



MON VALLEY INITIATIVE

305 E. 8th Ave.
Homestead, PA 15120-1517

Community Outreach
Housing & Real Estate Development
Housing Counseling
Workforce & Business Development

www.monvalleyinitiative.com



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28th
year
of service
to the
Mon Valley

MVI HIGHLIGHTS

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Your donations...

Guide job-seekers to employment

MVI's Workforce and Business Development Team has directly assisted 2,019 people to obtain jobs since the program began in 2000. Between December 2015 and November 2016, MVI enrolled **316 new people** into the program, and **225 people successfully gained jobs**. Of those, more than **80 percent successfully overcame major challenges**—for instance, a past criminal record, a substance abuse problem, or a lack of educational credentials—in order to get a job.



Empower communities

MVI's Community Outreach program engages the volunteers of our member CDCs to make sure these local leaders and stakeholders are able to provide MVI's three other teams with guidance, direction and feedback. This deep local connection ensures that **MVI stays relevant and responsive** to the needs of our constituents throughout the Mon Valley.



A message from the CEO



The Mon Valley Initiative was first formed in response to the economic and social devastation caused by the closure of major steel mills and related industries in the 1980s. Many things have been accomplished since then through the tireless efforts of our staff, volunteers and many partners. But the Mon Valley is still struggling and we continue to see economic disparity and poverty in our communities even 30 years later.

Because it is clear that much remains to be done, our inspiring mission of “working together to unite the communities and restore the economic vitality of the Mon Valley” has driven us to a recent strategic planning process, as we continue to ask ourselves how we can be more effective in accomplishing our mission. We want to continue to plant new seeds that can grow and provide beneficial future harvest. I truly appreciate the leadership of the MVI board members who have welcomed the opportunity to engage in taking an honest look at ourselves and our environment to learn from our past, understand our present and envision our future.

We are deeply grateful for the vital resources that so many of you have already shared with MVI and we hope that you will continue to partner with us creating a brighter future for the Mon Valley!

Laura R. Zinski
Chief Executive Officer

Educate new home owners

MVI's pre-purchase Housing Counseling services were provided to **324 people in 2016**. Of those served, **135 people were able to successfully purchase homes**. Since the program started in 2004, 1,907 people have successfully qualified for mortgages and purchased homes. And others—after receiving this valuable educational service—decided to improve their personal financial positions before making an investment in a home.



Build homes

MVI's Housing and Real Estate Development Team and our coalition of community development corporations (CDCs) have now completed 534 units of quality, affordable housing. In addition, there are **58 more homes under construction**, and the financing for **52 additional units** is being secured. In addition, MVI staff and CDC volunteers have also undertaken major planning efforts (both community-wide and site-specific) in seven of our member communities. Over the past 10 years, MVI real estate projects represent more than **\$34 million in direct investment** to our member communities.

Community Outreach • Housing & Real Estate Development • Housing Counseling • Workforce & Business Development

Mon Valley Initiative • Southwestern Pennsylvania Re-Entry Coalition • Braddock Economic Development Corp. • Downtown West Newton, Inc. • East Pittsburgh Economic Development Corp. • Greater Charleoi Community Development Corp. • Homestead-area Economic Revitalization Corp. • Monessen Community Development Corp. • North Braddock Cares, Inc. • Rankin Community Development Corp. • Swissvale Economic Development Corp. • Turtle Creek Development Corp. • www.monvalleyinitiative.com

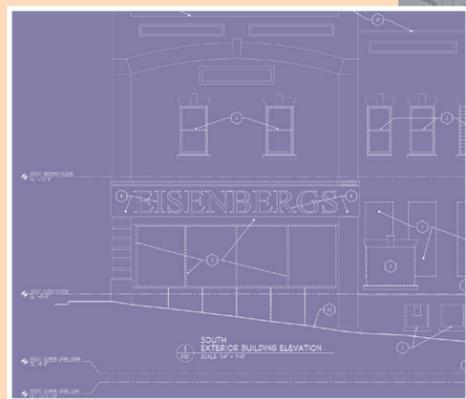
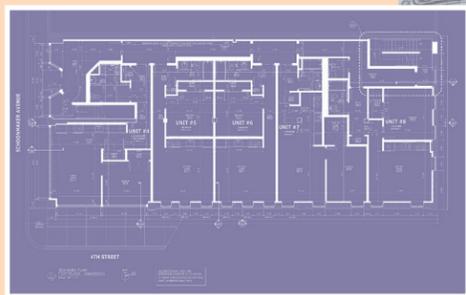
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Blighted Monessen property to become apartment building

