

PORTLAND NEIGHBORHOOD AND REDEVELOPMENT PLAN



May 2019

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A. INTRODUCTION

The Borough of Portland engaged Triad Associates in August, 2018 to develop a community and economic development strategy. The Portland Neighborhood Redevelopment Plan is intended to evaluate current conditions and make recommendations for future policies and transformational projects. The overall goal of the plan is to maximize the natural landscape and the history of the area, and to provide methods and means to recharge economic growth and revitalization throughout the Borough of Portland.

The planning process included data analysis, field study and community input. One of the first steps in the process was to identify the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) within Portland. The SWOT provided needed information on the current issues facing the Borough as well as providing insight into potential future interventions. All of the initial data and observations is laid out in the Background Analysis section.

Building off of the Background Analysis as a foundation, the next piece is the Vision section. The Vision section lays out potential projects that align with the Vision for the Borough of Portland. This section also includes recommended policy changes and other potential transformational projects.

The final section of the plan is the Action Agenda. The Action Agenda lays out the specific actions and steps for implementing the vision. The final section also includes potential funding sources that pair with the proposed projects.



B. BACKGROUND ANALYSIS

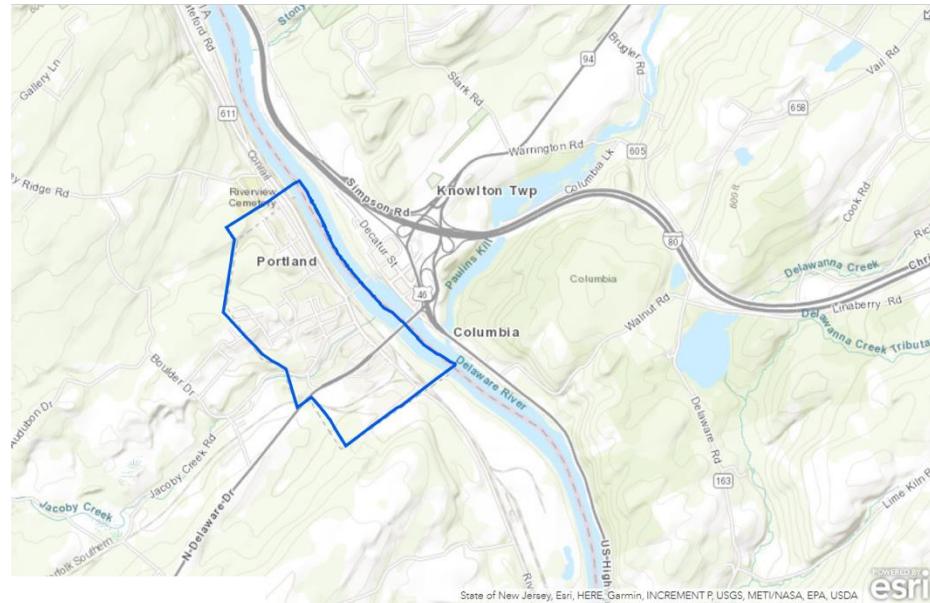
1. PORTLAND TODAY

The Borough of Portland has engaged Triad Associates to develop a Neighborhood Redevelopment Plan. The Plan includes goals, projects and other initiatives that will enhance the Borough. An important first step in any planning process, is the background analysis. The existing conditions will provide an overview of Portland, which will provide the foundation for future economic and community development goals and opportunities.

The Borough of Portland was incorporated in 1876. First settled due to the logging trade, Portland then expanded with the introduction of the railroad, which served as a force for development. The railroad brought increased population and expansion of the business community. Since that time, Portland has remained stable in population. The current population is 519. The Borough's area is .58 square miles.

Route 611 runs through Portland's downtown and provides a connection to Route 80. The Delaware River is the eastern boundary. Within the Borough there is a footbridge that connects to Columbia, New Jersey. Portland is located just south of the Delaware Water Gap and has unobstructed views of the Gap. Portland serves as a Gateway to the Poconos.

Portland is also connected along Route 512 to the other Slate Belt Communities of Bangor, Pen Argyl and Wind Gap. This east west connection provides a link to Route 33 that runs from the Poconos to the Lehigh Valley. The Slate Belt is actively pursuing



Map 1 - Location

shared goals through the Slate Belt Rising initiative. The Slate Belt Rising Committee has begun implementing a strategy within the last several years that provides staff assistance and guidance on community development initiatives.

Based on population projections, Portland is expected to grow modestly over the next twenty years based on current trends. However, there are other opportunities in Portland that could lead to additional growth and development. While small in size, Portland has a presence within the Slate Belt Region and numerous opportunities due to its outstanding regional location. This includes the Borough's proximity to the Delaware River, Interstate 80, and regional employment and recreational opportunities. Portland has the ability to capitalize on its history and opportunities that can transform the Borough's downtown and surrounding neighborhoods.

