

2019-2020 ECONOMIC IMPACT REPORT



Small businesses and entrepreneurs are the life-blood of our local economies and this was never more apparent than during 2020. Our programs rose to the occasion to assist their small businesses through continually shifting circumstances. From these efforts, Arkansas now boasts of outdoor dining districts, adaptable storefronts, stronger businesses and a resurgence of place-based entrepreneurship. I am pleased to present Main Street Arkansas's biennial economic impact report. This report reflects not only the hard work of our designated Main Street programs during 2019 – 2020, but it also displays the adaptability and creativity of the small businesses in our downtowns and historic commercial districts across Arkansas.

— GREG PHILLIPS, DIRECTOR

\$222M
DOWNTOWN
INVESTMENTS

918
NET GAIN
IN JOBS

32K
VOLUNTEER
HOURS



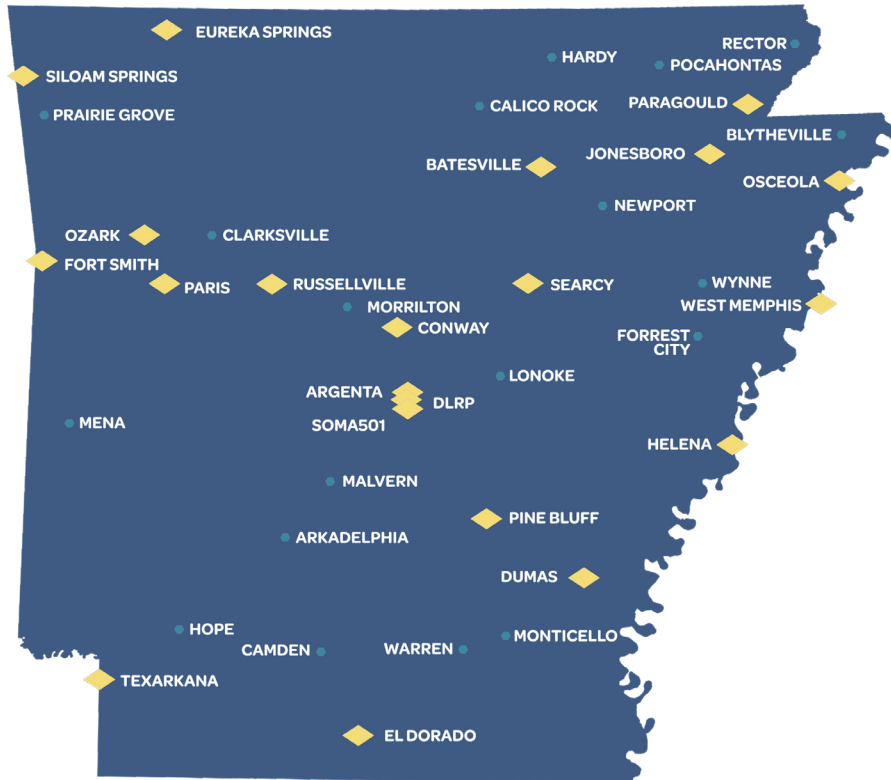
OUR NETWORK

Arkansas's downtowns are the heart of our communities. Our Main Street network stretches from Jonesboro to Texarkana, from Siloam Springs to El Dorado and from Mena to Helena, threading together each natural region of the state into a coordinated effort to thrive.

With more than 37 years of experience, we've seen communities capitalize on the very assets that characterize their downtowns. Countless volunteers and community leaders are dedicating themselves to preserving their community cores and ensuring that their downtowns are vibrant gathering places.

Designated Main Street Programs

- ◆ ARGENTA
- ◆ BATESVILLE
- ◆ CONWAY
- ◆ DUMAS
- ◆ EL DORADO
- ◆ EUREKA SPRINGS
- ◆ FORT SMITH
- ◆ JONESBORO
- ◆ DOWNTOWN LITTLE ROCK PARTNERSHIP
- ◆ OSCEOLA
- ◆ OZARK
- ◆ PARAGOULD
- ◆ PARIS
- ◆ PINE BLUFF
- ◆ RUSSELLVILLE
- ◆ SEARCY
- ◆ SILOAM SPRINGS
- ◆ TEXARKANA
- ◆ WEST MEMPHIS



- ◆ DESIGNATED PROGRAMMS
- NETWORK PROGRAMS

As of 2020.

