

# MY MEADVILLE

## COMMUNITY ACTION PLAN









# THANK YOU

The work that has been done in the last three years would not have been possible without our volunteers and supporters. A special thanks goes to our Leadership Team members of the past and present: Dave Anderson, Heather Fish, Jack Harkless, Deb Lehman, Nancy Mangilo-Bittner, Stephanie Martin, Peter McCaffery, Julie McClymonds, Marissa McIntire, Zach Norwood, Jason Puryear, Delaney Rohan, Josh Sherretts, Christin Smith, Mary Spicer, Autumn Vogel, Jill Withey, Peter Zimmer. Over the last three years, we've laid the groundwork for much more to come. We thank our Stewardship Team who will steward this plan and hold our community accountable: Justin Adkins, Kelly Boulton, Katie Davis-Bonilla, Bennett Gould, John Hartnett, Ron Mattocks, Gabby Miller, Lee Scandinaro, and Julie Wilson as well as members of the Leadership Team who will continue on. We thank the Redevelopment Authority of the City of Meadville for hosting this initiative and the City of Meadville and City Council for their on-going support. We thank the Pennsylvania Humanities Council and the Orton Family Foundation for giving Meadville the opportunity to implement Community Heart & Soul, with special thanks to Mimi Iijima and Leanne Tingay for guiding and supporting us along the way. We thank and send our love to our sister Heart & Soul initiatives, Heart of Williamsport and Greater Carlisle Heart & Soul; it's been wonderful learning alongside you.

Finally, we would like to thank all of our volunteers, event attendees, social media followers, and everyone who shared their stories and lent their efforts to create a plan for our community based on what matters most to us. YOU are the HEART & SOUL of Meadville.





# THE EVOLUTION OF OUR COMMUNITY VALUES

## 2015

Meadville was awarded a grant from the Pennsylvania Humanities Council to implement the Orton Family Foundation's Community Heart & Soul process.



## Summer 2017

We attended events and gathered stories in as many ways as we could. We hosted listening sessions where residents gathered to listen to the stories of their neighbors to uncover what people value most about Meadville.

## Fall 2017

My Meadville hosted a Community Celebration that brought together over 150 people to create a first draft of value statements that communicate our town's common values.

## Spring 2018

My Meadville hosted a series of potluck dinners to gather residents' ideas for action based on our values. These potlucks culminated in the My Meadville Ideas Summit which gave folks a chance to prioritize possible actions.

## Spring 2016

We piloted the story-gathering process, gathering thin data at community events.

## Fall 2016

We officially launched the project and began conducting interviews and story circles.

## Spring 2017

We expanded our Interview Team and, with the help of our wonderful volunteers, gathered hundreds of stories from folks in our community.



## Winter 2017

Value statements were revised and validated by the community through digital surveys, presentations, and public events.

## Summer 2018

My Meadville unveiled its Community Action Plan, a plan made for and with our community based on our shared values.



# INTRODUCTION

It is summer 2018 in Meadville, Pennsylvania. Our small town is facing big problems. Poverty is well above national and state averages. White supremacy and hate simmer. Too many homes are unsafe. Too many people lack access to healthy food, good jobs, and adequate care. Once vibrant neighborhoods feel lonely and cold, as infrastructures crumble. Opioids are destroying lives. Everyone is anxious. Even young people feel hopeless and depressed. All the while, climate change is devastating the environment. Our problems are big and shared, and the stakes couldn't be higher. Yet, we hear over and over from mainstream media just how divided we are: republican vs. democrat; black vs. white; man vs. woman. We're on our own, so the story goes.

In spite of this, Meadville residents have been coming together to listen to and learn from one another. For three years, with the guidance and support of the Orton Family Foundation & the Pennsylvania Humanities Council, the My Meadville (Meadville Heart & Soul) initiative has been gathering the stories, experiences, concerns, ideas, and dreams of hundreds of residents. After analyzing all the data we collected from you, we found that we are decidedly not on our own. When it comes to what matters most to Meadville residents, we actually have a lot in common. Over the course of those three years, we found that there's more that unites us than divides us. By sharing our stories and hearing the stories of others, we've identified the things that matter most to all of us about Meadville.

Together, we've summarized those commonalities in 8 value statements:

- We value a local community that celebrates and accepts all of the differences among individuals that keep our town vibrant and culturally beautiful.
- We value a convenient, flexible, and affordable local transportation system that makes important places accessible for all residents.
- We appreciate our close-knit, friendly small-town vibe and the unique special places, businesses, and events which create a sense of community, identity, pride, and togetherness.
- We will be a healthy community that has access to health care, fresh food, quality housing, and support services.
- We value youth-centered programming and safe accessible spaces that support youth and prepare them for a fulfilling future.
- We value a community with public access to natural resources and recreational amenities that add beauty and opportunities for physical activity and recognize our responsibility to conserve our environment.
- We value a quality local education system that challenges students in a safe learning environment so that all students are capable of building a better future.
- We value a community that supports and nurtures local businesses and our downtown, provides quality jobs, and involves people in the local economy in order to improve the quality of life for all residents.



These value statements are the bedrock of the Community Action Plan that follows. This is our plan to create a place where folks belong, are listened to, and are taken care of, so that everyone can contribute to building the wealth of our community. A number of initiatives have sprouted up during the time that Meadville was undergoing the Heart & Soul process as connections were formed, momentum grew, and new leaders were activated. You'll find that work listed in our plan. We hope that you'll also find your place in the Community Action Plan and that you will contribute what you can.

In his book, "Out of the Wreckage: A New Politics for the Age of Crisis," George Monbiot describes the new story that so many communities like Meadville are writing in these troubled times. It goes like this:

"We are astonishing creatures, blessed with an amazing capacity for kindness and care towards others. But this good nature has been thwarted by a mistaken view of our own humanity. We have been induced by certain politicians, economists and commentators to accept a vicious ideology of extreme competition and individualism that pits us against each other, encourages us to fear and mistrust each other, and weakens the social bonds that make our lives worth living.

"Though it is not the only factor, this has helped to usher in an age of loneliness, in which, on this crowded planet, we are disconnected from each other as never before. The result is an epidemic of unhappiness and of psychological and physical illness. The atomization we suffer has eroded our sense of common purpose and sapped our belief that, by working together, we can change life for the better. It has undermined democracy, and allowed intolerant and violent forces to fill the political vacuum. We are trapped in a vicious circle of alienation and reaction.

