



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

**EXECUTIVE
DIRECTOR'S
REPORT
FOR
AUGUST
2023**

Tammi Michali

From: Mary Wassell <wassell@parkerphilips.com>
Sent: Wednesday, July 26, 2023 9:00 AM
Cc: Kate Philips
Subject: RELEASE: Three Playbook Initiatives Gain Momentum, New Investments



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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

Three Playbook Initiatives Gain Momentum, New Investments

Work Begins Efforts to Revitalize Erie's Eastside Community and Preserve Affordable Housing

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ERIE, PA (July 26, 2023) – Infinite Erie, formed and funded by Erie Insurance, The Erie Community Foundation, and ECGRA, marked significant progress on three investment ready projects outlined in Erie's Investment Playbook.

In June, the Hamot Health Foundation and The Erie Community Foundation pledged \$15,000 to study the feasibility of the Burton School Project; the Erie County Land Bank was awarded a \$400,000 grant from the Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency (PHFA) to form the Cornerstone Community Land Trust (CCLT), and a groundbreaking ceremony was held for the Grow Erie initiative to begin a generational transformation of Savocchio Opportunity Park.

"This is just the beginning," said Karen Bilowith, The Erie Community Foundation President & CEO. "Each of these initiatives is part of the Investment Playbook — place-based neighborhood strategies — to revitalize neighborhoods and increase equity across Erie County. By coordinating inclusive growth strategies, Infinite Erie is organized across public, private, and civic leadership to implement Erie's Investment Playbook."

Infinite Erie worked with the Erie County Landbank and members of the CCLT steering committee to secure \$400,000 in funding to form the CCLT, an initiative committed to creating and preserving affordable housing throughout Erie County. Money awarded through the Pennsylvania Housing Affordability and Rehabilitation Enhancement (PHARE) fund will be dedicated to increasing the supply of permanently affordable housing and reducing future potential gentrification of struggling neighborhoods.

Revitalization of the Burton School is another Infinite Erie Investment Playbook initiative designed to transform Erie's East Bayfront Neighborhood. Infinite Erie commends the Hamot Health Foundation and The Erie Community Foundation for funding a feasibility study of the Burton School Project. As a historic site, the Burton School can play a critical role in providing important services to Erie's neighborhoods. The school can serve as a hub for childcare, pre-K, and workforce development while stimulating the economy by creating jobs and increasing foot traffic.

"Investment in the historic Burton School is vital to transforming a neighborhood plagued by violence and tragedy. With 50% of our population age 18 and under, the highest in the city, bringing the building back to life as a neighborhood hub of education will work to rebuild hope and aspiration among not just our youth but all residents," said Gary Horton, founder and CEO of the Urban Erie Community Development Corporation, which made an offer to purchase the building in February of 2023. "The project is in line with the City of Erie's Comprehensive Plan, Infinite Erie, and the strategic plan of the Eastside Grassroots Coalition. When combined with other projects, like the revitalization of Rodger Young Park and the development of Savocchio Opportunity Park, the Burton project will have a profound impact on the transformation of the Buffalo Road corridor, an area that the private sector has historically neglected."

The revitalization of the Savocchio Opportunity Park was celebrated at the June 15 groundbreaking of the Grow Erie project. An equitable economic development project establishing controlled environment agriculture, the project marks the end of a 15-year effort to revitalize the park and the beginning of a generational transformation of the space. Initially working with Cornell University's Engineers without Borders, who surveyed residents that identified access to land and urban agriculture as a priority, and partnering with the Erie County Redevelopment Authority (ECRDA) and Integrated Agriculture Systems (INTAG), Grow Erie is a public-private collaboration that merges cutting-edge research, technology, and agriculture science with marketplace expertise to produce local goods, create meaningful jobs, and revitalize a long-vacant lot.

"As a key project of Erie's Investment Playbook, Grow Erie will work to transform the East Erie neighborhood through long-term, sustainable, and equitable growth — exactly what the Playbook was intended for," said Kim Thomas, executive director of Infinite Erie. "By ensuring ongoing collaboration between local residents, community leaders, and funders, Grow Erie is transforming Erie by putting plans into action."

MCIC's Grow Erie project was also the first recipient of the Infinite Erie's Community Impact Fund, which The Erie Community Foundation has already committed \$5 million to. The Grow Erie project, which received \$500,000, directly aligns with what the fund's mission is all about — working to advance progress in Erie County and close the social, economic, and racial inequities.

Collectively, these projects will move the Infinite Erie Investment Playbook forward by focusing on place-based neighborhood initiatives. The CCLT project will increase home ownership, reduce blight, repair housing across the affordability spectrum, and allow BIPOC residents to benefit from the construction boom. Public and private funding can revitalize neighborhoods by reviving commercial corridors, like the Savocchio Opportunity Park, and anchor properties, like the Burton School, ultimately bringing about generational change and increasing equity throughout Erie.

