

FUTURE IN FOCUS





Erie County Redevelopment Authority

OUR MISSION

To facilitate retention and creation of jobs and increase prosperity in the Erie region while building the economic development infrastructure through the acquisition, development and redevelopment of real estate in Erie County and through grant and lending opportunities to businesses and municipalities.

OUR BOARD OF DIRECTORS



Kate Philips
Chair



Harry Eighmy
Vice Chair



William DeLuca
Secretary



David Knapp
Treasurer



Charles "Boo"
Hagerty



Perhaps 2023 can best be described as the year that the Erie County Redevelopment Authority saw its vision, often touted as bold — or crazy, depending on how you look at — as being executed. This annual report will highlight where we went from vision to execution, showcasing our team's unique ability to bring a project to fruition—in turn, creating jobs and reinvigorating our economy.

We've completed the Berry Global warehouse expansion project, broken ground on the Grow Erie project at Savocchio Opportunity Park, and completed the demolition at Quin-T Tech Paper and Boards and Erie Malleable Iron sites.

A large part of our community's success comes from our ever-growing lending program. As in past years, 2023 saw a record-breaking year in terms of both the number of borrowers — 59 — and the amount loaned — just shy of \$14 million. Businesses large and small, from all corners of Erie County, were helped: Expansion projects at Rehrig Pacific and Leisure Time Powersports of Corry, new

ventures at Werner Books and BeBe Design House, and advanced technology investments at PSNergy, to name a few.

We are always proud to showcase the progress we have made to eradicate industrial blight. And this year, we've proven we're not afraid to take on the daunting challenges that others have ignored, challenges that have halted development and often endangered our neighbors. Consider, for example, our historic partnership with the Erie Port Authority to tackle the former Erie Coke site.

Our many partnerships and our dedication to equitable development have helped lead to a successful 2023. The year ahead will be full of challenges and opportunities, and we will seize each with the same focus and vigor that we did in the past year. It's all part of our team's one mission—to create a vibrant Erie economy for all.

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tina Mengine'.

Tina Mengine
Chief Executive Officer,
ECRDA



Community members break ground on the Grow Erie project in 2023. The long-awaited project will transform a former brownfield site on Erie's east side.

Grow Erie project breaks ground

Long-awaited development at a former brownfield site came to fruition with the Grow Erie groundbreaking at the Joyce A. Savocchio Opportunity Park in June.

The project, a public-private partnership of ECRDA, the Minority Community Investment Coalition, and Integrated Agriculture Systems, represents an investment in

one of Erie's most underserved neighborhoods.

Grow Erie's plans include the creation of a commercial aquaponics facility, which will combine aquaculture, the breeding and harvesting of fish, and hydroponics, the growing of plants in a soil-free environment. The project also includes construction of a community greenhouse, which will be

available for residents and groups to use.

Grow Erie's enterprise promises to create jobs, serve businesses (including the neighboring Curtze Food Services), provide locally grown produce in a food desert—and, vitally, act as a catalyst for future growth. The project should be complete in 2024.



An architect's rendering from Bostwick Design Partnership shows the completed Ironworks Square.

Ironworks Square takes shape on busy West 12th corridor

First came painstaking remediation work, clearing out decades' worth of caustic chemicals.

Then came the wrecking balls, taking down crumbling brick walls that defied salvage. But crews have finally transformed the former site of Erie Malleable Iron at West 12th and Cherry streets.

ECRDA purchased the decrepit factory in 2021 and quickly got to work to

create Ironworks Square, a vibrant new mixed-use facility.

Now, crews from EE Austin & Son are renovating the remaining building on the east end of the property. The result will be a welcoming facility with high-tech, built-to-suit spaces designed to serve businesses' needs.

Work is continuing, with space leasing now. Keep watching—the site transformation continues.



Berry Global's operations expanded with a new warehouse, here under construction.

Berry expansion project wraps up

After several years of stops and starts, the Berry Global warehouse expansion took shape in Erie's Little Italy neighborhood, adjacent to Berry's existing manufacturing facility. The 90,000-square-foot facility will serve as a warehouse and distribution center, providing Berry with key facilities needed to create jobs and secure its presence in Erie. Berry will lease the warehouse from the Enterprise Development Center, which built and owns the facility at West 15th and Myrtle streets. ECRDA and the state provided lending support for the expansion project.



