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FEATURED

## Construction on The Arc Community Greenspace begins

By Mike Crowley Meadville Tribune  
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Construction now underway at The Arc Community Greenspace on Market Street between Chestnut and Arch streets. The project includes a performance stage, sustainable landscaping and other features.

SHANNON ROAE/Meadville Tribune



As work began a week ago on construction of The Arc Community Greenspace, officials involved in the creation of the new downtown gathering spot said that the long development process had been worth it.

“Things are rocking and rolling,” said Mark Weindorf, executive director of The Arc of Crawford County. “What we’re trying to do is to make sure the folks we serve are included in events. Oftentimes, they’re not.”

The Greenspace, located on Market Street between Chestnut and Arch streets, already has a WiFi hotspot and solar-powered umbrella tables with charging stations. The construction now underway will add a performance stage, sustainable landscaping and other features that, in keeping with the disabled clients served by The Arc, are accessible.

The hope, according to Weindorf, is that making the space available for free use by community groups will lead to family-friendly events that draw participants from all parts of the community, including clients of The Arc.

Development of the project began in late 2018, shortly after The Arc acquired the location of the former Meadville Club and had the building razed. The idea started with Weindorf and artist Amara Geffen, but has been shaped by numerous stakeholders since then.

“It felt like it was charmed,” Geffen said. “As the vision became clearer, the resources to implement it were available to us. We were lucky — it doesn’t always go like that.”

Geffen described the development process involving successively wider circles of contributors, from individual community members who contributed to meetings where the vision of the space was shaped, to businesses and anonymous donors, city and state government and others.

It wasn't all luck, however, according to Sarah Merritt, director of Pennsylvania Creative Communities, the grant program that selected the Greenspace project and three others from a pool of more than 100 to be the first crop of projects for the new grant program in 2019. The grant provided annual sums of \$25,000 for four years and was combined with a Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources grant for \$115,000 as well as contributions from The Arc, the city of Meadville and others to round out the \$230,000 project budget.

Meadville has managed finances for the project, according to City Manager Maryann Menanno, and is contributing repairs and paving to Clinton Court, which runs along the northern boundary of the Greenspace. The city had planned to use \$68,950 in Act 13 funds from Crawford County plus a matching amount from the city itself to repair the portion of Clinton Court that travels over Mill Run, which flows beneath the street and the Greenspace.

“Unfortunately,” Menanno said in an email to The Meadville Tribune this week, “the City found that the \$137,900 originally thought to be sufficient to repair Clinton Ct., is in fact not enough. The new cost estimate we received just this morning from Ashley Porter to fully repair the bridge is \$234,250. On Wednesday, Council will vote to submit another grant application for Act 13 money to help cover the additional cost.”

The evident cooperation between the various stakeholders Geffen described contributed to the project's appeal when it was among the pool of applicants being considered by a panel of experts, Merritt said in a phone interview Tuesday.

“It's such a great project,” she said. “The thing that really struck all of us was the deep connection this project has with the clients of The Arc of Crawford County and how this project seeks to connect them.”

Major construction is expected to be completed by late June. A dedication ceremony will follow, according to Weindorf, as will a variety of movie nights, concerts and other community-oriented activities.