If you have been paying attention (and we hope you have) to what both PDC and the National Main Street Center espouse, you should be well aware that one of the fundamental missions of your organization, and one of your primary responsibilities as a manager, is to improve and/or enhance the environment for reinvestment in your community. This mission/responsibility extends to creating a better environment for entrepreneurship in your town. In short, you should be fostering a more dynamic “entrepreneurial ecosystem.”

WHAT? Yeah, I said it – a more dynamic entrepreneurial ecosystem. So what does an entrepreneurial ecosystem look like? If you simply Google the term, you will find a wealth of information. Recently, I attended an Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) funding workshop, where there was a great deal of discussion about the importance of fostering and supporting these entrepreneurial ecosystems. The graphic here, from the ARC website, helps to more clearly define the structure of an entrepreneurial ecosystem.

There is a lot to digest here and an “economic vitality” committee that takes on this task should realize that there is a great deal of work to be done. First, and probably most importantly, is to conduct an assessment of the community’s status relative to each of these “infrastructure” categories.

Without knowing where you stand, you will never know where you have to go. Some of these infrastructure issues will be easier to address than others.

Among the more difficult segments to change will be talent and market access. Obviously. More densely populated parts of the Commonwealth will have a greater number of potential entrepreneurs and so help with generating a critical mass of individuals necessary to establish a local entrepreneurial network. It’s not that smaller town and rural areas can’t develop a local ecosystem, they just have to be more realistic about the size of the system.

The two areas where I do see the local organization being able to significantly impact the entrepreneurial ecosystem are the community culture and government/regulatory support elements. Informational sessions, educational workshops, facilitating the creation of local entrepreneurial networks and “makers guilds” are all steps that the local organization can take. There are also organizations, including the PA Department of Education, that are supporting the development of entrepreneurship programs for young people. Local revitalization organizations can and should be a partner in that effort.

In addition, a review of the local zoning ordinance to make sure that the downtown is “user friendly” for incubators, co-working spaces, commercial kitchens, micro brewpubs and micro-distilleries, sidewalk cafes, etc., all help to facilitate the creation of the local entrepreneurial ecosystem. Setting up micro or small business loan funds and partnering with your local Small Business Development Center (SBDC) can help with the business assistance and the capital side of the ecosystem.

Creating an entrepreneurial ecosystem is a transformative strategy that every local revitalization organization should explore, evaluate and (if appropriate) incorporate into your five year strategy.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EVENT</th>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>TIME</th>
<th>LOCATION</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2019 Community Revitalization Conference</td>
<td>June 2-5</td>
<td>All Day Events</td>
<td>Erie, PA</td>
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<tr>
<td>New Manager Training</td>
<td>Monday, July 22 &amp; Tuesday, July 23</td>
<td>8:30 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.</td>
<td>Harrisburg, PA PDC Offices</td>
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<td>Community Revitalization Academy: Organization</td>
<td>Wednesday, July 24 &amp; Thursday, July 25</td>
<td>8:30 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.</td>
<td>Harrisburg, PA PDC Offices</td>
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<td>Manager’s Meeting &amp; Regional Leadership Forum WEST</td>
<td>Wednesday, September 11</td>
<td>9:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. (Meeting)</td>
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<td>9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. (Forum)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Manager’s Meeting &amp; Regional Leadership Forum EAST</td>
<td>Wednesday, September 18</td>
<td>9:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. (Meeting)</td>
<td>TBD</td>
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<td>9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. (Forum)</td>
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<tr>
<td>New Manager Training</td>
<td>Monday, September 30 &amp; Tuesday, October 1</td>
<td>8:30 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.</td>
<td>Harrisburg, PA PDC Offices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Revitalization Academy: Physical Improvement</td>
<td>Wednesday, October 2 &amp; Thursday, October 3</td>
<td>8:30 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.</td>
<td>Harrisburg, PA PDC Offices</td>
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For more information or to register for an event or training, please visit our online events calendar.
Amy Kopecky
*Lebanon Business Improvement District*

Lebanon native Amy Kopecky is the new manager of the Lebanon Business Improvement District (BID), recently announced by the Lebanon Foundation. The Lebanon Foundation serves as the Neighborhood Improvement District Management Association for the BID. Kopecky replaces real estate professional John Tice, who stepped in as interim director in March 2018 following the resignation of Kelly Withum.

