

Economic Development

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Don Cunningham, President and CEO of Lehigh Valley Economic Development Corp. (LVEDC), told reporters after the bill signing that several key properties in the Lehigh Valley could benefit from PA SITES.

"I think what they want to do is focus on things that can happen fairly quickly. It's something that maybe has a 10- or 20-year runway on it. The nice thing about the Lehigh Valley properties is with a little bit of infusion of money we can turn them around," Cunningham told The Morning Call.

In addition to the Bethlehem Steel General Office building, Cunningham said opportunities include:

Lehigh Valley Dairy: The 10-acre site in Whitehall Township has been vacant for 30 years and is being demolished to make way for redevelopment.

Dixie Cup factory: A developer proposes turning the former plant in Wilson into a mixed-use development featuring hundreds of apartments.

Champion spark plugs: The property in Hellertown is being repurposed as the location of a hospital proposed by Lehigh Valley Health Network.

Iron Works: The long-time manufacturing property in Catasauqua, which hosted several companies in its lifetime including Crane Iron Works and FLSmidt, has been vacant for nearly two decades.

PA SITES funding already is flowing to the Lehigh Valley, through a much smaller trial run of the program that was included in last year's state budget. In May, Shapiro visited Allentown to announce that a site there was the first recipient for a grant from the trial. The \$1.1 million will pay for utilities to be extended to a former Lehigh Structural Steel site along the Lehigh River, allowing for construction of a manufacturing facility that could employ 30 to 50 people.

Shapiro repeatedly has held up the Lehigh Valley as a model for economic development, heralding the region's public and private leaders for working together to get things done.

"Everybody's rowing in the same direction. Everybody understands the important role that economic development plays in creating a safer, healthier environment where people can put food on the table and provide for their families. That's what real freedom looks like, and that's what real opportunity is all about. You're doing it here in the Lehigh Valley," Shapiro said during his visit on July 16.



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