 2021
  \item \textsuperscript{81} ECGRA makes investments in five areas, Quality of Place, Municipalities, Youth & Education, Small Business, and Neighborhoods & Communities. From 2006-2016, ECGRA granted over $40 million. Storytelling Series. “ECGRA Grant Money Works for Little Italy Neighborhood Revitalization,” December 18, 2016.
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$75,000 from 2011-2016 from ECGRA. These two programs can be seen as mitigating the potential “adverse effects” of the fracking and casino industries. While these programs are influential, they have a limited reach across Pennsylvania, and Elm Street designation is not integral to their distributions.

Another frequently utilized state initiative is DCED’s Neighborhood Partnership Program (NPP), part of the Neighborhood Assistance Program (NAP). NPP is a long-term collaboration of private businesses, government, and nonprofit organizations to benefit a community strategic plan. Keystone Communities designation, including Elm Street, allows for eligibility consideration in the NAP program. To participate, businesses must contribute at least $50,000 for a minimum of five years and receive a tax credit of up to 75%. The nonprofit must commit the funds to specific development needs in a targeted area and produce measurable outcomes. These requirements align nicely with the Elm Street program, and many organizations utilize NPP.

Three organizations in this study are currently in an NPP cycle. The City of Bradford’s Office of Economic and Community Development (OCED) is currently in the fourth year of its second NPP cycle. For the City of Bradford to receive these funds, they partner with a nonprofit, the Downtown Bradford Revitalization Corporation. Currently, Zippo Manufacturing Company and Northwest Bank have contributed funds to the

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82 SSJNN used the funds throughout Erie’s Little Italy on murals, community gardens, home repairs, lighting improvements, career education and outreach programs, and their annual Italian festival. “ECGRA Grant Money Works for Little Italy Neighborhood Revitalization.”
program. The Community Action Development Corporation of Allentown entered its third NPP cycle in 2021. Every cycle, more corporate sponsors wish to contribute, a testament to Allentown’s greater revival. The Sisters of St. Joseph Neighborhood Network also benefits from the growing industry in Erie through NPP. From 2016-2022, they receive $250,000/year from corporate contributions through NPP for façade improvements and sidewalk replacements. To benefit from NPP, Elm Street communities must have relationships with businesses willing and able to contribute funds.

Another funding source Elm Street organizations utilize is philanthropic foundations, typically private nonprofits that award grant monies. Like state agency grants, Elm Street designation does not afford the organization any privilege in private grantmaking processes. The Wells Fargo Regional Foundation provides a commonly used grant that supports neighborhood revitalization programs in eastern Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Delaware. The Regional Foundation offers Neighborhood Planning Grants up to $100,000, Neighborhood Implementation Grants up to $750,000, and Program Related Investments up to $250,000. In 2018, the Spanish American Civic Association’s Elm Street Steering Committee received a $100,000 planning grant to facilitate neighborhood engagement to assist with the development of their  

84 They first received $250,000/year from 2006-2012, then $550,000/year from 2013-2019, and now are receiving $650,000/year until 2027. Dan Bosket, interview by author, December 11, 2020.
comprehensive Elm Street Plan for southeast Lancaster.\textsuperscript{87} The United Neighborhood Centers has frequently benefitted from Regional Foundation grants. Since 2010, they have been awarded millions of dollars for making improvements throughout their Elm Street neighborhood.\textsuperscript{88} As Wells Fargo is only eligible to communities in eastern PA, the Federal Home Loan Bank of Pittsburgh’s Blueprint Communities is a comparable program in western PA.\textsuperscript{89} No current Elm Street organizations have received their funding, but it is an opportunity.

