



BERWICK

5-Year Strategic Plan

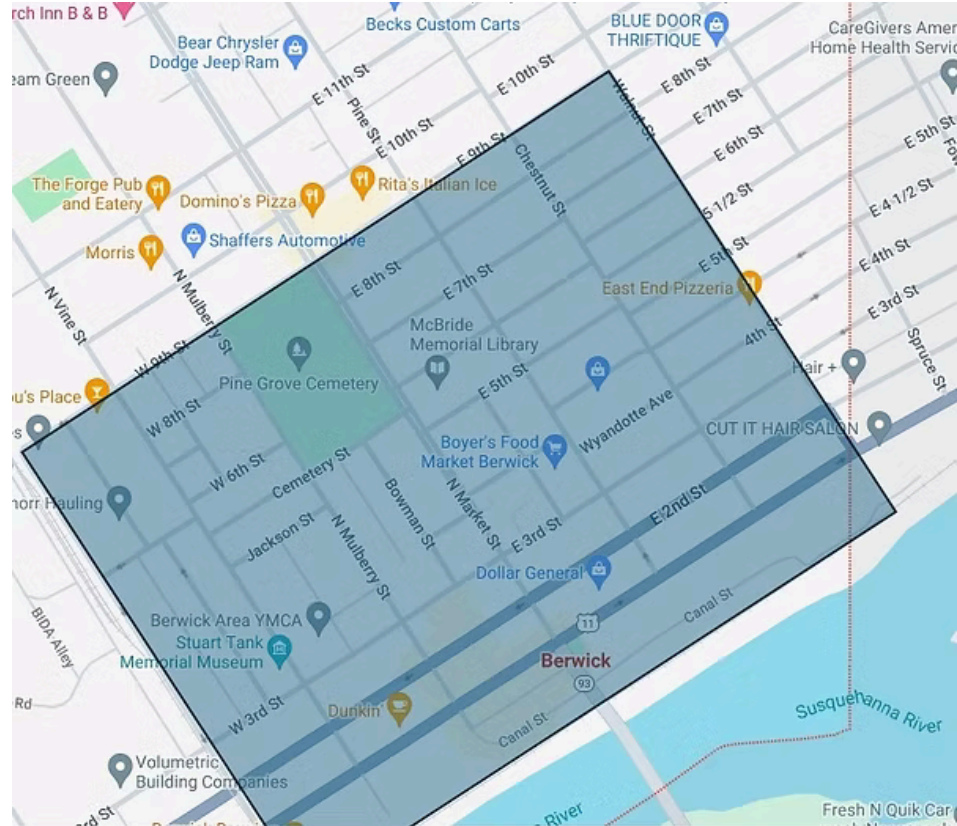
BERWICK
Blueprint
COMMUNITIES®

WE ARE FROM BERWICK

Vision

Berwick will promote a vibrant, inviting Downtown and walkable residential community that meets our local definition of livability: Affordability, Accessibility, Ample Opportunity for Shopping, Recreation, and Social Engagement for all ages.

Berwick is a tight-knit community that supports one another, comes together for various activities and causes, instills pride in its citizens, and is a good place to raise a family. This initiative will strive to identify opportunities to embrace, preserve, and enhance that identity within the Blueprint neighborhood.



HISTORY OF BERWICK

Borough of Berwick
Columbia County



The Jackson Mansion



Berwick, Pennsylvania, was founded by Quaker Evan Owen in 1786 and named for the English town of Berwick-Upon-Tweed. In the mid-1800s, manufacturing rose in Berwick, most notably the American Car & Foundry Company (AC&F), which grew to become one of the largest railroad car manufacturers in the eastern United States, providing the first steel subway cars to New York City and London. The AC&F also produced 15,000 Stuart Light Tanks during World War II. Today, notable industries in Berwick include Wise Snacks, Berwick Industries, and Talen Energy's Susquehanna Steam Electric Station in nearby Salem Township.

Like many postindustrial communities, Berwick has struggled with a declining population. The community's location makes it accessible from Routes 80 and 81, but not as convenient as Bloomsburg and Hazleton, where higher-paying jobs draw people away from the borough. Berwick maintains a strong sense of community and blue-collar pride. The town is notable for its generosity and often rallies to support neighbors in need or causes of community benefit.

DATA

Blueprint Communities teams were provided with data to help them understand the community demographics. Below are some key findings from the Data.

These reports not only help the team to understand the makeup of the community they serve but also serve as a tool for addressing the housing crisis, identifying opportunities for business recruitment and retention, and analyzing consumer spending patterns. By using these reports, teams can ensure that their planning efforts are asset-based and market-driven.



