

[Return to Story](#) [Print This Page](#)  Larger text  Smaller text

Grant program targets 7 Westmoreland County towns, including Greensburg, for revitalization



By Bob Stiles

Monday, Sept. 22, 2014, 10:54 p.m.



Latrobe could become an easier place to get around, thanks to a Community Foundation of Westmoreland County grant program, the city manager said.

Several curb cuts made years ago need repairs, and a foundation grant program could help with the costs, Wayne Jones said.

"You want to be able to have people walk downtown, shop downtown, get around downtown, and do it comfortably," said Jones, who noted that many senior high-rises are in the city center.

The foundation will forward \$150,000 in revitalization grants for each of the next three years to groups in the county's seven Third Class cities — Arnold, Jeannette, Greensburg, Latrobe, Lower Burrell, Monessen and New Kensington.

Foundation officials explained the program to about 30 people from government, nonprofit and other agencies on Monday in the Greensburg Garden & Civic Center.

"The whole idea is to create a fund so that communities in Westmoreland County can have a resource available to support whatever in that community makes sense," said Jim Bendel, foundation executive director.

The program strives to develop partnerships involving neighborhood residents, business associations, civic groups, nonprofits and local governments, he said.

The seven communities were selected because they experienced significant loss in their manufacturing base and subsequent out-migration of people, foundation officials said.

Community groups and organizations can submit projects with funding based on safety, education, cleanup and beautification needs. Foundation officials suggested cleaning up vacant lots, establishing community gardens and improving accessibility under the Americans with Disability Act, or ADA, as among possible projects.

Grants for revitalization will range from \$500 to \$40,000 yearly, and groups may apply more than once. Each group will have to contribute funding equal to one-quarter of the project's costs. These funds can consist of volunteer time, cash or in-kind goods or services, said Susan Acito, foundation programs manager.

Members of the public are encouraged to submit ideas, but they must partner with a nonprofit or similar organization to receive funding, officials said.

Foundation officials strived to make the applications easy to fill out, Bendel and Acito said.

"We're looking at it for our front porch project," said George O'Brien, chief executive officer of the Greensburg YMCA.

YMCA officials want to rebuild the porch and make it look as it did a century ago when the landmark structure was built, but with a heated walkway.

Funding could enhance a playground outside the YMCA on South Maple Avenue, O'Brien said.

The grant money could help make libraries in the seven communities more accessible, said Cesare Muccari, executive director of the Westmoreland County Federated Library System.

"The one thing I saw right away, the ADA compliance," he said. "I'm going to talk to them specifically if they have any issues there."

Grant applications for 2015, the program's first year, must be submitted to the foundation by Oct. 31. Decisions on funding will be made by Dec. 1.

After the three years, and if the program continues, it will open to all Westmoreland County communities, Bendel said.

Bob Stiles is a staff writer for Trib Total Media. He can be reached at 724-836-6622 or bstiles@tribweb.com.

Copyright © 2014 — Trib Total Media