PARTNERS IN PROGRESS

By now, ECRDA has a record of delivering on complicated cleanup projects—think of the now-cleared Quin-T Tech Paper and Boards facility, or the former Erie Malleable Iron site that is being transformed on West 12th Street. With that expertise in mind, ECRDA has partnered with the Erie-Western Pennsylvania Port Authority to target another blighted site—the former Erie Coke property at the foot of East Avenue, on Erie’s waterfront ECRDA

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and the Port Authority in October agreed to enter into a project cooperation agreement to address the property, which the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection has found to be heavily contaminated by hazardous materials.

Under the agreement, the Port Authority, with ECRDA, will determine whether it is in the community's interest to condemn and acquire the site, which has been abandoned by Erie Coke since it ceased operations—after a history of environmental law violations—in 2019.

If the 194-acre site is condemned, ECRDA will use its cleanup experience to assist the Port Authority with acquisition and remediation, with the ultimate goal of seeking input regarding future uses.

The site, now prime waterfront property adjacent to a Port Authority marina,

campground, and boat launch, has been used for industrial purposes for 190 years—and for nearly a century for the production of coke, a coal product used in blast furnaces.

Erie Coke would not escape responsibility for the cleanup should the Port Authority's condemnation and acquisition of the property come to pass, but the company is believed to be insolvent and is awaiting trial on federal charges of environmental law violations.

The agreement by the Port Authority and ECRDA aims to circumvent Erie Coke's inaction, creating a pathway to removing hazards and repurposing the site.

"It is never easy to imagine our community being left with the responsibility to clean up someone else's mess," said Kate Philips, ECRDA board chair. "But in this case, it is exceedingly more difficult and risky to sit by and do nothing."

'This is a very large site in a waterfront location critical to Erie's future, but its existing heavily contaminated condition needs to be addressed first and foremost, so we are proceeding with a collective goal of determining a pathway forward that reflects the gravity of the challenge."

JEFFREY BRINLING,
CHAIRMAN,
ERIE-WESTERN
PENNSYLVANIA
PORT AUTHORITY



*Pictured at left and on previous page:
An aerial view of Erie Coke site.*

RECORD BOOST TO BUSINESSES

Another year, another record-breaking level of lending by ECRDA. In 2023, ECRDA's total lending was nearly \$14 million, easily surpassing the previous record—\$12.2 million recorded in 2022.

In all, ECRDA lending helped Erie County businesses—large and small—create more than 150 new jobs and retain more than 900 jobs.

ECRDA's strategic approach emphasized robust and impactful support for projects and businesses—providing vital financing for diverse businesses, helping rural communities to take on transformative

initiatives, and, as always, making a meaningful impact on the community.

Another significant investment in 2023: A \$7 million expansion project at Rehrig Pacific Company, a plastic fabrication plant on Erie's west side.

The project was complex—not only did it include the building of a 70,000-square-foot warehouse and campus expansion, it necessitated closing a portion of West 20th Street. But the project was equally important, as it maintained the presence

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**\$13.9
MILLION**

Amount of ECRDA's total lending in 2023, topping 2022's previous record lending of \$12.2 million. The 2023 total represents 59 loans made.

‘The ECRDA works with Marquette when local businesses need it the most. Not only have they been very easy to work with, but they are helpful when traditional financing isn't available. It's important to Marquette that ECRDA matches Marquette's mission and business model to support local businesses. They want to see our community grow and succeed just like we do.”

JON PATSY, SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT OF BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT, MARQUETTE SAVINGS BANK



ECRDA helped Rehrig Pacific expand its Erie campus and build a 70,000-square-foot warehouse.

of a successful global plastics manufacturer in Erie County.

ECRDA quickly got to work helping Rehrig Pacific navigate the hurdles needed to complete the expansion—including working with Erie Mayor Joe Schember and his team to gain permission for the closure of West 20th Street, and securing a \$1 million loan through the City of Erie Business Development Revolving Loan Fund.

Will Rehrig, company president, praised the assistance of ECRDA, in particular Chris Groner, vice president of Capital Finance and Lending.

“Chris worked diligently to understand our business model, future goals, and current challenges.

... Our project is a prime example of the exceptional work that can be accomplished when the right resources come together in support of local business.”

Rehrig Pacific’s warehouse expansion project was further supported by a \$500,000 American Rescue Plan grant from the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development, secured by state Senator Dan Laughlin, of Erie.

“I’m extremely pleased that we had a role in the founding of the Rehrig Pacific expansion project in Erie,” Laughlin said. “Rehrig Pacific is a great example of an American

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‘E ngaged community partners like the Erie County Redevelopment Authority are vital to the Cleveland Fed’s efforts to gather on-the-ground perspectives on issues affecting lower-income people and communities. ECRDA leaders regularly provide valuable insights about the economic realities faced by different communities in northwest Pennsylvania, helping us to better understand the workforce conditions, affordable housing challenges, and small business development issues in the region. In 2023, ECRDA also played a critical role in encouraging small businesses to participate in the Bank’s national small business credit survey to better understand small businesses’ credit experiences and the vital role they play in the economy.”

TRACEY MASON,
ASSISTANT VICE PRESIDENT,
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT,
FEDERAL RESERVE BANK OF CLEVELAND



The Pops—Adrian, a chef, and Nadia, a baker—purchased Trawka's Market, an Erie institution on Payne Avenue.

success story and vital economic driver. They are a family company with global implications, and our state investment helped ensure they would continue their presence in our community.”

Just as impactful, but perhaps less noticeable, were smaller ECRDA loans that supported small businesses—including some that represent an investment in neighborhoods and longtime Erie traditions.

Adrian Pop and his wife, Nadia, received an ECRDA loan to help them purchase Trawka's Market, an Erie institution on Payne Avenue.

For more than 60 years, the shop has served up fresh sausage and other meats, as well as a variety of grocery items and takeout food.

The Pops, natives of Romania, saw the shop as their own American dream, with plans to expand the lunch takeout options and add flavors of their homeland to the menu.

“The loan that was provided allows me to fulfill my dream of running a successful, community-oriented business,” Adrian Pop said. “We look forward to being a great resource to the community, and a destination for Erie residents.”

\$11.5 MILLION

Total amount of two bonds issued in 2023 by the Erie County General Authority, an affiliate of ECRDA. The bonds supported Montessori Regional Charter School in Millcreek Township and Brevillier Village in Harborcreek Township.

New product takes off, with ECRDA help

They say that history repeats itself. There was a bit of that feeling in March 2020, when pandemic restrictions prohibited Room 33, a Prohibition-themed bar and restaurant, from selling alcohol when it was forced to switch to takeout only.

Room 33's solution? Crafting and selling non-alcoholic versions of classic cocktails.

The enterprise was such a success that a new business, Blind Tiger Spirit-Free Cocktails, was born. Rebecca Styn, founder of Room 33, ultimately sold the restaurant to her team to focus solely on growing the Blind Tiger brand.

And the brand has certainly grown: Blind Tiger can now be found in more than 1,000 stores, bars, and restaurants nationwide—including 100

Wegmans stores across the Northeast—and has been racking up awards in national and international competitions.

From its founding, Blind Tiger has benefited from ECRDA support, including microloans and a StARTup Grant that supported the launch and helped the business scale up over the past several years.

Support for Blind Tiger not only exemplifies ECRDA's dedication to helping local businesses grow, but also to supporting female-owned businesses.

"ECRDA's unwavering support played a pivotal role for Blind Tiger, showcasing the power of collaboration between local businesses and development authorities to drive economic growth and innovation," Styn said.

22
PERCENT

Percentage of businesses that received ECRDA loans in 2023 that are female owned.



Fund supports BIPOC-owned businesses

Never let it be said that starting—or owning—a small business is easy. For BIPOC-owned businesses, however, even greater barriers, especially financing, can create challenges to helping those small businesses thrive.

The Diverse Erie Small Business Fund aims to eliminate such barriers while lifting up BIPOC-owned businesses. Created in 2022, the effort brought together private and public community partners to create a \$2 million fund—which is housed and administered by the Enterprise Development Fund, an ECRDA affiliate.

After distributing initial loans in 2022, the Diverse Erie Small Business Fund continued its mission by supporting BIPOC-owned businesses in 2023. One of those businesses, Nila's Dream Day Care Center, allowed owner Chatiqua Keyes-Carr to add staff, growing the business.

In 2023, the fund also supported business

owner Nadia Shabanza-Pero in realizing her dream of opening an interior design studio.

The \$200,000 loan from the Diverse Erie Small Business Fund allowed Shabanza-Pero to open BeBe Design House—named in honor of her mother—on Zuck Road in Millcreek Township. The business specializes in interior design for commercial, multi-family, residential and vacation properties.

Shabanza-Pero said the fund's financial support has sparked "a transformative journey" for BeBe Design House.

"The generous funding will allow us to create a cutting-edge design studio for our team and a welcoming client-focused design center," she said. "This funding will not only give us a new physical space but also the capacity to expand our services, host events, and strengthen our community ties."



Nadia Shabanza-Pero, owner of BeBe Design House.



