



VIEWS & VISIONS

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Wheeling is a City that Surprises You

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A native of Wheeling, West Virginia, Jake Dougherty serves as the Executive Director of Wheeling Heritage, a community nonprofit focused on being a catalyst for the revitalization of Wheeling through historic preservation, entrepreneurship, arts and impact investment. In 2018, he was named to the National Trust for Historic Preservation's inaugural list of 40 Under 40: People Saving Places for his leadership in advocating for the increase in the West Virginia State Historic Tax Credit, and Wheeling Heritage was named a winner of the 2019 Great American Main Street Award.

For a city of only 27,000 people, Wheeling, West Virginia boasts a tremendous number of high-quality cultural institutions and tourism attractions. While these attractions aren't the wild and adventurous activities often featured in the state's tourism campaigns, they are the wonderful and enriching variety that demonstrate our community's commitment to celebrate a rich heritage while illuminating our bright future.

Every day at Wheeling Heritage, we work to facilitate and promote these cultural assets that tell Wheeling's story, both where we, as a community, came from and where we are going. We do this work because cultural assets define us as a city. They make it a special place; one with authenticity and heart. A place that doesn't look like Anywhere, USA, and a place you won't soon forget. Fortunately for us, there is no shortage of assets to celebrate in Wheeling, West Virginia.

I love talking to people from out of town, particularly those from larger cities, and hearing



the surprise in their voice when they learn that Wheeling has its own symphony. What's even more exciting is explaining that the Wheeling Symphony Orchestra is only the tip of the iceberg. From beautiful historic theatres to world-class riverfront parks, Wheeling's venues set a stage for local and national entertainment. From boutique shopping in Centre Market to cheering on the Wheeling Nailers at WesBanco Arena, Wheeling is full of activities for the entire family.

As I look back through my Facebook memories at the end of each year, I'm impressed by the number and variety of activities we have here in Wheeling. Seeing art exhibits at Stifel Fine Arts Center; eating pierogis and fried fish sandwiches on Fridays during lent at Our Lady



Left: The Wheeling Artisan Center features unique, handmade gifts such as glassware, artwork, pottery and more created in West Virginia and Appalachia. Right: A performance of traditional Irish Stepdance during the annual Wheeling Celtic Celebration (photo credit: Neil Warren).



of Perpetual Help in South Wheeling; throwing a cannon ball down a hill during the world's largest Irish Road Bowling team tournament; enjoying a drink and live music in Later Gator's courtyard, pizza on the porch of Good Mansion Wines, and a croissant at Sarah's on Main; walking through the gardens at Oglebay Park; taking an obligatory photo from the midway point of the Wheeling Suspension Bridge; learning about the birth of West Virginia and one of the most creative political maneuvers in American history at West Virginia Independence Hall. This list is only a small portion of the things for visitors and residents to do here in Wheeling.



Through these cultural activities, we aren't just showing you a good time, we're sharing our story. The institutions and attractions that fill our calendars are important to defining us as a community. Often, these still thriving institutions were left here by generations past, and the events are the lasting traditions of the various groups of people who made Wheeling their home. The space and activities that are attractive to visitors are the same that comprise our collective community conscience.



At first, what might surprise you is how much there is to do and see in Wheeling. But throughout your time here, you'll be surprised by how much you experience and learn about our great community and, hopefully, how much you learn about yourself. ▽

Image 1: The Wheeling Nailers is a minor league hockey team and a "AA" affiliate team of NHL's Pittsburgh Penguins. They have called Wheeling home since 1992. **Image 2:** Centre Market is located in historic downtown Wheeling (photo credit: Erin-Yaeger). **Image 3:** The annual Grecian Festival is a multi-day affair that features traditional Greek food, live music and dancing as well as cooking classes, artists and craftsmen (photo credit: WV Tourism Office). **Image 4:** A first-of-its-kind photography show, "Art of Inclusion" features portraits of Ohio Valley residents who are part of the LGBT community (photo credit: Matt Myles).