The Borough of Kutztown’s Rental Housing and Downtown Business Strategic Plan aligns and connects government, businesses, nonprofit organizations, educational institutions, and Borough residents so that they can work together in structured committees with assigned tasks to create the Kutztown that was collaboratively envisioned by hundreds of stakeholders. The plan provides these committees with direction for the next three years and beyond.

The plan outlines strategies in five areas:

- Housing
- Economic Development
- Planning and Codes
- Complete Streets
- Marketing

The full plan is online: KutztownPlan.com
Rental Housing and Downtown Business Strategic Plan

Planning Process

The Borough of Kutztown formed the volunteer-based Kutztown Rental Housing and Downtown Business Strategic Plan Task Force to engage local business owners, landlords, Kutztown University, organizations, and residents in the leadership of this project. The community provided their insight and ideas in several ways. Two community meetings were held at Kutztown Area Middle School with a combined attendance of more than 140 people. More than 500 people completed an online survey. More than 15 people participated in interviews and a focus group was held with Kutztown University students. The team from Hailstone Economic reviewed local ordinances and procedures, walked through the downtown area to carefully view each building, and collected and analyzed data about local needs and opportunities. The strategies in this plan are based on data, local experience, and conversations among neighbors about the future direction for Kutztown.

Vision

The Borough of Kutztown thrives at the crossroads of rural comfort and urban adventure. In this university town with a distinct allure, you can luxuriate in the simple pleasures of friendship and fresh air, stroll or bike through charming streets filled with welcoming neighbors and historic architecture, and live an environmentally and economically sustainable lifestyle. The downtown area is bustling with residents, visitors, and students who enjoy its eclectic mix of trendy shops and unique restaurants, an active arts scene, family-friendly events, and lively gathering spaces. It is a culturally rich, vibrant area overflowing with creative energy.

Kutztown has a variety of housing options that are affordable, accessible, and appealing to people at every stage of life. Young professionals, families, older adults and students live, work, play, and participate in community activities together. All residents take pride in their homes and in their community.

Our community is resilient, cohesive, forward-thinking, and diverse. Employers, tourists, and future residents are attracted to our lush landscapes, flourishing economy, excellent schools, innovative leadership, and opportunities for growth and prosperity.
Rental Housing and Downtown Business Strategic Plan

Strategic Actions

Planning and Codes

- **Strategic Action 1**: Update parking policies to promote development and to prioritize the parking needs of residents and business owners.
- **Strategic Action 2**: Evaluate the use of form-based codes and sidewalk cafe/parklet zoning standards to encourage improved use of existing space.
- **Strategic Action 3**: Require permits for “for rent” signs to manage perceptions about rental vacancies.
- **Strategic Action 4**: Review variances, special exceptions, and conditional uses to align them with the Borough’s economic development goals.
- **Strategic Action 5**: Streamline the land development and permitting approval process to encourage development.
- **Strategic Action 6**: Consider decreasing building permit requirements for residential construction to encourage home renovations.
- **Strategic Action 7**: Ensure the Community Development Office (CDO) has the capacity required to be successful.

Economic Development

- **Strategic Action 1**: Assess local business needs to retain existing businesses.
- **Strategic Action 2**: Communicate and partner with local businesses to promote their stability and growth.
- **Strategic Action 3**: Recruit new businesses to address gaps in the local market.
- **Strategic Action 4**: Advocate for and support efforts to improve traffic flow and promote regional connectivity.
- **Strategic Action 5**: Continue to develop and launch the Arts and Innovation Incubator to promote business opportunities in the Borough.
Strategic Actions

Housing

• **Strategic Action 1**: Create incentives, reduce fees, and limit new student rentals to promote deconversion and to reduce the number and rate of student rental vacancies.

• **Strategic Action 2**: Adjust inspections and code enforcement to improve exterior and interior housing conditions.

• **Strategic Action 3**: Promote in-home room rentals to create new affordable housing options for students.

• **Strategic Action 4**: Partner with landlords to promote compliance with Borough policies and new opportunities.

Complete Streets

• **Strategic Action 1**: Adopt a Complete Streets policy to create an exceptional pedestrian experience that is safe, comfortable, and delightful for all residents and visitors.

• **Strategic Action 2**: Develop a comprehensive transportation plan, based on the Complete Streets approach, that can be flexibly updated to promote continued growth Downtown.

• **Strategic Action 3**: Advocate for the extension of the existing BARTA route #22 from Lyons to Kutztown and explore the possibility of extending LANTA service to connect Kutztown with Allentown to promote tourism and access to services.
Rental Housing and Downtown Business Strategic Plan

Strategic Actions

Marketing

- **Strategic Action 1:** Position Kutztown as a great place to live to target audiences.
- **Strategic Action 2:** Connect businesses and organizations throughout the region to promote Kutztown’s unique assets and opportunities.
- **Strategic Action 3:** Promote activity and mobility within the Borough to improve traffic flow to local businesses.
- **Strategic Action 4:** Leverage the network and capacity of Kutztown University to collaboratively create opportunities for learning, organize community and volunteer activities, and promote inclusion.

Partners

In the Borough of Kutztown and beyond, there are many organizations that can be engaged to support implementation of this plan. In addition to the key partners of the Borough of Kutztown and Kutztown Community Partnership, these include: Berks Alliance · Berks Area Regional Transportation Authority (BARTA) · Berks Career and Technology Center · Berks County Community Foundation · Berks County Industrial Development Authority · Berks County Redevelopment Authority · Berks County Workforce Development Board · Discover Lehigh Valley · Friend Incorporated · Greater Reading Chamber Alliance · kTown Hall co-working space · Kutztown Area Historical Society · Kutztown Area School District · Kutztown Community Library · Kutztown Small Business Development Center · Kutztown University · Northeast Berks Chamber of Commerce · Reading-Berks County Visitors Bureau (PA’s Americana Region)
Kutztown Borough Council is ultimately responsible for the successful implementation of this plan. A Task Force, which includes the Borough Community Development and Public Works Committee, chairs of the five committees, the director of the Community Development Office, and the Director of Kutztown Community Partnership will meet quarterly. Day-to-day coordination of the plan will be facilitated through existing, and possibly new, staff at Kutztown Borough and Kutztown Community Partnership as well volunteers on the five committees.

The five committees are: housing; planning and codes; complete streets; economic development; and marketing. Each committee will include representatives from local businesses and organizations, residents, and other stakeholders who are interested in, and committed to, the focus area of the committee. A representative from the Borough and Kutztown Community Partnership will sit on each committee.

The chart below shows the communication, reporting, and accountability structure for implementation of this plan: