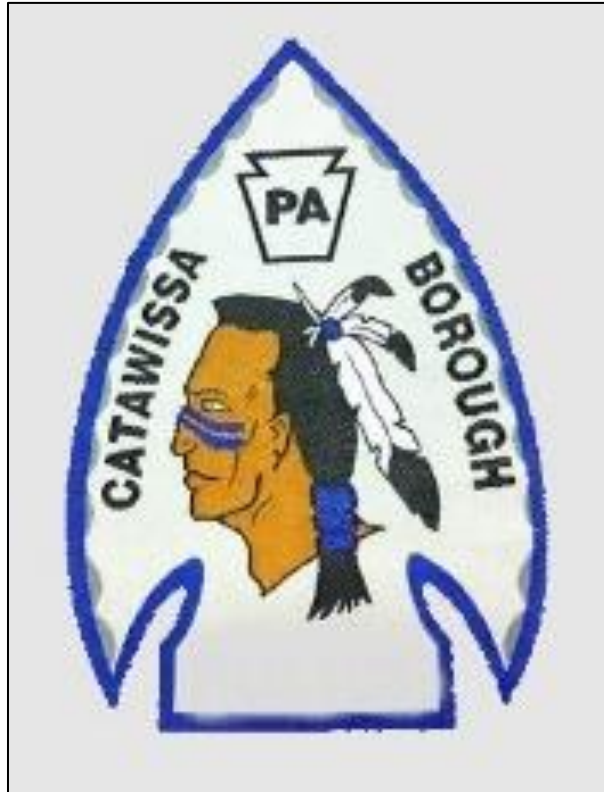


Catawissa, Pennsylvania

“A really great place to stop!”



A Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy

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Introduction

This report is the culmination of months of planning, analysis of economic trends, data gathering and interpretation, visioning, and prioritization. The process began in April of 2019, with the creation of the Catawissa Borough Stakeholder Advisory Committee. Their skill sets, varied expertise and institutional knowledge have resulted in this focused, thoughtful blueprint for growth in the Borough of Catawissa.

The goal of this plan is to provide a roadmap for the total redevelopment of Catawissa Borough. The goal of this plan is to outline specific steps that, if taken, will make Catawissa a better place to live, work, and raise a family. In order to design a plan for future growth for the Borough, it is important to consider the past.

About Penn Strategies

Penn Strategies was founded in 2011 and has grown to a staff of 5 with offices in Watsontown, PA, Harrisburg, PA, and Washington, DC. Serving municipalities, non-profits, and commercial businesses throughout the Commonwealth of PA, Penn provides economic development planning, grants administration, grant writing, lobbying, public relations, consulting services as well as government regulatory advice.

These professionals bring a technical capacity that few other firms have perfected. This proven system for success requires both a micro and macro approach to issues and problems that face our clients in order to maximize results.

We represent municipal clients throughout Pennsylvania providing advocacy and fund development services. We have been successful in obtaining grant awards from programs such as Alternative and Clean Energy Program (ACE), Flood Mitigation Program (FMP0 – Act 13, Greenways, Trails, and Recreation Program (GTRP) – Act 13, LSA, Municipal Assistance Program (MAP), PA Department of Conservation & Natural Resources (DCNR), PA Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), Redevelopment Assistance Capital Program (RACP), PA Department of Economic Development (DCED) Intermodal, and PA Department of Transportation (PENNDOT).

In the management activity of the grant process, Penn Strategies is committed to working with the leadership of all federal government departments and PA Commonwealth agencies. Penn Strategies has strong relationships across the Commonwealth with both federal and state elected officials.

Scope

As with all municipalities, Catawissa Borough needs to prioritize its needs and objectives for community improvement projects to ensure that development interests and economic growth in the Borough is targeted, achievable and part of a long-term vision. These initiatives of enhancing the Borough's downtown, improving infrastructure, and augmenting its cultural and recreational assets among other things, will undoubtedly improve the community. However, with increasingly limited resources and funding opportunities, the Borough must establish priorities and achievable objectives.

Penn Strategies was hired by the Borough to establish these economic development priorities and outline a plan for implementation. We go a step further than many planning firms in that we will remain "on the ground" to assist Borough leaders and staff in the actual implementation of this plan. Penn Strategies will write all Borough Council Resolutions and submit all grant application which are deemed necessary.

Methodology

Penn Strategies utilized a five-tiered approach to the creation of this plan. Our unique approach is designed for a highly intuitive and tailored outcome to ensure that we capture the most essential factors to Catawissa's future success.

Stakeholder Advisory Committee

Our approach to developing this plan included an extensive review of data and trends in municipal planning, interviews with Borough officials, community leaders, and the development of a "Stakeholder Advisory Committee". We have included all of the data deemed relevant under various sections of this report.

To create this group, we asked Borough officials to identify a group of community leaders, grass tops as we call them, who were "plugged into" the needs and concerns of the community. We wanted people who understood the history of Catawissa and had a stake in its future.

While creating a simple survey and identifying a representative sample of Catawissa Borough residents would have allowed us the opportunity to identify a few basic priorities, we wanted more extensive background information and prefer to develop recommendations based upon detailed, substantial conversations with community stakeholders. By creating a Stakeholder Advisory Committee, we were able to use a "Focus Group Methodology" to collect information.

In April of 2019, Penn Strategies helped to form the Catawissa Borough Stakeholder Advisory Committee, a non-partisan, diverse group made of local residents, business owners, and community leaders with the goal of obtaining unbiased, non-political information which would

aid in the development of a comprehensive economic development strategy. In addition to assisting with the development of a strategy, it was our hope that these stakeholders would remain engaged and help Penn Strategies and Borough leaders to implement the recommendations listed in the plan.

Since we want to keep the Stakeholder Advisory Committee together in some form as Catawissa Borough enters the implantation phase of this Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy, securing “buy-in” from these individuals is critical. Each of the policy recommendations listed later in this document was fully vetted by this group and has their total support. Any recommendations that were not met with total support after extensive discussion were totally scrapped. These vetted policy recommendations are outlined later in this plan.

The following is a list of the members of the Catawissa Borough Stakeholder Advisory Committee:

Barbara Reese
Lori Roberts
Stu Hartman
George Hughey
Mike Spagnuolo

The Catawissa Borough Stakeholder Advisory Committee met on the dates listed below. These sessions lasted about two hours each. Selected notes and agendas from these meetings are available in the Appendix of this report.

April 15, 2019
May 13, 2019
June 3, 2019
June 24, 2019
July 15, 2019
August 6, 2019
September 30, 2019
November 25, 2019

Catawissa Government Officials

Executive Branch

Mayor: Todd Burke
Borough Manager: Larry Kopp
Borough Secretary: Connie Cole

Legislative Branch

Council President: Doug Krum

Council Vice President: Corey Yule

Gina Trapani, Member of Council

Anthony “AJ” McKenney, Member of Council

Janel Patel, Member of Council

Roy Klinger, Member of Council

Victoria Waugh, Member of Council

Intuitive Interviews

According to the Center for Assessment, Planning & Accountability, focus groups allow for greater insights into how people think, while surveys generally ask closed-ended questions that may limit the feedback that can be gained from a respondent.

Penn Strategies employs skilled focus group facilitators who not only know the right questions to ask but understand the importance of non-verbal communication, probing, reflection, and avoiding “tells”.

SWOT

Using a focus group format, we started this process by asking each member of the Committee to list the strengths and weaknesses of the Borough. We asked them not only to consider the Borough’s economic health but also, it’s educational, environmental, and cultural conditions as well. This information was very helpful in completing our SWOT Analysis (an in-depth review of the regions strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats). Collection of this information was the primary focus of our first two meetings. As a general rule, the stakeholder’s concerns were validated by statistical data.

For each of these strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats we asked stakeholders to expand upon their thinking and asked pointed questions aimed at responding to this SWOT Analysis with some specific policy recommendations. After this consideration, we offered details on several specific policy initiatives which have been effective in communities with similar characteristics to Catawissa Borough.

Data Collection and Interpretation

Our approach to developing this plan included an extensive review of data and trends in municipal planning, as well as research and evaluation of the demography relevant to Catawissa.

We compared these statistics to the stakeholder concerns, which generally were validated by the statistical data.

After these considerations, we offered details on several specific policy initiatives which have been effective in communities with similar characteristics to Catawissa Borough.

Feet on the Street

Finally, we go a step further than many planning firms in that we begin and end “on the ground”—first in assessment and later in execution.