These loans have been instrumental in enabling Nila's Dream to establish a safe environment for children while jump-starting its operations. These funds have also played a pivotal role in hiring and supporting dedicated employees, fostering our growth and service quality."

CHATIQUA KEYES-CARR, OWNER, NILA'S DREAM DAY CARE CENTER

Investments in rural projects pay off

In 2023, ECRDA's lending spanned from corner to corner of Erie County—including \$3.39 million invested in rural businesses and communities through 14 loans.

ECRDA helped Venango Township, Union Township, and the City of Corry with municipal loans, helping those communities tackle improvement projects.

In Corry, the low-interest financing allowed the city to begin a major sewer system project. "Borrowing from ECRDA was simple, quick, and user-friendly for our small local government authority," said Len Clark, chairman of the Corry Municipal Authority.

Local businesses, too, benefited from ECRDA support—from Great Lakes Cast Stone in Girard to Leisure Time Powersports of Corry

to Penn Shore Winery & Vineyards in North East Township.

Scott and Hannah Neeley, of Pittsburgh, purchased Penn Shore Winery in 2023 with the support from the ECRDA.

"The opportunity came at a time of rising finance costs for acquisitions as rates skyrocketed late 2022 and into the first half of 2023," Scott Neeley said.

But thanks to their bank's relationship with ECRDA, the Neeleys were able to close on the purchase and move their family to North East—and hire 14 full-time staff for their business.

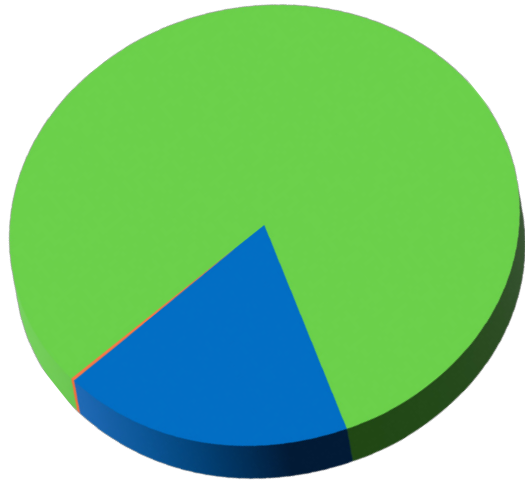
"We are very thankful and excited for what lies ahead," Scott Neeley said, "and we thank the ECRDA for helping to make it happen."



Hannah and Scott Neeley are the new owners of Penn Shore Winery.

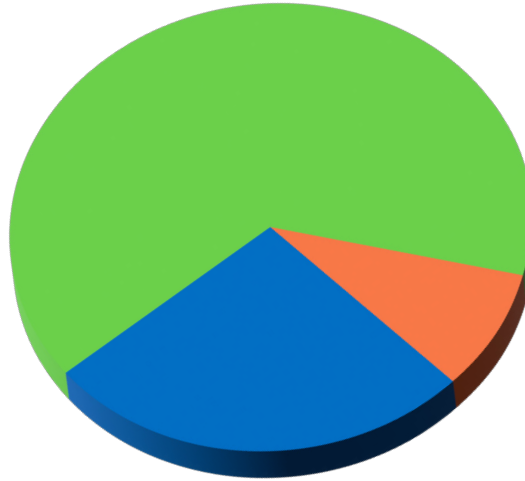
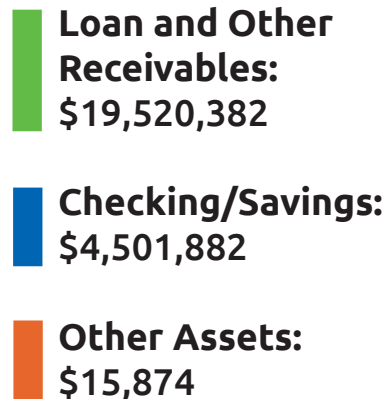
‘With rising rates, we were considering delaying our expansion project. But the exceptional financing packages offered by ECRDA gave us an avenue to confidently move forward. I am very excited for the future opportunities this project will provide for our team, our business, and our community.”

