



## Economic Development Roundtable Notes

From the Plan Slate Belt interactive Roundtable held on February 5, 2020. The Roundtable discussions are intended to add detail to the draft goals outlined in the fall 2019 *Issues and Opportunities Report* and assist with policy and action development. Working Goals include:

1. A balance between growth and preservation.
2. A high regional quality of life.
3. Efficient local and regional governments.
4. A resilient transportation and infrastructure network.
5. A strong farming community.
6. A prepared student body and workforce.

### Table 1

- ❖ Question 1: What do you have? (Current businesses in the Slate Belt)
  - Commercial/retail: fast food, restaurants, gas stations, garages, wineries/breweries, furniture
  - Industries/manufacturing: logistics, mineral extraction, water extraction, waste management, weld shops, dog treat manufacturing, inert gas refining, salvaging
  - Services: human services, health services, financial, nonprofits
  - Recreation: bowling alleys, physical fitness
  - Farming, Landscaping
  - Are the storefronts occupied?
    - Bangor storefronts are 50/50
    - Roseto is empty
    - Wind Gap lost 6 over last 12 months
    - Pen Argyl is occupied – most active area along Route 512 (mixed-use district)
    - Portland is pretty weak
    - Washington is mostly occupied, but they don't have a lot
  - Locals primarily frequent business establishments
- ❖ Question 2: What do you want? (Desired businesses in the Slate Belt)
  - More retail
  - Technology-based businesses: programming, manufacturing computer tech in Wind Gap/Pen Argyl area. Slate Belt lacks the talent, though.
  - Different types of restaurants – cafes/coffee shops in downtown business areas, but need to share parking
  - Focused destination (e.g. Gettysburg) – eat, then shop, needs to be dog-friendly, accessible activity
  - Agritourism
  - Ecotourism – Minsi Lake

## Plan Slate Belt Economic Development Roundtable Notes February 5, 2020

- Wineries/distilleries (booze trail) – locate in general farmland areas
- Opportunities for Airbnb – can visit the Poconos but cheaper stay
- Recreational opportunities: use of quarries
- Hotels – easy access off Route 33/Route 80
- Large-scale public event venue, concert venue, festivals
- Higher education
- Industrial hemp
- Businesses/industries not wanted: composting, waste, biosolids, nuisance (shooting ranges, loud chicken/pig farms, heavy manufacturing)
  
- ❖ Question 3: What can be done to encourage business development in different areas?
  - Change public perception, convince people development is needed
  - Marketing, rebrand the Slate Belt
  - Straighten 512/191 intersection, Route 80 access (Route 80 should be addressed in Lehigh Valley transportation plans)
  - Provide high capacity internet
  - Existing infrastructure improvements: water/lighting/sewer
  - Provide electric charging stations
  - Better cell phone capability, but need cell towers
  - Increase bikeability/walkability
  - Physical constraints of the area, can't expand roads in most areas
  - Address obstacles: truck traffic (Upper Mt Bethel/Route 611), housing/building stock, Section 8 housing, old mill buildings – people want everything move-in ready, need cooperation of property owners
- What tools are available at the municipal level?
  - Zoning ordinances
  - Incentive tax breaks: KOZ, LERTA. Show there is a long-term benefit.
- What regional tools are available?
  - Long range transportation plan
  - DCED - County/State grants
  - Elected officials
  - Private enterprise grants – technology. Probably need higher density though.
  - Housing improvements
  - Infrastructure, electric vehicle charging stations

## Table 2

- ❖ Question 1: What do you have? (Current businesses in the Slate Belt)
  - **Plainfield**
    - Gas stations (push for park n' ride at key locations)
    - Lots of convenience stores
    - Limited restaurants
  - **East Bangor**
    - Valley Industrial Properties (82 acres)
      - Capital Auto Parts