We make a point of seeing Catawissa first-hand, driving and walking the streets, and observing first-hand the issues identified by the Advisory Committee. This informal component of our assessment helps us to relate to and comprehend the data we have gathered.

Following the formulation and presentation of the plan, we continue a presence as we assist Borough leaders and staff in its actual implementation. Penn Strategies will write all Borough Resolutions and submit all grant applications which are deemed necessary.

The Economic Condition of Bloomsburg-Berwick MSA

An analysis of the economic development potential of Catawissa Borough would not be complete without giving consideration to the present condition of Columbia County and the region in general. Catawissa Borough is considered to be a part of the Bloomsburg-Berwick Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA). MSA's are geographic areas used by federal agencies to collect, tabulate, and publish key statistics about a region. There are 18 MSA's in Pennsylvania and 384 MSA's in the United States. The Bloomsburg-Berwick MSA is the smallest in the Commonwealth and is the 12th smallest in the United States.

According the most recent year of available data, the Bloomsburg-Berwick Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA):

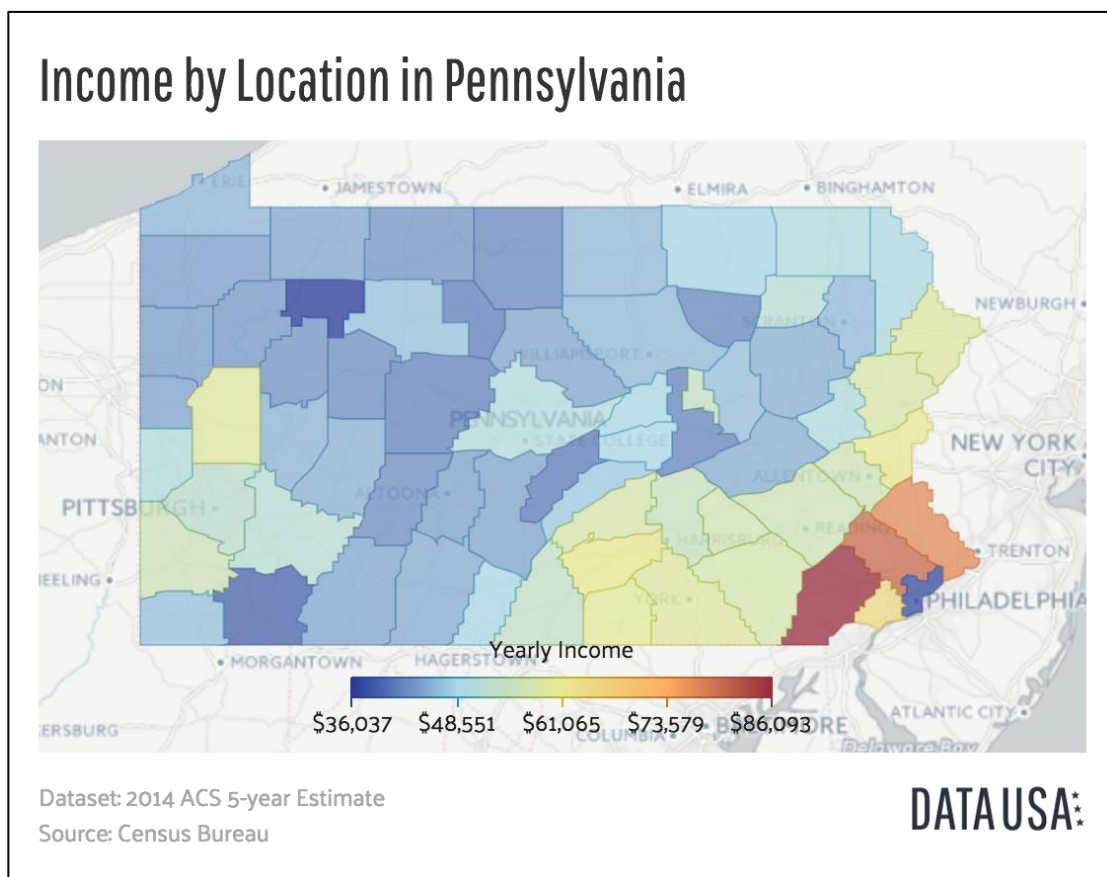
- has a population of 84,917.
- has an unemployment rate of 3.9%.
- has a 14.79% poverty rate.
- has a median age of 41.2.
- has 38,697 people employed.
- has a median household income of \$49,968
- has a median property value of \$151,100.
- has a home ownership rate of 69.5%.

Regional Per Capita Personal Income

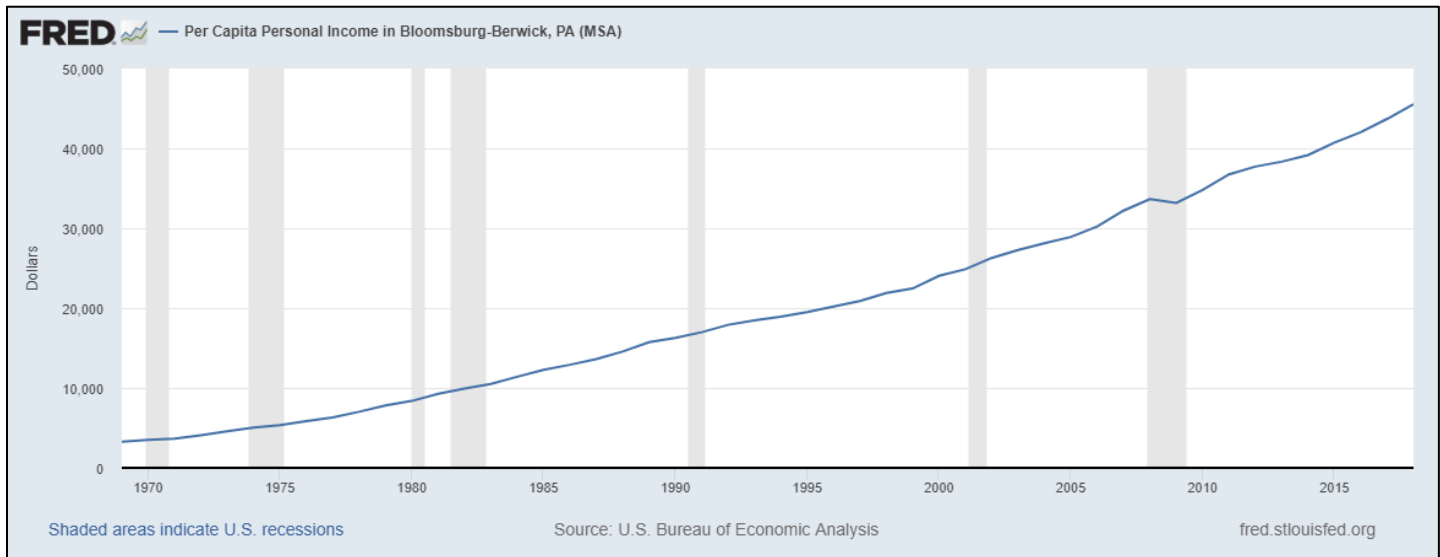
Per Capita Personal Income was \$43,692 in 2017, which is significantly less than the state average of \$56,225 and the national average of \$60,200. It is positive that Per Capita Personal income has continued a steady rise, however, the increase has often struggled to keep up with rate of inflation.

An important factor, not considered when looking solely at this indicator, is the average cost of living in the MSA, which is less than the state and national average. This would mean that an individual earning \$43,692 per year in this MSA may have more buying power than an individual earning the same amount in another part of the state or nation.

