



# CENTER *Piece*

PENNSYLVANIA DOWNTOWN CENTER'S SEMI-ANNUAL NEWSLETTER / *Spring 2026*



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**I**t's been a long time since you've heard from us through the CenterPiece. There have been many changes in the world, this country, the commonwealth, and here at PDC. Personally, I've celebrated six and a half years as executive director, and what a time it's been! As an organization, we had to contract during COVID, but we have been expanding ever since! PDC has a staff of eight, seven full-time staff members and one part-timer. You'll hear from most of us throughout the next few pages!

The last two years have been busy – we embarked on our second round with Federal Home Loan Bank of Pittsburgh of being the Pennsylvania Blueprint Communities initiative partner. We're proudly serving ten community programs in eastern PA, each one up to incredible and exciting work in their own communities. I cannot wait to see what they'll accomplish in the upcoming year (more from Justine later)!

We've grown the PA Department of Health's WalkWorks program providing expanded technical assistance and funding to municipalities throughout the commonwealth while helping them be safer places for pedestrians and cyclists of all ages. If you haven't considered WalkWorks for your own community, I would encourage you to do so (more from Sam)!

In April we were honored to have Governor Shapiro join us and Main Street America as we co-hosted the national 2025 Main Street Now conference in Philadelphia, with 2,171 attendees and countless volunteers! Whew! How fun was that?! We could not have done it without the support and assistance of many, many partners – thank you for all of your support!

And, in July 2024, the Commonwealth budget passed with a new line item – Main Street Matters, along with a new program that brings comprehensive and commonsense funding and support to get what needs to be done in our Pennsylvania Main Street and Elm Street programs. Thank you for everyone's advocacy and support these last 14 years! However, we are not done – there will be continuous advocacy as we recognize how fragile these successes are. Keep your eye out for PDC's 2026 Advocacy Day on April 21st, and please join us in Harrisburg so that our collective voice can be seen and heard.

I am incredibly proud of the work that we are doing. We succeed when all of you succeed, and it has been so rewarding to watch and learn from the inspiring work that is happening throughout Pennsylvania! We are making an impact with every conversation, every façade project, every rehabilitation project, every ribbon-cutting, every clean-up effort, through every volunteer, every board member, every business owner, every developer, every resident, every day. As we all like to remind ourselves – Main Street, Elm Street & community development are team sports, and we're proud to be part of your team!



## **Making Waves on Main Street (and Elm Street): Big Bold Ideas that Push the Boundaries**

I mean, how many times can you use water-related puns while promoting a conference in Pennsylvania? Typically, only when that conference is in Erie! We are super excited to bring the Pennsylvania Downtown Center conference, the Commonwealth's Premier Revitalization Conference to this incredible community! This will be the third time since I've been at PDC and each time it feels like a completely unique experience. If you've never visited Erie, or if you were a kid the last time your family took a road trip there, I promise you will be surprised and find the city unrecognizable! My first visit was in 1992, and I can hardly believe it's the same place!

We are so proud of Erie Downtown Partnership under the steadfast leadership and insightful guidance of CEO Emily Fetcko, with an incredible staff of passionate and vested community leaders whose energy is contagious! Thank you Mulnah, Christine (and Dave!) for all of your assistance. We can't wait for everyone to see all the good trouble you've been up to in downtown!

For those of you who have never attended one of our conferences, I think you'll be in for a fun-filled, jam-packed, exhausting, but rejuvenating time of connecting with your peers and colleagues, all while learning all kinds of good stuff to take back home. Our theme: Making Waves on Main Street (and Elm Street): Big Bold Ideas that Push the Boundaries will get us out of our comfort zones and into a place of dreaming and scheming big! This is our time to be brave, and this is our chance to make things happen in our own towns, neighborhoods and business districts. No one is going to do it for us, but perhaps they will do it with us. Let's explore how we can accomplish more together and break down the barriers and boundaries that have kept us from being the absolute best version of ourselves and our communities.

*Julie A. Fitzpatrick*

**Julie Fitzpatrick**  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

# Calendar of Trainings & Events

Learn More & Register at  
[PADOWNTOWN.ORG](http://PADOWNTOWN.ORG)

## MARCH 2026

- 18 **Community Revitalization Academy<sup>4</sup>**  
Design
- 19 **Brown Bag Brain Trust**
- 24 **Developing Your Own Revolving Loan Fund Webinar Series #1**
- 30 **Downtown 101**  
Harrisburg, PA
- 31 **Advocacy Webinar**

## APRIL 2026

- 1 **Developing Your Own Revolving Loan Fund Webinar Series #2**
- 20 **Neighborhood Assistance Program Workshop**  
Harrisburg, PA
- 21 **Main Street & Elm Street Advocacy Day**  
Harrisburg, PA
- 22 **Community Revitalization Academy<sup>4</sup>**  
Community Marketing
- 16 **Brown Bag Brain Trust**
- 13 - 15 **Main Street Now Conference**  
Tulsa, Oklahoma