## Plan Slate Belt Economic Development Roundtable Notes February 5, 2020

- Dumping dirt into pit
    - Zoning for manufacturing not warehousing
    - Strawberry Fields
  - **Pen Argyl**
    - What can be done with defunct quarries? (outdoor recreation, museum, trail connection)
  - **Wind Gap**
  - Green Knight Industrial Park
  - Pharmacy
  - Petrucci
  - ASGO moving from Allentown
  - NAPA development (by-pass road to Waste Management)
  - Bed and Breakfast
- Recreational Tourism
- Winery in Lower Mt. Bethel, Washington (Upper Mt. Bethel – closed)
  - Riverton Hotel, restaurant with closed rooms
  - Campgrounds in Upper Mt Bethel
  - Nothing unique
- ❖ Question 2: What do you want? (Desired businesses in the Slate Belt)
- Local theater
  - Good restaurants (Nice Plate, Classic American, Bistro/Italian (Cherry Valley Hiway))
  - Ecotourism
  - Events with regional draw (arts festivals, playhouse (theater))
  - Move theater (Wind Gap lost theirs due to parking), movies in the park
  - There is an over-abundance of diners, pizza shops, bar food)
  - **Pen Argyl**
    - Restore the old opera houses on West Main (occupied by smaller business like hair, dance, tropical fish shops)
  - **Portland**
    - Limited space available
    - Portland steel (make steel, rebuild in 2021)
  - **Lower Mt. Bethel**
    - No restaurants
    - Martins Creek Inn (cursed business)
  - **Plainfield**
    - Plainfield Diner just closed
  - **Bangor**
    - Business that can sustain without foot traffic
    - Better restaurants (Deli, Classic American for cheap, Greasy spoon, \$20-30 dinner)
    - Brewery in jeopardy
    - Parking not yet an issue
- Developing business
- Everyone wants a tax incentive

## Plan Slate Belt Economic Development Roundtable Notes February 5, 2020

- LERTAs
- Assistance with loans/storefront grants (BEDC, Rising tide)
- How do you market the Slate Belt?
  - Regional economic development department (LVEDC?)
  - Local cultivation (LVEDC? someone dedicated)
- Businesses will follow
  - Small/medium size manufacturing (40,000-50,000)
  - Keep manufacturing near Route 33 (weight restricted bridge on Male Rd)

### Table 3

- ❖ Question 1: What do you have? (Current businesses in the Slate Belt)
  - **Upper Mt Bethel:** (largest municipality)
    - 900 acres of industrial, 4 manufacturing facilities
    - Bangor School District (largest employer)
    - 2 banks
    - Dinner and pizza shops
    - Bakery going out of business
    - Farm stands, farm & garden w/market (homemade goods)
    - Garden nursery, Christmas tree farms
    - Food, winery & hard cider, convenience store, gas station, small mall (True Value hardware store, auto parts store, several eateries, doctor and post office)
    - Chelsea Inn B&B, Kirkridge Retreat, Tuscarora Inn & Conference Center
    - Driftstone RV and Campground
    - Farms, dairy, pigs, goats
    - Outdoor - hiking, etc.
  - **Bangor**
    - Developed downtown
    - 3 parks
    - Restaurants/food, bars/grills
    - Hair salons, barbers
    - Storefronts could be better: 3/4 vacancies, many closing/moving
    - Main Street market
    - Library
    - Hardware
    - Professional services: lawyer, doctor
    - Yoga studios
    - CVS
    - Bank (closing)
  - **Lower Mt Bethel**
    - 3 stone quarries: Haines & Kibblehouse, Eastern Industries
    - 176 acres for trails
    - Talen Energy
    - Flour mill

Plan Slate Belt Economic Development Roundtable Notes  
February 5, 2020

- Vineyard with sales
- Gas stations
- Landscaping business
- Restaurant
- Recreation - hiking
- Small business in Martins Creek
- Tenters - bed and breakfast
- **Washington**
  - Supermarket, some stores (Dollar Tree, vitamin, Rite Aid)
  - Parks and recreation
  - Doctors
  - Farmland
  - Bank (closing)
  - Bio spectra
- **Wind Gap**
  - Lost 6 major business in last year
  - Vacancies are a concern, not in best shape, not eye appealing
  - Strip mall and intermittent shops, Café on Broadway, fast food, diner, ice cream, antique shop, hair salon, fish store, Giant, Kmart (closing), phone store, second-hand shop, bike shop
  - Gas stations, car dealership
  - Flea market
  - Empty buildings (not great quality)
  - Mobility, walking, etc. is an issue (cannot get around)
  - Convenience stores
  - Movie theater – poor condition
- **Portland**
  - Chocolate
  - Furniture
- **Roseto**
  - Bedroom community
  - Auto repair shops
  - Family grocery store
  - Bakery (closed)
  - Café (gone)
  - Landscape business
  - Florist
  - Silk mills - historic, apartments now
- **Plainfield**
  - Waste Management
  - Coordinated Health, St Luke's
  - Farm stand, farm-owned market
  - Stock warehouse, several warehouses
  - Village of Belfast: gas, general store