Average Individual Income in Pennsylvania



Per Capita Personal Income in Bloomsburg-Berwick PA MSA

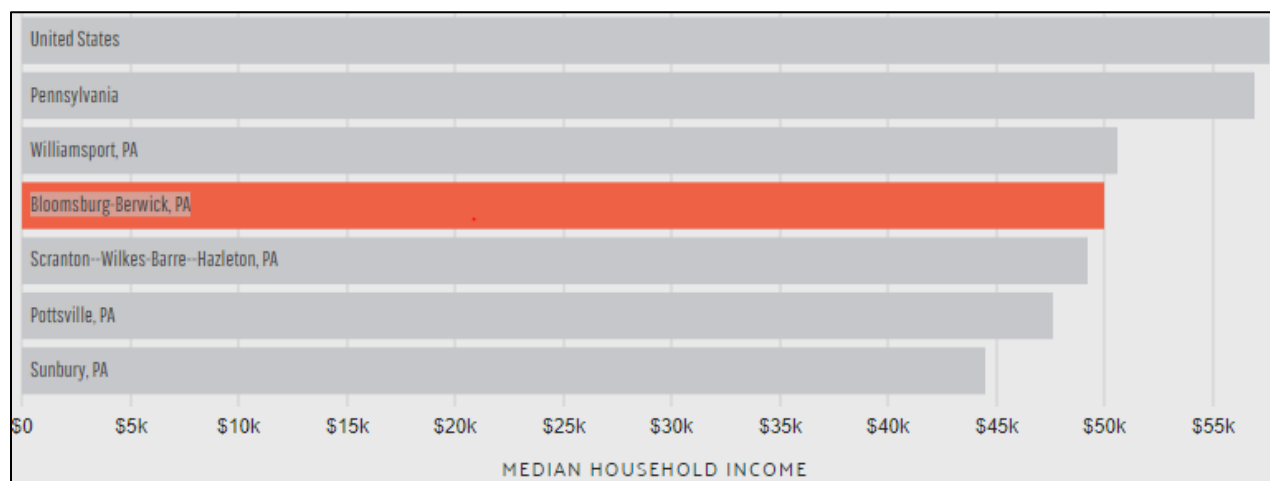


Regional Median Household Income

The Median Household Income in the MSA is \$49,968, which is less than the national median income of \$60,336 and the Pennsylvania rate of \$56,951. The growth of this rate in the MSA represents a 2.49% increase from 2016 to 2017, this is slightly higher than the 2017 inflation rate of 2.13%. Regional Median Household incomes are rising at a slightly rate than inflation. This means that households should be noticing a real growth in their buying power.

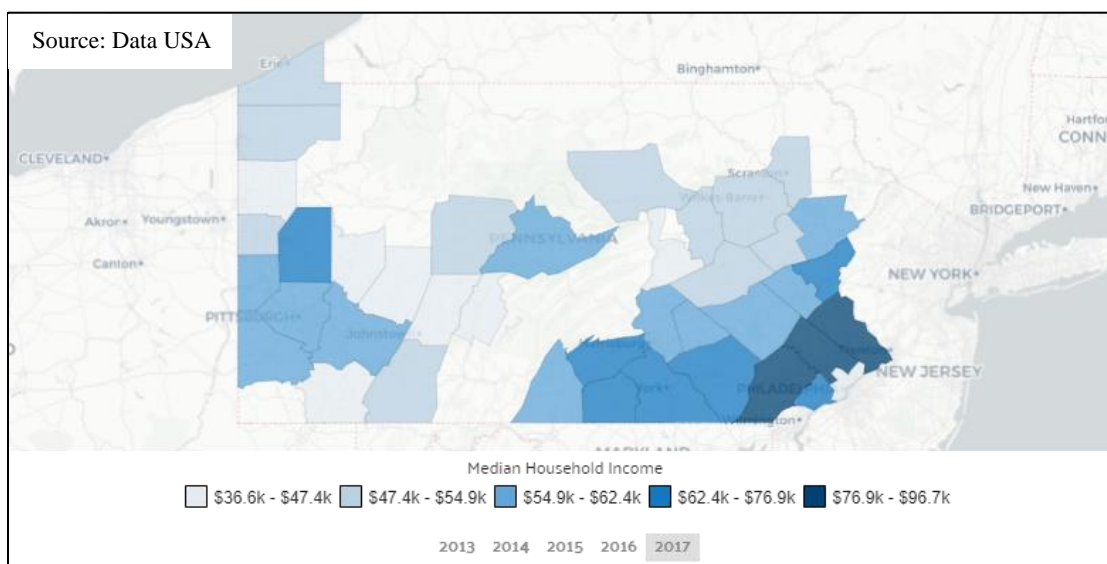
As the chart on the next page demonstrates, the Bloomsburg-Berwick MSA stacks up nicely compared to other MSA's in the region. It's only slightly lower than the Williamsport PA MSA and is higher than Scranton-Wilkes Barre-Hazleton MSA, Pottsville MSA, and the Sunbury MSA.

National, Pennsylvania, and Regional MSA's Compared



Median Household Income in Pennsylvania

Source: Data USA



Regional Unemployment Rate

The most recent unemployment rate for the MSA is 3.9%, that's just below the state average of 4.0% and higher than the national average of 3.5%. As the chart on the next page demonstrates, the unemployment rate in this MSA has been consistent with the national and state averages throughout modern history.

The economy of this region is very much affected by national and state economic activities. While many regions with strong employment in health care and education are deemed to be “recession proof”, which means that they are not affected by national and state economic trends, the Bloomsburg-Berwick MSA does not fall into that category. This means that the region is very much influenced by overall economic growth and economic retardation.

According to the most recent available data there are 38,700 people employed in the Bloomsburg-Berwick MSA.

The largest industries are:

#1 Health Care and Social Assistance – 8,065 people

#2 Manufacturing – 5,839 people

#3 Retail Trade – 4,838 people

The highest paid industries are:

#1 Utilities – \$78,810 annually

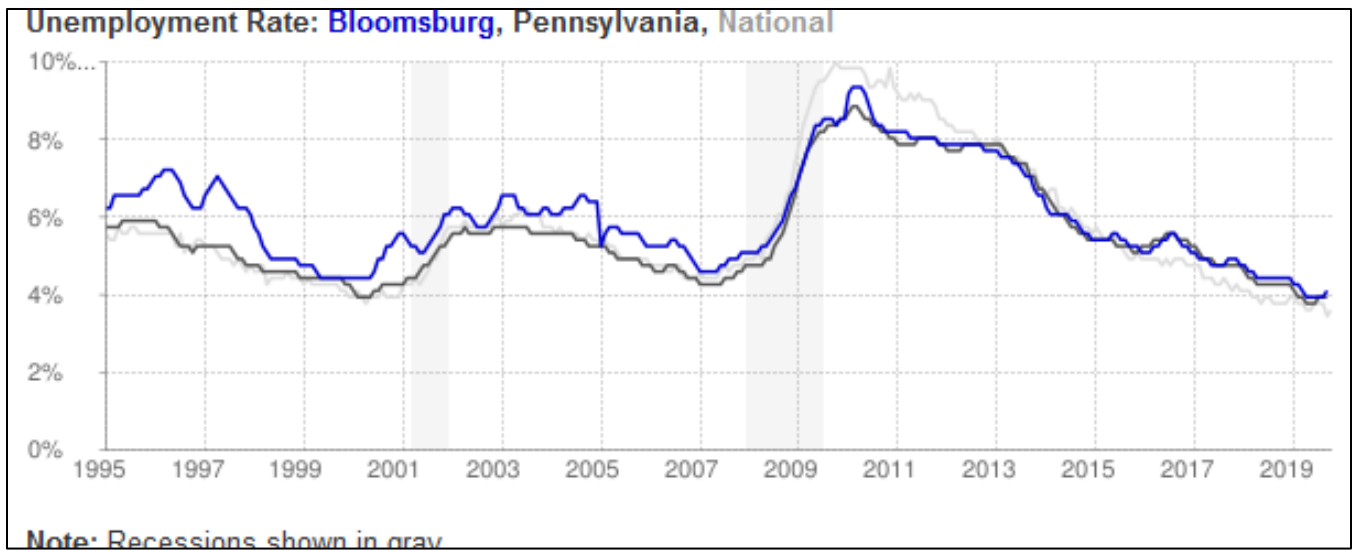
#2 Mining, Quarrying, & Oil and Gas Extraction – \$59,375 annually

#3 Professional, Scientific, & Technical Services – \$49,750 annually

Men in the MSA have an average income that is 1.35 times higher than the average income of women, this makes the income inequality index 0.469, which is lower than the national average. This means that the wage gap between men and women is smaller here than in the rest of the nation.

