



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

**EXECUTIVE
DIRECTOR'S
REPORT
FOR
NOVEMBER
2021**

ERIE COUNTY COVID 19 REPORT

By:

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Jefferson Educational Society

PERRY WOOD, Ed.D., Executive Director, Erie County
Gaming Revenue Authority

COMMITTEE CO-CHAIRS:

CARL J. ANDERSON III, Chairman of Erie County Council

KIM CLEAR, Chair of Finance and Vice Chair, Erie County
Council

July 2021



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

INTRODUCTION

Erie County, Pennsylvania, as with counties and cities across the United States, finds itself at a pivotal moment as a result of the coronavirus Covid-19 pandemic, its impact, and its continuing effects. The impressions the pandemic have left go beyond the obvious public health crisis, one which has claimed the lives of more than 4.5 million people worldwide, more than 700,000 in the U.S., and more than 400 in Erie.

Noting that, the situation beyond the public health crisis boils down to this locally: What happened to people, government, schools, for-profit and nonprofit businesses, and the economy overall since Erie County recorded its first case of Covid-19 on March 18, 2020? What are the lessons learned? Where can we go from here? With some local, state, and federal funding support already affecting the situation – and a great deal more to come – how can post-pandemic rebuilding best serve the Erie County community? Could this be a transformational moment and, if so, what would it take for that to happen? Can this be Erie County's once-in-a-generation moment to address not only post-pandemic fallout but also structural economic failures that existed long before Covid exposed them?

Such a stage was set when Erie County created the Economic Impact and Covid Revitalization Committee (EICRC) on January 5, 2021. Appointed by County Council Chairman Anderson and Vice Chairwoman Clear, members of the community were selected to assist with gathering data, listening sessions held over Zoom, and recruitment of expert testimony. This report reviews the timeline of the ongoing impact of the pandemic, captures the findings of the committee's meetings, and offers timely recommendations based on the listening sessions held with a diverse range of community stakeholders.

Members of the committee are as follows:

Committee Chairs:

Co-Chairman Carl Anderson, Chairman of Erie County Council and Co-Chairman of the EICRC

Co-Chairwoman Kim Clear, Chairwoman of Erie County Council Finance Committee and Co-Chairwoman of the EICRC

Committee Members:

Mary Rennie, member County Council

Brian Shank, member County Council

Perry Wood, Executive Director of Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority

Ferki Ferati, President of the Jefferson Educational Society

Honey Stempka, Director of Erie County Planning and Gaming Community Development

Jessica Horan-Kunco, Executive Director of the Erie County Council of Governments

Amy Murdock, Director of Governmental Affairs of the Erie Regional Chamber & Growth Partnership

Parris Baker, Associate Professor of Social Work, Gannon University

Support staff:

Nicole Inan, Deputy County Clerk and Assistant Supervisor of Elections

Tom Maggio, Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority

Tammi Michali, Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority

Doug Smith, County Clerk, Erie County Council

Amy Swartzfager, financial advisor to Erie County Council

After two organizational meetings, the committee began a series of 16 meetings and listening sessions. Over the following nearly four months, the committee heard from major stakeholders in the county representing government, business, nonprofits, and for-profit organizations before work concluded in May.

Research and listening sessions yielded a wide range of findings detailed later in this report. The Jefferson Educational Society was asked to review the outcomes of each session to aid in an observation study of the findings, which formed the basis for a series of recommendations made by the authors. An addendum to the report provides detailed meeting summaries.

BACKGROUND & HISTORY

On March 16, 2020, Erie County Executive Kathy Dahlkemper issued a Disaster Declaration that warned the area of what was coming and provided instructions on how to protect area residents and their families. After its first case of Covid-19 on March 18, 2020, Erie County recorded 21,273 cases of infection and 419 deaths as of July 19, 2021. However, cases and deaths were markedly lower by spring 2021, mostly attributable to increased vaccination rates.

As of July 19, 124,157 full vaccines have been administered to Erie County residents according to the Pennsylvania Department of Health Covid-19 Vaccine Dashboard. According to a July 18 Erie Times-News report, that represents 51.9 percent of the vaccine-eligible population (12 years of age and older). The Pennsylvania Health Department's goal of 70 percent of adults by the end of June was not met, remaining at a distance in mid-July, but appeared within reach if those eligible continue to receive vaccinations.

Further analysis shows that the pandemic has already had a residual impact that could negatively affect the Erie economy for years. A joint task force of the Dahlkemper Administration and Erie County Council in June 2020 created the following with the funds received from Erie County's Covid-19 County Relief Block Grant:

- **Municipal Reimbursement Program:** The purpose of this program is to mitigate the impact of Covid-19 on Erie County's 38 municipalities and the people that they serve. The county is providing financial support through the Erie County C.A.R.E.S. (Coronavirus Aid, Relief, Economic Security Act) Municipal Reimbursement Program to cover direct costs incurred in responding to the Covid-19 public health emergency.
- **Nonprofit Assistance Grant Program:** The purpose of this program is to support Erie County's nonprofits – including first responders – that have been negatively impacted by the Covid-19 public health emergency. The county is providing emergency funding through the Erie County C.A.R.E.S. Nonprofit Assistance Grant Program.
- **PPE for Small Businesses:** The goal of this program is to provide "high touch" small businesses with kits containing masks, hand sanitizer, and gloves, or other items. Groups include medical and dental practices, childcare services and youth camps, museums and historical sites, amusement and recreation centers, independent restaurants, barber shops, beauty salons, nail salons, and personal care services.
- **Small Business Assistance Grant Program:** The purpose of this program is to aid small businesses. Erie County received \$24.3 million in block grant funding, of which \$5 million has been committed to small businesses (fewer than 100 employees) and tourism organizations affected by the Covid-19 pandemic.