JAY DAVIDS, OWNER AND OPERATOR, LEISURE TIME POWERSPORTS OF CORRY



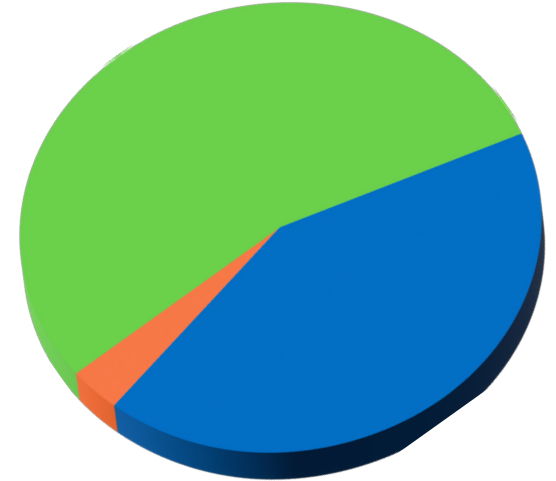
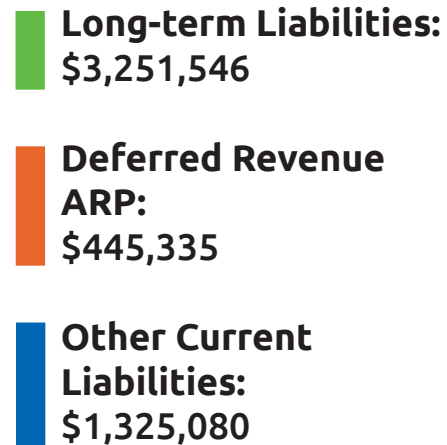
ASSETS

TOTAL: 24,038,138



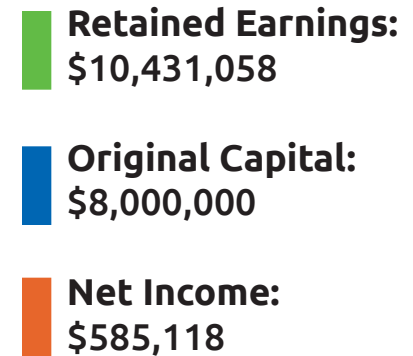
LIABILITIES

TOTAL: 5,021,961



EQUITY

TOTAL: 19,016,176



A TENURE OF TRANSITION

In his day job, Bill DeLuca is senior vice president of commercial banking at ErieBank. For the past decade, however, he has also been serving on the ECRDA's board of directors—helping not just to oversee daily operations, but to shepherd a new era of the authority and its impact. At the time of DeLuca's appointment, in fall 2012, ECRDA operated under a service-sharing arrangement with the Corry Redevelopment Authority—a situation that DeLuca said was cost effective but “hampered our ability to grow additional products and services.” Now, with the end of his board service in 2023, DeLuca can point to signs of progress that he credits with bringing “transformational change” at ECRDA, positioning it to be a true change agent. Five accomplishments he's proud of:



1 A NEW TEAM: First, building up ECRDA's team has allowed us to begin to implement ambitious plans for Erie to move forward—we began taking action, versus always talking about making changes. Tina Mengine's leadership, starting in 2019, was a big driver, as was a new sense of self-imposed accountability.

2 WORKING TOGETHER: Collaboration also helped us reach new levels of impact. City, county, public and private sectors all came together to move Erie County forward with revitalization and job creation

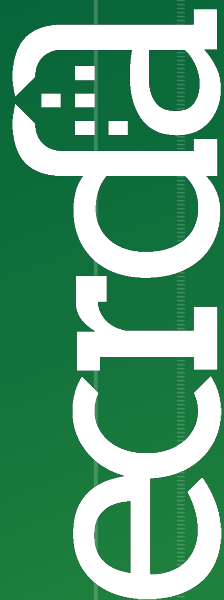
efforts. The city of Erie and ECRDA joined to enhance local capabilities and streamline “ease of use.”

3 INCREASED CAPACITY: Technology advancements also allowed the ECRDA team to handle larger volume and assist during the pandemic—when the team administrated multiple programs, including CARES, CHIRP, the American Rescue Plan, the Emergency Assistance Plan, and more.

4 ONE-STOP SHOP: We've seen the ECRDA take the lead to implement a new delivery

system. In 2012, we administered a \$16 million loan program. Now, ECRDA serves as a one-stop concierge service provider under a single umbrella.

5 TARGETING BLIGHT: Finally, our work revitalizing and repurposing properties in the community represents a new strategy. We've seen this working at the EMI and Quin T industrial sites, and by projects like the Berry Global expansion. By accessing grant programs to bring necessary dollars, we're making projects feasible and bringing our vision of transformative change to fruition.



**Erie County Redevelopment
Authority**

Enterprise Development Center
of Erie County

Enterprise Development Fund

Erie County General Authority

Erie County Industrial
Development Authority

Erie County Community
Services Financing Authority

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