\textit{Size: Area and Population}

There is significant variation between the communities’ population and the Elm Street neighborhoods’ areas within the studied organizations. Allentown and Erie are the largest communities with over 95,000 residents, while Bradford, Chambersburg, and Lewisburg have less than 20,000. Lancaster and Scranton are mid-size with 50,000-80,000 residents. Population size affects the number of stakeholders involved in a community’s redevelopment. Organizations in smaller communities may be more inclined to form partnerships with similar groups. The number of volunteers engaged in an Elm Street organization can vary based on population size. SSJN in Erie boasts over 300 committed volunteers, but this may not be possible within smaller organizations.\textsuperscript{90}

\textsuperscript{87} The foundation will also invest $890,000 over four years. Stuhldreher and King, “Wells Fargo Foundation Provides $100,000 Neighborhood Planning Grant for Southeast Lancaster.”
\textsuperscript{89} FHL Bank Pittsburgh, “Blueprint Communities,” Accessed April 18, 2021.
\textsuperscript{90} Durney, interview.
Larger communities also benefit from greater funding opportunities and sources. Allentown and Erie benefitted from NPP relationships with local businesses, while Lewisburg has lamented the lack of possible business partners.

Population size does not always correlate to the area size of the Elm Street neighborhood. Chambersburg has a very small population but the second-largest neighborhood area at over 300 acres. Allentown has the largest population, but its Elm Street neighborhood only covers 70 acres, placing it into the small category. Area should correspond to some sense of distinctive and identifiable existing characteristics that constitute a specific defined neighborhood, allowing for a more targeted and successful Elm Street program. The organizations managing the two largest area neighborhoods in Chambersburg and Lancaster have not expanded their efforts into other residential neighborhoods.

Certified Local Governments

Surprisingly, a characteristic that did not come up during manager interviews as distinguishing was a municipality’s status as a certified local government (CLG). CLG is a program administered by the National Park Service with assistance from the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission’s State Historic Preservation Office. To achieve certification, local governments commit to enacting historic preservation ordinances and commenting on National Register of Historic Places nominations within their jurisdictions. In return, CLG’s are eligible for funding incentives and technical
assistance.\textsuperscript{91} In essence, CLG status “certifies” the municipality’s professional practices concerning its administration of preservation policies.

Of the seven communities with Elm Street organizations, only three are CLG’s, Allentown, Bradford, and Lancaster. Bradford has a National Register district covering its Main Street area that is subject to design guidelines, regulated by the Historic Architecture Review Board (HARB).\textsuperscript{92} Unfortunately, the designation does not contain the adjacent Elm Street neighborhood as a historic district. On the other hand, Allentown has a local historic district, Old Allentown, that directly corresponds to its Elm Street neighborhood. The city’s historic preservation ordinance places HARB in charge of guidelines for historic districts.\textsuperscript{93} Lancaster administers both local historic districts and a heritage conservation overlay, the latter which contains Southeast Lancaster, the Elm Street neighborhood. This designation requires regulation of new construction and demolition applications within the overlay district but not alternations to existing structures.\textsuperscript{94} Lancaster and Allentown’s Elm Street neighborhoods achieve stability and sustainability with the added protection of a historic preservation ordinance.

Despite not being a CLG, Lewisburg also administers a historic preservation ordinance that places design guidelines and HARB overview on its National Register

\textsuperscript{93} Allentown PA. “Historic Districts.” Accessed April 18, 2021.
district. This district encompasses the majority of the Elm Street neighborhood, Bull Run. Chambersburg also has a National Register district covering much of the borough, including the Elm Street neighborhood, but no local regulations oversee it. Given the requirements of an Elm Street neighborhood being in existence prior to 1961, this satisfies the age criteria for the National Register and most local historic preservation ordinances. Currently, there is no correlation between Elm Street designation and Certified Local Government status, and the managers do not consider it influential. Given funding concerns discussed previously, CLG status can make funding for municipal staff available, which is otherwise difficult to obtain.

Redesignation

A surprising distinction between Elm Street organizations was their choice to apply for redesignation. As mentioned before, an Elm Street designation sunsets after five years. Elm Street organizations may continue to follow their Elm Street plans after this, and many chose to remain members of the Pennsylvania Downtown Center while also completing annual reporting.

Four of the seven studied organizations expanded from their initial Elm Street neighborhood to other residential areas in their communities. One variable between the organizations was if they chose to apply for redesignation for these new neighborhoods. Two of the organizations, United Neighborhood Center and the City of Bradford, sought

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redesignation as they expanded. UNC is currently in the planning process for the Pinebrook section of Scranton, intending to subsequently apply for Elm Street designation. UNC has the organizational capacity to maintain its base of operation in South Side, their original neighborhood, and to invest its resources in a new deserving area. In Bradford, their designated area expanded from State Street to the Second Ward as well.

