

Connellsville

A Neighborhood Partnership Program
Community

I M A G I N E
C O N N E L L S V I L L E



Dear Friends and Partners,

As President and Executive Director of the Fayette County Cultural Trust, we are writing to extend our heartfelt gratitude to each of you for your unwavering support and partnership through the Neighborhood Partnership Program (NPP) and Special Program Priorities (SPP). Your commitment has been a cornerstone in the ongoing transformation and growth of Connellsville, a testament to what can be achieved when community, vision, and dedication come together.

Our journey, marked by significant milestones and impactful initiatives, has been profoundly influenced by the generosity and foresight of our partners and funding sources. Your belief in our mission—to cultivate a vibrant and prosperous community through cultural and educational endeavors—has allowed us to make substantial strides in revitalizing Connellsville and enhancing the quality of life for its residents.

Through the NPP and SPP, we have been able to foster a wide range of projects and programs that have touched every corner of our community. From the revitalization of our downtown area and the support of our public art initiatives to the educational leaps made possible by the Fayette Entrepreneurship & Educational Center, each endeavor has been a step toward a brighter, more inclusive future.

Your support has not only enabled us to bring these projects to life but has also allowed us to partner with a myriad of non-profit organizations dedicated to serving the needs of low-income families in our area. This collaboration has been instrumental in creating a stronger, more connected community, where every member has the opportunity to thrive.

As we reflect on the progress we have made together, I am filled with a deep sense of appreciation for your partnership. To TriState Capital, Somerset Trust Company, PNC Bank, UPMC Health Plan, and the many other organizations and individuals who have joined us in this endeavor, your contributions have been invaluable. You have helped lay the foundation for a legacy of growth, creativity, and community engagement that will benefit Connellsville for generations to come.

Looking ahead, we are excited to continue this journey with you, building on the successes we have achieved and exploring new opportunities to enrich our community. Your continued support and collaboration will be key to our collective success, and we are eager to see what the future holds for Connellsville.

On behalf of the Fayette County Cultural Trust and the entire Connellsville community, thank you! Your investment in our vision has been a powerful force for change, and we are profoundly grateful for your partnership.

With our deepest gratitude,

James Michael Edwards
President

Daniel Cocks
Executive Director

Connellsville

Neighborhood Partnership

Program

Fayette County Cultural Trust

2024

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Empowering Community Through Culture: The Fayette County Cultural Trust's Journey of Transformation

The Fayette County Cultural Trust has emerged as a beacon of hope, culture, and economic revitalization. Since its inception, the Trust has embarked on a mission to enrich the community's fabric through a diverse array of initiatives, each designed to foster growth, education, and artistic expression within Connellsville and beyond.

A Legacy of Culture and Education

At the center of the Trust's endeavors is the Connellsville Canteen WWII Museum/Cafe, a tribute to the rich history and sacrifices of the Greatest Generation, coupled with Harry Clark's Indian Creek Railroad display. This vibrant center not only preserves history but also serves as a gathering place for the community, hosting events such as the Laurel Highlands Ambassador Program, holiday programs for children, and the engaging Lunch & Learn series.

Revitalizing Downtown Connellsville

The Trust's Downtown Connellsville initiative stands as a testament to its commitment to economic development. By providing matching funds for business signs, facade work, and sidewalk repairs, this grassroots effort has breathed new life into the downtown area. Celebratory events like the Soup Walk, Chili Walk, and "It's a Connellsville Christmas" have become cornerstones of community engagement, drawing residents and visitors to explore and appreciate the revitalized cityscape.

Fostering Artistic Excellence

The Achievement in the Arts awards recognize high school seniors across Fayette County who excel in music, visual arts, and theater. This initiative not only celebrates young talent but also encourages the pursuit of artistic endeavors. Similarly, the Rural Arts Collaborative Program places teaching artists in schools throughout southwestern Pennsylvania, West Virginia, and Ohio, nurturing creativity and expression in a variety of disciplines.

Public Art and Educational Expansion

Public art projects spearheaded by the Trust have added vibrancy to Connellsville, transforming public spaces into canvases that reflect the community's spirit and history. The newest venture, the Fayette Entrepreneurship & Educational Center, represents a leap forward in community education. This 10,000 square foot facility is poised to host university-led classes on business and lifelong learning initiatives, including plans for a multipurpose performance and learning studio adjacent to the Connellsville Canteen.

Collaboration for Community Welfare

Thanks to the Allegheny Conference of Economic Development, the Trust was selected to spearhead Connellsville's involvement in the Strengthening Community partners program, a recognition that underscores its impactful work.

Through the Neighborhood Partnership Program, enabled by the Pennsylvania Department of Economic Development, the Trust has supported numerous local non-profits, channeling funds into projects that directly benefit the community's well-being.

The Better Together program epitomizes the Trust's collaborative ethos, partnering with area non-profit organizations to address the needs of low-income families.

By engaging with the University of Pittsburgh, Seton Hill University, and Penn West University, the Trust has cemented its role as a leader in educational and community development. The Trust's achievements have been widely recognized, earning two Townie Awards for Public Art and the Connellsville Canteen initiative, and being named a 2024 Partnership of Distinction awardee by the University of Pennsylvania.

A Future Bright with Promise

As the Fayette County Cultural Trust continues to weave its tapestry of cultural, educational, and economic initiatives, Connellsville stands as a testament to what a community can achieve when its members come together under a shared vision. With each project, the Trust not only enriches the present but also lays the groundwork for a future where culture, education, and economic vitality thrive hand in hand.

“Better Together” in Connellsville: Supporting the Community

In the heart of Connellsville, a pioneering initiative is reshaping the landscape of community support and collaboration. Led by the Fayette County Cultural Trust, the “Better Together” partnership epitomizes the strength of collective action. Formed under the Neighborhood Partnership Program, this collaboration unites a broad spectrum of nonprofit organizations, each dedicated to enhancing the well-being and prosperity of the local community.

The Better Together coalition boasts a roster of committed partners: Connellsville Area Community Ministries, Wesley Health Center, Alternatives.Yes, Connellsville Carnegie Free Library, The Learning Lamp, and the Fayette County Drug & Alcohol Commission. This diverse alliance leverages each organization’s strengths, from providing food security and healthcare to supporting pregnant women, advancing education, promoting literacy, and addressing substance abuse issues.

At the core of the Better Together initiative is a shared commitment to fostering a welcoming and supportive environment for all Connellsville residents. This collaboration aims to weave a tight-knit community fabric, ensuring accessible support and opportunities for every individual to flourish.

Through the concerted efforts of its partners, Better Together has launched various impactful projects. Connellsville Area Community Ministries has notably expanded its food distribution efforts, reaching an increased number of families in need. Wesley Health Center continues to offer crucial

healthcare services to under insured individuals, addressing a vital community need. Alternatives.Yes provides essential support and resources for pregnant women, affirming its commitment to maternal and child health.

Educational initiatives spearheaded by Connellsville Carnegie Free Library and The Learning Lamp have enriched local learning opportunities, bolstering literacy and educational growth from childhood through adulthood. Additionally, the Fayette County Drug & Alcohol Commission’s dedicated work in substance abuse prevention and recovery support underscores the initiative’s holistic approach to community health and well-being.

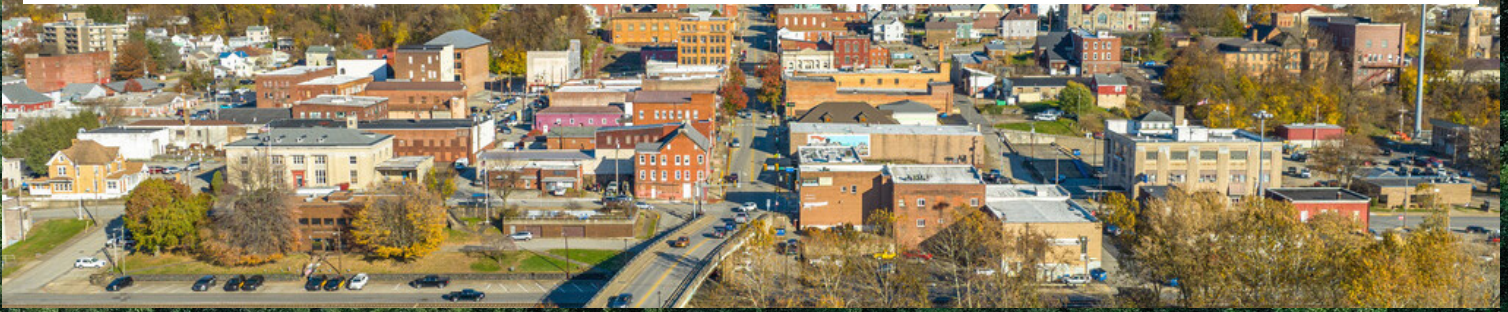
The success and expansion of Better Together hinge on active community participation and support. This initiative serves as an invitation for volunteers, contributors, and community members to join a collective endeavor aimed at uplifting and transforming Connellsville into an even more vibrant and supportive place to live.