The BID operates as a public-private partnership funded through an annual assessment on commercial buildings in the district. The BID encompasses Cumberland Street from 4th to 11th, as well as portions of Chestnut and Willow Streets.

Kopecky previously served as a client relationship manager for Heartland Wealth Advisors in Lebanon. She is a graduate of Lebanon Catholic High School and Immaculata University and serves on the board of directors for the Lebanon Community Theatre.

Dinny Kinloch chaired the recruitment commitment for the BID and said of Kopecky that her strong business background and demonstrated commitment to the community gave her the edge over other candidates. “We are looking forward to working with Amy as she leads Downtown Lebanon in continuing growth and improvement,” he said in the release.

Bettina Jones
*Castle Shannon Borough/the Castle Shannon Revitalization Corporation*

Bettina Jones started as Keystone Community Coordinator for Castle Shannon Borough/the Castle Shannon Revitalization Corporation in February 2019, where she is continuing the effort of that organization to breathe new life into Castle Shannon's downtown business district and to promote the community's identity as a transit hub and family-oriented and friendly place to live.

Prior to moving to Castle Shannon, Bettina was working at a university and at several development non-profit organizations in the Republic of Macedonia, while working on a PhD studying foreign direct investment in Macedonia. She is a graduate of the University of Pittsburgh Graduate School of Public and International Affairs, where she studied international relations and economic security. She is now happy to apply those skills and her international experience in the very localized and hands-on role of Keystone Community Coordinator.
PDC ANNOUNCES ANNUAL REPORT

“So much of what we do to advance our local economies is difficult to quantify. We foster pride. We celebrate history. We honor community leadership and equip them with the tools they need to grow as professionals. Revitalization doesn’t happen overnight, but your continued dedication and that strategic work can lead to real change.”
- NAOMI NAYLOR

MESSAGES FROM THE INCOMING BOARD CHAIR AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR | SERVICE DELIVERY | EDUCATION & NETWORKING | MEMBERSHIP | HIGH PERFORMING PROGRAMS | FINANCIAL STATEMENT

FIND THE FULL REPORT AT PADOWNTOWN.ORG/about-us/governance-documents

READ THE REPORT
YOUTH AND GARDENS
Bring Neighborly Smiles in Erie

by Stefan Klosowski
Prior to her initial work with SSJNN of managing the children’s programs, Gretchen was a writer for a daily newspaper and a teacher. She now spends time on development, marketing and grant writing with a focus on Little Italy’s (as the neighborhood is sometimes referred to) gardens and farmers market. In 2014 Gretchen was recognized by the United Way and Unified Erie with an award for her work with youth and gardens while also selected as one of “Erie’s 40 under 40” by Erie Reader.

Other notable awards through the years include:

- 2017 - Urban Farm Project from the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society
- 2011 - Outstanding Support of the Champs after-school program, Erie School District

There are plenty of neighborhood-wide changes taking place including eight gardens, the Urban Farm which supplies the flourishing farmer’s market and a local restaurant, Alkeme. The Namaste Garden together with several Bhutanese and Nepalese neighbors have been growing unique vegetables and herbs. On Mondays during market season, nearly 200 visitors on average visit the local farm stands where you’ll find many neighborhood teens often helping to sell what, in most cases, they’ve planted, tended, and harvested.

The physical face of this neighborhood has also changed. Since 2012 more than 100 facades have been completed through many generous funding partnerships that include the NAP and NPP tax credit program and the Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority. These facades and the rich stories told through 16 neighborhood murals make for a dramatically visible change. Along with replacement sidewalks, these improvements demonstrate care and give residents a sense of pride.