ECONOMIC IMPACT AND COVID REVITALIZATION COMMITTEE FORMED

When the Economic Impact and Covid Revitalization Committee was created on Jan. 5, 2021, the Erie County Department of Health announced there were 138 new cases of Covid-19 with the number of total cases of Covid documented at 12,308 along with two deaths. The daily announcements coming from the County Executive's office were an ever-louder drumbeat heralding the rise of Covid infections in Erie County.

The purpose of the committee, however, was not to confront the disease or to assist in its inevitable demise as a matter of public health. The purpose of the Economic Impact and Covid Revitalization Committee was to look beyond the immediate onslaught of disease and assess its more lasting impact on the Erie economy, its workforce, and Erie County businesses.

The purpose was also to familiarize committee members with information that community organizations were gathering about the long-term impact of the pandemic. This information could be used to counter short- and long-term impacts and enable Erie County to spring forward when the pandemic was beaten.

Erie County government was not the only government thinking proactively. The federal government had already passed the C.A.R.E.S. Act in March 2020. This was a \$2 trillion stimulus bill called the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act to blunt the impact of an economic downturn that economists projected globally to result from the coronavirus pandemic.

The C.A.R.E.S. Act was signed into law on March 27, 2020. Through its own act of law, Pennsylvania allocated \$625 million of its share of C.A.R.E.S. Act funding for block grants for counties. Erie County was one of 60 counties in Pennsylvania eligible to apply to the Department of Community and Economic Development's Covid-19 County Relief Block Grant Program. The County's application was submitted June 16, 2020, and \$24,358,828 was received on July 15, 2020.

A joint task force of the Dahlkeper Administration and Erie County Council prioritized the application of available relief, developing programs and processes through which funding from the Covid-19 County Relief Block Grant could be dispensed; to prepare a recommended budget for Erie County Council outlining best uses of the block grant funding; and provide oversight of the implementation of the county's block grant. The task force created the following with the funds received from Erie County's Covid-19 County Relief Block Grant (fully outlined in the introduction):

- Municipal Reimbursement Program
- Nonprofit Assistance Grant Program
- PPE for Small Businesses
- Small Business Assistance Grant Program

However, officials in Erie County government wanted to continue to assess the damage done by the pandemic to ensure that Erie County businesses and individuals benefited from the C.A.R.E.S. Act and to make sure that any other necessary remediation measures were taken. The desired outcome was to ensure that Erie County businesses, organizations, and residents received the help needed to address the negative impact of Covid-19. It was this impetus that led to the creation of the Economic Impact and Covid Revitalization Committee.

During the period in which the committee functioned, from January 2021 to May 2021, combatting the spread of Covid and its negative effects on the Erie County economy remained the central issue.

FINDINGS OF THE COMMITTEE THROUGH RESEARCH AND LISTENING SESSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS BASED ON LISTENING SESSIONS

While some findings emerged across multiple sessions, the following is presented in chronological order of the listening sessions held by the Economic Impact and Covid Revitalization Committee, noting both the date and theme of the sessions.

A Call for Transformative Projects

Multiple Sessions (1/13/21; 1/20/21; 2/3/21; 3/10/21; 3/31/21; 4/14/21; 5/5/21)

HIGHLIGHTS: *Dr. Keith Taylor, President Gannon University; Steve Mauro, VP Gannon University; Ralph Ford, Chancellor Penn State Behrend; Amy Bridger, VP Penn State Behrend*

FINDINGS: *Repeatedly during listening sessions, the concept of transformative projects was referenced. Federal dollars of the magnitude and scale that are flowing to Erie County and proposed to flow in the coming months allows an opportunity to invest in projects that can create a multiplier effect, catapulting the economy forward.*

RECOMMENDATION: *Transformative projects could focus on people and/or places. More research and community engagement are necessary to determine how best to implement a transformative grant program.*

Jobs, Education, Workforce, and Young People

Multiple Sessions (1/15/21; 2/3/21; 2/10/21; 3/10/21; 4/7/21; 4/14/21; 5/5/21)

HIGHLIGHTS: *Bishop Dwayne Brock, Executive Director of Eagle's Nest Leadership Corporation; Daria Devlin, Executive Director of Erie Center for Arts and Technology*

FINDINGS: *Workforce readiness and connecting young people to careers is the purview of many organizations in the workforce development system.*

RECOMMENDATION: *An up-and-coming piece of that puzzle is the establishment of Erie County's first community college. Not having a community college has cost the Erie region millions of dollars in funding and created a huge disadvantage in building a workforce that can attract industry.*

Spurring Small Business Revitalization and Growth

(1/15/21; 2/10/21; 5/5/21)

Impact on Erie's Economy

HIGHLIGHTS: *Dr. Ken Louie, Director of the Economic Research Institute of Erie at Penn State Behrend; Liz Wilson and Cathy Von Birgelon, Ben Franklin Technology Partners; Amy Murdock, Government Relations at Erie Regional Chamber and Growth Partnership; Tina Mengine, Executive Director of Erie County Redevelopment Authority; Chris Groner, Loan Officer at Erie County Redevelopment Authority; TJ Bogdewic, CEO of Bridgeway Capital; Cathryn Easterling, Director of Erie Office Bridgeway Capital*

FINDINGS: *Small-business resiliency was on full display during the pandemic. For example, restaurants pivoted their service model to begin offering curbside takeaway, utilizing app-based ordering services and other online platforms. After recognizing the need to have locally manufactured PPE, such as face shields and face masks, early in the pandemic, local manufacturers shifted production lines to meet the needs of the community.*

RECOMMENDATION: *Investing in municipalities' main streets and surrounding neighborhoods is a true and tested revitalization approach. Focus should be kept on these corridors by leveraging funds to upgrade their streetscapes, building stock, and events that attract people.*

Municipal Infrastructure Assets

(1/27/21)

Municipal Surveying

HIGHLIGHTS: *Jessica Horan-Kunco, Executive Director of Erie Area Council of Governments*

FINDINGS: *Local governments have a large inventory of infrastructure-related projects that is currently deferred.*

RECOMMENDATION: *Investing in traditional infrastructure, like sewer and water, is essential and should be prioritized.*