## MAY 2026

- 21 **Brown Bag Brain Trust**
- 19-21 **Community Revitalization Academy<sup>4</sup>**  
Economic Vitality (Virtual)
- 28 **Developing Your Own Revolving Loan Fund Webinar Series #3**

## JUNE 2026

- 2 **Active Transportation Advocacy Day**  
Harrisburg, PA
- 4 **Active Transportation Summit**  
Harrisburg, PA
- 28-July 1  
**PA's Premier Revitalization Conference**  
Erie, PA  
**Including:**
  - **Managers Meeting<sup>1</sup> & Leadership Forum<sup>2</sup>**
  - **Downtown 101<sup>3</sup>**
  - **Community Revitalization Academy<sup>4</sup>**  
Safe, Clean, & Green

<sup>1</sup> Attendance by the local manager is required.

<sup>2</sup> Attendance by at least one board or committee member at any one of these is required for national accreditation.

<sup>3</sup> Attendance by a new manager is required at one of these trainings within four (4) months of starting date.

<sup>4</sup> Attendance by a new manager at all of these is required. Three of the five sessions must be completed in the first year a manager is in the position. All five sessions must be completed within two years from the date a manager is hired.

# Get to know the Staff



Julie Fitzpatrick, Executive Director of the Pennsylvania Downtown Center, is known for her ability to connect people, ideas, and resources to move communities forward. She may not always have the answer, but she almost always knows who does. When she's not juggling emails (often with Gilmore Girls on in the background), Julie enjoys spending time with family and friends. She also loves getting her hands dirty tending to native plants in her backyard.



Iris Quigley is the Content Development Director and Special Projects Coordinator at Pennsylvania Downtown Center. Community development is more than a job to Iris, it is a movement that can spark transformative change and improve quality of life for the commonwealth. Outside of work, you can find Iris out on a trail with her husband and dog, working in her flowerbeds, or curled up with a good book.



Bill Arrowood brings a wide-ranging background to his role as PDC's Field Services guru, with past experience as a corridor manager, location scout, schoolteacher, movie projectionist, little league coach, and theater empresario. Nearly four years into his time at PDC, Bill is known for his steady presence and belief that simply showing up—and doing what you say you will—matters most. He has a deep appreciation for discovering back roads, diner pie, Elvis impersonators, and county fair corndogs. A former (and very real) mayoral candidate in his hometown, Bill now calls South Philadelphia home, where he lives with his wife and dog, Solo Jones.



Justine Trucksess is PDC's Blueprint Communities and Special Projects Coordinator, working closely with ten communities across Eastern Pennsylvania. After ten years with Hanover's Main Street organization, she welcomed the opportunity to support multiple teams and share lessons learned—both best practices and what to avoid. Justine enjoys discovering what makes each community unique and serving as a cheerleader for the Blueprint cohort. Outside of work, she stays busy with her family in Hanover and is an active volunteer, serving as YWCA Hanover Board President and with the Hanover Christmas Committee.

Virginia Mauk serves as PDC's Conference Coordinator, bringing extensive experience from her work with the Downtown Carlisle Association and as a Chamber of Commerce Executive Director in Maryland. She leads the planning and execution of PDC's annual conference, focused on connecting community partners and equipping attendees with new tools and ideas for revitalization. Virginia is also an advocate for advancing women's interests through her involvement with AAUW. In her free time, she enjoys creative and artistic pursuits.



Samantha Pearson is the Healthy Communities Program Manager at the PDC. She works on the PA WalkWorks program in collaboration with the PA Department of Health with the goal of improving individual and community health through environmental change -- specifically, helping communities become safer, more accessible and more inviting places to walk and bike to get to everyday destinations. Back in the 1980s she traveled from where she grew up in south Florida to gymnastics camp in Woodward over the course of three summers, spending time just under 40 miles west of where she lives now in Lewisburg. .



Emma Hudson is PDC's Network Relations and Content Designer, also managing PDC's membership. She enjoys supporting local businesses and helping Pennsylvania's downtowns thrive. A Rollins College graduate and former collegiate soccer player, Emma has a strong passion for fitness and completed her first marathon in Philadelphia this November. Outside of work, she's an avid animal lover who has rescued many birds and shares her home with three cats—Stache, Mango, and Little Man.



Kyleigh Graybill is PDC's Strategic Programs Manager, bringing creativity and collaboration to community revitalization efforts across Pennsylvania. With a background in communications and experience as Perry County's Main Street Coordinator, she believes every town can thrive with intentional partnership. Outside of work, Kyleigh enjoys live music, good coffee, and outdoor adventures with her family. Fun fact: She hiked the West Rim Trail at the PA Grand Canyon on the coldest day of the year to get married on a cliffside vista.



# on the road again

by Bill Arrowood

**F**or someone who is on the road a lot you end up having to find places sleep, and if you are like me, and want to get to know the places you visit, then the Best Western out on the highway is not exactly your best choice, (sometimes it's the only choice, but that's a whole other thing).

