



center Piece

PENNSYLVANIA DOWNTOWN CENTER'S QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER / SUMMER 2016



IT'S OFFICIAL!

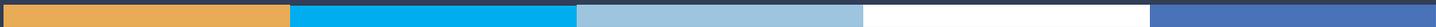
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CHANGE IN ATTITUDES/
CHANGE WITHIN
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*How community leaders can lead
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PROGRAM OF THE
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*An exemplary Elm Street in
West Reading*





*A New
Commonwealth Fiscal Year*

A NEW PDC PROGRAM YEAR THEME

by Bill Fontana

BY THE TIME YOU WILL BE READING THIS, WE WILL BE WELL INTO THE MONTH OF AUGUST, MORE THAN A MONTH INTO BOTH THE NEW COMMONWEALTH FISCAL YEAR AND PDC'S FISCAL/PROGRAM YEAR. THE 2016-17 FISCAL YEAR WILL BE ONE FOR THE AGES, FROM A PDC PROGRAM PERSPECTIVE. CONSIDER THAT IN THE COURSE OF THIS FISCAL YEAR PDC WILL:

- Host the 2017 National Main Street Center's Main Street Now Conference in Pittsburgh
- Help the NMSC raise \$250,000 in support of the conference
- Celebrate its 30th Anniversary
- Deal with the opportunities and challenges of an increased DCED Keystone Communities budget
- Go through the contract RFP and (hopefully) renewal process related to the continuation of delivering services to Main Street and Elm Street Programs
- Introduce a complete rework of the PDC website.

- Governance
- Inclusiveness and Diversity
- Intra-Community Marketing & Communications
- Community Advocacy

So much for sleep this year!

But I do want to take a moment and talk about his year's theme – Organizational Development & Sustainability- in the rest of this article.

Things always seem to run in cycles and one of the things we are currently seeing from our vantage point here in Harrisburg is a statewide interest in re-thinking, re-evaluating- and restructuring the organizations that have delivered successful Main Street and Elm Street efforts. The pressures to do more with less, to move the geographic focus of the local effort and a host of other issues are driving this trend. As a quick refresher, the subsets of "Organization" are:

- Partnership Development
- Internal Organizational Capacity (including board and staff training and volunteer development)
- Long-Term Financial Stability

There is much to talk about in each of these subsets. It is highly likely that we will convene another Think-Tank during the course of this fiscal year to explore in-depth one or more of these subset components. Many of the issues that we are facing as a nation may be addressed locally through better knowledge of, and better skills in, one or more of these areas. In particular I am convinced that Main Street and Elm Street programs could play an important, and perhaps even critical role, in facilitating the conversations that need to occur in our communities related to violence, police-community relations, inclusiveness and diversity and related topics. The horrendous carnage that occurred at the Pulse nightclub in Orlando, where 49 people were murdered, happened in one of that City's Main Street districts. Put yourself in the position of an Elm Street or Main Street manager having to deal with the reality of a helping your community recover from a challenge such as that. I am hopeful that Orlando will have a session in Pittsburgh next year to tell us all what they have learned.

There is no question that these are times of great uncertainty in many ways. But we in the revitalization community, working together to build stronger organizations and more understanding communities, can be important players in overcoming these challenges.

2016 EVENTS CALENDAR

For more information or to register for an event or training, please [visit our online events calendar](#).

EVENT	DATE	TIME	LOCATION
WEST Community Revitalization Academy: Organization	Tuesday, August 23 & Tuesday, August 30	8:30 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.	Erie, PA
EAST Managers Meeting	Wednesday, September 14	9:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.	Gettysburg, PA
EAST Leadership Forum	Wednesday, September 14	9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.	Gettysburg, PA
WEST Managers Meeting	Wednesday, September 21	9:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.	Clarion, PA
WEST Leadership Forum	Wednesday, September 21	9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.	Clarion, PA
WEST Community Revitalization Academy: Design	Thursday, September 22 & Thursday, September 29	8:30 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.	T/B/D
New Manager Training	Monday, September 26 & Tuesday, September 27	8:30 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.	Harrisburg, PA PDC Offices
Community Revitalization Academy: Physical Improvement (Design)	Wednesday, September 28 & Thursday, September 29	8:30 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.	Harrisburg, PA PDC Offices
WEST Community Revitalization Academy: Marketing	Tuesday, October 18 & Tuesday, October 25	8:30 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.	T/B/D
Revitalization Network Meeting	Wednesday, October 19	1:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.	Titusville, PA
Leadership Forum	Wednesday, October 19	9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.	Titusville, PA
New Manager Training	Monday, November 14 & Tuesday, November 15	8:30 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.	Harrisburg, PA PDC Offices
Community Revitalization Academy: Community Marketing	Wednesday, November 16 & Thursday, November 17	8:30 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.	Harrisburg, PA PDC Offices
National Preservation Conference	Tuesday, November 15 - Friday, November 18		Houston, TX
WEST Community Revitalization Academy: Economic Vitality	Tuesday, November 29 & Tuesday, December 6	8:30 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.	T/B/D

It's official!

PDC TO HOST 2017 NATIONAL MAIN STREET CONFERENCE

THE PENNSYLVANIA DOWNTOWN CENTER (PDC) WILL BE THE HOST ORGANIZATION FOR THE 2017 NATIONAL MAIN CENTER'S MAIN STREET NOW CONFERENCE. THE CONFERENCE WILL TAKE PLACE FROM MAY 1 TO MAY 3 IN PITTSBURGH, AT THE WYNDHAM HOTEL, RIGHT ON "THE POINT" IN DOWNTOWN PITTSBURGH.

MAIN STREET
Now
CONFERENCE

SAVE *the* DATE

PITTSBURGH, PA // MAY 1-3, 2017



*The
official
announcement*

was made at the end of the 2016 Main Street Now conference in Milwaukee. Following that announcement, Patrice Frey, Executive Director of the National Main Street Center, came to Pittsburgh on June 24 for a local press conference to inform Pittsburgh and the southwestern Pennsylvania community that close to 2,000 revitalization professionals will descend on “the Burgh” next May.

