

My name is Susan Marcus. I live in Wakefield where I sit on the Economic Development Committee. I'm writing to urge the House Finance Committee to support another year of funding -- \$150,000 -- for the Main Street Rhode Island program. Without continued funding, the expertise our community has been building in the first year of the program would be cut off at a critical point in our development.

I am grateful that the General Assembly passed an appropriation last year for one of the three years as requested by Grow Smart for The Main Street Rhode Island program. Under a signed MOU between Grow Smart and [Main Street America](#), RI participants are receiving extensive training from the national group's staff and their experts from around the country. As we near the end of Year 1, "[Learning Cohort](#)" communities are benefiting from the success of the program to date.

While I am not a member of one of the 11 learning cohorts involved in the 6-month training program Grow Smart has organized, my community is participating. I am in regular contact with our group, which is already moving from learning to action, developing real projects with genuine economic potential. Members of the Wakefield cohort find the sessions enormously valuable. In addition to the training, the sessions provide on-going opportunities for in-person networking with other Rhode Islanders determined to improve their Main Streets.

The Main Street America model carries a documented average return on investment of 22 to 1. The state's \$150,000 investment not only supports a training program, it also catalyzes private spending, business development, and property reinvestment that would not otherwise occur.

Cutting off funding at this moment would forfeit the returns on an investment Rhode Island has already made, and would sever our access to Main Street America's technical expertise at exactly the point when we are ready to put it to work. I respectfully urge the House Finance Committee to approve the \$150,000 appropriation for Main Street Rhode Island in FY 2027.

Thank you for your consideration. I invite you to contact me should you have any questions or wish to discuss this matter further.

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