Leaders of Better Together highlight the importance of innovation, community input, and sustained dialogue in driving the initiative forward. “By uniting our efforts, we harness the power to create lasting change within our community,” remarks the Director of the Fayette County Cultural Trust. “This journey is only beginning, and we see a bright future for Connellsville as a model of compassion, resilience, and community support.”

Participation in this initiative, whether by volunteering, donating, or advocating, empowers residents to contribute to a significant positive transformation in their community.



Revitalizing Connellsville: The Transformative Impact of the Neighborhood Partnership Program



The City of Connellsville has become a shining example of how strategic collaboration and targeted funding can breathe new life into a community. At the core of this transformation is the Neighborhood Partnership Program (NPP), a visionary initiative by Pennsylvania's Department of Community and Economic Development designed to foster long-term collaborations between business, government, and community leaders. With a tax credit incentive of up to 75% or 80% awarded to contributing businesses based on the program's length, the NPP has catalyzed a comprehensive, asset-based, and relationship-driven approach to community development in Connellsville.

A Coalition for Change

The Fayette County Cultural Trust has been instrumental in leveraging NPP funding to spearhead a range of initiatives aimed at enriching Connellsville. With the support of partners such as TriState Capital, Somerset Trust Company, PNC Bank, and past contributions from UPMC Health Plan, the Trust has channeled resources into pivotal projects that touch every corner of the community.

Impact Across the Board

The fruits of NPP funding are evident across a spectrum of Connellsville's organizations, each addressing different facets of community need:

Community Ministries: Support has extended the reach of food distribution, clothing, and utility assistance programs, directly tackling issues of poverty and food insecurity in Connellsville. NPP funding has enabled the expansion of services, ensuring that more residents have access to basic necessities.

Wesley Health Clinic: With NPP backing, the clinic has broadened its healthcare services, particularly benefiting those uninsured or underinsured. This has improved community health outcomes, providing preventative and urgent care that was previously out of reach for many.

Connellsville Carnegie Library: Investment has revitalized the library as a community hub, expanding access to digital resources, educational programs, and literacy initiatives. This has made a marked difference in educational support and lifelong learning opportunities for all ages.

Connellsville K-9 Unit: The funding has been instrumental in maintaining and enhancing the K-9 unit's operations, with Ambroos the police dog playing a crucial role in drug seizures, search and rescue operations, and community policing efforts.

Parks and Recreation: NPP funds have transformed local parks, funding pavilion roofs, playground equipment, and the establishment of the Go Laurel Highlands visitors center at Yough Park. These improvements have made recreational spaces more inviting and accessible, promoting outdoor activities and community gatherings.

Alternatives.Yes: This organization has seen a boost in its ability to support pregnant women and families, offering counseling, educational programs, and material support. The funding has been vital in extending compassion and assistance to those facing pregnancy-related challenges.

The Learning Lamp: With support from the NPP, The Learning Lamp has enriched educational offerings in Connellsville, providing tutoring, scholarships, and after-school programs that address the diverse learning needs of the community's youth.



Cultivating Community: Connellsville's Journey of Unity and Growth

The City of Connellsville presents a vibrant tapestry of community life, woven together by the hands of its residents and the organizations dedicated to its welfare. Among these, Connellsville Area Community Ministries stands as a pillar of support, extending far beyond the traditional role of a food bank to embody a holistic beacon of hope for those in need.

A Comprehensive Approach to Support

Connellsville Area Community Ministries has developed a reputation for its expansive array of services designed to not only address immediate needs such as hunger and clothing but also to tackle broader issues impacting the community. From utility assistance and emergency shelter services to educational programs, the Ministries endeavors to meet the diverse needs of Connellsville's residents, ensuring a foundation of support that fosters long-term stability and growth.

Enriching the Community Through Partnership

A key to the Ministries' success in broadening its impact is its strategic partnership with the Fayette County Cultural Trust through the Neighborhood Partnership Program (NPP). This collaboration, mentioned here to highlight its significance, amplifies the Ministries' capacity to serve by integrating cultural enrichment and social services, thus enriching the community's social fabric. This partnership represents a holistic approach to community development, where cultural vitality and social welfare intersect to foster a thriving environment for all residents.

Initiatives that Transform Lives

The synergy between Connellsville Area Community Ministries and its partners has birthed initiatives that not only provide immediate relief but also empower

individuals and families towards self-sufficiency and community engagement. Educational outreach programs, for example, not only aim at academic excellence but also at nurturing a sense of curiosity and lifelong learning among participants. Similarly, initiatives focusing on health and wellness emphasize the importance of accessible healthcare services and promote healthy living practices within the community.

A Vision for Sustainable Development

Looking ahead, Connellsville Area Community Ministries continues to build on its legacy of collaboration and service. The organization remains committed to identifying and addressing the evolving needs of the community, with a keen focus on sustainability, education, and inclusive growth. The goal is to ensure that every resident of Connellsville has access to the resources and opportunities necessary to lead fulfilling lives, contributing to a cycle of positive community development.

Building a Legacy of Collaboration and Compassion

The journey of Connellsville Area Community Ministries, enriched by strategic partnerships such as with the Fayette County Cultural Trust through the NPP, stands as a testament to the power of collective effort in community service. By bridging gaps between social welfare and cultural development, the Ministries and its partners underscore the comprehensive nature of community support, where every initiative undertaken is a step towards a more inclusive, empowered, and vibrant Connellsville.

The ongoing efforts of Connellsville Area Community Ministries, supported by collaborative partnerships, continue to inspire a vision of community where unity, growth, and compassion pave the way for a future filled with possibilities. It's a testament to the belief that together, a community can overcome challenges and celebrate the richness of its diversity, creating a lasting legacy for generations to come.

Wesley Health Center: Elevating Community Health in Connellsville

The Wesley Health Center emerges as a pivotal force in transforming local healthcare landscapes. Known for its unwavering dedication to ensuring that high-quality medical services are accessible to all, the center embodies the principles of compassion, care, and community. A notable aspect of its operation is the funding received from the Neighborhood Partnership Program (NPP), provided by the Fayette County Cultural Trust, which has been instrumental in expanding the center's capacity to serve the community effectively.

At its core, Wesley Health Center is driven by a mission to bridge the gap in healthcare accessibility. Recognizing the challenges that many face in obtaining affordable healthcare, the center strives to offer comprehensive medical services that cater to the needs of all Connellsville residents. This commitment to accessibility and quality care is not just a response to a need but a proactive approach to building a healthier community.

The support from the Fayette County Cultural Trust through the NPP program enables Wesley Health Center to achieve its goals. This funding has facilitated the expansion of services, the acquisition of advanced medical equipment, and the implementation of health education initiatives. It's a testament to how targeted financial support can amplify the impact of healthcare providers, making a tangible difference in the lives of community members.

Wesley Health Center's approach to healthcare extends beyond treating illnesses. It encompasses a

wide range of services designed to promote overall well-being, from preventive care and health screenings to chronic disease management and health education. By addressing health issues from multiple angles, the center aims to not only improve individual health outcomes but also to foster a culture of health awareness and proactive care within the community.

The impact of Wesley Health Center on Connellsville is profound. Through its dedication to providing accessible healthcare the center ensures that healthcare is not a privilege but a right accessible to all. Its outreach programs and health education efforts have empowered residents with the knowledge and resources to take control of their health, contributing to a stronger, more informed community.

Looking forward, Wesley Health Center remains committed to its mission of expanding healthcare access and improving the quality of medical services in Connellsville. Supported by the funding from the Fayette County Cultural Trust through the NPP program, the center is poised to continue its vital work, adapting to meet the evolving healthcare needs of the community. The vision is clear: a community where comprehensive, quality healthcare is a cornerstone of community well-being.

Wesley Health Center's contribution to Connellsville goes beyond healthcare; it is a testament to the power of community-focused care and the impact of strategic support, such as that provided by the Fayette County Cultural Trust through the NPP program. As the center continues to serve and uplift the community, its story tells what can be achieved when care, compassion, and community come together.





Empowering Connellsville: The Carnegie Free Library's Community Mission

The Connellsville Carnegie Free Library, with its rich history and dedication to public service, has become a cornerstone of the community, particularly for families facing economic hardships. Thanks to the support of the Neighborhood Partnership Program (NPP) funds provided by the Fayette County Cultural Trust, the library has been able to expand and enhance its offerings, making a significant impact on low-income families through access to technology, the internet, and educational programs.

Bridging the Digital Divide

In today's digital age, access to the internet and computers is not just a convenience but a necessity. Recognizing this, the Carnegie Free Library has placed a strong emphasis on bridging the digital divide within Connellsville, ensuring that all residents, regardless of their financial situation, have access to these essential resources. The NPP funds have been instrumental in this endeavor, allowing the library to offer free internet and computer use to the community. This initiative has proven to be a lifeline for many, providing access to job opportunities, educational resources, and vital communication tools.

