

CHAPTER 4

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN

The Kutztown Planning Region must support conditions for entrepreneurship and livable communities, as well as innovative economic and community development. We must position ourselves to maximize the skills of our workforce and create innovative opportunities for future economic development. The Borough must proactively create a friendly business environment for desirable businesses and talented full-time residents.

Types of Economic Development: Residential, Commercial, Industrial, Seasonal

College Town Economy

A substantial portion of Kutztown's economy is keyed to the school year. Kutztown University's roughly 10,000 students attract a specific sort of business to the area. Students bring a welcomed energy and commerce to the area, and Kutztown benefits from the presence of the University.

This specific set of businesses also brings significant externalized costs, however and like residential development, student-oriented businesses should be balanced with year-round commercial activity. The quantity and density of student rental businesses, for example, means that roughly 1/3 of the Borough's population is largely transient, buys few durable goods from local merchants, leaves during the summer, and tends not to participate in local volunteer and political culture. Students are also seen easy prey by outside visitors, and have a history of fostering various nuisances such as unwanted noise, trash, and other issues. Too much of *any* kind of business with significant external costs that the community must bear will eventually have a negative impact on that community. Kutztown must continue to limit or to recoup the external costs, and to enhance the positive impacts of this class of business.

The Borough and the University have taken the first steps towards alleviating some of the problems through cooperative activity. Such activities include the [Kutztown University Borough Of Kutztown](#) (KUBOK) organization, the [Off Campus Advisory Council](#), and a professional staff person who serves as a liaison with the Borough. [Kutztown Community Partnership](#) has been a leader in this area, as has the Mayor, in cooperation with KU's President. We must continue to invest in this relationship with the goal of cooperating towards shared goals.

The Borough must make every effort to more fully recoup the external costs of college-town-related commercial activity such as additional police efforts, trash removal, and excessive through-traffic.

Encouraging Economic Vitality and Entrepreneurial Activity

The Borough can address the issue of economic vitality through its municipal ordinances. Amending zoning and subdivision/land development ordinances to allow additional commercial and business development, as well as adaptive reuse of older buildings is one method. Streetscape enhancement of commercial areas and entry or “gateway” enhancements are others. Kutztown must take advantage of the public/private partnerships that exist and provide leadership to the business community to help establish a common focus for future economic development.

A healthy economy requires a balance between residential and non-residential uses. Communities with high quality-of-life amenities attract more affluent and skilled workers and retain existing workforces better than communities with poor quality-of-life amenities. Preserving architecture, heritage, and culture helps a community maintain a sense of place and attract people and businesses to the Region.

Kutztown must ensure that commercial activities do not interfere unduly with residents who live in mixed-use zones.

Main Street

Main Street is the main thoroughfare through the Borough, and runs directly through the central business district as well as a portion of the Borough’s historic district. Kutztown has historically served as a business center for its region. Unfortunately, large volumes of through traffic as well as competing commercial development outside of town threaten to undermine the economic vitality of the downtown. The Borough must strive preserve its unique status as an economic and cultural engine for the region.

The downtown core must have a pedestrian-friendly design that accommodates informal gathering places mixed in with stores, restaurants, coffee shops, and office uses.

Streetscape improvements along Main Street have been initiated, including street lighting enhancements under the Hometown Streets program and shade tree plantings. Such streetscape enhancement projects should be continued to achieve visual continuity.

Foster a positive image through special events, programs, music and art festivals, and holiday decorations. Promote the historic and cultural heritage of the Region as a means to promote tourism. Marketing tools such as banners, brochures, and restaurant/shopping guides should be produced. Businesses may offer incentives to encourage Kutztown University students to patronize the downtown.

The provision of a sidewalk (and/or trail) system throughout the Borough is another method to enhance social interaction and the sense of place. Such a system could provide bicycle and pedestrian access to downtown Kutztown as well as recreational opportunities to students and residents in surrounding areas. The Borough could encourage this through provision of bicycle and pedestrian-friendly facilities, such as bike racks and benches, in the downtown area.

The Borough should continue to review its sidewalk policy to ensure it fixes gaps in the sidewalk system. It should create a priority list of gaps to be fixed, if necessary with a public fund. It should also ensure that sidewalks are constructed or repaired when a property is sold or developed.

Informally affiliated with the Borough of Kutztown, the Kutztown Community Partnership, a 501(c)(3) non-profit entity charged with the revitalization of the borough's Main Street business district and the enhancement of the quality of life of all borough residents, has made application to the [Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development](#) (DCED) and undergone final review by representatives from the [Pennsylvania Downtown Center](#) (PDC). The Borough has been accepted into this program.

Additional Target Areas

1. Cooperation with Kutztown University
 - a) Events management
 - b) Public Relations and Marketing
 - c) Shuttle Service/Mass Transit to remote parking facilities to alleviate student traffic and parking issues
2. Parking Management
3. Traffic Calming
 - a) On Main Street
 - b) To create walking neighborhoods
 - c) In alleyways
4. Market Kutztown and its unique attributes
 - a) College-based events (cooperate with KU)
 - b) Promote historical aspects of the town
 - c) Coordinate existing holiday events
 - d) Community events such as Halloween, Christmas on Main St. Etc.

e) Summer/Weekend promotions (Work with store owners to encourage nearby residents to come visit when traffic and parking issues ease on Saturdays and Sundays)

5. Ease business startups in Kutztown.