## Plan Slate Belt Economic Development Roundtable Notes February 5, 2020

- Gas station, car dealership
- Fast food, restaurants
- Bank
- Tech-o-Bloc
- Green Knight Industrial Park
- 3500 acres preserved farmland
- Plainfield Community Park, Gall Farm – developing into a park, rec trail adjacent
- Appalachian + North Tier Trail, Plainfield Rec Trail
- **East Bangor**
  - Industrial dumping: Capital – quarry
  - Industrial site (82 acres) – warehouses. This site planning on adding businesses.
  - Auto repair shops
  - Trolley shop
  - Diner/ice cream
  - Make paint
  - Jewels bar/shooting range/gun sales
- **Pen Argyl**
  - Retail shops, gas station, restaurants, pizza, hair salon, fish store, pool store, bank
  - Online stores with small storefront
  - Dance studio, mixed martial arts
  - Premier Granite
  - YMCA
  - Nastek
  - Main street operation (?)
  - Professional services (doctor/dentist)
  - Antique store
  - MC Squared – displays (stages/tradeshows)
  - Library
- ❖ Question 2: What do you want? (Desired businesses in the Slate Belt)
  - Ecotourism, agritourism/agritainment (weddings/farming weekend – Klein Farm), agribusiness
  - Farm to table restaurant
  - Hiking & recreational
  - General goods stores, Light commercial, small store front businesses in village and other high populated areas, attractive main streets draws business in (downtown redevelopment), small mom & pop stores/businesses
  - Balance of rural nature with modern convenience
  - East Bangor: light commercial, small retail
  - Upper Mt Bethel: Residents prefer to keep rural but some want jobs (most want rural), businesses for tax base, hard to say what they want
  - Downtown redevelopment, traffic flow + study
  - Boutique, hotels
  - What makes contextual sense, strong design standards

## Plan Slate Belt Economic Development Roundtable Notes February 5, 2020

- Parking
- Offices – co-working spaces
- Vineyard
- Corn maze
- Keep farm field instead of warehouse
- Retail development
- Kid friendly destinations
- ❖ Question 3: What can be done to encourage business development in different areas?
  - Parking is an issue
  - Building age
  - Work/commuting lifestyles
  - Decisions made around car trips
  - Cost/convenience: WalMart/Sam's Club cheaper than Weis
  - Ecotourism - Christmas trees/pumpkins/hiking, etc.
  - Imagination by Dorney
  - Destination activity - kid friendly
  - Co-working space (NY+NJ employees work from home)
  - History
  - Supportive services for ecotourism (bike shop, camping, canoe store)
  - Hours 5-11pm (need to hit that market)
  - Healthcare
  - Internet online access
  - Limited internet access (cell services) for ecotourism
  - Want redevelopment authority
  - GKEDC example at Beers
  - Start-up costs – Planning + zoning fees, regulatory environment (young people making long-term commitment is a struggle)
  - Hemp business - process here (can we?)
  - Incubator space - model
  - Small footprint manufacturing
  - Skilled trade force (they have work force)
  - Incentivize talent to move to region (working with county)
  - Lower Mt Bethel wants rural
  - Businesses that look like “rural”, McDonalds does not look like it
  - Strong design standards
- What tools do we have to encourage business?
  - More creative types of business
  - Destination trips - local
  - “Cool” kid friendly main street
  - Building to rent office spaces to work from home
  - Ways to provide convenience but keep rural look
  - Strong design standards and guidelines
  - Have business hours that meet needs of tourism - adapt to modern lifestyle
- Need county-wide:
  - Redevelopment authority

Plan Slate Belt Economic Development Roundtable Notes  
February 5, 2020

- Business development assistance
- Financial resources
- Incubator models