2. HOUSING

The housing stock has not increased over the years as the population has remained the same. The number of units has remained consistent with no major developments proposed or constructed in the Borough. Over 50% of the housing units in the Borough are rentals. In the last several years, there Borough has seen very few new permits issued for housing development. Most years, there weren't any housing permits issued. However, the makeup of the units has shifted from owner-occupied to renter-occupied in the last several years. This is a significant change since the 2000 Census, where 61% of all housing units were owner occupied.

The housing stock is generally older, with 73% of the housing constructed before 1939. There are a variety of architectural styles throughout the Borough including numerous Victorians that have been preserved. One of the challenges facing all older communities is the maintenance and upkeep of existing housing stock. This is especially true for the renter-occupied housing stock throughout the Borough.



The median household income is \$45,250. The Poverty rate in the Borough is 21% and is higher than Northampton County, which is 9.8%. The unemployment rate is 16.1%, which is twice the Northampton County rate of 8.2%. These statistics have a direct impact on the housing conditions. The higher poverty rate means that households may be struggling to maintain their properties.

Housing provides a direct link to economic development efforts. In order for the population to grow in the Borough, additional housing units would be needed. There is still available land throughout the Borough where new housing could be built or incorporated into a mixed-use development.

3. RECREATION

Portland has a number of recreational resources. The Delaware River figures as a prominent natural resource and defining characteristic of Portland. Pedestrian access across the river via the Portland-Columbia Pedestrian Bridge provides views along the River as well as a connection to New Jersey. The pedestrian bridge provides uninterrupted views of the Delaware Water Gap. The River is heavily used for recreation activities.

Portland is a terminus for many kayak, canoe and rafting trips that begin north of the Delaware Water Gap due in large part because of the access to the Delaware River from the downtown. During the summer months, hundreds of visitors pass through Portland on a daily basis as their excursion comes to an end in the Borough. The various trips bring new visitors to the area and provide an opportunity for the Borough to capitalize on these activities. Upon completion of their excursions, most people do not stay in Portland because there are few commercial, dining, or other recreational opportunities immediately available.



The trail network is strong in the Portland Area. Northampton County has several key networks as well as several multi-state trails. On the next page are several key trail systems that pass through Portland.

September 11th National Trail – 1,130-mile non-motorized hiking and cycling trail

Liberty-Water Gap Trail – 130 mile that connects two national landmarks: the Delaware Water Gap and the Statue of Liberty

The Appalachian Trail – 2,200 mile that runs from Georgia to Maine with 229 miles in Pennsylvania

The September 11th National Trail, Liberty-Water Gap Trail and the Appalachian Trail are multi-state networks. Those trails generally accommodate day hikers. The Appalachian Trail accommodates both day hikers and through hikers. Each year thousands of hikers attempt to walk various lengths of the Appalachian Trail. Portland has the ability to capitalize on each of these existing trails and tie them to economic development efforts. The trail network provides a link to visitors that are coming to the area for the trails.



In addition, Northampton County has been very active in connecting existing trail networks and key recreation sites. There are numerous assets throughout the County and municipalities that can be linked together to improve access and complete networks. Northampton County is working on a connection between Portland and Lake Minsi Trail. In addition, the County is working with the National Park Service at the Delaware Water Gap to make a connection to Minsi Lake. The County is also working on a signage plan that will incorporate cohesive signage at each of the County-owned parks.

A feasibility study is currently underway to connect the Delaware & Lehigh National Heritage Corridor from Portland to Walnutport. The trail system already spans 165 miles. The trail runs from Northeast Pennsylvania down through the Lehigh Valley and Bucks County. Northampton County is facilitating the feasibility study.

The National Wild and Scenic Delaware River is part of the National Geographic’s branded Geo-Tourism. The Wild and Scenic Delaware River Geotourism Program seeks to celebrate the health, beauty and diversity of the River. Key points along the river from Easton, PA to Hancock, NY can be listed on the map guide. The Map Guide through National Geographic allows people to build their trips that include entries of businesses, recreation and other key points of interest, which can be found at delawariver.natgeotourism.com. People can determine their journey by mode of transportation such as walking, biking, driving or bus.



Map 2 – Northampton County Trails

With all of the recreation amenities and potential, there is an opportunity to capitalize on these resources. Existing resources and future trail development can contribute to other economic development efforts in the Borough.

4. HISTORIC CHARACTERISTICS

Portland is fortunate to have several key historic resources that provide a connection to the past. These historic resources help to tell the story of the community and its residents. Historic resources also provide an opportunity to highlight the heritage of a community and tell a story. In addition, historic resources can serve as an economic development tool that brings visitors to a community to explore their uniqueness.

Located just off of Delaware Avenue is the Portland Town Hall & Lockup, which is referred to as the “Pokey”. Council met for the first time on July 14, 1877 in the new Town Hall. The lockup was incorporated into the basement of the building. This small structure provides an important link to Portland’s history and how the community first incorporated. This historical landmark remains intact and illustrates the rich history of Portland.



The Delaware, Lackawanna and Western Railroad Station was built in 1850 in the Arts & Crafts style of architecture. The station is located along an active railroad line and close to the Delaware River. Over the years, several different railroad lines have run through Portland. The railroad provided an important connection for commerce in Portland. The Station is an anchor of the downtown even though it is currently vacant. The Station and vacant land present an opportunity for redevelopment and preservation.