Here are some of my favorite unique places to stay around the Commonwealth:

If it has to be a hotel, I try to stay downtown, so when in Wilkes-Barre, (don't let the slightly dated lounge décor fool you), Genetti's has the best hotel breakfast around, by a long shot. More often, I will often look for an AirBnB, and while some are always going to be better than others, its great to see many in upper floors spaces that our downtown's are in much need of utilizing, like those in Clarion above Crook's Store or in Chambersburg, Butler, or Lock Haven, but also in some funky adaptive reuses like this church space in Titusville, not to mention a plethora of places here in Midtown Harrisburg. Sometimes, when there isn't a cheaper option, I will splurge if there is a lovely real Bed & Breakfast, like Victoria on Main in Corry & Our Fair Lady in Bellefonte, or The Highland in Meadville or if you are spending the holidays in Hollidaysburg, you can't go wrong with the Mimosa Courtyard Inn.

As you might expect, in addition to wanting to be somewhere local, I look for a place with a story, or some nostalgia. To wit there a handful of repurposed old train cars smattered around the state that offer both a distinctive experience and chance to step back in time. I have visited the caboose motels in Titusville & Doolittle Station in Dubois which hosts an adjacent brewpub, (where I came in 2nd on trivia night), bizarre giant dinosaur displays and some very friendly goats.

One of my favorite and most frequent stops is the last true motor lodge on the old Lincoln Highway (Route 30), located just west of Bedford, the Lincoln Motor Court is probably the antithesis of its swanky neighbor down the road, the Omni Springs Hotel, but with its vintage bungalow cottages surrounding a central picnic area, complete with firepits and live music on the weekends, it is a charming remnant of the bygone era of Americana.



Along the banks of Lake Erie is a delightful retro motel with the best view of the sunset you can find for miles, Lakeview on the Lake, located about 10 miles from downtown, has a dozen rooms in its tiny motel, but also has a handful of cottages and an vintage Airstream trailer.

When I am in need of a hard reset after a few days in the city, (and to save the company some money from by aforementioned B&B luxuries), I'll pitch the tent I keep handy in the trunk and take advantage of some of the Commonwealth's myriad state parks and private campgrounds like SB Elliot State Park north of Clearfield, or Pymatuning State Park near Sharon, (where you can watch the ducks walk on the fish at the Linesville Spillway and stop for a slice of strawberry rhubarb at Twin Pies), relax by a fire and wake up to the sounds of birds and crickets. I have however learned the hard way that some campgrounds are better equipped than others, like the one I recently visited outside Elysburg, where I only discovered after I arrived in the dark only that the bathroom was a port-a-john with no toilet paper. Sometimes sleeping on a leaky air mattress gets old and I will upgrade to some glamping at a place like Canyon Creek, just over the ridge from the PA Grand Canyon in Wellsboro, where you could sleep in a covered wagon, or keep coming back to one of my favorite spots, Lake Wonoka, between Honesdale and Carbondale, for their year round cabins that are anything but rustic, and a great bar and grille right down the hill for dinner.

Suffice to say, if there is a question of where you want to stay when on the road in Pennsylvania be sure to reach out to me for tips and references, because like George Washington of old, odds are, I have slept there.



# *Growing Pains and Putting Out the Flames: A Raw, Honest Analysis of the Current State of Community Development*

by Iris Quigley

**W**hen I initially sat down to write this article, I planned to share some strategies on engaging your community, from getting them to complete a survey to attending a public meeting. However, when pen hit the paper, I instead felt called to dump some thoughts that have weighed on my body, mind, and soul for quite some time.

I am a two years into this position. And I am tired. They say ignorance is bliss, perhaps to not know the work that it takes into making a community function is ecstasy. However, once you see this grand truth there is no going back. I used to believe that great places happened overnight. I would galivant about charming downtowns like Carlisle and Lititz not recognizing the tireless hours behind that awesome festival or that unforgettable storefront. Now, with a heavy dose of reality and a bit of experience under my belt, I realize that working in community development and the world of Main Street is anything but sunshine and rainbows.

While I'm still racking my brain on how to crack this code and offer real solutions (it may just take a whole revolution), I can shed some light on some truths I have learned over the last 24 months.

## **TRUTH #1: NO ONE REALLY KNOWS WHAT COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT MEANS.**

As someone who watched Parks and Recreation at a very young age, I guess I assumed that everyone else did the same. Turns out, most of the people around you do not have even an inkling of how local government (or Main Street programming, for that matter) works. Grants can be completed at the speed of light. Someone shares a "good" idea on a community Facebook page, and it gets brought to fruition the next day. Maybe these things will happen someday, but for now we are left wondering, how the hell do we get these people to see things from my point of view? Nevertheless, we trudge on and fight the good fight to make our corner of the world a little bit better. In most cases, the community is benefitting from the work of community development without ever knowing that an organization or a person is behind the scenes making things happen.