In her remarks, Ms. Frey said “the National Main Street Center is delighted to work with the Pennsylvania Downtown Center to bring our 2017 Main Street Now Conference to Pittsburgh – a world class city with a uniquely important story of transformation to share with revitalization leaders throughout the country. I’d especially like to thank Governor Wolf and the Department of Community and Economic Development for their support of this conference, and Bill Fontana, Executive Director of the Pennsylvania Downtown Center, for his leadership of Pennsylvania Main Streets and his willingness to host this conference in Pittsburgh.

Main Street Now is the largest nationwide gathering of commercial district revitalization professionals in the nation. This annual, three-day event draws upwards of 1,500 community leaders from small towns, mid-sized cities and urban neighborhood business districts from all across the country. It brings together leaders who are united in their effort to transform downtowns and neighborhood commercial districts into places people want to live, work, shop and play.”

In addition to Ms. Frey, PDC Board Chairman Larry Newman, Executive Director of the Diamond City Partnership in Wilkes-Barre, represented PDC at the press conference. “PDC’s board and staff are thrilled to have this opportunity to showcase our members’ work for our peers from across the nation: here in Pittsburgh, in communities throughout southwestern Pennsylvania, and in towns and cities across the Commonwealth which have embraced the Main Street

Approach to downtown and neighborhood revitalization” said Mr. Newman.

In addressing the impact of the Main Street Program in Pennsylvania, Mr. Newman said, “More than 175 Pennsylvania communities – from East Carson Street on the South Side to Easton at the confluence of the Delaware and the Lehigh Rivers – have participated in the Main Street Program since it began in 1980. During that time, Pennsylvania’s participating Main Street programs have generated a net increase of more than 6,500 businesses, 17,650 full-time equivalent jobs, and more than \$1.2 billion dollars in total investment across the Commonwealth.” PDC Executive Director Bill Fontana was equally enthusiastic about the conference coming to Pittsburgh. “I am one of the few people left in the ‘Main Street Movement’ who attended the first National Town Meeting, as it was called back then, in Winston-Salem, North Carolina in 1986. I am ecstatic that the National Main Street Center will be coming to my home town for its conference during PDC’s 30th Year Anniversary. I have seen lots of Main Street conferences and we really want to make this one for the ages. State Coordinators still talk about the 2009 National Main Street Conference in Philadelphia. In particular they remember the opening reception in the Reading Terminal Market with Ben Franklin, Betsy Ross and a Mummer’s Band. We have our work cut to outdo that conference” said the Executive Director.

“I am really looking forward to people from around the country being able to visit and see first-hand so many of the incredible things taking place in Pittsburgh and the surrounding southwestern Pennsylvania communities. We particularly want to highlight our current designated communities in the region such as Sewickley, Mt. Lebanon and Wilkinsburg. We will also be taking folks to communities that graduated from either the Elm Street and Main Street programs. I think they will all be very impressed.”

It was noted that the economic impact on the region will be significant. For instance, the Wyoming state program will bring about 60 individuals in to Pittsburgh several days before the conference and tour several rural communities within the broader region. Right now places like Bedford, Indiana, Ebensburg and Clearfield are being discussed for visits from them.

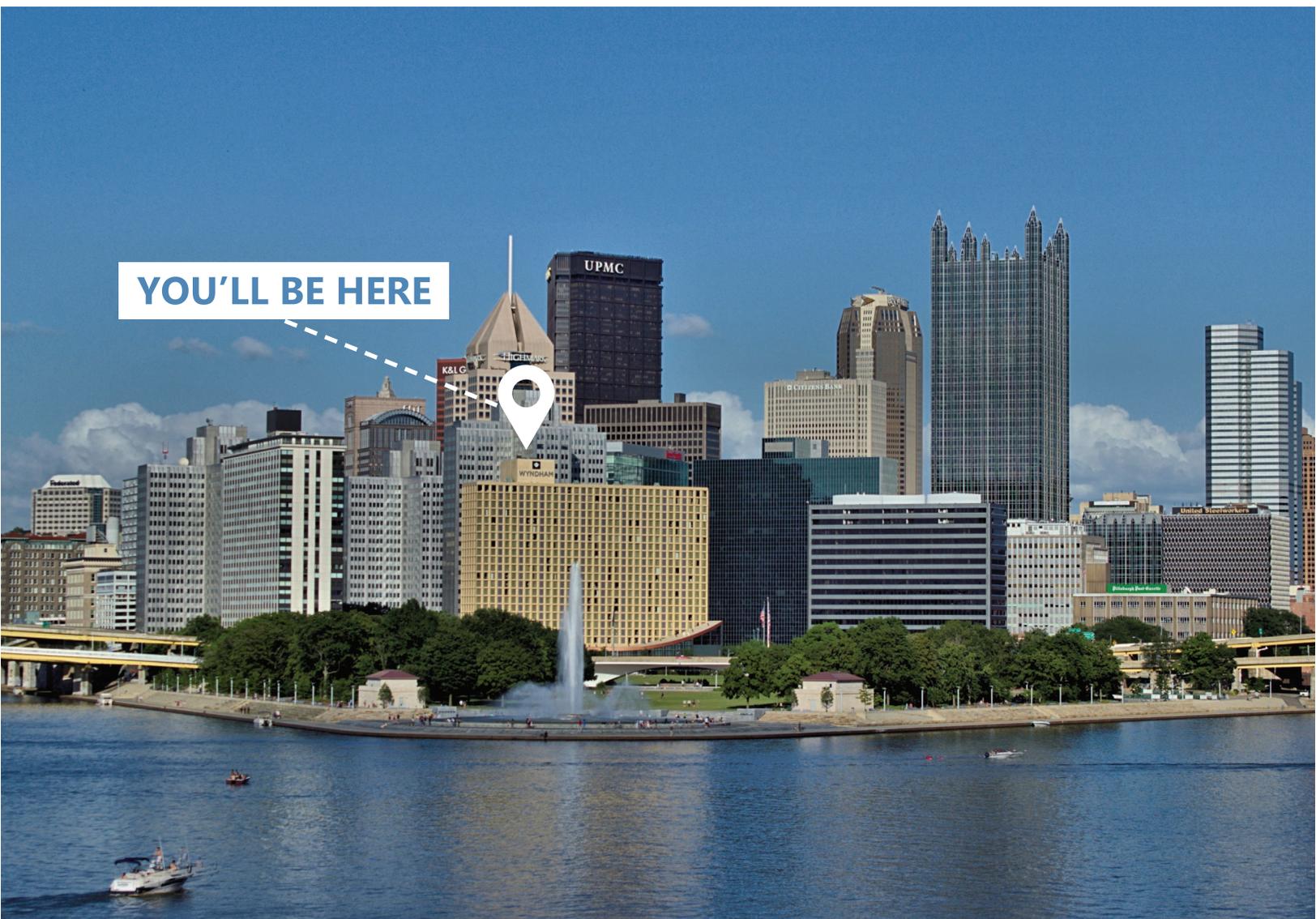
Another unique component of the conference are the “State Dinners.” These are events where all of the attendees from a given state will find a local restaurant of their liking and enjoy an evening of fine dining and camaraderie at that

establishment. That can mean as many as 40-45 restaurants in the downtown area each getting between 20-60 new customers.

“One thing we do want the Pennsylvania folks to know is that there will NOT be a PDC state conference in 2017. We are encouraging those who normally attend the PDC conference to take advantage of this unique opportunity to network with their counterparts from around the United States and Canada. We will still have a 30th Anniversary Dinner in June, where we will also give out the 2017 Townie and Best Performing Program awards” noted Mr. Fontana.

In concluding his remarks at the press conference, Mr. Newman said “PDC looks forward to working with DCED, The City of Pittsburgh, Allegheny County, The Urban Redevelopment Authority, The Pittsburgh Downtown Partnership, The Federal Home Loan Bank of Pittsburgh, the PA Historical and Museum Commission, PNC, and all of our other local partners in making this the best “Main Street Now” Conference in the history of the National Main Street Center.

There’s so much we have to show off and to discuss; we can’t wait, and we hope to see you here in Pittsburgh next May.



PDC BOARD *Update*

THE PENNSYLVANIA DOWNTOWN CENTER BOARD OF DIRECTOR'S HELD ITS REGULAR QUARTERLY MEETING ON MAY 18, 2016. THIS MEETING ALSO SERVED AS PDC'S REORGANIZATION MEETING FOR THE 2016-2017 FISCAL YEAR. AMONG THE ITEMS OF BUSINESS TAKEN UP BY THE BOARD WERE THE FOLLOWING:

ELECTION OF NEW BOARD MEMBERS

The board was presented with a slate of candidates for consideration by its Internal Operations Committee. The nominees included Mary Luscavage, Main Street Manager and Executive Director of Downtown Shenandoah, Inc; Lenwood Sloan, former DCED Marketing Director; and Adrienne Squillace, Assistant Vice President for Community Development Banking at PNC (pictured below).

ELECTION OF 2016-2017 OFFICERS

The board also elected its new officers for 2016-17. Board Chair Larry Newman (Wilkes-Barre), Board Vice-Chair Naomi Naylor (Quakertown), Corporate Secretary Sloan Auchincloss (Harrisburg) and

At-Large Representative Chuck Broad (Reading) were all re-elected to a second term. James Rodriguez asked to have someone replace him as PDC's Treasurer since he now resides in France. Stephanie McIlwee (Gettysburg) was elected to fill his position and will take over as Treasurer as soon as all required paperwork is completed.

PDC AUDITOR SELECTION

After conducting a RFP-based review process, the board re-authorized a three year engagement letter for audit services with Smith-Kearns & Elliott. The board cited satisfaction with past audit performance, including on-time delivery, and best cost matters as the basis for its decision to retain the current auditor.

2016-2017 BUDGET APPROVAL

The Board approved a PDC 2016-2017 fiscal year budget of just over \$909,000. The budget is slightly higher this year due to the fundraising associated with the 2016-2017 National Main Street Center (NMSC) Conference in Pittsburgh. It was not known exactly how much of the fundraising requirement for the conference will actually flow through PDC to the NMSC, but in any case those funds are essentially a pass-through and do not represent a significant permanent increase in the PDC budget.



PDC BOARD NOMINEES, FROM LEFT TO RIGHT

*Lenwood Sloan, Former DCED Marketing Director
Adrienne Squillace, Assistance Vice President for
Community Development Banking at PNC
Mary Luscavage, Main Street Manager and
Executive Director of Downtown Shenandoah, Inc.*

