



# Amesbury

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## **For immediate release**

September 22, 2021

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## **City of Amesbury Receives U.S. Economic Development Administration Grant for Downtown Resiliency Project**

Mayor Cassandra Gove is happy to announce that the City of Amesbury received a \$22,500 grant from the US Economic Development Administration (EDA) for the Reimagining a Resilient Downtown Amesbury Project. This project will merge the I AMesbury 2030 initiative and the Lower Millyard visioning project with a downtown-specific assessment to determine what actions the City can take to ensure Amesbury is prepared for and can adapt to economic, social and environmental challenges and shocks.

Angela Cleveland, Director of Community and Economic Development has put together a Task Force to work on this project. The Task Force is comprised of Amesbury City officials and local/regional volunteers, including but not limited to the Merrimack Valley Planning Commission (our strategic partner), City Councilors, local businesses, the Amesbury Chamber of Commerce, existing Lower Millyard Task Force members and others.

The Reimagining a Resilient Downtown Amesbury Task Force, whose first meeting is Thursday, September 23<sup>rd</sup> to kick off the project:

- Mayor Cassandra Gove, City of Amesbury
- Angela Cleveland, City of Amesbury
- Jeb Brugmann, Resilient Cities Catalyst
- Nate Robertson, MVPC Community and Economic Development Planner
- Brittany Steingesser, I AMesbury 2030 Task Force Co-Chair and expertise in sustainability and resilience planning
- Michael Hogg, City Councilor
- Barbara Lorenc, Cedar Street Studios / Trades Mill
- Bob O'Brien, CEO of CI Works
- John Mayer, Executive Director of Amesbury Industrial History Museum
- Michelle Riaz, Owner of Brewery Silvaticus
- Mary Anne Clancy, Communications Director for the Institution for Savings
- Caitlin Thayer, City of Amesbury Communications Director and President of the Friends of the Amesbury Public Library
- Troy Purington, Resident and expertise in mill building renovation/revitalization
- Rachel Harris, Local architect

- Tom Morgan, Planner in Seabrook, New Hampshire
- Nick Cracknell, Resident

Over the next year, the Task Force will focus on a variety of areas related to economic, environmental and social resilience.

Economic resilience is defined as being inclusive of three primary attributes: the ability to recover from shock, the ability to withstand a shock, and the ability to avoid the shock altogether.

Environmental resilience is having the right infrastructure to support a business' ability to survive natural disaster exposures and vulnerabilities.

Social resilience is having a robust and diverse housing market, household wealth and purchasing power for a community to support the businesses, and proper public safety in place.

The COVID-19 pandemic showed us how incredibly important resilience planning is for our City and our business community. Throughout the pandemic [the City has worked to support local businesses](#), and this grant now provides the opportunity to proactively plan for future support. It also allows us to re-evaluate our current processes and systems to determine if changes need to be made for future growth and opportunities.

For instance, right now zoning downtown only allows for 25% of the square footage of a given space to be used for manufacturing. The word "manufacturing" could bring to mind a large, loud business operation, however, today's manufacturing businesses are cleaner and greener, and can include the manufacture of items including beer, candles, clothing, jewelry and furniture. This type of antiquated zoning has kept us from attracting a diverse set of businesses to the downtown area.

The result of this project will be a set of recommendations about zoning, how the City can better work with businesses, and the best ways to attract new businesses, including manufacturing. The community can expect regular updates from the Task Force as they begin their work. A webpage will be developed on the [City's ClearGov site](#) and news will be shared on social media and in the City's e-newsletters, which can be signed up for here: <https://www.amesburyma.gov/city-eneewsletter>.

#### **Quote from Mayor Cassandra Gove**

"Amesbury's businesses are a key component of our vibrant and growing community. I have been working to support our business owners for many years, and throughout the pandemic we have offered City support in many forms. This grant allows us to take another step in the right direction and to update many of our old practices for the future of our community."

#### **Quote from Angela Cleveland, Director of Community & Economic Development**

"Our partnership with Resilient Cities Catalyst on this project will allow us to identify realistic, but effective, recommendations to create a more resilient, adaptable downtown that is prepared to take on tomorrow's economic, social, and environmental challenges. We are so excited to be awarded an EDA grant to work with our partners on this project!"