

ECONOMIC VITALITY PLAN FOR PERRY COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA



Perry County Economic Development Authority
9 West Main Street
New Bloomfield, Pennsylvania 17086

Dear Perry County Residents:

The story of Perry County's personality began in 1820, when residents who were tired of traveling over the mountain to Cumberland County for goods, services and representation splintered off to create their own county. That independent spirit thrives here today. It also underpins the goals of the Perry County Economic Development Authority (PCEDA).

Long ago, the PCEDA board realized it needed to focus on asset-based development. Through numerous projects, including quality of life surveys, county-wide branding initiatives and business retention and expansion research, the need to infuse care and cultivation into our existing businesses was quite clear. For the PCEDA board, the downtown revitalization project was the next logical step in a strategic effort to retain and support those entrepreneurs who live and work here. Fortunately, the blueprint for downtown revitalization exists, and the national Main Street Program is one of the best examples. Their model is tried and proven. The PCEDA board was happy to partner with Arnett Muldrow to develop the framework to tie in locally with this national program. We've worked on numerous projects with this group to date and have been pleased with their in depth of understanding about what it means to work toward economic development in a rural area, often on a shoestring budget.

It was the close partnership with the Arnett Muldrow team that enabled our own re-emergence as a vital force for a sustainable, vibrant economy and quality of life in this county that we are so fortunate to call home. As Perry Countians, we also understand being creative with the resources you have. We had all the right ingredients: promising downtowns, a plan that works and a star-cast team. The next challenge was figuring out how to mix the ingredients in the best way.

This is where the Keystone Communities Program and the Pennsylvania Downtown Center come on scene. As the administrators of the state's Main Street program, they understood the program's value. But none of our downtowns could participate independently—the program requirements were too onerous for boroughs like those in Perry County. What we knew from our research is that drawing on our assets, in this case our unique county identity, could be the key to success. The team at KCP was an eager audience to our plan – enter the Main Street program ... as a county!

We added the Pennsylvania Downtown Center to the existing Arnett Muldrow team, who built upon more than five years and multiple projects in the county as a base for understanding the character of each of our boroughs. Through the last couple years (including the COVID derailment and rerouting), the team has come to deeply understand the character, charm and challenges of our boroughs. At PCEDA, we're excited for these next steps. We can't wait to see the plan start to take shape and to work with our friends and neighbors in each borough to help make the magic happen.

Please join us on our journey to rediscover Perry County's Hometowns.

On behalf of the PCEDA Board and Staff,
Michelle Jones, PCEDA Executive Director

ECONOMIC VITALITY PLAN

PERRY COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA



about Perry

Perry County is located in central Pennsylvania and is a rural county with a population of 46,262 (2019). Established in 1820, Perry County retains a distinct rural character that is augmented by the Susquehanna and Juniata Rivers and the ridgelines of the Appalachian Mountains. The county is home to nine (9) Boroughs and thirty one (31) townships.

Perry county's rural location and topography places it in a unique position in central Pennsylvania. Its proximity to the Harrisburg metro creates a unique blend of rural character in the county itself and easy access to jobs, retail and dining, and other amenities found in urban areas.

Perry Countians understand that the future of their home towns are not simply being dependent on its proximity to the Harrisburg metropolitan area. They recognize the important role and attraction of farming,

rural recreation, and small-town living. To enhance those features and highlight others, the community established the Perry County Economic Development Authority (PCEDA) in 1973 with the goal of developing economic strategies for the boroughs, townships, and villages of the county.

The 21st century PCEDA is distinctive in many ways. First, it represents a strong and growing partnership among the County Commissioners and the many local governments in the community. Second, the PCEDA acknowledges that traditional approaches to Economic Development must be combined with a respect for the rural nature of the community, existing industries, recreational amenities, and the enhancement of the County's boroughs and townships. In combination, this positions PCEDA to make a long-term and sustainable positive economic impact for the benefit of all residents.

brand statement

The Brand Statement for Perry County was crafted out of the input received from community survey work, roundtable meetings with citizens throughout the county, and the input and support of the Perry County Economic Development Authority. It forms the foundation of the graphic identity for the community.