PDC WELCOMES

Sam Hutton



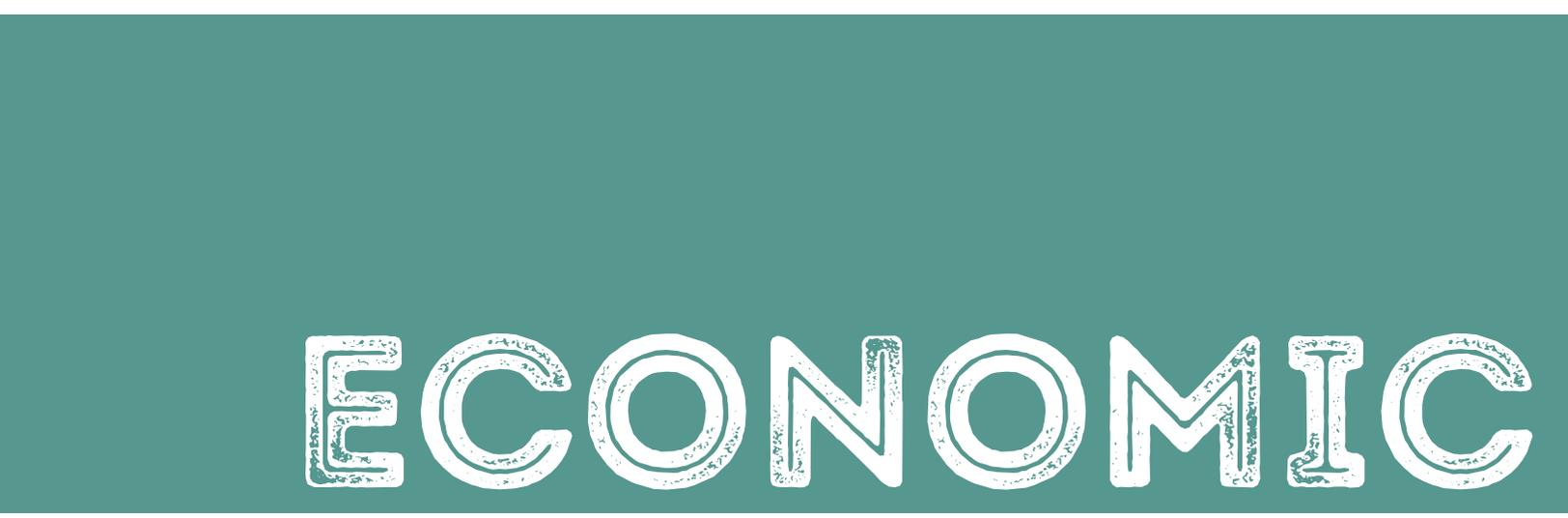
My name is Sam Hutton and I am a recent graduate from Harrisburg University of Science and Technology. I studied Integrative Sciences concentrating on Environmental Science and Renewable Energy. Within the study of hard sciences like chemistry and physics, I also learned the uses and applications of technical sciences, such as Geo-Spatial technology.

By being the GIS Intern I look forward to building the PDC maps for both the internal community to use and the external community to comprehend the work being completed in and around their local communities. Being from the busy city of Baltimore, Maryland and moving to Harrisburg for school was a nice change of pace. Seeing the development in the local communities is something that is exciting to see visually and economically. After working on the Mine Mapping project with Harrisburg University's GIS Lab, and then working with The Nature Conservancy on their Healthy Trees, Healthy Cities Project, I wanted to continue the work I started in GIS by helping local communities grow and develop into bustling metropolises full of health and awareness of local environmental and economic growth.

I believe that my involvement with the community such, as Harrisburg Young Professionals and local after school art programs, I have grown to love being a part of something bigger than myself and helping it become something great!



CREATING



ECONOMIC



VITALITY

*2016 Conference
Reflections and Sentiments
#PDCVitality*

by Maria Wherley

"It was a fantastic conference—your team did an excellent job! Everything ran smoothly and on-time, which I know is hard to accomplish at a conference of this size."

-Conference Attendee

This year's statewide conference was well attended and chock full of informational sessions—inside and outside of the Renaissance Allentown Hotel. With the theme, Creating Economic Vitality, attendees observed firsthand the transformation happening in the Lehigh Valley region—specifically Allentown, Bethlehem and Easton.

From the 'Stacks to Stills' in Bethlehem to our welcome 'Sunday on 7th' at Lewnes Loft we kicked off the first day in a truly spirited fashion. Our Keynote Speaker, Patrice Frey of the National Main Street Center, was with us for Monday's lunch to share glimpses of what's happening across the country with Main Street. Here are some phrases—timely and appropriate in community revitalization efforts—'Nicety to Necessity' and 'Main Street is now Main Stream'. Patrice provided insight on the Refreshed Main Street Approach that NMSC unveiled within the past year and acknowledged that we, here in Pennsylvania, will pick up this conversation where we left off for the 2017 Main Street Now Conference in Pittsburgh.

Some other nuggets~Monday evening we all traveled by foot to dine in a number of the venues on Hamilton Street where the fare was quite tasty no matter the

palette. For Tuesday's Townie Awards Gala, DCED Secretary Dennis Davin joined us where he saluted state-wide program revitalization efforts. The gala itself lived up to its fine reputation for recognizing program accomplishments with heartfelt stories of the community commitments imperative to be worthy of a Townie Award. That same evening we awarded National Main

Street Accreditation certification to the programs meeting the requirements for this high accord in their 2015 efforts.

To round out our conference we were pleased and quite taken by the Closing Keynote speaker, Judy Wicks, author, speaker and entrepreneur. Judy's story is compelling and moved us as she shared what her commitment and a passion has brought forth in her journey locally, nationally and internationally.

If you missed the conference or if you want to check out the session presentations, most are available [on our website here](#).





**GENERAL ASSEMBLY
PASSES 2016-2017 BUDGET**

ON TIME | *by Bill Fontana*

*In
a dramatic
turnaround*

from the 2015-2016 Commonwealth budget process, the PA General Assembly passed a 2016-2017 fiscal year budget on time. While the budget was passed by the June 30 legislative deadline, Governor Tom Wolf did not immediately sign the budget, letting the budget become law without his signature. The Governor, while supportive of the spending plan, asked the General Assembly to send him the revenue package that would support the proposed expenditures. That effort took an extra couple of weeks. The General Assembly did pass the requested revenue plan by mid-July, making the budget plan whole.

The most important aspect for community revitalization was that the General Assembly did include a \$12.2 million dollar allocation for the Keystone Communities Program. This represents an almost doubling of the 2015-16 allocation of \$6.35 million that was approved when the 2015-16 spending plan was finally approved in March of 2016.

While the increase in the Keystone Communities Program represents a victory in this year's budget battle, the war is far from over. The \$12.2 million in the Keystone Communities Program carried with it a \$450,000 allocation for a regional revitalization project in one of Pennsylvania's sixth class counties.

