

CUMBERLAND COUNTY COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

CDBG PLANNING GRANT PROGRAM APPLICATION – 2010

Community(s) Town of Gray

Contact Information: Name: George Theborge; Tel. 657-3112

Address: Town of Gray, 6 Shaker Road, Gray, Maine 04039


E-mail: townplanning@graymaine.org

Project Title: Monument Square Master Plan

Amount of CDBG funds requested \$ 20,000

Total estimated project cost \$ 30,000

Name of Authorized Official: Deborah Cabana, Town Manager

Signature of Authorized Official: 

**CUMBERLAND COUNTY COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM
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MONUMENT SQUARE MASTER PLAN

1. Describe the community problem or needs you wish to address with Community Planning Program funds. 35 points

a. Describe the scope, magnitude and severity of the problem

Like many historic downtowns in Maine, Gray Village has seen a decline from its heyday in the 19th and early 20th centuries. During those earlier periods, the Village was the primary focus of commercial activity and community life, and the character of the buildings and landscape reflected its social importance.

In the post-WWII period, development of the automobile culture drew activities and focus to more regional locations, and care and attention to the Village and its structures waned. Historic buildings were allowed to decline, and many of them were torn down and replaced with service stations and fast food restaurants.

The Village is now an odd mixture of historic buildings and more modern structures and sites that lack visual or functional cohesiveness needed for a vibrant downtown. The declining quality and hodgepodge results have discouraged investment in properties, and the overall economic health of the Village and community has suffered as a result.

The portion of the Village proposed for a master planning study is a classic case of this syndrome. The Town owns three adjacent properties on Shaker Road—Stimson Hall, which is on the National Register of Historic Places, and the Town Hall and old Post Office, both vintage 1960s utilitarian structures that detract from the Village's historic character and quality.

Upon completion of the new Town Offices at Pennell Institute on Main Street in 2010, the Town will be vacating its Shaker Road offices and Stimson Hall. Once vacated, those buildings will likely continue to decline like the abandoned Post Office, which has been vacant for nearly a decade. Because of the recession and the condition of the properties, attempts to sell them for private redevelopment have failed. This planning project will develop a future vision for the block that will stimulate private investment and redevelopment in keeping with the historic Village character. It will also help catalyze revitalization in other parts of the Village.

b. Describe past efforts, if any, to address the problem.

A year after the new Post Office was built on Portland Road outside of the Village, the Town attempted to stimulate interest in redevelopment of the old Post Office on Shaker Road. In 2002, a local architectural firm prepared a conceptual design for expanded Town offices that would fill in the space between the Town-owned buildings and modernize both structures. Due to budget concerns, that effort failed, and the idea was abandoned.

In 2006, the Town undertook a master planning process for the entire Village and adopted the current Village Master Plan that has been guiding policies, programs, and

projects, including the Town's applications for CDBG funding. That plan set goals and objectives for revitalization of the downtown and created vision and momentum for achieving them.

When voters approved renovation of the historic Pennell Institute on Main Street for new Town Offices in November of 2008, the Council put the Shaker Road properties on the market. After a year in the hands of one of the region's top commercial brokerage firms, only one serious offer for any of the three properties materialized, and concerns over lack of parking and joint use of the limited parking available quickly ended that opportunity.

c. Does the problem have specific impacts on low/moderate income households or low/moderate income neighborhoods?

The condition of Gray Village as a downtown has implications for the general quality of life for all of the 7000 plus citizens of the community. The Village itself in the section involved in the CDBG program is part of census block group with a total population of 878 people, of which 398 or 45 percent are in low to moderate income households. The other census block group making up Gray Village has a total population of 1583, with 654 or 41 percent being low to moderate income. So over 1000 LMI people are potentially impacted.

For these households and individuals, downtown revitalization removes or prevents blight in their neighborhoods and provides opportunities for services and employment within close proximity to their homes, thereby reducing the need to seek those opportunities elsewhere, which helps address the region's transportation challenges.

d. Why are CDBG funds critical to the planning activity's success?

Stimson Hall was originally designed for public assembly but lacks modern amenities, and the small lot lacks adequate parking to make it a viable stand alone site. The adjacent Town Hall has limited floor space with split levels that make handicapped accessibility difficult and expensive. The Post Office is in the worst condition of all three buildings. Successful redevelopment of the block will require a coordinated plan with shared parking and utilities.

Given these site conditions and the current recession, there is not enough development and/or leasable space potential in the properties to attract private capital for redevelopment unless a creative and workable master plan is developed. The Town is investing \$2.4 million in renovations to the historic Pennell Institute and is also facilitating revitalization of the historic Clark Block on Main St. Addressing the needs of this block in addition to its efforts elsewhere in the Village requires outside funding help.

2) What's the strategy to complete the planning project? 30 points

a. Describe the planning tasks to be undertaken

Successful redevelopment of the block will require careful planning and cooperation with adjacent property owners. The process will start with an engineering analysis of the site constraints and opportunities for redevelopment, looking at stormwater and wastewater management and parking as the physical limiting factors. Calculations will be made to establish a maximum build out capacity of the block.