Organizing for Biden Stimulus Programs

(2/3/21)

HIGHLIGHTS: *Bruce Katz, author of "The New Localism" and Director of the Nowak Metro Finance Lab at Drexel University*

FINDINGS: *Beyond Erie County's allocation of funding through the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021, there are other bills currently in the works that will be formulaic and competitive. Those sources have been identified by the Nowak Metro Finance Lab at Drexel University.*

RECOMMENDATION: *Erie County needs a process to monitor, identify, and build complex community coalitions around state and federal funding. Hiring a consultant, such as Bruce Katz, the Founding Director of the Nowak Metro Finance Lab at Drexel University, would give Erie County an advantage in understanding how to best utilize these funding sources and organize around them. In his New Localism blog, Katz describes the concept of an Economic Recovery Center to accomplish these goals.*

Stabilizing Nonprofits

(2/24/21)

Impacts on the Nonprofit Sector

HIGHLIGHTS: Adam Bratton, Executive Director, The Nonprofit Partnership

FINDINGS: The nonprofit sector has been hobbled by the inability to fundraise. To prevent the collapse of venue-driven organizations, the federal government created the Shuttered Venues grant program. However, many cultural organizations that do not operate a venue, while temporarily bolstered by PPP forgivable loans, still need support.

RECOMMENDATION: Nonprofits need grants. An inventory of readily available grants at the local, state, and federal level should be easily accessible to nonprofits in the area along with coaching and support services for seeking such funding.

Stabilizing County Assets

(3/3/21)

COVID Impacting Erie County

HIGHLIGHTS: Casey Wells, Executive Director, Convention Center Authority; Chuck Iverson, Director of Finance, Convention Center Authority

FINDINGS: Destabilized organizations require an injection of capital to maintain their solvency. Some of these organizations are under the direct purview of Erie County government, while others play a role in social and economic development alleviating the county of this crucial role.

RECOMMENDATION: Erie County government has a responsibility to county-related organizations that were destabilized by the pandemic. Many of these entities are a catalyst for economic recovery, sustainability, and growth. Entities include Erie County Convention Center Authority, Pleasant Ridge Manor, ECGRA, ECRDA.

Addressing Diversity, Inclusion, and Equity

(3/10/21 and 3/17/21)

Minority Communities in Erie County
Stimulus Disbursement Observations

HIGHLIGHTS: *Dr. Parris Baker, Associate Professor, Gannon University; James Sherrod, Executive Director at Martin Luther King Center; Gary Horton, Executive Director at Quality of Life Learning Center and President Erie Chapter NAACP; Autumn Anderson, Project Manager at North Highland*

FINDINGS: *According to the U.S. Census, the 16503 ZIP code has 55 percent rental housing; 89 percent of children qualify for free or reduced lunch; 36 percent of residents are African American; 12 percent are Hispanic; and the majority of adult inhabitants are not high school graduates. Distressed areas, featuring higher concentrations of minority population, felt a more pronounced impact from the Covid-19 pandemic, worsening already stressed communities and neighborhoods.*

RECOMMENDATION: *As Erie County brings in dollars from all grant programs at the state and federal levels, consideration for diversity, inclusion, and equity must be part of the civic dialogue, the decision-making process, and the outcome measurement. In other words, Erie County needs to measure how these funds impact the lives of minorities and lift up communities in areas that were already distressed prior to the pandemic's impact and worsened during the pandemic.*

Fiber Optic Technology Needs in Erie County

(3/24/21 and 3/31/21)

Impact of Underserved Populations

HIGHLIGHTS: Joel Deuterman, CEO VNET; Matt Wiertel, Director of Marketing VNET; Erick Friedman, CIO of Erie County, Erie County Surveying of Underserved Populations

FINDINGS: The need for high-speed internet supported by wireline or fiber optic cables was placed on full display during the pandemic. Erie County continues to have significant geographic areas that are not served or are underserved by telecommunications carriers. Lack of fiber optic infrastructure to the home remains a major barrier to education, economic development, and citizen engagement.

RECOMMENDATION: Investing in fiber optic subsidies, like the federal government's approach to rural electrification, needs to be prioritized by the incoming county administration. It should work with both ILECs and CLECs to cover geographic areas of Erie County – rural and inner-city areas – that are both underserved or not served at all.

Public Safety Response to COVID

(4/21/21)

Impact on Public Safety

HIGHLIGHTS: John Grappy, Director Erie County Public Safety; Dale Robinson, Emergency Management Coordinator; Andrew Pennock, Emergency Management Coordinator

FINDINGS: Emergency medical services, volunteer fire departments, and related public safety agencies were pushed to the brink during the pandemic.

RECOMMENDATION: A new approach to emergency medical services and public safety is required to be prepared for a future pandemic. The county's approach to this sector requires innovation. The more these entities can evolve to regionalization of services, the more resilient they will be in the face of future disasters.

CONCLUSION

This is the time to plan with the help of expert guidance, then act with one voice that reflects the interests of everyone in the Erie County community. Many refer to this movement as this century's "Moonshot Moment," echoing the call to propel Americans not just into space but to land on the Moon. It is important to note that those words were met with action: The investment in innovation, the ongoing research that led to actualizing those words. Today, words must become more than bandied about inspiration phrases. Experts must be called upon to help communities, like Erie, make smart, informed decisions today that will have implications for decades to come.