*"These people are members of a community and care about where they live. So, what I hear when I'm being yelled at is people caring loudly at me."*

*- Leslie Knope,  
Parks & Recreation*



*At the end of the day, the people are what make this work worth it. The network we have built is our greatest strength.*

*Shoutout to Stevette in Oil City!*

## **TRUTH #2: YOU CAN'T PLEASE EVERYONE.**

Much of my work involves facilitating public meetings in communities. Something I have learned in picking dates for these workshops is that there will never be a perfect day to host one. There is always another event, another school sport, another one of kid's birthday party, that will make picking a day nearly impossible. The point is you will never be able to please everyone in the room. The colors you chose for your flyer will somehow hurt the feelings of someone in your town. The work that you throw yourself into day after day will inevitably not be in line with the very, very specific vision of that one borough councilperson you just can't seem to please no matter the topic. With such a public-facing job as a Main Street Manager, you are bound to make some enemies, which is why I encourage you to accept this fate from the start and smile on the days when it feels like no one else is on your side. To quote Leslie Knope (too soon for another Parks and Rec reference?), "These people are members of a community and care about where they live. So, what I hear when I'm being yelled at is people caring loudly at me."

## **TRUTH #3: WE ARE ALL TIRED. SO VERY TIRED.**

Something we must accept in community development is that we must be okay with never seeing a finish line. There will not come a day where we decide "Yes, we have made a vibrant community and now the work stops forever, and we move on." The work never really ends, and because of this hard truth, it is even more difficult to not feel burnt out or hopeless. Main Street Managers do not get told enough that they are doing amazing work (quick pause to say you are doing great things!) which is why we must take it upon ourselves as community developers to celebrate every. single. win. Breaking ground, receiving grants, façade improvements, successful events, a check off the strategic plan, they all deserve to be celebrated. No matter how big or small, each of these is a little milestone in working to directly improve the quality of life in your community. When no one else is doing work quite like this, it's especially important for

us to give ourselves a little pat on the back for believing that our communities deserve more. Not just more shops or restaurants (or God forbid, parking spaces), but more green spaces, inclusive places, and middle-housing options that have a positive impact on mental health, sense of belonging, and securing a safe future. So yes, we are tired, but we are also fulfilled.

## **TRUTH #4: THERE IS A LIGHT AT THE END OF THE TUNNEL.**

It's not all bad. Yes, there is never enough capacity, nor are there enough hours in the day to complete all the work that needs to be done. However, there is a bright, beautiful, hopeful light at the end of the tunnel that somehow makes all this worth it. Because you are a change maker. In a world where most people expect others to do the job for them, you are actually doing the work. You get out of bed each morning because the work you're doing won't just improve real estate value or help a business unlock a tax break, it's because improving your community will result in a place where people feel safe, seen, and cared for. This work will address mental and physical health in an age where we are lonelier and more sedentary than ever before. This work will impact the hearts and minds of both residents and visitors of your town in a positive way, even if they don't quite know it. That is why we do this work, and that is why we love this work.

While I fail to offer specific solutions to what we are faced with, I hope you feel inspired to keep going. You are never alone, and there is an entire network of determined hearts just like yours at the ready to bounce ideas off or just be a listening ear. They say it takes a village to raise a child. I say it takes a village to raise a village. Thank you for being a part of that village. May we grow together, no matter how uncomfortable, and may we put out the flames together.

# *The Most Fundamental Transportation Infrastructure Needs*

by Sam Pearson

**P**DC plays many roles in community revitalization in Pennsylvania, including providing training, technical assistance, networking, access to resources, and on occasion funding. Beyond those services to the many organizations and municipalities working in the community revitalization field, PDC also engages in education and advocacy, working to increase awareness and understanding of key issues related to community-based economic development whether on the part of the general public or elected officials.

Recently that advocacy has included our ongoing promotion of substantial/transformational state funding for our Main Street and Elm Street communities, collaboration with other organizations on the Transit for All PA campaign, seeking to ensure stable and sufficient funding for transit all across the commonwealth, and submitting public comment at both the state and federal levels with respect to various bills and funding proposals, many connected to transportation. We also collaborate with partner organizations on that both in other states and at the national level, organizations like America Walks, the League of American Bicyclists, the National Center for Transit Justice, Main Street America, and Transportation for America.

One recent Request for Information (RFI) from the federal Department of Transportation (USDOT), asked for input on “America’s Most Fundamental Infrastructure Needs,” asking specifically for comments focused in four categories: enhancing transportation safety (including for pedestrians), accelerating delivery for transportation projects, increasing opportunities through investment in transportation infrastructure that promotes economic growth, and strengthening partnerships with States and other key stakeholders.