Fostering Education and Lifelong Learning

Beyond digital access, the Carnegie Free Library leverages NPP funds to offer a variety of educational programs tailored to the needs of low-income families. These programs range from literacy initiatives for young children to skill-building workshops for adults, all designed to foster lifelong learning and personal growth. Through these offerings, the library not only supports academic achievement but also equips individuals with the skills necessary to improve their economic circumstances.

Creating a Hub of Community Support

The impact of the Carnegie Free Library's efforts, supported by the Fayette County Cultural Trust through the NPP, extends beyond individual benefits to contribute to the overall vitality of the Connellsville community. The library has become a hub of support and engagement, where residents can find not just books and computers, but a welcoming space that encourages exploration, creativity, and connection. It's a place where barriers are broken down, and opportunities for advancement are opened up, particularly for those who might otherwise be left behind.

Looking Ahead: Expanding Impact and Inclusivity

As the Carnegie Free Library looks to the future, the continued support from the NPP and the Fayette County Cultural Trust is essential in sustaining and expanding these critical programs. The library remains committed to adapting its services to meet the evolving needs of the community, with a particular focus on inclusivity and accessibility. By doing so, it aims to ensure that every resident of Connellsville, regardless of income, has the tools and opportunities they need to succeed.

A Testament to Community Strength

The Carnegie Free Library's success in utilizing NPP funds to support low-income families is a testament to the strength and potential of community-focused initiatives. In partnership with the Fayette County Cultural Trust, the library is not just a place to check out books but a vital resource that empowers individuals, supports families, and enriches the entire Connellsville community. Through access to technology, educational programs, and a welcoming space for all, the Carnegie Free Library is helping to build a brighter, more inclusive future for Connellsville.



Illuminating Futures: The Learning Lamp's Beacon in Connellsville

The Learning Lamp is casting a bright light on education, offering hope and opportunity for the community's youth and families. With a mission deeply rooted in nurturing growth and igniting potential, The Learning Lamp stands out as a pivotal force for educational enrichment in the region. Supported in part by the Fayette County Cultural Trust through the Neighborhood Partnership Program (NPP), this organization is making strides in transforming the educational landscape of Connellsville, but its reach and impact are further amplified by a diverse array of funding sources and community partnerships.

The Learning Lamp's offerings in Connellsville are both broad and deep, tailored to meet the varied needs of the community it serves. From tutoring and homework help to innovative STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) programs, The Learning Lamp is committed to providing high-quality, accessible educational opportunities. Early childhood education programs lay a strong foundation for life-long learning, while scholarship programs ensure that financial barriers do not hinder a child's ability to achieve academic success.

One of The Learning Lamp's core strengths is its ability to bridge educational gaps, offering targeted support to students who face academic challenges or come from under-resourced backgrounds. By providing a supportive environment where children can explore, learn, and grow, The Learning Lamp is actively contributing to the leveling of the educational playing field in Connellsville. Its programs are designed not only to improve academic performance but also to build confidence, critical thinking skills, and a love for learning.

The Learning Lamp's success is deeply intertwined with its community-centric approach. Recognizing the importance of engaging with families and the broader community, the organization works closely with local schools, businesses, and other non-profits to create a cohesive support network for its students. This col-

laborative spirit enhances the quality and reach of its programs, ensuring that the benefits extend beyond the classroom and into the community at large.

While the support from the Fayette County Cultural Trust and the NPP program has been instrumental in fueling The Learning Lamp's initiatives, the organization's diverse funding model plays a critical role in sustaining and expanding its services. Through grants, private donations, and community fundraising efforts, The Learning Lamp is able to innovate and adapt to the changing needs of Connellsville's youth. This multifaceted approach to funding ensures that the organization remains a robust and dynamic force for educational change.

As The Learning Lamp looks to the future, its commitment to educational excellence and community engagement remains unwavering. By continuing to harness the power of diverse funding sources, including support from the Fayette County Cultural Trust and the NPP, alongside its innovative programming and community partnerships, The Learning Lamp is poised to keep lighting the way for Connellsville's students. Through its efforts, the organization not only enriches individual lives but also strengthens the fabric of the community, proving that when it comes to education, a little light can go a long way.



Empowering Choices: The Journey of Alternatives.Yes in Connellsville

Alternatives.Yes helps support for families navigating the complexities of pregnancy and early parenthood. With a compassionate mission to empower individuals and families through education, support, and resources, Alternatives.Yes has become an indispensable part of the community fabric. Bolstered by the support of the Fayette County Cultural Trust through the Neighborhood Partnership Program (NPP), alongside contributions from other generous organizations, Alternatives.Yes is extending its reach, ensuring that every family in Connellsville has access to the care and support they need.

At its core, Alternatives.Yes is dedicated to providing comprehensive assistance to pregnant women, new parents, and their families. Through a range of services, including pregnancy counseling, parenting classes, and material support such as clothing and baby supplies, the organization addresses the immediate and long-term needs of those it serves. These programs are designed not only to provide aid but also to foster a sense of empowerment and independence among participants.

Understanding the diverse needs of families in Connellsville, Alternatives.Yes tailors its approach to offer not just physical support but emotional and educational guidance as well. By creating a safe, welcoming environment, the organization encourages open dialogue and shared experiences, helping to build a strong community network of support. This approach underscores the belief that informed choices and compassionate support can profoundly impact individuals' lives and the well-being of their families.

The collaboration with the Fayette County Cultural Trust through the NPP has been a significant catalyst for Alternatives.Yes, enabling the expansion of services and outreach efforts. However, the organization's strength also lies in its ability to unite various community partners and volunteers in its mission. Through partnerships with local healthcare providers, educational institutions, and other nonprofits, Alternatives.Yes weaves a comprehensive support network that amplifies its impact across the Connellsville area.

A cornerstone of Alternatives.Yes' mission is its commitment to education. By offering classes and workshops on topics ranging from prenatal care to early childhood development and parenting skills,



to make informed decisions about their health and well-being. These educational initiatives are crucial in fostering long-term positive outcomes for parents and children alike.

As Alternatives.Yes looks to the future, its vision remains clear: to continue to provide compassionate, comprehensive support to every family that walks through its doors. With the ongoing support of the Fayette County Cultural Trust, other community organizations, and the dedication of its staff and volunteers, Alternatives.Yes is poised to expand its reach and deepen its impact. The organization's unwavering commitment to empowering families in Connellsville is a testament to the power of community, collaboration, and care.

Alternatives.Yes' journey in Connellsville is a shining example of how targeted support and compassionate care can transform lives. Through its diverse array of services, commitment to education, and the backing of the Fayette County Cultural Trust and other community partners, the organization continues to make a significant difference in the lives of families. Alternatives.Yes is not just a resource but a home for those seeking support, guidance, and a path to a brighter future.



Revitalizing Connellsville: A New Era for Parks and Recreation

The City of Connellsville Parks and Recreation Board is ushering in a new era of community and nature-based engagement. With the support of the Fayette County Cultural Trust and the Neighborhood Partnership Program (NPP), the board has spearheaded transformative projects that enhance the beauty and utility of the city's parks. These initiatives not only aim to revitalize green spaces but also to foster a stronger sense of community, promote health and wellness, and boost local tourism.

A Canopy of Renewal: East Park Pavilion Roofs

Among the first of the notable enhancements funded through the NPP was the renovation of pavilion roofs at East Park. This project symbolizes a canopy of renewal, offering residents and visitors alike a sheltered space to gather, celebrate, and enjoy the tranquility of nature. The new roofs blend aesthetic appeal with functional design, ensuring that these communal areas remain a cornerstone of outdoor activities in Connellsville for years to come.

Playful Horizons: Enhanced and Accessible Playground Equipment

A key focus of the Parks and Recreation Board's vision is the inclusion and accessibility of play spaces for children of all abilities. With the backing of NPP funds, various parks across Connellsville have seen the introduction of enhanced playground equipment, specifically designed to be accessible to children with diverse needs. This initiative reflects a commitment to creating inclusive environments where joy and laughter are universal, allowing every child the opportunity to explore, play, and grow.

Bridging Trails and Commerce: The Go Laurel Highlands Visitors Center

Go Laurel Highlands established a visitors center located at Yough Park. This strategic development serves as a pivotal stop for bicyclists journeying along the Great Allegheny Passage, transforming Connellsville into a hub of outdoor recreation and economic activity. The visitors center not only provides essential amenities and information to trail users but also plays a crucial role in promoting local businesses, from

restaurants and shops to lodging facilities. By connecting the dots between nature, commerce, and community, this center is set to be a catalyst for sustainable tourism and local development.

A Future Rooted in Community and Nature

The efforts of the Parks and Recreation Board, supported by the Fayette County Cultural Trust and the NPP, highlight a forward-thinking approach to urban planning and community engagement. By investing in the revitalization of parks and recreation facilities, Connellsville is not only enhancing the quality of life for its residents but also positioning itself as a destination for visitors seeking the beauty and adventure that the region has to offer.

