



E.C.G.R.A.
ERIE COUNTY GAMING REVENUE AUTHORITY

**EXECUTIVE
DIRECTOR'S
REPORT
FOR
FEBRUARY
2020**



January 30, 2020

James Sparber
Finance Director
Erie County Courthouse
140 W 6th Street, Room 111
Erie, PA 16501-1011

Dear Mr. Sparber:

In accordance with the Pennsylvania Race Horse Development and Gaming Act 42 of 2017, the Department is required to distribute quarterly the Local Share Assessment collected for slots to the municipalities in which a licensed gaming entity is located. This distribution is based on the local share assessment amount collected plus the slot machine license operation fee amount collected over Summit Township's budget limitation.

An ACH for the fourth quarter of 2019 payment in the amount of \$3,022,671.63 should be deposited in your bank account within 3 - 5 business days. This payment includes the slots local share assessment of \$522,671.63 and the slot machine license operation fee of \$2,500,000.00. Any reductions to the Gross Terminal Revenue (GTR) for promotional items is the result of the Gaming Bulletin 2015-01 and the Pennsylvania Supreme Court's April 28, 2014 decision in Greenwood Gaming and Entertainment Incorporated v. Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Department of Revenue (90 A.3d 699 (Pa. 2014)).

If you have any questions, please contact me at 717-346-4004.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Jennifer Heckert'.

Jennifer Heckert, Gaming Division Chief
Bureau of Fiscal Management

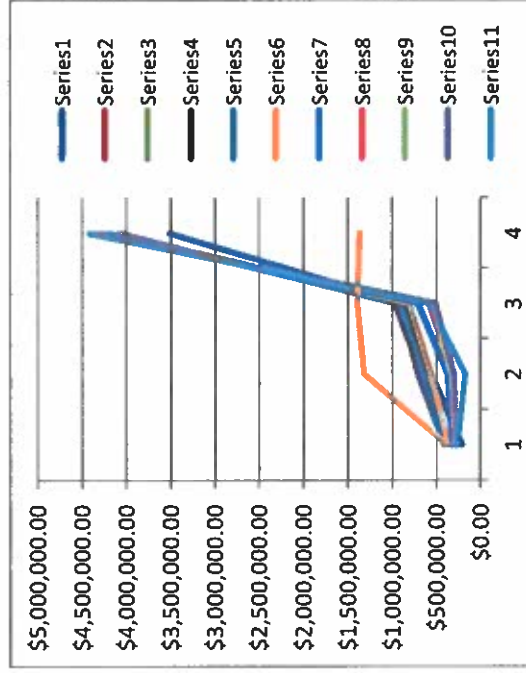
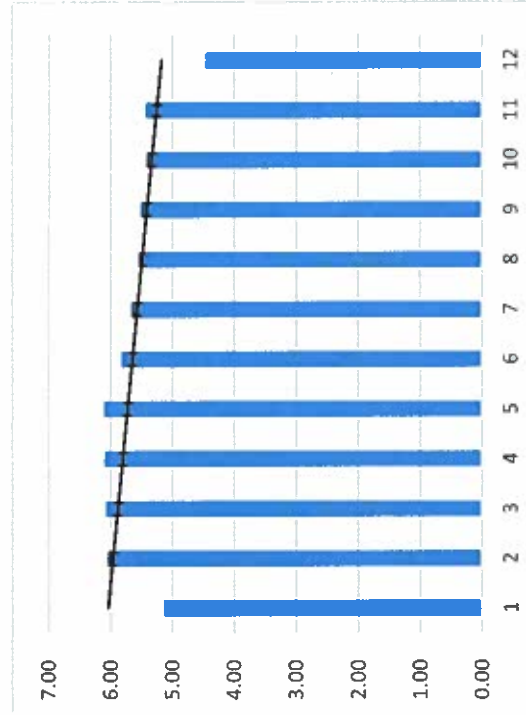
Erie County 067-021010-042100
\$3,022,671.63 X .55 = \$1,662,469.40

ECGRA 067-021050-042100
\$3,022,671.63 X .45 = \$1,360,202.23

Revenue Dashboard
by Quarter
2007 - 2018 YTD



Year	1st Qtr	2nd Qtr	3rd Qtr	4th Qtr	Total
2007	201,418.07	562,082.72	867,508.44	3,507,952.54	5,138,961.77
2008	366,211.37	672,936.98	941,125.00	4,063,561.53	6,043,834.88
2009	407,507.87	701,525.21	898,525.69	4,060,932.24	6,068,491.01
2010	385,476.85	665,559.96	962,909.94	4,073,449.24	6,087,395.99
2011	393,440.61	636,302.96	903,421.25	4,166,222.13	6,099,386.95
2012	356,241.99	554,752.50	794,443.73	4,114,583.35	5,820,021.57
2013	318,869.71	374,557.04	701,478.54	4,261,932.00	5,656,837.29
2014	281,934.65	315,628.24	584,126.03	4,350,692.65	5,532,381.57
2015	264,934.67	308,566.19	541,749.43	4,390,710.21	5,505,960.50
2016	271,003.84	300,719.61	507,757.83	4,332,642.04	5,412,123.32
2017	254,570.93	172,041.71	578,894.78	4,412,495.64	5,418,003.06
2018	375,769.51	1,317,928.22	1,394,780.33	1,362,089.40	4,450,567.46
2019	373,319.64	1,314,153.08	1,391,141.81	1,360,202.23	4,438,816.76
	4,250,699.71	7,896,754.42	11,067,862.80	48,457,465.20	71,672,782.13





Ridge Policy Group Activity

ECGRA Jan 15 – Feb 15 Report

Relevant Activity

- RPG has been working directly with the North East Borough to identify funding opportunities for their Sustain NE concept. This has included:
 - Confirming and attending the Feb 6th as a meeting date for a walking tour of North East with Sen Laughlin and Rep Sonney to review RACP project
 - Scheduling a call with PennDOT to have an initial discussion of gateway projects in North East borough
 - Having bi-weekly calls set up to help support their activities
- On January 24, held a call with Ryan Bookhamer, STEM & Gifted Administrator for Fairview School District about potential funding opportunities to support his activities
- On February 7, held a call with Perry to discuss potential research funding for algae bloom build up
- Reviewing potential infrastructure implications in relation to Congress working on an infrastructure package (ongoing project)
- We continue to monitor progress of RACP authorization legislation.

Grant/ Funding & Legislative Opportunities

Algae Bloom

- The House voted on The Great Lakes Restoration Initiative Reauthorization (GLRI) bill. We've talked about the GLRI as a potential source of funding for algae bloom support in Erie in the past, so reauthorization may lead to important additional funding. Through the initiative, a task force headed by the Environmental Protection Agency coordinates efforts of federal agencies and nonfederal partners to address pollution, invasive species, and other restoration needs in the region. The initiative is authorized to receive \$300 million annually through fiscal 2021 under current law. Under the bill, its authorization would be \$375 million in fiscal 2022, increasing incrementally to \$475 million in fiscal 2026.

ARC POWER 2020

What is **POWER**?

POWER (Partnerships for Opportunity and Workforce and Economic Revitalization) is a congressionally funded initiative that makes federal resources available to help communities and

regions that have been affected by job losses in coal mining, coal power plant operations, and coal-related supply chain industries due to the changing economics of America's energy production.

POWER 2020

ARC is accepting applications in response to the [POWER 2020 Request for Proposals \(RFP\)](#). Strong POWER projects are **regional, strategic, and transformational** in their approach to the **economic revitalization** of coal-impacted communities.

HOW TO APPLY

Applications are accepted via the [POWER 2020 Application Portal](#). Application guidance and requirements are outlined in the [POWER 2020 RFP](#).

Important Dates

- **February 28, 2020, 5:00pm (ET):** POWER 2020 Letter of Intent Submission deadline (Submit to power@arc.gov)
- **March 27, 2020, 5:00pm (ET):** POWER 2020 Final Applications deadline (Submit to [POWER Portal](#))



Funding Opportunities	Awards
Erie School District/Mercyhurst University – PASmart Award	\$ 500,000
Greater Erie Community Action Committee – pre-apprenticeship program	\$ 49,995
ARC Grant – Investing in Appalachia’s Future: ARC 5-year Strategic Plan	\$ 200,000
EDA – Regional Innovation Strategies Assistance to Coal Communities Program	\$ 1,000,000
Millcreek School District Foundation – tax credit	\$ 20,000
City of Erie/Erie Innovation District (ARC POWER grant)	\$ 500,000
Erie Innovation District (EDA grant)	\$ 2,000,000
<hr/>	
TOTAL:	\$ 4,269,995



**BRIDGEWAY
CAPITAL**
Connect Opportunity with Capital

PITTSBURGH
707 Grant Street
Suite 1920
Pittsburgh, PA 15219
T 412.201.2450
F 412.201.2451

ERIE
1001 State Street
Suite 1400
Erie, PA 16501
T 814.451.1172
F 814.451.1150

UNIONTOWN
2 West Main Street
Suite 135
Uniontown, PA 15401
T 724.425.0330
F 724.425.0332

February 5, 2020

VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL

Perry Wood
Executive Director
Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority
5340 Fryling Road, Suite 201
Erie, PA 16510

Dear Perry,

Bridgeway Capital is pleased to provide this Performance Report on the Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority's 2018 Mission Related Investment of \$2.5 million for the Inclusive Erie Fund. To complement ECGRA's funding, which is being directed to minority-owned businesses in Erie County, Bridgeway has committed an additional \$2.5 million in capital from other sources to finance non-minority-owned businesses.

Since receiving funding in October 2018 and formally launching the program on Dec. 3, Bridgeway has deployed a total of \$976,000 to 8 small businesses operating in Erie County. Program accomplishments to date include the following:

- \$296,000 has been lent to 5 African-American-owned businesses.
- \$560,000 has been lent to 2 non-minority-owned business.
- \$120,000 has been lent to a Syrian immigrant.
- 6 of the 7 funded companies are located in The City of Erie and operate in low- to moderate-income areas; the other company, 1 Tagteam Logistics, is located in McKean, a city in Erie County.
- To date, the Inclusive Erie Fund has supported the creation of 8 new full-time jobs.

During this reporting period, Bridgeway made a \$120,000 growth loan to Sham Middle Eastern Market, located on E. 12th St. Sham specializes in halal meats, fresh produce, and ethnic foodstuffs and serves Erie's growing Syrian and Middle Eastern population. The working capital loan will allow the store's owner to more efficiently and competitively stock his store. Currently, he makes multiple trips each week to Detroit to source products. The loan will allow him to purchase a larger van and transport a greater volume of product with each trip.

A \$10,000 start-up loan will support the launch of 1Tagteam Logistics, a woman- and African American-owned general freight broker services company. The owner, Martina Johnson, will run the company together with her husband, Willie, who has 19 years of experience in the trucking industry. Willie gained a vast knowledge of shipping and logistics while serving in the U.S. Army on active duty.

Bridgeway's Inclusive Erie Fund is complemented by the Erie Minority-Owned Business Accelerator (EMOBA). EMOBA is designed to provide developing businesses a strong foundation for successful business growth. Since its start six months ago, EMOBA has delivered four business education workshops and three networking events to a cohort of six minority businesses. Each three-hour

workshop focuses on a discrete business topic designed to prepare participants to launch and/or grow their businesses. In the weeks between sessions, program participants receive one-on-one tailored assistance focused on business planning and strategy development. These sessions are led by Bridgeway's Entrepreneurship Hub Manager, Talpha Harris, who is leading EMOBA, as well as other community professionals and partner organizations. Through the program, participants gain access to strategic consulting, legal and accounting assistance, and the development of marketing collateral. Bridgeway's Inclusive Erie Fund is complemented by the Erie Minority-Owned Business Accelerator (EMOBA). The EMOBA is designed to provide developing businesses a strong foundation for successful business growth.

Bridgeway continues to build a pipeline of potential Inclusive Erie Fund loans, both those that will be backed by ECGRA funding and those that will require leveraged sources of capital.