The comment we submitted asked for greater consideration and funding commitment to the needs of people using our transportation system without the benefit — or encumbrance — of a private motor vehicle. We started out stating the case that all modes of personal transportation

be considered since it is no longer called the Highway Department:

*Whereas almost every community has a continuous network of usable roads for cars within their boundaries and between them and their neighboring municipalities, even if they need maintenance, almost no community has a safe, accessible continuous and connected network of routes for walking or biking to get to destinations within their boundaries much less from there to adjacent jurisdictions. The rare community that does have extensive sidewalks and trails, is almost guaranteed to have many stretches that are completely impassable for someone pushing a stroller, using a wheelchair or navigating with a white cane.*

*Given that 30% of the population cannot drive, 30% are overweight and another 30% have obesity, and that surveys consistently show walking as the top leisure and exercise choice and biking as an option with high levels of interest but also concern about safety, it is fair to say that safe, accessible infrastructure for walking and biking are a critical need.*

*More than 30 years after the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) was passed, very few communities have actually been able to fund and install the accessible sidewalk*

*infrastructure it calls for — even as they have likely rebuilt almost every single road that existed when it was passed.*

PDC’s comment to the federal Department of

Transportation then listed 12 specific areas for improvement, some being individual programs and other concepts that might have impact across various programs and policies:

- Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A) Update
- Sarah Debbink Langenkamp Active Transportation Safety Act
- Bicycle education and curriculum updates
- Vulnerable Road User Special Rule continuation
- Transit for All of America (and PA!)
- Liberate Transit Development from Red Tape
- Fix It First
- Safety Over Speed
- Complete Streets Act
- Safer Vehicles
- Transportation Alternatives/Safe Routes to School funding for safety
- Congestion Reduction Through Wise Use/Build It and They Will Come

Looking just at the first of those items, the recommendation for the continuation of the Safe Streets and Roads for All program is a clear need for PA and across the country, but may not be top of mind or well-known or widely understood.

Here in PA, in the first four years of the program, there have been 40 awards for a total of almost \$108M, split between planning and demonstration (just over \$19M), design/construction (almost \$86M), and programs (just over \$2.5M). Planning funding is intended for the development of Comprehensive Safety Action Plans, akin to Active Transportation Plans, but also including motor vehicle safety. There have been 26 awards in PA for this part of the program. Implementation funding (for design and construction) is clearly the largest share of the total and has been awarded to just 5 communities so far (with one of them receiving two such awards).

After the first year of the program, demonstration projects were added to the planning project category. While it is challenging to complete demonstration projects in Pennsylvania (check out the WalkWorks resources on that topic at <https://bit.ly/PAwwTUresources>), during the previous year of the program, five communities sought and were awarded these funds. Programs are also an allowable use, but less pricey and only three awards in that category have been made in PA to date.

The ultimate goal for the 26 grantees who have done or are working toward Comprehensive Safety Action Plans with this funding is to then pursue implementation funding for the many safety-enhancing infrastructure projects called out in those plans. But if the program no longer exists, they may be left with great ambitions and no clear path to realization.

In effect, this could mean that much of the time, effort, and funding that went into the planning will feel like a waste. We consider such work valuable even without a clear path to design and construction funding, but it was in fact the stated point of the bipartisan infrastructure funding to start with. And the reality is that those who engaged (or in some cases are still engaging) in these planning efforts took the leap because of the promise of access to future construction funding.

SS4A funds have gone to large cities and small, to rural areas, whether to the Planning Organizations or the counties or to individual boroughs or townships. They have been awarded in every area of the state. But the implementation funds have been confined to date to the larger cities precisely because they were more likely to have already had planning documents in place that made them eligible for implementation monies. PHL already had a Vision Zero Action Plan, adopted in 2017. Both Lancaster and Bethlehem had created planning documents in part using WalkWorks funding in 2020 and 2021.

Few if any municipalities are in a financial position to be able to independently fund the kinds of improvements we know are needed to bring about the safe, accessible, and connected networks needed to support and enable the economic development and quality-of-life advances most of us are seeking. All communities have similarly hefty liabilities related to road design, construction, and maintenance, but they have access to structured planning and funding support to address those otherwise insurmountable challenges. We need programs like SS4A — and the other Surface Transportation Reauthorization priorities listed above to help us put in place these critical, fundamental infrastructure needs.

PDC works on an ongoing basis to communicate with state and federal agencies and elected officials, bringing insight and input needed on behalf of our historic core communities, local economies, and thriving neighborhoods. We invite you to join us in these education and advocacy efforts with notices sent either through the regular PDC Messenger and WalkWorks Newsletter or occasional standalone advocacy alerts.

We hope you see the value and importance of these efforts and take the time to join in. While admittedly our suggestions may not bear fruit every time, there are definitely promising results over the years. Consider the Main Street Matters Program or SS4A. We have to articulate the need and even outline the pathways to funding for years before they can be adopted.

Please join us for our Active Transportation Advocacy Day in Harrisburg on June 2, 2026. Exercise those advocacy muscles along with us! Let's speak up for our communities together!

# Meet the Managers

## GUIDING THE NEXT CHAPTER:

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### MEET THE NEW LEADERS ON MAIN & ELM STREET



JULIE VAN  
OSDOL

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*Greater Easton  
Development  
Partnership*

Meet Julie VanOsdol, Main Street Manager of the Greater Easton Partnership. Born and raised in Easton, Julie's love for her hometown runs deep. After high school, she moved to Manhattan to pursue ballet, but city life ultimately showed her how much community and connection mattered to her. Easton soon called her home.