In Erie, the SSJNN began in Little Italy but extended their Elm Street strategies into the East Side neighborhood. Due to the long designation application process and the lack of guaranteed funding, they decided not to seek designation for this separate neighborhood. The skills and knowledge they learned from their original Elm Street program profoundly influenced their planning and implementation strategies in East Side without relying on the formal designation process. Lewisburg Neighborhoods Corporation also grew beyond their original neighborhood of Bull Run into the North Ward without a new designation application. Lewisburg’s most significant barrier to the application process was the 10% match requirement.

A different scenario is underway in Chambersburg where Building our Pride in Chambersburg is seeking redesignation for their same original Elm Street neighborhood, the 3rd Ward. The 3rd Ward is the second-largest Elm Street neighborhood by area,

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97 Matzner, email.
98 Durney, interview.
99 Pearson, interview.
despite Chambersburg being a very small community of only 20,800 people. As their initial designation covered almost the entirety of the borough’s residential area, BOPIC cannot expand to a new distinct community. Their redesignation process was hindered as their current manager works on a volunteer basis while DCED requires a full-time paid manager.\textsuperscript{100}

\textsuperscript{100} Jack Jones, interview by author, January 28, 2021
Section 5: Evaluations and Recommendations

After recognizing the merits of Elm Street’s programmatic synergy between residential neighborhoods and surrounding commercial districts and the variety and appeal of the many communities that have participated, this study began by questioning the current low number of Elm Street designations across the Commonwealth. It was essential to understand the conditions that caused the decline of neighborhoods in older cities and towns and earlier programs that sought to remedy similar concerns. The history of the program, most notably its funding appropriations record, reveals insight into what occurred to result in its current low level of utilization. To encourage greater use of the Elm Street program, this section proposes recommendations to strengthen the program at the state level and identifies best practices for sustainable Elm Street organizations. It also highlights opportunities for continued research into the Elm Street program.

Recommendations

To better ensure the success of Elm Street organizations, PDC and DCED should implement programmatic revisions. The following paragraphs suggest recommendations in the categories of administration and personnel, funding, monitoring and reporting, growing the program, historic/CLG designation, reporting and outreach, and increasing diversity.
Administration and Personnel

With the change to the Keystone Communities program structure, operational grants are no longer awarded to Elm Street organizations to financially support a manager. This has significantly decreased the ability of organizations to join the program. If DCED requires a full-time paid manager for Elm Street designation, there should be some funding that goes to administrative costs. The possibility of acquiring funding again to cover the managers’ entire salary for five years seems unlikely, but providing even half the salary match would go a long way in ensuring organizational sustainability and communities’ demonstratable stake in its success.

A part-time director runs Lewisburg Neighborhoods Corporation and Building our Pride in Chambersburg has a volunteer manager. These show that it is possible to achieve success without a full-time paid manager. There should also be a push to advocate for greater state funding for the Keystone Communities Program, which includes the Elm Street Program. Additionally, there should be less tolerance for “walking around money” projects to be added to the appropriation, as these do not necessarily align with more comprehensive community goals. If more funding was achieved, operational grants could be reinstated.

Funding

Many Elm Street organizations achieve funding from a variety of sources, including other Pennsylvania state agencies. It would benefit the organizations if their
Elm Street status were an explicit positive actor in obtaining these related grants. PennDOT’s Transportation Alternatives Set-Aside Program currently takes into consideration the designations of PA Byways, DCNR Heritage Areas, and National Register of Historic Places district. In a similar vein, all state agencies could factor in Elm Street designation in their grant considerations. Elm Street organizations must rely on funding sources other than DCED for operational monies. It would be beneficial to encourage other state agencies to privilege Elm Street in their awards.

*Monitoring and Reporting*

Additionally, when an Elm Street program achieves a state agency grant, it would be beneficial to streamline the monitoring and reporting systems. The current DCED and PDC required system has been described in many of the interviews conducted during this study as time-consuming and cumbersome by Elm Street managers. Given the pervasive staff limitations, many are apprehensive of existing or new reporting requirements. It would benefit Elm Street organizations if they could submit the same data to multiple state agencies rather than crafting individual reports. A more flexible approach to annual monitoring could also allow organizations to customize their indicators to reflect their determined goals. Every community intentionally tailors its

101 https://www.penndot.gov/ProjectAndPrograms/Planning/Pages/Transportation%20Alternatives%20Set-Aside%20-%20Surface%20Trans.%20Block%20Grant%20Program.aspx
Elm Street Plan, and it would be advantageous to track the success of achieving their chosen goals in addition to baseline data.