Bridgeway thanks ECGRA for its continued support of our efforts to stimulate economic opportunity and equitable development in Erie County. Please do not hesitate to contact us with questions or comments.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'TJ Bogdewic', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

TJ Bogdewic
President and CEO

Bridgeway Capital, February 2020 Performance Report - Inclusive Erie Fund

Business	Loan Amount	Total Project Cost	Target Market	New Jobs Projected	Startup	Minority-owned	Woman-owned	Funding Source	Funding Source Terms
Johnson Real Estate Properties	\$60,000	\$66,170	Yes	Yes	0	No	Yes	No ECGRA - MRI	Medium-term loan
Crockett Apartment Rentals	\$175,000	\$175,000	Yes	Yes	0	No	Yes	No ECGRA - MRI	Medium-term loan
Autumn's Beauty Supplies	\$15,000	\$15,000	Yes	Yes	0	No	Yes	Yes ECGRA - MRI	Medium-term loan
Mark Anthony Concrete	\$500,000	\$500,000	Yes	Yes	3	No	No	No Bridgeway	Medium-term loan
Sham Middle Eastern Market	\$120,000	\$120,000	Yes	Yes	1	No	Yes	No ECGRA - MRI	Medium-term loan
Valor Labz	\$60,000	\$68,500	Yes	Yes	4	Yes	No	No Bridgeway	Medium-term loan
1 Tagteam Logistics	\$10,000	\$11,500	Yes	Yes	0	Yes	Yes	Yes ECGRA - MRI	Medium-term loan
Parris Dawson	\$36,000	\$36,000	Yes	Yes	0	No	Yes	No ECGRA - MRI	Long-term loan

Total Lending	\$976,000
Lending in Target Market (by #)	100%
Lending in Target Market (by \$)	100%
New Jobs Projected	8
ECGRA Funds Used	\$416,000
Funds Leveraged - Internal Bridgeway level	\$560,000
Internal Leverage Ratio (Outside funds to ECGRA funds)	1.3
Funds Leveraged - External, project level	\$992,170
External Leverage Ratio (Outside funds to Bridgeway funds)	1.0

Senator Laughlin
Municipal Leaders Grant & Resource Workshop
The Tom Ridge Environmental Center
301 Peninsula Drive, Erie, PA 16505
Tuesday, February 11, 2020

Schedule

- 8:30-9:00** **Registration & Continental Breakfast**
- 9:00-9:15** **Welcome and Introductions by Senator Dan Laughlin**
- 9:15-10:15** **PA Senate Grants Team**
 Joe Marsicano, Funding & Resource Specialist
- Community & Economic Development**
 Kim Thomas, Regional Representative
 Kim Bracey, Executive Director
 Governor's Center for Local Government Services
- PENNVEST**
 David Henning, Project Manager
- 10:15-10:30** **Break**
- 10:30 – 11:30** **Department of Conservation and Natural Resources**
 Erin Wiley Moyers, Regional Advisor
- Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority**
 Dr. Perry Wood, Executive Director
- General Services**
 Ken Hess, Deputy Secretary
- Erie County Redevelopment Authority**
 Tina Mengine, CEO
- 11:30-12:00** **Meet the Presenters**



COUNTY OF ERIE

OFFICE OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE

Kathy Dahlkemper,
County Executive

January 21, 2020

Dale Barney
1205 Lynn Street
Erie, PA 16503

Dear Mr. Barney,

Thank you for your willingness to continue to serve on the Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority. Upon the recommendation of County Councilman André Horton and myself, your reappointment to the Authority was approved by Erie County Council on January 21, 2020. This five-year term will expire on December 31, 2024.

The County of Erie congratulates you and extends its appreciation for your willingness to serve. Please accept my gratitude and high regard for the time and service you provide.

Sincerely,

Kathy Dahlkemper

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kathy Dahlkemper", is written over a horizontal line.

cc: Douglas Smith, Clerk
Perry Wood, Executive Director, Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority
File



Erie Lead Asset Award

AGENDA

Perry Wood
Senator Dan Laughlin
Representative Ryan Bizzaro
County Councilman Andre Horton
Mayor Joe Schember
James Sherrod

Background/Emcee
Brief Remarks
Brief Remarks
Brief Remarks
Brief Remarks
Brief Remarks/Photo Op

CHECK PRESENTATION:
Individual Presentations (amounts attached)
MEMO: Community Centers

Media Q & A



NEWS*NEWS***NEWS***NEWS***NEWS***NEWS***NEWS*****

ECGRA Community Asset Grants Enhance Local Community Centers

CONTACT: Kate Philips
philips@parkerphilips.com
215.850.4647 | mobile

ERIE, PA (January 17, 2020) Marking a continued investment of local share gaming funds, Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority (ECGRA) Community Assets Grant Program awarded grants today to 13 community centers from across Erie County, as part of its \$1 million Arts, Culture and Heritage project area.

State Senator Dan Laughlin, State Representative Ryan Bizzaro, County Council Member Andre Horton, and City of Erie Mayor Joe Schember joined ECGRA officials this morning at the MLK Center to award **\$137,469** to 13 local community centers from across the region.

“By focusing on impact investing, ECGRA ensures that our local share gaming revenue is going to work for families across Erie County,” **said State Senator Dan Laughlin, PA-49.** “ECGRA’s continued investment in neighborhoods is moving the needle when it comes to making Erie County the best place to live, work and play,”

“Community Centers offer safe and welcoming place for children to engage in disciplined physical activity and healthy relationships,” **said State Representative Ryan Bizzaro, PA-3.** “ECGRA’s approach to community and economic development is continually strengthening our Erie County economy, while creating neighborhoods that families want to call home.”

“ECGRA is investing in Erie County at the street level and C-suite level—its impact investing model is making a difference across Erie County,” **said Erie County Councilperson, Andre Horton,**

District-2. “When the youth of our communities have the opportunity to engage with positive discipline and strong adult role models, their potential is limitless.”

“I want to give two thank-yous,” said **City of Erie Mayor, Joe Schember**. “The first goes to the County Officials and the Erie County Gaming and Revenue Authority for making these funds available to help Erie County Community Centers; the second thank-you is to the 13 Community Centers receiving awards today. Your great work builds opportunity, restores hope, and helps transform Erie.”

“A community asset is just that; a well-maintained asset that enhances the health and vibrancy of our Erie County communities,” said **Perry Wood, Executive Director, ECGRA**. “The success and the health of neighborhoods depend on focused investment in areas that are proven to improve the economic stability of a region. Investing in Parks, Fields & Trails, as well as Community Centers will provide a new level of support for local community assets that are ready for fresh investment.”

To date, ECGRA has invested \$1.085 million in the Community Asset Grant Program, supporting capital improvements and programming which provide social, educational, cultural, health, recreation, and/or economic benefits to residents of Erie County.

Community Center Grants will support capital improvements, programming, and equipment for publicly accessible community centers. A community center is a neighborhood or community hub whose primary focus is social, educational, cultural, and/or recreational activities serving a particular segment of the community such as children or senior citizens.

A complete list of grants awarded is below.

COMMUNITY CENTERS		
Organization	Project	Amount Awarded
Academy Neighborhood Association	Academy Neighborhood: Tool Lending Library	\$3,000.00
Booker T. Washington Center	The Big Assist Program	\$15,000.00
Borough of Girard	Girard Borough Social Hall	\$5,000.00
Borough of North East	North East Senior Center 2020	\$10,000.00
Community Health Net	Vision for 30 More Years	\$15,000.00
Eagle's Nest Leadership Corporation	Eagle's Nest After-School Program	\$15,000.00
Edinboro Legion Pool, Inc.	Edinboro Legion Pool Improvement Project	
John F. Kennedy Center	- A Community Asset	\$15,000.00
	JFK Floor Care	\$2,954.00
Martin Luther King Center	Family Matter - Workforce Development and self-sustainability	\$15,000.00
Northwestern Community Youth Center	Equipment Upgrade	\$3,000.00

Urban Erie Community Development Corporation	UECDC Housing Assistance Program	\$15,000.00
YMCA of Corry	Raise the Roof Campaign	\$12,000.00
	YMCA Community Learning Center	
YMCA of Greater Erie	Teaching Kitchenette	\$11,515.00
TOTAL Awarded		\$137,469.00

###

Erie Center for Arts & Technology
Meeting Agenda
1/28/2020
3:30pm

Welcome and introductions

Brief overview of the deal structure

Discussion with attorneys from Dickinson Wright:

- Representation of the four lending entities
- Documentation
 - Intercreditor agreement
 - Subordination agreement
- Requirements prior to closing
- Timeframe
- Closing schedule – simultaneous with NM closing?

Meeting with lending entities:

- Project update from Daria
- Further clarification on deal diagram if needed
- Updates on approval process

Next steps



Parks, Fields & Trails

AGENDA

Perry Wood
Representative Ryan Bizzaro
County Councilman Andre Horton
County Councilman Carl Anderson
Nichole Bawol

Background/Emcee
Brief Remarks
Brief Remarks
Brief Remarks
Brief Remarks/Photo Op

CHECK PRESENTATION:
Individual Presentations (amounts attached)
MEMO: Parks, Fields & Trails

Media Q & A



NEWS*NEWS***NEWS***NEWS***NEWS***NEWS***NEWS*****

ECGRA Community Asset Grants Will Enhance Local Parks, Fields & Trails

CONTACT: Kate Philips
philips@parkerphilips.com
215.850.4647 | mobile

ERIE, PA (January 31, 2020) Marking a continued investment of local share gaming funds, Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority (ECGRA) Parks, Fields & Trails Grant Program awarded grants today to ten local parks, fields and trails organizations from across Erie County.

State Representative Ryan Bizzaro, County Council Members Andre Horton, Carl Anderson, Scott Rastatter, and Brian Shenk joined ECGRA officials this morning at the Humane Society of NWPA to award \$149,839 to successful applicants supporting new Parks, Fields & Trails projects.

"We are incredibly grateful for the support from ECGRA in awarding our organization funds from the Parks, Fields & Trails grant," said Humane Society of NWPA Executive Director Nicole Bawol. "Being awarded this grant helps us to achieve our vision of enhancing the Erie Humane Society's property with new updated parks and walking trails for community members and their pets to enjoy!"

"My congratulations to all the recipients receiving funding this round," said State Rep. Ryan Bizzaro PA-3. "I am excited to see several organizations striving to improve our communities, our neighborhoods and our livelihood through ECGRA's Parks, Fields & Trails grants. These community assets are a source of civic pride and heritage in Erie and will help preserve our local culture and livelihood for all to benefit and enjoy."

“One of my priorities is to focus on Erie County’s network of recreational assets and their connections to the community,” said Erie County Executive Kathy Dahlkemper. “I’m grateful for ECGRA’s commitment to investing in impactful projects that benefit Erie County.”

“Developing our communities helps make Erie County a better place to live, work, and play,” said **Erie County Council Chair, Andre Horton, District-2**. “ECGRA has a keen focus on strategic investment that supports economic and neighborhood growth. These dollars are working from the ground up, and I’m proud of the work their doing to stimulate the economy and elevate the quality of life in Erie County.”

“Community development happens successfully when the public and civic sectors work together to strengthen the social fabric of the community,” said **Perry Wood, Executive Director, ECGRA**. “This synergy generates investment and improves the quality of life for residents. You must look no further than Erie County’s beautiful parks, fields and trails to understand the value of investing in their maintenance and providing opportunity to expand them.”

To date, ECGRA has invested \$2.325 million in the Community Asset Grant Program, supporting capital improvements and programming which provide social, educational, cultural, health, recreation, and/or economic benefits to residents of Erie County.

The new **Parks, Fields & Trails Grants** will provide funding for capital projects to create, protect, or improve publicly accessible parks, athletic fields, and trails throughout Erie County. Funding can also be used to increase or improve access to recreational facilities.

A complete list of grants awarded is below.

PARKS, FIELDS, & TRAILS		
Organization	Project	Amount Awarded
Asbury Woods	Meadow Trail Restoration	\$14,918.23
Bayfront Eastside Taskforce	The Three Forts of Presque Isle and Interpretive Center	\$20,000.00
Borough of Edinboro	Thompson Park Renewal	\$25,000.00
Headwaters NRC Trust	Headwaters Park Nature Play Area	\$25,000.00
Humane Society of NWPA	Erie Humane Society's "Bark Park & Wagging Trails" Project	\$15,000.00
Lake Erie Arboretum at Frontier	2020 LEAF Pathways Project	\$14,712.37
Lake Erie Region Conservancy	West Road Access Area Trail Improvement	\$12,459.00
Platea Borough	Platea Borough Park Improvement Project	\$2,500.00

Springfield Township	Bicentennial Park Improvements	\$3,750.00
Washington Township	Inspiration Park Trail Project	\$16,500.00
TOTAL Requested		\$149,839.60

###

Evaluation of 2019 Erie Summer Jobs and More Program

Submitted to:
Georgia Del Freo
Vice President/Operations
Greater Erie Community Action Committee (GECAC)
18 West Ninth Street
Erie, PA 16501
Ph: 814/459-4581 ext. 402 - Fax: 814/456-0161
Email: gdelfreo@gecac.org - www.gecac.org

Submitted by:
KeyStone Research Corporation
3823 West 12th Street
Erie, Pennsylvania 16505-3301
Ph: 814/836-9295 - Fax: 814/836-9615
Email: info@ksrc.biz - www.ksrc.biz

December 23, 2019





February 5, 2020

Administrative Services

Daniel S. Snow, M.D. Health Center
1202 State Street
Erie, PA 16501
(814) 454-4530

Mr. Perry Wood

Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority
5340 Fryling Road, Suite 201
Erie, PA 16510

Medical Services

Daniel S. Snow, M.D. Health Center
1202 State Street
Erie, PA 16501
(814) 455-7222

Dear Mr. Wood,

Harborcreek Health Center

4401 Iroquois Avenue
Erie, PA 16511
(814) 464-0509

I would like to thank you for your very generous donation of \$15,000 (fifteen thousand dollars) on behalf of our request for *Vision for 30 More Years*. Community Health Net is a public charity recognized as tax-exempt by the IRS under Section 501(c)(3).