Frederick Duckloe & Brothers furniture is an anchor at the end of the business district. The family-owned furniture company has been in Portland for over 140 years. The fourth generation family still runs the store, which is a destination. The store is part of the Portland’s heritage. The furniture store is an economic driver for the Borough, bringing in visitors.

The range of historic buildings within the Borough provides Portland with an identity. There are numerous Victorian styled homes within the Borough along with more traditional colonial style architecture. The variety of historic elements and styles enhances the Borough, while differentiating it from other communities nearby.

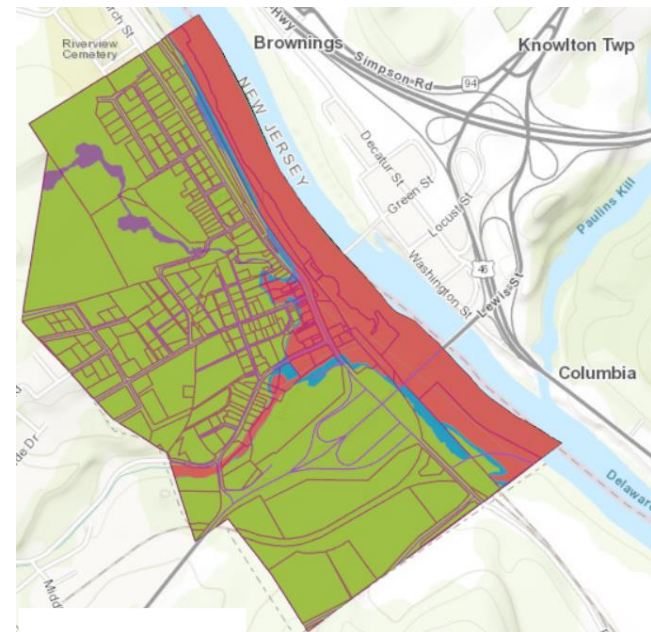
5. FLOOD PLAIN ANALYSIS AND NATURAL FEATURES

One of the most significant assets in Portland is the proximity of the Delaware River. Portland is unique with its access across the river via a pedestrian bridge that connects to Columbia, NJ. The bridge provides incomparable views of the Delaware Water Gap and can be used to attract tourists and outdoor enthusiasts to the area. The river serves as a boundary for Portland and one of the Borough's key features.

Portland endured three floods in a two-year period. State Street and Delaware Streets are areas that are at risk for flooding based on historical trends. The flooding occurs when the Jacoby Creek has an influx of water and does not reach the Delaware River. This back up can cause significant flooding in low-lying areas in the Borough. Since that time, the dam located upstream in New York has been monitored more closely to ensure that the water remains at a level that will minimize flooding downstream.

Based on previous planning efforts, additional engineering studies may need to be done to address the issue. Additional interventions along low-lying, flood prone areas should continue to be investigated to determine what improvements could be done and the costs associated with those improvements.

However, it is important for future development to consider the possibility of how flooding may impact new businesses and development. Any new development in the area around State Street and Delaware should consider the possibility of flooding. In addition, Portland should ensure that any new developments along the creek are reviewed to ensure that they do not have an impact on the creek.



Map 3 – Flood

Borough officials continue to monitor the actions of the Delaware River Basin Commission as they are responsible for several key reservoirs located in New York that can affect the flow and levels of the Delaware River. Over the last several years, the Delaware River Basin Commission has maintained the reservoirs at a level that has not negatively impacted the Delaware River and Portland.

6. ASSESSING THE COMMERCIAL MARKET IN PORTLAND

One of the principal goals of this Development and Redevelopment Strategy is to revitalize Portland's downtown commercial district. The commercial district is approximately the area fronting on Delaware Avenue (Pennsylvania Route 611) between Bridge Street to the south and just north of Main Street. This area is the focal point for the primary commercial uses in the community including:

- Duckloe Brothers Furniture Showrooms, an internationally renowned furniture manufacturer with a large distribution network;
- Portland Market, a small grocery store providing convenience food shopping for Portland and other area residents;
- Thrift Store;
- PNC Bank, the only bank in town, but a large presence both in terms of its dominance at the corner of Delaware Avenue and Bridge Street and its historical nature;
- U.S. Post Office, the main post office for the Borough, even though Portland is broken into two zip codes requiring some residents to receive delivery from a Mount Bethel postal address;
- Tobacco Store, offering the usual sundry items and convenience goods;
- Antique Shop;
- Convenience Store and Gas Station, located on the river side of Delaware Avenue, this is a convenient stop for motorists traveling through the borough on Route 611; and
- Vacant Buildings and Store Fronts, the most prominent of which is the former Erie Lackawanna Train Station. While vacant buildings pose a challenge for downtown, they also offer redevelopment opportunities.



