



COMMERCIAL REAL ESTATE INSIGHT & NEWS

The Bowditch & Dewey Real Estate Blog

MassDevelopment's "Commonwealth Places" Program Contributes to Successful Project in Downtown Ashland

BY CHRIS MERCURIO AND JACOB TOSTI • AUGUST 3, 2017

Last month, a new public space named "[The Corner Spot](#)" opened in downtown Ashland, Massachusetts, to considerable fanfare. Lauded as a "[downtown destination](#)", the Corner Spot is essentially a community gathering space that features amenities such as porch swings, a café seating area, a book swap spot, a kids play area, and a pop-up store front intended for new businesses. The space will also be hosting a variety of family-friendly events throughout the summer, including board game nights and open mic music sessions. The Corner Spot is a great example of public-private cooperation and community involvement leading to neighborhood revitalization.

Located on a lot that was slated for affordable housing but failed to attract a developer, the Corner Spot owes its existence in part to MassDevelopment's "Commonwealth Places" program, which provided a \$25,000 grant to fund the Spot's construction. The program, described as a "creative funding mechanism," for "place-based community-driven projects" requires community revitalization project sponsors to set a crowdfunding goal for their project. If the goal is met within sixty days, MassDevelopment (a governmental economic development authority established in 1998) provides a grant matching the goal amount dollar-for-dollar. It is a testament to the community spirit shared by Ashland residents and businesses that they not only met the \$25,000 crowdfunding goal, but also exceeded it, contributing over \$38,000 toward the Corner Spot project.

Blog-readers interested in participating in the Commonwealth Places program may wish to visit the [MassDevelopment website](#), which features a list of ongoing and completed community projects and information relating to applications for new projects. Congratulations to the residents of Ashland for taking the initiative to improve their community.