None of the neighborhood revitalization and progress would be possible without the 300 plus volunteers and because of their efforts and accomplishments they’ve been recognized by the Junior League of Erie and the Neighborhood Resource Organization. This consistency of volunteer presence and the relationships formed gives Gretchen a deep sense of gratitude.

Beyond the special event days at Little Italy Farmer’s Market, the neighborhood celebrates National Night Out and hosts two notable fundraisers, the La Nuova Aurora Society in September featuring a celebrity bar tending event and each spring the Guess That Tune Gala with 500 or so attendees.

Gretchen attended Mercyhurst Prep High School in Erie, and received her BA from Clarion University, majoring in English with a concentration in Writing. Gretchen earned a Secondary Education Teaching Certificate from Edinboro University and dedicated a year of service with AmeriCorps NCCC western region, based in Sacramento, CA.

Personally, Gretchen enjoys gardening, cooking and preserving foods, reading, traveling, and outdoor activities such as hiking and kayaking on Lake Erie. She is a member of Saint Patrick Church and Associate of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Northwestern PA. She loves Erie and spends time with friends and family, including husband Dave and Irish setter, Rowdy.

As the Neighborhood Manager for the Sisters of Saint Joseph Neighborhood Network (SSJNN) Elm Street Program, Gretchen, like most managers, wears many hats.
In early December a few years ago, a volunteer had just finished stringing lights on a little pine tree near the front of the International Flavors Community Garden. When Gretchen left the building it was already dark and the tree looked great all aglow. As she drove past the garden, she saw four little girls from the apartment house nearby all holding hands around the tree and singing Christmas carols. Out from their little apartment and there in the cold in their tattered jackets - it was a magical moment to see.

One day last summer at the farmers market a little boy, maybe 7, came up to her as he was finishing an apple he'd just gotten from the market. He said he really loved it and tried some other foods for the first time that day. He gave her three seeds from his apple and said he wanted her to plant them so more people could have these apples to eat like he did.

Once at the farmers market a dear neighbor came by to say hello. She is a regular at the market and doesn't miss a Monday. She told Gretchen that she cancels her meals on wheels during the summer months because she so enjoys coming to the market, buying veggies herself and visiting with everyone. This is a reminder of the other benefits of having the market. It is much more than fresh food.
One afternoon several years ago a young girl walked into her office and just quietly sat there. When asked what she wanted she replied, “Nothing, I just need to be here for a while.” There are various activities we have to support our neighbors, but she said the little girl’s words speak to the needs of the area – it is the presence, support and hope of the Sisters in the inner city that is important. We just need to be there!

- FORMER SSJNN DIRECTOR
Erie Shines Bright

by Guest Contributor Emily Fetko, Erie Downtown Partnership

Erie, PA has long been the gem of the northwest Pennsylvania region. And it's shining brighter today than ever before.
There’s a definite shift in perspective and the way people are thinking about our new Erie. If you’re one of the many Erieites who beam when asked to describe, “your Erie”, then you know what I’m talking about. There’s a smirk that somehow can’t be hidden when we talk about “our Erie”.

Erie’s on the verge of a major renaissance. In fact, that renaissance is already in motion and visible throughout the downtown. The skyline is changing. Key sectors are growing and preparing for more employees with beautiful, state of the art facilities going up floor by floor at Erie Insurance, now Erie County’s largest employer. The hospital downtown, UPMC Hamot, is building a new patient tower—all with serving the Erie community with better care in mind.

A new hotel is being built along downtown’s beautiful Bayfront with all the amenities you could want, joining existing, quality hotels that overlook a breathtaking bay.

And a new economy is emerging in the innovation and tech sector with the introduction of the Erie Innovation District, which isn’t just creating a dynamic Smart City framework, but a tech revolution bringing tech start-ups from all over the world to test and launch products and services that advance Erie’s position on a national level as a lead innovation city.