Julie graduated from Lehigh University with a degree in Business Management and was drawn to work that centered around people, creativity, and welcoming spaces. Volunteering at a local art studio helped her discover a passion for connecting others to resources, which led her to the Greater Easton Partnership.

Mentored by Kim Kmetz, Julie grew into a confident community advocate who thrives on hands-on projects and meaningful relationships. She is energized by bringing people together and helping create a downtown where everyone feels they belong.

EMILY  
ARCARO

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*NeighborWorks®  
Northeastern  
Pennsylvania*

Meet Emily Arcaro, Community Development Specialist at NeighborWorks Northeastern PA. Born and raised in Northeastern Pennsylvania, Emily brings a strong passion for arts, culture, and community to her work. She graduated from Penn State University in 2016 with dual Bachelor's degrees in Anthropology and Medieval History, with academic research that earned her special recognition and broadened her global perspective.

Emily's connection to Carbondale deepened through her work managing the Carbondale Farmers Market, where she built lasting relationships with residents, vendors, and community partners. That experience—along with her collaboration with NeighborWorks—gave her valuable insight into the needs and potential of the community. Emily thrives on Carbondale's openness to creativity and change and believes that meaningful revitalization comes from teamwork, risk-taking, and shared vision. As Main Street Manager, she is excited to build strong connections and help guide Carbondale's continued growth and renewal.





JASMINE  
COLBERT

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*Perry County*

Meet Jasmine Colbert, Main Street Manager of Perry County. Born and raised in the area, Jasmine combines a passion for community with a background in photography and commercial design. After 20 years leading the Perry County Council of the Arts, she now focuses on helping boroughs thrive through partnerships, creativity, and community engagement. Outside of work, Jasmine enjoys spending time with her family, gardening, traveling, and creating art. Fun fact: She has only five U.S. states left to visit!

Meet Taylor Scheetz, Main Street Manager of Quakertown Alive. With deep family roots in Quakertown, Taylor returned home after earning a degree in Public Relations with a minor in Business Studies from Temple University, driven by a desire to give back to the community that shaped her.

After volunteering with Quakertown Alive and chairing the gardening tour, Taylor felt called to step into the role as longtime leadership prepared for retirement. She is passionate about building relationships, amplifying local business stories, and preserving the small-town moments that make Main Street special.

TAYLOR  
SCHEETZ

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*Quakertown  
Alive*



LYNN  
WELLER

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*Our Town  
Foundation,  
Hamburg*



Meet Lynn Weller, Executive Director of Our Town Foundation in Hamburg. A Kutztown native with a degree in Political Science from Temple University, Lynn brings energy, creativity, and a passion for community building to her work. She loves bringing people together, fostering connections, and creating a sense of home and belonging in downtown Hamburg. Outside of work, Lynn enjoys baking, gardening, foraging mushrooms, and hiking. Fun fact: Her spirit animal is a hawk!

# BUILDING A BLUEPRINT

*by Justine Trucksess*

**W**hen we think about a blueprint, we often think of technical or architectural drawings. Something that provides the plan for the construction of a place or a building. It has a literal definition but also a figurative use. A blueprint can be a roadmap or plan for the future of a community. Blueprints can help you know where you are going, what you want to see for the future, and how you get there.



*Here are just a few of the projects these ten teams have been working on:*

## ALLENTOWN 1ST & 6TH WARDS

We want to extend our congratulations to graduates of the 2024/2025 Federal Home Loan Bank Pittsburgh (FHLB) Blueprint Communities® Initiative. These teams are ready to take on the implementation of a community informed, asset-based, and market-driven 5-year strategic plan. Communities applied in a competitive application round to join this robust learning and planning process. The teams began their journey as a Blueprint Community in April of 2024 with a kickoff in Harrisburg at the State Capitol. Since that time, a coaching and technical assistance team, including PDC, Penn State Extension, and others, have worked one-on-one with each team of up to ten individuals representing a diverse network of organizations and businesses in the community. Guiding the process and providing support and coaching has been the core of our function during this program.

Created by FHLBank in 2005, the initiative prepares and supports Blueprint Communities teams as they develop and implement a revitalization plan. Community teams receive support over a 10-year period to help them prioritize initiatives, connect to expertise, build a plan of action, and access implementation resources. Plans are designed with community input to address locally identified needs. Past plans have included strategies to increase tourism, develop quality affordable housing, support the local business community, and redevelop historic buildings.

These communities have been putting in the work, and we cannot wait to see where these plans take them!

*"Blueprint Communities" is a registered service mark of the Federal Home Loan Bank of Pittsburgh.*

As a community engagement activity, the Allentown Team led a Photo Walk for young people in their neighborhood. Images captured that day were used as banners for the team's Fall Housing Fair event, held in a vacant green space to activate the space and engage the neighborhood.