A long-vacant and rundown former department store in Monessen is being converted into an apartment building. A coalition of community development corporations known as Mon Valley Initiative is overseeing the nearly \$1.8 million project, funded in part by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. Monessen officials called it an example of a positive development in the financially strapped city in Westmoreland County. "I think it's going to be really beautiful," Monessen Councilwoman Patricia Bukowski said.

—Observer-Reporter, Washington, May 27, 2016



Newsworthy in 2016

Mon Valley towns looking to revitalize turn to zoning codes

As Pittsburgh's economic position strengthens, many Mon Valley towns are looking for ways to spark their own revitalization, and zoning plays a key role in that endeavor. That's just one reason why zoning ordinances should be living documents, said Patrick Shattuck, director of real estate for the Mon Valley Initiative, a nonprofit working to revitalize towns and boroughs.

But it's not just about making a place for new types of businesses, he said. It's about strengthening the very fabric of the towns. —WESA-FM Radio, Pittsburgh, Feb. 29, 2016



Is there room for preservation in Pittsburgh's development?

It seems like almost weekly a new article is published branding Pittsburgh as "the next Portland" or "the new hot city for Millennials." With all the investment and development going on around the city, how can preservation play a role? One large accomplishment for Braddock was the redevelopment of

the former UPMC Braddock Hospital site through a partnership between Allegheny County, TREK Development and Mon Valley Initiative. This investment not only provided housing, jobs and potential for new businesses, it invested in preserving Braddock's historic past.

—Young Preservationists of Pgh., March 5, 2016



Laura Zinski has been at the helm of MVI for 15 years

Imagine trying to take on the task of restoring economic vitality to the entire Mon Valley. Laura Zinski did just that 15 years ago this month, when she became CEO of the Mon Valley Initiative. The organization provides a mix of services, including workforce development, preparing people for home ownership, real estate development, affordable housing and main street commercial renovations, as well as community outreach. "The combination of these services, delivered in a way that engages a broad group of people, has been the key to rebuilding the fabric of our communities and



providing a sense of hope and possibility," Zinski says.

—Observer-Reporter, Washington, July 27, 2016

EQT Foundation helps Charleroi's Meadow Park

Efforts to turn a lot where several former Charleroi schools once stood in the borough into a greenspace known as Meadow Park have received a \$25,000 boost from the EQT Foundation. Homestead-based Mon Valley Initiative, a grassroots coalition that includes Greater Charleroi Community Development Corp. and nine other community development corporations, announced the grant on Thursday. "It seemed like the perfect application for us to fund," said Ellen Rossi, manager of the EQT Foundation.

—Herald-Standard, Uniontown, Aug. 5, 2016



Home sweet Swissvale home

Potential home buyers can see up to 10 houses for sale in the second annual "Make Swissvale Home" house tour and networking event set for Sunday. The free event runs from 2 to 6 p.m. and begins at GoodFellas Restaurant, with presentations by sponsors Swissvale

Economic Development Corp., Mon Valley Initiative and PrimeLending. —Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, Sept. 9, 2016

I thought that those interested in reasonably sized and price houses might be interested in this event that showcases some of the homes for sale in Swissvale. It's a place where you can find a not too big, not too expensive house and still be close to downtown Pittsburgh.

