



NEWS RELEASE

# The Hartford Donates \$2 Million To Main Street America To Remove Barriers For Small Businesses

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Initiative to benefit 15 communities and approximately 1,500 small businesses

HARTFORD, Conn.--(BUSINESS WIRE)-- **The Hartford** has committed \$2 million to a multi-year initiative that supports small businesses and fosters economic and community vibrancy. The funds will expand the company's **Small Business Accelerator Grant Program** with **Main Street America**, a national nonprofit organization dedicated to strengthening communities through the economic development of historic downtowns and commercial districts. The Hartford, which insures more than 1 million small businesses, will award up to 15 grants to communities nationwide to help small businesses gain access to affordable multi-use spaces.

"At the Hartford, we have the privilege of working with small business owners every day, and we are proud to partner with Main Street America to address one of their biggest challenges - access to commercial real estate," said The Hartford's head of Small Business, Chris Jones. "This initiative will enable business owners to connect with their local community, attract new customers and contribute to the economic growth and vibrancy of main streets."

Over the next two years, the funds will support launching, growing, or operating new and existing small business accelerator sites, including pop-up shops, co-working spaces, and other innovative spaces. In addition to developing physical spaces, this program will also fund the creation of a virtual accelerator program and contribute content to a digital platform that is providing training, networking, and mentorship for Main Street small business owners across the country. Through the combined efforts of the accelerator sites and virtual platform, the program aims to

reach approximately 1,500 small businesses nationwide.

"The Small Business Accelerator Grant Program is built on the understanding that small businesses need more than just financial resources. They need a vibrant support system with access to strategic spaces and networks that can help them scale and sustain growth for the long haul," said Main Street America's Chief Innovation Officer, Matt Wagner. "By offering affordable spaces and mentorship, this program provides the critical places small business owners need to overcome barriers, while strengthening the fabric of local economies where it's most needed."

The first round of grants was awarded to eight Main Street communities, in three categories – new and expanding, operating, and sustaining grants.

## New and Expanding Grants

These are awarded to support the establishment or expansion of a commercial site, such as a pop-up shop, a temporary space that allows for a low-risk exploration of new markets, or incubator sites, which assist businesses in growing from infancy to a sustainable next phase. Grantees include:

- Downtown Neighborhood Association of Elgin in Elgin, Ill.;
- Downtown Lansing Inc. in Lansing, Mich.; and
- Florence Downtown Development Corp. in Florence, S.C.

## Operating Grants

These are awarded to enhance ongoing services of an existing and operating physical accelerator site. Grantees include:

- Sterling Main Street in Sterling, Ill.;
- Mount Vernon Downtown Association in Mount Vernon, Wash.; and
- Sweet Auburn Works, Inc. in Atlanta, Ga.

## Sustaining Grants

These are awarded to previous grantees of the Small Business Accelerator Grant Program to ensure their project's long-term success. Grantees include:

- Puerto Rican Cultural Center in Chicago, Ill.; and
- Middlesboro Main Street in Middlesboro, Ky.

This initiative is a continuation and expansion of the **Small Business Accelerator Grant Program** that The Hartford

and Main Street America piloted in 2023, which granted \$300,000 in business accelerator grants to three Main Street communities. The next round of grants will be awarded and announced in 2026.

Learn more about our partnership with Main Street America [here](#).

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