As these projects come to fruition, the impact on the community is palpable. Families enjoy picnics under the refreshed pavilions, children of all abilities share laughter on the playgrounds, and cyclists find a warm welcome at the Go Laurel Highlands visitors center. Each initiative, backed by the vision and funding of the Neighborhood Partnership Program, weaves a richer tapestry of community life in Connellsville.

Looking Ahead: The Green Heart of Connellsville

The transformation of Connellsville's parks and recreational spaces is more than just an upgrade—it's a reimagining of what it means to live, play, and thrive in this vibrant community. As the city continues to grow and evolve, the Parks and Recreation Board, with the support of partners like the Fayette County Cultural Trust, remains committed to nurturing the green heart of Connellsville. Through collaboration, innovation, and a deep-rooted love for the community, the board is not just preserving green spaces but creating a legacy of health, happiness, and connection.



Ambroos: The Heart and Hero of Connellsville's K-9 Unit

In Connellsville, a community of 7,500 residents, a four-legged officer has been making significant strides in ensuring public safety and strengthening the bonds within the community. K9 Ambroos, a vital member of the Connellsville K-9 Unit, has had an impressive year in 2023, assisting in roughly 100 police investigations, contributing to 30 arrests, and being involved in 20 drug seizure incidents. This remarkable track record underscores the critical role that K-9 units, particularly dogs like Ambroos, play in small communities. Supported in part by the Fayette County Cultural Trust through the Neighborhood Partnership Program alongside other funding sources, K9 Ambroos' contributions are a testament to the community's commitment to safety and the invaluable service provided by these canine companions.

The utility of a K-9 dog in a community the size of Connellsville is multifaceted. Ambroos' acute senses, especially his ability to detect narcotics, have been instrumental in the city's fight against drug-related activities. The presence of a K-9 unit significantly enhances the police department's capabilities, allowing for more efficient and effective law enforcement operations. Ambroos' involvement in search and rescue operations also highlights the versatility and indispensability of K-9 units in addressing a wide range of public safety concerns.

Beyond his contributions to policing, Ambroos plays a vital role in building and maintaining a positive relationship between law enforcement and Connellsville residents. Through public demonstrations and participation in community events, Ambroos and his handler, Tyler, offer residents a closer look at the operations of the K-9 unit, promoting transparency and understanding. These interactions not only demystify law enforcement efforts but also help in fostering a sense of community and mutual respect.

The success of the Connellsville K-9 Unit, and Ambroos' achievements in particular, are supported by a collaborative funding effort. While the Fayette County Cultural Trust provides limited funding through the NPP, highlighting the community's investment in public safety and the well-being of its residents, the unit also benefits from other sources of funding. This diversified financial support ensures that the K-9 unit remains a well-equipped and integral part of Connellsville's approach to community safety.

Ambroos represents more than just a member of the

police force; he embodies the spirit of Connellsville's commitment to creating a safe, welcoming, and united community. The achievements of the K-9 unit, bolstered by Ambroos' contributions, serve as a powerful reminder of the positive impact that well-supported law enforcement can have on a community, regardless of its size.

As we look to the future, the continued support and success of the Connellsville K-9 Unit, with stars like Ambroos leading the charge, are critical to the city's ongoing efforts to enhance public safety and community well-being. The support from the Fayette County Cultural Trust, through the NPP, along with contributions from other sources, underscores a collective commitment to investing in effective law enforcement strategies.

Ambroos' story is not just one of individual achievement but a reflection of Connellsville's collective spirit and dedication to fostering a safe, engaged, and vibrant community. Through the continued support and hard work of the K-9 unit, Connellsville remains a shining example of how small communities can achieve big results in public safety and community policing.

Officer Ambroos





Downtown Connellsville: Rebirth of a City

Downtown Connellsville: Rebirth of a City

A premier initiative of the Fayette County Cultural Trust is Downtown Connellsville. This grassroots program specifically aims at rejuvenating the city's urban core, making it more attractive for businesses, residents and visitors.

Since its inception, the Downtown Connellsville Steering Committee has offered educational opportunities through a monthly Lunch and Learn series and workshops with Seton Hill University Business School.

Beautification efforts have included the installation of benches, planters and trash receptacles. In addition, the care and maintenance of the plants is spearheaded by the committee.

Through matching funding for business signage, façade work and sidewalk repairs, the initiative has improved the aesthetic and functional appeal of the downtown.

Additionally, promotional efforts like ribbon-cutting services, advertising opportunities in the Trail Book and a Downtown Walking Map have helped to boost local commerce and tourism, further enriching the economic vitality of Connellsville.

Connellsville CANTEEN
 café & museum
 13111 Crawford Ave., Connellsville, PA 15425
 724.603.2093 ConnellsvilleCanteen.org

Tuesday, November 21, 2023 • 12:00 p.m. - 1p.m.

**Global Economic Trends
The Key Indicators of Progress**

Dr. Debasish "Deb" Chakraborty
 Dean, School of Business
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An Economist by Training. Dr. Debasish earned a Ph.D. in international finance from the University of Pittsburgh. Teaching and Research interest lies in the area of International trade and Finance. Before coming to Seton Hill, he worked for Central Michigan University, as a Professor of Economics, Director of MBA Program and Assistant Dean. He consulted for General Motors, Chrysler Corporation and Tata Consultancy Services. His recent research interest lies in the area of Big Data and Internet of Things on managerial decision making.

RSVP required, please email
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Wukich Center
for Entrepreneurial Opportunities



Ribbon cutting for Appalachian Creativity Center

Downtown Renewal - Blight Removal - New Developments

In Connellsville the debate over preserving old buildings versus making way for new development captures the essence of a community at a crossroads. While historical preservation is vital for maintaining a city's cultural heritage and identity, there comes a point when some older structures may no longer contribute to the community's growth or well-being. In certain cases, taking down older buildings is the best option for paving the way for new development in smaller rural cities.

First and foremost, safety concerns stand as the primary reason for the demolition of most of the condemned buildings. These structures have outlived their lifespan and are not feasible for restoration. They also posed significant risks to public safety. In Connellsville, where resources for maintenance and restoration are very limited, the cost of bringing these buildings up to code can be prohibitively expensive. This makes demolition a more practical and safer option.

Economic development is another critical factor driving the decision to replace old buildings with new constructions. Connellsville faces many economic challenges, including limited employment opportunities and a declining population. New developments have attracted new businesses, created jobs, and helped to stimulate economic growth, contributing to the revitalization of Connellsville. By making room for modern facilities, residential complexes, or commercial spaces, Connellsville is able to enhance its appeal to new residents and investors.

Moreover, the environmental impact of condemned buildings cannot be overlooked. Many of these structures were built with materials and technologies that are far from today's energy-efficient standards. Demolishing these buildings to make way for green, sustainable constructions can significantly reduce a community's carbon footprint. New developments can incorporate renewable energy sources, efficient waste management systems, and environmentally friendly materials, aligning with broader goals of sustainability and conservation.

However, Connellsville approached the demolition of old buildings with a balanced perspective. Cities like Connellsville have to carefully evaluate which structures hold historical significance and potential for repurposing. Decisions have ensured that the city's heritage is not erased in the pursuit of progress. Preservation efforts coexist with new development, selectively saving buildings that contribute meaningfully to

the city's character and story.

While the preservation of historical buildings is crucial, not all old structures in Connellsville are able to be saved. Safety concerns, economic development needs, and environmental sustainability are compelling reasons the demolition has occurred in certain cases. Connellsville is navigating the path toward a future that honors their heritage while embracing the opportunities of modern development.



The building pictured above was taken down and new development pictured below was built.



This previously condemned structure was demolished to make room for a new housing development, specifically designed to support seniors. The transformation is captured in the image below.



Downtown Renewal - Blight Removal - New Developments



The Aaron's building, positioned in the heart of downtown Connellsville, was teetering on the brink of demolition. In a visionary move, an entrepreneur acquired the building from the City of Connellsville for the nominal sum of \$1 and ingeniously transformed it into a bustling event center. In a bold architectural feat, the top two floors were meticulously removed, and the cornice was artfully matched at the top, preserving the building's historical essence while ushering it into a new century.



Nestled on the west side of Connellsville and bordering the serene Youghiogheny River, the Connellsville Redevelopment Authority successfully collaborated with partners to bring a significant addition to the area—a 54-room hotel strategically located along the Great Allegheny Passage. Boasting an indoor pool and select rooms featuring cozy fireplaces, this hotel recently celebrated a remarkable achievement by reaching the annual one million dollar mark in sales ahead of schedule. Recognized for its exceptional amenities, this Comfort Inn has earned the distinction of being the third-best Comfort Inn in America, ranked by visitor reviews.

Further enhancing the hotel's appeal, the owner is currently expanding the premises to include an event center and a restaurant, adding to the charm and convenience for guests and locals alike. This development was made possible by the removal of dilapidated houses, clearing the path for this exciting new venture.