Work Drive Time
16 Minutes



Unemployment Rate
6%



2024 Top Industries*

1. Healthcare and Social Assistance
2. Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services
3. Finance and Insurance
4. Other Services (except Public Administration)
5. Retail Trade



Household Growth

2024 Estimate 856
2029 Projection 852
% Change: 2024 to 2029 -0.47%

Homeowners 40.1%
Renters 59.9%



Houses Built Before 2000
96.25%



Home Value

2024 Estimate \$135,172.08
2029 Projection \$143,709.01
% Change: 2024 to 2029 6.3%

*by NAICS codes

Data provided by Pennsylvania Downtown Center & Claritas Spotlight
Claritas market data reports include Demographics, Business Data, PRIZM Psychographics, Retail Market Power, and Consumer Buying Power.

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

More than 1,000 residents and stakeholders contributed input to the Berwick Blueprint Initiative through creative storytelling, surveys, public events, facilitated exercises, and targeted outreach to create a robust, inclusive, and community-validated foundation for implementation.

Creative Community Storytelling – “We Are From Berwick” Video

A Facebook prompt invited residents to describe Berwick through its people, sights, sounds, and experiences. Over 150 responses were distilled into a collective poem and produced into a promotional video with support from local photographers, videographers, a voice actor, and volunteers. The video established an asset-based narrative for early vision-setting.

Public Kickoff Event (February 6, 2025)

The Initiative launched at the Berwick Theater & Center for Community Arts with roughly 100 attendees. The event premiered the We Are From Berwick video and featured local refreshments, music, and remarks from community leaders. Participants engaged in an interactive activity across eight Downtown Berwick topic areas to identify priorities and ideas for the plan.

Virtual “Perceptions of Berwick” Survey

An anonymous perceptions survey captured candid feedback on community strengths, challenges, and opportunities, generating 324 responses. Results validated emerging themes and helped identify priority planning areas.

Event-Based Community Survey Outreach

A short survey shared at community events gathered input on what residents appreciate about Berwick and what they want for its future. These responses refined the Blueprint’s priority focus areas.

Priority-Focused Community Brainstorming Survey

Once priorities were set, a final brainstorming survey collected specific ideas and strategies tied to those areas. Distributed digitally and through community groups, results directly shaped the Blueprint’s four goals and many of the action items now underway or planned.



GOALS

Teams spent 18 months learning from their community to create an actionable asset-based, market-driven strategic plan for the community, encouraging a holistic approach to community revitalization.

GOALS

OBJECTIVES

Goal 1: Berwick Borough offers an array of safe and attractive housing options for a variety of income levels within walking distance of Downtown.

Objective 1: Increase the number of occupied residential units within a half-mile of Downtown by promoting infill development, rehabilitating blighted properties, and supporting mixed-income housing options.

Goal 2: Berwick Borough has a vibrant, bustling downtown with attractive amenities for the community and businesses.

Objective 1: Establish and support a Downtown Revitalization Committee composed of business owners, community leaders, and residents. The Committee will guide and coordinate Berwick's Blueprint initiatives, including revitalization efforts, local business promotion, community events, beautification, and collaboration with the Borough to enhance the downtown experience.

Objective 2: Increase downtown business activity, property reuse, and community engagement by supporting mixed-use development, improving public spaces, and fostering partnerships that enhance the district's appeal for residents, visitors, and investors.

Objective 3: Enhance downtown accessibility, walkability, and connectivity through infrastructure improvements, wayfinding, and transportation options that support increased foot traffic and equitable access to businesses, amenities, and public spaces.

GOALS



GOALS

OBJECTIVES

Goal 3: Downtown Berwick celebrates arts, culture, and heritage as a driving force for community engagement, economic growth, and creative expression. Rooted in Berwick's proud industrial legacy, cultural traditions, community events, and its connection to the Susquehanna River, the downtown serves as a dynamic hub where history, art, music, and theater come together to inspire residents and visitors alike.

Objective: Develop and activate public spaces and programs that celebrate arts and culture while increasing accessibility and community engagement in Downtown Berwick.

Goal 4: Berwick's enhanced riverfront access, parks, and engaging public spaces foster a healthier, more connected community that promotes recreation, social interaction, and appreciation for nature.

Objective 1: Collaborate with Borough officials and community partners to enhance public access to the riverfront and redevelop Canal Street's train station area to support connectivity, recreation, and economic activity in alignment with broader community plans.

Objective 2: Improve and revitalize at least three Borough parks by upgrading amenities (benches, lighting, playgrounds, signage) in alignment with the Borough's Park Plan.

