

Successes, Partnerships, Challenges, and Opportunities

An incomplete list that demonstrates potential for cross-sector partnerships to build revitalization efforts.

Local Successes

- ❑ **AOAA:** The Anthracite Outdoor Adventure Area in Coal Township opened its gates to off-road vehicle users five years ago bringing approximately 20,000 people yearly to the region to recreate on 7,500 acres.
- ❑ **ARP:** Inspired in part by Franciscan ideals, the mission of the Anthracite Region for Progress is dedicated to providing a better quality of life for the people of Shamokin and Coal Township through economic and environmental development.
- ❑ **Members Choice:** For every \$1.00 on deposit, Members Choice Financial Credit Union reinvests \$1.26 in the region.
- ❑ **MCDI:** Mount Carmel Downtown Inc. seeks to upgrade, enhance and beautify the physical characteristics of the historic business section of the Borough of Mount Carmel and to encourage and support commercial opportunities, to explore the possibilities of attracting tourists, and to work with any and all organizations on the local, regional, state and federal levels, that engage in the same types of activities.
- ❑ **SABER:** In 2018, the Shamokin Area Businesses for Economic Revitalization (SABER) was formed. Great strides have been made in a few short months including nomination of officers and board members, a mission statement, and their 501(c)3 status is underway.

University-Community Partnerships

- ❑ **Education:** Susquehanna University partnership with Greater Susquehanna Valley United Way to design and implement after-school programs for at risk-youth in Shikellamy School District.
- ❑ **Food Access:** A partnership between Bucknell University and Susquehanna University, Sowing Change is a food security resource network connecting campus and community gardens and their partners and constituents to expand knowledge of sustainable growing practices, to strengthen regional food security, and to cultivate opportunities to connect people of all backgrounds through healthy food. Sponsored by CCNYPA.
- ❑ **Neighborhood Revitalization:** Local social service agencies partnered with faculty at Bloomsburg and Bucknell Universities over a period of 10 years to work towards revitalization of a neighborhood in Berwick.
- ❑ **Re-branding:** Bucknell Studio Art and Management students worked with Mount Carmel Downtown Inc. to create a new logo and branding strategy for downtown, including new social media and web platform.
- ❑ **Strategic Planning and Related Analysis:** Students in Geography and Management work with a range of organizations (such as AOAA, MCDI, Mother Maria Kaupas Center, Mount Carmel Public Library, United Way, and local government) to create strategic planning, consumer and market analysis, and recommendations for areas of expansion.

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Challenges for Small Businesses

- ❑ **Cost of Doing Business:** Managing costs across the board, but especially those related to building and investing in existing community assets and downtown buildings. Rising health care premiums impact the benefits small businesses can offer to employees, and their costs.
- ❑ **Customer Retention:** Access to new customers and retention of existing customers is a top concern, especially among new businesses.
- ❑ **Polarization:** The image of the community both inside and outside the community. Infighting and political polarization in local and national politics are barriers to progress.
- ❑ **Regulation:** Changes in regulations. Drug policy - both legal and corporate policies are out of sync and inconsistent across the region.
- ❑ **Technology:** Access and affordability of broadband internet in an increasingly technology-driven economy especially impacts rural communities.
- ❑ **Workforce:** Finding professional/management employees; workforce preparedness and the training and development of staff. Finding qualified technically skilled employees, especially in manufacturing. The opioid crisis in the region greatly impacts our workforce and the perception of the region.

Opportunities for Collaboration

- ❑ Performing outreach and creating working plans to reach and involve more community members to be active in revitalization efforts and create community cohesion within increasingly diverse populations.
- ❑ Creating a dynamic system for local nonprofits and businesses to upload requests for collaboration or volunteering from high schools, universities, organizations, businesses, and community members.
- ❑ Develop and implement strategies for recruiting downtown businesses and repurposing vacant downtown properties.
- ❑ Survey residents to identify needs and opportunities for neighborhood revitalization.
- ❑ Expand after-school programs for at-risk or low-income youth including foci on skills for entrepreneurship and job readiness.
- ❑ Conduct comparative analysis of how other communities have addressed similar challenges to develop a menu of options for action.

Stories of success and partnership abound in our area.

This list shares a small selection of those successes and partnerships, recognizes some known challenges local businesses face, and provides some examples of collaboration opportunities.

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