The hotel's success has acted as a catalyst for surrounding economic development, inspiring several entrepreneurs to invest in the area. Among these new ventures, a brewpub is set to open, promising to be a welcome addition for both residents and visitors. This wave of development signifies a bright future for Connellsville's west side, transforming it into a hub of activity and leisure by leveraging its natural beauty and strategic location.



Creating New Development Opportunities



New development opportunities along the Great Allegheny Passage and Route 119 in Connellsville.



For years, portions of Connellsville adjacent to the Great Allegheny Passage have been overshadowed by underutilized spaces and buildings in disrepair, stunting potential growth and community enrichment. Recognizing the untapped potential of this locale, especially given its prime location along a popular biking and hiking trail that connects Pittsburgh to Washington DC, entrepreneurs have begun investing time, resources, and creativity into transforming these eyesores into economic opportunities.

This movement isn't just breathing new life into the physical landscape; it's reigniting a sense of community pride and participation. Residents are witnessing the positive impacts of these changes, from job creation to improved aesthetics, and are increasingly supporting the revitalization efforts.

The collaboration between these entrepreneurs and the community highlights a shared vision for a vibrant, economically robust Connellsville. This synergy is proving to be a powerful catalyst for change, showcasing how strategic development along the Great Allegheny Passage can serve as a model for similar communities seeking renewal.

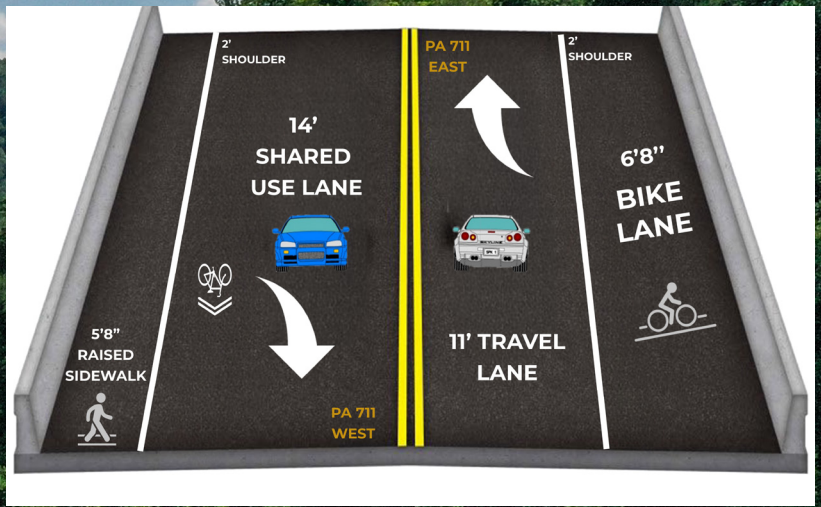
The future looks bright for Connellsville. The

once-neglected areas are being transformed into bustling hubs of activity, signaling a new era of prosperity rooted in community, connectivity, and the great outdoors. This entrepreneurial spirit, coupled with a commitment to the region's natural beauty and historical significance, is setting the stage for a renaissance along the Great Allegheny Passage.



Several dilapidated properties on the west side have been systematically demolished to pave the way for future development initiatives.

Bridging Communities - Crawford Bridge Project



Bridging the Divide: Connellsville's Gateway to Unity

As November 2024 approaches, Connellsville stands on the brink of a transformative era, heralded by the construction of the new bridge over the Youghiogheny River. This isn't just any bridge; it's a symbol of unity, innovation, and foresight, designed to reconnect the city in ways that transcend mere physical distance. With its dedicated bike lane, accessible sidewalk, and a shared bike-car lane, the new McCray Robb Crawford Bridge promises to be more than a thoroughfare—it's set to become the city's artery, pulsing with life and activity, connecting both sides of the river and downtown in a seamless blend of functionality and aesthetic appeal.

The significance of this bridge cannot be overstated. Every day, 20,000 cars traversed the span, a testament to the crucial role this crossing plays in the daily lives of Connellsville's residents and visitors. Yet, until now, the divide has been more than physical. It has represented a barrier to inclusivity, a challenge to cyclists and pedestrians, and a bottleneck in the vision of a more connected community. The new bridge, with its thoughtful design and modern amenities, addresses these challenges head-on, promising a future where no one is left behind.

The dedicated bike lane is not just a path; it's a commitment to sustainable transportation and a nod to the growing community of cyclists in Connellsville. It recognizes the bicycle as a viable means of commuting, recreation, and connection, offering a safe and scenic route for cyclists to enjoy the beauty of the Youghiogheny River without competing with vehicular traffic.

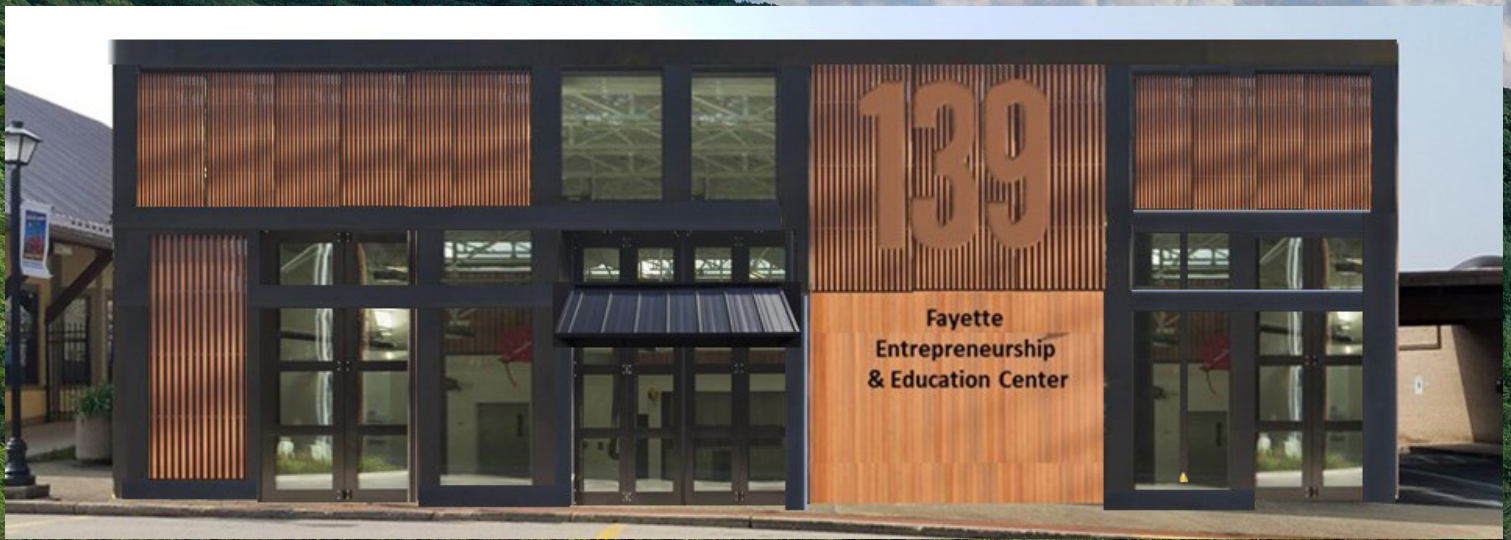
Similarly, the inclusion of an accessible sidewalk speaks volumes about the city's dedication to

accessibility and equality. It ensures that everyone, regardless of mobility, can enjoy the bridge's offerings. Whether it's a leisurely stroll to take in the riverside views or a daily commute, this feature guarantees that the bridge serves all citizens, reinforcing the principle that public infrastructure must cater to the public in its entirety.

Moreover, the shared bike-car lane represents a forward-thinking approach to shared spaces. It's a practical solution to the challenge of limited space, but it also symbolizes the bridge's broader goal: to reunite and serve the community in all its diversity. This lane is a reminder of the need for coexistence and mutual respect among all road users.

The economic implications of the new bridge are equally promising. By improving accessibility, the bridge is poised to spur economic growth on both sides of the river. Local businesses stand to benefit from increased foot and bike traffic, and the ease of movement will undoubtedly attract more visitors to Connellsville's downtown area. This influx of activity is not just good for business; it's a catalyst for community vibrancy and engagement.

In many ways, the new bridge over the Youghiogheny River will be metaphor for the kind of community Connellsville aspires to be: connected, inclusive, and forward-looking. It is a tangible expression of the city's commitment to reuniting its downtown and fostering a sense of belonging among its residents. When the bridge opens in November 2024, it will not just be an infrastructure milestone; it will mark the beginning of a new chapter in Connellsville's history—a chapter where both sides of the river are united, not just by a bridge, but by a shared vision for a brighter, more connected future.



Cultivating Culture and Entrepreneurship: Fayette Entrepreneurship and Education Center

The Fayette Entrepreneurship and Education Center stands as a testament to the power of community, culture, and innovation. This monumental 10,000 square foot facility, located at 139 West Crawford Avenue, is setting a new standard for educational and cultural enrichment in the region.