In addition, there was/is some degree of uncertainty as to how much of the remaining \$11.75 million is available for discretionary allocation through applications submitted by Elm Street, Main Street and Keystone Community designees, as well as non-designated programs. Sources contacted by PDC in mid-July indicated that they were still not fully aware as to how much of the remaining funding had been allocated to particular projects. There was some degree of speculation that discretionary projects might still be "flat-funded," meaning that the actual amount not already committed could be similar to last year's \$6.35 million.



PDC Executive Director Bill Fontana said that he would continue to search out the answers as to exactly how much was available for distribution by DCED in fiscal year 2016-2017 through the Single Application process. He indicated his hope that by the time the managers convene for their September regional meetings, that he and/or DCED representatives would be able to address the issue.

In addition to the Keystone Communities Program increase the General Assembly funded the Neighborhood Assistance Program tax credit allocation at its full legislative limit of \$18 million and passed a new Mixed-Use Housing Development Program through the Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency.



*Change
in Attitudes*

*Change
within Ourselves*

by Julie Fitzpatrick

THROUGH THE YEARS WE HAVE TAUGHT AND EXPLAINED THE EIGHT PRINCIPLES OF THE MAIN STREET APPROACH - MOST OF WHICH ARE FAIRLY CONCRETE AND MEASURABLE, BUT THE ONE THAT IS DIFFICULT TO IMPACT AND THE ONE THAT IS CHALLENGING TO OVERCOME IS - CHANGE. REGARDLESS OF YOUR AGE, GENDER, RACE, ETHNICITY, RELIGION OR POLITICAL STANCE - CHANGE CAN BE DIFFICULT TO ACCOMPLISH. SO MANY OF US CONSIDER OURSELVES TO BE OPEN-MINDED, FAIR CITIZENS, BUT WHEN IT COMES RIGHT DOWN TO IT... ARE WE? ARE WE REALLY?

Change – or true transformative change, occurs when there is a shift; a shift in one’s perspectives, a shift in attitudes, and a shift in behavior. If we are being truly honest, for any of us, that is a difficult role to overcome. Regardless of our educational attainment and life experiences, we are all creatures of habit and of our environment. We feel comfortable and safe when we are surrounded by familiarity and predictability, but if something or someone attempts to challenge our “normal”, then look out! We need to have our basic human needs met, those of safety, security, and sustenance, then and only then, are we able to

focus on relationships and community. But, those relationships are often comfortable, easy and safe. What happens when someone who may look different, speak differently, think differently, enters our realm of security? Can we trust them? How can we trust them? Do they want things to change in a way more like “them”, and less like “us”? This is the internal dialogue that is occurring in every neighborhood, town, and city all over America, and all over the world.

Can we support change? But, most importantly, are we as community leaders leading by example and

supporting and encouraging it? Change happens – whether you want it or not – but what are we doing so that the change that does occur is: healthy, inclusive, sustainable, and welcoming? What is our legacy to the younger generations – are we leaving our neighborhoods, our communities, and our world better than how we found them? What are those issues in your own community that have been divided – whether by the political spectrum or by other varying opinions and viewpoints?

Think about beginning the dialogue...

🌀 *Invite the community* TO HAVE AN OPEN AND HONEST CONVERSATION; DON'T HOLD BACK, OFTEN TRUE BREAKTHROUGHS ONLY OCCUR WHEN THERE ARE OPEN AND HONEST CONVERSATIONS.

🌀 *Be willing to listen* TO ONE ANOTHER AND ALLOW AND ENCOURAGE EVERYONE TO HAVE A VOICE. ONCE EMPATHY IS REACHED, DEFENSIVENESS IS NO LONGER NEEDED.

🌀 *Realize that this is a process* AND SOLUTIONS WILL NOT OCCUR OVERNIGHT.

🌀 *Leave egos* AT THE DOOR.

🌀 *Be willing to discuss* DIFFICULT AND OFTEN IGNORED TOPICS.

🌀 *Bring food.* IT MAY SEEM TRITE, BUT BREAKING BREAD TOGETHER CAN OFTEN CREATE A LEVEL PLAYING FIELD AND HELP BUILD A SENSE OF TOGETHERNESS AND COMMUNITY (REMEMBER, IT'S ONE OF OUR BASIC HUMAN NEEDS). ENCOURAGE A POTLUCK AND FAVORITE RECIPES FROM THEIR GRANDMOTHER. IT'S A GREAT WAY TO INTRODUCE VARIOUS CULTURES AND BACKGROUNDS, AND HELP TO BREAK DOWN BARRIERS.

An Exemplary Elm Street in West Reading Wins

BEST PERFORMING PROGRAM OF THE YEAR

by Stefan Klosowski

*Dean
has
been*

an Elm Street manager for nine years and this includes two Elm Street neighborhoods; Center Point and Ten Points. His skills and experience allows him to delve into non-profit management, and community development programs at all levels. He has a B.S. in City and Regional Planning/Urban Design from the School of Architecture and

Environmental Design at California Polytechnic State University in San Luis Obispo. This education has provided him with a firm understanding of design principles.

He was employed as an Executive Director in the national Neighbor Works® network both in Reading, PA and San Diego, CA for a period of ten years. In this work he acquired the ability to communicate with a wide variety of business leaders, government officials, professionals, technical consultants and local stakeholders. His areas of expertise include strategic planning, organizational oversight, program design and implementation, and resource development and marketing.

Dean Rohrbach enjoys his current profession since it builds upon his natural abilities and interests. He feels that 'planners' must be generalists to understand the variety of forces at play and be able to pull them together to make it work. He appreciates the exercise of the creative and intuitive parts of his brain when working on design issues, as well as the rational and analytical portions when

working on the everyday nuts and bolts. He feels that "It's not work when you love what you do!"

Now that Dean is beyond the age of 60 and having been lucky to enjoy his work, he can sit and look back upon his career with a sense of satisfaction knowing that he has changed people's lives by making them homeowners and contributed to long-term streetscape improvements. He can also take pride in the fact that he has added beauty to the built environment through color and public art projects.