This baseline assessment of development potential will be reviewed by a local architect who will also review the existing buildings for expansion potential or replacement. Several concepts will be prepared to illustrate redevelopment options in terms of building forms and locations.

The engineering assessment and architectural concepts will provide essential background information for a public participation process involving stakeholders and members of the general public to create a common vision for one or more redevelopment models that can be effectively marketed. The planning process will establish goals and objectives for the block in terms of potential uses or use mixtures and desired amenities and design features.

The output of the public participation efforts will then be refined into a proposed master development plan. That plan will serve as the basis for a special zoning template that will be the governing regulations for redevelopment of the block. The combination of professional assessments and community support will greatly improve the marketability of the properties to potential investors.

b. Outline the project's schedule

See attached project schedule.

c. Are community partnerships established and engaged in the project?

The Economic Development Director has been working with the Manager and Town Council on laying the groundwork for the master planning process. The Community Economic Development Committee is on board, as are the abutting property owners whose land will be involved in addition to the Town-owned properties. The process will also engage other stakeholders, including local business owners and Village residents, and civic groups like the Historical Society and Library Association.

3) Convey your community's readiness to proceed. 30 points

a. How has the project been conveyed to community residents?

The Village Master Plan that has provided policy and program guidance for this effort involved an extensive public participation process. The move to Pennell Institute and resulting availability of the Shaker Road properties for redevelopment were subjects of a Town-wide referendum. Efforts to sell the properties have been widely advertized. The planning process will involve additional community outreach to convey project goals and content and to solicit input for the project outcomes and redevelopment vision for the block.

b. Are matching funds available for the project?

The Town has \$10,000 in a reserve account available for matching funds.

c. Are staff and/or consultants available to complete the project?

The planning and engineering components of the project will be contracted with the consultants who provide these services to the Town of an on-going basis. Both firms have adequate capacity for the project and in-depth knowledge of the properties and project goals. The architectural component will be put out to an RFP process to find a firm with downtown revitalization and historic preservation expertise.

Planning Grant Application --- Program Budget

Cost Category	CDBG Funds	Municipal Funds	Other Funds	Total
Consultant Services	\$20,000	\$9000		\$29,000
Advertising		\$400		\$400
Public Meetings		\$200		\$200
Printing		\$300		\$300
Mailings		\$100		\$100
Other				
1.				
2				
3.				
4.				
Total Costs	\$20,000	\$10,000		\$30,000

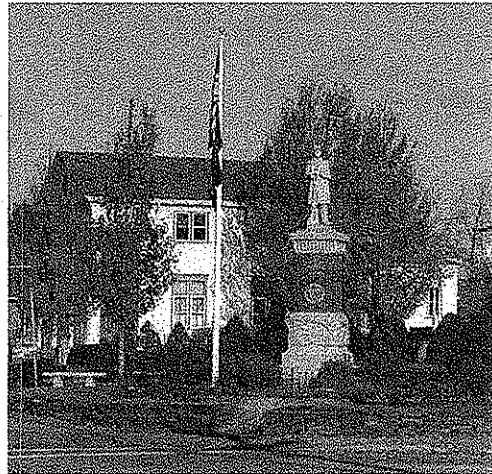
Project Implementation Schedule

<u>Activity</u>	Q #1 J - S 2010	Q #2 O - D 2010	Q #3 J - M 2011	Q #4 A - J 2011	Q #5 J - S 2011	Q #6 O - D 2011	Q #7 J - M 2012	Q #8 A - J 2012
Contract/ Environmental Review	X							
Reporting		X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Architect RFP	X							
Execute Contracts	X							
Engineering Analysis	X	X						
Planning Program	X	X	X	X				
Architectural Analysis	X	X						
Design Charette			X					
Draft Report			X					
Council Presentation				X				
Final Report				X				
Project Completed:				X				

MONUMENT SQUARE EXISTING CONDITIONS



Stimson Hall



Civil War Monument

Historic Character

Vs.