At its core, the center is a hub of academic and technological advancement, featuring state-of-the-art classroom spaces equipped with the latest technology. These facilities are utilized by prestigious institutions such as the University of Pittsburgh and Seton Hill University, offering a broad spectrum of educational opportunities to local students and lifelong learners alike. The inclusion of such high-caliber educational resources within Connellsville will provide unparalleled access to higher education and professional development in the area.

Adding a unique cultural dimension to the center is its housing of an impressive collection of area Native American artifacts, courtesy of the Archeological Center at West Penn University. This exhibit not only celebrates the rich historical tapestry of the region but also serves as an educational resource, offering insights into the lives of the Native American communities that once thrived in the area.

Plans are underway to introduce a 100-seat theater, destined to become a cornerstone for theatrical learning and a versatile venue for classes, lectures, and intimate performances. This addition promises to

enrich the cultural landscape of Connellsville and beyond, providing a space where creativity and education converge.

The realization of the Fayette Entrepreneurship and Education Center is a collaborative effort, brought to life through the dedication and support of many partners. Among them, TriState Capital & Mid Penn Bank stand out for significant contributions, having supplied critical funding through the Neighborhood Partnership Program and Special Program Priorities (SPP) Program. This support not only underscores the project's importance but also highlights the potential for public and private entities to come together in fostering community development.

The Fayette Entrepreneurship and Education Center is more than just a building, it embodies a vision where culture, education, and entrepreneurship are interwoven, creating a vibrant community where individuals can learn, grow, and thrive. As this center continues to evolve, it is poised to leave a lasting impact, cultivating a legacy of innovation and collaboration that will resonate for generations to come.



**University of Pittsburgh
2024 Partnership of Distinction Award**

In the tapestry of Connellsville's ongoing revival, the collaborative efforts between the Fayette County Cultural Trust, University of Pittsburgh, West Penn University, and Seton Hill University stand out as a beacon of community collaboration and development. These partnerships have introduced a range of invaluable programs that have significantly enriched the cultural and educational landscape of Connellsville and its environs. It's important to highlight, though, that such transformative collaborations owe much to the solid groundwork laid by the Neighborhood Partnership Program (NPP) and the existing partnerships within Connellsville.

The NPP, along with the Special Program Priorities (SPP) programs, have been instrumental in fostering an environment conducive to such ambitious collaborations. By promoting and facilitating partnerships among local organizations, businesses, and educational institutions, these programs have played a critical role in catalyzing the community development initiatives that Connellsville is witnessing today. Their emphasis on cooperative efforts and shared goals has been a magnet for the involvement of prestigious higher education institutions, leveraging their vast resources and expertise for the community's benefit.

The vibrant partnerships involving various organizations dedicated to cultural, educational, and economic development, have created a fertile ground for these

new collaborative ventures. This spirit of cooperation and mutual support has attracted further involvement from institutions like the University of Pittsburgh, West Penn University, and Seton Hill University, thereby enriching the community's development projects.

The supportive framework provided by the NPP and SPP programs has been essential in bridging the gap between the community's needs and the academic resources available. This synergy has not only led to the successful implementation of programs directly benefiting Connellsville's rural population but has also garnered prestigious accolades such as the University Partnership of Distinction award, underscoring the effectiveness and impact of these collaborative efforts.

The dynamic partnerships nurturing the revival and development of Connellsville highlight the power of collective action, significantly boosted by initiatives like the NPP and SPP programs. These collaborative achievements herald a promising future for Connellsville, driven by education, culture, and entrepreneurship. They also serve as an inspiring model for other communities aiming to harness the power of partnership for communal growth and development. Through the strategic use of resources and the fostering of strong partnerships, Connellsville exemplifies how communities can transform themselves into thriving centers of cultural and educational excellence.



University of Pittsburgh professors and students at the Connellsville Canteen.

Revitalizing Connellsville: The Impact of the Allegheny Conference's Strengthening Communities Initiative



Allegheny Conference on Community Development

In Connellsville transformation is underway. This change, marked by growth and revitalization, has been significantly propelled by the Allegheny Conference on Community Development's Strengthening Communities initiative. A key milestone in this journey was the Fayette County Cultural Trust's admission into the Neighborhood Partnership Program (NPP), a development that has since catalyzed substantial funding and support from prominent financial institutions.

The Strengthening Communities initiative, with its focused aim of invigorating communities through strategic partnerships and investments, found a perfect ally in the Fayette County Cultural Trust. By facilitating the Trust's entry into the NPP, the initiative opened doors to critical funding sources, including TriState Capital, Somerset Trust Bank, and PNC Bank. These partnerships have not only injected vital financial resources into the community but also underscored the power of collaborative effort in driving sustainable community development.

UPMC Health Plan, as an earlier partner in the program, deserves special mention for its foundational support. The healthcare giant's early involvement and funding provided a significant boost to the initiative, setting a precedent for future partnerships and reinforcing the initiative's potential for making a real impact in communities like Connellsville.

At the heart of this transformation is the Fayette County Cultural Trust, which has masterfully spearheaded the NPP Program, directing its benefits towards the betterment of Connellsville—a community characterized by its rural charm and the economic challenges typical of low-income areas. Through the NPP, the Trust has been instrumental in redistributing funds across a broad spectrum of local organizations committed to uplifting those in need.

Organizations such as Connellsville Area Community

Ministries, Wesley Health Center, and the Connellsville Carnegie Free Library have directly benefited from this influx of resources, each playing a crucial role in enhancing the quality of life for low-income families. The Connellsville Parks and Recreation Board, Alternatives.Yes, the Learning Lamp, and Connellsville K-9 are among other beneficiaries that have utilized these funds to foster a vibrant, supportive community environment.

A noteworthy mention is Highland Hospital's significant contributions to the community's well-being before its acquisition by Penn Highlands. The hospital's efforts, supported by the NPP funding, exemplify the program's reach and impact on various facets of community health and welfare.

The journey of Connellsville, from a quaint town facing economic hardships to a community on the rise, showcases the remarkable potential of targeted community development initiatives. The Allegheny Conference's Strengthening Communities initiative, in conjunction with the NPP and the strategic partnerships it has nurtured, demonstrates a successful blueprint for revitalizing communities. By uniting the strengths of the Cultural Trust, financial institutions, and diverse local organizations, Connellsville is emerging as a model of how rural, low-income communities can thrive through collaboration and strategic investment.

As Connellsville continues to grow and evolve, the story of its revitalization offers inspiration and valuable lessons for other communities aiming to navigate similar challenges. The collective effort of the Allegheny Conference, the Fayette County Cultural Trust, and their partners stands as a testament to the power of unity and shared vision in creating sustainable, inclusive communities where everyone has the opportunity to thrive.



Charting the Future: Fayette County Cultural Trust and the Next Chapter of Connellsville's Revitalization

As Connellsville stands today, reflecting on the strides made in community development and economic revitalization, the Fayette County Cultural Trust is poised to embark on an even more ambitious journey forward. Leveraging the Neighborhood Partnership Program (NPP), the Trust is keen on forging new partnerships that will amplify its impact, fostering a brighter future for Connellsville and its residents.

Connellsville's transformation has been profound, particularly in addressing blight, supporting low-income populations, and cultivating a vibrant business environment that champions a sense of belonging. The progress made is a testament to the power of collaboration and targeted initiatives driven by the Cultural Trust and its partners.

Looking ahead, the Trust is not resting on its laurels. Several initiatives are in the pipeline, aimed at building upon the foundation laid in recent years. The expansion of the entrepreneurial center stands as a cornerstone of future economic initiatives. This expansion will not only enhance resources for budding entrepreneurs but also attract more business talent to the area, contributing to a thriving local economy.

The Entrepreneurial Center's growth is expected to spur innovation and provide a nurturing ground for startups and small businesses. Through workshops, mentorship programs, and networking opportunities, the center will play a pivotal role in empowering local entrepreneurs to realize their visions and contribute to the community's economic vitality.

Moreover, while Connellsville has seen a reduction in blighted structures, challenges remain. A key focus will be the rehabilitation of significant sites such as the Brimstone Corner building. This five-story vacant building in the heart of downtown Connellsville represents both a challenge and an opportunity. Transforming such structures into usable, vibrant spaces can act as a catalyst for further downtown revitalization, attracting investment and enhancing the city's aesthetic appeal.

Additionally, the Trust is looking to rejuvenate Connellsville's gateway entrance corridors, particularly along Crawford Avenue and North Pittsburgh Street. These efforts aim to create welcoming entrances that reflect the city's renewed spirit and progress. Enhancements may include landscaping, public art installations, and infrastructure improvements, contributing to a positive first impression for visitors and a renewed

sense of pride for residents.

Future initiatives also include fostering a more robust arts and culture scene, expanding recreational activities along the Great Allegheny Passage, and enhancing public spaces to encourage community engagement and tourism. By doing so, Connellsville can further solidify its reputation as a vibrant, attractive destination for both residents and visitors.