He first learned about the Elm Street manager position through a newspaper advertisement. By the late 1990s West Reading's commercial area was in a state of sharp decline. In 1997, the West Reading Borough Council recognized the need for borough-wide revitalization to turn the tide and created the Main Street Authority and Main Street Foundation. Between 2001 and 2009, the Main Street program invested over \$6.2 million in streetscape and property improvements to Penn Avenue through use of a number of private-sector and government funding sources. In 2011, in order to cut duplication and reduce costs the Main Street Authority and Main Street Foundation were combined to form the West Reading Community Revitalization Foundation which is the governing board for both MS and ES programs.

In 2007, the Elm Street program was created to protect the investment on Penn Avenue by combating blighting influences in surrounding neighborhoods where 98% of the housing



WORKING WITH DEAN AND LEARNING ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE AND STABILITY THE ELM STREET PROGRAM PROVIDES, WEST READING HAS TRULY BEEN A GUIDING LIGHT AS WE CONTINUE TO DEVELOP AND IMPROVE OUR DOWNTOWN. DEAN AND I HAVE BEEN ABLE TO WORK TOGETHER TO CREATE PROJECTS AND INITIATIVES THAT TRULY COMPLEMENT EACH OTHER AND POSITIVELY IMPACT BOTH DISTRICTS WHILE HOLISTICALLY IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF LIFE IN THE BOROUGH FOR ALL. THIS SYMBIOTIC RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN OUR PROGRAMS IS WHAT COMMUNITY REVITALIZATION IS ALL ABOUT.

Christin Kelley, West Reading Community Revitalization Foundation

stock was built in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, home ownership was decreasing, infrastructure was deteriorating and demographics were changing.

Since 2007, through the Elm Street program \$3.8 million has been invested in long-lasting physical improvements in the 12-square block area in the Ten Points and Center Point neighborhoods. These funds were used to create homeowners, improve the housing stock, beautify the streetscape, increase safety and involve residents. Like some other Main Street programs they have their own 'signature' streetscape improvements with curvilinear brick-lined grass medians, as well as new curbs and sidewalks. They also worked with West Reading Borough to fund needed water and sewer system replacements.

West Reading has held some events to attract media attention. For example, they don't just hold a neighborhood block party: they have a neighborhood water balloon fight. Dean is a rather tall individual and an easy target. He also has a great sense of humor and has become the willing recipient of the neighborhood children's balloon tossing.

A special GREEN project was created in 2009. They transformed an overgrown, trash strewn, vacant lot into a Community Garden and Social Area with 42 raised garden beds. Residents rent these beds at \$15/season and maintain the common areas. The social area is planted with lilies and there is a picnic table and park bench. The garden allows neighbors to get to know one another and ultimately work together to make their neighborhood a safer, friendlier, and cleaner place. Elm Street has also purchased 20 large flowering street planters which are maintained by residents. All of this adds to making the neighborhood more pedestrian friendly and able to greet visitors with beauty and romance them with color.

Special efforts are taken to integrate the Main and Elm Street efforts. This West Reading team of Dean Rohrbach and Christin Kelley has made critical strides to join their commercial and residential districts:

- ALL ELM STREET STREETScape IMPROVEMENTS RUN PERPENDICULAR TO MAIN STREET AND INVITE PEOPLE INTO THE NEIGHBORHOOD.



- THEY ARE CURRENTLY WORKING ON A TWO-BLOCK PLAN TO CONNECT THE READING HOSPITAL AT THE EDGE OF THE ELM STREET NEIGHBORHOOD TOGETHER WITH THE EPICENTER OF THE MAIN STREET COMMERCIAL DISTRICT.
- THE ELM STREET AND MAIN STREET PROGRAMS COMPLEMENT EACH OTHER IN THE MURAL CORRIDOR PROJECT. THIS IS A THREE-BLOCK OUTDOOR ART GALLERY ON THE HALF-STREET THAT SEPARATES THE COMMERCIAL AND RESIDENTIAL AREAS. THESE ARE NOT TYPICAL URBAN MURALS BUT ACTUAL WORKS OF ART. THE MURAL CORRIDOR IS ANOTHER WAY THEY MAKE THEIR NEIGHBORHOOD WALKABLE BY MAKING IT MORE VISUALLY INTERESTING.

The West Reading Elm Street program is an award winning community:

- WEST READING WON THE MOST RECENT AWARD AS THE BEST PERFORMING ELM STREET PROGRAM OF THE YEAR
- ANDY MOLETRESS OF THE WRCRF WON VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR TOWNIE AWARD
- THE COMMUNITY GARDEN WON A COMMUNITY GREENING TOWNIE AWARD IN 2007
- THE COMMUNITY GARDEN ALSO WON AN URBAN CONSERVATION SERVICE AWARD BY THE BERKS COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT
- THE WRES WAS AWARDED THE PITTSBURGH PAINT'S ANNUAL "PAINT DAYS" AWARD IN 2011--THE FIRST YEAR EVER FOR THE AWARD; WHICH PROVIDED PAINT FOR THE FIRST "PAINT THE TOWN" PROJECT
- DEAN ROHRBACH WON A TOWNIE AWARD FOR

OUTSTANDING PROGRAM MANAGER OF THE YEAR IN 2012. THIS WAS THE FIRST TIME AN ELM STREET MANAGER WAS EVER SELECTED FOR THE AWARD

- ALSO IN 2012 THEY WERE THE SECOND PROGRAM IN THE STATE TO BE DESIGNATED A KEYSTONE COMMUNITIES ELM STREET
- IN 2014, THEY WERE SELECTED AS A GREAT PLACE IN PA NEIGHBORHOOD BY THE AMERICAN PLANNING ASSOCIATION OF PA. THE FIRST YEAR EVER FOR THAT AWARD.

One of the special highlighted programs in the West Reading Elm Street district is the entrepreneurial Property Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resell or PARR program. This enables them to buy properties in bad shape (usually foreclosures); repair and modernize; and sell them to home buyers. The program's goals are to: improve the housing stock; reduce density; increase homeownership; decrease rental units; raise property values and improve the tax base in the Elm Street target neighborhood.