Girard School-Based Health Center

1135 Lake Street, Suite 2
Girard, PA 16417-1063
(814) 774-3155

Your contribution will be utilized to purchase new equipment for general and advanced vision care which will enable us to provide more advanced diagnosis, care and patient education to all patients regardless of their ability pay.

Dental Services

Dr. Nicholas Hosu Dental
Daniel S. Snow, M.D. Health Center
1202 State Street
Erie, PA 16501
(814) 452-4262

By partnering with individuals like you, we will continue to make a lasting and positive difference in the overall health of the Erie community, now and for many years to come. It is our Mission at Community Health Net, "To improve the quality of life in our region, by providing professional healthcare services, with compassion, respect and dignity to all."

Community Health Net Dental

1611 Peach Street, Suite 465
Erie, PA 16501
(814) 456-8548

We are grateful for your generosity and commitment to our organization and mission.

John E. Horan Garden Apartments

Dental Office
2120 East 10th Street
Erie, PA 16511
(814) 464-0307

Thank you and Best Regards,

Craig Ulmer
Chief Executive Officer

Pharmacy Services

Community Health Net Pharmacy
Daniel S. Snow, M.D. Health Center
1202 State Street
Erie, PA 16501
(814) 464-9520

www.community-healthnet.com

The official registration and financial information of Community Health Net may be obtained from the Pennsylvania Department of State by calling toll free, within Pennsylvania, 1 (800) 732-0999. Registration does not imply endorsement. Please also note that no goods or services were received in exchange for this donation.



Benedictine Sisters of Erie

January 14, 2020

Perry Wood
Executive Director
Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority
5340 Fryling Road, Suite #201
Erie, PA 16510

Dear Perry,

Thank you for the generous \$42,000 Anchor Building Program grant award received on 1/13/2020. Your gift will be applied to the expense of the installation of a new cast iron steam boiler at the St. Benedict Community Center, a ministry of the Benedictine Sisters of Erie.

The center aims to provide a recreational facility inclusive of peoples of all races and challenges. It provides opportunities for teambuilding and mentoring, friendship and hope to Erie's inner-city youth.

On behalf of all the sisters, my deepest thanks to you, you're staff and the Board of Directors for all you have done for the Benedictine Sisters of Erie and the Erie community.

Together we can strive to build a world of peace, justice, equality, and community where all are called *friend*.

The sisters and I hold you close in our daily prayers and give thanks for your generosity and friendship!

With gratitude,



Sister Anne Wambach, OSB
Prioress
Benedictine Sisters of Erie

*We are grateful
for your generous
support.*

Federal tax laws require us to state that no goods or services were provided in exchange for this gift.

Enclosure
cc: Tom Maggio



January 16, 2020

Mr. Perry Wood, Executive Director
Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority
5340 Fryling Road, Suite 201
Erie, PA 16510

RE: ECGRA Community Assets Grant

Dear Mr. Wood,

On behalf of the Lake Erie Arboretum at Frontier (LEAF), I want to thank the you and the Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority (ECGRA) for funding support for our grant application for the ECGRA Community Assets: Parks, Fields and Trails program. The funds will be used for path refurbishment/expansion in Frontier Park in the City of Erie. This grant will allow LEAF to expand to new areas of the park as well as improve accessibility of the gravel paths to many groups who find it difficult to utilize because of their eroded and deteriorated condition.

We appreciate ECGRA's support for this project which will improve accessibility to members of our community and for all future visitors of the park and LEAF.

Sincerely,

Vernon L. Peterson
Executive Director
Lake Erie Arboretum at Frontier

Check Date: 1/7/2020

Check Amount: \$14,712.37



January 21, 2020

ECGRA
Perry Wood
5340 Fryling Rd Ste 201
Erie, PA 16510-4672

Dear Perry,



The weather has changed, and our residents are truly *"Walkin' in a Winter Wonderland"*. A special thank you is in order for your gift of **\$80,000.00** for the Anchor Building grant. Our homeless women and children will certainly have warm heads and hearts this holiday season.

As you may be aware, we are beginning to work on the former Holy Rosary School building to expand our services and help many more families. Keep an eye on our Facebook page as this vital project moves forward!

We are truly grateful to you for your support. Together we can do many great things for families right here in Erie. On behalf of the women, children and staff of the Mercy Center – Thank You!

We hope you had a joyous holiday season and will experience God's blessings as we begin a brand-new year.

Kindly,

Jennie

Jennie Hagerty
Executive Director



In accordance with section 170(f)(8) of the Internal Revenue Code, I certify that Mercy Center for Women is a 501(c)3 charitable organization to which contributions are tax deductible. Since no goods or services were given in exchange for your gift, the entire amount is tax deductible. This letter serves as documentation of your gift and is necessary for your income tax records.

*Dear Perry,
This awarded grant is changing lives as the Mercy Center for Women moves forward into permanent housing. We are grateful to you and your team for believing in our mission to serve homeless women and children in the community. Thank you for your generosity and being the voice of support to those we serve.*



February 10, 2020

Dr. Perry Wood
Executive Director
Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority
5340 Fryling Road, Suite 201
Erie, PA 16510

Dear Dr. Wood:

I am writing to thank you and the Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority Board of Directors for ECGRA's generous support of Our West Bayfront's 404-06 West 8th Street Rehabilitation Project through your Anchor Buildings grant program. We received the second and final installment of the grant funds for this project on February 4, 2020.

Thanks to ECGRA's significant support for this project, we have made considerable progress with this project, and leveraged additional funds to broaden its reach. The first phase of renovation of the historic building at 404-06 West 8th St has been progressing smoothly since November 2019 and will finish later this spring. We are seeking funding from other sources to complete the rehabilitation of this building.

Thanks to another major grant from ECGRA through the Mission Main Streets program, we are broadening this initiative to include the revitalization of the West 8th Street Commercial Corridor. The "Re-Store West 8th Street" initiative supports neighborhood commercial activity along West 8th Street, and work is already underway with renovations at several properties. We are excited to see renewed private-sector interest in the corridor with the recent sale of two important properties in this district.

If you or the board is interested in a tour of any of the projects we have been able to undertake with ECGRA's support, I am happy to arrange one. On behalf of the thousands of residents who call the West Bayfront home, we are grateful for your leadership and creative vision which is transforming Erie block by block.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Anna Frantz', is located below the 'Respectfully,' text.

Anna Frantz
Executive Director

cc: Tom Maggio



**FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT
FOR HEALTHY LIVING
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY**

December 31, 2019

**Perry Wood, Executive Director
ECGRA
5340 Fryling Road, Suite 201
Erie, PA 16510**

Dear Perry, Tom and Board of Directors:

On behalf of the members, volunteers, and staff of the YMCA of Corry, I want to thank you for the generous gift of \$12,000 from ECGRA for the Raise the Roof Capital Campaign. We currently are closing in on \$100,000 on hand. The campaign includes the roof replacement, maintenance reserve, and annual support. Your grant will be applied as directed towards the purchase of 2 AC units for the fitness center. The funds will be placed in the maintenance reserve account and withdrawn upon purchase of the units.

Once again, thank you for the generous gift. It truly means so much too so many!

**Steve Redrup, CEO
YMCA of Corry**

**YMCA OF CORRY
906 North Center Street
P 814 664 7757 F 814 665 6833**

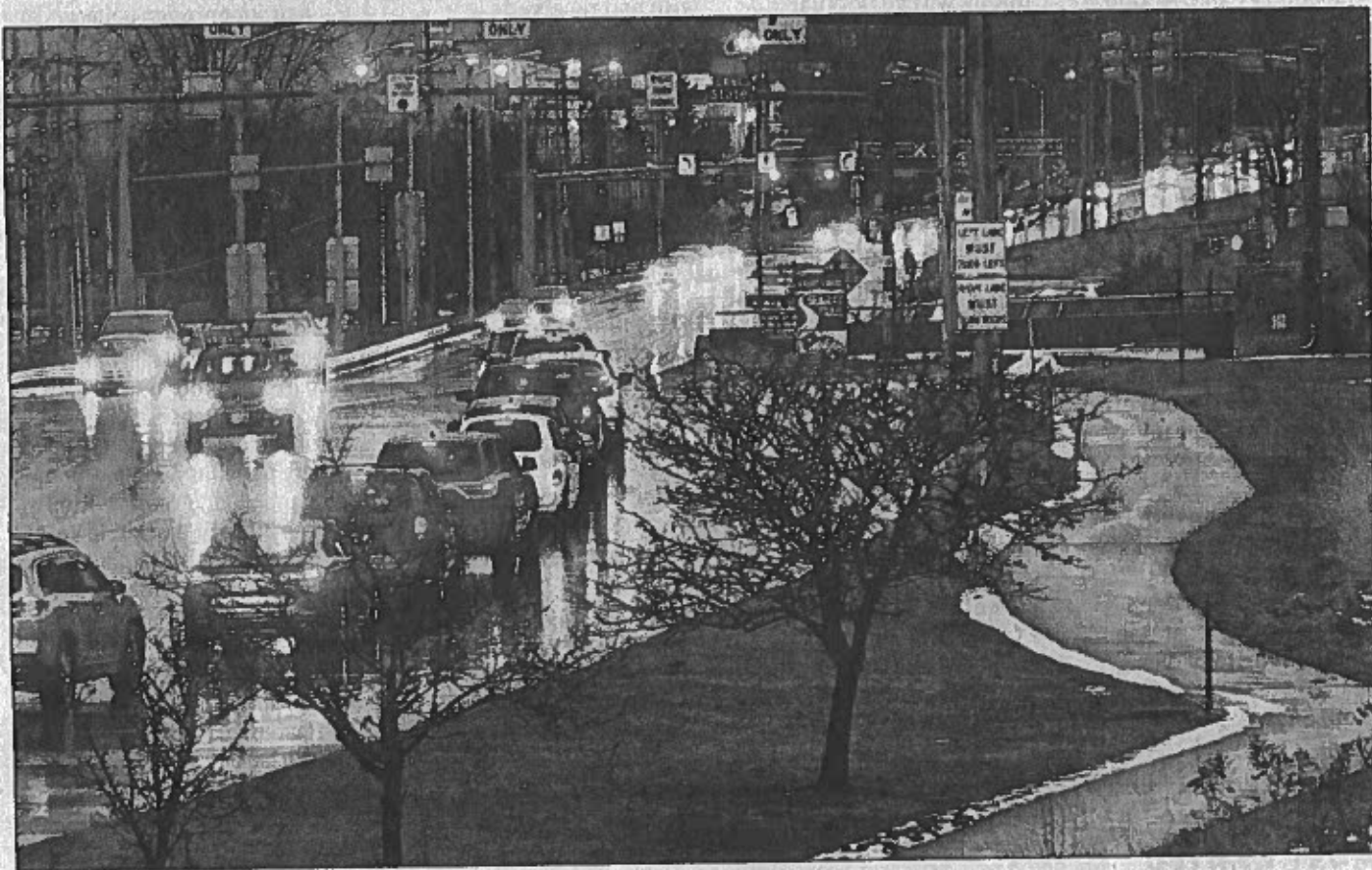
Erie Times-News

Thursday, January 30, 2020

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Designing connections



Evening traffic fills the Bayfront Parkway on Friday, looking east, near the intersection with State Street in Erie. On Thursday evening, students and urban designers will present their ideas on how to define and connect existing walkways and to incorporate "iconic" pedestrian bridges over the parkway. [GREG WOHLFORD/ERIE TIMES-NEWS]

Urban designers will present new ideas to reconnect, define Erie's bayfront, downtown

By Valerie Myers
Vmyers@timesnews.com

A new plan to connect Erie's downtown and bayfront and to dress up public areas on both sides of the Bayfront Parkway will be presented to the public at the Jefferson Educational Society on Thursday

Want to know more?