October 2021

Meeting with Executive Director
Ongoing Social Media Management
Ongoing Consulting
October Comms

IMPLEMENTED

29 Total October posts
18 Total graphics created
ETN media management, Katz Playbook visit
OPED drafting, submission & placement
<https://www.goerie.com/story/opinion/2021/10/29/bruce-katzs-help-erie-readies-investment-and-growth/8548738002/>

IN PROGRESS

Erie County COVID Report
Holiday Graphics
Parks Fields & Trails 2 Year Report
ECGRA Playbook
ECGRA Playbook Event
Roadshow Tours with ECAT, PACA, and Train Station Corry

IN PROGRESS | 2021 Grant Releases and Graphics

Community Assets - Arts Culture Heritage
Community Assets - Community Centers



**Inter-Church
Ministries**
of Erie County

Working Together...United in Faith

250 West Seventh Street | Erie, PA 16501 | 814.454.2411 | icm@icmeriecounty.com

org

October 27, 2021

ECGRA
5340 Fryling Road Suite 201
Erie, PA 16510

Thank you very much for your sponsorship of the 2021 Keystone Conference at the Bayfront Convention Center in Erie on Monday and Tuesday. This is always an outstanding event created and produced by the Non-Profit Partnership as well as the opportunity for all of us in non-profit work to gather and learn many new ideas, all the while showing off some of the best of Erie. It was especially wonderful to be able to gather in person again this year. Your help in making this possible and your presence are very much appreciated.

Sincerely,

Karen E. Adams, Director
Inter-Church Ministries of Erie County

Tammi Michali

From: Jennie Hagerty <jhagerty@mcwerie.org>
Sent: Friday, October 29, 2021 12:26 PM
To: Tammi Michali
Subject: Thank you

Dear Tammi:

Thank you for taking the time to tour the school project and learn about our project/partnerships. We are excited to be a larger part of this area offering countless services to the community. Your questions and interest today permitted me to further share the good work of the Mercy Center. I appreciate you coordinating the Board to visit and site and take interest in our mission.

Have a nice weekend!

Jennie

Executive Director
Mercy Center for Women
1039 East 27th Street
Erie, PA. 16504
(814) 455-4577

Smile, Pray, Be Kind
~Monsignor John Hagerty



The Women We Serve...

Being homeless is a description of a current state of affairs; it does not have to be a defining label.

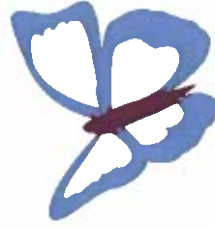
We empower women to become self-sufficient:

- Helping them increase their income and reduce their debt
- Helping them improve their self-esteem
- Working with them to complete the life skills program

How the Residential Program Works

When a woman enrolls in the Mercy Center for Women residential program, she becomes an active part of the house's daily upkeep. She will share in the preparation of evening meals on a rotating basis, and she will also attend house meetings, where staff and residents exchange ideas about house activities. She will work one-on-one with a case manager to complete the program designed for her. As a woman successfully completes the program, she will show progress in developing basic life skills:

- Budgeting and restoring credit
- Social interaction
- Accountability
- Emotional maturity
- Honesty
- Positive attitude
- Household management
- Personal care
- Gain self-sufficiency



Self-improvement Classes

- **Self-esteem** is the degree to which we feel confident, consider ourselves valuable, and respect ourselves. This group teaches the participants to practice self-care, identify triggers to low self-esteem, and develop skills to feel good about self which greatly affects our well-being.
- **Healthy Relationships** Find out what constitutes a healthy relationship and the things you need to keep a relationship healthy. There are reliable tools that can be used to create a healthy relationship, many of which have not been taught in our culture.
- **Effective Communication** skills are fundamental to success in many aspects of life. Many jobs require strong communication skills and people with good communication skills usually enjoy better interpersonal relationships with friends and family. Effective communication is a key interpersonal skill and learning how we can improve our communication has many benefits.
- **Relapse Prevention** is to help individuals continue on the road to recovery by identifying stressors, problems, and solutions so that they will not go back to unhealthy behaviors.
- **Anger Management** is the process of learning to recognize signs when you become angry, and taking the necessary actions to calm down and deal with the situation in a productive way.
- **Critical Thinking and Creative Problem Solving** Participants will learn how to make better decisions by asking questions, defining a problem, and examining evidence. *"We cannot solve our problems with the same thinking we used when we created them."* - Albert Einstein

Other Programs...

- **After Care Program** — Provides residents with one year of follow-up upon leaving Mercy Center for Women. They are encouraged to join our alumnae support group and volunteer in helping others.
- **Mentor Program** — Volunteer mentors help women develop coping skills and serve as role models.
- **Clothing Store** — Clean used clothes for women available for purchase at very affordable prices.



DRESS FOR SUCCESS®
ERIE

- **Dress for Success Erie®** — Promotes the economic independence of disadvantaged women by providing professional attire, a network of support and the career development tools to help women thrive in work and in life.
- **Professional Women's Group** — Job retention support group

"As I walked through Mercy Center's doors,

I was broken and scared. I was not sure how to be the mother my children deserved.

With MCW's support, guidance and direction,

I can now be the woman and mother my children need me to be!

- A grateful Client



Mercy Center for Women is designed to transition women and children between emergency housing and a permanent place to live. Women must be homeless, motivated and committed to changing their lives.

Everything starts with an interview with a case manager who goes over the woman's personal history to determine her needs. To be accepted, she must be at least 21 years old and show that she:

- Is committed to life-changing actions for physical, psychological and emotional growth
- Has no history of violence against herself or others
- Has no serious mental issues
- Is in recovery from drugs and alcohol for at least thirty days

If she has a criminal record, it must be resolved or in a stage of resolution—parole or probation.

Similarly, if drugs or alcohol are an issue, she needs to have completed her rehab program or have a positive recommendation to our program from her counselor.

Mercy Center for Women is a 501(c)(3) charitable organization that was founded by the Sisters of Mercy in 1994 by bringing together the services of Hope House, a transitional housing facility for women and children, and GROW (Grass Roots Opportunities for Women), an advocacy center. Since the beginning we have served more than 8,000 women and children in our community.

We are open 24 hours, seven days a week and can comfortably accommodate 17 families. The Center is a family setting with 17 individual bedrooms. We are handicap accessible, and have an accessible bedroom and bath suite on the first floor. We have a large fenced-in backyard with a playground.

For more information or if you are interested in volunteering, call 814-455-4577.