## BERWICK

FHLBank Pittsburgh provided funds to each team to support a site visit to another participating community. These visits built connections between teams and encouraged the communities to work together and be inspired by each other. The Berwick team hosted a group site visit from the Carbondale and White Haven teams. This event allowed all three teams to connect over shared experiences and projects that they want to pursue.

## CARBONDALE

The Carbondale team used Blueprint Communities project grant funds for the six newly installed murals downtown. These murals were coordinated by the Blueprint team members and reflect the community's core values through art.



## EASTON - SOUTH SIDE

The team from Easton, representing the South Side neighborhood, focused their project and engagement funds on stimulating even more residential pride in the area. The team commissioned a new logo for the neighborhood and installed a large mural on a gateway building highlighting individuals and businesses that inspire the South Side Easton residents.

## HARRISBURG - ALLISON HILL

The team from Allison Hill, neighborhood of Harrisburg, recognized the value and importance of resident input in their 5-year strategy. The team faced the challenge of engaging residents in a neighborhood that has been surveyed many times over the past few years with very little outcome. To ensure participation, the team developed an interactive, low-cost experience to gather input from residents. The residents were given pretend money to either stay in the neighborhood or relocate to somewhere else. With the pretend money they were given, they had options on where they would invest that money in Allison Hill. Those results gave the team a sense of what needed attention in the area.



## JUNIATA PHILADELPHIA

The Juniata team has been focused on learning from the entire community about their needs. The team opted to utilize the PA Downtown Center's ability to host a perception survey for the team. While the team members are no strangers to surveys, they worked hard to ensure it would be a successful experience for the community members completing the survey. The team offered the survey in English, Spanish, and Vietnamese to make it accessible to all residents of the neighborhood.

## PANTHER VALLEY

The Panther Valley Area is a four-borough area that is named for the school district that exists to serve the students from the four unique communities of Nesquehoning, Summit Hill, Lansford, and Coaldale. Recognizing a great need in their community as it relates to food insecurity, the Panther Valley team chose to support their local food pantry effort with their project grant funds. The team funded improvements to the food drive that made it more efficient and allowed it to serve more people during the holiday season.



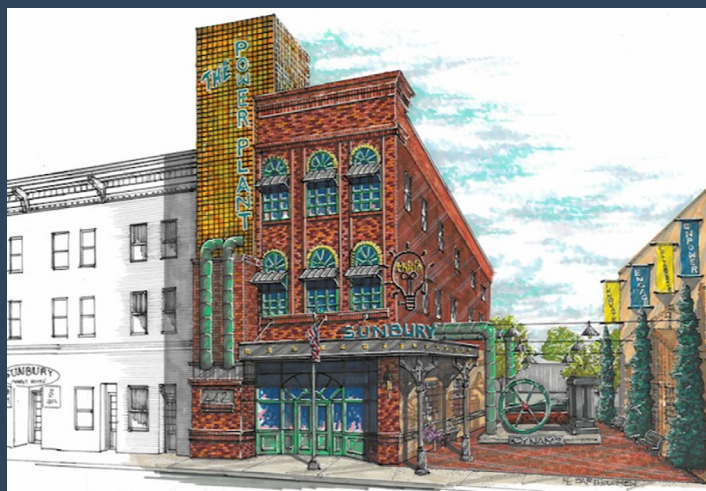


## READING - 9TH ST CORRIDOR

Reading's team held a number of engagement sessions to collect information and build relationships. These community discussions were for people who live or own a business in the area. The purpose was to build strong local leadership, collaboration, and development capacity as the team worked to advance sound local and regional planning, which includes a clear community vision and comprehensive implementation plans.

## SUNBURY

The Downtown Sunbury team had some great brainstorming sessions as they would travel together as a team. Through those discussions stuck in a van, the team developed an exciting project for property redevelopment of a blighted parcel on their main street. The proposed project would renovate one building to become the future location of Sunbury Revitalization Inc. offices, shared workspaces, a small business incubator, and an ADA-accessible apartment on the first floor with multiple upper-level residential units. Demolition of the adjacent, structurally damaged building will create the greenspace and possible display of the Edison Dynamic Power Plant.



## WHITE HAVEN

White Haven pursued the Blueprint Communities program after spending many months setting a foundation for a community revitalization strategy. With the help of this program, the team has been able to build on that work and chart a course for the next five years of activity, and as the only town on the D&L trail, to show the region that White Haven truly reflects its brand-new tagline, "Small Town. Big Adventures."

# Three's Company

## MEET THE FIRST THREE DESIGNATED COMMUNITIES UNDER THE MAIN STREET MATTERS PROGRAM

*by Bill Arrowood*

### Lewisburg

In one of the Commonwealth's most quintessential downtowns, and with a long history of revitalization and engagement already, Lewisburg Downtown Partners leveled up their program by becoming the last of the Keystone Designated programs in Spring 2024. The application and strategic planning course was charted by longtime executive director **Ellen Ruby**, who, as the part of the application process, created a succession plan for **Lynne Ragusea** to take the steering wheel in Spring of 2025.