Perry County is a stunning place, bounded by rivers and mountains that frame valleys filled with rich lands and timeless experiences. Our history is steeped in agriculture where necessity drives innovation. We retain our passion for this place, a work ethic with an eye toward solutions, and a spirit of cooperation.

Here, we cultivate the land. We are farmers who couple our traditions and experience with technology and innovation to bring food to the entire region.

Here, we cultivate small business with entrepreneurs who are driven to provide exceptional service and deep connections to our place.

Here, we cultivate the connection between people and our landscape. Our forests, parks, trails, and rivers beckon exploration for visitors and locals alike.

Here, we cultivate the skills of our people. We recognize the potential of our residents and know that retaining their talent will enrich our county.

Here, we cultivate the values of a comfortable way of life. We rely on deliberate progress, thoughtful cooperation, and an eye for what can be.

We look to the future with the wisdom of experience. We understand that to thrive we must harvest the opportunities that lie ahead. We stand prepared to reap the bounty of economic success. We understand that the basis of our potential is bound to the experience of our past.

We are Perry County, and we are Carefully Cultivated

PROJECT TEAM & APPROACH

PERRY COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA



The Perry County Economic Development Authority (PCEDA) board of directors led community engagement and planning process and retained a team of experts including market economists, landscape architects, architects, outdoor recreation specialists, marketing and branding professionals, and grant writers. This team included:

Arnett Muldrow & Associates, Ltd. - Market Analysis and Branding

Mahan Rykiel Associates - Urban Design and Planning

Southcoast Consulting - Organizational Planning and Funding

Community Design Solutions - Architectural Guidance and Renderings

Robert Brookover, IV PhD - Recreation, Tourism, and Trails Planning

Pennsylvania Downtown Center - Main Street Guidance and Organization



The team worked with individual Borough Councils and other local leaders in nine communities across the county along with their adjacent townships. Countywide leadership including the County Commissioners and planning staff at the county level provided vital assistance throughout the project.

The project team traveled to each of the nine boroughs in the county to convene thirty-one meetings and roundtables over the course of the project. These meetings included borough council members, resident stakeholders, partner organizations, and the citizens of Perry County to determine needs, desires, and goals for each community. The team also conducted site reconnaissance, market assessment, a review of existing and prior plan, and prior work completed for each community and the county as a whole.



Although the process was interrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic, the team continued to work with representatives of the PCEDA and the County to submit grant applications for implementation during the COVID lockdown.

The team resumed its work with additional communities, conducted follow up meetings, and presented preliminary findings to those communities engaged in the process prior to COVID-19.



The overarching goal of the project is to combine the expertise of each local community with that of the project team to provide a toolbox of recommendations that apply countywide and specific recommendations for each borough to enhance the economic vitality of Perry County and its communities. Ultimately, this plan can serve as a roadmap for the County to pursue Main Street Designation through the Pennsylvania Main Street Program, secure grant funding for future projects, and deploy projects that are easily accomplished in the short term.

USERS GUIDE

PERRY COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA

Unlike a traditional planning document, the Perry County Economic Vitality Plan is designed to be a dynamic tool for the entire county, individual borough governing bodies, volunteers, and citizens of the county. As a result, the report is divided into two major sections:

1. Countywide Resource Guide
2. Individual Borough Reports

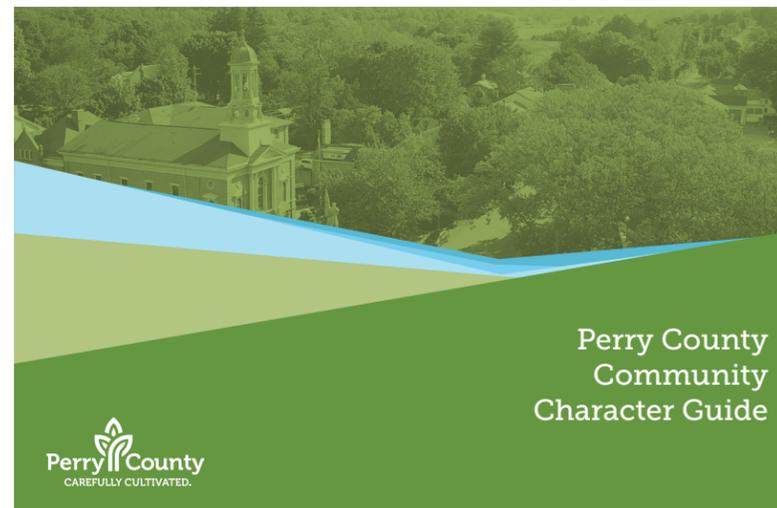
The Countywide Resource Guide is a series of sections with countywide guidance on common themes, recommendations, and findings. It includes the following 13 sections:

1. Community Character Guide
2. Growth and Development Guide
3. Parks and Open Space Guide
4. Placemaking Guide
5. Trails, Tourism, and Outdoor Recreation Strategies Guide
6. Facade Grants Guide
7. Perry County Architectural Character Guide
8. Problem Buildings Guide
9. Façade Improvement Best Practices
10. Architectural Design Studies
11. Transitions to Community Reports
12. Demographics and Market Conditions
13. Organizational and Implementation

The Individual Borough Reports contain specific recommendations for each of the nine boroughs. These reports are tailored to each borough's capacity for implementation, a reflection of input from community residents, and the project team's expertise. They are:

1. Blain
2. Duncannon
3. Landisburg
4. Liverpool
5. Marysville
6. Millerstown
7. New Buffalo
8. New Bloomfield
9. Newport

The Borough's reports are digital and can be read as a whole or used in conjunction with the Countywide reports to further identify and understand recommendations.



HOW TO ENGAGE & SUPPORT THE PLANS PERRY COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA



Community revitalization is an ongoing and evolving process. Each community in Perry County has different levels of capacity and distinct needs. Despite these distinctions, the plan presents many opportunities for each of the nine Boroughs as well as adjacent Townships to develop cooperative partnerships between and among themselves, the County, and the Perry County Hometowns program. This document is designed to provide individuals, groups, and local governing bodies ways to engage and support the plan.

Individuals

- Volunteer for a Perry County Hometowns Committee: The Perry County Hometowns Main Street program is based on a grass roots approach tested over forty years in hundreds of communities across the United States. Volunteers are the backbone of success. Countywide, the Perry County Hometowns program has four committees that work for the betterment of each community: Design, Economic Vitality, Promotions, and Organization. Volunteering for one of these committees is a great way to get involved.
- Volunteer at the Borough Level:

Borough Councils

- Affirm participation
- Policies
- Matching funds
- Shared Expertise

Allied Groups

- Schools
- Service Organizations
- Church Groups
- Historic Groups
- Arts Groups

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

PERRY COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA

The Perry County Economic Vitality Plan would not be possible without the support of many people over the course of this two-year project. The project team extends its sincere thanks for the opportunity to work with the Perry County Economic Development Authority's Board of Directors and staff who worked tirelessly on this project from its inception to completion:

Martha Roberts, Chair
Morgan Tressler, Vice Chair
Patti L. McLaughlin, Treasurer
John Gerner, Secretary
Russell N. Hoover, Assistant Treasurer/Secretary
R. Franklin "Frank" Campbell
Richard G. Pluta
Michelle Jones, Executive Director
Brenda Watson, County Commissioner
Duane Hertzler
Kevin Fitzpatrick
Shawna Weller

The Perry County Commissioners have been supportive in identifying implementation funding and offering assistance with promotion of this project. Jason Finnerty with the Tri-County Planning Commission has worked alongside the team providing historic information, current mapping and research as well as attending many of the planning meetings. Julie Fitzpatrick flawlessly executed two roles in this process both as a team member and the Commonwealth statewide Main Street advisor. All nine Borough Councils supported these efforts from the initial agreement to participate to your attendance and meetings and excitement over implementation. None of this would have been possible without the efforts of all of those above and for that the team extends profound gratitude.

Most importantly, the team extends its sincere thank you to the citizens of Perry County who extended a warm welcome along with their extraordinary passion and knowledge of the county and their hopes and dreams for the future economic success of the place they call home. This plan is dedicated to each of you.