Gannon University, a college within downtown, is renovating a large building downtown to be home of the future iHACK incubator that will offer students tech and cyber security training as well as house tech entrepreneurs.

This sense of community among Erie’s growing tech set doesn’t stop there—in the historic Renaissance Centre, downtown’s tallest building, there are creators, makers, and innovators on almost every floor including the collective at Radius Cowork—Erie’s first coworking space with over 100 members. We’re definitely a community that supports the hustle of the everyday entrepreneurial life and defends the role these entrepreneurs play in shaping our Erie.

**Erie is this eclectic community full of natural beauty, abundant pride, and the storied past that so many communities across our nation recognize in themselves.**

**No longer the manufacturing center it once was, Erie has struggled along with so many other “rust belt” communities waiting for their turn. Waiting for their time.**

**The wait can be frustrating, but for discerning eyes you’ll see that Erie’s turn is here. We’ve been called off the bench. Our time is now.**
From small business to large corporations you can feel commerce happening all around you as jets fly over downtown into our Erie International Airport, CSX trains grind past the Brewerie at Union Station, and the bellowing horns of monstrous container ships being towed into the Donjon Ship Building & Repair facility from the Saint Lawrence Seaway to our bay wake your senses and disrupt everything you’ve heard about Erie.

No, it’s not dreary Erie. No, it’s not snowing year-round. No, we’re not dead. Not done. We’re just beginning. You might have been to Erie when the Pennsylvania Downtown Center statewide conference was held here 12 years ago. Maybe you came to Erie a few years ago. Erie’s significantly different than it was 12 years ago, and even three years ago. And you need to see it with your own eyes. Today.

The Erie that we’re offering you during the state-wide conference is an immersive behind the scenes peak at what it takes to rebuild. And we know that every community can relate to the need to evolve and to reinvent. Our time is now, and we can’t wait to show you how we got here.

Erie’s transformation starts downtown.

The conference early bird rate has been extended to Friday, May 3.

Register today!
LOOKING GLASS ART PROJECT

Come to Erie on Sunday, June 2 in time to join the Looking Glass Art Project mobile tour that exemplifies a collaborative community public art program created by artists Tom Ferraro and Ed Grout. Through story telling they collectively transform information into public art projects while providing enrichment through the process.

Edward Grout and Tom Ferraro who, after a lifetime of creating their own vast bodies of work, joined forces in 2012 realizing what public art can do for a community. Their goal was to democratize the creative process by giving the reigns to the populations that would ultimately be the most exposed to their pieces. They wanted the finished artwork to be a reflection of the region and for people to see themselves in what they created together as a community.

From their first residency, LifeWorks Erie, an educational and health service of the LECOM Institute for Successful Aging, participants were interviewed then created artwork reflecting on the transformation of technology in their lifetimes. Their most recent endeavor “I am; I will be….Erie’s Future”, with Erie Downtown Partnership—included over 75 refugees from the International Institute of Erie and over 225 English as Second Language Students at Erie High School—participants examined the stories of their lives. They shared not only the history and culture of their homelands, but also the perils and atrocities of events that led to their flight to the United States and ultimately to Erie, Pa.

These stories and the many others told through this program are quite moving. Along with the stories, the art will captivate you.
BUILDING ERIE WILL BE A MARATHON NOT A SPRINT

LAWRENCE PARK
HOW LIBRARIES SUPPORT INNOVATION AND CREATIVITY
The Idea Lab in the Blasco Memorial Library is the place to develop ideas, learn design skills, and spark entrepreneurial spirit. The Idea Lab is a hands-on collaborative space ready to be explored — a place to get connected with community experts and have access to a curated collection of business and maker resources.