Mercy Center for Women

1039 East 27th Street

Erie, PA 16504

Phone: (814) 455-4577

Fax: (814) 459-7012

www.mcwerie.org

Email: jhagerty@mcwerie.org

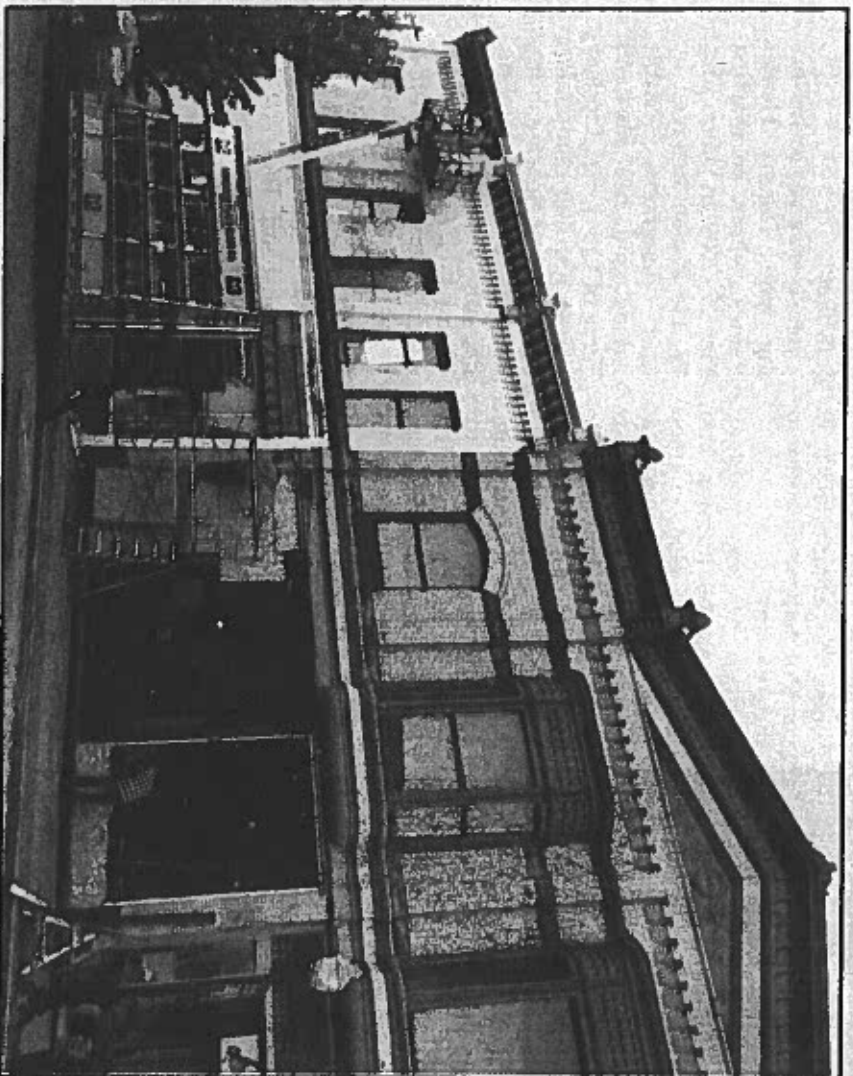


Our Mission

Mercy Center for Women is a sponsored ministry of the Sisters of Mercy and is committed to enhancing the dignity of each person it serves through the healing of body, mind and spirit.



Thursday, October 14, 2021



Carol Fielding/The Corry Journal

Downtown spruce-up

More exterior renovations are being done thanks to Mission Main Street grants. The Juice Shop, 8 S. Center St., received new windows on Tuesday, and Impact Corry, 4 S. Center St., is getting a paint job. Both buildings are owned by Josh Dyne of Dynasty Construction.

Mission accomplished: Union City completes 5 projects

BY MARYANN MOOK
Staff writer

UNION CITY — Five projects that have been ongoing in Union City Borough are completed: the WalkWorks Active Transportation Plan, the Comprehensive Parks and Recreation Plan, Caffisch Park Improvements, construction of Municipal Lot 3, and tree planting at Municipal Lot 3.

The plan was created to get Union City residents and members of the public who visit Union City out in the fresh air, give them a place to exercise and an opportunity

to enjoy nature. "This is a plan the borough will refer to when making improvements within the borough and applying for grant funding to implement the plan," Borough Manager Cindy Wells said.

Borough officials worked with The EADS Group engineering firm and UPStreet Architects. The plan has maps that show physical enhancements including walking loops and pedestri-

an and bicycling amenities, such as a water filling station and bike fix-it stations.

The plan helps to identify important destination points and prioritizes walking routes that need upgraded. Therefore, the plan includes better sidewalks.

"The borough is looking at areas that need immediate sidewalk improvements," Wells said.

The plan was developed by a steering committee consisting of Borough officials and staff, residents, members of the Parks and Recreation Commission and Erie County Planning, along with healthcare, transportation and recreation representatives.

The Active Transportation Plan is available on the Union City Borough's website at the following link: <http://unioncitypa.us/borough/2021-active-transportation-plan-priorities/>.

The Active Transportation Plan was funded by a \$15,000 WalkWorks grant from the Pennsylvania Department of Health with funding provided by the State Physical Activity and Nutrition Grant and Preventive Health and Health Services Block Grant from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The Comprehensive Parks and Recreation — This was

funded through state and local grants.

The plan was created as a master plan for parks within the borough and will continue to be used for reference for grant applications to implement the plan in several phases for all the parks: Caffisch Park, Devereaux Park, Tot Lot at First Avenue and West High Street, Southwest Park at Atlantic and Washington streets, and the Willow Street ball fields.

"The plan shows more walking paths at Caffisch and Devereaux parks, a disc golf course and improved ball fields on Willow Street," Wells said.