What: "Reconnecting the Bayfront" program
Where: Jefferson Educational Society, 3207 State St.
When: Thursday, 7 p.m.
Admission: Free
To register: Visit www.jeserie.org or call 459-8000
To read the design report: Visit www.jeserie.org/reports

evening.

The "Reconnecting the Bayfront" plan is by

students from Kent State University's College of Architecture and Environmental Design and professional designers from the university's Cleveland Urban Design Collaborative. The plan proposes ways to define and connect existing walkways and incorporate "iconic" pedestrian bridges over the parkway.

The study also proposes redesigning Dobbins Landing as a park-like gathering space with grass, trees and

maybe a piazza with sculpture or fountain.

"We really responded to the fact that the community feels such a compelling need to get people to the waterfront, but once they're there, what happens? What is the gathering place? There's Liberty Park on the west side, but Dobbins Landing seems like an obvious place to bring people, and with a few adjustments,

See DESIGN, A5

DESIGN

From Page A1

"You could really highlight that," said Kristen Zeiber, project manager and urban designer with Cleveland Urban Design Collaborative.

Roundabouts proposed by the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation to ease traffic congestion at Sassafras and Holland streets could be designed as miniature parks inside the traffic circles, according to designers.

Public art, consistent lighting and plantings could help define existing walkways and visually connect the waterfront and downtown, designers said.

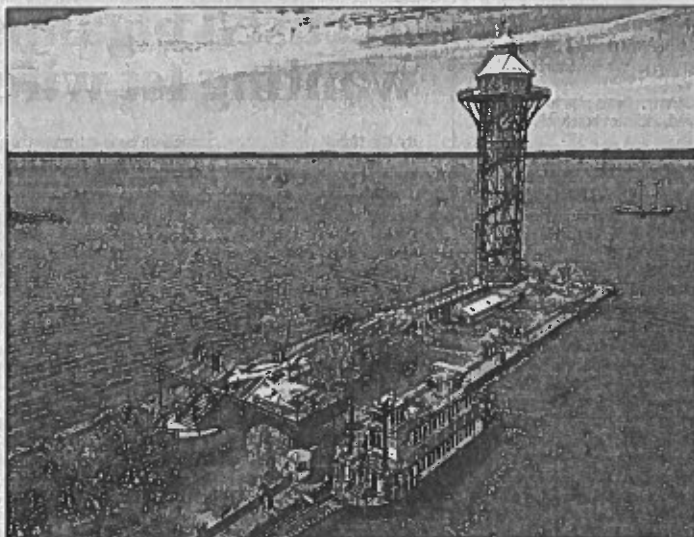
"We were really surprised by just how much public access there is along the bayfront, including the Bayfront Promenade and bikeway path," Zeiber said.

"One conclusion that we came to is that this is not all about lack of public access. It's also about a lack of public perception of what's already along the bayfront and coming up with ways to make it feel more public, more connected, more exciting and navigable."

Gaps in the walkways should be addressed by property owners and PennDOT, designers said.

"There are some pieces of the network missing, including at UPMC Hamot where the walkway on the south side of the parkway is completely cut off because of the loading dock there," Zeiber said.

The "Reconnecting the Bayfront" plan also proposes new landscaping, lighting and signs to improve



One proposal by student designers at Kent State University's College of Architecture and Environmental Design and professional designers at the university's Cleveland Urban Design Collaborative is creating a park at Dobbins Landing and the Bicentennial Tower. (CONTRIBUTED)

the "fairly unwelcoming" streetscape along State Street south of the Bayfront Parkway.

The Kent State/CUDC proposals were first presented to the public at the end of an intensive three-day work session in Erie in October. Professional and student designers met with representatives of bayfront neighborhood groups, the Erie Downtown Partnership, Erie County Public Library, Erie Water Works, city and county planning departments, PennDOT and other organizations to hear concerns and suggestions and design possible solutions.

"Every year we take students out into the real world and into communities with urban design challenges," Zeiber said. "We hear about

the issues and in really short, intense design sessions go through options to address them and then get feedback from the people we're working with.

"It allows the students to interface with something that's not just theoretical," she said.

The team focused on projects that could be done no matter how the Bayfront Parkway is redesigned.

The Pennsylvania Department of Transportation presented its leading proposals to improve the parkway in August. The proposals include construction of the two roundabouts, lowering the parkway at State Street and moving a stretch of CSX holding track near State Street.

It also proposes that

"iconic" pedestrian bridges be built over the reconstructed highway.

PennDOT will present final recommendations for the project this year.

The "Reconnecting the Bayfront" proposals don't reinvent that wheel or other downtown and bayfront plans, Zeiber said.

"We didn't want to throw away any existing work that's been done," Zeiber said. "A lot of time, thought and money — between what the (Erie-Western Pennsylvania) Port Authority, Erie Refocused, Erie Downtown, PennDOT and others have done — already have gone into this."

The new proposals are exciting, said Angela Beaumont, director of operations for the Jefferson Educational

Society, which solicited and sponsored the "Reconnecting the Bayfront" study.

"We loved its ideas. We were blown away. (Designers) grasped the challenges and showed us possibilities that we hadn't thought of," Beaumont said.

The new proposals fill a gap in other planning, Michael Fuhrman said. Fuhrman is a writer, lecturer and research consultant formerly involved in Destination Erie regional planning. With retired Erie Art Museum Director John Vanco, Fuhrman approached the Jefferson Educational Society about soliciting and sponsoring the Kent State/CUDC study.

The study was funded by identical \$5,000 grants from the Erie Community Foundation and Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority.

"This plan seems to be a sort of missing piece of the puzzle in a sense," Fuhrman said. "The PennDOT plan, for instance, is through a particular lens, and that is safety and dealing with congestion. And that's important."

"What CUDC put together is a vision through a different lens, one that's also concerned about congestion and safety but beyond that taps into how to connect the amenities on the waterfront with the urban core and more specifically with the east and west neighborhoods," Fuhrman said.

"It looks at what we need to do to create that spark of vitality that makes people consider visiting or living downtown. That's something that some of the other plans don't address and that will be huge in our success in terms of revitalization," he said.

Valerie Myers can be reached at 878-1913 or by email.

Friday, January 31, 2020

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Former Erie County Councilman Jay Breneman, left, and Bob Hand, president of the Academy Neighborhood Association, stand in the vacant lot at 329 E. 28th St. where they plan to put a shipping container to store the inventory of the tool lending library they started in 2017. (JACK HANRAHAN/ERIE TIMES-NEWS)

TOOL TIME

New home
coming for
tool lending
library

By Ron Leonardi
rleonardi@timesnews.com

A vacant lot at 329 E. 28th St. is set to be transformed into Erie's tool lending library headquarters.

Academy Neighborhood Association officials said a recent \$3,000 Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority grant will allow the organization to expand the outreach of its popular tool lending library to further encourage home repairs among more city residents.

The neighborhood association purchased the East

28th Street lot in December from the city for \$250 in a repository sale. The association established its tool lending library in 2017 with fewer than 100 tools. Its inventory now totals more than 3,000 and all Erie residents are invited to use the library.

"This will give us a permanent spot going forward for the tool lending library to function and thrive," said Bob Hand, president of the Academy Neighborhood Association.

See TOOLS, A5



Rakes, shovels, brooms and other tools in the Academy Neighborhood Association's tool lending library are being stored temporarily in a basement room at the Jefferson Educational Society. (GREG WOHLFORD/ERIE TIMES-NEWS)

TOOLS

From Page A1

The program allows residents to borrow donated tools and equipment for free for home-repair projects or seasonal work.

Three years ago, members of the Academy Neighborhood gathered some of their own tools and launched the program at the Academy Neighborhood Center, 3025 French St.

"Additionally, we're here on East 28th Street, which is where Erie Re-focused tells us to start," Hand, 50, said. "It's also taking an empty lot, and who knows how much longer it would sit here for if we didn't step in and do something with it. At the very least, we're going to mow it and take care of it. We're going to have a nice-looking building set back a little ways."

Neighborhood association officials plan to place a shipping container measuring 8 feet by 40 feet on the 5,600-square-foot lot to permanently store the tool lending library's expanding inventory.

Once the shipment container is placed on the lot, neighborhood association staff will add siding, and the lot will feature a white picket fence, community garden, flower boxes and solar-powered security lights.

A shipping container was chosen because it is strong, durable, weather-proof and affordable.

Hand said he is waiting on the lot's sale to be finalized. He anticipates the relocated tool library will open in mid-summer.

Meanwhile, the tool lending library is temporarily closed, and its tool inventory is in storage in the basement of the Jefferson Educational Society, 3207 State St.

There are no plans to place any additional structures on the East 28th Street lot in addition to the shipping container, Hand said.

"People can pull up and park," he said. "We want to make sure we're accessible and make it easy for anybody to get back there."

Once the tool lending library re-launches, tools will be distributed on Saturdays and possibly on another day, Hand said.

During the past three years, tools have been distributed to city residents on Saturdays at the Academy Neighborhood Center. Former Erie County

Councilman Jay Breneman brought the concept of a tool lending library to Hand after working on a citizens' blight manual as part of the Jefferson Educational Society's Civic Leadership Academy in 2016.

"I was in my basement and garage clearing through all the extra tools I had from two homes I remodeled, and my wife was right," Breneman, 37, said. "I had all these extra tools I only used once. I didn't want to get rid of them, so I thought why don't I put my money where my mouth is and start this tool library."

Breneman doesn't live in the Academy Neighborhood, but he has family members who do and he spends a lot of time there. His children also go to school there.

The Academy Neighborhood covers an area bound by State Street to the west and Parade Street and Old French Road to the east, and by East 26th and 38th streets to the north and south.

"We set it up and said, 'Let's just play this by ear,'" Breneman said. "It's just grown steadily and it's become a resource for the neighborhood. I don't turn anybody away."

Hand said the tool lending library was established to encourage residents to tackle home repairs and to assist them financially so they don't have to purchase tools they might only need to use once or twice.

"Maybe somebody wants to do a job but can't afford to go buy three or four one-time-use tools and have them sitting around," Hand said. "Or maybe there is somebody who may very well can afford it but is choosing not to and wants to spend their money in some other way, but still wants to get the work done to improve their home in Erie."

An expanding tool inventory has been sustained by three years of continual tool donations.

"I think people want to part with stuff from their house, but they want to know that it is going somewhere where it will be used," Hand said. "We have received tools that were somebody's father's tools, family tools that have been in a family for generations and they want them to go somewhere useful."

Most of the tool inventory's largest donations have come in the past year, Breneman said.

"It came to the point where I had to tell people to hold off on donating tools because I was running

out of ways to process them," Breneman said. "I've learned how to store things and organize them. I've learned about tools I didn't know existed, and I've learned how to identify antique tools."

The tool library works mainly on trust.

"We trust everybody," Hand said. "Everybody has brought everything back."

No deposit is required, but people who borrow tools must provide their name, address and have their photo taken with whatever implement they are borrowing.

Hand believes the new east Erie location, once it becomes operational, will expand the neighborhood association's ability to distribute tools to more residents across the city.

"I think having this permanent location, knowing where it is, being able to put it on social media every day, having it look nice and being an asset to the neighborhood will help," Hand said. "Now you're going to get people in and out all the time looking for something, looking for a drain snake that they don't want to go buy — things that you use once. I think that's going to be the biggest asset."

People had been donating building supplies such as tile, wood, piping, plumbing and electrical items, but it became too much of a burden space-wise and material-wise, and "not enough supplies were going out as was coming in," Breneman said.

Breneman decided to restrict the library inventory to tools and other consumable supplies such as tape, nail screws, cabinet hinges, doorknobs, and other essentials.

"Our goal is to make this program part of the neighborhood where people just naturally know that this is the place you go if you need to fix something around your house," Breneman said. "We want it to become a place for people to come and learn about what tools are available and how to repair their home."

"We plan to have classes here by handy people and experts on how to do basic repair work, pet projects and gardening," he said. "Whatever we do here, we want to make sure it's complementary to the neighborhood."

Ron Leonardi can be reached at 870-1680 or by email. Follow him on Twitter at [www.Twitter.com/ETNLeonardi](https://twitter.com/ETNLeonardi).

Local communities get park grants

By Rick Chemlicky, editor,
Edinboro/McKean and
Sandy Rhodes, editor, FLAG area

More than \$45,000 has been awarded to area communities to use to improve parks, thanks to a grant from the Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority.