Jude Shingle, the Idea Lab’s Emerging Technology Librarian, will lead this walking tour where conference goers can see these Lab features:

- **Idea Lab Makerspace**: Design, create, and build using shared equipment including 3D printers, sewing machines, vinyl cutter, design software, and more.

- **Media Lab**: Record music, video, podcasts, and more in the digital media lab.

- **Community Classroom and Collaboratory spaces**

- **Job & Career Resources and Support**: With access to a curated collection of job and career resources and a place to meet with community partners for help with navigating a career path.

URBAN NEIGHBORHOODS GARDEN TOUR
Neighborhood organizations and entrepreneurs have seized the opportunity that lies in Erie’s blighted or vacant lots. While touring, learn how these groups have reused areas and turned them into thriving green space, gardens, urban farms and markets.

- **Our West Bayfront and Bayfront East Side Task Force (BEST) - community gardens and revitalization efforts**

- **For profit urban farm French Street Farms, overview of reuse of vacant lots tying in with city’s revitalization plan and entrepreneur’s strategy and success, Owner/Operator Carrie Sachse**

- **SSJ Neighborhood Network’s community gardens with a focus on Urban Farm Project (social enterprise program with neighborhood teens) and Little Italy Farmers Market**

LAWRENCE PARK HISTORIC DISTRICT
*A “Garden City” in Erie County*
After prior applications for historic designation failed, in 2018 the Lawrence Park Historic District was listed on the National Register of Historic Places. This was funded, in part, through a Keystone Historic Preservation Planning Grant the PA State Historic Preservation Office (PASHPO) and a grant from the Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority.

Melinda Meyer, a public historian, and Bill Callahan, the western PA community preservation coordinator for PASHPO, will guide this tour and share not only the history of Lawrence Park but the story behind the company that went out of its way to build a really nice community and create good lives for its employees.

THE CONFERENCE EARLY BIRD RATE HAS BEEN EXTENDED TO FRIDAY, MAY 3.

Register today!
THANK YOU
to our 2019 Conference Sponsors
Back in October 2015, the Kauffman Foundation first coined the term, “entrepreneurial ecosystems”. The Kauffman Foundation used the philosophy as a way to approach entrepreneurialism from a comprehensive, multiple perspective systems approach beyond simply financing and training entrepreneurs.

by Julie Fitzpatrick
The Kauffman Foundation has outlined six major objectives a community, particularly a regional community, could follow in developing an entrepreneurial ecosystem:

1. **Favor incumbents less** – work to lower barriers for new corporations

2. **Listen to entrepreneurs** – policymakers could engage entrepreneurs to develop more supportive and practical policies

3. **Map the ecosystem** – inventory the participants and show their roles and how they’re connected

4. **Think big, start small, but move fast** – with entrepreneurial ventures and in developing progressive & responsive strategies

5. **Avoid artificially segmenting your community or your strategies** – most entrepreneurs wear many hats, are versatile & are involved/connected in many ways

6. **Prepare to capitalize on crises** – economic disruption creates entrepreneurial opportunities

From an ecological perspective, an ecosystem is a community of interacting organisms and their physical environment, or a complex network or interconnected system. The two main components of an ecological ecosystem are: non-organic aspects: temperature, humidity and topography (abiotic) and the life forms that inhabit it: producers, consumers, etc. (biotic). If an abiotic component changes, an abiotic component has to adapt or it dies. It is a perfect comparison to how interconnected and interdependent an entrepreneurial environment is to its surroundings.

