

# ANNUAL REPORT

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## DOWNTOWN WEBSITE ENHANCED; COMMUNICATION IMPROVED

New features recently incorporated into the Downtown Lewistown, Inc. website include an updated directory of Downtown businesses by product offering, an up-to-date listing of available commercial properties, and links to partner agencies and organizations. Additionally, the functionality of the site allows the posting of images and text featuring related developments and projects in Downtown Lewistown. Look for regular updates on activities of your Downtown friends and neighbors. Better yet, use the "Contact Us" button on the left hand side of the home page screen and inform us of your project/achievement and we'll be happy to include it in our next set of updates to the "News & Events" listing or feature it in the "Project Gallery" page. The website, designed by ACS World, Inc. is continuing our enhancement of service to Downtown business and property owners, stakeholders, partners, and residents and comes to you as a continued investment by the Board of Directors to enhance the service provided by the organization.



Screen Image of Downtown Lewistown, Inc. Website

### ANNUAL MEETING HELD TODAY

The Downtown Lewistown, Inc. Board of Directors present the Officers and Directors for the 2005-2006 year in addition to the summary of projects, programs, and services advanced during the past year.

### PUBLIC INVESTMENT UPDATES

The long awaited Montgomery Avenue Enhancement Project is wrapping up design of the \$175,000 project with bidding anticipated for later this summer. This project is made possible through the collective efforts of DLI, Crider-Mitchell Construction, Mann Edge Tool Company, the Borough of Lewistown and Borough Engineer, pro-bono contributions from Lepley Electric, Dauphin Electric, Gold Key Real Estate & Appraising, and Moon Brothers Landscaping,

The \$230,000 Dorcas Street Gateway Project has received favorable review to utilize a portion of the Borough Community Development Block Grant allocation to fund design and engineering costs for the Federal TEA 21 project. Bidding for the design/engineering phase is anticipated for late 2005 pending approval of the block grant monies.

Aided through allocations from the PA Department of Community & Economic Development, Penn-Dot, PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, Borough of Lewistown, Mifflin County Commissioners, MCIDC, local business industry and private property owners, these investments are crucial to fuel economic development Downtown in combination with efforts to improve the region as a whole.

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## DOWNTOWN STEWARDSHIP

The Mifflin County Historical Society, DLI and the Juniata River Valley Visitors Bureau/Juniata Area Chamber of Commerce continued the program to recognize owners of significant historical properties and the care they have taken to maintain and preserve the landmark. Each owner was presented with two plaques, manufactured by a local entrepreneur, representative of the sites contribution to the heritage of Mifflin County, and the date of the property's significance. This year the Committee and Society honored the Apprentice's Literary Society building, housing the Mifflin-Juniata United Way offices, Russell Bank, now a part of Omega Financial Corporation, St Marks Episcopal Church, and WMRF Radio, Mifflin County's oldest station. With the addition of these four buildings, the sites so honored now numbers seven with several more to be recognized this summer.

This Committee continues its efforts to develop a historic walking tour of important buildings and sites educating both visitors and residents using the Historical Society videotape as a starting point.

## DESIGN CHALLENGE GRANT

The Design Challenge Grant Program offers direct financial assistance to commercial property and business owners stimulating investment in the Downtown Charter Plan area. A range of exterior improvements are eligible for reimbursement grant funding up to a maximum of \$2,500 per building per year subject to review by a Community Design Committee made up of knowledgeable residents and a qualified design consultant under contract with the SEDA-COG Community Resource Center. The consultant offers design and technical assistance to Downtown business and property owners ranging from comprehensive surface preparation for painting projects to detailed construction plans for major building and storefront improvement. After review by the Committee and design professional, recommended eligible projects are forwarded to the DLI Board for approval. Since the inception of the revitalization program, 19 projects have received reimbursement funds for completed and approved work with another 10 in construction or pending final review. As evidenced throughout the revitalization effort, the minimal amount of public funding leverages long lasting, visible, and appropriate improvement of properties in the downtown area. These reimbursement grant funds are made possible from an allocation from the PA Department of Community & Economic Development and administered by Downtown Lewistown, Inc. and its supporting partners.



Miller Theatre marquee  
rehabilitation

## DOWNTOWN BUSINESS UPDATE

This past year several businesses opened or expanded their market presence in Downtown; Seven Mountains Medical Center, Jackson Hewitt Tax Service, Spankey's Body Shop, Wieken & Associates, Olde Timer's Herbals & More, The Lewistown Restaurant, Monument Square Barbers, Haubert Homes, Community Resources for Independence, Inc., The Upper Room Worship Center, and Deb's Corner. Nennies Café doubled their restaurant seating area while the Great Wall Chinese Restaurant, Mann Edge Tool Company, Four Star Jewelers, Friendship Bookstore, Maria's Restaurant, Dr Jonathan Turoff, Neurologist, WCHX Sales office, Sterling Coin Exchange, and Koontz Insurance Agency are no longer in business or have discontinued their downtown business or manufacturing venture.