These active businesses and other structures are all assets from which to build a strategy for downtown revitalization. Other assets that can complement this redevelopment effort, or provide catalysts for additional visitation and commercial traffic include:

- The Delaware River and the Recreational Opportunities it can bring;
- The Pedestrian Bridge to Columbia, NJ and the Vista of the Delaware Water Gap that can be observed from the bridge;
- The Opportunity to encourage Route 611 through Portland as a major Route to Poconos;
- The Portland Industrial Park;
- Easy Access to Interstate 80;
- Available Public Parking on Delaware Avenue; and
- The Existing and Future Regional Recreational Trail Network.

The following pages of this narrative present information that in conjunction with the retail and commercial assets that exist in the borough today, will provide a foundation from which to explore new opportunities and the potential for redevelopment.

THE EXISTING BUSINESS INVENTORY

Portland is a community of only 519 residents¹ and consequently, on that supports a very small number of employers. The following table provides an approximation of the employment base.

¹ 2017 U.S. Census estimate, American Community Survey

Table 1
Profile of the Existing Commercial and Industrial Base in Portland, Pennsylvania

Employment Sector (SIC Code)	Number of Establishments	Number of Employees
Construction	3	24
Manufacturing	1	1
Transportation	2	15
Utilities	1	1
Wholesale Trade	3	129
Retail Trade	12	102
Finance, Insurance & Real Estate	1	4
Services	10	57
Government	2	3
Unclassified Establishments	2	0
TOTAL	37	336

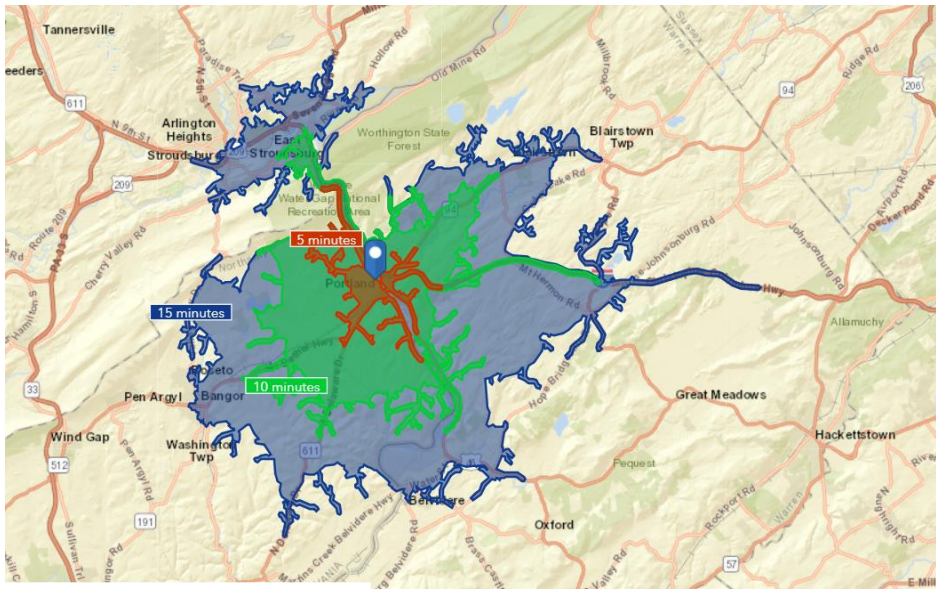
Source: ESRI 2018 Estimate

GAP ANALYSIS AND CONSUMER DEMAND

Given the types of retail and other services that exist in the Borough, what types of businesses are missing that could be supported by the local market? To accomplish this, a “gap analysis” was performed for the various sectors of the retail and service economy. This analysis examined both the demand and supply for retail goods and services within three different markets that were defined by drive times.

The first was the “Five Minute” Drive time market. This is essentially the market that serves the borough population and the immediate area surrounding the borough. The second was the “Fifteen Minute” Drive time market. This is the market that would accommodate “convenience

shopping” – in other words the willingness of people to get into a car and run to the market for bread, milk, or other convenience items. The third and final area focused on a “Thirty Minute” Market. In this instance, the consumer is seeking to make some serious purchases for large ticket items or demonstrating a willingness to travel some distance for merchandise that might not be readily available.



Map 4 – Drive Times from Portland

Table 2 on the following page illustrates those sectors of the retail and service economy where there are gaps. A gap indicates that there is more demand within the drive time region than there is a supply of a given sector’s goods or services. In the table, a plus sign (+) indicates that a gap exists. A minus sign (-) indicates that there are no gaps.

Table 2
Gap Analysis for Various Drive Times Around Portland Borough

RETAIL OR SERVICE SECTOR	5 MINUTE DRIVE TIME MARKET	15 MINUTE DRIVE TIME MARKET	30 MINUTE DRIVE TIME MARKET
Motor Vehicles and Parts Dealers	+	+	-
Furniture and Home Furnishings Stores	-	+	+
Electronics and Appliance Stores	+	+	+
Building Materials, Garden Equipment & Suppliers	+	+	-
Food and Beverage Stores	+	+	-
Health and Personal Care Stores	+	+	-
Gasoline Stations	-	-	-
Clothing and Clothing Accessory Stores	+	+	+
Sporting Goods, Hobby, Book, and Music Stores	+	+	+
General Merchandise Stores	+	+	-
Miscellaneous Store Retailers	+	-	-
Non-Store (Online) Marketers and Retailers	+	+	-
Food Services and Drinking Places	-	+	+