—IHeartPgh.com, Sept. 9 2016



JP Variety Store opens

Braddock residents, who have long had few retail options in their community, have a new place to shop. JP Variety Store opened July 30 on Braddock Avenue. The store is part of a block of properties at 522-528 Braddock Avenue that were formerly home to the Braddock Free Press newspaper, Guentert's Bakery and the Braddock Moose Lodge. Acquired by the nonprofit Mon Valley Initiative in 2013, the property was overhauled for just under \$2 million. "We want to serve the community, be a positive influence in the community, bringing low-priced goods to the community," said Mary Potter, who runs the shop with her husband, John.

—Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, Sept. 23, 2016



\$10K available for home buyers in Charleroi

Up to \$10,000 is available right now to people who want to buy a home in Charleroi Borough, but they need to take advantage of it as soon as possible. The money, available through the state's housing trust fund, may be put toward a down payment or closing costs, said Jonathan Weaver, a housing counselor at the Mon Valley Initiative. Fourteen people have already received similar assistance to purchase homes across the river in Monessen, he said.

—South Hills/M.V. Messenger, October 2016



Communities shine at MVI awards

Three of the Valley's finest citizens were honored Thursday night at the Mon Valley

Initiative's banquet and awards ceremony. All of this year's honorees are very deserving, but it's not accolades that motivates them to do what they do. It's a desire to serve their fellow citizens and make our communities better places to live. Congratulations to all of this year's winners and to everyone involved with the Mon Valley Initiative for their continuing contributions to our region.

—M.V. Independent, Monessen, Oct. 21, 2016

Honoree Matt Shorraw of Monessen quoted former Congresswoman Shirley Chisholm, "You don't make progress by standing on the sidelines, whimpering and complaining. You make progress by implementing ideas." Alex Garlitz of Charleroi was humble in receipt of her award. "In reality, I'm just a representative of all of the people on our CDC," Garlitz said. "We love our community and we want to make it a better place."

—Herald-Standard, Uniontown, Oct. 21, 2016

Elections in the U.S.A.

Unable to reverse globalization, non-governmental organizations and policies try to use measures to mitigate the effects of deindustrialization in the region. The Homestead area of Pennsylvania housed a number of steel mills that closed in the 1980s. Today, it has

At right: MVI workforce team members Tracey Reaves, Camille Smith, Bobby James Smith and Samson Murage

Meet two of the people helped by the workforce program in 2016

"Amanda" was on Social Security Disability and wanted more independence. She joined the workforce program in March and began taking MVI's computer classes because she lacked the basic digital skills necessary to search for a job. She also worked with MVI's Camille Smith to improve her communication skills and build her self-confidence. When she learned a nearby retailer was hiring for the holidays, she applied online and conducted a practice job interview with Camille to ensure that she was ready. Amanda aced the real interview and was hired. After the holidays, she plans to return to school and become a certified massage therapist.

the typical setting of America's impoverished cities. There are thousands of abandoned houses.

The Mon Valley Initiative buys these houses, renovates and resells them at affordable prices, as a way to revitalize the region. The NGO also trains workers so they can find jobs.

—Folha de Sao Paulo, Brazil, Nov. 5, 2016

Turtle Creek rehab property latest example of nonprofit's reach

The so-called "blue tarp" house in Turtle Creek was headed for demolition. It had been foreclosed on by a bank. Now, it had a blue tarp for a roof, it was cramped, and it smelled dank. But at the same time, it had good bones. So 18 months ago, the Mon Valley Initiative snapped up the blue-tarped property. Now, the house is back on the market. Recently, MVI staffers, supporters and dignitaries such as Allegheny County Executive Rich Fitzgerald joined together to celebrate the house's complete renovation. It marks the 17th residential property the Mon Valley Initiative has refurbished within the borough in the past five years.

—Pittsburgh Tribune-Review, Nov. 10, 2016



When he came to MVI in April, "Walter" had been unemployed for more than three months. He had extensive experience in customer service and his goal was to find a full-time opportunity in his field. Walter also was interested in improving his credit. He began working with MVI's Samson Murage on career development and financial coaching. In June, Walter was hired full-time by an MVI employer partner as a Customer Care Representative. Within two months of working with MVI's Workforce Program, Walter went from having zero income to earning a sustainable living wage with benefits.

* names have been changed to protect the clients' privacy