ABOUT INFINITE ERIE

By coordinating inclusive growth strategies to deliver transformative change, Infinite Erie will implement Erie's Investment Playbook and position Erie to attract & secure more public and private sector funding than like-size regions. Powered by the Erie Action Team, Infinite Erie consists of public, private, philanthropic, and civic leadership in Erie County, who bring influence, guidance, and resources to empower the work of the Delivery Teams and put plans into action. Erie Action Team members include: The Erie Community Foundation, Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority (ECGRA), Erie Insurance, Jefferson Educational Society, Hamot Health Foundation, Erie Regional Chamber & Growth Partnership, Erie County Redevelopment Authority, City of Erie, Diverse Erie,

Erie's Black Wall Street, Urban Erie Community Development Corporation, Greater Erie Economic Development Corporation (GEEDC), and the Office of the Governor of Pennsylvania (ex-officio).

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PP

July 2023

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

IMPLEMENTED

14 Total July posts
10 Total graphics created
Strategic Marketing Planning with Kate Philips and Executive Director
2022–23 Annual Report

IN PROGRESS | 2023 Grant Releases and Graphics

Holiday Graphics
2022–23 Annual Report Graphics

IN PLANNING

Parks Fields & Trails 2 year report
ECGRA Playbook
Roadshow Tours

[View this email in your browser](#)



INFINITE PROGRESS

By coordinating inclusive growth strategies to deliver transformative change, [Infinite Erie](#) has begun the hard work to implement [Erie's Investment Playbook](#) and position Erie to attract and secure more public and private sector funding than like-size regions.

Recently, Infinite Erie marked significant progress on **three investment-ready projects** outlined in the Investment Playbook.

- In June, the Hamot Health Foundation and The Erie Community Foundation pledged \$15,000 to study the feasibility of the Burton School Project.
- The Erie County Land Bank was awarded a \$400,000 grant from the Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency (PHFA) to form the Cornerstone Community Land Trust (CCLT).
- A groundbreaking ceremony was held for Minority Community Investment Coalition's (MCIC) Grow Erie project to begin a generational transformation of Savocchio Opportunity Park.

Through key collaboration, these place-based neighborhood initiatives will move the Playbook forward by revitalizing neighborhoods and increasing equity across Erie County.

Learn more about these projects that are working to revitalize Erie's Eastside community and preserve affordable housing [here](#).

#InfiniteProgress

Burton School

Cornerstone
Community
Land Trust

Grow Erie

ERIE'S INVESTMENT PLAYBOOK



BROADBAND INITIATIVE

TAKE ERIE COUNTY TO THE NEXT LEVEL

Big things are happening that can help Erie County define its future — and one of those key initiatives is broadband expansion in underserved and unserved areas. Excellent and accessible broadband is a necessity that impacts nearly every

aspect of life. Currently, Pennsylvania is developing plans to expand broadband availability and address digital needs and is expected to receive substantial federal funding for the purposes of broadband expansion, adoption, and literacy.

Last month, Infinite Erie hosted the Internet For All: Connecting the Commonwealth with the Pennsylvania Broadband Development Authority (PBDA), in partnership with VNET and the Jefferson Educational Society, where Erie County community members had the opportunity to voice their opinion on their Internet experiences to help the PBDA with their broadband action plan to equitably close the digital divide.

If you were unable to make the meeting, you can still provide feedback through a survey. Your participation is essential to supporting our collective interests in fast, reliable high-speed internet service for everyone.

[CLICK HERE TO TAKE THE SURVEY](#)

APPLY TO BE AN ECONOMIC RECOVERY CORPS FELLOW

In partnership with the U.S. Economic Development Administration and International Economic Development Council, the Economic Recovery Corps is seeking 65 fellows.

Fellows will have infinite opportunity to serve as catalysts, working in partnership with local leaders and communities to activate economic development strategies that drive innovation, sustainable growth, and build long-term resilience.

[LEARN MORE AND APPLY HERE](#)

Transform Economic Recovery

APPLY TO BE AN ECONOMIC
RECOVERY CORPS FELLOW

Applications Due By August 15!

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH



IN THE NEWS

Infinite Erie has been making headlines. Please take a moment to read these insightful articles and insights to learn more about the collaborative efforts that are driving Erie's economic and community development.

ERIE NEWS NOW

WJET 24

**HAMOT HEALTH

FOUNDATION: THE INSIDER

**Infinite Erie's Permanent Supportive Housing initiative discussed beginning at 18:27.

LIKE, FOLLOW, SHARE

Infinite Erie transcends politics to transform place. Through the collaboration and coordination of inclusive growth strategies, the Erie Action Team will put Infinite Erie plans into action to serve as a catalyst for equitable and inclusive growth to deliver transformative change.

