



# CITY OF BETHLEHEM

Department of Community & Economic Development

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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **Governor Shapiro Visits Pi: Partnership for Innovation**

Bethlehem, PA – Governor Josh Shapiro visited Pi: Partnership for Innovation earlier this month to meet with Bethlehem’s Mayor, Dept. of Community & Economic Development (DCED) staff, and innovative startup companies.

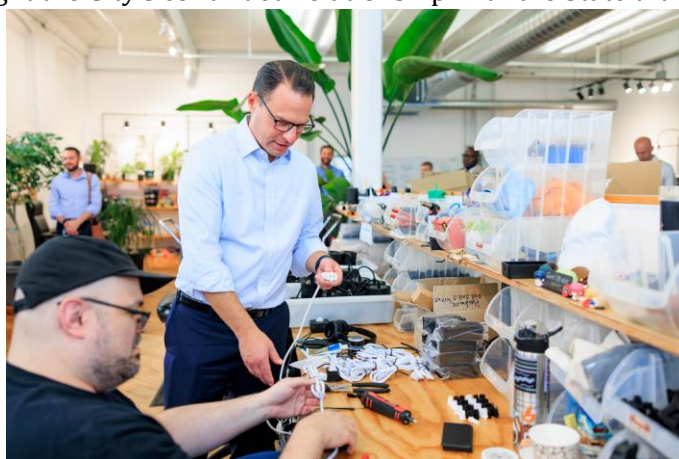


Governor Shapiro’s visit to Pi highlights the lasting impact of those economic development investments made decades ago. Soltech Solutions, a design and manufacturing company creating aesthetic LED Grow Lights, moved into Pi in 2017. The Governor was able to tour Soltech’s operations, talk with the assembly assistants, and hear from CEO Paul Hodges about their successes and future challenges. Part of those challenges involve Soltech finding suitable space to move in to. A

large part of Soltech’s workforce comes from the local colleges and universities. This further reinforces the value of locating companies near these institutions. The Governor was also able to visit with Almas Foods International and speak to Ali Almasi about his entrepreneurial journey. He moved to Bethlehem from Iran to pursue a degree in Lehigh’s Technical Entrepreneurship master’s program. Ali ended up locating his saffron company, under the brand name Zaffrus, in Pi in 2018.

“It’s always a great day when we get to host the Governor here in Bethlehem” said Mayor J. William Reynolds. “There is no better place to highlight the City’s continued relationship with the State than touring Pi. We are confident that the Governor was able to see the impact of the State’s continued investment in economic development.”

The City of Bethlehem has a long history of partnering with the Commonwealth to advance joint economic development initiatives. In 1993, the City was able to secure almost \$1 million in funding through the State’s Business Infrastructure Development (BID) and Enterprise Zone



Grant-to-Loan programs. This was used to help create Bethlehem Technology Center I. This facility operated as an incubator until IQE purchased the building and repaid the City funds that were invested in the building. Another \$250k in Enterprise Zone Grant-to-Loan funding was secured from the State for Bethlehem Technology Center II. That facility was purchased by OraSure Technologies and the funds were repaid to the City. The City ended up loaning \$750k of these funds to the Bethlehem Economic Development Corporation (BEDCO) in 2011 to create Pi: Partnership for Innovation. Pi operates on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor of the former silk mill that also houses Cantemli's Hardware and the Yoga Loft. In keeping with the original use of the building, Pi focuses on helping product-based startup companies launch and grow. The Commonwealth also designated the Southside Bethlehem Keystone Innovation Zone (KIZ) in 2004 that unlocks additional resources for innovative startup companies.

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