Source: ESRI 2018 Estimates

From this table, the availability of goods and services in the five and fifteen minute drive time markets is similar. But, the thirty minute market indicates some significant differences. This can be explained in part by the fact that just at the fringe of the fifteen minute mark and within thirty minute commute, there are two large malls that service the commercial needs of the region's population. The Stroud Mall in East Stroudsburg has 41 stores, offering a diverse range of retail goods and services. The two large anchor stores are Sears and J.C. Penny. In addition there is a Cinemark

Theater offering first run movies and entertainment. At a slightly further commute is Mansfield Commons in Hackettstown. This shopping center has 16 stores, and is anchored by Kohl's and Wal-Mart.

The question then becomes which of the sectors offers the best opportunities for new retail or commercial uses in Portland's downtown business district. Some of the sectors where there is consumer demand, such as "Motor Vehicle and Parts Dealers," are not suitable for Portland's downtown because they require large amounts of land and high visibility. Others, such as "Electronics and Appliance Stores" or "General Merchandise" are dominated by the big box retailers such as Sears, Best Buy, Wal-Mart and others. That leaves several sectors where there exist consumer demand in all three drive time markets, or where such demand could be increased by transient or tourist traffic. In particular, these include clothing and accessory stores, sporting goods, and food services and drinking places. Home furnishings might also be viable given Duckloë's presence in the community.

Table 3 provides closer look at the consumer demand within these markets. (Red indicates no demand, while green indicates the estimated volume of consumer demand in dollars.)

Table 3
Consumer Demand in Various Retail and Service Sectors

RETAIL OR SERVICE SECTOR	5 MINUTE DRIVE TIME MARKET	15 MINUTE DRIVE TIME MARKET	30 MINUTE DRIVE TIME MARKET
Furniture and Home Furnishings	\$3,708,138	\$3,079,100	\$30,598,707
Furniture Stores	\$4,151,966	\$1,947,063	\$980,419
Home Furnishings	\$443,858	\$5,026,162	\$31,579,126
Clothing and Accessory Stores	\$1,505,808	\$22,658,745	\$58,132,722
Clothing Stores	\$1,037,563	\$15,967,364	\$35,612,362
Shoe Stores	\$218,775	\$3,420,057	\$2,084,492
Jewelry, Luggage & Leather Goods Stores	\$249,470	\$3,298,977	\$20,435,867
Sporting Goods, Hobby, Book and Music Stores	\$757,806	\$8,150,308	\$35,145,797
Sporting Goods, Hobby, & Musical Instr. Stores	\$659,962	\$7,372,872	\$32,067,054
Book, Periodical, & Music Stores	\$97,844	\$777,437	\$3,078,743
Food Services and Drinking Places	\$668,111	\$11,877,814	\$51,407,915
Special Food Services	\$69,251	\$290,842	\$2,813,049
Drinking Places — Bars and Alcoholic Beverages	\$47,631	\$446,546	\$7,745,072
Restaurants ²	\$689,731	\$11,732,111	\$40,849,794

Source: ESRI, 2018 Estimates

² The figure for restaurants within the five minute market does not account for the recent closure of the PA Bagel and Deli Restaurant, so that number probably becomes one that should reflect positive consumer demand.

This table indicates that there is considerable consumer demand for goods and services within each of the listed sectors with the exception of furniture stores and in certain instances food services and drinking places, (see footnote below.)

The Portland Industrial Park

Beyond the market for consumer goods and services, the Portland Industrial Park offers opportunities for large manufacturers, assemblers, and other light industrial firms to locate in the Borough. The industrial park is located in the south end of Portland, very convenient to both PA Route 611 and Interstate 80. The industrial park straddles both Portland Borough and Mount Bethel Township, but draws employees from both municipalities and communities throughout the greater region.

The park is currently occupied by two major employers, one of which is undergoing a significant expansion. These employers — Air Liquide and Ultra Poly— employ approximately 100 individuals. Ultra Poly is expanding and will hire an additional 60 people within the year. During the process of interviews with business, civic, and community leaders, the accessibility of the industrial park to Interstate 80 was cited as a key asset and a particular strength of the industrial park’s location.

The Industrial Park has access to rail service via Norfolk Southern. Norfolk Southern links the Borough to the region and nationally through various connections. Currently, Norfolk Southern runs trains through the Borough each week via the Portland Secondary Route. The Portland Secondary is 22 miles from a connection with the Lehigh Line in Easton. Just North of Portland, there is an interchange with the Delaware-Lackawanna railroad and connections to Stroudsburg. The Portland Secondary provides an opportunity to easily connect to New York and New Jersey as well as other parts of Pennsylvania and beyond.



In addition, the Borough has comprehensive water and sewage service throughout the municipality, and capacity in both systems that will accommodate growth in residential, commercial and industrial development. That is a significant development and redevelopment asset.