"By coming together to revive community life, we, the heroes of this story, can break the vicious circle. Through invoking the two great healing forces—togetherness and belonging—we can rediscover the central facts of our humanity: our altruism and mutual aid.

"Where there is atomization, we will create a thriving civic life. Where there is alienation, we will forge a new sense of belonging: to neighbors, neighborhood and society. Where we find ourselves crushed between market and state, we will develop a new economics that treats both people and planet with respect. Where we are ignored and exploited, we will revive democracy and retrieve politics from those who have captured it.

"In doing so, we can reclaim our happiness, reclaim our self-reliance, reclaim our pride, and reclaim our place. We will belong once more both to society and to ourselves."

Julie Wilson



# Our Community Actions at a Glance

|  |                   |                    |                   |                    |    |
|--|-------------------|--------------------|-------------------|--------------------|----|
| <b>Create a 24-Hour Community Center</b>                       | ✓ Inclusion       | ✓ Small Town       | ✓ Health & Safety | ✓ Children & Youth | 2  |
| <b>Establish ongoing Town Hall meetings</b>                    | ✓ Inclusion       | ✓ Small Town       | ✓ Local Economy   |                    | 2  |
| <b>Expand trauma-informed trainings</b>                        | ✓ Health & Safety | ✓ Inclusion        |                   |                    | 3  |
| <b>Change zoning ordinance that prevents urban agriculture</b> | ✓ Health & Safety | ✓ Small Town       | ✓ Nature          |                    | 5  |
| <b>Establish tenants' rights and education program</b>         | ✓ Health & Safety | ✓ Small Town       | ✓ Inclusion       |                    | 5  |
| <b>Develop neighborhood hubs</b>                               | ✓ Health & Safety | ✓ Inclusion        | ✓ Small Town      | ✓ Local Economy    | 6  |
| <b>Establish recovery peer leaders</b>                         | ✓ Health & Safety |                    |                   |                    | 6  |
| <b>Host an "Ask an Addict" community panel</b>                 | ✓ Health & Safety | ✓ Small Town       |                   |                    | 7  |
| <b>Launch youth mentor program</b>                             | ✓ Health & Safety | ✓ Children & Youth | ✓ Education       |                    | 7  |
| <b>Institute an Addiction and Recovery Advisory Council</b>    | ✓ Health & Safety | ✓ Small Town       |                   |                    | 8  |
| <b>Create a Needle Exchange Program business plan</b>          | ✓ Health & Safety |                    |                   |                    | 8  |
| <b>Establish a Welcome Committee</b>                           | ✓ Small Town      |                    |                   |                    | 10 |
| <b>Spotlight community cleanup efforts</b>                     | ✓ Small Town      | ✓ Local Economy    | ✓ Nature          |                    | 10 |
| <b>Create a Block Party Toolkit</b>                            | ✓ Small Town      | ✓ Inclusion        |                   |                    | 11 |
| <b>Create a local brand</b>                                    | ✓ Local Economy   | ✓ Small Town       |                   |                    | 13 |
| <b>Implement Participatory Budgeting</b>                       | ✓ Local Economy   | ✓ Small Town       | ✓ Inclusion       |                    | 13 |
| <b>Host a local vendor fair</b>                                | ✓ Local Economy   | ✓ Small Town       |                   |                    | 14 |

|   |                    |                 |                 |                    |    |
|---|--------------------|-----------------|-----------------|--------------------|----|
| <b>Establish Meadville Environmental Advisory Council</b>               |                    |                 |                 |                    | 16 |
| ✓ Nature  |                    |                 |                 |                    |    |
| <b>Increase public benches, trash cans, and pet waste stations</b>      |                    |                 |                 |                    | 16 |
| ✓ Nature  | ✓ Health & Safety  | ✓ Small Town    | ✓ Local Economy |                    |    |
| <b>Establish kayak and canoe rental on French Creek</b>                 |                    |                 |                 |                    | 17 |
| ✓ Nature  | ✓ Small Town       |                 |                 |                    |    |
| <b>Establish a host and procedure for recreation equipment</b>          |                    |                 |                 |                    | 17 |
| ✓ Nature  | ✓ Small Town       |                 |                 |                    |    |
| <b>Create a map of public parks</b>                                     |                    |                 |                 |                    | 18 |
| ✓ Nature  | ✓ Small Town       |                 |                 |                    |    |
| <b>Increase access to counseling services for students and families</b> |                    |                 |                 |                    | 20 |
| ✓ Education   | ✓ Health & Safety  |                 |                 |                    |    |
| <b>Sustain Summer Parks Program</b>                                     |                    |                 |                 |                    | 20 |
| ✓ Education   | ✓ Health & Safety  | ✓ Small Town    | ✓ Nature        | ✓ Children & Youth |    |
| <b>Encourage school board to reflect community</b>                      |                    |                 |                 |                    | 21 |
| ✓ Education   | ✓ Small Town       |                 |                 |                    |    |
| <b>Create a HYPE (Helping Youth Promote Excellence) Squad</b>           |                    |                 |                 |                    | 23 |
| ✓ Children & Youth  | ✓ Small Town       |                 |                 |                    |    |
| <b>Create a Youth Advisory Committee</b>                                |                    |                 |                 |                    | 23 |
| ✓ Children & Youth  | ✓ Small Town       |                 |                 |                    |    |
| <b>Organize a "Tool Shop Bus Top Competition" (shelter expansion)</b>   |                    |                 |                 |                    | 25 |
| ✓ Transportation  | ✓ Small Town       | ✓ Local Economy |                 |                    |    |
| <b>Revise Crawford Area Transportation Authority's bag limit policy</b> |                    |                 |                 |                    | 25 |
| ✓ Transportation  | ✓ Small Town       | ✓ Local Economy |                 |                    |    |
| <b>Increase access to information about public transit</b>              |                    |                 |                 |                    | 26 |
| ✓ Transportation  | ✓ Small Town       |                 |                 |                    |    |
| <b>Increase available transportation for youth</b>                      |                    |                 |                 |                    | 27 |
| ✓ Transportation  | ✓ Children & Youth |                 |                 |                    |    |
| <b>Create a mobile bike repair unit</b>                                 |                    |                 |                 |                    | 27 |
| ✓ Transportation  | ✓ Health & Safety  | ✓ Nature        |                 |                    |    |



# Inclusion

We value a local community that celebrates and accepts all of the differences among individuals that keep our town vibrant and culturally beautiful.

