



Economic Development Round Table Summary 3:30-5 pm, April 13, 2022

Attendees:

In-person – Bob Mills, Victor Rodite, Mark Thomas, Vicky Roth, Vince Smith, owner of several Catasauqua small businesses.

Virtual: Catasauqua Borough Manager Steve Travers, Northampton Borough Mayor Tony Pristash, and LVEDC Director of Regional Partnerships Andrew Kleiner.

LVPC Staff: Jill Seitz, Brad Stewart, Julie Benco, Bambi Griffin Rivera, Dean Severson, Steve Neratko, Matt Assad and Hannah Milagio.

Discussions of note:

Downtowns

1. Community leaders have effectively used Main Street and grant programs to spur economic development, but downtown's have dwindled as businesses closed and storefront were demolished.
2. Catasauqua has invested a great deal of time and resources into its last piece of developable land, the Iron Works site.
"Our goal is to get everything back in that waterfront district," Smith said. "We need more goods and services businesses that people can use."
3. Borough downtowns have suffered from businesses closing and first floor sites being turned into residential space or demolished, Pristash said.
"We lost valuable storefronts," Pristash said. "But we are meeting the needs of people, with gifts, coffee, beer, bank, pets and restaurant".

Traffic

4. Truck traffic from nearby warehouses is causing congestion issues in the business districts, making it less attractive for customers, workers and businesses. Creating quality of life issues that hold the business district back.
5. Trucks trying to avoid traffic, or in some cases and emergency, are destroying township and business district roads, causing damage.

Trails

6. River Central communities have close access to the D&L Trail and the Nor-Bath Trail, but haven't capitalized on the connection.

What Might Help

1. More coordinated and targeted marketing, particularly online, to help downtown businesses and attract others.
2. A clear plan to connect the communities to the trails and the people who use them.
3. A re-invigorated Main Street program with greater buy-in from the county and the Greater Lehigh Valley Chamber of Commerce.
4. Regionalized marketing plans that utilize municipal websites, and use the shared resources of the Delaware and Lehigh Heritage Corridor and Discover Lehigh Valley.