7. TRANSPORTATION AND PARKING

PennDOT takes periodic counts of traffic along the major highways in the Commonwealth. The 2017 Traffic Count Map (illustrating 2016 traffic counts) shows that PA Route 611 through Portland has an Average Annual Daily Traffic Count of 3,660 vehicles. The map also shows that the bridge crossing to and from New Jersey accommodates 8,800 vehicles and nearby I-80 supports between 18,000 and 20,000 vehicles daily.

A 2015 Traffic Study by PennDOT indicates that during the summertime or seasonal months of April through October, on the average roadways in the State can anticipate a 10% to 20% increase in traffic volumes. In the case of Route 611 through Portland, this means that a maximum average of an additional 732 vehicles might be anticipated, bringing the average daily traffic count to almost 4,400 vehicles daily. (During the peak seasonal holidays such as Memorial Day, Labor Day, and Independence Day, these figures increase dramatically.)

There are several parking options in the downtown area of Portland. There is existing on-street parking that is not metered. In addition, there is a surface lot located on Delaware Avenue between Bridge Street and Main Street. Available parking is an important component to any downtown and is critical to the success of small businesses. There is another parking lot located near the Industrial Park along River Road, which is optimally located for park and ride activities.



8. IMPLICATIONS FOR DEVELOPMENT AND REDEVELOPMENT

There are a number of implications stemming from this look at the commercial market in Portland.

1. Retail Potential. There is clearly retail potential that exists for an individual seeking to develop a new business in downtown Portland. Of course, retail spending levels are not the only determinant of a successful business. The unique nature of the business; the marketing that accompanies the business; and the management of the operation are key drivers of a successful enterprise.
2. Location. Portland has a great location. Route 611 provides easy access to downtown and Interstate 80 is a short commute for industrial traffic coming to or from the Portland Industrial Park.
3. Regional Cooperation. Cooperation among communities in the Slate Belt as well as Columbia, New Jersey and other counties and communities in the region can help to advance regional marketing agendas, promote special events, and highlight the area for new investment opportunities.
4. Tourism. The commercial market in Portland today can be augmented by additional efforts to promote tourism in the Borough and throughout the region. Additional promotion will increase the number of visitors, transient traffic, and destination prospects, all of which can increase the market for new retail, service, and related commercial opportunities.
5. Housing Development and Redevelopment. There are several opportunities for redevelopment in the Borough. Potential projects would allow for greater growth that can bring new visitors and residents to Portland. Redevelopment projects can be transformational.
6. Industrial Park Expansion. Bringing new companies to the Industrial Park will bring necessary jobs to the Borough and the region. Existing capacity exists in the Industrial Park amongst several successful companies that continue to grow and expand.

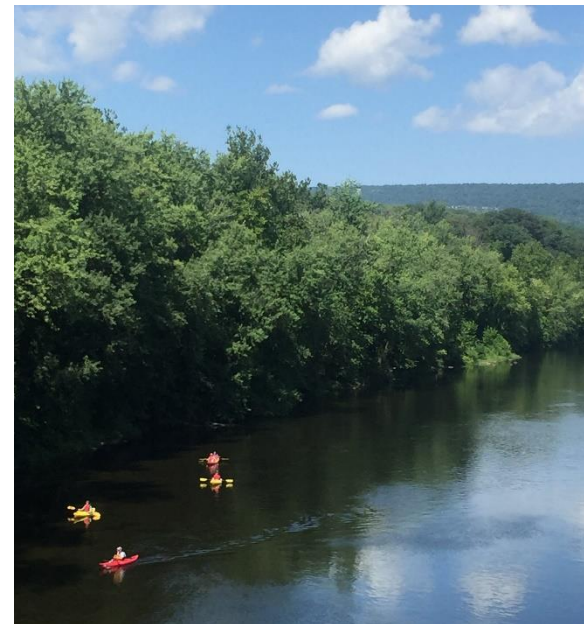
Finding ways to build on the synergy and potential that exists among the various opportunities will help the community define the specific redevelopment projects that might be the best fits for the Borough. As this plan evolves, the Action Agenda will define specific business types, investment opportunities and other actions that offer both short and longer-term initiatives that focus on commercial development and redevelopment in the Borough.

9. STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS AND FIELD NOTES

A key component to any plan is public engagement. It was important to reach out to key stakeholders as well as providing an opportunity for the public to provide input through an online survey. There were 6 stakeholder interviews completed as part of the planning process. Interviews were conducted with business owners, residents and government officials. In addition, the team spent some time in the Borough doing fieldwork. Several key themes emerged, which are listed below:

Strengths and Assets

- The People of Portland
- Delaware River
- Regional Trail Network — both existing and planned
- Interstate 80
- Duckloe Furniture Store
- Pedestrian Bridge across Delaware River
- Vista of the Delaware Water Gap
- Affordable Housing
- Family Friendly Town
- Capacity of Water and Sewer Systems
- Potential for Tourism
- Part-time Police Department
- Development and Redevelopment Opportunities
- Available Parking
- Recreation
- Public Restrooms



Challenges and Threats:

- Limited Advertising/Awareness of Portland
- No overnight Accommodations such as Bed Breakfasts, hotels, etc.
- Threat of Flooding
- River Access
- Appearance of Downtown Buildings
- Barriers from Norfolk-Southern Railroad
- Limited Staffing and Resources in the Borough
- Too Many Rentals/Need for More Home Ownership
- Engaging Residents



Based on the feedback received, Portland has a great deal of opportunities and assets. These assets and opportunities can be leveraged into transformational projects for the Borough. The majority felt as though Portland had a great deal of potential and even viewed the challenges and threats and opportunities for change.

