

## **DRAFT CONCEPT**

February 13, 2026

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### **Market House Pedestrian Plaza Demonstration Project**

The Town of Shepherdstown proposes creating a temporary pedestrian plaza around the Market House, one of the community's most iconic buildings.

This short-term project will convert the area around the Market House into a safe, car-free zone featuring seating, planters, shade structures, and other "quick-build" amenities that invite people to pause, gather, and experience the space differently. It aims to demonstrate the benefits of a pedestrian-oriented town center, namely improved safety, accessibility, and quality of life for residents and visitors alike. This experiment will also inform the Town's efforts to permanently pedestrianize this space.

By providing comfortable, accessible seating and reducing vehicle conflicts, the project supports AARP's Community Challenge Grant goal of promoting vibrant public places. Allowing residents, businesses, and officials to experience Market House Square as a pedestrian space before committing to permanent changes, the temporary closure will turn abstract debates into lived experience. This experiment also provides the Town a low-risk opportunity to identify and resolve issues/answer questions before investing in a more permanent installation.

### **Execution**

Using temporary, low-cost materials like bollards, planters, and movable furniture, the pedestrian zone will be installed quickly. The Town will oversee site preparation, set-up, and removal.

As part of the project, the Town will sponsor / organize several community events, like yoga classes and outdoor music, to actively involve residents and gather diverse feedback on the pedestrian space.

We will use surveys, observation, and community events to solicit public feedback. This inclusive approach aims to make everyone feel their input matters, fostering a sense of shared ownership and confidence among stakeholders. When the temporary plaza is removed, the Town Council will hold a reflection session for residents to share their experiences, express their likes and dislikes of the space, and help determine next steps for the project.

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### **AARP Community Challenge Grant Summary**

Annual contest with three grant categories

1. **Flagship grants** support projects that improve public places; transportation; housing; digital connections; and disaster resilience. Award ceiling: \$15,000.
2. **Capacity-building microgrants** are \$2,500. [not applying]
3. **Demonstration grants** fund projects that encourage replication of exemplary local efforts in improving pedestrian safety, expanding high-speed internet access and adoption, and housing choice design competitions. Award ceiling: \$25,000.

**Grant activities must be completed by December 15<sup>th</sup>.**

#### **Grant application**

- Deadline: March 4<sup>th</sup> 5pm EST
- Evaluation criteria
  - 60% impact
  - 30% execution
  - 10% innovation
- Online application
  - basic demographics profile
  - Project description
  - Basic activity plan
  - Deliverables
  - Community engagement strategy (especially of those 50+)
  - Description of volunteer participation
  - Past livability efforts
  - Top line budget.

Most narratives have a 2,000 character maximum

They also allow inclusion of additional materials to support the project like letters of support or renderings as a single attachment.