The Fayette County Cultural Trust's vision for Connellsville is one of continued growth, innovation, and community empowerment. Through strategic partnerships and the continued support of the NPP Program, the Trust is set to lead Connellsville into a future where economic and cultural prosperity are within reach for all. As these initiatives unfold, the Trust invites the community, businesses, and potential partners to join in shaping a promising future for Connellsville, showcasing what can be achieved when a community comes together with purpose and vision.



Native American display provided by Penn West University in the Fayette Entrepreneurial and Education Center

Forward Thinking Development - The Iron Horse Bridge Project: Connellsville's Pathway to Connectivity and Tourism Growth



In an ambitious move set to redefine Connellsville's status as a central hub for outdoor enthusiasts, the Iron Horse Bridge Project emerges as a beacon of community development and tourism attraction. Spearheaded by FayPenn Economic Development in collaboration with the City of Connellsville, this visionary project aims to bridge the gap—literally and figuratively—between two of the region's most cherished recreational trails: the Great Allegheny Passage and the Coal & Coke Trail.

The Iron Horse Bridge Project, named to reflect the historic significance of railroads in the area, is more than just a structural endeavor; it's a strategic initiative designed to enhance connectivity, boost local tourism, and provide a seamless experience for bikers, hikers, and nature lovers. By linking these two pivotal trails, Connellsville is set to become an even more attractive destination for outdoor activities, drawing visitors nationally and internationally.

The Project's Impact on Tourism

The Great Allegheny Passage attracts thousands of cyclists and adventurers each year, offering them a unique journey through the heart of the Appalachian Mountains. The Coal & Coke Trail, with its rich industrial heritage and natural landscapes, complements this experience, providing a window into the region's past while offering its own array of picturesque vistas and unique experiences.

The integration of these trails through the Iron Horse Bridge is expected to significantly enhance the user experience, making it easier for tourists to explore the diverse attractions each trail offers without the inconvenience of navigating disconnected routes. This connectivity not only simplifies logistics for trail users but also encourages longer stays in the area, contributing to increased spending at local businesses, restaurants, and accommodations.

Economic Revitalization through Connectivity

Beyond the immediate benefits to tourism, the Iron Horse Bridge Project represents a broader vision for economic revitalization in Connellsville. By positioning the city as a major hub for trail users, local leaders anticipate a ripple effect of economic activity, including the growth of bike rental shops, repair services, and outdoor gear stores, alongside a demand for more hospitality and dining options to cater to visitors.

This project also underscores a commitment to sustainable development and active lifestyles, promoting environmental stewardship and health and wellness in the community. The enhanced trail network encourages residents and visitors alike to engage in outdoor activities, fostering a greater appreciation for the region's natural assets.

A Collaborative Effort

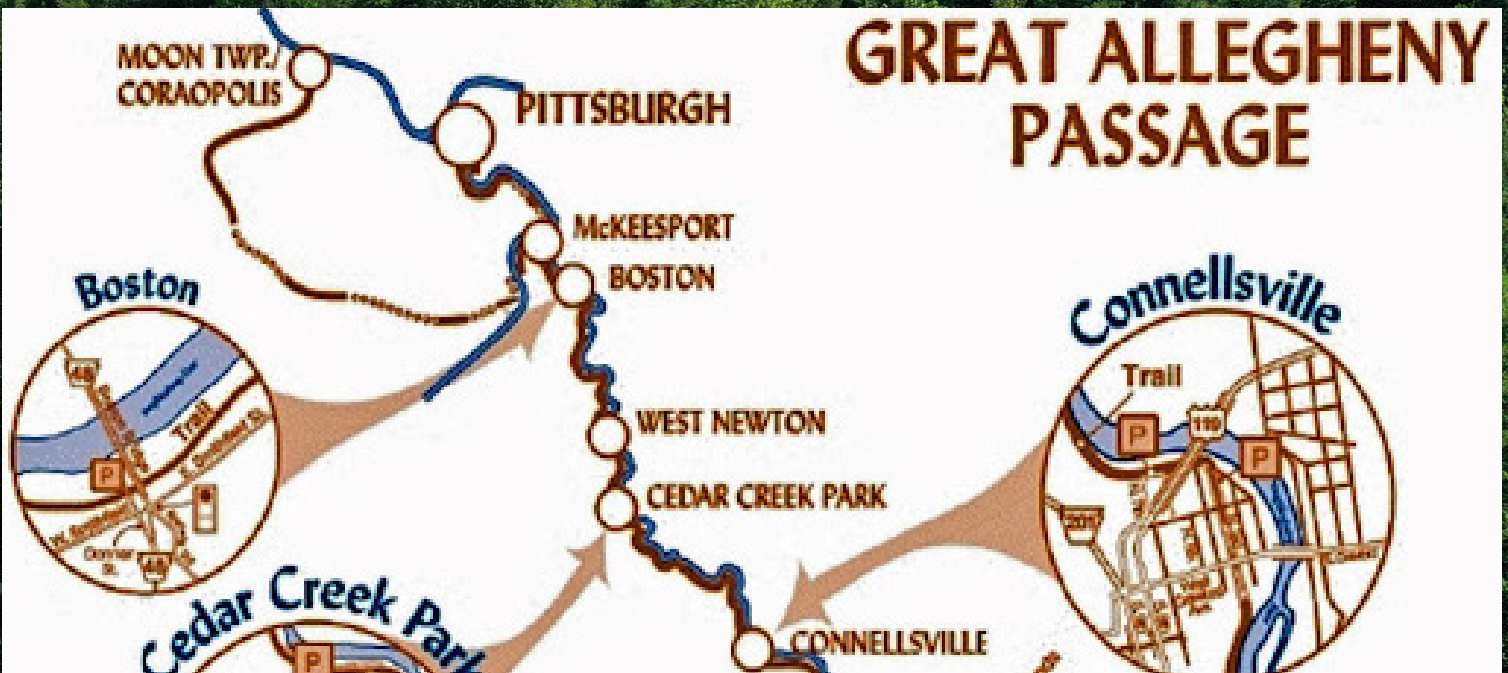
The collaboration between FayPenn Economic Development and the City of Connellsville in spearheading the Iron Horse Bridge Project is a testament to the power of partnership in achieving transformative community goals. Through shared vision and strategic planning, these entities are laying the groundwork for a project that promises to bring significant benefits to Connellsville and its surrounding areas.

As the Iron Horse Bridge Project moves forward, it stands as a symbol of progress, connectivity, and the enduring appeal of the great outdoors. Connellsville eagerly anticipates the completion of this project, ready to welcome the influx of visitors and the positive impact it will have on the community's economic and recreational landscape. The Iron Horse Bridge is not just a pathway between two trails; it's a bridge to a brighter, more connected future for Connellsville and all who come to explore its wonders.

Partnerships in Progress:

The synergy of partnerships between non-profit organizations and foundations exemplifies a powerful catalyst for economic upliftment and community transformation, especially in areas like Connellsville, situated outside the urban sprawl of Pittsburgh. Despite its geographical separation from the city, Connellsville, along with the broader Fayette County area, plays a pivotal role in shaping the region's identity and appeal to tourists. Attractions such as the Great Allegheny Passage, Fallingwater, and Ohiopyle State Park not only draw visitors to Fayette County but also contribute significantly to the perception of Pittsburgh and Southwestern Pennsylvania as a whole. The

positive experiences of tourists in Connellsville and its surroundings generate invaluable word-of-mouth promotion, fostering increased tourism and reinforcing the region's status as a desirable destination. This ripple effect underscores the importance of collaborative efforts in not only elevating the economic status of a specific area but also in enhancing the overall allure and reputation of the wider region. Through unity and shared vision, non-profit organizations and foundations are indeed making a profound impact, demonstrating the remarkable power of partnerships in driving both local and regional advancement.



Over the past 16 years, the Fayette County Cultural Trust (FCCT) has been at the forefront of spearheading transformative change, not only within the bounds of Connellsville but also across the broader tapestry of Southwestern Pennsylvania. Through strategic partnerships with a diverse array of non-profit organizations, foundations, and individuals, the FCCT has catalyzed significant economic advancement and cultural enrichment in this historically rich yet economically challenged region.

These collaborations have been pivotal, setting a dynamic course towards sustainable development across various sectors. From the arts to theater, education, historic preservation, and economic development initiatives, our concerted efforts have painted strokes of prosperity and growth across the entire area. The impact of these partnerships extends

deep into the community fabric—embedding teaching artists in schools, spearheading historic preservation in downtown Connellsville, addressing environmental concerns, and equipping budding entrepreneurs with essential business tools.

The significance of these endeavors cannot be overstated, as they have markedly improved the lives of individuals, fostered environmental stewardship, and driven the redevelopment of Connellsville, transforming it into a example for other rural, low-resourced communities.

In recognizing the invaluable contributions of our partners, we extend our profound gratitude for their support and dedication to our shared vision of a thriving, culturally rich, and economically vibrant Southwestern Pennsylvania.