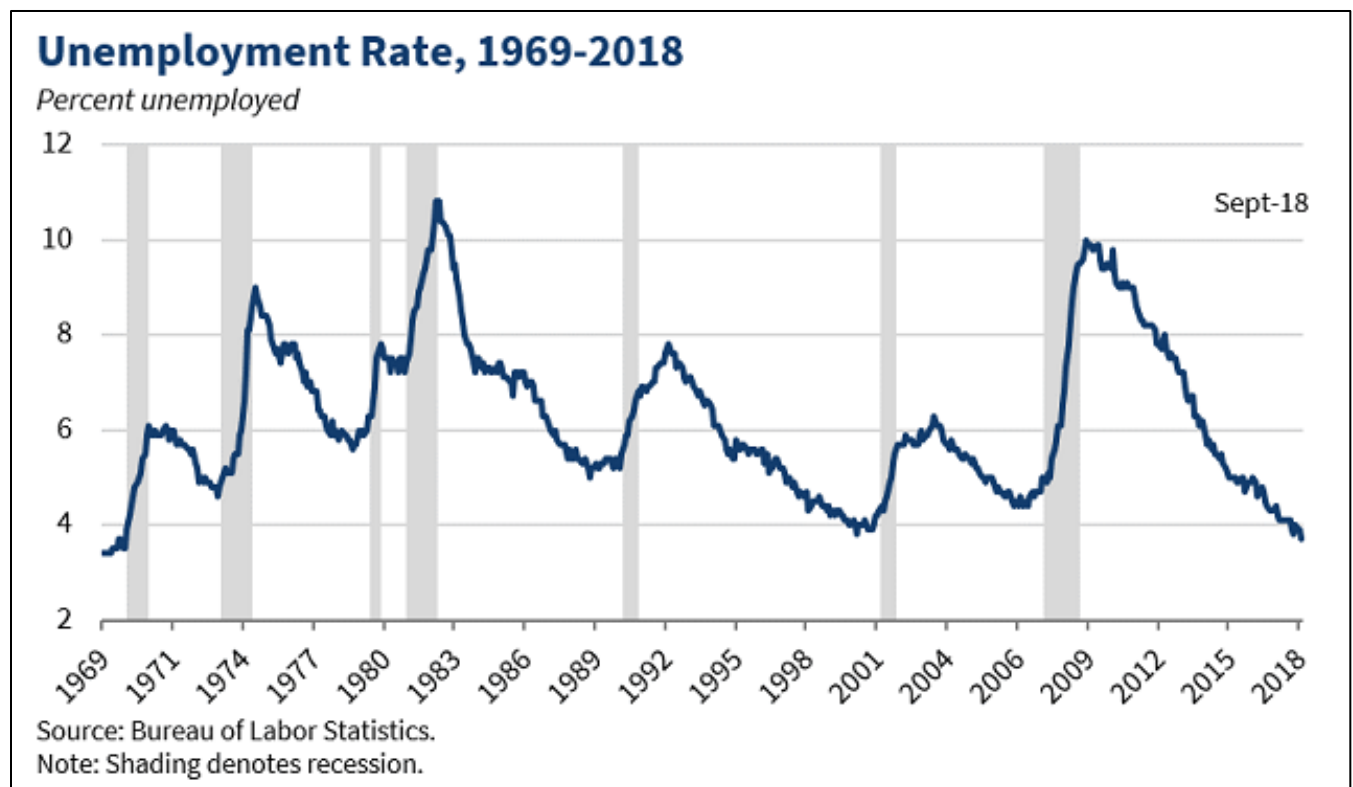
Generally, most jobs in this region are not “white collar”, and do not require a four-year college degree. While incomes are slightly lower here than in many other MSA’s, the lower cost of living provides many opportunities for comfortable living.

Regional, Pennsylvania, and National Unemployment Rates Compared

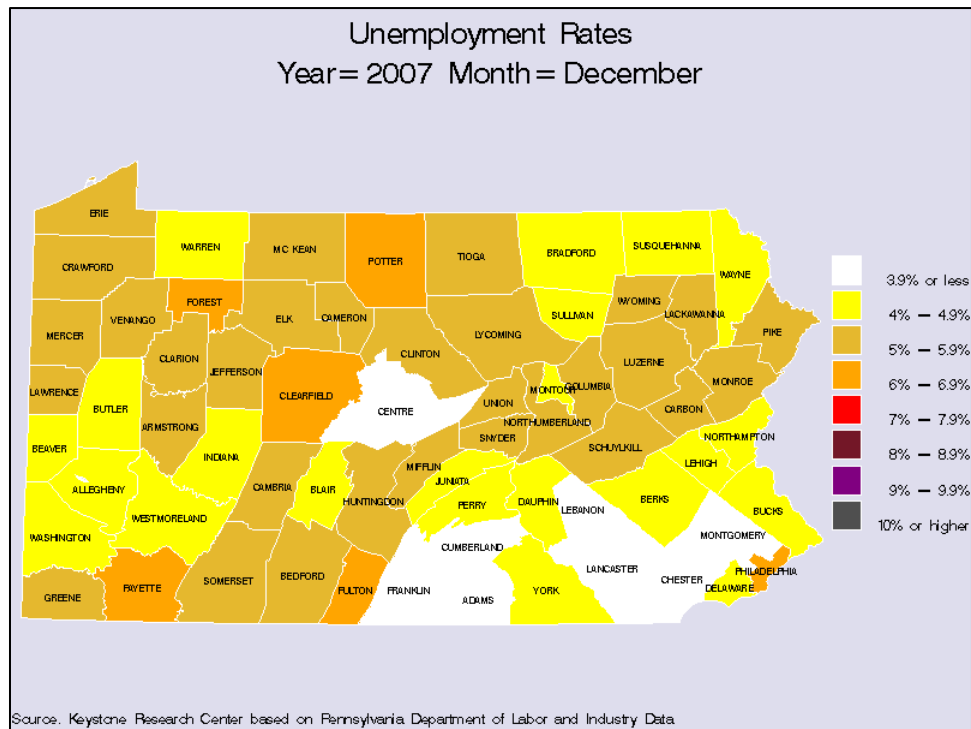


Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

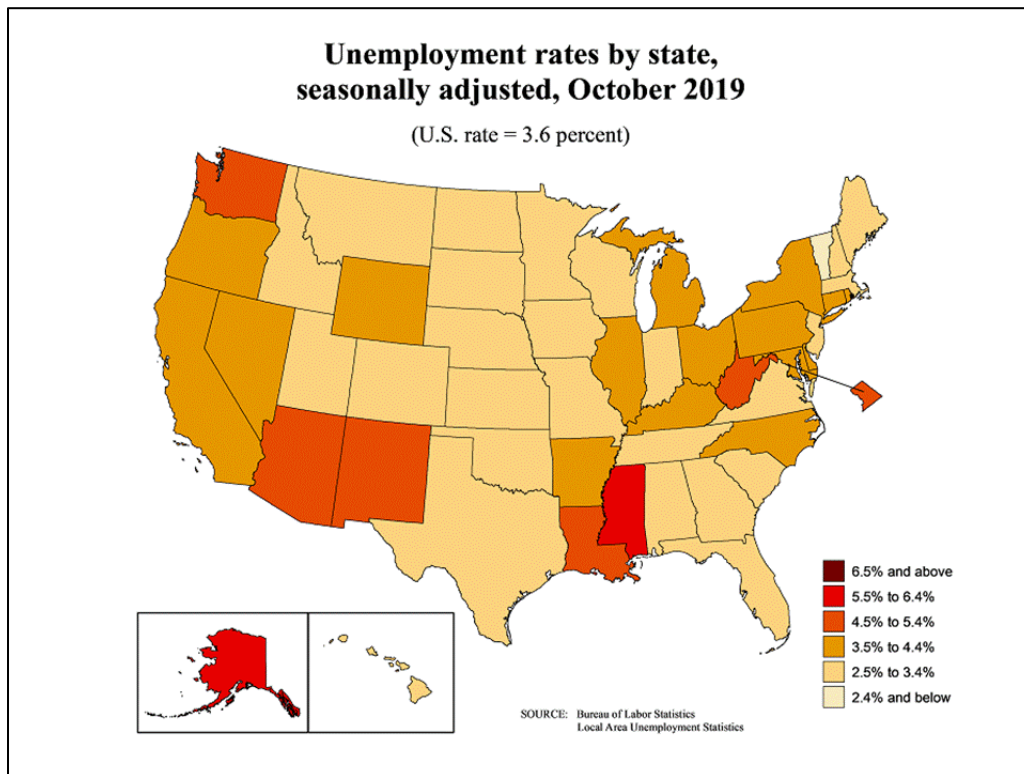
Unemployment Rate in the United States



Unemployment Rates in Pennsylvania



Unemployment Rates in United States



Catawissa Borough Basic Data

Total Population

The population of Catawissa Pennsylvania was 1,552 according to the 2010 census. The estimated population number for 2018 was 1,480. As demonstrated by the chart below, Catawissa, like many small towns throughout Pennsylvania, has steadily lost population since the 1950's.