The National Main Street Center (NMSC) has taken the Kauffman Foundation’s basic principles for local government leaders or a regional community and has adapted them to the Main Street Approach in a community. None of us are self-sufficient, nor should any revitalization strategy be self-contained. Too often the two most basic issues of a failed or thwarted revitalization strategy are communication issues (intra-organizational or inter-community) and a non-comprehensive (siloed) strategy or approach; when developing an entrepreneurial ecosystem, these issues are addressed. This can still occur as a bottom-up, grassroots effort in coordination with local government and the powers that be. It goes beyond accessibility to capital and mentorship, and incorporates leadership development, social networking, and housing opportunities.
NMSC has developed a comprehensive introduction to entrepreneurial ecosystems – I would encourage you to review it and begin to apply its concepts to your community’s own revitalization strategy, whether it’s a Main Street or an Elm Street program. The guide stresses the importance of this interconnected network and the value of ‘place’ that is often undervalued in developing this whole system. Our unique, historic and authentic communities have the qualities that so many entrepreneurs are looking for when determining where they want to live and begin this next chapter of their lives.

Capitalizing on the characteristics that we already have, such as historic business districts, authentic neighborhoods, and walkable communities are vital first steps in developing qualities related to place in an entrepreneurial ecosystem.

Developing an entrepreneurial ecosystem needs to be focused on creating places where people want to be. If people want to be there, their business will too, and then more people and more business. Developing these places takes a deeper understanding of other factors including the kinds of housing options and service businesses that people both want and need, offering high quality educational systems, and creating an environment for social equality and inclusivity. Supporting opportunities so people are able to create a higher quality of life in all areas: family, social, business, and civic, is at the core.

The entrepreneurial communities within the City and County of Erie have tirelessly worked very intentionally to develop this ecosystem.

Join PDC in Erie for the 2019 Conference “Innovation, Entrepreneurship & Economic Vitality”, where multiple sessions will share these stories. Beginning on Monday with the general session on “The Innovation Collaborative” and the Idea Lab mobile workshop, and taking you through the conference with a myriad of individual sessions, we are proud to offer stellar examples of how Erie is creating a place where people want to live and thrive.
My mother is the oldest of seven children. The youngest three are very close to me in age. They were more like siblings to me than aunts and uncles. Because of this, we were always together. My father travelled quite a bit for his job, and it was not uncommon for my mom to take my brothers and I to have dinner at my grandparents’ house where we would all squeeze around the table.

I have remained very close with my aunts and uncles. Despite all of us going our separate ways and to all corners of the country, we somehow managed to maintain contact and unbelievably, we’ve all returned to the Pittsburgh area. Our kids are now the same ages, which at times, can be confusing when trying to explain the dynamic of the relationships.

We make it a point to have an annual trip to Presque Isle and Lake Erie each summer. We load up our cars with picnic lunches and snacks, sand toys, balls, frisbees, fishing rods and boogie boards in the hopes that there will be big waves that day. The expanse of Lake Erie is mind-boggling. If you didn’t know it, you would think you were at the shore except your eyes wouldn’t burn after being tumbled by a wave. It is truly phenomenal, both in size and in beauty.

Some of the cousins are now in college and the youngest is only three, yet, there is something for all of us to do while we are there. The younger kids try to bury each other in the sand or go on some exploratory adventure. The teenagers lay out and complain that they can’t see their phone screens, and their parents relish in that same disconnect and take in the pleasure that comes from being together.

“The expanse of Lake Erie is mind-boggling, both in size and in beauty. If you didn’t know it, you would think you were at the shore - except your eyes wouldn’t burn after being tumbled by a wave.”
$15 Million for Keystone Communities: Gathering for a Day of Advocacy

Are you aware that the Commonwealth’s Main Street, Elm Street and blight remediation programs are funded through the Keystone Communities program? Are you aware that a third-party study has indicated that the Commonwealth generates $7.87 in direct revenue for every dollar put into the Main Street Program? Are you aware that this funding source was cut by 90% by the previous administration, from approximately $56 million in 2009 to about $6.5 million today?

On April 8, 2019, Main Street managers, Elm Street managers, and community leaders from across the Commonwealth gathered at the Capitol to address the importance of increased funding for the Keystone Communities Program line item. Learn more about the incredible impact of the Main Street, Elm Street, Enterprise Zone and Accessible Housing programs, and reach out to your legislator today!
9th Street blossoms in Downtown Reading