



Community Center Investment  
Program | **CASE STUDY**



## MainStreet Warner - Warner, New Hampshire

### From Historic Landmark to Vibrant Community Hub

MainStreet Warner, a nonprofit dedicated to preserving and revitalizing Warner's downtown, is transforming an underutilized historic building into a multipurpose community center. Originally built in 1833 as a church and later serving as a Masonic lodge, the building was acquired by the organization in 2020 with a vision to reimagine it as a space for residents, service organizations, and local schools. CDFA's Community Center Investment Program helped fund the initial phase of the ambitious renovation project, which breathes new life into a landmark in the heart of town.



### Laying the Foundation for Multi-Purpose Community Space

Phase one of the renovations included replacing the obsolete electrical system, installing a new HVAC system, and upgrading the building's envelope for improved insulation and energy efficiency. The kitchen, which was outdated and not up to code, was completely redone, featuring a large walk-in cooler that will support the community kitchen and the partner food programs. The project also included the installation of ADA-accessible bathrooms and structural stabilization of the flooring.

*"The idea is to create an integrated building," shared MainStreet Warner Board Member Tom Heise. "We're starting with updating the annex, which has a kitchen and a community room. Down the road, the adjacent main hall will be turned into a performing arts and educational venue."*

With plans to carry on transforming the space, MainStreet Warner has emphasized community engagement throughout the process. Hundreds of residents toured the building during open houses, and local chefs and event planners were consulted to help make the kitchen and meeting spaces functional and welcoming.

### Strengthening Community Ties and Addressing Resident Needs

The community response has been overwhelmingly positive. "We've talked to about ten organizations that are eager to use the space for their programming," said Heise. The town of Warner has also expressed interest in using the facility as an emergency heating and cooling center.

In the long term, the center is expected to host nutrition and cooking classes, support food access initiatives, provide afterschool and arts programming for Simonds Elementary School students, and serve as a community gathering space for concerts, films, and public meetings. With 22–25% of families in Warner qualifying for free or reduced lunch, the center directly addresses food insecurity while also fostering educational enrichment and community connection.

Due to its central location, the revitalized building also contributes to MainStreet Warner’s long-term goal of maintaining a vibrant and active downtown.

*“This is part of a long-running project to keep our Main Street healthy and attractive instead of having all the businesses move out along Interstate 89,” noted Heise.*

## Strategic CDFA Partnership and Funding Drive Long-Term Impact

The project’s estimated \$550,000 budget was supported by an award of \$278,000 from CDFA, and additional funding from HUD and USDA. A mix of private donations and in-kind contributions, like architectural services, also supported the construction. A local fundraising campaign is still underway to address an unexpected challenge with donated kitchen equipment, which turned out to be noncompliant and improperly sized for the space.

This was MainStreet Warner’s first time working with CDFA, and Heise offered strong praise for the partnership. “I have nothing but the highest praise for CDFA’s support, both through the application process and subsequently,” he said. The grant’s requirements prompted the organization to formalize internal policies and operations, which ultimately strengthened its capacity. “Those conversations were very useful. We became more aware of the considerations that we had to undertake at various parts of the process,” Heise added.



MainStreet Warner also received funding from CDFA to complete an energy assessment of the building and is in discussions about a potential loan to install solar panels on the building’s roof, which would significantly improve long-term sustainability and energy independence.

*“It’s gratifying to see how invested CDFA is in the success of this facility,” concluded Heise. “This building will be a recurring reference point for what it means to live in Warner.”*

### Key Learnings:

Planning flexible timelines and budgets is essential to address unexpected challenges

Navigating federal grant compliance processes can strengthen organizational capacity

Community engagement promotes tailored design and purpose for multi-use spaces