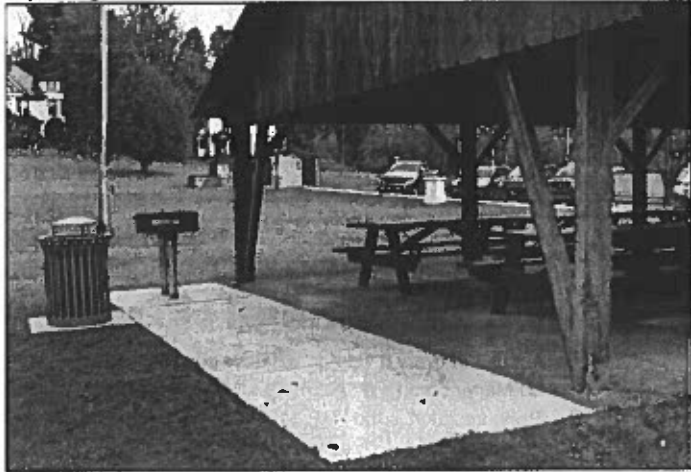
The Comprehensive Parks and Recreation Plan is available on the Union City Borough's website at the following link: <http://unioncitypa.us/parks-and-recreation/2021-parks-and-recreation-plan/>.

Two phases of the plan have been completed as the Caffisch Park Improvement Project - Phase 1 included ADA accessibility in Caffisch Park with walking paths; improved parking area; handicapped-accessible picnic tables; and new swing sets, benches, grills and trash receptacles.

Phase 2 of the project included the purchase of restrooms for those with disabilities.

and Recreation — This was

◀ See Projects, P.2



Contributed photo

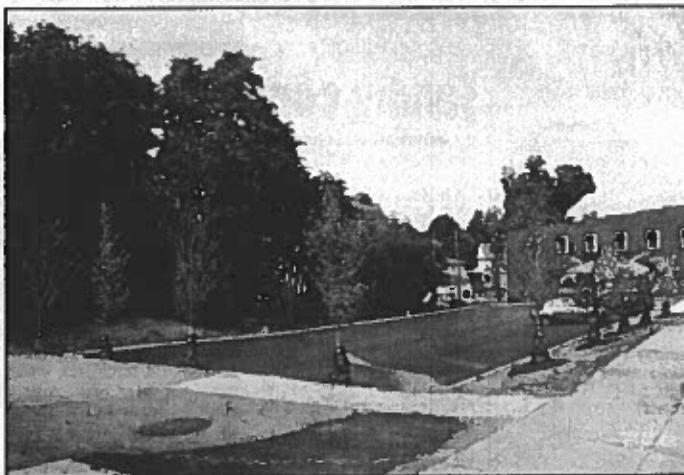
Phase 1 of the Caffisch Park Improvement Project in Union City included new sidewalks and new trash receptacles.

Projects

(Continued from front page)

Funding for the Comprehensive Parks and Recreation Plan and Phase 1 and Phase 2 of the Caffisch Park improvements was from the Department of Community and Economic Development Greenways, Trails and Recreation Program grant for \$50,000, Union City Community Foundation \$10,000, \$110,000 grant from the state Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, \$50,000 from the Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority (ECGRA) and \$30,000 from the Erie Community Foundation's Shaping Tomorrow grant.

Municipal Lot 3 — This was constructed on South Main Street, across from the Union City Public Library. The parking lot project included a mural affixed to the south wall of the Dai Spa and Salon building and greets visitors traveling northbound in the borough. The mural was created and made by artists Tom Ferraro and Steve Mik of the Looking Glass Project in Erie. They researched the history of the borough and engaged the



Contributed photo

Municipal Lot 3 recently was constructed on South Main Street in Union City, along with a mural and the planting of 11 trees.

community in the mural's theme, colors and design.

Tree planting — The tree project included the planting of 11 trees around Municipal Lot 3 parking lot. The trees are redbud, American elm, serviceberry and red maple.

The trees were financed by remaining matching funds from the Erie Area Council of Governments (COG) Multi-municipal Collaboration grant from ECGRA. Erie County provided an \$85,000 cash match and the city of Erie provided

a \$20,000 cash match.

The Erie Area COG planted more than 725 trees in 11 municipalities over four years (more than a \$250,000 value). The actual dollar amount for the trees planted in Union City has not been determined.

'Billions of dollars' could come to Erie area

Urban policy expert is showing how it's done

Kevin Flowers
Erie Times-News
USA TODAY NETWORK

Bruce Katz believes the Erie region could potentially see billions of dollars in federal aid and other funding over the next several years, earmarked for broadband internet expansion; housing improvements; roads, bridges and other infrastructure; and other uses.

Katz wants to make sure that local officials have a deployment strategy for that funding which includes clear and specific priority projects — and he is working on plans to develop that strategy.

Katz is an urban policy expert and author who is also co-founder and inaugural director of the Nowak Metro Finance Lab, based at Philadelphia's Drexel University, which helps municipalities craft growth strategies and find innovative ways to fund community development.

He is helping Erie-area officials develop a "playbook" for going after various pots of government funding, both from existing government aid programs and grants that are expected to be available in the next few years.

Katz said that would likely include funding from the \$1 trillion bipartisan infrastructure bill currently being debated by Congress.

Much of the strategy will focus on the city of Erie. The plan will also identify local priorities for that funding.

The Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority, Erie Insurance and the Erie Community Foundation are paying \$150,000 for Katz' work.

See BILLIONS, Page 4A

Billions

Continued from Page 1A

"We need to be prepared with our priorities and our plans, so we can respond immediately and try to get these extra dollars," said Renee Lams, Erie Mayor Joe Schember's chief of staff.

Lams said a portion of the city of Erie's roughly \$76 million in federal American Rescue Plan funding will likely be used to leverage future dollars as part of Katz' plan for the region.

The Erie Times-News spoke with Katz recently about his work and what it could mean for Erie.

Explain the genesis of this effort and how you got involved?