Growing the Program

The Pennsylvania Downtown Center should actively recruit existing organizations that presently work on similar neighborhood revitalization goals to become Elm Street organizations. Having more neighborhoods following the approach would foster a more extensive network of affiliated managers to serve as learning opportunities. Reinforcing the concept that existing Main Street programs could also implement Elm Street could bolster both programs’ success. PDC and DCED could incentivize organizations involved in other Keystone Communities programs to enter Elm Street as well. It is also easier to gain the trust and support of residents through established organizations.

Historic and CLG Designations

There should also be a push for Elm Street organizations to consider advocating for the historic designation of their neighborhoods. This designation could allow for the regulatory management of neighborhood change for projects involving new construction, demolition, and/or alternations. While organizations cannot achieve CLG status on behalf of their municipality, they can advocate for the certification process. If the neighborhood is in a CLG community but not yet historically designated, there is the possibility of achieving subgrants through the State Historic Preservation Office. Local
Reporting and Outreach

There should be an annual publication by PDC or DCED that reports on Elm Street organizations’ activities. With the emphasis on monitoring as part of the Elm Street approach, PDC should publish this compiled data. The reports would heighten visibility to the work that Elm Street is contributing to the revitalization of neighborhoods across the Commonwealth. This would be a valuable resource to use in advocacy work, whether that is encouraging new organizations to join or increasing state appropriations. It would also be a point of pride for the participating organizations that their work is recognized and valued, especially given the time spent on their annual reports. The publication could also serve as a benchmark to compare the different organizations to.

Increasing Diversity

There should be a push to recognize the unique struggles of predominantly minority neighborhoods within the Elm Street program. Future designation and grant applications should consider the populations’ racial makeup, with more significant assistance awarded to minority neighborhoods. There should also be consideration by
existing Elm Street organizations on how to better support any minority populations within their neighborhoods.

These proposed programmatic changes would go a long way in increasing the number of neighborhoods participating in the Elm Street program while ensuring the sustainability of existing organizations.

**Organizational Best Practices**

As revealed during the Elm Street manager interviews, there are many differences between Elm Street organizations. Nevertheless, some broad patterns emerged when analyzing the varying characteristics. This section will determine the best practices of Elm Street organizations that result in sustainable organizations.

**Organizational Stability**

Elm Street flourishes better in preexisting organizations with a related mission. Given the limited data of Elm Street programs run by municipalities, it appears nonprofit organizations execute the program better. A nonprofit’s mission can be either social services or redevelopment, but it should be broader than just the Elm Street program. Having an established organization implement the Elm Street approach ensures some level of proven organizational capacity. This can translate into other best practices such as funding sources and partnerships. Gaining community trust and support will be easier for an organization with a known track record. Hopefully, an established nonprofit also
has a reliable source of members, donors, and volunteers eager to endorse Elm Street. Whereas organizations that form solely to serve the Elm Street program will have many more obstacles to overcome for sustainability. Out of the studied organizations, all but one were established for over five years prior to initiating their Elm Street designation.

**Partnerships**

Another best practice is to take advantage of partnerships. If there is a separate Main Street program within the same community, the Elm Street organization must form a close partnership with it. These two organizations are both working towards the same goal of a robust and healthy community, and their successes are interdependent. It would be beneficial to host joint events, engage in cross-promotion, and join forces to apply for large grants. This is also the case with any Business Improvement Districts, Community Development Organizations, or other associated programs. Many of the same stakeholders will overlap between these groups, so the organizations would benefit from capitalizing on collaboration. It is also crucial for Elm Street organizations to partner with large institutions within or surrounding their neighborhoods. Universities, schools, libraries, and churches are key affiliates that could strengthen Elm Street’s goals. These institutions often have funding resources to offer as well. Many times, these institutions draw in people who do not reside in the neighborhood, allowing the Elm Street organization to reach more stakeholders. Other nonprofit
organizations such as historical societies may be good collaborators, but their organizational capacity should be considered before entering a partnership.