The money awarded in this round is part of a \$1 million funding pool that continues to support the current Community Assets grant program, which includes two additional project areas: Arts and Culture plus Heritage and Community Centers.

The Parks, Fields & Trails Grants pro-

vide funding for capital projects to create, protect, or improve publicly accessible parks, athletic fields, and trails throughout Erie County. Funding can also be used to increase or improve access to recreational facilities, according to information provided by ECGRA.

Edinboro Borough, Washington Township, Platea Borough and Springfield Township all received money for their respective parks.

Edinboro Borough will receive \$25,000 for Thompson Park.

Borough Manager Kevin Oppl said

See Parks, P. 2



Photo by Sandy Rhodes

Girard Borough Manager Rob Stubenbort holds up some material that will be used to renovate the meeting room for Council chambers during a meeting Jan. 20. See story on Page B8.

rs to the Edit
aries

Parks

, B2, B3
, B6, B7

Continued from Page 1

these improvements are necessary to make the park safe for children.

"Thompson Park used to have a play area, but it was wood and was removed when it was deemed unsafe," Oppl said. "The play area will be small, since there is not a lot of room to the east of the courts, but should have swings, a slide and some other activities for the kids."

Oppl added the courts will be renovated and lighted with Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) money.

"The CDBG money will be used to install a play area next to the basketball courts in Thompson Park downtown," Oppl said. "The courts are scheduled to be renovated this summer as well. The courts will be resurfaced and lighted installed."

Inspiration Park Trail Project in Washington Township will receive \$16,500 that is earmarked for picnic areas.

"Park money is earmarked for outfitting five picnic areas with a table, fire ring, grill and trash can. A small pavilion will be erected at the top of the hill near the new parking area, Washington Township Manager David Anthony said. "In addition, we will be establishing trails using either millings or wood chips for walking and hiking in the nicer months and cross-country skiing in the winter.

"It is wonderful to have this huge blank slate that we can mold into an awesome treasure for the community. The 70 acres is gaining in popularity almost daily. A beau-

tiful location that will be transformed with this latest grant from ECGRA."

Some landscaping work is on tap for Bicentennial Park in Springfield Township.

Township Secretary Meredith Borstorff said the \$3,750 for the township will go toward landscaping with the addition of trees and flowers in the park.

In Platea Borough, \$2,500 will help keep toddlers busy while visiting Platea Borough Park.

"We are getting new pieces of equipment for toddlers," Secretary Lyne Daniels said, explaining that there will be a bouncy ride where kids can ride on animals.

The borough will also use the money for wood chips that will help prevent weed growth.

Humane Society, Three Forts project among grant recipients

ECGRA awards nearly \$150,000 to 10 agencies for parks, fields, trails

By Matthew Rink
Erie Times-News

The Humane Society of Northwest Pennsylvania will continue to grow at its Zimmerman Road home that it has occupied since 2004.

Plans call for the expansion of the Humane Society's "Bark Park" and "Wagging Trails." On Friday, the Humane Society received \$15,000 from the Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority for the project. It was one of 10 agencies to receive a total of \$149,840 from ECGRA's Community Asset Grant Program for parks, fields and trails.

Community members and their pets will have access to the Bark Park and Wagging Trails.

"When I came on board almost five years ago, the board of directors and I started discussing how we could enhance our campus and utilizing it not only for our shelter pets, but for all of our community members to benefit from," Executive Director Nicole Bawol said Friday morning at the Humane Society during a ceremony at which the ECGRA grants were announced.

In 2016, the Humane Society developed a multi-phase plan to remake its campus. The first phase involves enhancing its existing dog park and creating walking trails, Bawol said.

"Grant funding for organizations like ours and projects like this are imperative," she said.

Another project funded Friday was a proposal to replicate three Presque Isle forts — French, British and American versions — on their original east Erie locations. The Bayfront Eastside Task Force formed a limited liability company last year to raise funds and apply for grants for a study that will help determine if the project is feasible.

Freelance writer and researcher Michael Fuhrman and Erie County Councilman Carl Anderson, whose occupation involves historical research, advanced the idea following a study by the Jefferson Education Society.

ECGRA awarded B.E.S.T. \$20,000.

"The Forts and Presque Isle represent our heritage, our culture, recreation and economic development," Anderson said, "so there's no better project that we could be talking about when we talk about trying to move our community forward, looking to our past and celebrating our heritage."

Anderson appeared with four other members of Erie County Council: chairman Andre Horton, Brian Shank, Mary Rennie and Scott Rastetter. Also on hand was state Rep. Ryan Bizzarro, D-3rd Dist.

ECGRA grants require a dollar-for-dollar match from recipients, which must be either nonprofits or municipalities.

The other eight recipients of ECGRA's Community Asset Grants for parks, fields and trails Friday were:

- Asbury Woods, \$14,918, Meadow Trail restoration
- Borough of Edinboro, \$25,000, Thompson Park renewal
- Headwaters NRC Trust, \$25,000, Headwaters Park nature play area
- Lake Erie Arboretum at Frontier, \$14,712, 2020 LEAF Pathways project
- Lake Erie Region Conservancy, \$12,459, West Road Access Area trail improvement
- Platea Borough, \$2,500, Platea Borough park improvement project
- Springfield Township, \$3,750, Bicentennial Park improvements
- Washington Township, \$16,500, Inspiration Park trail project

Matthew Rink can be reached at 870-1884 or by email. Follow him on Twitter at www.Twitter.com/ETNrink

Renaissance Block Committee readies application for funding

BY REBEKAH WALLACE
rebekah@thecorryjournal.com

Impact Corry and a six-member Renaissance Block Committee are working to prepare an application for \$100,000 in funding from the Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority (ECGRA). If awarded, Impact Corry says the funds will be part of a 2020 Renaissance Block Program Grant (RBPG) for various home improvement and beautification projects.

Applications to receive this grant money are due on March 31 and recipients will be announced on April 16.

According to Impact Corry, the program is a dollar-for-dollar matching grant that allows for up to but no more than \$5,000 to be awarded per address, regardless of the size of project being proposed.

Impact Corry Community Development Director Chuck Gray said this means that each homeowner would be responsible for putting up the first \$5,000 toward completing a project, and the money being sought by the committee would be used to double that amount.

This could potentially add up to a total of \$10,000 per home, if Corry is awarded the grant money. If a homeowner's proposed project costs more than this, the homeowner would be

responsible to make up the remainder.

Gray said the work being done on the Renaissance grant application is bringing the Corry community closer together.

"The opportunity to apply for these funds has already created connections between neighbors and neighborhoods as residents work together to begin the application process," Gray said.

On Dec. 20, 2019, Impact Corry received a round of preliminary applications, which included information about projects homeowners in four eligible Corry neighborhoods were hoping to have done.

The four designated neighborhoods are called School House Block, Park Place, Bear Creek and Hiram's Haunt. Together, they stretch as far south as West Washington Street, east to Wayne Street, north to Bond Street (including the south side of East Irving Street between Wright Street and Wayne Street) and west to Mead Avenue.

Impact Corry said 54 homeowners from Schoolhouse Block submitted information by the Dec. 20 deadline, and based on these applications, it was chosen as the first neighborhood to be worked on should the grant money

See Block, P.2

Block

(Continued from front page)

Schoolhouse Block includes sections of Wayne, Wright, North Center, East Irving, Bond, East Congress, East Frederick and Gould streets.

Finalized and updated applications from the same 54 Schoolhouse Block homeowners who first submitted estimates were due Jan. 31.

The newer applications were completed with the help of contractors and after homeowners doing DIY projects were able to add up anticipated costs for materials, Gray said.

"We don't know how many of these homes will meet this next cut off," she said.

Gray also said she is impressed by the amount of interest in this program so far.

"We have been so enthused by the widespread commitment to and interest in the Renaissance

Block Program," Gray said. Proposed improvements to the other three neighborhoods will take place if and when the funding becomes available, Gray said. She noted that in two years a new application can be submitted for an additional \$100,000.

"We have built in up to two years to get funded for each neighborhood before moving onto the next," Gray said. "We are looking for additional funding sources to match the renaissance block monies. I am already beginning to apply two other funding sources this year."

Projected matching amounts for the other neighborhoods are as follows: Park Place, \$65,875; Bear Creek, \$50,525; and Hiram's Haunt, \$19,900. These numbers are based on estimates submitted by homeowners on or before Dec. 20.

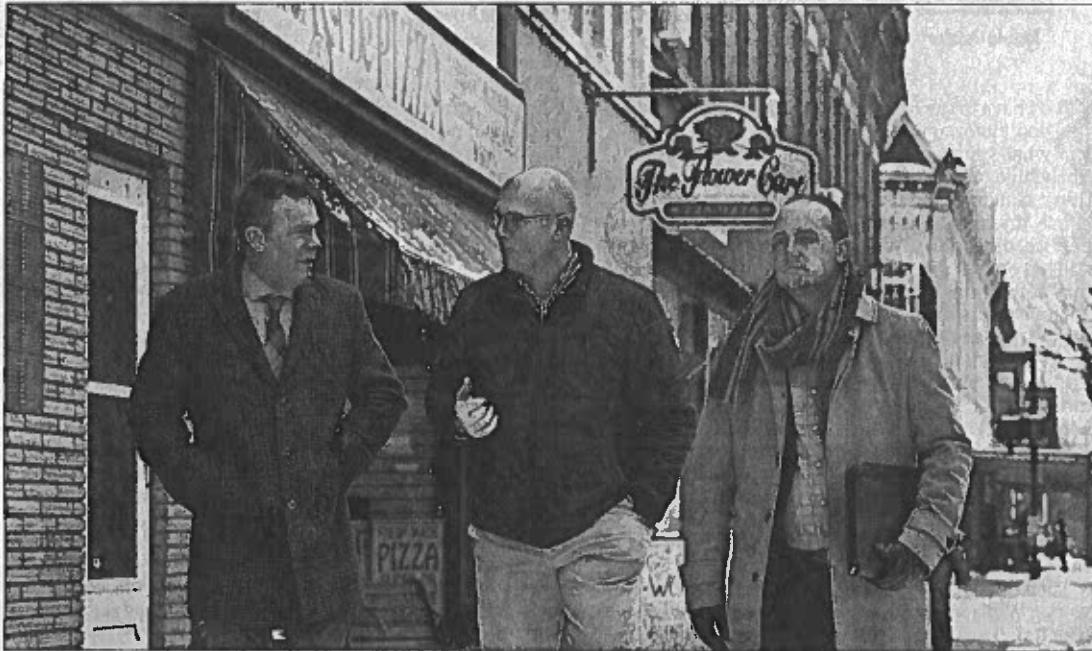
Erie Times-News

Friday, February 7, 2020

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'Sustain North East'



From left, Pennsylvania State Senator Dan Laughlin, North East Borough Manager Patrick Gehrlein and Perry Wood, executive director of the Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority, tour downtown North East on Thursday to discuss future economic possibilities related to Mercyhurst North East being put up for sale. [GREG WOHLFORD PHOTOS/ERIE TIMES-NEWS]

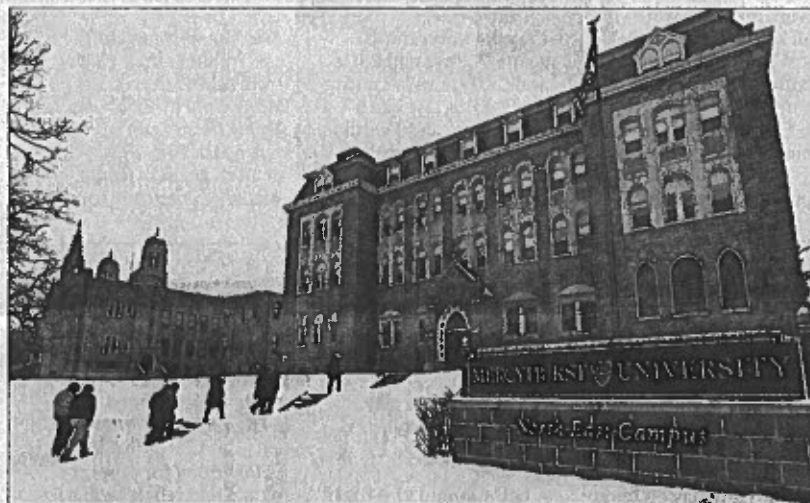
Plan would pump millions into downtown buildings, streetscapes

By Matthew Rink
mrink@timesnews.com

NORTH EAST — A multi-million initiative unveiled by civic leaders Thursday aims to reinvent and renovate historic downtown buildings, attract viable residential and commercial tenants and improve streetscapes.