Objective 3: Expand public access to the Susquehanna Riverfront by creating new entry points, trails, and wayfinding signage that encourage recreation and community use.

TURNING PLANNING INTO ACTION

Project Highlight: WalkWorks Capacity Building Grant

Through the WalkWorks Capacity Building Grant, the Borough of Berwick is advancing its Blueprint goal of creating a more walkable, connected, and healthy community. The grant is supporting pre-planning for an Active Transportation Plan that identifies safer walking and biking routes linking neighborhoods, parks, schools, and the downtown. This work is engaging residents and local partners and is positioning Berwick to pursue future funding for pedestrian safety, complete streets, and multimodal connectivity.



Project Highlight: Coblenz Corner & Main Street Matters

In 2024, downtown Berwick was named a Blueprint Community, and Community Strategies Group, was awarded a \$678,062 Main Street Matters grant from DCED to launch the Coblenz Corner Project. This investment will turn a long-blighted building in the heart of the emerging Berwick Arts District into our local teen center and entrepreneurial academy, directly advancing our Blueprint goals for youth opportunity, small business growth, and a vibrant, revitalized downtown.

Project Highlight: Blueprint Passport – Shop Local Initiative

The Blueprint Passport: Shop Local Initiative encouraged residents to explore Berwick's downtown during the holiday season by visiting participating businesses and completing fun tasks at each stop. Participants collected stickers in their "passport" to earn raffle tickets, culminating in a Winterfest drawing for \$500 in Shop Local prizes that supported Berwick's small businesses.

PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS CONT.

Modernizing Berwick Zoning Ordinances	The Berwick Blueprint initiative is supporting Berwick Borough in modernizing its zoning ordinance to promote new business, housing, and the creative redevelopment of existing properties. This effort will involve public input, coordination with planning professionals, and a comprehensive review of current regulations. Completion will be marked by the formal adoption of the updated ordinance by Borough Council.
TOTAL Investment - \$47,075	\$10,000 - Program Grant Investment \$37,075 - Leveraged

Downtown Bench and Blueprint Branding	In direct response to the Community Perception Survey that showed 75% of participants wanted more seating downtown, the Blueprint Committee leveraged a grant from FHLBank Pittsburgh to secure additional sponsorships and place 5 beautiful cast-aluminum Berwick-branded benches in Downtown Berwick. The committee also placed large Blueprint-branded stickers that include QR codes to the Berwick Blueprint website along the border of the blueprint neighborhood and at the highest traffic pedestrian intersections.
TOTAL Investment - \$15,177	\$5,000 - Program Grant Investment \$10,177 - Leveraged





Photo from Blueprint Communities Kickoff 2024

Team Members

Beth Burke, Columbia County Housing & Redevelopment Authorities
Connie Donlin, Berwick Arts Association
Jay Jarrett, Berwick Borough
Liz Masich, Berkshire Hathaway Homeservices
Josh Nespoli, Community Strategies Group
Marc Nespoli, Marc Nespoli Group - EXP Realty
Teresa Peters, For the Cause - Teen Center
Tom Popko, First Keystone Community Bank
Damien Scoblink, Community Giving Foundation
Ayrin Shortlidge, Berwick Area United Way



Blueprint Communities Program Goals

The purpose of Blueprint Communities is to serve as a catalyst for the revitalization of older communities and neighborhoods.

In order to achieve this, program goals include:

- Building strong local leadership, collaboration, and development capacity.
- Developing sound local and regional planning skills, which include clear community vision statements, effective goal-setting strategies, comprehensive implementation plans, and performance evaluation measures; and
- Encouraging coordinated investments by public and private funders.

ABOUT BLUEPRINT COMMUNITIES

Blueprint Communities®, a program of the Federal Home Loan Bank of Pittsburgh (FHLBank), is a place-based revitalization initiative. This year, the program is being administered by Pennsylvania Downtown Center (PDC) in the Commonwealth.



Fred Bañuelos,
Community Investment,
Business Development Manager
fred.banuelos@fhlp-pgh.com
fhlp-pgh.com



Justine Trucksess, Blueprint Coordinator,
jtrucksess@padowntown.org
padowntown.org

Coaching & Technical Assistance Provided By:



PennState Extension



"Blueprint Communities" is a registered service mark of the Federal Home Loan Bank of Pittsburgh.

Learn more about our community revitalization effort!

Berwick Blueprint is a resident-driven initiative to identify shared priorities of Berwick residents and businesses for the future of Downtown Berwick and the surrounding residential zones.

www.berwickblueprint2024.com

www.facebook.com/BerwickBlueprintCommunity



Scan to learn more!