*Fundraising*

In considering best practices for funding sources, an Elm Street organization must be creative. Many organizations look for grants after they develop a specific initiative. This is very valuable and often results in support for targeted projects. However, organizations should not overlook funding for broad categories, such as the Wells Fargo Regional Foundation. As DCED Keystone Communities grants are only for planning, implementation, façades, and public improvement, there is a lack of funds for operational expenses outside of salaries such as promotion and public awareness. While project-specific monies are always instrumental, with the current Keystone Communities grant structure, it is worthwhile to pursue grants that contribute to greater organizational capacity and sustainability.

*Geographic Specificity*

When determining how to define an Elm Street neighborhood, the best practice would be to ensure that it is clearly self-defined. Acreage is not the best indicator to consider; the average size of neighborhoods in this study is 180 acres, but they range from 30 to 400 acres. Population size is also not a definitive statistic as there are Elm Street organizations in municipalities with 5,000 residents to over 120,000 residents,
averaging at 55,650 residents. Organizations in smaller populations require greater cooperation and partners among stakeholders and organizations but can effectively implement the Elm Street approach. It is essential to have a well-defined Elm Street neighborhood despite area or population.

**Planning**

An additional best practice is to customize the Elm Street plan and approach to meet the neighborhood’s needs. Listening to the resident’s wants and needs is paramount when prioritizing strategies and projects. While the five points within the Elm Street approach should all be reflected in an organization’s work, successful organizations concentrate on the specific aspects most needed in their neighborhood. Creating flexibility within the framework is a hallmark of an effective manager in a sustainable Elm Street organization.

**Continued Research**

This thesis uncovered new avenues that should be considered in future related research. One is the role of the Elm Street manager. As the core facilitator of organizational sustainability, consideration should be given to their qualifications, training, salary, and turnover rate. This could illuminate other not considered barriers to sustainability. There could also be more study given as to why Elm Street organizations go inactive. To the author’s knowledge, there is no comprehensive list of all Elm Street
designations ever awarded. After determining this, patterns could be discerned about what causes programs to cease and the circumstances in which that is an indicator of organizational failure. There should also be a thorough study on if the Elm Street program affects its surrounding commercial districts’ health. This symbiotic relationship was foundational to the program, but currently, there has been a lack of emphasis on ensuring these two concepts mutually benefit each other.

Conclusion

The Elm Street program in Pennsylvania is a unique approach that recognizes the interdependent relationship of commercial cores and their surrounding residential neighborhoods. Following outmigration, disinvestment, and urban renewal, many community-led redevelopment organizations hoped to revive older cities and towns. The National Trust for Historic Preservation’s Main Street approach emerged as a successful approach to revitalize historic downtowns. In Pennsylvania at the turn of the twenty-first century, there was an appetite to address the disturbing if not destructive development trends within the Commonwealth. In this atmosphere emerged Representative Freeman’s idea of Elm Street.

While the legislative process was cumbersome, Governor Ed Rendell championed the program during his campaign and first budget appropriation. He signed the Elm Street program into law in February 2004. Mary Means, the Main Street program creator, was contracted to fully develop the program, making long-lasting
impacts on its structure. Throughout the next eighteen state fiscal years, the larger line items that included the Elm Street program changed and varied, directly affecting the program’s stability and implementation.

Currently, there is only one designated Elm Street neighborhood in Pennsylvania, with seven additional “practicing” programs. Within these organizations are many characteristics that influence their implementation of the Elm Street program, such as mission, organizational partnerships, funding sources, size: area and population, and redesignation. From interviews with various stakeholders, including DCED and PDC staff and Elm Street managers, a set of statewide recommendations and organization best practices were developed to encourage broader use of the Elm Street program. The Elm Street program is exceptional in its articulation of the synergy between neighborhoods and their adjacent commercial districts and its goal of revitalizing neighborhoods to support the surrounding districts.
Bibliography:


https://lewisburgpa.com/history/.