The Sustain North East Initiative also strives to assist Mercyhurst University in marketing and preserving the historic buildings, including the chapel, on its North East campus, pinpoint appropriate future uses of the campus and find a new long-term property owner.

Mercyhurst University has requested \$25 million in state Revitalization Assistance Capital Program



After a tour of downtown North East, local business, political and civic leaders visit Mercyhurst North East to discuss future economic possibilities related to the pending sale of the campus.

funds for the North East campus. And the borough has requested \$10 million in RACP funds for the Sustain North East plan. The

requests are part of Senate Bill 905, a capital project funding authorization bill that remains in committee, but could be put to a

vote this spring.

Borough Manager Patrick Gehrlein and Charlene

See PLAN, A4

PLAN

From Page A1

Kerr, chair of Downtown North East Inc., said facade improvements have benefited some downtown businesses. But those are merely cosmetic, they said. Many of the same buildings along Main and Lake streets require substantial structural upgrades.

"And the money isn't there in the private sector to do it," Kerr said, noting that property owners would receive little to no return on their investment.

"We don't want to just gloss over those problems and say, 'Well, there's a new coat of paint,'" Gehrlein said.

The borough of North East, the North East Area Chamber of Commerce, Downtown North East Inc., a non-profit that works on economic development and beautification projects, and other entities are attempting to raise \$1.2 million locally for the Sustain North East plan. The Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority has already approved a \$400,000 loan for the local fundraising efforts.

"We have the opportunity with the Mercyhurst North East campus closing to do something exciting and create some synergy with downtown," said Perry Wood, executive director of the Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority.

On Thursday, North East Area Chamber of Commerce Director Holly Ferruggia, North East Township Planning Commission Chairman Vernon Frye, Wood, Kerr and Gehrlein accompanied state Sen. Dan Laughlin, R-49th Dist., on a tour of downtown and the Mercyhurst North East campus.

"The intentional investment you're trying

to make here is really important," Laughlin said. "You're not just doing this willy-nilly."

'A huge blow'

Though structural issues of historic downtown buildings have needed to be addressed for several years, the borough was confronted with an even more daunting challenge in 2019 when Mercyhurst University announced it would move all but one of its associate degree and certificate programs from North East to its main campus in Erie.

Mercyhurst plans to move those programs from the North East campus, which includes the former St. Mary's Seminary and multiple student apartment complexes, after the spring 2021 semester.

The campus, which straddles the borough of North East and North East Township, is currently on the market.

"It had to be a huge blow to a small community like this," Laughlin told the group Thursday morning.

Caleb Pifer, vice president of external relations for Mercyhurst, said a comprehensive marketing plan for the campus is being developed.

"Our administration is really hoping that there will be an end result that's good for everybody," he said.

Debbie Morton, a spokeswoman for Mercyhurst, said the RACP funding, if awarded, would not be used by the university.

"We are not seeking these funds for our use," Morton said, "but to make them available for whomever would acquire the property in the future and seek to develop it for the economic revitalization of the region."

Sustain plan specifics

The Sustain North

East Initiative would invest an estimated \$5 million into new sidewalks, curbs and gutters, street lights, trees and other plantings, security cameras and Wi-Fi. The improvements would affect east and west Main Street and Lake Street (Route 89) from the underpass south of downtown to Mercyhurst North East.

It also would dedicate \$3 million into deteriorating historic buildings to bring them up to code and to improve access to mostly vacant second-story spaces. Those spaces could be turned into professional offices or loft apartments.

Some of the buildings, Kerr said, have sagging roofs and poor foundations or have mold issues.

Jenny Sholtis, 32, owns the building at the southwest corner of East Main and Vine streets with a group of partners known collectively as KJAM Properties.

The building, constructed in 1892, has two commercial units, including one occupied by Lake Country Bike, and two apartments. It also has a spacious ballroom with hardwood floors.

Sholtis called the building "a long-term investment," but one that could be aided by the collaborative efforts of local officials.

"We just want to get good tenants in for the community and keep those tenants long-term," Sholtis said. "We want people to come to the community, stay in the community. Especially upstairs, it would be great to have an event space for downtown that everyone could utilize."

Gehrlein said smaller communities too often "wait for what will happen next" instead of being proactive. That shouldn't be the case for North East, he said.

"So much of our downtown community

is built around tourism, he said. "Being right on the grape trail and the wine trail, we want to capitalize on that."

Matthew Rink can be reached at 870-1884 or by email. Follow him on Twitter at [www.Twitter.com/ETNRink](https://twitter.com/ETNRink).

VIEWPOINT

OUR VIEW

North East charts path to future

The issue: Sustain North East initiative

Our view: Proactive collaboration promising

As the 2021 closure of the Mercyhurst University North East campus draws near, the North East community stands at a pivotal crossroads.

We don't have to look far to see what can happen when the economic engines that sustain small town life pack up and leave.

Recovery is not a given. In fact, it is the exception. And it succeeds usually only when community stakeholders rally with speed, craft a vision and pursue it together, rather than endure loss passively.

Franklin, to Erie's south, is one such place that sprang into action decades ago as the changing global economy siphoned away manufacturing jobs. It went after funding to finesse its Victorian main street with attractive facades and lighting. It packed a calendar full of events, including the nationally recognized Appiefest and the just-ended Franklin on Ice, that are hosted in the graceful parks that flank the soaring twin-towered Italianate Venango County courthouse. Marquee festivals combined with a humming downtown boasting good restaurants, boutiques, a microbrewery, a distillery and a winery enhance life for residents and act as a draw for visitors from afar.

The price of inaction or half measures can be seen in contrast in suffering downtowns throughout this region and beyond. It's the rotting facades, empty storefronts and quiet calendars that suggest surrender.

It is welcome to see North East spurn the wait-and-see approach and instead embrace Mercyhurst's departure as an opportunity to restore and refashion its downtown to new purpose.

As reporter Matthew Rink detailed, leaders are pursuing an ambitious multi-pronged, multi-million dollar initiative they have dubbed Sustain North East.

Mercyhurst has requested \$25 million in state Revitalization Assistance Capital Program funding to help whomsoever acquires the campus develop it.

In conjunction with that, the Sustain North East initiative plans to help market the campus and preserve its historic buildings, including the chapel. It will also seek \$10 million in RACP funds to overhaul the downtown, restoring historic buildings from the foundation up, improving streetscapes and facades, and installing security cameras and Wi-Fi.

Local capital also will be tapped. The borough, the North East Chamber of Commerce, Downtown North East Inc. and others are looking to raise \$1.2 million with the help of a \$400,000 Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority fundraising loan.

North East, like Franklin, enjoys an attractive layout and handsome historic architecture. And it has an established tourist trade visitors who ply the grape and wine trails, as Borough Manager Patrick Gehrlin noted.

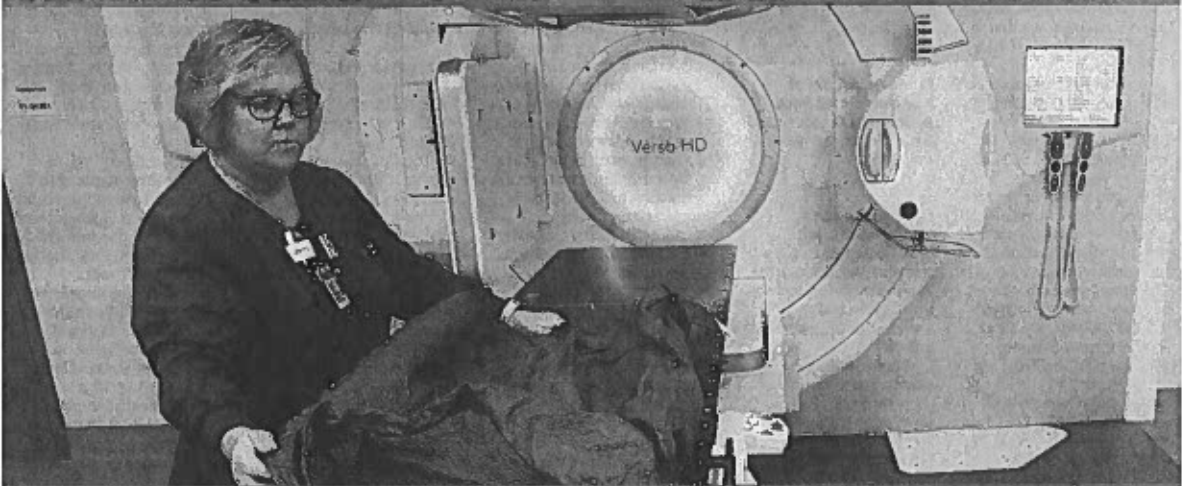
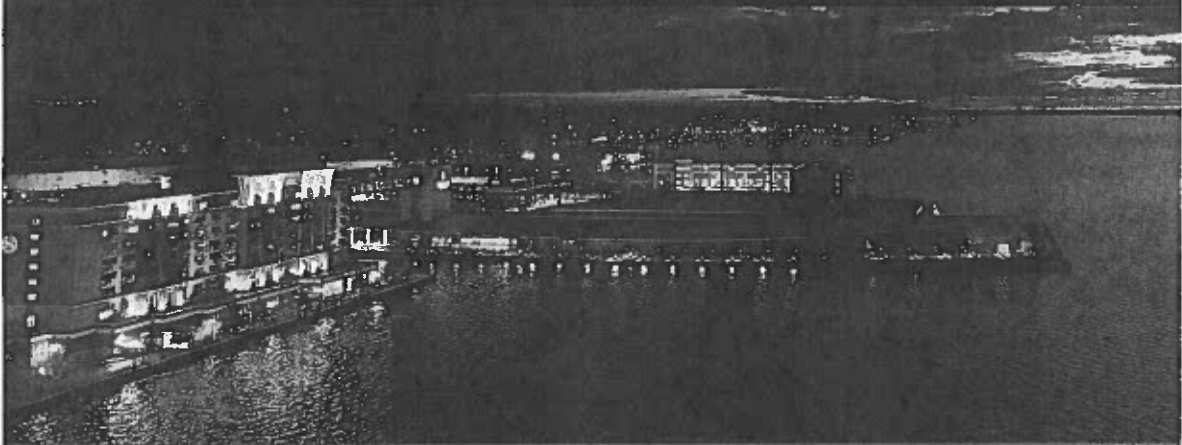
The cross-sector, forward-looking activism in North East mirrors efforts underway in Erie and smaller communities like Corry and Union City.

It's smart. It's intentional. And really, given the price of inaction, the only way forward.

ERIE 2020

ERIE THROUGH FRESH EYES

ANNUAL ECONOMIC REPORT FOR THE REGION • SUNDAY, FEB. 16, 2020 • SECTION K



ERIE GROUPS HELP FUND REVITALIZATION

By Matthew Rink
Erie Times-News

For the Erie Community Foundation, there was no better way to start the year than with a string of 20s to end 2019.

"We had what we call a 20, 20, 20, 20 year," President Mike Batchelor said of 2019. "It was pretty amazing. We had new gifts of more than \$20 million. We had grants of more than \$20 million. Our assets went up by more than \$20 million and we created more than 20 new endowment funds. So going into 2020, that makes us optimistic that we can be helpful."

Another big achievement: The Erie Community Foundation's annual Erie Gives campaign, a 12-hour online fundraiser that benefits local nonprofits of all sizes and missions, set another record in 2019, raising \$5.53 million from 8,958 donors for 391 participating nonprofits.

In his 30 years on the job, Batchelor has never felt so excited about the foundation and the direction of the city and county.

"I've frankly never been more optimistic about our community's future," Batchelor said.

This year, the Erie Community Foundation will continue to advance new initiatives it unveiled in recent years.

Those initiatives fall into three categories:

First, it has doubled its small grant gift-making pool from \$500,000 to \$1 million.

Second, it's dedicating \$15 million to three to five transformational grants. The first was announced in September — a \$6 million donation to a \$26 million project to expand the Magee Womens Research Institute in Pittsburgh to UPMC Hamot's Magee-Womens Hospital in Erie.

UPMC, Penn State Behrend, Hamot Health Foundation and the Magee Womens Research Institute are contributing \$5 million each.

"We want projects with strong local champions that can leverage our money by several multiples and implement a project that could change the trajectory of our community," Batchelor said. "It's a very high bar. We are thrilled about our first grant. We think it meets all those tasks."

Those funds will also be dedicated to projects that would transform

neighborhoods, strengthen the downtown core and improve community health outcomes. The foundation received 25 ideas that it has since narrowed down.

The third endeavor is a \$10 million commitment to mission-related investments. The foundation is using principal, instead of earned interest, from its endowment to make those investments, a departure from past practice.

