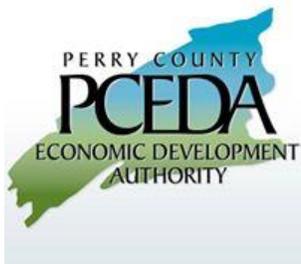


Perry County Economic Development Survey Summary Remarks

Prepared for the



Prepared by



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The following points present the consultants overarching conclusions based on the survey data from the Economic Development Survey conducted from March through May of 2017. They represent the opinions of the consultant based on experience in evaluating survey data in communities. The following points represent “highlights” of the data and can serve as an executive summary of key findings.

- The survey had a remarkably high participation rate. While the survey was not intended as a random sample, 1,571 respondents represents a large response number when compared with similar surveys we have conducted in other communities. In our experience, only one jurisdiction had a larger number of participants and Perry County had a 3.4% participation rate based on the population of the County. It is important to note, however, that the survey was not limited to Perry County residents.
 - The vast majority of respondents were residents of Perry County 98.2%.
 - 64% of the respondents were women and 34% were men (2% declined to answer). This is fairly typical of a survey of this nature.
 - The age and race of the respondents mirrors that of the broader population and serves as an indicator that the survey has representation from a broad base of the population. The one population segment that seemed to be under-represented was residents aged 18-25.
 - The distribution of respondents from across the county also represents that the survey was taken by residents throughout the county and not simply in more concentrated areas of population like Millerstown or Duncannon.
 - A significant portion of the respondents 37.5% live in Perry County and work elsewhere. This was the most common answer for respondents and indicates a theme that continued through the survey. Many of those who lived in Perry County worked in nearby more urbanized communities such as Harrisburg and Carlisle.
 - Survey respondents were asked to rate how they feel about Perry County – the rural nature of the County and the fact that it is a good place to live scored equally high. Respectively, 90% and 89% of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing that it its rural character and quality of life defined the community.
 - Survey respondents were less satisfied with the variety of shopping and dining options in the County. 71% disagreed or strongly disagreed that shopping options were sufficient while 72% felt the same way about dining options.
 - Respondents were less committed about whether Perry County is a good place to start a business with 43% responding “neutral” to this question.
 - Echoing prior thoughts, survey respondents felt strongly that Perry County needed more opportunities for people to work locally. 85% agreed or strongly agreed that this should be a priority. This bore out in other ways as well with 65% of respondents disagreeing or strongly disagreeing that Perry County provided opportunities for young people to stay.
 - Other important notes are that respondents expressed a stronger desire to promote independent businesses over national retailers and restaurants and that the county should encourage entrepreneurs.
 - Respondents tended to agree that promotion reasons for people to return, tourism assets, its small towns, and its assets in general would be valuable. Each of these characteristics had the majority support of respondents.
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- This desire to promote the community was corroborated by sentiments that the County was unknown at the state and especially the national level. This was compounded by feelings by the majority of respondents 58% felt that Perry County did not have a positive identity from those outside the County.
- This delta between external impressions of Perry County and internal impressions is important. 72% of respondents felt that the county has a positive identity among locals.
- Business owners were asked particular questions about Perry County. (only 17% of respondents were business owners). They indicated the following:
 - 63% indicated that they agreed or strongly agreed that their business is supported by locals.
 - 65% indicated that they are exploring ways to expand their business.
 - 42% indicated that Perry County is an easy place to run a business (31% disagreed or strongly disagreed)
- With regard to small business, entrepreneurship, and new opportunities, the most robust response was stronger education and training opportunities were of most concern with 80% agreeing or strongly agreeing.
- More restaurants ranked by far the most important mentioned needs when asked in an open ended question with 462 respondents indicating that as a need. Retail and shopping options ranked a distant second with 191 respondents.
- Farming was a consistent theme throughout the survey with most respondents agreeing that this is a critical part of the economy, traditions, and future of Perry County. However, 178 respondents indicated that support of farming was a need.
- 81% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that it is important to have an economic development function that unites Perry County.
- Moreover, 82% of respondents indicated that Perry County needs to have a clear and understandable identity – clear affirmation that an economic development marketing campaign is needed.
- The most important function identified as a need for Economic Development in Perry County is to encourage small business and entrepreneurship with 87% of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing.
- The survey respondents were clear in their descriptions of Perry County’s assets using open ended questions: friendly and welcoming, beautiful and picturesque, rural, and the outdoors all were high ranking assets while negative perceptions of the County included pejorative terms about rural life (hicks, hillbillies, and uneducated).

Final thoughts:

- The survey showed robust support for Economic Development efforts in Perry County.
 - This form of Economic Development should be less focused on industrial recruitment but on supporting small business, the rural economy, retail/restaurant development, and education.
 - There is a strong desire to promote Perry County both to reinforce its positive aspects and mitigate negative perceptions.
 - Respondents have clear perceptions of the assets of the community that should be promoted.
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