

Downtown Sykesville Connection

2026–2027 Work Plan

Mission

The Downtown Sykesville Connection (DSC) preserves, promotes, and enhances the character, history, vibrancy, and inclusivity of Downtown Sykesville. Through innovative programming, equitable placemaking, and sustainable practices, DSC strengthens the community's economic and cultural vitality.

Transformation Strategy

The Downtown Sykesville Connection continues to advance its FY22–FY26 transformation strategy through the Main Street America Four Points: Economic Vitality, Design, Promotion, and Organization.

Strategic priorities include:

Get Wowed

Enhance accessibility, arts integration, and immersive experiences that make downtown a memorable destination.

Enhance accessibility, arts integration, innovative and immersive experiences that make downtown a memorable destination.

Get Engaged

Strengthen connections among residents, businesses, and organizations through programming and collaborative initiatives.

Get Together

Expand DSC's role as a hub for community engagement, entrepreneurship, and partnerships, removing barriers, bias, and obstacles.

Get Green

Promote sustainability, environmental stewardship, and wellness through education and public space improvements.

Work Plan Implementation

Projects are implemented through volunteer committees, strategic partnerships, and staff coordination. Each committee leads initiatives aligned with the transformation strategy while leveraging grants, sponsorships, and community participation.

Priority initiatives for 2026–2027 build upon recent progress, including:

- Continued business recruitment and retention efforts.
- Expansion of inclusive cultural programming.
- Strengthening public art and placemaking initiatives.
- Enhancing economic vibrancy, community engagement, and volunteer participation.
- Promoting the Main Street experience and destination.

Economic Vitality

Goal

Strengthen downtown's small business ecosystem, increase foot traffic, and support entrepreneurial activity.

Priority Initiatives

- Administer and pursue revitalization grants (MIP, TAG, façade programs, and others).
- Support small businesses through collaborative marketing campaigns, gift card programs, and themed retail experiences.
- Explore the development of business incubation initiatives that support youth and minority entrepreneurs, fostering inclusive small business growth.
- Activate the 7611 Main Street community hub through pop-ups, workshops, and small-business programming. Efforts will engage the JEDI committee task force.

- Explore transportation and parking solutions, including feasibility research for trolleys or shuttles.
- Expand experiential retail initiatives, including curated shopping packages, referral programs, and collaborative events.

Project budget: \$5,000

Grant funds: \$0

Design

Goal

Enhance the physical environment of downtown while preserving its historic character.

Priority Initiatives

- Maintain and expand public art installations and downtown beautification efforts.
- Support façade improvements and historic preservation projects.
- Advance creative placemaking through lighting, art installations, and public gathering spaces.
- Develop youth educational initiatives promoting historic preservation and traditional trades.
- Pursue designation opportunities and funding that strengthen Sykesville's cultural identity.
- AI in preservation and arts, and website improvement and updates.

Project budget: \$6,000

Grant funds: \$4,000 (MIP + CCAC)

Promotion

Goal

Increase visibility, tourism, and community engagement through storytelling, events, and branding.

Priority Initiatives

- Promote downtown businesses through coordinated digital marketing campaigns.
- Expand video storytelling and multimedia content highlighting local entrepreneurs.
- Improve signage during fundraisers and events.
- Explore Every Door Direct Mail (EEDM) for Sykesville Main Street promotions.
- Host community events and experiences that draw diverse audiences to downtown (Candle Light Fever at St Joe, Concert at the Carroll Council, Concert at Fred Gossage).
- Strengthen sponsorship opportunities and branded merchandise programs.
- Engage youth and emerging entrepreneurs through programs such as the Junior Market.
- Explore new fundraising opportunities, build strategic partnerships, and reduce the demand on Town and DSC staff resources.
- Promote Sykesville Main Street through innovative initiatives (purchase a coin press, explore portal experience, research video mapping, etc)

Project budget: \$5,000

Grant funds: \$0

Town Support: \$5,000 (GAMSA)

Community Engagement & Inclusion (JEDI)

Goal

Ensure downtown Sykesville remains welcoming, inclusive, and representative of the broader community.

Priority Initiatives

- Host cultural celebrations including Pride, Juneteenth, and Diwali.
- Expand youth engagement programs, workshops, and leadership opportunities.
- Support the Black Heritage research initiative and related educational programming.
- Activate community spaces with cultural movie nights, workshops, and social programming. Effort combined with the Economic Development Committee.
- Promote inclusive business participation through initiatives that highlight welcoming businesses (e.g., window paintings, signage, accessibility ramps, etc.)
- Explore opportunities to improve accessibility throughout downtown, including portable ramps for businesses and digital tools that support navigation and engagement for blind, low-vision, and deaf visitors.
- Incorporate Braille in printed materials and provide multilingual translations across communications and promotional efforts.

Project budget: \$8,500

Grant funds: \$4,000

Green & Wellness Initiatives

Goal

Promote environmental sustainability, community wellness, and stewardship of public spaces.

Priority Initiatives

- Maintain downtown gardens and beautification projects.
- Expand environmental education through composting and sustainability programming.
- Activate green spaces through art programs, workshops, and community gatherings.
- Explore future wellness initiatives such as sensory-friendly therapeutic gardens.

Project budget: \$2,500

Grant funds: \$0

Business fundraisers: \$600

Implementation and Evaluation

The Downtown Sykesville Connection will evaluate progress through:

- Annual impact tracking, including trends in sponsorship support and membership growth.
- Volunteer participation metrics.
- Business engagement and retention data.
- Attendance and participation in events and programs

Projects not completed during the fiscal year will be reviewed during the annual planning retreat and prioritized for the following work cycle.