

# Downtown Development Districts (DDD) Program Expands

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*Governor Markell designates new districts in Smyrna, Milford, Harrington, Georgetown and Laurel*

- **Governor Markell made the expansion announcement during an event on Wednesday in Downtown Smyrna**
- **Since last year, \$14 million in Downtown Development Districts grant funding has leveraged more than \$200 million of private investment in Wilmington, Dover and Seaford.**
- **Smyrna Mayor: DDD designation will “ignite even more progress.”**
- **Funding round for large projects is scheduled to begin in early September**
- **Lawmakers unanimously approved the DDD program in 2014**

**Smyrna, DE** – Governor Jack Markell on Wednesday announced a statewide expansion of Delaware’s Downtown Development Districts program, significantly building on the state’s efforts to redevelop Delaware’s commercial business districts and drive private investment in towns and cities.

Governor Markell officially designated five new Downtown Development Districts – in Smyrna, Harrington, Milford, Georgetown and Laurel. Investors who make qualified improvements to residential, commercial, or industrial properties in those districts now may qualify for state and local development incentives, including 20 percent state grant rebates.

“The Downtown Development Districts program already is driving major investment in our cities, from Market Street in Wilmington to the banks of the Nanticoke River in Seaford,” **said Governor Jack Markell**. “More Delawareans than ever want to live and work in walkable, urban areas. This expansion will help meet that demand by encouraging private development of downtown areas statewide.”

Since early 2015, the Downtown Development Districts program has helped finance major new private development in the original districts in Wilmington, Dover and Seaford, with \$14 million in state grant funding leveraging more than \$200 million of private investment. Governor Markell made the expansion announcement in downtown Smyrna on Wednesday morning, joined by local officials representing the new districts.

## **Quotes from new DDD representatives**

“We are excited about the transformation that will occur in the next few years in Downtown Smyrna. Smyrna has been working hard to grow our Downtown, and the Downtown Development District designation will help ignite even more progress and at a quicker pace,” **said Smyrna Mayor Joanne Masten**. “The grant program will open doors for our wide range of developers and business owners with opportunities to further strengthen our town. We’re grateful that Governor Markell has made this initiative available to so many wonderful downtowns in Delaware.”

“We are extremely excited about our selection as a Delaware Development District partner with the State of Delaware,” **said Milford Mayor Bryan Shupe**. “The Downtown Development District application process has been a great experience for the City of Milford. It has allowed us to explore and evaluate the public and private, commercial, and residential assets within the downtown district.

“Determining an overall economic development strategy that encourages private investment from existing businesses and home owners as well as prospective investors, the City of Milford has created a series of incentives that rewards individuals and businesses that enhance the quality of living within the district,” **Shupe said**. “The benefits created by the State of Delaware DDD program, including the potential for grants up to 20 percent of hard costs for private investments, will create a vibrant economic environment where public-private partnerships can create jobs and further economic opportunities in downtown Milford.”

“Harrington is very honored to accept the Governor’s Downtown Development District Designation and I feel this is exactly what Harrington needs to jumpstart its Downtown Revitalization,” **said Harrington Mayor Anthony R. Moyer**. “The City recently adopted a Downtown Development District Plan with input from the community, various organizations, downtown businesses and a Downtown Task Force with support from the City Council and Planning Commission. The Plan would not have been possible without the Neighborhood Building Blocks Grant Fund.

“A special thanks to our City Manager, Teresa Tieman, and her staff, as well as Debbie Pfeil and Lauren Good of KCI Technologies, Inc. for leading the efforts with these initiatives and the very competitive designation application,” **Moyer said**. “The City recently approved five District specific incentives and ten other citywide incentives, created several development resources, and ensured infrastructure was in place. With this designation, our Downtown is certain to prosper, maintain its character, and be the center of our community.”

“The Town Council and I are committed to the revitalization of our downtown and firmly believe this designation, combined with significant local incentives, will help kick start both residential and commercial investment within our main commercial district,” **said Georgetown Mayor Bill West**. “Initial efforts will be to complete our implementation plan, communicate the designation to all properties within the district boundaries, and invite new and existing projects to take advantage of this opportunity. We appreciate the continued support from both the Office of the Governor and the Delaware Legislature for this worthwhile program. We look forward to the positive impact of this designation on the Town of Georgetown.”

“The development district designation will give Laurel a very important new tool to stir new development along broad creek to support eco tourism, establish new businesses and revitalize homes in our historic area,” **said Laurel Mayor John Shwed**.

## **DDD Background**

The DDD program, administered by the Delaware State Housing Authority, was created by legislation proposed by Governor Markell and passed unanimously in May 2014 by the General Assembly. In January 2015, Governor Markell designated the downtown areas of Seaford, Dover and Wilmington as Delaware’s first three Downtown Development Districts.

To incentivize development, applicants receiving DDD grants are eligible for up to 20 percent of their construction costs in the form of a rebate. Grants are awarded only when projects are complete. Local incentives also are available for qualifying projects.

In Laurel, for example, local incentives include property tax relief and coordinated cross-agency efforts to help investors build homes, promote homeownership and rehabilitate vacant properties. Smyrna is offering business consulting services, discounted utility charges and assistance from a Revolving Loan Fund for Downtown Development District investors.

### **Downtown Development District Incentives**

In early September, the Delaware State Housing Authority will launch a new funding round for large projects in each of Delaware's Downtown Development Districts. Nearly \$8 million in funding will be available for projects statewide. Applications to fund small projects – defined as investments of less than \$250,000 in a designed downtown district – are accepted on a rolling basis.

“We’re thrilled to work with homeowners, developers, and small business owners to drive investment in all of the newly-designated districts,” **said Anas Ben Addi**, Director of the Delaware State Housing Authority. “This program is working, and we’ve seen the proof in Wilmington, Dover and Seaford. We look forward to even more progress statewide.”

Governor Markell announced in March that the DDD program would expand through new district designations. Delaware's Office of State Planning Coordination led the process to review the applications and designate the new districts. Applications were scored based on the town or city's need for Downtown Development District incentives, the jurisdiction's downtown revitalization plan, and the creativity of its incentive package.

“All of Delaware's towns and cities are unique, and I am so pleased that we were able to expand this program to the five diverse communities being recognized today: Laurel, Harrington, Smyrna, Milford and Georgetown,” **said State Planning Director Constance Holland**. “The best part of this program is that it supports such a wide range of redevelopment activities so each town can thrive. This program demonstrates that the state supports all of our local governments and their visions of economically vibrant, healthy, and complete communities.”



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