<u>Catawissa Population</u>		
Census	Pop.	%±
<u>1900</u>	2,023	11.8%
<u>1910</u>	1,930	-4.6%
<u>1920</u>	2,025	4.9%
<u>1930</u>	2,023	-0.1%
<u>1940</u>	2,053	1.5%
<u>1950</u>	2,000	-2.6%
<u>1960</u>	1,824	-8.8%
<u>1970</u>	1,701	-6.7%
<u>1980</u>	1,568	-7.8%
<u>1990</u>	1,683	7.3%
<u>2000</u>	1,589	-5.6%
<u>2010</u>	1,552	-2.3%

Source: 2017 U.S. Census Estimates

Basic Demographics

- The median age in Catawissa in 2017 was 39.3 years old, which is only slightly higher than the national median age of 38 years old and is lower than the statewide median age of 40.4 years old.
- 55.9% of the population of Catawissa are women, compared to 50.8% nationally and 51.1% in the state.
- 44.1 % of the population of Catawissa are men, compared to 49.2% nationally and 48.9% in the state.
- Over 97% of the population in Catawissa are white, compared to 72% nationally and 81% in Pennsylvania.
- 92% of Catawissa residents have a high school degree or higher, this is higher than the state and national average.
- \$41, 917 is the median household income in Catawissa, this lower than Columbia County (\$48,385), Bloomsburg-Berwick MSA (\$49,968), Commonwealth of Pennsylvania (\$56,951) and the national average (\$57,652).

Occupation, Industry, and Income Information for Catawissa Pennsylvania

Subject	Estimate	Margin of Error	Percent
OCCUPATION			
Civilian employed population 16 years and over	671	+/-101	671
Management, business, science, and arts occupations	165	+/-45	24.6%
Service occupations	134	+/-41	20.0%
Sales and office occupations	157	+/-43	23.4%
Natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations	55	+/-23	8.2%
Production, transportation, and material moving occupations	160	+/-36	23.8%
INDUSTRY			
Civilian employed population 16 years and over	671	+/-101	671
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining	18	+/-14	2.7%
Construction	28	+/-20	4.2%
Manufacturing	113	+/-37	16.8%
Wholesale trade	10	+/-10	1.5%
Retail trade	195	+/-41	15.6%
Transportation and warehousing, and utilities	40	+/-22	6.0%
Information	2	+/-3	0.3%
Finance and insurance, and real estate and rental and leasing	19	+/-16	2.8%
Professional, scientific, and management, and administrative and waste management services	28	+/-19	4.2%
Educational services, and health care and social assistance	165	+/-40	24.6%
Arts, entertainment, and recreation, and accommodation and food services	70	+/-25	10.4%
Other services, except public administration	53	+/-23	7.9%
Public administration	20	+/-12	3.0%
INCOME AND BENEFITS (IN 2017 INFLATION-ADJUSTED DOLLARS)			
Total households	679	+/-72	679
Less than \$10,000	57	+/-27	8.4%
\$10,000 to \$14,999	52	+/-21	7.7%
\$15,000 to \$24,999	125	+/-33	18.4%
\$25,000 to \$34,999	70	+/-22	10.3%
\$35,000 to \$49,999	89	+/-33	13.1%
\$50,000 to \$74,999	141	+/-42	20.8%
\$75,000 to \$99,999	68	+/-27	10.0%
\$100,000 to \$149,999	62	+/-25	9.1%
\$150,000 to \$199,999	12	+/-8	1.8%
\$200,000 or more	3	+/-4	0.4%
Median household income (dollars)	41,917	+/-7,573	(X)
Mean household income (dollars)	50,986	+/-4,405	(X)

Source: uscensus.gov

The data above shows that the wages of the residents of Catawissa are distributed more evenly than in the nation at large. A lack of income disparity is viewed as a positive economic characteristic by most social scientists.

While the median household income in Catawissa is lower than the County, MSA, State, and National average, it grew 9.35% from 2016 to 2017. This growth rate far outpaces inflation and is a very positive sign for the Borough.

Housing Information

According to the most recent U.S. Census estimates, there are 744 total housing units in the Borough of Catawissa. Of the units that are occupied, 61.6% are owner occupied, while 38.4% are rental properties. The median value of a home in the Borough \$92,600, the median monthly rent is \$656 per month.

This information means that housing in Catawissa is reasonably affordable and that the owner occupied vs. rental housing number are about average for a small town in rural Pennsylvania. While traditionally, a large number of renters in a town was viewed by many community planners as a negative economic indication, that theory is being adjusted, as many higher net worth younger and retired people are flocking to rental properties.

Owner Occupied Home Values/ Cost of Ownership

Subject	Estimate	Margin of Error	Percent	Percent Margin of Error
VALUE				
Owner-occupied units	418	+/-53	418	(X)
Less than \$50,000	46	+/-18	11.0%	+/-4.1
\$50,000 to \$99,999	194	+/-46	46.4%	+/-7.9
\$100,000 to \$149,999	133	+/-33	31.8%	+/-7.4
\$150,000 to \$199,999	31	+/-17	7.4%	+/-3.9
\$200,000 to \$299,999	14	+/-10	3.3%	+/-2.2
\$300,000 to \$499,999	0	+/-10	0.0%	+/-5.8
\$500,000 to \$999,999	0	+/-10	0.0%	+/-5.8
\$1,000,000 or more	0	+/-10	0.0%	+/-5.8
Median (dollars)	92,600	+/-6,271	(X)	(X)
MORTGAGE STATUS				
Owner-occupied units	418	+/-53	418	(X)
Housing units with a mortgage	226	+/-44	54.1%	+/-8.0
Housing units without a mortgage	192	+/-41	45.9%	+/-8.0
SELECTED MONTHLY OWNER COSTS (SMOC)				
Housing units with a mortgage	226	+/-44	226	(X)
Less than \$500	3	+/-4	1.3%	+/-1.9
\$500 to \$999	110	+/-36	48.7%	+/-11.8
\$1,000 to \$1,499	101	+/-33	44.7%	+/-11.9
\$1,500 to \$1,999	12	+/-8	5.3%	+/-3.6
\$2,000 to \$2,499	0	+/-10	0.0%	+/-10.5
\$2,500 to \$2,999	0	+/-10	0.0%	+/-10.5
\$3,000 or more	0	+/-10	0.0%	+/-10.5
Median (dollars)	1,000	+/-81	(X)	(X)
Housing units without a mortgage	192	+/-41	192	(X)
Less than \$250	16	+/-9	8.3%	+/-4.6
\$250 to \$399	69	+/-23	35.9%	+/-10.0
\$400 to \$599	91	+/-35	47.4%	+/-12.2
\$600 to \$799	16	+/-12	8.3%	+/-6.7
\$800 to \$999	0	+/-10	0.0%	+/-12.2
\$1,000 or more	0	+/-10	0.0%	+/-12.2
Median (dollars)	418	+/-34	(X)	(X)

Profile of Renters

Subject	Estimate	Margin of Error	Percent	Percent Margin of Error
GROSS RENT				
Occupied units paying rent	246	+/-52	246	(X)
Less than \$500	102	+/-26	41.5%	+/-11.0
\$500 to \$999	113	+/-34	45.9%	+/-10.0
\$1,000 to \$1,499	31	+/-28	12.6%	+/-9.7
\$1,500 to \$1,999	0	+/-10	0.0%	+/-9.7
\$2,000 to \$2,499	0	+/-10	0.0%	+/-9.7
\$2,500 to \$2,999	0	+/-10	0.0%	+/-9.7
\$3,000 or more	0	+/-10	0.0%	+/-9.7
Median (dollars)	656	+/-168	(X)	(X)
No rent paid	15	+/-10	(X)	(X)
GROSS RENT AS A PERCENTAGE OF HOUSEHOLD INCOME (GRAPI)				
Occupied units paying rent (excluding units where GRAPI cannot be computed)	243	+/-52	243	(X)
Less than 15.0 percent	45	+/-21	18.5%	+/-8.0
15.0 to 19.9 percent	35	+/-20	14.4%	+/-6.8
20.0 to 24.9 percent	28	+/-13	11.5%	+/-5.7
25.0 to 29.9 percent	32	+/-22	13.2%	+/-7.7
30.0 to 34.9 percent	44	+/-28	18.1%	+/-10.5
35.0 percent or more	59	+/-23	24.3%	+/-9.1
Not computed	18	+/-11	(X)	(X)

Source: United States Census

Crime Data

While the major focus of our work is related to economic development, significant statistical correlation exists between crime rates and economic growth. People and businesses do not like to locate in areas that are perceived to be violent and crime ridden.