Arkansas Downtown Network Programs

- ARKADELPHIA
- BLYTHEVILLE
- CALICO ROCK
- CAMDEN
- CLARKSVILLE
- FORREST CITY
- HARDY
- HOPE
- LONOKE
- MALVERN
- MENA
- MONTICELLO
- MORRILTON
- NEWPORT
- POCAHONTAS
- PRAIRIE GROVE
- RECTOR
- WARREN
- WYNNE

MISSION

Main Street Arkansas works to strengthen and preserve historic downtowns and Main Street districts across the state. It provides technical assistance, resources and ongoing education to local programs to help them implement and excel in the Main Street Four-Point Approach™, creating a vivid and vital sense of place.

VISION 2021-2026

In 2030, Main Street Arkansas will be a premiere state coordinating program. The program is known for its expertise in historic preservation, downtown revitalization, small business development and program management. Main Street Arkansas staff are leaders in downtown design and innovative solutions and are the primary resource for downtown economic development. Main Street Arkansas designation is a highly valued and sought-after status by communities.

OUR IMPACT

2019 BY THE NUMBERS



Net Gain in Businesses



Net Gain in Jobs



Volunteer Hours
\$432,586 Value



Public Improvement
Projects
\$7,455,036 Invested



Facade Renovation, Building Rehab,
& New Construction Projects

\$145,310,784
PRIVATE FUNDS
INVESTED

2020 BY THE NUMBERS



Net Gain in Businesses



Net Gain in Jobs



Volunteer Hours
\$278,922 Value



Public Improvement
Projects
\$3,306,604 Invested

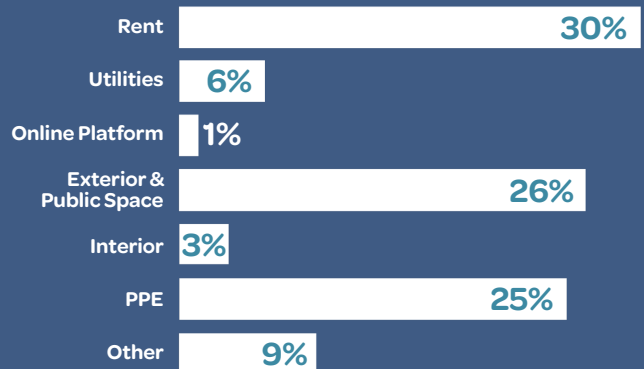


Facade Renovation, Building Rehab,
& New Construction Projects

\$66,080,445
PRIVATE FUNDS
INVESTED

PANDEMIC IMPACT & RESPONSE \$249,500

ADDITIONAL FUNDS PROVIDED FOR COVID RELIEF TO SMALL BUSINESSES



Additional funds were provided to communities to assist small businesses with challenges presented by the pandemic. Funds were used for improvements such as: exterior, interior and district signage, rent & utilities, creating online platforms for businesses, PPE and outdoor dining supplies. Funding was provided for FY21 and percentages reflect uses up to Dec. 2020.



OUR STATE COORDINATING SERVICES

INVESTED

- \$643,500 grant funds invested directly in communities
- \$82,511 invested directly in local program development
- \$47,000 funded through the Public Art Grant
- 7 public art projects funded through the Public Art Grant

TRAINING & DEVELOPMENT

- Conducted numerous site visits & board trainings
- 125 renderings and signage plans provided
- 14 training webinars provided
- 15 workshops provided
- Partnered with SBDC & Arkansas SBA to provide businesses with online sales and marketing training
- Hosted quarterly trainings
- Hosted workshops on Small Business Management, Window Displays, Storefront Design, Economic Vitality and Leadership
- Held two cycles of Main Street University
- Communities received funding for strategic planning, program branding, by-law consulting and fundraising
- Provided funding for local leaders to attend critical conferences

SPECIAL PROJECTS LAUNCHED

- Released report on “Impacts of COVID-19 on Arkansas Small Businesses”
- Provided 2,000 masks to programs and small businesses
- Partnered with The Conductor, an entrepreneurial support organization, to assist small businesses across the state in tech development and training



OUR PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

CAMDEN DOWNTOWN NETWORK

NEW PROGRAM ON THE BLOCK

Five new business ribbon cuttings during a program's first year is something to celebrate; that Camden Downtown Network (CDN) experienced this within a public health and economic crisis is something to turn heads.