It granted the Housing and Neighborhood Development Service \$500,000 for its purchase of the iconic Boston Store last year.

The foundation will also continue to work with partners like the Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority on projects such as the Union City Historic Preservation Plan, which received \$625,000 last year through ECGRA's Mission Main Street fund and the Erie Community Foundation's Shaping Tomorrow fund, and the new Erie Center for Arts and Technology.

The Erie Community Foundation is providing ECAT \$1.5 million and ECGRA is adding \$500,000 so that ECAT can rehabilitate the former Wayne School building.

ECGRA Executive Director Perry Wood noted that the agency, charged with distributing \$4.5 million of gaming revenue annually, has reached a level of "stability" and "accomplishment" after 10 years in operation.

An impact study released in the fall notes that ECGRA has generated \$128 million in economic impact and created nearly 850 jobs.

"The board is happy with it and I know elected officials are happy with it and the communities that we're serving are happy with it," Wood said of the ECGRA model. "And that's a really good place to be after you've invested \$50 million in the community and had 10 years under your belt to work toward the most effective revitalization models in the United States."

ECGRA has refined and expanded some of its signature grant programs in recent years in hopes of jump starting revitalization projects across the county.

It's also continued to build its Lead Assets Endowment, which funds nine nonprofits such as the Erie Art Museum and Erie

Zoological Society. The fund has grown to \$13.9 million and grants are now made using interest from the endowment.

One program, Renaissance Block, aided 15 neighborhood groups and municipalities in revitalization efforts last year. The program allows up to \$5,000 to be spent per property on exterior improvements in a designated area.

Our West Bayfront, for example, received \$100,000 last year to implement improvements aimed at preserving neighborhood character and improving safety and walkability in an area around Gridley Park and a four-block area nearby.

"They're working heavily with the university (Gannon) as well as the residents," Wood said of Our West Bayfront. "They're revitalizing the Eighth Street commercial corridor as well as the surrounding neighborhoods. They truly get the synergy that needs to be created between Renaissance Block and commercial corridors. We are cheerleaders just as much as we are funding supporters."

ECGRA requires recipients to match their grants dollar for dollar. Wood has said frequently that such a model has "unleashed capital" and that the overwhelming response from the community is a "sign of pent-up demand."

In coming months, ECGRA will be working with the borough of North East, multiple community organizations and Mercyhurst University on ways to market downtown North East and the Mercyhurst North East campus, which the university intends to vacate and sell following the 2021 spring semester.

"The idea there is to take the revitalization process to the next level by really wrapping as many resources around a community like North East as we can," he said.

"If this is successful and we're able to effectively get a priority list in place and start advocating for funding of those priorities alongside the funding that ECGRA is putting in, I think we'll have a new model for dealing with the revitalization process."

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CORRY EMBRACES BLUE ZONES PROJECT

By David Bruce
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CORRY - Employees at Corry Counseling Services can now stand at their desks or pedal while they sit at them.

They can also join a weekly walking group or ease their stress by spending a few minutes in the office's new "downshifting" room, where they can relax and perhaps listen to ocean waves on a portable stereo.

"I'm encouraged by how our staff has embraced these changes," said Karen Croyle, Corry Counseling Services executive director. "They are used to us doing things that promote engagement, so it's not a surprise. But I'm glad they are so willing to get involved."

Corry Counseling Services is just one Corry-area business that is embracing the region's efforts to be a Blue Zones Community. It's a three-year community initiative designed to improve people's health and help them live longer lives.

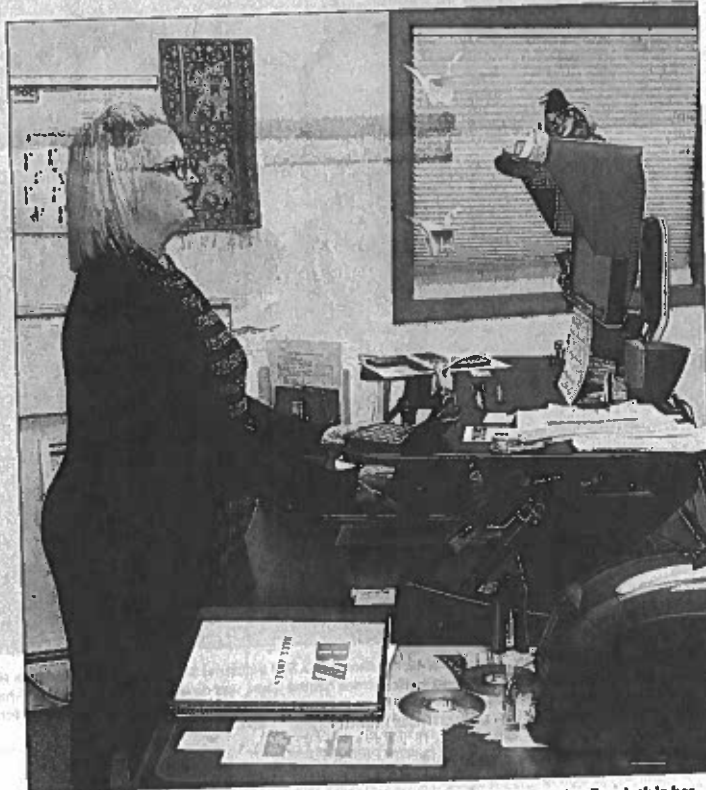
After months of planning, healthy activities and other changes have been occurring all over the region since Blue Zones Project-Corry was launched in June.

"The national team is so impressed with how quickly the Corry community has come on board with this project," said Shannon Wohlford, the project's engagement lead. "People have really come forward, eager to join."

Corry was selected earlier this year to be the 47th Blue Zones community in the world.

The project is designed to help residents live longer, healthier lives by following examples - known as the Power 9 lifestyle principles - found in communities around the world where a high percentage of people live into their 90s and 100s.

The \$3.5 million cost of the project is funded primarily by UPMC, Highmark Health and Corry Memorial Hospital. It also



Denise Seib, human resources director at the Corry Counseling Center, uses a standing desk in her office. The center is among the Corry-area businesses embracing the region's efforts to be a Blue Zones Community. The \$3.5 million Blue Zones Project, designed to improve people's health, is funded primarily by UPMC, Highmark Health and Corry Memorial Hospital. (JACK HANRAHAN/ERIE TIMES-NEWS)



As part of the Blue Zones project, the Corry Counseling Center has created a break room designed to calm workers. (JACK HANRAHAN/ERIE TIMES-NEWS)

has received \$100,000 from the Erie County Gaming Authority and several

smaller grants. A recent study conducted by Blue Zones

Blue Zones is working with a volunteer at Corry Memorial Hospital to offer three or four tobacco cessation programs a year in Corry. The first six-week session started Jan. 15 and included seven participants.

A healthy cooking class, which featured a plant-based Mediterranean diet, drew 16 people to Corry's Emmanuel Episcopal Church in November.

More classes will be held in the future, Wohlford said.

"We also are working with the Salvation Army and the Second Harvest Food Bank to host a mobile fresh fruit and vegetable stand," Wohlford said. "The Salvation Army, which offers breakfasts and lunches on weekdays, asked us to come and do some healthy food tastings and food-skills training."

Blue Zones Project-Corry is also working with Sander's Markets in Corry to help it become a Blue Zones Project-approved grocery store.

As part of the process, signs will be attached to certain shelves and coolers in the store that contain fresh fruits and vegetables, whole-grain and other healthy foods.

"It's all about making the healthy choice the easy choice," said Jennifer Eberline, the project's community program manager.

Taste testings and educational programs are also planned for Corry Area School District students, teachers and staff as the district tries to become a Blue Zones-approved school.

The project also was awarded a \$20,000 grant from Pennsylvania WalkWorks to create a walking and biking plan for Corry. The search for a consultant to implement this project started in January.

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Upstart business gets help from the hive

Edinboro students launch company to keep fishing sites clean

By Ed Palattella
Erie Times-News

Hunter Klobucar and Tyler Waltenbaugh, students at Edinboro University of Pennsylvania, became friends over a shared passion for steelhead fishing.

Their connection has become so tight that the two have launched a business to promote environmental conservation among freshwater anglers, whether they are casting lines on the streams and creeks of northwestern Pennsylvania or the raging rivers of the American West.

"We want to be that company in the outdoors industry that is making the change," Klobucar said. "It has the potential to make the change in the industry, the potential to change the world."

He and Waltenbaugh are partners in Fish Gods, a company that has developed a reusable collapsible mesh bag for anglers to pick up trash. Fish Gods has a logo and other promotional materials and is ready to court investors for the production of the inexpensive bag.

"We want to target the angling community first and branch out into other outdoor activities such as camping, hiking and biking," Waltenbaugh said.

He and Klobucar got hooked on their idea in the summer of 2018. The swift trajectory from concept to company is due largely to the help Fish Gods has received from the Northwest Pennsylvania Innovation Beehive Network, created in 2014 and expanded in the following years as a grant-funded collaboration for entrepreneurs between Edinboro University, Penn State Behrend, Gannon University, Mercyhurst University and the Erie County Public Library.

"We can give them all our ideas and they can make this happen," Waltenbaugh said. "It is irreplaceable."

Idea bubbles up

Waltenbaugh, 23, a senior strategic communications major, is from Leechburg, northeast of Pittsburgh. Klobucar, 21, a junior majoring in environmental geology, is from Jeannette, southeast of Pittsburgh.

The two, who now share an apartment, got to know each other at Edinboro through fishing. They founded the campus fly-fishing club and got it chartered through the 5 Rivers program of Trout Unlimited, the fishing advocacy nonprofit.

In the summer of 2018, Waltenbaugh and Klobucar were among four college students selected to participate in Trout Unlimited's Pennsylvania Brook Trout Odyssey, meant to increase understanding of the popular game fish. During the fishing trip, which followed Route 6 in Pennsylvania, Waltenbaugh and Klobucar noticed how plastic items — bottles, milk jugs, forks, spoons — and other trash littered streams throughout the state.

"It was unbelievable," Waltenbaugh said.

The two also came to realize that picking up and collecting the trash could be difficult for anglers because they are already carrying rods and other gear. Waltenbaugh and Klobucar came up with a solution: a mesh bag, clipped to an angler's clothing, into which garbage could be placed.

"Our bag is the answer to turning a blind eye on trash," Waltenbaugh said. "Where do you put a dirty water bottle that has been sitting in mud for three weeks?"

Busy Beehive

Fish Gods is one of a number of startups that the Northwest Pennsylvania Innovation Beehive Network has helped launch. Some others:

- Sphere Brakes, a specialty brake company.
 - One Leg Up, a locally produced line of dog toys.
 - Bayfront Glass, a bottle and jar recycler.
 - M2 Additive, which uses a new kind of extruder for plastics-based manufacturing.
 - AmpliLife, whose product is a collapsible bowl with a no-spill lid and a built-in charger and a stand for an iPhone or iPad. It is designed for families that are traveling with children.
- Compiled by Penn State Behrend, which is part of the Beehive Network with Edinboro University of Pennsylvania, Gannon University, Mercyhurst University and the Erie County Library.
- Watch video of the founders of Fish Gods discuss their company: www.GoErie.com/Videos.

He and Klobucar also aimed to make their product environmentally friendly. They came up with a bag that would be made of mesh, with a flexible lid, and that could be used again and again.

"The idea," Klobucar, "is to have a bag that you don't throw away."

Catching a wave

Klobucar and Waltenbaugh kept developing their idea when they started along the path that would eventually get them involved with the Beehive Network. In the spring of 2019, they named their company Fish Gods, after an ancient phrase in which anglers pray for a good catch.

If you are kind to the fish gods and respect the environment, Klobucar said, "the fish gods will bless you with good fortune, a good day on the water."

Fish Gods' fortunes improved during Waltenbaugh's class on introduction to public relations at Edinboro. His professor, Tony Peyronel, told the students about the Ben Franklin Partnership's Big Idea Startup Contest. The competition, run locally through Penn State Behrend, carries a top prize of \$50,000 for a new company.

Waltenbaugh and Klobucar entered the Big Idea contest in



Tyler Waltenbaugh looks over promotional materials for the company he started with Hunter Klobucar. They have developed a collapsible bag for fishermen to pick up trash.

the spring of 2019 and did not win for Fish Gods.

But they got encouragement through the contest to enroll in a 10-week business camp for startups at Behrend called the Ben Franklin Tech-Celebrator@Erie. At the end of the camp, they won \$5,000 for their pitch for Fish Gods and the reusable bag, which will have an "earth-friendly name" and be about a foot long, Klobucar said.

Waltenbaugh and Klobucar used the \$5,000 as capital to build up their business.