## Subthemes

- Educational, supportive, and engaging events & programming
- New ideas, accepting of others
- Willingness to change
- Build relationships
- Retain individuality
- Inclusive and welcoming

## What's Underway

In the last few years we've seen...

- the revival of our local National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) chapter
- Crawford County Human Services implement a national model to make Crawford County a trauma-informed community through the Systems of Care initiative
- the establishment of the Crawford County chapter of Showing Up for Racial Justice (SURJ), a national anti-racism group



# Inclusion

We value a local community that celebrates and accepts all of the differences among individuals that keep our town vibrant and culturally beautiful.

## Action 1 Create a 24-Hour Community Center

### Overview

Residents have expressed a need for a community space that is a safe, centrally located, religiously unaffiliated, and welcoming to all without financial barriers. This space will be identified as a information source for folks in need of services, especially the LGBTQ youth. Identified needs include, but are not limited to, education, support services, activities, and mentorship to educate and grow community pride among all resident diversities.

### Existing Resources

- Successful local community center models like CHAPS, ARC, and soup kitchen
- Blighted/vacant properties
- Call for community center in City's comprehensive plan

### Community Values

- ✓ Small Town
- ✓ Health & Safety
- ✓ Children & Youth

## Action 2 Establish ongoing Town Hall meetings

### Overview

The ideas presented in this Community Action Plan came from activated citizens and their experiences in Meadville. To maintain active citizen participation, quarterly Town Hall meetings will be held to address topics that matter to residents. Clicker polling is a suggested means of participation. These meetings can be increased in frequency if participation increases and the community yearns to address issues more consistently.

### Lead Solution Partner

- City of Meadville

### Existing Resources

- Active citizen participation

### Community Values

- ✓ Small Town
- ✓ Local Economy

# Inclusion

We value a local community that celebrates and accepts all of the differences among individuals that keep our town vibrant and culturally beautiful.

## Action 3 Expand trauma-Informed trainings

### Overview

In conversations across Crawford County, My Meadville has heard much about trauma-informed care. Childhood traumas such as violence in the home, family instability, and food insecurity are not isolated incidents, but rather the beginning of struggles that continue well into a child's future, impacting them physically, mentally, and behaviorally. It is a desire shared among many residents to see those who work with the public, and therefore interact with those impacted by trauma, undergo trauma-informed training. These trainings are designed to help participants understand the impacts of trauma and allowing them to modify their behavior and interactions. Rather than act out of bias, these individuals, such as teachers, social workers, police officers, fire fighters, code enforcement officers, and others, will be able to help build resilience and heal our community.

### Lead Solution Partner

- Crawford County Systems of Care
- Peace 4 Crawford

### Community Values

- ✓ Health & Safety

### Existing Resources

- Systems of Care initiative
- Emerging trauma-informed research





# Health & Safety

We will be a healthy community in which everyone has access to health care, fresh food, quality housing, and support services.

## Subthemes

- Addiction prevention + treatment
- Healthy & locally grown foods
- Safe places
- Active police force
- Locally-driven
- Educational programs



## What's Underway

In the last few years, we've seen...

- the Crawford County Planning Office undergo a comprehensive county-wide housing study to collect in-depth data on the state of housing in Crawford County
- Crawford County Human Services receive a grant and subsequently launch a cross-sector initiative to make Crawford County one of the first trauma-informed communities
- the development of more than 3 community gardens, over 10 city gardens, one community orchard, and the Grow Meadville Garden Network that connects them all
- the rise of Not One More, a grassroots effort to fight the cycle of addiction and support those recovering from addiction
- the launch of the Meadville Medical Center's Let's Talk Campaign to de-stigmatize addiction
- the enstatement of the Community Navigator position, a Medical Center employee dedicated to helping community members navigate the path to recovery
- the start of the Mobile Market House, an initiative to increase access to local foods and support local farmers



# Health & Safety

We will be a healthy community in which everyone has access to health care, fresh food, quality housing, and support services.

## Action 1 **Change zoning ordinance that prevents urban agriculture**

### Overview

Currently, the City's Zoning Ordinance prohibits urban agriculture which includes community gardens within City limits. A moratorium has been placed on the ordinance to allow for the development of community gardens that we've seen (Creating Landscapes for Families' garden on South Main, the MARC Community Garden, and the garden in Fifth Ward). That moratorium is due to expire. The City of Meadville's Planning & Zoning Commission, however, is preparing to rewrite the Zoning Ordinance. We hope to include a provision allowing urban agriculture, including community gardens and urban farms. An ordinance such as this will allow for long-term sustainability of existing gardens as well as the development of new gardens and farms, making fresh, locally grown foods accessible to more members of our community.

### Lead Solution Partner

- City of Meadville Planning Commission
- Grow Meadville Garden Network

### Community Values

- ✓ Small Town
- ✓ Nature

### Existing Resources

- Growing number of gardens and support for community gardening
- Grant received by City of Meadville to update Zoning Ordinance

## Action 2 **Establish tenants' rights and education program**

### Overview

In Meadville, 56% of houses are renter occupied. This, coupled with the realities that 55% of our residential buildings were built before 1950, and 56% of residents are identified as "low to moderate income", indicates a need for a strong tenant-focused support network. Such a network will address community concerns expressed about the aesthetics and safety of our neighborhood and empower renters in tenant/landlord relationships. In resident interviews, many residents expressed concerns regarding unfair treatment by landlords, neglected properties, and unsafe homes. By sharing knowledge, skills, and resources, community members hope that this program will begin to create safer and healthier homes and neighborhoods.

### Lead Solution Partner

- Common Roots
- Northwest Legal Services

### Community Values

- ✓ Small Town
- ✓ Inclusion

# Health & Safety

We will be a healthy community in which everyone has access to health care, fresh food, quality housing, and support services.