Appendices:

A. Legislation Text

ELM STREET PROGRAM ACT - ENACTMENT
Act of February 9, 2004, P.L. 61, No. 7 Cl. 71

Providing for a residential neighborhood enhancement program to be administered by the Department of Community and Economic Development; and making an allocation of appropriated funds.

The General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania hereby enacts as follows:

Section 1. Short title.

This act shall be known and may be cited as the Elm Street Program Act.

Section 2. Definitions.

The following words and phrases, when used in this act, shall have the meanings given to them in this section unless the context clearly indicates otherwise:

“Department.” The Department of Community and Economic Development of the Commonwealth.

“Established residential neighborhood.” A defined geographic area which has consisted of buildings and structures for housing individuals and families which has existed as a residential neighborhood since before 1961.

“Main Street Program.” The program administered by the Department of Community and Economic Development designed to assist a community’s downtown economic development effort through the establishment of a local organization dedicated to downtown revitalization and management of downtown revitalization by hiring a full-time professional downtown coordinator.

“Program.” The Elm Street Program as established in section 3.

Section 3. Elm Street Program.

(a) Establishment.--There is established the Elm Street Program within the department which shall assist municipalities in preparing and implementing a revitalization strategy for established residential neighborhoods which are in close proximity to either a Main Street Program project or an existing commercial district.

(b) Applications.--The department shall prepare application forms for the grant program established in this act and award grants to municipalities and other eligible entities based on the requirements in subsection (c). The department shall require that
a map be furnished with all applications clearly identifying the established residential neighborhood and demonstrating its close proximity to a Main Street Program project or an existing commercial district.

(c) Program requirements.--The program shall:

(1) Provide basic grants for a period of up to five years per project and, upon approval by the department, an additional period of up to five years for administrative costs associated with the hiring of a professional Elm Street Manager, who may serve as an assistant to the Main Street Manager if a MainStreet Program exists within the municipality.

(2) Provide residential reinvestment grants for infrastructure and structural improvements, including, but not limited to, streets, street lights, trees, exteriors of buildings and sidewalks or other pedestrian-oriented features.

(3) Provide planning and development grants for:

   (i) Marketing and promoting urban residential living.
   (ii) Leveraging additional private and public investment.
   (iii) Promoting home ownership and other housing options.
   (iv) Addressing social and economic concerns including, but not limited to, crime, blight, employment opportunities and public services and amenities.
   (v) Achieving consistency, whenever appropriate, with existing commercial and residential revitalization efforts.
   (vi) Promoting the development of traditional neighborhood consumer services and goods, including, but not limited to, banking institutions, grocery stores and pharmacies.

(4) Provide an assessment of the applying municipality’s need for the following:

   (i) The establishment of a neighborhood improvement district as defined in the act of December 20, 2000 (P.L.949, No.130), known as the Neighborhood Improvement District Act.
   (ii) A review of local comprehensive plans and zoning and other land use ordinances to foster the viability of established residential neighborhoods, with a balanced mix of commercial, civic, employment and residential uses, with particular attention to a diversity of housing options.
   (iii) A review of educational and recreational opportunities and facilities.
(c) amended Oct. 9, 2008, P.L.1417, No.115)

(d) Eligibility.--Municipalities or their designated agencies must meet the following criteria:

(1) Have an established residential neighborhood in need of revitalization in close proximity to an existing commercial district.

(2) Provide evidence of support by local residents, merchants and government officials.

(3) Commit to provide a minimum of a 10% match for any department grants. The match must consist of financial or in-kind support from other public or private sources based upon departmental guidelines. The department may waive or reduce the matching requirement if it determines such requirement would constitute a hardship upon the municipality or the agency designated by the municipality. A hardship exists if the municipality meets one of the following criteria:


(ii) The matching requirements for the application would exceed 5% of the municipality’s annual operating budget.

(iii) Part or all of the established residential neighborhood identified in the application is participating in the Pennsylvania Weed and Seed Program as administered by the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency.

(iv) A minimum of 20% of the municipality’s population falls below 150% of the Federal poverty level.

(e) Multiple projects.--The department may approve more than one project within the boundaries of a municipality. Multiple projects may occur simultaneously or at different periods of time.

(f) Cooperative projects.--The department may consider applications submitted by two or more municipalities as a single application for a single project area.

