

'Have-No-Town'? Not anymore. Live music venue planned for Havertown

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Image: Getty Images

Work is underway to turn a 100-year-old building in Havertown, Pa., into a music venue and center.

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Can Havertown in Delaware County transform itself from the ill-gotten moniker Have-No-Town to a tourism destination?

There's hope converting a 100-year-old building into a music and arts venue will put Havertown, located within Haverford Township, on the map as a destination that can spur further development.

Tom Kelly, along with brother Paul and their wives Sheri and

Susan, in 2012 created nonprofit Kelly Music for Life to make Haverford Township a more desirable place to live, work and visit through festivals, concerts and music programs.

Among the nonprofit's successful, year-round bids include the Havertown Irish Festival, a concert-in-the-park series and the Havertown Harvest Fair, and there are plans to start an Italian festival in October this year.

Kelly Music for Life's festivals attracted tens of thousands of people and generate an economic impact of \$3 million every year, Tom Kelly told the Philadelphia Business Journal.

Upper Darby in Delaware County also [turned to festivals](#) to attract more people to the 69th Street Business District.

The Havertown events cast a wide net; 40 percent of attendees come from Havertown, while the remaining 60 percent come from outside the 19083 ZIP code, Kelly said, meaning "people were coming to Havertown for specific reasons, spending money on food, drink and vendors and crafters."

Kelly Music for Life has another project forecast to inject another \$1 million every year for Havertown while filling a void in the residential suburb's live music and entertainment scene.

Kelly Music for Life in 2017 bought a 2-floor property at 4. E.

Eagle Road with intentions to renovate and convert it into the Kelly Center for Music, Arts and Community — a year-round community space and live music venue with a café.

Converting the 100-year-old, 3,500-square-foot building will take \$500,000 to complete, about half of which has been secured through foundations, individual donors and proceeds from festivals and concerts.

Rendering of the Kelly Center for Music, Arts and Community. Courtesy of Kelly Music for Life

The scope of the restoration plan includes replacing aging pipes and wiring; installing energy efficient central air and heating systems; new windows and skylights; upgrading insulation and soundproofing; and restoring the front façade to its original design.

There will be a permanent, state-of-the-art sound system installed, and a café, run by New Avenue Foundation, is also planned.

The second floor has two apartments that need to be renovated.

One unit will serve as office and meeting space for the nonprofit Kelly Music for Life and as a quiet space for professional performers before they hit the stage. The second unit will be converted into living quarters for a Kelly Center employee or caretaker.

The Kelly Center for Music, Arts and Community is slated to open sometime in 2019.

Kelly Music for Life is reviewing bids from contractors based on architectural plans, with a goal of awarding contracts by October.

Transform into a destination

Delaware County is the fifth-most [populous](#) county in Pennsylvania, and moves have been made over the past few years to boost its brand as an attractive tourist destination.

Among the more significant initiatives took place in 2015, when its destination marketing organization [adopted a new name](#) to better promote the suburban county that includes parts of the Main Line, Brandywine and Riverside.

(See below to see Delaware County's hotel performance.)

The Kelly Center for Music, Arts and Community will specifically help Havertown become a bigger draw as a destination.

Havertown is located between lower income communities like Upper Darby, which has a median household income of \$42,000, and more affluent Main Line communities like Wynnewood, with a median household income of \$130,000, according to Trulia.com, using [U.S. Census Bureau data](#).

Once known as a Superfund site, Havertown has made strides in cleaning up its image.

"Have-No-Town. That's what [they] referred to it," Kelly said. "That reputation has changed considerably. The kids in middle school and high school now think they live in the coolest place."

There's "new excitement" in the area now, thanks in part to the nonprofit's festivals and events, and the music center they're developing could supplement that.

Entertainment venues can often spur new development and redefine the areas where they're located.

"It's all about diversifying the hours of use to make a place safer and more lively," said Lauren Gilchrist, vice president and director of research for JLL in Philadelphia.

New operations in Philadelphia include The Fillmore in the

Fishtown neighborhood, and the soon-to-reopen Philadelphia Metropolitan Opera House on North Broad Street, undergoing a \$56 million restoration.

The music center is filling a void in Havertown, whose only venues available for live performances are inside bars, which Kelly Music for Life officials said are not suitable environments for families, children and those in recovery.

"There are three levels of impact from when we do music festivals, and I see the same effect when we open the Kelly Center," Kelly said.

Those three levels are: direct impact, money collected from rentals for events and the café; ripple impact, when visitors go to other businesses around the center; and the echo impact, or when visitors come back after attending a festival.

Proposed programs for the Kelly Center for Music, Arts and Community include after-school music programs; senior programs; music education; spoken word and theater programs; and art exhibit space, among others.

The Kelly Center forecasts about 300,000 people will visit the facility through its café and programs and events. It will provide more than 100 hours of meeting space every year for local businesses, and it will provide leased space for local nonprofit fundraisers and events.