Our social media pages are filled with resources, information on the 35 projects, and shareable graphics. Please like, follow, and share our posts to help spread the word.

Powered by the
Erie Action Team



20TH ANNIVERSARY

2004 - 2023



EDINBORO ART & MUSIC FESTIVAL



**A gracious THANK YOU for
your support of the Edinboro Art
& Music Festival. Whether it was
time, money, expertise, goods, or
services - your generous
contributions help to make this
event a success - we are most
grateful and appreciative!**



*Can't thank everyone
to EAMF enough!
for all your help!*



UNION CITY POLICE DEPARTMENT

Union City Police Department 13 South Main St.
Union City, PA 16438
814-438-3441 secretary@ucpolice.us

August 8, 2023

ECGRA
5340 Fryling Road
Erie Pa 16510

We would like to thank you for your donation to our National Night Out event. Contributions like this help make the evening a huge success. It brings us great joy seeing the community come together with events like these. This year we had different activities and tables set up to provide information concerning safety, we had over 250 people in attendance. We were also able to give away 10 Bikes & many other prizes along with food and a beverage.

Again, we want to thank you for your support in this event & our department. We look forward to working with you again!

Sincerely,
Union City Police Department

Thursday, June 29, 2023

Impact Corry receives \$175K, sets priorities for completing projects



Mason Bennett/North East News-Journal

BY CHLOE FORBES

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Impact Corry is focused on fostering entrepreneurial values with a new grant from the Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority

(ECCGRA) totaling \$175,000.

The grant, which is part of the Building a Better Future program, comes from funds Erie County received from the Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Fund.

"ECCGRA has been dedi-

cated to supporting small businesses in rural areas," said Dr. Perry Wood, executive director of ECCGRA, during an awards ceremony on Tuesday.

"Today's announcement is the next big step toward that goal."

◀ See **Priorities**, P.2

Priorities

(Continued from front page)

Along with Impact Corry, BridgeWay Capital got \$200,000; Erie's Black Wall Street, \$48,000; Sisters of St. Joseph Neighborhood Network, \$57,750; and U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants, \$150,000.

Impact Corry received the grant for its Increasing Rural Businesses through Erie County project. Charles Gray, executive director of Impact Corry, explained that while the plan focuses on building rural businesses, it can be broken into two parts.

The first is viability — the ability to work successfully. Impact Corry was able to use this grant funding to bring Tony Peyronnel on board as an "economic gardener."

Peyronnel will meet with 144 local businesses a year to find their strengths, challenges and goals, then connect them with the resources they need to be successful and sustain it. The Erie Regional Chamber and Growth Partnership will accompany him on those visits.

The purpose is to nurture and mentor businesses that already exist.

"Rather than growing outward and pulling people in, we're focused on the businesses here in Corry," Gray said.

She mentioned that out of the 15 businesses Peyronnel has connected with so far,

many struggle with web presence, whether through maintaining a website or establishing a social media presence.

With this grant, Impact Corry is planning to utilize its partnership with Corry Higher Education Council to hold small workshops that help those business owners to revamp their web presence.

Gray said businesses are often focused on keeping the lights on and paying employees, not looking to what social media post they can put up for the day, so it's crucial to have those resources.

The other part of the plan is visibility. That means making sure Corry's rural businesses are prominent in the public eye.

Impact Corry plans to bring in photographers and writers to document all the assets in the area and build out a web portal that will act as a one-stop-shop tourism hub. That way, when people visit Erie County, they can extend their stay by easily locating things to do outside the city.

This project comes as a line of others hangs in the balance.

Gray said that her top priorities right now are based on funding. So far, projects Impact Corry completed include: Listing Downtown Corry as a historic district on the national registry; brand development for Corry Rails + Trail and Corry Greenway Junction Trail; invested in Renaissance Block grants to receive over 42 homes; plans for North Hills Municipal Golf Course; PLAN Corry for the

city and others.

The projects she said she needs to focus on now are the Corry Area Technology Center and Hub (CAIHC) facility, fiber optic internet rollout, Renaissance Block funding, changes to Corry City Park and working jointly with the Hi-Ed.

While she expresses gratitude for her team so far, she said they need help.

"We know that we need to grow to be able to move all the projects as quickly as they need to move," Gray said. "Things could move more quickly, but until we solve the capacity issue, we'll just have to keep task switching. Our ambition has brought a lot in, and now we need the capacity to deliver on everything."

She said she'll be cutting back on fundraising efforts so she can focus on projects like CAIHC and Renaissance Block grants, but she's worried at what cost it will come.