It is important to note that crime data in smaller municipalities can be someone misleading, as one or two incidents can cause significant spikes in calculated crime rates. Regardless, a report which neglects to reference crime data would not be complete.

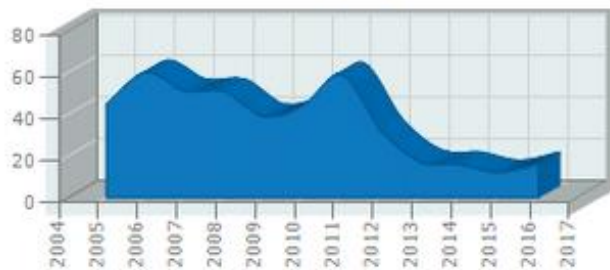
We find the presentation of crime data on www.CityRating.com to be the most accurate and useful. The data below was collected from that site and checked against the FBI's Uniform Crime Reporting Statistics for accuracy.

Catawissa Pennsylvania:

- has experienced an overall downward trend in crime over the last 12 years.
- has experienced a slight increase in violent crime.
- has experienced a reduction in property crime.
- violent crime is lower than the national average by 49.83% and is lower than the violent crime rate in Pennsylvania by 37.04%.
- property crime is lower than the national average by 56.65% and lower than the property crime rate in Pennsylvania by 39.04%.

Property and Violent Crime Totals

Catawissa Property Crime



© 2019 CityRating.com - <https://www.cityrating.com/crime-statistics/>

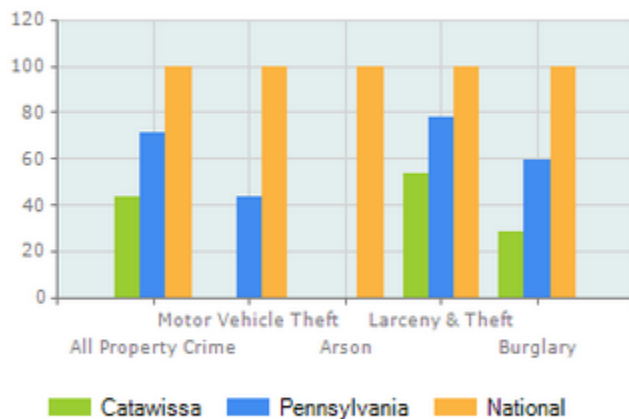
Catawissa Violent Crime



© 2019 CityRating.com - <https://www.cityrating.com/crime-statistics/>

City versus State versus National Crime Comparison

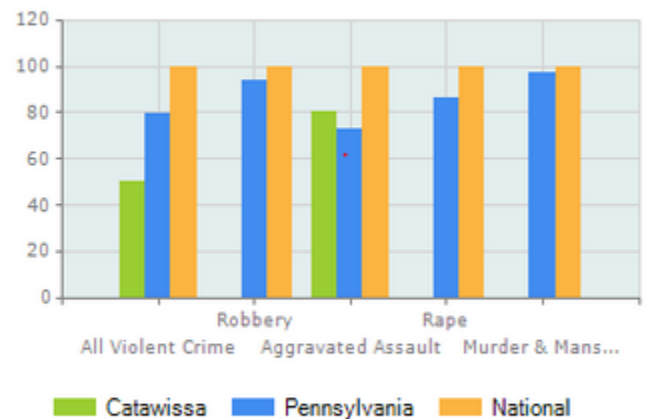
2016 Catawissa Property Crime Comparison



Compared to U.S. average. (U.S. average equals 100)

© 2019 CityRating.com - <https://www.cityrating.com/crime-statistics/>

2016 Catawissa Violent Crime Comparison



Compared to U.S. average. (U.S. average equals 100)

© 2019 CityRating.com - <https://www.cityrating.com/crime-statistics/>

Summary of Data

Challenges

Northeastern and Central Pennsylvania in general and Catawissa Borough face numerous challenges. A few of them include:

- unemployment is regularly higher than the state and national average.
- household incomes are lower than the state and national average.
- aging infrastructure.
- high school property taxes.
- aging housing stock with low property values.
- fragmentation of local government has resulted in more costly delivery of basic governmental services.

These challenges are not uncommon among municipalities in older industrial states and are not impossible to overcome with careful planning, vision, and strong leadership.

Opportunities

Compared to the other municipalities in Pennsylvania, Catawissa Borough is in a strong position to experience significant economic growth. Thanks to the efforts of Borough leaders, Catawissa Borough is now on sound fiscal footing. The budget is balanced, debt is at a minimum and Borough tax rates are reasonable when compared to their immediate neighbors. Catawissa Borough collects most of the monies necessary to run their government through providing electric to their residents and businesses. These rates appear to be reasonable compared to other regional providers.

Along with a strong fiscal report card, Catawissa has numerous potential economic drivers; unfortunately, they have yet to be tapped to their full potential. The three major economic drivers for the Borough and Northeastern and Central Pennsylvania are: their proximity to markets, the regional presence of numerous institutions of higher learning, and several major hospitals serving the area.

From Catawissa Borough, one can reach 60% of the population of North America in less than 8 hours by car or truck. The ability for a business of any size to get their product to potential customers in a quick and cost-effective manner is critical. This market proximity offers great opportunities for companies in the warehousing, manufacturing, and technology industries.

In addition to great proximity to major markets, the shifting national mood toward embracing trade policies which favor the interest of domestic manufacturing over offering cheap goods to consumers could bode well for “Rust Belt” states like Pennsylvania. There is also a very strong “Buy Local” and “Buy American” resurgence in the United States which will increase the demand

for locally sourced products. Catawissa Borough and Northeastern Pennsylvania have long been known for the strong work ethic of their residents. Manufacturers looking to add a facility would find an affordable, hardworking, and eager labor pool ready to fill these low to mid skilled jobs.

Access to low cost energy could help too. While most of the Natural Gas exploration in Pennsylvania is north of Columbia County, the projected uptick in this industry and the associated availability of an inexpensive energy source, could encourage companies to locate here. Most manufacturing companies are high energy users and companies in the plastics and chemical industry directly rely on natural gas for production. Northeastern Pennsylvania's proximity to highways, railroads, and ports; coupled with its potential future closeness to low-cost natural gas, would make it an ideal manufacturing hub.

In addition to potential growth in manufacturing, the region can begin to attract technology industry jobs as well. For the first time in history many companies are moving to where the talent is, as opposed to making the talent move to them. Modern technology has enabled firms to open satellite locations to better access a balanced talent pool. The Borough is within a few miles of Bloomsburg University. Employers in the region would be wise to partner with Bloomsburg University to design academic programming which would fit the needs of the modern work force.

Regions cannot succeed economically without a strong health care system. Hospitals not only provide much needed health care services, they provide family sustaining jobs to residents. Catawissa Borough is fortunate to be near Commonwealth Health and Geisinger Health System. Competition among these providers will increase the level of care made available to patients, as well as increasing the pay of health care professionals in order to attract the best medical talent. This will have a very positive effect for Catawissa and Northeastern Pennsylvania.

Finally, the Borough of Catawissa experiences a significant amount of "pass through traffic" as a result of visitors en route to Knoebels Amusement Resorts. The park, which opened in 1926, is the largest admission free park in the United States. Its rides have won awards from organizations such as *Amusement Today*, American Coaster Enthusiasts, and the International Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions.

In 2014, Travel Channel rated Knoebels one of their Top 10 Family Friendly Amusement Parks in the United States. America's Number One Amusement Park ^[1] In 2008, the park's dark ride was the subject of a one-hour documentary, "Laff In The Dark's Behind The Scenes At Knoebel's Haunted House".

Finding a way to convince visitors to stop in Catawissa on their way to Knoebels, undoubtedly provides the Borough it's best opportunity for economic and cultural growth.

Threats

2017 was viewed as the height of the Pennsylvania's overdose crisis, at that time Pennsylvania ranked 3rd among all 50 U.S. States for drug overdose rates. According to an October 2, 2019 article in the Philadelphia Inquirer, the Commonwealth saw an encouraging drop in fatal overdoses in 2018 – a 18% decrease after years of sky-high overdose rates.

At the epicenter of this crisis were the 11 counties in Southwestern part of the state. Thanks to proactive actions by regional officials, these counties experienced a 41% drop in overdose deaths from 2017 to 2018.