While they operate the standard Façade Improvement program, they've taken it to another level. The Paint the Town is an innovative program that's painted a total of sixty-nine (69) properties within a five-block area and changed the character of the target neighborhood. The facades of the properties are painted in bright three-color schemes and give the neighborhood curb appeal. Every year they partner with the United Way of Berks County to conduct the Paint the Town event. Volunteers paint the front facades of a group of contiguous homes on a chosen block in historic three-color schemes chosen by an interior designer. The local residents call the homes the "Painted Ladies" of West Reading.

Another element that makes West Reading exemplary is the "teamwork" and their collaborative effort. The Elm Street manager and Main Street manager, Christin Kelley have a good relationship and help each other implement their respective

FIGURES THAT ATTEST TO SUCCESS

TOTAL INVESTMENT IN FIRST ELM STREET NEIGHBORHOOD (TEN POINTS) FROM 2007 TO 2011: **\$2,928,375**
THE WYOMISSING FOUNDATION CONTRIBUTED IN SECOND ELM STREET NEIGHBORHOOD FROM 2011 TO 2015: **\$417,500.00**

BANK FORECLOSURES: **FELL FROM 25% TO 18.8%***

INVESTOR PURCHASED PROPERTIES: **DROPPED FROM 43.8% TO 31.3%***

HOMEOWNER PURCHASED PROPERTIES: **INCREASED FROM 63.6% TO 81%***

MEDIAN PRICE OF HOMEOWNER PURCHASED HOMES: **INCREASED FROM \$80,000 TO \$88,250***

**Real estate property analysis 4/2009 to 5/2016*

FOR CENTER POINT (CURRENT ELM STREET TARGET NEIGHBORHOOD)

BANK FORECLOSURES: **DROPPED FROM 17.4% TO 15.4%**

INVESTOR PURCHASED PROPERTIES: **DROPPED FROM 39.1% TO 34.6%**

HOMEOWNER PURCHASED PROPERTIES: **INCREASED FROM 66.7% TO 76.2%**

MEDIAN PRICE OF HOMEOWNER PURCHASED HOMES: **INCREASED FROM \$123,650 TO \$130,000**

goals as well as developing and implementing mutual goals. They are integrated into regional economic development, business, recreational, arts and entertainment community decision-making. The team approach acts as a recruitment tool for the region.

Much of their art work consists of murals and a recent Art Nouveau mosaic. They are planning for a total of eleven murals. Some of the murals are along the two block outdoor art gallery called the Cherry Street Mural Corridor. Cherry Street is the border between Main Street commercial district and Elm Street residential areas and benefits both. For businesses along Penn Avenue it creates a pedestrian circulation pattern taking visitors and shoppers down toward blocks that receive less attention. For residential neighborhoods it helps create a walkable neighborhood to attract young professionals and families who want a 'cool' place to live.

Their neighborhood newsletter has two traditions residents look forward to. In the April Fool's Day issue they

Photoshop something ludicrous like a monorail running through the neighborhood. In the Halloween issue they gather and print local ghost stories or make them up. Residents love both of these special issues.

Dean is a man of his own making. He doesn't have cable or satellite at his home, so he spends a lot of time reading. "I usually read two or three books a month," he said adding "I enjoy history, theology, politics and science fiction; 'hard' science fiction being my favorite." These days Rohrbach says his life is rather sedentary enjoying walking his Corgi named 'Ruby' along the Wyomissing Creek trail at Reading Museum and Arboretum and making note of the beauty of nature. He is proud to be a Quaker and involved in making his voice heard on issues of peace and social justice. Once a week, Dean and his girlfriend dine at one of the over 20 distinctive dining destinations in West Reading. Dean truly believes in supporting local business!



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DRIVING, DOWNTOWNS, AND DESTINATIONS

with Dave



Summer is in full swing all across the Keystone State and everyone is trying to squeeze in a vacation or two in-between events, fairs, and festivals. The change in seasons has made travel much easier and I have been able to spend more time working directly with so many of our wonderful programs and the dedicated professionals that support community revitalization every day. So let's get to it and I'll share with you some of the things I've learned from a variety of places I've visited since winter thawed away:



WHILE PITTSBURGH is getting all the attention from thought leaders around the country for its revitalization renaissance, we can't forget about our colleagues in Philadelphia and all the great work being done in the City of Brotherly Love. One of the most unique and exciting community revitalization projects being undertaken is in Philly's Walnut Hill

neighborhood. The work, which has potential to lead to Main Street and Elm Street designations is being spearheaded by The Enterprise Center (theenterprisecenter.com). Committed to enhancing the civic, social, and entrepreneurial life of the citizens it serves, The Enterprise Center is a dynamic organization. One item of note is their recently completed neighborhood plan which included very thoughtful analysis of public transportation availability. This is something I would encourage every program to study and look at in their community because of the importance that public transportation plays in the lives of many of our citizens. Robust public transportation networks are critical to enhancing the employment prospects of residents and health of communities. I'd also be remiss not to mention another neighborhood in the City of Philadelphia I've been fortunate to work with these past few months; that is Chestnut Hill (chestnuthillpa.com). Known as the city's Garden District, this historic neighborhood in Philadelphia offers some of the best shopping and dining in the northwest part of the city while also putting on display exceptional architecture and attention to historic aesthetics. With its cobblestone streets and eclectic retail attractions, Chestnut Hill is a not to be missed part of the Philadelphia experience.



IN WORKING WITH so many of our Main Street programs, I often hear about the desire to bring more daytime workers into the downtown and also to capture that highly sought after catalyst business, the brewpub, into the mix of businesses. A great example where both of these elements have come together with exciting results is Danville in Montour County.

