

## Perkasie Borough – Economic Development Plan Update

### Steering Committee Meeting #1 Summary

The first steering committee meeting was held on June 11<sup>th</sup>, 2025, at Perkasie Borough Hall to direct the Borough's Economic Development Plan Update. The following committee members attended the meeting: Randy Faulkner, Alice Krier, Bruce Costa, Kelly Laustsen, Meghan Grever, and Donte King. Assistant Borough Manager, Linda Reid also attended the meeting. G&A consultants Judith Stern Goldstein, R.L.A and Adrienne Blank R.L.A orchestrated the meeting. Upon introductions, Adrienne began the discussions with an overview of the project description, background information, and steering committee roles. The project is a continuation of the recommendations and economic development strategies found in Chapter 11 of the Perkasie Borough Comprehensive Plan 2014 and is funded in part by a Keystone Communities Grant through the Pennsylvania Department of Community & Economic development. Some of the key target project goals include:

- develop an updated vision that reflects the wants and desires of the community
- assess the economic conditions of the commercial areas to develop strategic goals and objectives
- ultimately decide if a Keystone Community Designation is right for the Borough and if a Main Street Manger is to be included in future strategic planning

An overview of the strategic goals from the Comprehensive Plan was discussed including the desire to develop a town center where the Shelly's area is located. Walkability was discussed and how to encourage people using the trails to patronize the different businesses.

One asset not mentioned in the Comprehensive plan was the Art and Culture asset that has developed since 2014. New murals and new businesses have opened offering design, and creativity. "*Arts in the parks*", trails, wayfinding, farmers market, and people moving into Perkasie have developed a unique draw. A community theatre is also desired.

Demographic Data was reviewed and discussed with a deep dive into the people who make up Perkasie borough since 2014. There was a shift in demographics from the largest age group being (25-44) to now being (45-64) overall, which is important to the Borough's business recruitment strategies. Individuals in this age group are more likely to open small businesses as they generally have an entrepreneurial spirit, disposable incomes, are coming into inheritance and want financial independence. Ancestry, age and racial composition was also discussed and tying these characteristics to the promotional strategies.

The Community survey questions were reviewed and discussed with the following changes:

- include fitness activities in options
- remove downtown and replace with Perkasie Borough
- add a question to find out where people go when not in Perkasie and what draws them there

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The community survey will go live June 16<sup>th</sup> at 8 am and will close June 30<sup>th</sup> at midnight. The committee was asked to help distribute and share the survey on social media and post the flyer.

### Perceptions of Vacancies

The perception/reality of the vacancies in the town center overlay district were discussed with an overall agreement that there are vacancies in the commercial core. The perception was described as “*Perkasie is a vacant town with some businesses.*” “*Perkasie has a lot of funeral homes.*” Strategies for changing this perception are needed.

Some reasons why there are vacancies include:

1. landlords not making it a priority to fill vacancies
2. mixed use with tenants upstairs - hard to fill first floors with businesses in current market
3. many business properties have gone to residential.

Things that helped included the borough changing zoning to have mixed use as a by-right use.

A discussion about walkability followed with an emphasis on things to draw people to walk to the next business and placemaking opportunities.

Some other strategies discussed included:

- A desire for one voice and collaboration between business groups.
- A desire to make it cool for 12-year-olds, something for everybody, “improve the vibe”.
- History of town with “*heritage tours*’ add interest and things to do.
- History/Art/Family are key strategies to include in promotional efforts for Perkasie.

The project timeline was distributed.

The next steps include to develop a business inventory and property listing and evaluate consumer demand for the next Steering committee meeting scheduled for July 16<sup>th</sup> at 8:30 am.