Meanwhile, they tapped into a trove of resources that cost them nothing. They became clients of Edinboro's Beehive, in which students and faculty in marketing and other fields assist nonprofits and business enterprises, most of them startups such as Fish Gods.

"We are here to give them as much help as we can," said Peyronel, executive director for entrepreneurial development at Edinboro University. "We run it like an agency that does not bill clients."

Peyronel's job includes oversight of Edinboro's Center for Branding & Strategic Communications, part of the Northwest Pennsylvania Innovation Beehive Network. He said the Edinboro Beehive has taken on

more than 50 clients, with Waltenbaugh and Klobucar as the only student clients.

They are also the first clients to use the Edinboro Beehive's Student Start-up Hub, in the university's Baron-Forness Library. The hub provides space so student entrepreneurs do not have to work out of their dorm rooms or apartments.

"They are really on the move here," Peyronel said of the two. "They are on their way. They are looking for investors. We are continuing to work with them this semester as they prepare to publicly launch the product."

The Edinboro Beehive students and faculty helped Fish Gods develop a logo — it incorporates the trident, symbol of the ultimate fish god, Neptune — and helped them craft their branding, promotional materials and marketing plan. The Edinboro faculty and staff also helped in designing the company's website, which is to go live soon.

The Beehive Network at Gannon provided legal assistance and Penn State in University Park provided legal guidance as Waltenbaugh and Klobucar created a limited liability company, in September. And the Beehive Network at Penn State

"Our bag is the answer to turning a blind eye on trash. Where do you put a dirty water bottle that has been sitting in mud for three weeks?"

Tyler Waltenbaugh
Edinboro University of Pennsylvania student

Behrend, with its program on plastics engineering and its Innovation Commons for entrepreneurs, helped them design a prototype bag.

The pooling of resources, which has benefited other startups in the area, is what makes the Beehive Network so valuable for entrepreneurs, many of whom have little funding or expertise to tackle all the business-related details on their own, said Amy Bridger, senior director of corporate strategy and external engagement at Penn State Behrend.

Bridger helps coordinate the Beehive Network, which she said is designed to "create an entrepreneurial ecosystem for the entrepreneur."

"The credibility of the network makes a difference," she said.

Dream floats on

Waltenbaugh and Klobucar stand out among the other startup founders in that they are college students juggling schoolwork and social lives with the demands of launching a business. The Beehive Network proved an asset to them in that regard as well.

Without the Beehive Network, "I really don't think we would be where we are in our lives right now," Waltenbaugh said. A student entrepreneur needs such a support system, he said, "Unless you have a rich uncle."

The Beehive Network's assistance, Klobucar said, "made us legitimate and professional."

The Beehive also helped the two students dream. They dream about making their signature product. But they also dream about bigger ideas. The fish gods, after all, are watching.

"We have plans much further than a bag," Waltenbaugh said. "We have bigger plans for Fish Gods and environmental issues."

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Bartlett and Detzel say they are just as confident that they've found the right match for their talents and the marketplace.

Bartlett said she imagines working someday at a place like Erie Insurance or maybe Wabtec.

Detzel likewise likes the idea of staying in Erie.

"There are so many options," he said. "Pretty much every company will be using internet connected devices."

Detzel and Bartlett aren't the only ones making an important bet.

Gannon, which announced the creation of two new majors and I-HACK in the fall of 2018, is betting millions of dollars that the university is investing its money in the right place at the right time.

The plan calls for a top-to-bottom transformation of the vault-like Verizon building at 131 W. Ninth St. where hundreds of telephone operators once plied their trade.

The renovation would begin with a facelift of the first and second floors for use as a lobby and academic space, both of which would be ready for class this fall.

Pierre McCormick, a 1979 Gannon graduate, last year donated \$1 million to the university, which is being used to establish the Pierre McCormick Cyber Learning Center on the building's second floor.

A third floor, which would be called the hatchery and would be linked by an open stairway from the second floor, is envisioned as a place where students and faculty could work on projects with industry partners, giving students access to real-world experience and providing businesses with the services of the university.

Plans call for the fourth and fifth floors, about 13,000 square feet each, to be leased to commercial tenants, most likely technology companies.

As for the sixth floor, Walter Iwanenko Jr., vice president for academic affairs at Gannon, said Gannon is working with a corporate partner that has experience in building data centers in older buildings.

"We are looking at not only housing our own data, but Erie has been overlooked as a perfect

location to store data" for companies in need of a second, off-site location, he said.

What makes Erie a good fit for a data center?

Proximity, mostly. It's within a 150 miles of three major population centers and it's not prone to earthquakes or hurricanes.

For Iwanenko, this investment feels like the right move at the right time, both for the university and for the city.

He explained why recently as he looked out the south-facing, fourth-floor windows and across the street to the former Rothrock Building, where \$8.5 million transformed it into a new home for Velocity Network and, at least temporarily, a home for the Erie Innovation District.

The job outlook numbers seem to justify the programs themselves.

But it is the activity in the community around Gannon that's helping fuel the university's confidence that not only will students enroll, but that businesses will lease space and data center clients will choose Erie.

"We are extremely confident," Iwanenko said. "We wouldn't invest \$27 million into a project that we weren't confident in. I think we are gathering steam in this block. I think the momentum is starting to build. We believe a lot of magic is going to happen. We believe this is going to be a community asset."

For now, this fortress

of a concrete and steel building is a mostly blank slate, a construction zone, where old materials are being stripped away to make way for new heating and ventilation equipment and other infrastructure.

Vernaza, who explained that plans call for construction to be complete by the fall of 2021, found her words

interrupted recently as she toured the building by the sounds of construction equipment and garbage sliding down a chute.

Bartlett and Detzel, now in their second semester in the I-HACK program, haven't taken a class in the new building yet, but say they're happy to be on the ground floor of a new program.

Bartlett said, "Being an adult student, I want to get the most productive degree, the thing that will do the most for me and the thing that will launch my career."

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Gannon University is investing millions on new curriculum and facilities for a future in cybersecurity

By Jim Martin
jmartin@timesnews.com

Nineteen-year-old Austin Detzel, of Wattsburg, has always loved electronics and computers. When he talks about the internet of things, he speaks of the IOT in the shorthand that friends speak of one another.

It's no surprise he was one of the first in line when Gannon University began enrolling students last fall for the first semester of its cyber engineering program.

Victoria Bartlett, of North East, followed a different route to Gannon's companion program in cybersecurity, both part of the I-HACK or the Institute for Health and Cyber Knowledge.

After high school she went to work at Sander's Market, where she and her employer, which operates seven stores, discovered she had an aptitude for computers and information technology.

For all the talk of cybersecurity — and there's a lot of it — and the demand for thousands and thousands of graduates with skills in cybersecurity and cyber engineering, Bartlett, Detzel and Gannon find themselves on the cutting edge.

And that can be an uncomfortable place to be.

Only a relative handful of programs in cybersecurity and cyber engineering exist at the moment.

In many cases, accreditation guidelines are still being developed, said Karinna Vernaza, dean of the college of business and engineering at Gannon.

She's not worried about that. Gannon has a history of its programs being smoothly accredited and she expects it to continue.

See BETTING, L2

Plotting a new course

Erie Innovation District plans for investing in the YMCA building set aside

By Jim Martin
Erie Times-News

There's usually room to argue about the relative success of anything.

But there's little debate about this: Seven technology-focused startup companies are based in Erie today and more are likely to come, thanks to seed money provided by a \$10 million

Erie-specific fund created by CapZone Impact Investments. It's unlikely any of that would have happened were it not for the creation, three years ago, of the Erie Innovation District.

But the EID, which has introduced 17 companies to Erie through the Secure Erie Accelerator program, is going through a reboot of sorts.

That reboot comes on the heels of a decision late last year by the EID's newly independent board not to renew the contract of Karl Sanchack,

who was hired in September of 2017 to serve as the CEO of the newly formed organization, led initially by Mercyhurst University.

And now, about two months later, the Erie Innovation District's board is working on a plan to map out its future.

Change seems certain. Jim Martin, regional president of Northwest Bank and chairman of the EID board, said he and Keith Kennedy, a vice

See DISTRICT, A8



Special section inside today

Erie 2020, our annual economic report on the region, features 40 pages of stories about area businesses, new projects and programs at area universities. You can find additional content, including graphics and videos, at GoErie.com/Topics/Erie-2020

president at Erie Insurance and a fellow board member, have spent a great deal of time talking to people who have a stake in Erie's business and growing technology community.

Martin said they've been met with broad agreement on one key point.

"Almost everyone we have talked to hopes and thinks it should continue," Martin said of the Innovation District. "They think it has made a lot of progress. Nobody I have talked to said it should end."

But there is question of who picks up the bill.

In a December interview, Martin said, "One of the things we would like is for the EID to be self-sufficient and not have to rely on grants from funders. We would like this thing to stand on its own."

The group was launched with the backing of Mercyhurst University and a \$4 million grant from the Erie Community Foundation, the Susan Hirt Hagen Fund for Transformational Philanthropy and the Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority.

For now, a few sources of income are apparent.

Both Mike Batchelor, president of the Erie Community Foundation, and Tim NeCastro, CEO of Erie Insurance, have said their organizations plan to help fund the Innovation District, at least through the end of the year.

"We need to help the Innovation District find out how it can best serve the community," NeCastro said in a recent interview with the Erie Times-News. "We are in a position to help fund that operation through 2020, along with the Erie Community Foundation."

But it seems as if Erie Insurance, a key source of funding, would like the organization, based in the Velocity Network building, to change course, at least slightly.

"I think it has to be more focused on business development activities," NeCastro said.

There seems to be general agreement that the accelerator programs, which brought new startups to Erie, are an example of what the EID did well.

"I think (those) are the things that have the most promise for this market," NeCastro said. "We would like to have the money to see



Rebecca Styn, 43, at left, is the vice president of ventures at the Erie Innovation District. Jim Martin, 59, at right, is the EID board chairman.

that continue."

The continuation of such programs is the closest thing to a certainty for the EID.

Martin said the board intends to move forward with at least one accelerator this year.

No date has been set yet and no focus for this year's accelerator has been selected, said Rebecca Styn, vice president of ventures for the EID. Among other subjects, she said the EID will be looking at the areas of focus that have been highlighted by the Erie Regional Chamber and Growth Partnership.

Meanwhile, Martin said the board will be meeting soon with CapZone to learn more about its plans for supporting startups in Erie.

"We don't know for sure

how they plan to invest that money. It's not locked up," Martin said. "It's very possible it could be used to fund an accelerator. I will know more once we meet face-to-face with CapZone."

One thing seems clear.

In June, the Erie Innovation District announced it was working on a plan to relocate its office and offices for startup businesses to between 36,000 and 40,000 square feet of space in the Downtown YMCA building.

The EID planned to renovate the exterior of the seven-story building and renovate and occupy space on the fourth, fifth and sixth floors. The organization last year sought but was turned down for a \$6.2 million request from the state

Redevelopment Assistance Capital Program.

Sanchack had said the project could move forward without the grant money, but Martin said that's not going to happen anytime soon.

"There is not going to be a real estate play unless someone comes in and says they want to invest a significant amount of money," he said. "That was a nice idea Karl had, but it's not cheap."

In different communities, Innovation Districts play different roles.

In Erie, the role of so-called placemaking is being pursued by the Erie Downtown Development Corp. and other developers, NeCastro said.

Although the EID has a four-member board, which includes former Chairman Joe NeCastro as well as Sanchack, the former CEO, Martin said he and Kennedy have been taking the lead for now as they work to reinvent the organization.

He's hoping to reach some conclusions this spring.

Michael Victor, president of Mercyhurst University, which oversaw the Innovation District initially, is hoping the new model bears some resemblance to the old.

In a statement, the university touted the success of EID under Sanchack's direction.

"Under Mercyhurst University's leadership, the Erie Innovation District thrived, establishing productive partnerships, creating investment opportunities, bringing new businesses and 'Secure Smart City' technology to Erie, while shaping an innovation ecosystem."

Victor believes believes the overall shape of the original model is worth preserving.

"Businesses from the West Coast have come to Erie and some have stayed," he said. "I think that was a good business model."

While bringing out-of-town businesses to Erie has been seen as a victory, Martin said the board is also looking for ways to involve local entrepreneurs.

"We would like to see job creation," he said. "If there is a way to involve local entrepreneurs we would be really excited about that."

Kennedy said he and Martin have come away from their talks with the community with a strong sense that the EID has done something good.

But neither he nor Martin is promising the new EID will look like the old one.

"I think we are still working through it," Kennedy said.

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