## Action 3 Develop neighborhood hubs

### Overview

Neighborhood Hubs will be supported, physical spaces embedded in local neighborhoods where residents can gather, connect, and have increased access to resources. These Hubs will use pre-existing properties within neighborhoods in order to retain community identity. The Hubs will employ community residents as leaders and organizers of these spaces. This project meets the expressed need for safe, local, and affordable spaces for residents of all backgrounds and ages to gather and receive support and build relationships, both formally and informally, as well as the expressed need for easier access to information about support services.

#### Lead Solution Partner

- Common Roots
- Crawford County System of Care

#### Partner Organizations

- Women's Services
- Living Waters Church

#### Community Values

- ✓ Small Town
- ✓ Inclusion
- ✓ Local Economy

#### Existing Resources

- County Planning's Housing Study
- System of Care

## Action 4 Establish recovery peer leaders

### Overview

As a way to bridge the gap between individuals who are actively using drugs and those in long-term recovery, trained peer leaders will be delegated and placed in key institutions to support active users who choose to seek recovery. These peer leaders will be those who are currently in recovery and have a strong working knowledge of the tools and systems that exist to support and encourage community members to seek help and healing. Peer Leaders could be stationed at Neighborhood Hubs (see above).

#### Lead Solution Partner

- "Let's Talk..." Campaign
- Crawford County Drug & Alcohol Commission

#### Partner Organizations

- Women's Services
- Meadville Medical Center
- St. James Haven
- Stone UMC Soup Kitchen
- Neighborhood Hubs





# Health & Safety

We will be a healthy community in which everyone has access to health care, fresh food, quality housing, and support services.

## Action 5 Host an "Ask an Addict" community panel

### Overview

Many residents have expressed concerns around the current drug crisis in our community, but often feel ill-equipped to offer tangible solutions due to the magnitude of the issue. After listening to community members who are in recovery, we have heard that relationship-based education and open communication can be an effective healing tool. Several residents who are in recovery have proposed regular open forums in which community members can discuss addiction and the current public health crisis in personal as well as larger social contexts. This work will demonstrate the goal of the current "Let's Talk..." campaign to end the stigma of addiction in our community and will provide a resource for meaningful community education.

#### Lead Solution Partner

- "Let's Talk" Campaign

#### Partner Organizations

- Women's Services
- Meadville Medical Center
- City of Meadville

#### Community Values

- ✓ Small Town

## Action 6 Launch youth mentor program

### Overview

Folks have expressed a desire for more drug and alcohol education resources within the Crawford Central School System. To meet this request, community members will develop a network of volunteer mentors who can have open and honest conversations with young people, encouraging them to choose paths that will prepare them for fulfilling futures. These mentors will primarily be paired with at-risk youth, but will also be able to go into schools to facilitate meaningful conversations about drug use, addiction, and recovery.

#### Lead Solution Partner

- "Let's Talk..." Campaign

#### Partner Organizations

- Women's Services
- Meadville Medical Center
- City of Meadville
- Crawford Central School District

#### Community Values

- ✓ Children & Youth Education



# Health & Safety

We will be a healthy community in which everyone has access to health care, fresh food, quality housing, and support services.

## Action 7 Institute an Addiction and Recovery Advisory Council

### Overview

One of the most concerning issues in addressing our current drug addiction crisis is the disconnect among those who are currently using, those in recovery, and those who are in positions of power. As a method to bridge this gap, an Addiction and Recovery Advisory Council will be established to work with the City and County to develop policies and institutions that promote safety, understanding, healing, support, and recovery. This council will be composed of those who are in recovery and their closest allies. The Addiction and Recovery Advisory Council will meet regularly and will have the opportunity to weigh in on City decisions that effect this vulnerable population.

#### Lead Solution Partner

- "Let's Talk" Campaign

#### Partner Organizations

- Women's Services
- Meadville Medical Center
- City of Meadville

#### Community Values

- ✓ Small Town

## Action 8 Create a Needle Exchange Program business plan

### Overview

Residents have expressed interest in the idea of bringing a "Needle Exchange" program into the community. Such a program will benefit the users by reducing the chance of transmitting blood-borne illnesses such as Hepatitis C and HIV, as well as the families and friends in direct contact with active users. A needle exchange program also facilitates a way for used needles to be disposed of in a safe and appropriate manner, further decreasing chances of disease transmission in the community.

#### Lead Solution Partner

- "Let's Talk" Campaign

#### Partner Organizations

- Women's Services
- Meadville Medical Center

# Small Town

We appreciate our close-knit, friendly, small-town vibe and the unique and special places, businesses, and events that contribute to a sense of community identity, pride, and togetherness.

## Subthemes

- Faith & family
- Things to do
- Places to meet & interact with each other
- Diversity
- Local tradition
- Historical Landmarks (Baldwin Reynolds, Diamond Park, Market House, the Academy)
- Anchor Institutions (Allegheny College, Meadville Medical Center, Meadville Public Library, Courthouse)
- Tradition-based events (Halloween Parade, Thurston Classic, Bulldog athletics)
- Locally owned, unique businesses (Pizza Villa, Tattered Corners, Eddie's, Hanks)

## What's Underway

In the last few years, we've seen...

- the start of MeadvilleCalendar.com, a comprehensive community calendar sharing all of the good things going on in Meadville
- events thrown by community members in order to provide low-cost, family-friendly fun and strengthen our sense of community, like Winterfest, the Pumpkin Derby, Splash Bash, and more
- the successful crowd-sourced startup of Tarot Bean Roasting Co., our local coffee shop and gathering place
- the expansion of the Crawford County Historical Society with the purchase and renovation of the Tarr Mansion
- the start of Thankful Thursdays, a grassroots community clean-up initiative
- the expansion of the Second Saturday Community Markets, a monthly festival of local art, music, and activities in downtown Meadville





# Small Town

We appreciate our close-knit, friendly, small-town vibe and the unique and special places, businesses, and events that contribute to a sense of community identity, pride, and togetherness.