In addition to key stakeholder interviews, an online survey was distributed and available for several weeks. The survey was shared via social media and via email through existing contact lists. The survey was intended to elicit input from the public about priorities for the borough. Below are the results of the survey.

A total of 64 people completed the survey. The majority, 67.9% of respondents currently live in Portland followed by 21.88% of respondents living in Upper Mt. Bethel. One third of respondents work in New Jersey with close to 10% driving 30 minutes to work and another 10% driving 45 minutes to work. Only one of the respondents worked in Portland.

Portland's Greatest Strengths were identified as the following:

1. Good location
2. Quiet community
3. Access to highways and transportation

Portland's greatest weakness was identified as the lack of jobs locally or within the region with 46.03% of the votes. 30% of people submitted other comments related to Portland's weaknesses where several themes emerged including the lack of stores/restaurants in the downtown, empty storefronts, properties not being maintained and the lack of business infrastructure to foster economic growth. Under what capital improvements should the Borough prioritize, 48.44% chose downtown redevelopment and beautification as the priority with an additional 15.63% choosing river access.



While not mentioned in the stakeholder interviews or the survey results, a December 2018 article in The Morning Call indicated that a high percentage of Lehigh Valley residents did not have adequate internet access. In Portland Borough, this figure exceeded 30%. In today's world, this is an issue that needs to be explored in more detail and addressed over the long-term.

Several questions in the survey were focused on housing. 54.69% do not believe that the existing housing stock is well maintained. Respondents chose single family detached housing as the type of housing needed for Portland with 65.63%. Townhomes were the second choice with 17.19% choosing this style of housing was most needed in the Borough.

Another focus on the survey was on what needed to be done to bring people to live in Portland. The responses were pretty evenly distributed among more jobs, a greater diversity of housing, providing adequate public services and amenities, and other comments that included more retail and more local businesses. Overwhelmingly, the top economic development priority for Portland was identified as small business development with over 60.32%

choosing that option. Types of jobs best suited for Portland were evenly split amongst remote/teleworking opportunities, manufacturing, retail and hospitality.

62.50% of respondents chose restaurants as the retail or community facility needed most in Portland. The second highest was a coffee shop with 35.94% choosing that option. The third highest choice was a food or grocery store with 32.81%. Just behind the food or grocery store was outdoor recreation or sporting goods store with 29.69%.

The last question asked respondents to provide their vision for Portland. Below are some of the responses/themes that continually came up.

- ❖ Revitalization of downtown area with new small businesses such as coffee shops, restaurants and breweries
- ❖ Maintain quaint community and small town feel
- ❖ Become more of a tourist destination
- ❖ Capitalize on assets such as history and riverfront
- ❖ Market community as a bedroom community for those working in New Jersey



Many of the answers to the online survey were consistent with the stakeholder interviews. Overall the respondents saw the potential in Portland and would like to see additional investment in the future to address several missing elements.

A copy of the complete survey results is in Appendix A.

C. VISION

Imagine a thriving Borough with a thriving downtown with a variety of retail and job opportunities that is well-maintained – a place where families want to live, where there are available jobs and where visitors stop and spend time.

That is the vision for the Borough of Portland. It is a vision imagined by the residents and stakeholders of the community. It was formulated through discussion, resident surveys and a collaborative effort with city officials. It is a vision around which goals and specific strategies can be built.

It is a vision that is aggressive and far-reaching. But it is also achievable. It provides the framework for the activities that must occur over the coming years.

Neighborhood and Redevelopment Plans must have a vision that touches on some aspects of the following parameters:

It must be Realistic

It must be Transformative; and

It must be Achievable.

The Neighborhood Redevelopment Plan is realistic because it is based on the input and participation of the residents and business owners. It contains projects and initiatives that can be implemented. Implementing the vision of the Neighborhood Redevelopment Plan will require a tremendous effort. Plan implementation will have to be followed judiciously and methodically through partnerships, resident engagement and the leadership of public officials

D. ACTION AGENDA

Utilizing the vision and broad goals, the following section of this plan outlines an Action Agenda and Implementation Strategy. The Action Strategy provides project and program recommendations based on the thematic issues defined by the vision. From this strategy, the partners, funding sources and other resources needed to support the Agenda are defined. The Action Agenda defines projects into near-term and mid to long-term projects. The near-term projects are intended to take less time to complete based on the partners involved and the type of project. The mid to long-term projects are more complex in nature and will take multiple partners as well as funding that will take time to complete. Both types of projects will have an impact on the Borough of Portland.