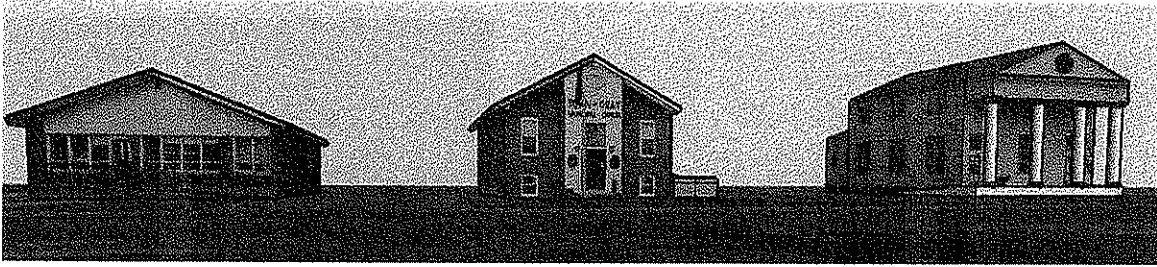
Town Offices

Car Culture



Old Post Office

MONUMENT SQUARE EXISTING CONDITIONS



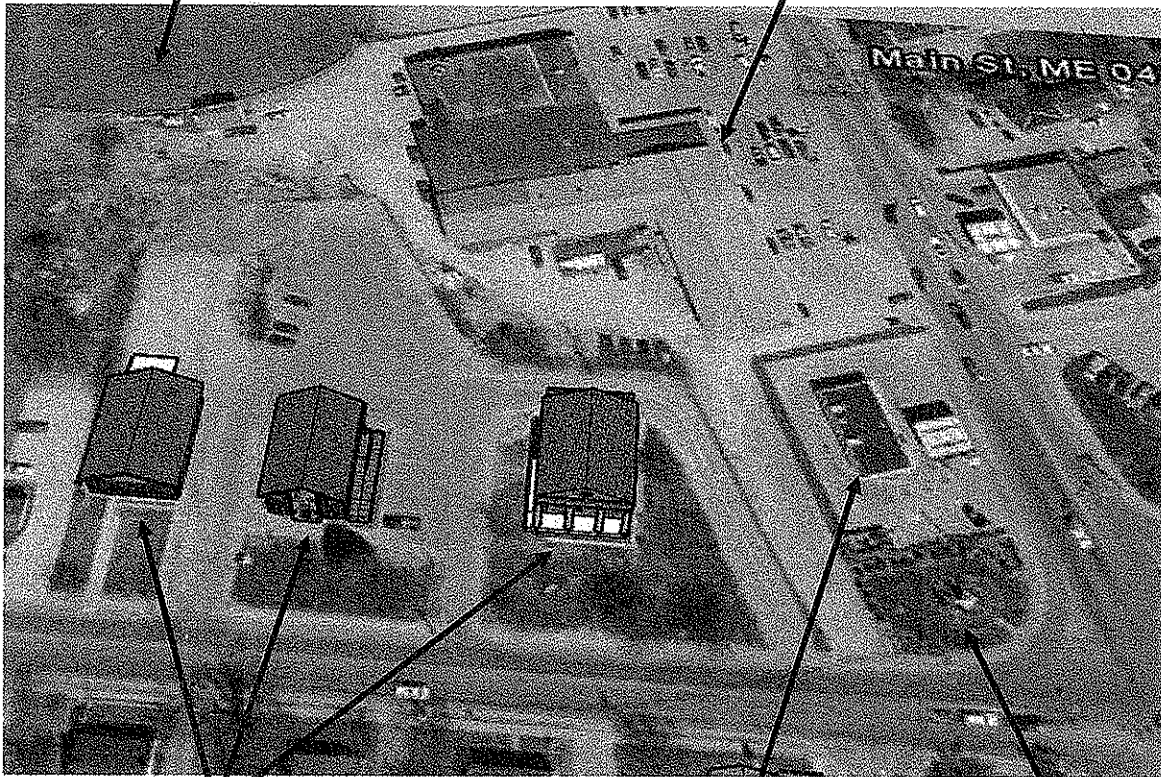
Post Office

Town Hall

Stimson Hall

School & Ball Fields

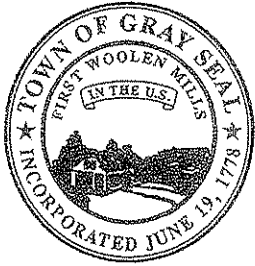
Shopping Center



Town-owned properties

Vacant Service Station

Civil War Monument



TOWN OF GRAY

6 Shaker Road
Gray, Maine 04039
townmanager@graymaine.org

1738
First Settled

CERTIFICATION OF THE TOWN CLERK TOWN OF GRAY

I, Deborah S. Cabana, do hereby certify that I am the Town Clerk of the Town of Gray, Maine and that a duly called meeting of the Gray Town Council was held January 5, 2010 at which four of the five members of the Town Council were present and voting throughout. Town Council support for the 2010 CDBG applications were approved as follows:

Item #076-10 To review and act upon proposed applications to the Cumberland County Community Development Block Grant Program for a \$50,000 grant to continue the Gray Village Facade Improvement Program and a \$20,000 grant for a master planning study of Town-owned properties on Shaker Road and adjacent properties on Main Street. The planning grant will involve a match of \$10,000 in local funds.

Councilor Hutchins moved, Councilor Sturgis seconded

Ordered the Gray Town Council approves submission of CDBG applications to Cumberland County for a \$50,000 grant to continue the Gray Village Facade Improvement Program and \$20,000 for a master planning grant of Town-owned Shaker Road properties and adjacent properties on Main Street to be matched by \$10,000 in local funds.

4 Yes

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Deborah S. Cabana".

Deborah S. Cabana

Town Clerk

Dated at Gray, Maine

This 8th day of January 2010