"We need to expand because if I have to focus on implementation exclusively, we will come to a point where I won't have any grants in the pipeline, and we'll have to start all over again," she said.

She said Impact Corry plans to draw on the community for that support. In the interim, she thanked the Corry Redevelopment Authority for paying for Deb Thompson of Strategy Solutions to work with Impact Corry.

"She's working with us to find a way forward and build that capacity," Gray said.

Thursday, July 20, 2023

Museum sees improvements thanks to ECGRA grants

BY CHLOE FORBES
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As its artifacts age, so does the building that houses them at the Corry Area Historical Society. That's why the society's museum is having some work done.

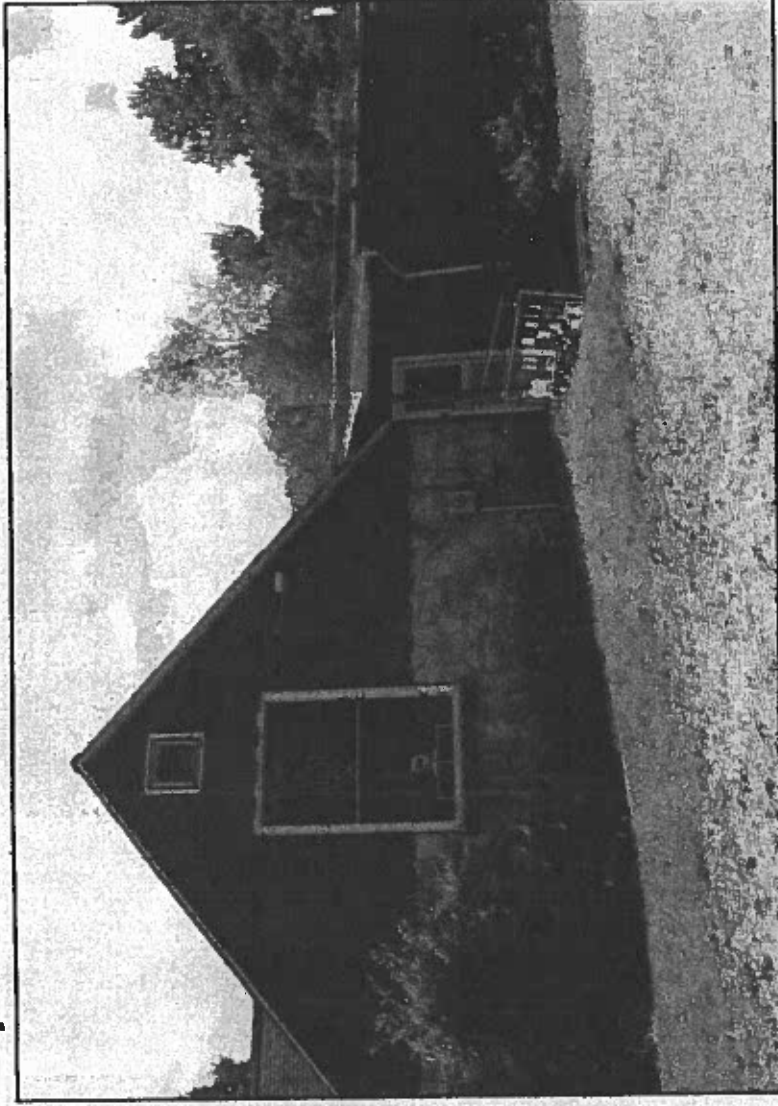
In the spring, the museum was awarded a total of \$2,000 through a grant from the Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority (ECGRA). The grant is through Erie Yesterday, a collaborative effort across local museums in Erie County.

There was a slight delay in receiving the funds, but now the museum is rearing to get started. The funding will help to improve the entrance way to the museum near the parking lot and enhance its facade.

"Improving the entrance way will make it safer and more inviting to guests," said Ann Clark, president of the historical society. She said it will be especially helpful in the winter due to the ice buildup on the entrance.

This comes as the museum just completed a project to repair its siding.

In 1991, an addition was



Rebekah Wallace/The Corry Journal

A view of Corry Area Historical Museum's main entrance and parking lot show where improvements will be made thanks to a \$2,000 ECGRA grant through an Erie Yesterday program.

constructed connecting the pole barn to the central museum building. The wood siding on the addition had deteriorated and was partially rotted.

The lower section around the building has now been replaced.

After the entryway is re-done, the museum has plans to work on even more improvements to the building. With the ECGRA grant, the museum has a year to complete the project. With the delay in distributing funds, Clark said she's unsure when

exactly that year starts and ends, but she said it's all the same nonetheless because the society is going to move as quickly as possible on the project.

"We hope to have it done way before the deadline," she said.