We're at this moment where the federal government is investing unprecedented levels of funding in a broad array of activities in cities and counties. But the federal government investments are very fragmented. You literally have hundreds of programs across dozens of agencies. So at the core the effort we're working on in Erie with Erie Insurance, EOCRA and the Community Foundation is to create a unified, integrated investment playbook, focusing particularly on the greater downtown, the bayfront, east and west bayfront neighborhoods and the commercial corridor along 12th Street, so that we can channel these federal investments in such a way that it will really serve Erie's priorities and Erie's needs and they have transformative impact.

Why is much of your focus on those particular areas of the city?

Because we felt that as in many other cities, there's a burst of market momentum in the downtown and on the bayfront, over really the last 10 years. Because of things like the (Erie-Western Pennsylvania) Port Authority, the (Erie County) Convention Center Authority have already done and because of the new Erie Downtown Development Corp. push near Ferry Square. You want to take that market momentum, extend it as far as possible, but have it work for the broadest sector of the population as possible. Have equitable and inclusive outcomes. Jobs, wealth building, growth.



Katz

tial to what happens elsewhere in the city. People want to expand success to the community in such a way that we are equipping workers with the skills they need, that we grow incomes, that we give people homeownership opportunities, give people entrepreneurship. We're hearing similar priorities from very different sectors of the community. You're still a place that makes things, for example. But you still have these hulking (vacant) factories and buildings that need to be torn down and pollution remediated.

Do you see obvious priority areas?

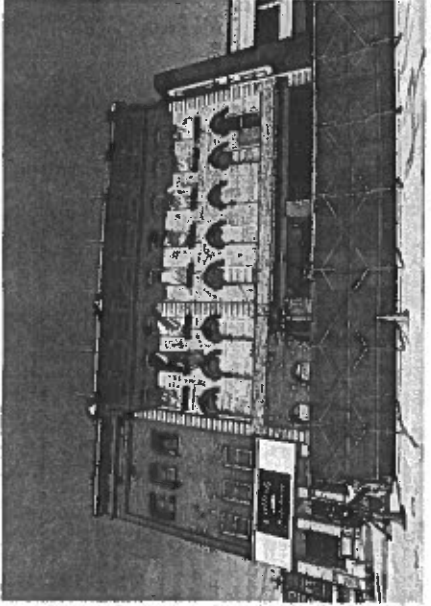
I think Erie needs substantial funding for environmental remediation, demolition and the reuse of some of your former industrial properties. You need funding around housing affordability, particularly single-family housing and home repair. You need housing investment that fits your housing stock. You need investment in entrepreneurship centered around businesses owned by people of color and new Americans.

What other things are being looked at?

We're still early in the process. What we're doing is teasing ideas and costing them out. So if you're going to have a home repair program for example, or a lease to purchase program in the east and west bayfront, what's the cost of that initiative? How much is public money and how much is private? Who is deploying it? This is not an abstract plan. This is going to be an investment playbook and we're really trying to enable the community to maximize both the level of federal funding received and its effectiveness and equitable impact.

There's also a capacity issue that has to be dealt with here. You're going to have to bulk up capacity. Most cities aren't prepared for this level of federal funding coming because their staffs are small, their nonprofits are small. But it's doable in a city like Erie because of size. You can get the people you need around one table.

Contact Kevin Flowers at kflowers@timesnews.com. Follow him on Twitter at @ETNflowers.



The Erie Downtown Development Corp. is creating the Flagship City Public Market on North Park Row. PHOTOS BY JACK HANRAHAN/ERIE TIMES-NEWS

that are prepared will do very well.

So, that's why detailed planning is important for Erie?

You have to put a blueprint together, and it has to be multi-sector and multi-jurisdictional. Because federal funding tends to flow through different entities — sometimes through municipal or county governments, sometimes through public authorities, many times through universities or hospitals or nonprofits. The distribution channels are varied and the forms are varied, because sometimes it's grants, sometimes it's tax incentives, sometimes it's loans. You've got to get your arms around this. At the local level, you have to (navigate) all this capital so it really works to your advantage.

How do Erie leaders think the money should be allocated?

First, I'm hearing a level of confidence that Erie has the potential to achieve great things. People are connected to the place. And whether we talk to people in the downtown, on the bayfront, from the private sector or nonprofits or with neighborhood groups, there's a sense of how all these issues are connected to each other. What happens to downtown for example is essen-



The Erie County Redevelopment Authority plans to demolish the former Erie Mallable iron property at West 12th and Cherry streets. Urban expert Bruce Katz said demolishing/reusing old industrial buildings along the 12th Street corridor should be a development priority in Erie.

ing Black and brown (owned) businesses.

A lot of the large funding we're talking about has not even been finally determined yet. The infrastructure bill, the Innovation (Act), larger bills still before Congress. The American Rescue Plan funding the city and county received is just the beginning. It's just the first wave. Erie could literally be the recipient of billions of dollars over the next half-decade. The key is to get prepared and organized for that. Many communities are not prepared, and those places

Mission Main Street grant gets 'Deluxe' treatment

BY CAROL FIELDING
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Joel Brennan and his wife, Brittany, have owned a business in Corry for the past five years.

In 2016, Brennan purchased the number 46 portion of the 44/46 N. Center St. building and opened a combined barber and tattoo shop called Deluxe Tattoo and Barber Company.

"I was interested in doing a classic tattoo/barbershop combination, which is something that was common back in the 1930s in New York City and on the west coast," Brennan said. "It was common to see tattoo shops in the back of barbershops when tattoo shops were illegal. You had to have some sort of fake front where people could walk in and out. So it was just really classic — this social aspect of tattooing and the social aspect of barbering — it melded together well."

In the summer of 2017, Brennan purchased the number 44 portion, moving Deluxe Tattoo next door and separating the barber shop from the tattoo shop. He later sold the barber shop to Matt Richards who is the current owner and rents the original barber shop space.

Built in 1920, prior to ownership by Brennan, the building and storefront was most recently Trendsetters Hair Styling and Jerry's Barber Shop.