(g) Priority projects.--The department shall give priority to projects with an established residential neighborhood that was already in existence prior to 1951.

(h) Limits.--The department shall establish limits on the amount of money available per project area so as to distribute the available funds as fairly as possible throughout this Commonwealth.
(i) Guidelines.--The department shall adopt guidelines to authorize municipalities or their designees, upon the submission of the appropriate applications and the approval of the department, to re-establish an Elm Street program in a neighborhood where a program had been previously established. ((i) added Oct.9, 2008, P.L.1417, No.115)

Section 4. Limitations.

(a) Program limits.--

(1) No more than 20% of its funds appropriated or allocated to the program in any fiscal year may be granted to municipalities in any county.

(2) In no case shall the aggregate amount of grants in any fiscal year exceed the amount of the appropriation to the department for the program in that fiscal year or the amount allocated to the program by the department in the event that funding for the program is included in an appropriation to the department containing funding for other programs. The provision of grants under this act shall in no way constitute an entitlement derived from the Commonwealth or a claim on any other funds of the Commonwealth.

(b) Prohibitions.--No funds from this program shall be expended to develop or convert farmland to residential, commercial or industrial uses. Farmland is any land that supports, or land with a recent history of supporting, the commercial production of agricultural crops, livestock or livestock products, poultry products, milk or dairy products, fruit or other horticultural products.

Section 5. Allocation of appropriated funds.

The sum of $5,000,000 of the State funds appropriated to the Department of Community and Economic Development for the New Communities Program in section 209 of the act of March 20, 2003 (P.L.463, No.1A), known as the General Appropriation Act of 2003, is hereby allocated to the department to make grants as authorized in this act.

Section 6. Expiration of act. (6 repealed October 9, 2008, P.L.1417, No.115)

Section 7. Effective date.

This act shall take effect immediately.
### Monitoring System

**From "Elm Street Manager's Handbook." Pennsylvania Downtown Center.**

#### INDICATORS & MEASUREMENTS COLLECTED BY PGC

- Number of Crime Incidents
- Number of Traffic Incidents
- Number of Property Incidents
- Number of Environmental Incidents

#### ELM STREET PROGRAM MEASUREMENT AND PERFORMANCE EVALUATION MATRIX

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### Sustainable Organizations

- Number of Local Organizations
- Number of Local Programmes
- Number of Local Members
### C. Appropriation History

#### State Budget for New/Keystone Communities

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*Data compiled by author.*
**D. Maps of Elm Street Communities**

*Map of Elm Street Organizations. Orange shows the designated program in Lancaster while brown shows practicing organizations. Created by author.*
Map of Allentown’s Old Allentown Elm Street neighborhood in blue with their Main Street program in yellow, created by author.
Map of Bradford’s State Street Elm Street neighborhood in blue with their Main Street program in yellow, created by author.
Map of Chambersburg’s 3rd Ward Elm Street neighborhood in blue with their Main Street program in yellow, created by author.
Map of Erie’s Little Italy Elm Street neighborhood in blue with their Main Street program in yellow, created by author.
Map of Lancaster’s Southeast Elm Street neighborhood in blue, and they do not have a Main Street program, created by author.
Map of Lewisburg’s Bull Run Elm Street neighborhood in blue with their Main Street program in yellow, created by author.
Map of Scranton’s South Side Elm Street neighborhood in blue with their Main Street program in yellow, created by author.
E. Interview Questions

How long have you been employed with the organization?

In what year did you achieve Elm Street Program Designation?

Have there been any significant administrative/organizational changes since the ES program began?

How has ES benefitted the community?

What is the community’s reception of the program?

What are the current goals/projects of the program?

What are funding streams for the program, other than DCED Keystone Communities grants?

Is there collaboration between the ES program and other similarly focused programs, such as Main Street?

Is there anything you would change about the program?

Would you recommend ES to similar communities?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Formed</th>
<th>Funding Sources</th>
<th>Other Funding Sources</th>
<th>Key Street</th>
<th>Initial Year</th>
<th>Population (year)</th>
<th>New. Size</th>
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*Note: All organizations listed above are of Elm Street as of February 2021. Characteristics Matrix created by author.*
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