

CASE STUDY: MIDDLESBORO, KY



In support of transitioning southeast Kentucky towards a cleaner environment and future, the Discover Downtown Middlesboro (DDM) Main Street program received a \$5,000 grant from *America Saves* to facilitate local energy efficiency implementation and outreach. DDM used the grant to hire a project manager to lead a consistent program of energy efficiency activities. These included engaging a team of 50 community volunteers who contributed a total of over 400 hours and communicating regularly with local business owners. DDM benefited from *America Saves*' ability to initiate collaboration with utilities and regional energy efficiency organizations in a way that had never been possible before in Middlesboro.



downtown Middlesboro

About Middlesboro: Middlesboro is a small town (pop. 10,334), located just one mile west of the Cumberland Gap, in southeastern Kentucky. Often referred to as “The Magic City,” geologists believe the geography of the town, being that of a basin, is the result of a large meteor crater. Today, Middlesboro is engaged in a major economic revitalization of its historic downtown. Discover Downtown Middlesboro was formed in 2004 to lead the revitalization efforts. In January 2014, President Obama announced the designation of southeastern Kentucky (which includes Middlesboro) as part of the first round of rural Promise Zones, a federal program to expand economic opportunity in distressed areas.

DISTRICT-BASED ENERGY CHALLENGES + GOALS:

The *America Saves* pilot project in Middlesboro began in late 2014. DDM, the primary local partner, recognized the benefits of being one of the first *America Saves* pilot communities and leveraged the designation to drive expanded investment and opportunity in the historic downtown. Overall, the Middlesboro project achieved the highest levels of business owner participation of any *America Saves* pilot, despite joining the project in its very earliest phase and losing their project manager halfway through. Overall, DDD fully reached their goal of engaging 100 businesses about their energy efficiency opportunities. In addition, a project partner, Mountain Area Community Economic Development (MACED) developed a custom, zero interest micro-loan program for energy retrofit projects, exclusively for *America Saves* participating businesses in Middlesboro.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT:

- “Achieving Energy Savings” Workshop and Lunch [September 2014]: The kick-off public workshop, presented by *America Saves* and MACED, shared information about saving energy and money on utility bills with Middlesboro business owners. Following the workshop, 25 business owners received no-cost energy assessments offered through MACED and implemented by their energy efficiency contractor, E-Max. The workshop provided a platform for MACED and *America Saves* to jointly announce the new energy efficiency micro-loan opportunity for businesses participating in *America Saves* and increase interest in energy retrofit projects.
- Business Owner Outreach [June 2016]: After collecting and analyzing energy data in Middlesboro, the *America Saves* team returned to deliver custom energy savings reports to participating businesses. Simultaneously, *America Saves* arranged for Kentucky Utilities (KU) to participate in business owner outreach and offer no-cost assessments at the time the *America Saves* reports were shared with business owners. KU's contractor, Matrix, conducted the assessments, which were included as part of a new, robust KU small business energy efficiency program, piloted in Middlesboro in partnership with *America Saves*. In total, more than 50 local business owners were directly engaged, in their place of business, during *America Saves* outreach and business consultations.

OUTCOMES:

- **93** customized *America Saves* reports for Middlesboro businesses
- **40** FREE energy assessments, offered through Kentucky Utilities
- **15%** average energy savings potential for Middlesboro businesses
- **\$3,169** average annual potential savings for Middlesboro businesses



talking with business owner

LOOKING AHEAD:

- Moving forward, Discover Downtown Middlesboro will continue distributing the custom energy savings reports to local businesses, sharing both simple retrofit opportunities as well as connecting to KU's new small commercial energy efficiency program.
- KU and Matrix will continue business owner outreach in Middlesboro to share information about their robust energy efficiency programs and incentives that provide no-cost energy savings assessments, rebates, no-cost LED lights, and more.

COMMUNITY COMMENT:

“In the Main Street world we are long on wanting to make things great things happen, and short on having the tools and resources bring about change. America Saves helped to fill the gap between our greatest hopes and the reality on the street. We were able to help businesses firsthand, create value for them, and give an edge especially to our small local businesses...In the end, preservation and energy are intertwined. Older buildings and their superior materials provide greater long-term durability and savings compared to their more modern counterparts. The embodied energy they contain and the rich social, cultural, and historical value they carry - makes them deserving of care. Ultimately I hope our preservation values and our environmental conservation values are viewed as part of one long continuum. What is environmentally sensitive can also respect our historic and cultural resources. America Saves perhaps was the finest program to achieve that potential to date.”

Isaac Kremer | Executive Director, Discover Downtown Middlesboro



www.SavingPlaces.org/AmericaSaves



National Trust for Historic Preservation

Preservation Green Lab