## Action 1 Establish a Welcome Committee

### Overview

While Meadville has much to offer both residents and visitors, many of its areas of interest aren't easy to find without proper information. Additionally, local residents take pride in our small-town feel where everybody seems to know each other. Newcomers have addressed that upon coming to Meadville, they can feel like an outlier and find it difficult to participate in the "small-town vibe". Community members propose establishing a Welcoming Committee which will be responsible for welcoming newcomers to Meadville, its neighborhoods, and areas of local interest. Neighborhood captains will be recruited to keep an eye out for newcomers, including new renters to the surrounding neighborhood. These captains will share welcome packets, which will include general city information, coupons to local shops and gifts, and telephone numbers of importance, and/or places of interest.

#### Lead Solution Partner

- City of Meadville
- Meadville Neighborhood Center

#### Supporting Partners

- Shadetree Commission
- Realtors
- Chamber of Commerce

- Big employers (Allegheny College, Crawford County Courthouse, Meadville Medical Center, Department of Environmental Protection)

## Action 2 Spotlight community cleanup efforts

### Overview

Many groups and citizens, including youth, are taking it upon themselves to maintain a cleaner and more beautiful Meadville. Community members feel recognition of these commitments to the community is important. Residents want to affirm these efforts by highlighting positive examples that showcase our community's commitment to one another. These spotlights could also encourage residents to continue to organize community cleanups.

#### Lead Solution Partner

- City of Meadville

#### Existing Resources

- Thankful Thursdays
- French Creek Clean Up

#### Community Values

- ✓ Local Economy
- ✓ Nature

# Small Town

We appreciate our close-knit, friendly, small-town vibe and the unique and special places, businesses, and events that contribute to a sense of community identity, pride, and togetherness.

## Action 3 Create Block Party Toolkit

### Overview

One recurring sentiment My Meadville has heard from community residents is that neighborhoods used to have a strong sense of identity. Neighbors knew one another and took great pride in their sense of connection and common identity. Residents feel the unique sense of neighborhood identity has been in decline. To foster connection among neighbors, community members have proposed developing a Block Party Toolkit. The Block Party Toolkit will provide a guide for organizing a neighborhood block party. Such a guide will include necessary City permits, suggestions for recruiting volunteers and partners, and a list of free resources like rentable life-size lawn games (see Nature). In providing the tools for residents to host their *own* block party, we hope to see increased connection, strengthened community identity, and inspired new leaders.

#### Supporting Partners

- City of Meadville

#### Existing Resources

- Draft of Block Party Toolkit

#### Community Values

- ✓ Inclusion





# Local Economy

We value a community that supports and nurtures local businesses and our downtown, provides quality jobs, and involves people in the local economy in order to improve the quality of life for all residents.

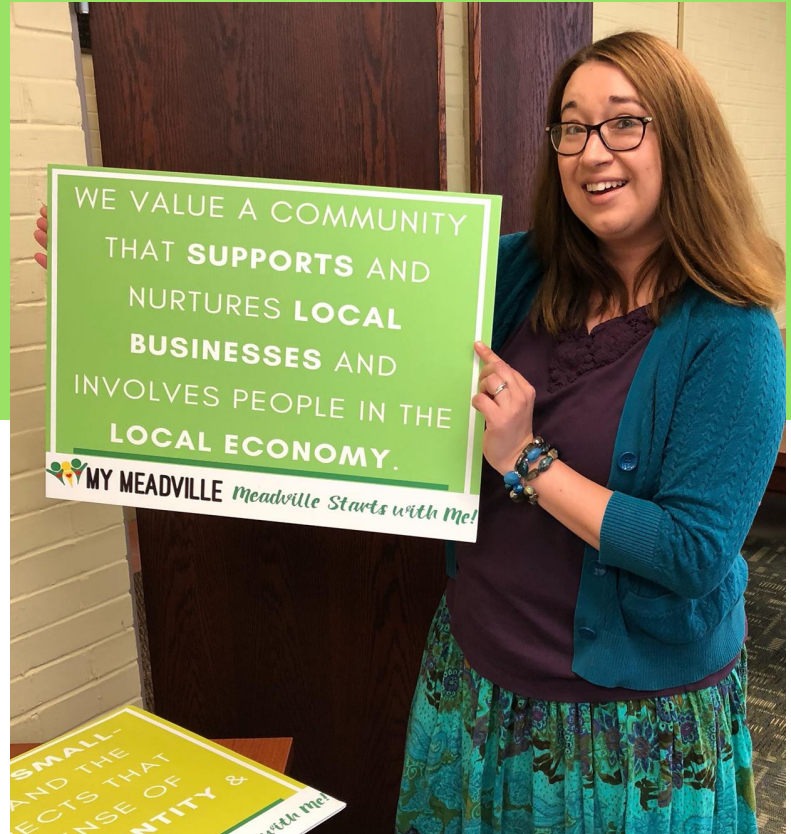
## Subthemes

- Downtown revitalization & beautification
- Variety of well-paying, high quality jobs
- Infrastructure and building improvement
- Retail diversification
- Incentives for locally owned businesses downtown
- Relationship building

## What's Underway

In the last few years, we've seen...

- the revival of the Meadville Independent Business Alliance, a group of independent business owners in downtown Meadville that offers peer support, hosts trainings for small business owners, and organizes First Fridays and other downtown events
- the launch of the Entrepreneur Accelerator Grant Program, a new project of the Redevelopment Authority that offers grants and business mentoring to emerging entrepreneurs
- the hiring of a Community Development Coordinator housed at the Redevelopment Authority who is responsible for supporting local business owners, assisting emerging entrepreneurs, and bringing people downtown
- the launch of the Northwest PA Investment Cooperative, established to cooperatively purchase commercial real estate in downtown Meadville, increasing community control over our buildings and our downtown
- the revamp of the Commercial Facade Improvement Program, a loan program of the Redevelopment Authority aiming to increase the curb appeal of downtown businesses
- the establishment of Foundry Cowork, a meeting space and shared workspace for creative professionals





# Local Economy

We value a community that supports and nurtures local businesses and our downtown, provides quality jobs, and involves people in the local economy in order to improve the quality of life for all residents.

## Action 1 Create a local brand

### Overview

Establish a "brand" specific to Meadville which communicates the identity and pride of our community. The brand, once designed and created, will then be used on maps and signs downtown for direction to areas of interest.