Located along the North Branch of the Susquehanna River, Danville is home to a nationally-recognized medical center as well as one of the most picturesque riverfronts you'll ever see. The Danville Business Alliance (visitdanvillepa.org) has worked with the medical center to bring jobs into the downtown that would otherwise be on the medical campus, helped that brewpub and other businesses grow, and is even getting into the upper-floor housing game (an area of interest I hear so many of our colleagues statewide talk about). Danville is also a very walkable community and that really enhances all of the great accomplishments to date and those to come. If you're looking for a nice summer road trip, take a drive to see what's going on in Danville (and pop in to see two other great designated Main Street communities, Lewisburg and Selinsgrove, in that area as well).



NOT TO LEAVE our colleagues in Steel City out of the mix, I've been fortunate to spend a good deal of time with several programs in the Pittsburgh area in recent months including Explore Sewickley (exploresewickley.com), the Wilkinsburg Community Development Corporation (wilkinsburgcdc.org), and the Mt. Lebanon Partnership (mtlebpartnership.org).

Sewickley is an exciting Main Street program that is undertaking unique and innovative events with an enthusiastic flair all their own. In Wilkinsburg there is a motivated corps of staff, leaders, and volunteers ready to take on everything from vacant home tours to a major historical revitalization project. A special tip of the hat is due to Mt. Lebanon as it has become my "home away from home" when visiting our southwestern Pennsylvania programs. With its quintessential Main Street area as well as great access to public transportation and major thoroughfares, Mt. Lebo is close to it all and yet somehow feels far away from the stresses of urban life. As I spend more time with all of these programs and others in the Pittsburgh area, I can understand why people are flocking to the region to make their future. Each of these great communities offers unique opportunities for community revitalization and a place to call home. The passion and



FOR THE FIRST TIME since joining PDC, I made a return trip to my former home of two years and visited several communities in northwest Pennsylvania. Erie (eriedowntown.com) is one of the recently designated programs in the state and a community every Pennsylvanian should visit to experience the beauty of the lake front along with the natural wonder of Presque Isle

State Park; taking in a SeaWolves or Otters game at the downtown sporting venues, strolling through Gannon University or one of the exceptional downtown public parks, and seeing great performances at a theater or club are all wonderful ways to enjoy Erie as well. I returned to my temporary hometown of Oil City (oilcitymainstreet.org) and look forward to visiting again soon. Oil City sits at the heart of one of our state's most historic areas, the Oil Region National Heritage Area. Anyone interested in beautiful Victorian architecture and impressive natural beauty should definitely put Oil City on their travel list. I also connected with great colleagues in Titusville to talk about the rebirth of that community's Town Square Building (which played an important role in the birth of the Oil Region and the oil industry). The Titusville Community Development Agency (tcda.org) is a team of some of the most thoughtful, innovative, ambitious, and accomplished economic & community development professionals

I have the privilege of knowing. Several years ago they brought back to life a building in the heart of their community that showed the power and potential of combined economic and community development investment supported by DCED. Sadly, their good work was almost lost to a fire over a year ago. Undeterred, they and the community rallied to revitalize yet again while bringing even more opportunity to the downtown and beyond. The Town Square Building project is one of the finest examples of what the redevelopment of an anchor building can do not just for the commerce of a community, but for its soul.



FOR THOSE OF YOU who are looking to build new connections with the economic development leaders in your county and region, take a look at what they're doing in Lancaster County with the Boroughs Collaborative Project (www.edclancaster.com/Boroughs-Collaborative.aspx). I was fortunate to be invited to attend a meeting with the working group for this project in Elizabethtown earlier this summer. This project is one to watch with great interest because I see it as having excellent potential and replicability across the Commonwealth. Take a look at it and see how it may apply in your community, county, and beyond. The further blending of our economic development organizations with our community revitalization entities will only serve to put everyone on a more prosperous path.



ENOUGH CAN'T BE SAID to thank our gracious hosts in Allentown and the greater Lehigh Valley (along with the entire PDC Conference Committee) for all the work that went into this year's PDC Conference. The cities and communities of the Lehigh Valley have a great history of Main Street and Elm Street

programs. The growth of the area (which I grew up not far from) in the past two decades is astounding to have witnessed and a credit to great leadership and a willingness to take risk and experiment along the way.



FOR THIS EDITION'S GOOD MEALS OUT the best meal recognition goes to the Maryland Crab Soup and Chicken Parmesan Wrap I had while visiting Oxford in southern Chester County. Oxford's location is ideal for people who want to enjoy the country life and beauty that Chester County's agricultural and equine

heritage offers while also providing close proximity to major cities and beaches. Oxford Mainstreet (downtownoxfordpa.org) is leading the way in the community by coordinating and convening stakeholders interested in improving all aspects of civic and commerce in the community. Oxford also utilizes an improvement district approach to support the community revitalization efforts; for the smaller communities unsure about what a business improvement district can do for them I'd encourage using Oxford as a case study to learn from.



AN HONORABLE MENTION for best meal recognition is also needed this time around. While PDC staff was attending the Main Street Now! Conference in Milwaukee, we had the pleasure to enjoy exceptional German food and the good company of many of you from around the Commonwealth. As we all work together

to prepare to host community revitalization professionals from around the world in Pittsburgh next May let's make sure we send everyone home with fond memories of Pennsylvania and stomachs full of all the great food our state has to offer.

As always, be sure to follow Pennsylvania Downtown Center on Twitter (@Pa_Downtown) and on Facebook. As staff is out and about we will do our best to share photos and stories about what we're seeing and learning from the communities we visit. That is all for now, see you out there on the road.

READ THIS ISSUE OF THE CENTERPIECE FROM COVER TO COVER? GOOD! YOU'VE FOUND THIS ISSUE'S GIVEAWAY AND ARE ELIGIBLE TO BE ENTERED FOR A FREE 2017-2018 STANDARD ORGANIZATIONAL MEMBERSHIP. EMAIL MARIA AT MARIAWHERLEY@PADOWNTOWN.ORG TO ENTER. *Valued at \$275; Must be a current member to participate.*



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