Now, according to a recent DEA report, the new epicenter of the state's overdose crisis is in eastern and central Pennsylvania. The most significant example in the region is Schuylkill County, where they saw their death rate increase from 39th out of 67 Pennsylvania Counties to 6th out of 67. Columbia County was ranked 23rd out of 67 Counties in fatal overdoses.

Local law enforcement and elected officials must remain vigilant and respond quickly to any noticeable trends related to opioid use and fatal overdoses. While there is some debate about the direct link between the current opioid epidemic and its influence on petty and violent crime, common sense dictates a correlation.

There is no debate that providing a community with a sense of pride and purpose, with attractive homes, meaningful work, restorative play and hope in the potential for good lives for residents and their families, diminishes both crime and drug abuse.

Advisory Committee Points of Discussion

While many topics of importance were discussed at the Stakeholder Advisory Committee meetings, the following is a recap of the major points of concern.

Mainstreet

Catawissa's "Main Street" runs through the heart of town. Stakeholder believed that the primary focus of downtown redevelopment should occur on the Main Street corridor.

While many members of the committee agreed that the Main Street area has a great deal of potential, they pointed out that few visitors stop and enjoy the area.

Parks and Recreation

Stakeholders agreed that Catawissa Borough has several recreational opportunities and generally pleasant open spaces. They also agreed that the recreational areas could be improved through a renewed focus on planning and investment using state grant dollars where possible.

They also agreed that a 5-year strategy to update and improve all recreational assets should be developed. They believed that the focus of this strategy should be offering more recreational opportunities that people of various ages would be interested in, such as walking paths, bike trails, and adult exercise equipment.

Housing

The Committee was concerned about Catawissa's housing stock. Members described aging houses built during the coal era. They affirmed local homeowners as being responsible citizens who care for their properties but pointed out that Catawissa elderly population is often challenged by the maintenance costs of these older homes, given their fixed incomes.

They also expressed concern that when older residents pass, surviving family members might be more likely to use the properties as rentals, given current trends in the area.

The Advisory Committee agreed that homeowners were more likely to invest in and maintain properties than landlords and renters, noting commendable exceptions. Several members expressed a desire for their children and grandchildren to be able to stay in Catawissa and hoped that more modern housing and better employment opportunities would facilitate this.

Image

The stakeholders expressed the need to better market their community to outsiders and create an appeal and other opportunities to make people stop and visit the town rather than just drive through. Concerns were also expressed about the lack of promotion through the visitor's bureau and brochure availability for marketing.

A need was also expressed for a mixed-communications approach that would help reach broader audiences through social media, newsletters, radio, website and newspaper. While the Press Enterprise allows locals to comment on happenings in Catawissa through a feature it calls "30 Seconds", most of the comments are negative.

The Borough just added a newsletter, which stakeholders agreed was very positive. The current Borough website is organized and easy to use, but some mentioned having difficulties finding certain information and stakeholders admitted to not visiting the site much and they believe it has a low visitation rate. There is currently no official Township social media (Facebook) page.

Economic Development Authority

Stakeholders agreed that Catawissa Borough should develop an Economic Development Authority. They expressed a concern that there is currently no Business Association. The creation of an Economic Development Authority would allow decisions about funding allocations to be made for the various programs and projects outlined in this report as a priority and protect the Borough from liabilities.

Crime

Stakeholders described Catawissa as a place where you used to be able to keep your doors unlocked. They noted that crime in The Borough was not as high as that of neighboring areas but were troubled by an uptick in nuisance crimes.

Appropriate speculation ensued about the relationship between rising crime in The Borough and rising drug use. All the stakeholders agreed that Catawissa would benefit from a more visible police force and active neighborhood crime watch.

Economic Development

Stakeholders agreed that economic development initiatives in the Borough should focus on improving the community for residents and small businesses and noted that little opportunity exists for major job creations due to the lack of available space. The Borough will have to work with County leaders to attract jobs to other parts of the region, while these employees will work elsewhere, they can live in Catawissa.

Catawissa Borough: Economic Development Plan

To rebuild a community, planners must first clearly identify and rank the priority issues. Typically, we identify ten priority issues, however, we feel that in this case it would be wise to focus on six achievable goals.

Economic Development Authority

PRIORITY ISSUE #1: CATAWISSA BOROUGH NEEDS TO CREATE AN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY.

The Municipal Authorities Act permits Borough's to create "special purpose" forms of government to provide specific services to residents. Often these Authorities focus on parking, recreation, water, or sewer. We believe that with the changing dynamics of economic development, Economic Development Authorities can serve as a perfect conduit for economic growth.

The Borough should consider forming the Catawissa Borough Economic Development Authority with the sole purpose of creating an environment that is positive for economic growth and advancement.

This Authority would:

- Be comprised of business and community leaders with a wide range of backgrounds.
- Serve as a conduit for grant funding.
- Meet regularly and provide advice to Borough officials on all economic development matters.
- Engage the community in their efforts.

Mainstreet

PRIORITY ISSUE #2: “MAIN STREET” NEEDS A FACE LIFT.

Catawissa’s “Main Street” lacks an identity and features an aging housing stock and many dated commercial structures. The “Main Street” in Catawissa includes Main Street and parts of Mill Street.

The Borough should consider the following:

- Creation of a façade improvement program, matched by state funds when possible, which offers incentives to property owners willing to make improvements which are consistent with specifications which will be laid out in an ordinance passed by the Borough Council.
- The Borough should devise a Main Street Reconstruction Plan. The Borough should retain an engineer to design, provide cost estimates and “phase out” this plan. Possible funding sources may include; PA Department of Community & Economic Development (PA DCED) Multimodal Transportation Fund, PA Department of Transportation (PennDOT) Multimodal Transportation Fund, PennDOT Transportation Alternatives Fund, and soon to be announced federal infrastructure funding.

Housing Stock

PRIORITY ISSUE #3: CATAWISSA NEEDS NEW HOUSING STOCK.

Many of the housing units in the Borough are aging and in need of repair. Catawissa is a wonderful place to live. It has relatively low property taxes, a reasonable cost of living, and a full-time police force. What it needs is low maintenance, high quality housing. By utilizing

programs and tools such as the Redevelopment Assistance Capital Program (RACP), private developers may be willing to work with the Borough to create market rate housing (i.e. no income restriction) for working people.

Parks and Recreation

PRIORITY ISSUE # 4: CATAWISSA BOROUGH NEEDS TO ENHANCE ITS PARKS AND RECREATION PROGRAM.

The positive connection between economic development and recreation is widely recognized by community planning organizations. Investments in recreation have been shown to increase property values, generate foot traffic, and even reduce crime. Having a strong parks program is one of the key indicators of a strong community. Investments in parks have been demonstrated to significantly increase the attractiveness of a community to potential homeowners and business investors.

The Borough should consider:

- Authorizing the completion of a Parks Master Plan to be completed in 2020 which will consider the best uses of the current recreational assets and potential connectivity options, which could include bike and pedestrian options. There are grant programs available through the Commonwealth Financing Authority (CFA), PA Department of Conservation & Natural Resources (PA DCNR) and even PA Department of Transportation (PennDOT) which could help to fund suggested projects.

Brand

PRIORITY ISSUE #5: CATAWISSA NEEDS A NEW IDENTITY.

The Borough needs to honor its proud past, while planning for its promising future. For a municipality to succeed it must understand and create a plan to respond to opportunities.

Two important opportunities that offer opportunity for Catawissa Borough are the existence of Knoebels Amusement Resorts nearby and the increase in e-commuting for employment opportunities. Using successful municipal branding techniques, Catawissa is well positioned to experience significant economic growth as a place to visit and make a home.

The Borough should:

- Issue an RFP for the creation of a new Borough logo, website, and Facebook page.
- Develop a new motto for the Borough.

- Purchase new entrance signage with this new logo and motto.

Crime & Drugs

PRIORITY ISSUE #6: CATAWISSA NEEDS TO BE A LEADER IN FIGHTING CRIME AND DRUGS.

Safe streets are critical to the success of a municipality. The Catawissa Borough Police is lucky to be led by an experienced Chief. It is important to provide the Department with the tools that they need to keep the streets safe from violent crime and drugs.

Catawissa should follow the “Broken Windows Policing” method by instituting a “Walk and Talk” program. The Borough Council should consider the following

- Making officers more approachable to citizens, thereby increasing the likelihood that community members would share information about criminal activity.
- Improving the image of the Catawissa Borough Police Department by making the community more aware of the positive things that law enforcement are doing to make Catawissa a better place to live.
- Allowing officers to interface with the youth and identify those that may need “early intervention strategies”.
- Creating a community policing “team approach” to combating drugs and crime.
- Allowing police to provide crime fighting information to homeowners and businesses such as fact sheets on how to prevent break-ins or how to avoid scams directly at the elderly.
- Requiring officers to spend one-hour of their shift walking in specific neighborhoods and then log their time and observations.