In 2020, Camden joined the Main Street program with newfound hope that this resurgence of community momentum would secure sustainable improvement for the previously well-known "Queen City" of the Ouachita. During their first grant cycle, the Camden Downtown Network awarded nine grants to small businesses, totaling over \$8,700 of investments to exterior improvement projects.

"I've seen how the [Camden Downtown Network] has impacted our community in a positive way by creating more people-friendly public spaces while preserving and repurposing historic areas," says Headgames Salon business owner, Mandy Gibbs. "It's also a great way to breathe new life into downtown because that's the heart of our community!"

Since CDN's adoption as an Arkansas Downtown Network program, a total of \$30,000 has been invested in the downtown.

"With new painting and [awnings] being replaced, it has drawn the attention of people throughout town to want to come to downtown to see what is happening," says CDN Executive Director, Charlotte Young. "New excitement has caused other groups and churches around town to want to jump in to help with projects. All the attention has caused new entrepreneurs, as well as established businesses, to start seeking out buildings within downtown to move there."

A critical component of success for downtown development is not only private investment but also private and public partnerships. Camden's first year partnerships were dynamic: a church partnership achieved newly painted parking spots, handicap spaces, curbs and power washed sidewalks; a partnership with Native Dog Brewing installed pet-friendly infrastructure across downtown, such as waste bag dispensers and receptacles; and a local nursery led the volunteer charge for a beautification and landscaping initiative for the mini-park.

Though the year's accomplishments are many to boast, CDN has high-impact goals for the future: "During our second year we are looking at transforming a vacant lot into a pocket park that will allow downtown workers, apartment residents and visitors a place to sit, relax and visit," says Young. "We are also pursuing the National Register designation of our commercial historic district, which would bring a significant amount of economic incentive and preservation opportunity to our community."



OUR PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

ARGENTA DOWNTOWN COUNCIL

Award Winning Downtown Dining District



In the face of multiple crises, the Argenta Downtown Council's (ADC) dedication to creativity and partnership launched the district into the national spotlight. Surrounded by the vibrancy of murals and flowers, Argenta is home to museums, galleries, craft beer, performing arts venues and incredible food. Before the pandemic, this district was "up and coming." Now it is a national destination.

In the years of 2019 and 2020, Argenta has seen a growth of nine new businesses downtown and 17 building improvements and new construction projects, totaling \$20,179,300 in private investment. The Argenta Downtown Council (ADC) has invested \$27,618 directly into downtown revitalization and has recorded over 2,000 hours in volunteer work.

Though these numbers allude to a thriving district, 2020 did not come without its challenges as the program re-strategized initiatives in response to the crises:

"Every second of every day was a challenge and still is," shared Chris Kent, executive director, "But as hard as it was, we tried to focus on making lemonade out of all of those lemons."

The district's reputation was propelled forward

in 2021 by its creative responses to dining and entertainment challenges emerging from the pandemic. ADC led the charge to implement a plan for a shared outdoor seating area in partnership with the creation of an Entertainment District with the city. The outdoor dining area was a hit from the beginning and Argenta Downtown Council was one of six awardees of the Main Street Forward Awards for its efforts. This award recognized "communities that have shown exemplary recovery and resilience efforts amid the multiple crises of 2020," announced Main Street America.

The shift from normalcy seemed to mobilize Argenta's creative and collaborative spirit beyond outdoor dining. The district utilized the change in pace to address other improvement projects, such as beautification and landscaping. Many of the impacts executed by the ADC were a result of strengthening long-standing partnerships:

"We all had to trust one another that we were working for the good of everyone and not just for our own self interests," Kent shares.

"I think what makes the Argenta Arts District unique is how we collaborate with one another," shares Kent. "With collaboration, Argenta is a high-performance machine, but when you take that necessary component away, we stall. Right now, we are firing on all cylinders."



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