

Penn State New Kensington, Economic Growth Connection and Partners Showcase New Facility and Initiative Goals

Penn State New Kensington and other project partners celebrated the grand opening of the Digital Foundry at New Kensington.

NEW KENSINGTON, PA, UNITED STATES, June 2, 2022 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Penn State New Kensington, the Economic Growth Connection of Westmoreland (EGCW) and other project partners celebrated the grand opening of the Digital Foundry at New Kensington, a new 15,044 square-foot innovation and manufacturing lab space on Fifth Avenue in downtown New Kensington.



The Digital Foundry is a new 15,044 square-foot innovation and manufacturing lab space on Fifth Avenue in downtown New Kensington.

“Since the opening of our Invent Penn State innovation hub, The Corner, in 2017, conversations then began for what would become the Digital Foundry at New Kensington, along with our collaborative model for future-readiness that we call, Nextovation™,” said Kevin Snider, chancellor of Penn State New Kensington. “Sustained, economic revitalization had to be built upon preparing all stakeholders in the region for the digital age, and our project went from creating jobs by seeding entrepreneurs, to building infrastructure, awareness and training to take the region from Rust Belt to Digital Belt.”

“

Throughout the years, and including today, innovation remains as a constant foundation to our great city, and the Digital Foundry is the newest example of that,”

Tom Guzzo, Mayor of New Kensington

Designed by R3A, a Pittsburgh-based architecture firm, the Digital Foundry at New Kensington is meant to be a

technological boost for manufacturing and job creation in New Kensington – a community that historically thrived as the birthplace of commercial aluminum manufacturing, but experienced

effects of economic downturn similar to other industrialized, Rust Belt areas.

“Technology is constantly changing and fostering talent that will help create new technology right here in Pennsylvania is important,” said Neil Weaver, acting secretary of the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development, which [provided nearly \\$200,000 in funding towards the project](#) through the Manufacturing

Training-to-Career (MTTC) program in 2021. “The DCED believes that innovation is key for our evolving economy. We are thrilled to have had a hand in the Digital Foundry at New Kensington’s story.”

The launch of the space was funded through a partnership between local government, corporate donors and foundational support. Since 2018, the Richard King Mellon Foundation has invested nearly \$10 million in total funding, to date, for the project and within New Kensington. Penn State has also provided a \$1 million matching gift, which will help create an endowment for ongoing operating support of this state-of-the-art facility, through the Economic Development Matching Program, an initiative of its current campaign, “A Greater Penn State for 21st Century Excellence.”

“Today, with the grand opening of the Digital Foundry, we take another huge step in support of our land-grant mission and ongoing community revitalization,” said Neeli Bendapudi, president of Penn State. “Because of the university’s focus on entrepreneurship and innovation, Penn State is uniquely positioned to lead this overarching effort. However, we can succeed only through a shared commitment to accomplish our goals and priorities together. The importance of investment — by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, philanthropists and friends, and corporate partners – cannot be overstated, and we’re so grateful for it.”

The state-of-the-art space, which was recently named one of eight [Smart Manufacturing Innovation Centers \(SMICs\)](#) by the U.S. Department of Energy in partnership with the Clean Energy Smart Manufacturing Institute (CESMII), will serve as a launching pad for training and access to modern software tools by linking digital data and equipment into manufacturing, operations and business management for industry, as well as research and educational components for students and workforce training. The Digital Foundry at New Kensington will be accessed by regional manufacturers, K-12 school districts, entrepreneurs, college students and faculty, and workers or community members wanting to develop new professional skills.



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“What a big day for the region,” said Jim Smith, president and CEO of the Economic Growth Connection of Westmoreland. “This project and the work in the city of New Kensington truly showcases collaboration, but also exciting potential. We can’t wait to continue to see how the Digital Foundry will impact current and future workforce, industry and education for Westmoreland County and beyond.” Attendees at the grand opening event heard from keynote speakers including Bendapudi, Snider, Weaver, Smith and Tom Guzzo before touring the facility which includes:

- Demonstration spaces for sharing manufacturing and technology industry trends
- Classroom and advanced computer lab and software stations
- Maker space production areas for product incubation
- A factory simulator model
- Signature programming and training opportunities for current and future workforce development

“New Kensington was founded upon innovation as the birthplace of modern aluminum manufacturing,” said Guzzo, mayor of the city of New Kensington. “Throughout the years, and including today, innovation remains as a constant foundation to our great city, and the Digital Foundry is the newest example of that, along with the 63 new businesses that have opened in the past two years.”

Community members are invited to see the facility at an open house on June 24 from 5 – 8 p.m. in conjunction with New Kensington’s monthly Fridays on Fifth event. The open house will feature lab demonstrations, facility tours, giveaways, a DJ and selfie station.

To learn more about the Digital Foundry, upcoming training opportunities and events, visit digitalfoundrynk.com.

About Digital Foundry at New Kensington

The Digital Foundry at New Kensington, currently being constructed along Fifth Avenue in New Kensington, Pa., will be a 15,044-square-foot innovation and manufacturing lab space aimed at building future-ready awareness and skill sets for the manufacturing industry, K-16 education sector, current and future workforce and community members in Southwestern PA. A collaborative effort between Penn State New Kensington and the Economic Growth Connection of Westmoreland, the Foundry’s mission is to drive the growth of ideas, learning and problem solving through application of digital technologies. Stay up-to-date with the Digital Foundry at DigitalFoundryNK.com.

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