The focus areas for the newly Designated community are to enhance Lewisburg's standing as not just a town with a college, but become a great college town, focusing strengthening the relationship not just with Bucknell as an institution, but its students, staff and alumni to continue to invest in the long term vibrancy of the community. Additional focus areas include long term financial sustainability and strengthening partnerships for the organization and establishing the downtown as a region's hub for arts, entertainment & dining.

### Hamburg

As the legendary director of Our Town Foundation (OTF), **Deena Kershner** looked ahead to stepping down after two decades, she knew that she wanted to leave a her legacy in good hands. To that end, when she found her successor, **Lynn Weller**, they worked side by side for almost a year to outline the strategy for the next generation of revitalization in Hamburg. A longtime force in the community OTF manages the Strand Movie Theater and the Hamburg Art Gallery and brings great events like the annual Hamburger Fest to keep things flavorful downtown. Its new strategic approach focuses on **Arts, Culture and Entertainment**, (focusing on the aforementioned theater, arts and a new community pavilion to host events), **Outdoor Recreation**, (as a nexus point along many trails and the home of Cabela's) and **Family-Friendly Tourism**, (revamping their marketing to appeal to a new growing demographic in the region). They formally received their Main Street Matters Designation in May 2025.

### Lewistown

Like Hamburg, Lewistown is helmed by another legendary Main Street leader, **Jim Zubler**, but 'the Zoob' isn't ready for retirement just yet. There is too much going on in Lewistown and he wants to be at the center of the action. It took a while to get it together, but after years of tinkering and working on their application, Downtown Lewistown Inc, submitted its paperwork in 2024, but then got caught in the interim between the old Keystone Program and the new Main Street Matters Program, but just because the official paperwork was still in the works, Jim got his organization moving towards the future with their newly minted strategic plan with focuses as **community for health, education, and entrepreneurial efforts, increasing downtown's vibrancy and activity and long term organizational sustainability**.

They were formally welcomed as a Designated Main Street Matters program in July 2025.



*If you or your community is interested in learning more about Main Street Matters Designation, please reach out to Pennsylvania Downtown Center staff members for more information.*



# THE IMPORTANCE OF PARTNERSHIPS

*by Virginia Mauk*

**P**artnerships come in all forms; we have life partners, workout partners, and work partners. Most importantly for non-profit organizations like the PA Downtown Center (PDC): our member partners and financial partners. Our mission cannot succeed without both, and we cannot thank all of our partners enough for their continued support!

The PDC had a financial requirement to support the 2025 Main Street Now National Conference in last April. Fortunately, we were able to fulfill this need with our co-host, the PA Dept. of Community and Economic Development, along with other key sponsors, the City of Philadelphia Department of Commerce, the Federal Home Loan Bank of Pittsburgh, PA Council on the Arts, PA Department of Health, PNC Bank, and S&T Bank. The generosity of these supporters enabled the National Main Street organization and the PDC to put on a high-quality conference for a record 2171 attendees!

PDC hosted state coordinators and other partners for an evening reception during the conference. Reception partners included Black Squirrel Collaborative, Arnett Muldrow & Associates Ltd., TixStone, and Bull Moose Marketing. We also hosted a gathering of PA community members, where we filled the restaurant with not only our presence but a palpable energy for the love of community development. This fun event was hosted by Derck & Edson. Both events offered an opportunity for these two groups to gather, network and inspire. None of this would have been possible without these organizations believing in our mission.

PDC Member, Downtown Bedford, Inc. (DBI), led by Lindsay Salas, supported the 2025 Gather & Grow | Townie Awards and Manager's

Meeting event that was held at Bedford Springs Omni Resort in May. With the local expertise of DBI, the two days of learning and celebrating our members' accomplishments were supported by local partners to include the Bedford Fall Foliage Festival, Pelham Advisors, Bedford County Development Association, Negley's Water, Kate's Real Food, and Bedford Candies. Thank you to DBI and these local businesses!

So, why share this information? We want to thank and recognize our partners, as well as emphasize the importance of partnerships. Again, the PDC could not host these events without the support of generous, community-minded partners. The 2026 PDC's Premier Revitalization Conference to be held in Erie will be here in just a few short months. We need partners to provide a successful conference! Partnerships offset costs, making the conference affordable for attendees as well as offer engaging speakers and learning opportunities. Businesses, please consider lending your support. If you are a Main or Elm Street Manager, connect us with businesses you are working with that support revitalization efforts; think playground equipment, wayfinding signs, banners, financial institutions, developers, etc. Partners benefits include increased brand awareness, strengthening statewide presence while connecting with over 250 community leaders and decision makers who are all "Making Waves on our Main & Elm Streets!"

To find out more, give me a call or send me an email, or check out the conference prospectus. I would love to hear from you and talk about how you can be a PDC Partner!



*Main Street Now 2025, Philadelphia*



# Making Waves on Main Street

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