#### Supporting Partners

- City of Meadville
- Redevelopment Authority
- Meadville Independent Business Alliance

#### Existing Resources

- Possible logo
- City signs
- Printed maps by Meadville Fine Arts

#### Community Values

- ✓ Small Town

## Action 2 Implement Participatory Budgeting (PB)

### Overview

As a way of meaningfully involving people in the local economy, community members would like to see a percentage of the City's budget set aside for projects determined directly by the consensus of Meadville residents. "Designed to re-engage citizens in the governance of their town, community, or region, (participatory budgeting) uses a community-focused process to gather input from residents about budget decisions, develop a set of priorities, vote on them, and then fund them...Typically, the municipality allocates a small part of their total budget to projects selected through PB, ranging from less than 1% to 20%." (*Building a Healthy Economy from the Bottom Up*).

#### Lead Solution Partner

- City of Meadville
- My Meadville

#### Existing Resources

- My Meadville process, data & Community Action Plan

#### Community Values

- ✓ Small Town
- ✓ Inclusion

# Local Economy

We value a community that supports and nurtures local businesses and our downtown, provides quality jobs, and involves people in the local economy in order to improve the quality of life for all residents.

## Action 3 Host a local vendor fair

### Overview

Our anchor institutions and local businesses hold a great deal of purchasing power. In an effort to keep as much of that money as possible circulating within our local economy, we would like to hold a local vendor fair. This fair would showcase what is offered locally, encouraging institutions and businesses to source from local businesses and support a prosperous local economy.

#### Lead Solution Partner

- Chamber of Commerce

#### Community Values

✓ Small Town



# Nature

We value a community with public access to natural resources and recreational amenities that add beauty and opportunities to for physical activity and recognize our responsibility to conserve our environment

## Subthemes

- Healthy foods, locally sourced
- 4-season climate
- French Creek
- Ravines and forests
- Walking trails
- Public parks
- Playgrounds
- Gardens

## What's Underway

In the last few years, we've seen...

- collaboration among local municipalities and the French Creek Valley Conservancy to start the Creek Towns Program, which seeks to create positive, sustainable economic growth based around the incredible value of French Creek
- the start of renovations and restorations to Meadville's oldest parks, Bicentennial Beers Park
- the revival of the beloved Summer Parks Program that staffs our public parks with attendants and provides summer programming and free lunches to local youth



*Assembled by Rayshon Knight.*



# Nature

We value a community with public access to natural resources and recreational amenities that add beauty and opportunities to for physical activity and recognize our responsibility to conserve our environment.

## Action 1 Establish Meadville Environmental Advisory Council

### Overview

The City of Meadville has achieved Gold Standard Certification from the Pennsylvania Sustainable Communities Certification Program. This program helps communities to track their progress in becoming environmentally friendly places to live, work, and play. Meadville's Gold Certification supports the commitment to conserving our natural environment that folks have expressed in their stories. The next step in the the certification process will be to achieve Platinum Certification. In order to continue to improve Meadville's sustainability, the Meadville Environmental Advisory Council (MEAC) will be established. In this council, representatives of the Meadville community will propose, collaborate, and execute resolutions to make Meadville more socially and environmentally sustainable.

#### Lead Solution Partner

- City of Meadville

#### Supporting Partners

- French Creek Valley Conservancy
- Sustainable Pittsburgh
- Pennsylvania Municiple League

#### Existing Resources

- Gold Certification

## Action 2 Increase public benches, trash cans, and pet waste stations

### Overview

Residents have expressed a desire to increase the number of public benches, trash and recycling receptacles, and pet waste stations in town in order to see cleaner and more comfortable public spaces. One identified means of achieving this is to reactivate the City of Meadville's Beautification Committee and launch a fundraising campaign with the Committee at the helm.

#### Lead Solution Partner

- City of Meadville

#### Existing Resources

- Beautification Committee
- City of Meadville's Parks Plan
- Boy Scouts of America

#### Community Values

- ✓ Health & Safety
- ✓ Small Town
- ✓ Local Economy



# Nature

We value a community with public access to natural resources and recreational amenities that add beauty and opportunities to for physical activity and recognize our responsibility to conserve our environment.

## Action 3 Establish kayak and canoe rental on French Creek

### Overview

According to residents, French Creek is a well-loved and highly valued community resource. Currently, there are no public opportunities that allow residents to play in and explore the river. Residents would like to see kayaks and canoes made available for use along French Creek, as well as a shuttle system to and from access points. These resources will allow our community to better engage with and enjoy French Creek - one of the most ecologically important waterways in the country and one of America's "Last Great Places," according to the Nature Conservancy.

#### Supporting Partners

- French Creek Valley Conservancy
- Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR)
- City of Meadville

#### Existing Resources

- Development along French Creek

#### Community Values

- ✓ Small Town

## Action 4 Establish a host and procedure for recreation equipment

### Overview

To encourage active use of our parks and green spaces, the Going Places project generously purchased over-sized outdoor lawn games for public use. These games can be used at public events like Winterfest and the World's Largest Potluck...in Meadville as well as at neighborhood block parties (see page 11). The games need a home and an established and publicized rental procedure.

#### Lead Solution Partner

- Meadville Area Recreation Complex

#### Existing Resources

- Block Party Toolkit (draft)
- The games!

#### Community Values

- ✓ Small Town

# Nature

We value a community with public access to natural resources and recreational amenities that add beauty and opportunities to for physical activity and recognize our responsibility to conserve our environment.



## Action 5 Create a map of public parks

### Overview

In an effort to make information about our parks more accessible, the City will create a digital map of all our public parks. Additionally, the City will also update the Parks and Recreation page on the City's website at ([www.cityofmeadville.org](http://www.cityofmeadville.org)). Making this requested information more readily available to the public may increase use of our public parks.

#### Lead Solution Partner

- City of Meadville

#### Existing Resources

- Bull Moose Progressive Marketing & Allegheny College digital mapping project
- Current capacity of the City to do this work

#### Community Values

- ✓ Small Town

# Education

We value a quality local education system that challenges students in a safe learning environment so that all students are capable of building a better future.

## Subthemes

- Safe schools
- Financial and geographic accessibility
- Address bullying and cyber bullying
- Job readiness programming
- Engaging and engaged teachers
- Engaged families
- Athletic programs
- After school programming
- Arts
- Community spirit
- Education for all stages of life



## What's Underway

In the last few years, we've seen...