- Neighborhood Partnership Program (NPP): \$2,150,000

***Includes TriState Capital; Somerset Trust Bank; PNC Bank; UPMC Health Plan**

- Claude Worthington Benedum Foundation: \$1,596,068
- Allegheny Foundation: \$440,000
- Estate of Michael Prestia: \$350,000
- Laurel Highlands Visitors Bureau: \$243,347
- Hillman Foundation: \$200,000
- Downtown Connellsville Individual and Business Donations: \$150,000
- First Energy Foundation: \$105,000
- EQT: \$40,000
- Rivers of Steel: \$13,375
- Williams Foundation: \$12,500
- Connellsville Rotary: \$12,000
- Community Foundation of Fayette County: \$10,500
- Pennsylvania Environmental Council: \$10,000
- Chevron: \$8,500
- Connellsville Industrial Enterprises: \$5,000
- Janney Montgomery Scott: \$5,000
- Fayette County Commissioners: \$5,000
- Three Rivers Community Foundation: \$4,000
- Eden Hall Foundation: \$2,500
- Columbia Gas Foundation: \$2,500
- WQED: \$2,500
- Daughters of the American Revolution: \$2,375
- Target: \$2,000
- Connellsville Chamber of Commerce: \$1,500
- Walmart: \$1,500
- Preservation PA: \$1,000
- Westmoreland Community Foundation: \$1,000
- PA Resources Council: In-kind services
- University of Pittsburgh: In-kind services
- Penn State Fayette: In-kind services
- Seton Hill University: In-kind services
- Penn West University: In-kind services



A production team from the Travel Channel was on location at the Connellsville Canteen to shoot an episode of “Mysteries at the Museum” titled “Heroine Hostess” in March 2018. The episode featured memorabilia from the 1936 TWA crash in Fayette County, which is showcased in the Canteen.



In 2023, Penn State Fayette collaborated to bring “The Wall That Heals” to Fayette County in honor of the 50th Anniversary of the Vietnam War.

The contributions and partnerships highlighted above exemplify the power of collaboration and collective action in achieving shared goals. Together, we have laid a solid foundation for the future, creating a legacy of growth, education, and culture that will benefit generations to come.

To each of our partners: your support has been a catalyst for change, inspiring hope and driving progress in our community. The Fayette County Cultural Trust looks forward to continuing this journey together, further enriching the lives of those

we serve and crafting an even brighter future for Connellsville and Southwestern Pennsylvania.

The total contributions to the Fayette County Cultural Trust over the last 16 years amount to \$5,360,665. This remarkable sum represents the collective support and investment of our partners and contributors, underscoring the broad-based commitment to the revitalization and enrichment of Connellsville and the wider Southwestern Pennsylvania region.

Connellsville Next

A Look through Connellsville's Comprehensive Plan - 2019

The city's renaissance is taking shape with a strategic plan to breathe new life into the very foundations of our community. This comprehensive strategy addresses our priority needs: replacing blighted structures with vibrant developments, empowering homeownership, and enriching the city with public art and clear signage to guide residents and visitors alike.

Investing: The Plan for Architectural Renewal

Key to our city's renewal is the securing of funding for architectural and design costs. Our vision is to provide owners with architectural design assistance to bring buildings up to code while retaining historic integrity. Investments in this area will not only redefine our cityscape but also attract businesses and residents who are eager to be part of our evolving story.

Thriving: Green Spaces and New Places

Our initiative includes acquiring vacant lands, transforming them into green spaces, community hubs, or new housing that blends seamlessly with the character of Connellsville. These projects will be the seeds from which our community's social and economic wellness will grow.

Public Art: Painting a Brighter Tomorrow

Public art is the soul of a city's public space, and Connellsville recognizes its power. We have two prime 'blank canvases' eagerly awaiting transformation: the Double Dragon Building and the Appalachian Creativity Center. These locations will soon tell new stories through the brushstrokes of local and visiting artists, funded by grants and community contributions.

Living: A Focus on Housing

Housing rehabilitation projects are at the forefront of this renaissance. Funding for first-time homebuyers and programs to adapt existing housing stock for senior citizens are critical components of the plan. By supporting our seniors and empowering

new homeowners, we're building a city that cherishes its past while nurturing its future generations.

Moving: Signage for Success

To truly thrive, Connellsville must be navigable and welcoming. Comprehensive wayfinding signage plan that will direct cyclists and visitors to amenities and businesses but also enhances the city's aesthetic appeal. Clear, creative signage is an essential element of a friendly, accessible city. City sidewalk replacement and repair are also on the list of priorities.

A Call to Action

To achieve these ambitious goals, we call upon private investors, governmental entities, and philanthropic organizations to recognize the potential that Connellsville holds. Your support can spark the change necessary to elevate not only our city but the entire Fayette County region.

Investing in Connellsville is not just a financial decision; it's a commitment to community, heritage, and a shared vision of prosperity. As we turn the page to this new chapter, we invite you to join us in crafting a vibrant narrative for Connellsville, where every citizen has a stake in the prosperity and their life is enriched by the art and culture. This is Connellsville's moment, and together, we can ensure it shines brightly.



**Proposed public art transforming the side of
136 South Pittsburgh Street**

The Rise of Southwestern Pennsylvania: Connellsville's Economic and Tourist Renaissance

Southwestern Pennsylvania is witnessing the emergence of a tourism renaissance, with Connellsville, in Fayette County, as its vibrant epicenter. The historic city, strategically positioned along the Great Allegheny Passage, is capitalizing on an upsurge in tourism, as it welcomes an influx of visitors en route to the natural splendors of Ohiopyle State Park and the architectural wonders of Fallingwater and Kentuck Knob.

Recent figures indicate an impressive increase in the number of visitors, with significant credit due to the diligent efforts of the Fayette County Cultural Trust (FCCT), it's partnerships, and the City of Connellsville. Their commitment to enhancing Connellsville's attractiveness has made it an irresistible stop for tourists.

Connellsville: The Hub of Natural and Architectural Wonders

Strategically located on the Great Allegheny Passage, Connellsville is a natural stopover for the trail's cyclists and hikers. This prime location has catalyzed a 20% increase in guest accommodations during peak seasons. Ohiopyle State Park continues to allure adventure-seekers, reporting a 15% rise in visits, while Frank Lloyd Wright's masterpieces, Fallingwater and Kentuck Knob, have enjoyed a 10% boost in tourism, bolstering the local economy.

The Educational Pivot Point: Fayette Entrepreneurship and Educational Center

The FCCT plans to inaugurate the Fayette Entrepreneurship and Educational Center. This center is poised to become a nucleus for innovation and learning, bridging the gap between education and practical entrepreneurship. The Center aims to empower aspiring entrepreneurs with the skills and knowledge needed to thrive, thereby fostering a more robust local economy and serving as a new focal point for community engagement and tourism.

Economic Boom and Future Projections

The recent surge in tourism has had an observable economic benefit, with the hospitality industry reporting a 25% revenue increase and retail sectors enjoying a similar growth. Connellsville's fiscal health is on the rise, with tax revenue gains promoting further infrastructural enhancements that augment the city's appeal to visitors.

As Connellsville and the FCCT forge ahead with these strategic initiatives, the promise of the city as a keystone of regional tourism is becoming a compelling narrative. The city's investment allure is on an upward trajectory, and as Connellsville continues to unfold as a jewel in the crown of Pennsylvanian destinations, it stands ready to welcome the world.



Elevating Connellsville is a crucial step in the broader strategy to uplift all of Fayette County, as it serves as a central node of economic and cultural activity that can have a ripple effect throughout the region. Strengthening Connellsville sets a precedent for revitalization and can act as a blueprint for success, encouraging investment and innovation county-wide. This not only fosters a unified regional identity that can attract tourists and businesses alike but also ensures that the benefits of growth — improved infrastructure, educational opportunities, and a bolstered local economy — are shared equitably among all communities within Fayette County. The symbiotic growth between Connellsville and the surrounding areas ensures that as the city thrives, it amplifies progress across the entire county, building a stronger, more resilient Southwestern Pennsylvania.

Four new investments

Yough River Brewing Company is the first of two brewing companies coming to Connellsville. The other brewing company will be Trippy Hippy which will be located on the West side of Connellsville near the Great Allegheny Passage and Comfort Inn Hotel.



**YOUGH RIVER
BREWING CO.**
CONNELLSVILLE, Pa



In 2023, Independence Health System opened an 18,000 square foot medical facility at the Wide Waters Plaza.

The total estimated annual impact in spending related to Independence Square in Connellsville is nearly \$14 million — \$7.3 million in direct expenses at the facility and \$6.4 million in direct ripple effect in the region.

This medical facility has resulted in about 92 jobs, 44 in direct employees at the facility — including 20 to 25 new positions — and 48 through indirect relationships.

The average salary for non-physician, non-advanced practitioner positions is \$47,000.



New event center under construction at the Comfort Inn Hotel.



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