

Putting the park in Park Avenue: Grant supports more greenspace

By Mike Crowley

MEADVILLE TRIBUNE

A downtown greenspace is set to get even greener thanks to some green in the form of a corporate grant.

A \$50,000 grant from the national T-Mobile Hometown Grant program will help fund creation of a “parklet” on the site of the former Park Avenue Cinema, adjacent to The Arc Community Greenspace. The property at 960 Park Ave. is owned by Meadville Redevelopment Authority (RDA), which is partnering with the Meadville Community Revitalization Corporation (MCRC) on the project.

The grant award — one of 25 made this quarter from a pool of approximately 1,000 applicants nationwide — was announced Tuesday. A check presentation will take place Friday at 4:15 p.m. in conjunction with the summer solstice celebration happening at the Greenspace from 3 to 9:45 p.m.

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The vacant lot at 960 Park Ave. will be transformed thanks to a \$50,000 grant from the T-Mobile Hometown Grant program.

SHANNON ROAE/Meadville Tribune

Greenspace

Continued from Page A1 “The Redevelopment Authority is proud to stand alongside T-Mobile to support the transformation of 960 Park Avenue into a vibrant greenspace that will bring life, activity, and new opportunities to our downtown,” siad Jim Miale, who chairs the authority. “This project exemplifies the power of placemaking to shape community identity and strengthen Meadville’s core commercial district, paving the way for future growth and revitalization.”

A conceptual rendering posted to social media by the MCRC shows trees and shrubs lining the Park Avenue sidewalk where the entrance to the miniature park would be. Other planned amenities include a walkway connecting to the Greenspace, benches, a pergola to provide shade and plenty of greenery, according to Renna Wrubleski, the city of Meadville’s community development director.

Wrubleski noted that the Redevelopment Authority acquired the site nearly three years ago through the Crawford County Tax Claim Bureau’s May 2022 judicial sale of tax-delinquent properties. “We’re really excited to see some movement happening with this project,” Wrubleski said. “Hopefully, the community will enjoy it and it will make people stop and turn

their heads to see — ‘Oh, what happened there?’ — and they’ll actually want to use that space now and it will intrigue people, help them enjoy our downtown and have a better perception of it.”

Renovation of the dilapidated cinema structure proved cost-prohibitive and the structure was demolished in September 2023. Since then, the site has remained a bare grassy lot.

“While one of the missions of the RDA is to redevelop the city’s tax base, the size of the parcel, the current market conditions, the downtown vacancy rate and cost of new construction all add up to the unlikelihood that the site will be developed in any near term,” said Andy Walker, executive director of the MCRC.

“Hence the partnership to convert it to a well designed green space to, among other benefits, improve the Park Avenue gateway into downtown.”

The check presentation ceremony, which will feature local and regional T-Mobile officials, will take place during the previously planned summer solstice celebration. The family friendly event includes children’s activities, live music, yoga at sunset and more. MCRC will provide free beverages and sweet treats for the 4:15 award announcement.

Since being launched in 2021, T-Mobile Hometown Grants have provided more than \$735,000 to 22 towns across Pennsylvania, including Harrisburg, Hershey, Lewistown, Pittstown and York. The program aims to award \$5 million over five years to rural towns across the country.

Meadville Mayor Jaime Kinder applauded the collaboration between private and public partners and said the project fits in with larger efforts to improve walkability and enhance the downtown area.

“We’re honored that T-Mobile chose to invest in Meadville,” Mayor Jaime Kinder said. “This project reflects exactly what we’re striving for as a city — revitalizing our downtown through smart partnerships, improved public spaces, and creative reuse of vacant lots.”

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