"When this building was



Above left, building owners Joel and Brittany Brennan (center and right) stand with employee Chad Fenstermaker (left) outside their freshly renovated building which sports new paint and lights. Above right, the rear of 44 N. Center St. also received a fresh outlook thanks to the geometric mural that has become a popular backdrop for photos.

built, it was one solid storefront and some time over the years it was subdivided," Brennan said. "When I bought it, there was no way to get upstairs. I asked the owner, 'How the heck are we supposed to get up there?' and he said, 'Well, I got this ladder here.' So it was kind of comical but I thought, 'OK, there's this super cool space up here and nobody can even get to it.'"

Since Brennan purchased number 44, many renovations have taken place to

access the second floor with the eventual plan to move the tattoo shop up there. The moving of the shop has allowed Brennan to open Gallery 44 on the first floor, a seasonally rotating art gallery.

He currently has a show by artist Joel Quiggle titled "Imaginarium" which runs through Nov. 27.

Many updates and renovations have been done to the storefront as well as the interior. With the help of ECGRA and the Mission Main Street grant, Deluxe Tattoo has been

able to paint the front exterior, paint a mural on the rear exterior and add exterior lighting.

"Because of the grant saving us money, we have poured the money back into the space to continue the interior renovation work," Brennan said.

One unique aspect of the project was the large-scale mural on the back of number 44. Although brand new, the mural has already received much positive feedback and has even become a backdrop

for senior portraits and other photo shoots.

"The mural has created a spark and brought talks for murals on other businesses to the table," Brennan said. "We hope that this is just the beginning."

Brennan said that the longer he's been in Corry, the more he has seen improvements made. He appreciates the opportunities brought by Mission Main Street through Impact Corry's Executive Director Charles "Chuck" Gray.

"Chuck and I have been very much on the same page," Brennan said. "When we connected it was like, 'you're doing something new and different and I want to do something new and different, so how can we help each other?'"

He's not sure when it will come to fruition, but Brennan hopes to have an art crawl with pop-up galleries in the downtown.

"I'm excited to just see what comes, whether in a store or an open empty storefront or the old rail station," Brennan said. "But it needs a breath of human interaction and spark of creativity. We all have the ability to think outside the box, and to bring something fresh to the table. And if we can all just keep bringing it, then hopefully we see other people bring it, too."

Gallery 44 and Deluxe Tattoo are open Thursday through Saturday, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.



Your Turn
Perry Wood
Guest columnist

With expert's help, Erie prepares for investment, growth

Finance is a key driving force behind our advanced industries, civic infrastructure and local government services. Finance determines where we're going as a community and how fast we get there. One of the nation's foremost experts on local government financing is Bruce Katz, director of Drexel University's Metro Finance Lab. Katz is also co-author of "New Localism," a book that expertly advances the importance of thinking locally and acting globally, which informs policymaking across the nation.

Katz also understands and respects Erie — he has studied Erie, gotten to know its leaders, and visited Erie many times to speak and advise.

For the past several months, Katz and his associates have been on the ground in Erie working on as important a project we as a community have tackled in almost a decade. Erie — and the entire world — has changed a lot since Erie Refocused was published in 2016. Efforts spearheaded by our economic development agencies, including the Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority, the Erie County Redevelopment Authority, the Erie Downtown Development Corp., our cities and towns and the local chambers of commerce, have all begun to take hold as we watch our county transform and reinvent itself.

Katz has been quick to point out that private-sector investments in Erie have reached a crucial tipping point requiring key strategic civic investments to amplify their effect. In addition, the new landscape created by COVID-19 has caused leaders to re-examine their revitalization strategies, especially around real estate and technology. These conversations are pivotal in Erie County moving an agenda forward

that maximizes access to and use of federal and state dollars in promoting economic and community development.

As part of the work to create a playbook for the region, the Katz team has interviewed more than 50 business, civic, and government leaders in Erie County — and reviewed a dozen local planning documents. Working through the Jefferson Educational Society, the listening sessions have placed great value on areas of economic development such as: placemaking, racial inclusion, tapping into a variety of innovation sectors, and building on our county's existing assets. Once the research phase is complete, it will be analyzed and inform a playbook guiding Erie County on how to invest local resources in shovel-ready projects that are embraced by the community both for their economic multiplier potential and social benefits.

Katz was in Erie last week taking an up-close look at what the city of Erie refers to as the core: the central business district, east and west bayfront neighborhoods flanking downtown, and the waterfront. Tertiary projects include industrial infrastructure funding for the 12th Street corridor and innovation-based approaches to the plastics industry. Our organizations, investors, and government leaders are contributing to the playbook's success by lending their ideas and resources.

This approach worked with Opportunity Zones. It can work with the American Rescue Plan Act, the Innovation and Competition Act, and the American Jobs Act, all being passed or considered by Congress as we speak. The goal is to make sure Erie County has financial architecture in place to:

- 1) Win competitive grant applications.
- 2) Advocate efficiently by getting organized.
- 3) Ensure that as many Erie County residents prosper from these funds as possible.
- 4) Build capacity where necessary.

Katz pioneered the Opportunity Zone playbook for Erie County. Now, with the assistance of the Jefferson Educational Society, Erie Insurance, the Erie Community Foundation, and ECGRA, our community will benefit from Katz to work on our next playbook. This work could change outcomes for Erie County as we all work to establish a competitive advantage for our economy and community benefit for our citizens.

Having Bruce Katz, the nation's leading expert in metropolitan government, as an adviser also gives Erie County a competitive advantage in leveraging these dollars with private and philanthropic investment.

In other news, ECGRA was recently selected by Erie County Council and County Executive Kathy Dahlkemper to administer a new grant program they refer to as "transformative" grantmaking. In the coming months, we will be working through our board of directors in consultation with elected officials, local leaders and potential applicants to determine what makes a grant application "transformative" in its approach. Instead of responding to federal and state policies dictated from above, we'll be looking at projects from the ground up.

As these exciting efforts move ahead, Erie's economic development community is rowing in unison toward Erie's future — and from my vantage I am pleased to report that it is brighter than ever.

Perry Wood is the executive director of the Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority.



Katz