DLI maintained its commitment to assisting the business community by offering Business Marketing/Promotion meetings on a regular basis for the sharing of ideas and exploring cooperative marketing efforts. DLI continues to hold Business Development & Economic Restructuring Committee meetings to review needed development programs, expand trade area and customer base research, maintain an up-to-date commercial property listing, and explore funding opportunities and programs to address reinvestment options in the Downtown and adjacent neighborhoods.

## PRIORITY PROJECTS ADVANCED

In 2004, the DLI Board of Directors identified four major priorities for action. Over the past year, significant progress was noted in advancing three of these priorities while the fourth remains in limbo. The number one priority, to establish a community college in Downtown Lewistown was temporarily suspended to allow work to commence on an unbiased feasibility study examining the potential for a community college in the multi-county Tuscarora Intermediate Unit service area. The second priority, to develop the center of town/Monument Square area is in the design/engineering stage with the County Planning & Development Department coordinating the nearly 1/2 million dollar PennDot "HomeTown Streets" project with support from property and business owners in the County. Downtown Lewistown, Inc. pledged \$2,000 to aid with the design/engineering work for this most visible project.

The third major emphasis, encouraging the revitalization/redevelopment of mixed use commercial and residential neighborhoods received a major shot in the arm with the awarding of a \$25,000 "Elm Street" organizational grant to the Borough of Lewistown intended to empower Five-Points/East End neighborhood residents and business owners to develop a strategic plan to rehabilitate the target area and increase investment in the neighborhood. Current work is to develop a Request For Proposal seeking qualified consultants for assistance in developing the detailed strategic plan.

The fourth priority, redevelopment/reuse of the former industrial site of Mann Edge Tool Company is currently on hold pending dissolution of the property.

## DOWNTOWN/EMBASSY THEATRE DEVELOPMENTS

During the past year, the Juniata Valley Bank (JVB) consolidated operations in Downtown Lewistown shuttering the former Lewistown Trust Bank facility. JVB still maintains a strong presence in Downtown operating branches at Monument Square and Water Street, and a loan center facility in the Kish Creek Center along South Main Street. In a great gesture of cooperation and support, JVB extended an opportunity to the community to develop a strategy encouraging the adaptive reuse of the over 11,000 square foot former branch location. Downtown Lewistown, Inc. is currently working with the Bank on a range of development scenarios.

DLI continued work with the Friends of the Embassy Theatre to undertake a feasibility study examining potential offerings and programming of the facility and to initiate development of a Historic Structures Report guiding rehabilitation of the 1927 Theatre building. Aided through a \$15,000 grant from the PA Historical & Museum Commission, the Friends contracted with the SEDA-COG Community Resource Center to coordinate work and engaged the resources of the Anthropology Department at Bucknell University. Bucknell students interviewed residents about their ideas and preferences regarding the Theatre, scrutinized demographic characteristics of the area, and compiled a profile of potential uses and programs which could be offered based upon these constraints. This profile will be incorporated into the Historic Structures Report to plan necessary facility upgrades to accommodate these programming opportunities. The building itself recently received improvements including an enclosed and finished marquee ceiling, aided through the efforts of the Mifflin County Veterans Association and the J.E. Steele Company. The installation of "up-lighting" to the Theatre facade rounded out the latest enhancements.

## KISH RIVERWALK & TRAIL PROJECTS

With work concluding on the Riverwalk & Trail Feasibility Study, development of a trail segment along Kish Creek is advancing toward design/engineering work. The Riverwalk feasibility study examined potential connections within the community and identified three segments for inclusion in a trail network. Through a series of meetings, the public was encouraged to provide feedback on a range of possible trail linkages and developments to be included. From these meetings, three trail routes emerged for consideration. Firstly, the linking of Victory and Rec Parks was viewed as crucial to the overall trail system. Secondly, during the series of public presentations, residents from the west end of the Borough voiced their interest and support to extend the trail from Victory Park along an existing utility corridor to the cement plant property along West Fourth Street. Finally, a potential connection from Victory Park to the County Stone Arch Bridge was examined and mapped. The feasibility study, coordinated by the SEDA-COG Community Resource Center, and funded by a \$13,500 grant from the PA Department of Conservation & Natural Resources (DCNR) matched by in-kind contributions from Mifflin County, Allegheny Ridge Corporation, and a private individual, concludes June 30, 2005.

As a key link of this network, the Kish Riverwalk Development Project connecting Downtown at South Main Street with Rec Park is nearing completion of the acquisition stage of development. Once the affected properties are secured by the Borough, design & engineering work will commence. This project is made possible through a \$110,000 grant allocation from PA DCNR and leveraged monies from the Federal TEA 21 Montgomery Avenue Development Project and a donation of land to the Borough from Omega Bank.