- the successful implementation of the Going Places Project, a mobile early learning classroom that brings information to families where they are and emphasizes the importance of high quality early learning
- three seasons of Grow Meadville, a summer program for teens that builds relationships with place and peers through cooking, growing food, and problem-solving
- the establishment of the Creating Landscapes Early Learning Center, a childcare center providing high-quality early learning



# Education

We value a quality local education system that challenges students in a safe learning environment so that all students are capable of building a better future.

## Action 1 Increase access to counseling services for students and families

### Overview

To further address the traumas experienced within our community, residents have indicated a desire for a more robust system of counseling opportunities available to both students and their families. Working with Systems of Care, the Meadville Medical Center, and mental health providers in the community, the intention is to develop a system of affordable psychological professionals who can support and guide students and their families through difficult circumstances, empowering them to seek out help and healing in a variety of ways without relying on referrals from a Primary Care Physician. Additionally, a stronger emphasis on mental health awareness and care will allow for the community as a whole to develop stronger resiliency strategies.

#### Supporting Partners

- Crawford County System of Care

#### Community Values

- ✔ Health & Safety

## Action 2 Sustain Summer Parks Program

### Overview

Many residents have expressed concerns over the lack of educational opportunities available to students during the summer. Community members have pinpointed the parks as a location for education and student engagement to continue over the school break, equipping students with preparations for the following school year and minimizing activities or actions which can place youth in physically harmful situations. After hearing this, a version of the Summer Parks Program has been revived, but it needs a permanent organizational home, funding sources, and a promotional strategy.

#### Lead Solution Partner

- Summer Parks Program
- Crawford County Systems of Care
- City of Meadville

#### Supporting Partners

- Crawford Central School District
- French Creek Valley Conservancy
- Creek Connections
- Going Places
- MLK Mentoring

#### Community Values

- ✔ Health & Safety
- ✔ Small Town
- ✔ Nature
- ✔ Children & Youth



# Education

We value a quality local education system that challenges students in a safe learning environment so that all students are capable of building a better future.

## Action 3 Encourage school board to reflect community

### Overview

My Meadville has listened to the concerns of many residents who feel far removed from school board decisions that affect their children and their community. Residents have suggested promoting 2-3 local parent and 2-3 student community representatives to serve on the school board in order to have resident concerns addressed and make Crawford Central School District more reflective of the community it serves.

### Lead Solution Partner

- Local leadership (2-3 parent representatives, 2-3 student representatives)

### Existing Resources

- Parent Teacher Association/Organization

### Community Values

- ✓ Small Town



# Children & Youth

We value youth-centered programming and safe accessible spaces that support youth and prepare them for a fulfilling future.

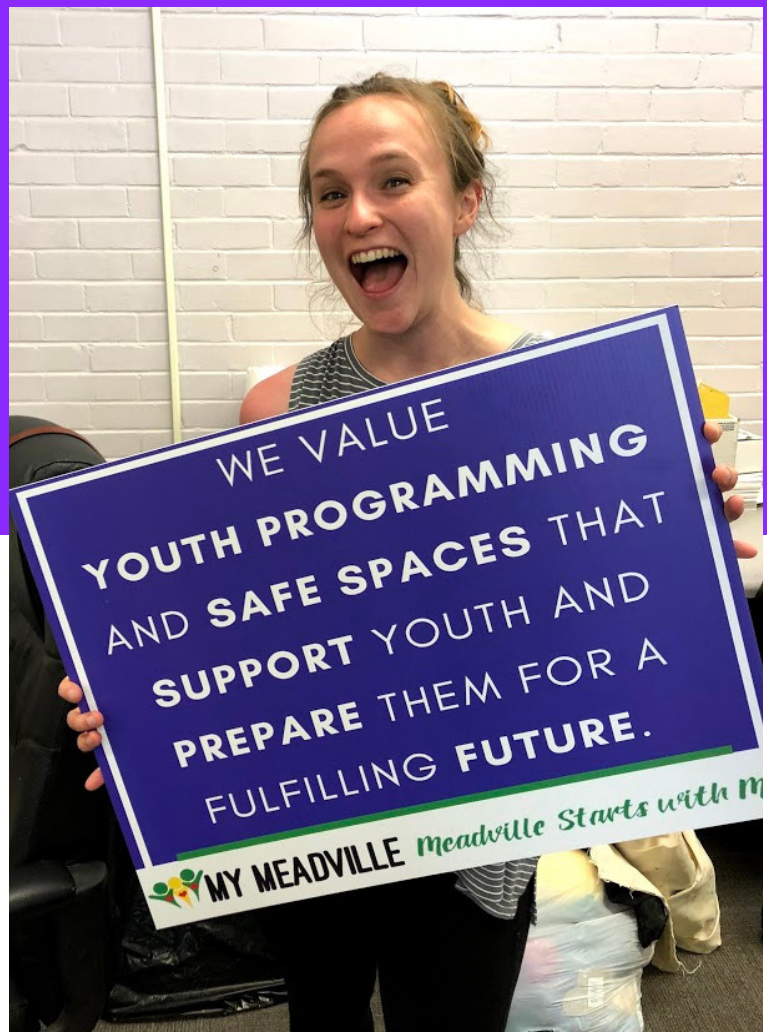
## Subthemes

- Community engagement and community events
- After school and mentoring programs
- Character building, team building, skill building, relationship building
- Safe, accessible, affordable, and supportive spaces
- Outdoor recreation
- Opportunities for growth

## What's Underway

In the last few years, we've seen...

- the revival of the beloved Summer Parks Program that staffs our public parks with attendants and provides summer programming and free lunches to local youth
- the start of the Meadville Area Teens Lounge, an idea born from Grow Meadville for a space that is designed and built by teenagers for teenagers
- the creation of the Community Playspace, regular times for families with children to come together and play in a free, unstructured environment
- the local return of the national mentoring program Big Brothers Big Sisters
- the implementation of garden education in several public school classrooms
- the development of the Creating Landscapes Basketball League, started by local families whose children did not make the school team and had no other option to play the sport
- the start of CHAPS' Youth Journey Center Clubhouse, an expansion of their program that assists young members in their recovery from mental illness





# Children & Youth

We value youth-centered programming and safe accessible spaces that support youth and prepare them for a fulfilling future.