Appendix

1. Examples of a Façade Improvement Program

EXAMPLE

Eligible Properties

1. Business storefronts bounded on North Main Street through South Main Street.
2. Applications will be received on a “first-come, first served” basis.
3. This grant applies to both commercial and residential properties on the above listed streets.

Financial Assistance

1. Basic grants will be available for eligible properties.
2. Grants of up to \$1,000 will be awarded, until the funds for this targeted area are exhausted or until the application time-frame expires.
3. A single property owner can receive more than one grant if he/she owns more than one property.
4. A tenant can apply for the grant with the written consent of the property owner.
5. Grants are awarded on a cost reimbursement basis.

Application

1. Applications must be submitted to the Borough Manager on XX/XX/XXXX date.
2. Notice of funding will be awarded within 30 days.
3. A \$25.00 fee is required to process an application.
4. Applications funding schedule will be determined by the Main Street Manager and will be will be open for 60 days.
2. After the closing there will be a new round of funding for another neighborhood in the borough.

Application Procedures

1. Meet with the Borough Manager or Main Street Manager
 - Bring a current photo of your property
 - Receive application
 - Discuss plans
2. Complete application
 - Attach cost proposals, project description and designs
3. Grant approval
 - Main Street or Borough Manager will review applications and will provide written approval to applicant.

4. Execute Project

- Work must be completed in 90 days and comply with the application
- Ashley borough will reimburse the property owner in accordance with the term of the grant

Eligible Activities

1. Brick and stone masonry
2. Architectural metals
3. Doors and upper-story windows
4. Exterior woodwork
5. Storefronts
6. Signage
7. Painting
8. Awnings
9. Lighting

No interior property improvements are eligible for funding.

Main Street Revitalization Examples

West Chester

West Chester in 2000 formed the Business Improvement District, a Municipal Authority, to fund and implement programs for the revitalization of the downtown. Funding is generated by an annual assessment equitably shared by all commercial properties in the district plus an allotment of funds from parking. The West Chester BID took advantage of several DCED programs including; Façade Improvement Program, Elm Street and Main Street designations.

The three goals of the BID are:

- 1) Increase customer traffic and sales
- 2) Retain, expand and recruit viable businesses
- 3) Advocate the interests of downtown to government agencies

Successes

- Reduced the business vacancy rate from 22% to 4% adding close to 250 new businesses
- Focused on specific projects.
 - Completed a historic hotel renovation and the opening of a new hotel and theatre
- 64 restaurants and more than 74 retail stores

Shenendoah

Concerned citizens, and business owners formed Downtown Shenendoah Inc. (DSI) in 2003, a non-profit 501c3, to return downtown Shenendoah to an active pedestrian-oriented business district. DSI kicked off a “Return to Prominence” Capital campaign in 2005 and has raised \$100,000.

The goals of the DSI are:

- 1) Our mission is to stimulate economic development by encouraging cooperation and building leadership in the business community;
- 2) To develop a marketing strategy that will provide an improved retail mix, strengthen the tax base, increase investor confidence; to build a viable tourism effort;
- 3) To promote a unified, quality image of Downtown Shenendoah as a center of goods and services;
- 4) To create an attractive, coordinated visual impression of Shenendoah through facade improvements streetscape and historic preservation of our existing buildings.

Successes

- After performing initial marketing analysis and published the results in economic positioning strategy DSI was accepted into DCED Main Street Program in March of 2006.
- DSI has been instrumental in aiding local businesses to renovate their buildings with the Design Challenge grant. To date they have over \$60,000 in Facade Grant money.

Lewistown Borough

Downtown Lewistown, Inc, a non-profit 501c3 organization funded in part by the Commonwealth, Mifflin County, Borough of Lewistown and local business, was charged in the spring of 2000 with adopting the Charter Plan for Downtown Lewistown. A DCED Main Street designation, Downtown Lewistown, Inc. has the following goals:

The goals of the DLI are:

- 1) Revitalization efforts to build upon the assets of downtown
- 2) Revitalization of neighborhoods and architecture

Successes

- Creation of a façade improvement program where owners of buildings & businesses in downtown Lewistown are invited to apply for up to \$5,000 in matching grants to improve the appearance of their facades.

- Since the inception of Downtown Lewistown, Inc., 43 projects have been completed in the Downtown and neighborhoods.
- Creation of residential reinvestment grants that assist with; adapting conversion of buildings to single-family ownership, facilitate compliance with the ADA, assist with the preservation of historic residential and mixed-use buildings
- Secured a “Elm Street” designation
- Former vacant industrial buildings and land were donated to the municipality for the construction of a new street allowing for greater access to parks and neighborhoods
- Secured federal TEA-21 funding that aided in lighting the new street and other developments
 - Leveraged with DCNR funds to construct a trailhead parking lot and rehabilitate an abandoned railroad bridge that crosses a creek
- The former Hotel Lewistown property was purchased by a private developer and rehabilitated into 20 market rate apartments

Clearfield Borough

The Clearfield Revitalization Corporation, a non-profit 501c3, works to ensure that downtown Clearfield and the surrounding neighborhoods remain vital places to live and work. CRC has a Main Street Director, Board of Directors and volunteers. The CRC also hosts events like fairs, and holiday gatherings.

Goals of the CRC are:

1) To address the four points of the National Trust for Historic Preservation’s Main Street Center, focusing on design, promotion, organization and economic vitality on Clearfield’s Main Street and downtown

Successes

- \$3 million streetscape project that includes the central business district, new sidewalks, curbing, lighting , street furniture and tree planting
- \$2 million Riverwalk project
- Establishment of a Façade Improvement Program that offers grants of up to \$5,000
 - Funded through the DCED PA Main Street Program
- An intuitive website that lists rental properties that are available, information on the CRC and other Clearfield Borough development initiatives and opportunities

City of Butler

Butler Downtown (BD) is a grassroots revitalization initiative involving local citizens and people from business, education, government and community organizations throughout the

region. The organization is a group of interested individuals set up as a non-profit 501 c3 organization, with the mandate to bring new energy and vitality to the city's central business district.

BD's goals are:

- 1) Help Current businesses thrive
- 2) Attract new businesses and jobs
- 3) Create a more aesthetically pleasing downtown

Successes

- Main Street designation in 2007
- Butler Downtown's Design Committee has created a comprehensive streetscape plan that includes new sidewalks, lighting, benches, and trash receptacles
- Fall festivals, farmers markets, and general promotion.

City of Lock Haven

Downtown Lock Haven Inc. (DLH) was created in November 2004 as a non-profit 501c3 to promote Lock Haven with a focus on revitalizing the downtown. DLH hosts a directory of downtown merchants on its website, and sponsors fairs and other community events.

Vision Statement

With its welcoming and walk-able business district, safe neighborhoods and small town charm, a vibrant Downtown Lock Haven will be a place where the people of and visitors to Central Pennsylvania come together to nurture their families, find educational and economic opportunity and enhance their quality of life.

Downtown Lock Haven will offer a friendly environment for simple, yet fulfilling living with affordable housing, a broadening institution of higher learning, strong and growing public and private schools, trusted health care institutions, safe streets and easy commutes to larger metropolitan areas to the east and west.

Successes

- A patriotic banner program that showcases local veterans
- Technical assistance services to small businesses
- Marketing and promotion of downtown merchants

Other Examples

Hollidaysburg

Hollidaysburg established the Hollidaysburg Community Partnership (HCP), which manages the Borough's Main Street program, façade program and streetscape program. The HCP also plans several events each year in downtown Hollidaysburg including car shows, Christmas tree lightings and other borough festivals.

Mt. Carmel

During the spring and summer of 2006, Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful (KPB), the Pennsylvania Downtown Center (PDC), and the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society (PHS) partnered on an innovative demonstration project to beautify Pennsylvania neighborhoods and encourage individual stewardship by using the skills and enthusiasm of college interns. Interns worked with residents in designing and creating gardens, murals, and mosaics as a method of building civic pride and responsibility. The Borough of Mount Carmel, Project PRIDE, DEP Project COALS, KPB, and the PDC (through the Main Street and Elm Street programs), along with other groups and organizations are all making major strides and implementing economic development and downtown revitalization projects in the Lower Anthracite Region.