## Action 1 Create a HYPE (Helping Youth Promote Excellence) Squad

### Overview

Helping Youth Promote Excellence, known as The HYPE Squad, is a group dedicated to creating an empowered network of teens within the community. This idea came from the My Meadville Ideas Summit, created by the teens in attendance. HYPE Squad aims to address the issue of teenagers not knowing what amenities exist to them and will consist of HYPE-selected teens to facilitate promotion of opportunities, a teen lounge as one example (expressed during the summit). It can also ensure teenage representation at town events.

### Supporting Partners

- Meadville Neighborhood Center
- Youth Advocacy Programs
- Crawford County Systems of Care
- Crawford County Mental Health Awareness Program (CHAPS)
- YMCA

### Existing Resources

- Teen lounge as a base/headquarters

### Community Values

- ✓ Small Town



## Action 2 Create a Youth Advisory Committee (YAC)

### Overview

With ideal membership reflecting the diversity of youth in Meadville, The Youth Advisory Committee (YAC) will be responsible for identifying youth trends, advising local leadership, and assisting in the development of policies relevant to the youth. They will also be in charge of creating projects and programs within the city to get the youth more involved in the community as well as looking for opportunities to partner with other organizations that empower youth and expand their network. This would ideally extend to the school board to facilitate a voice for the youth within important community decision-making.

### Lead Solution Partner

- Local leadership (2-3 parent representatives, 2-3 student representatives)

### Existing Resources

- Parent Teacher Association/Organization

### Community Values

- ✓ Small Town

# Transportation

We value a convenient and flexible local transportation system that makes important places accessible for all residents.

## Subthemes

- Bikability and walkability
- Sidewalk conditions
- Road conditions
- Public Transit

## What's Underway

In the last few years, we've seen...

- upgrades to the Eldred Glen trails at the Meadville Area Recreation Complex
- the addition of three buses that run on compressed natural gas (CNG) to our public transit fleet
- the addition of new public bus routes, connecting Meadville to Titusville & Conneaut Lake
- the addition of sharrows on City and State roads





# Transportation

We value a convenient and flexible local transportation system that makes important places accessible for all residents.

## Action 1 Organize a "Tool Shop Bus Stop Competition" (Shelter Expansion)

### Overview

Many residents have expressed that the long wait time between buses makes the public transportation system inconvenient. Further, spending that wait time at an unfurnished bus stop makes the system uncomfortable and prohibitive to certain populations, especially in inclement weather. As a means to make Meadville's public transportation system more accommodating to the rider and increase the visibility of the Crawford Area Transportation Authority (CATA) system, residents will work with CATA to increase the number of bus stop shelters in Meadville. As a cost-saving measure and as a way to get more community buy-in and awareness, community members suggest holding a bus shelter competition among local tool shops and the students of the Crawford County Career and Technical Center. The completed shelters will then be placed around the community at appropriate stops.

#### Supporting Partners

- Crawford Area Transportation Authority (CATA)
- Crawford County Career & Technical Center

#### Existing Resources

- National Tooling & Machining Association (NTMA)
- Active tool & die and machining sector

#### Community Values

- ✓ Small Town
- ✓ Local Economy

## Action 2 Revise Crawford Area Transportation Authority's bag limit policy

### Overview

Currently, a rider of Crawford Area Transit Authority buses is limited to two bags aboard the bus. This bag limit makes it difficult for riders to use the bus to make regular errands, especially grocery shopping. This is especially true for riders shopping for families. As a way to encourage ridership by addressing the needs of riders, residents will work with CATA to revise the current bag limit policy, allowing for additional bags of necessary items.

#### Lead Solution Partner

- Crawford Area Transportation Authority

#### Community Values

- ✓ Small Town
- ✓ Local Economy

# Transportation

We value a convenient and flexible local transportation system that makes important places accessible for all residents.



## Action 3 Increase access to information about public transit

### Overview

Many neighbors shared that they currently do not use the CATA transit system because they have difficulty accessing route and fare information. At the same time, regular riders shared similar difficulty receiving route updates. In order to address this, residents propose developing an app that would make information more accessible to riders. This could be done with the help of Laurel Technical Institute, Allegheny College, and Crawford County Career & Technical Center students. This app would also create an alternative to printed materials. Additionally, residents recommend that CATA employ a range of internet and media sources such as Facebook, Armstrong Cable's advertisement channel, radio advertisements (via local radio stations), as well as publish bus route information in the Meadville Tribune.

#### Lead Solution Partner

- Crawford Area Transportation Authority

#### Community Values

- ✓ Small Town

# Transportation

We value a convenient and flexible local transportation system that makes important places accessible for all residents.

## Action 4 Increase available transportation for youth

### Overview

Youth & Teens need the ability to access events and amenities without being concerned by transportation, a current barrier to teen involvement within Meadville and its respective events. With access to transportation, they will be more able to be involved and engaged in the community, increasing community pride on the youth level. One possible way to achieve this includes implementing a policy of free rides for youth on CATA buses. Alternatively, residents suggest a youth-oriented shuttle to ease capacity concerns of the current public transit system.

#### Supporting Partners

- Crawford Area Transportation Authority
- Crawford County Systems of Care
- Meadville HYPE Squad

#### Community Values

- ✓ Children & Youth

## Action 5 Create a mobile bike repair unit

### Overview

To enable active living and encouraging alternative means of transportation, residents would like to see a mobile bike repair unit. The vision is a repair shop housed in a trailer pulled behind a bicycle that can stop in parks, neighborhoods, business districts, and public places where bike users can use the tools to repair their own bikes and can share/gain information from the bike repair operator on how to fix their bike. Such a resource would encourage bike usage, develop mechanical skills and knowledge among children and adults, and build relationships among folks who use bikes. Additionally, this unit would allow for folks to conduct minor fixes to their bikes, free of charge. This would be especially useful for those who, due to financial constraints, rely on bicycles as their primary form of transportation.

#### Supporting Partners

- Meadville Time Trade
- Summer Parks Program
- Crawford Central School District
- Creating Landscapes for Families

#### Community Values

- ✓ Health & Safety
- ✓ Nature





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We are supported locally by the Redevelopment Authority of the City of Meadville.