NEAR-TERM PROJECTS

I. SIGNAGE

Creating a unifying theme of signage throughout the Borough is key to attracting new visitors as well as making it easy for all to navigate the Borough. Building on the efforts that have already been implemented including the newly installed banners, there is an opportunity to provide wayfinding signage to key landmarks throughout the Borough. These signs would provide tourists with an easy connection from Delaware Avenue to other areas of the Borough. One of the key assets of the Borough is the access to the Delaware River and the Pedestrian Bridge connecting Portland to Columbia New Jersey. Using the existing logo to provide a linkage will ensure that there aren't too many signs that are confusing.



Wayfinding signage allows the Borough to brand itself to visitors. The consistent reinforcement of the Borough's brand will ensure that the Borough is distinguished from other nearby areas. The Borough already has a new logo that can be incorporated into the signage to maintain consistency.

Proposed signage can also be tied to educational materials and marketing materials. Signs can tie into marketing materials that are available through the Borough or organizations such as the Lehigh Valley Convention and Visitors Bureau. While it is important that each stand on its own, these types of signs can provide additional information for visitors.

Next Steps:

- Identify landmarks that should be included
- Look for the best locations for signs
- Finalize design and template for signs in the Borough
- Secure funding for signs and/or identify partnerships to implement signage

Funding Sources:

Funding for these efforts can come from several sources. These include the following:

- Northampton County Community Investment Partnership Program — This program provides resources to Northampton County's aging communities that lack access to resources in implementing comprehensive community revitalization plans and strategies.
- Transportation Alternative Program — provides funding for a variety of non-motorized and non-highway projects. Eligible projects include community improvement activities.



2. TOURISM BROCHURE

Portland has several unique features such as the Pedestrian Bridge and Duckloe furniture that can and should be promoted. Developing and distributing a brochure in the Lehigh Valley, Pocono and Columbia, NJ regions will help bring new people looking for a day trip. Portland is easily accessible along Route 611 and with its proximity to Route 80.

Developing a marketing piece that can highlight activities and businesses in the Borough can lead to new people visiting the area. There may be an opportunity to partner with nearby towns to develop a day trip package or schedule for people. This could include working with the other municipalities in the Slate Belt or connecting to the Delaware Water Gap. The Delaware Water Gap would provide a link to outdoor recreation activities. In addition, since many of the kayak and tubing trips start near the Delaware Water Gap it would provide an opportunity to highlight the many amenities in the area.



The marketing materials can also be used to promote the existing businesses such as the Chocolate Shop, the General Store, eateries, and Duckloe furniture. In addition to the traditional tourist traffic, kayaking and rafting trips that end in Portland also bring potential patrons to the community who could take advantage of the retail and other opportunities offered. As additional businesses are added to the downtown, they can be added to the materials. The initial version does not need to be an extensive piece, even a one-page document highlighting Portland and distributed could have an impact. The material can be adjusted and updated as needed.

The marketing materials should be updated as needed, so it is important to create an easy template that can be used. Working with existing tourism bureaus in the Lehigh Valley and Poconos can reduce the costs and make the materials easier to distribute.

Next Steps:

- Contact Lehigh Valley Convention and Visitors Bureau to discuss ways to profile Portland in existing or new materials
- Contact Pocono Visitors Bureau to discuss Portland
- Work with local and regional business groups on the development of materials

Funding Resources:

- Funding for these efforts can come from several sources. These include the following:
- Pennsylvania DCED Marketing to Attract Tourism Program — applications are accepted year-round to promote a community's tourism assets.
- Local Share Account Monroe County — eligible uses of funding include public interest projects that improve the quality of life in the affected communities and economic development projects that promote local economic activity and create and/or retain jobs.
- Hotel Tax for Tourism through Northampton county — funds are intended to support events or project expenses that increase the number of visitors to the County

3. COMMUNITY BUSINESS WORKSHOP

This would be an event to bring together the existing business owners in the Borough as a way to engage them in the implementation of some of the short-term goals such as marketing. A strong and active business community can help foster additional businesses. Working with the existing business community will identify additional resources needed for their success. In addition, it is important to leverage their knowledge to help Portland. It is recommended to reach out to all of the businesses in Portland to get volunteers to participate.



The Community Business Sessions can incorporate other partners and regional organizations with similar goals. This could include Northampton County, Rising Tide of the Lehigh Valley and Lehigh Valley Economic Development Corporation. Bringing in other resources would be driven by the business community. The regional organizations would provide a connection to other initiatives that may be going on and provide a link to the efforts being undertaken in the Borough.

In addition, businesses in Portland can help lead additional revitalization efforts including streetscape improvements and signage updates. The business community should be engaged in the revitalization efforts and can bring a different perspective to the process.

Next Steps:

- Send an invitation to all of the businesses in Portland explaining the potential committee and asking for their participation
- Conduct an initial meeting with the interested businesses and identify a regular meeting time
- During the initial meeting, identify potential leaders and look for someone who would be interested in leading the group

Funding Resources:

Funding for these efforts can come from several sources. These include the following:

- PNC Foundation — The Foundation provides support to nonprofits that are working with small businesses and help foster business development.
- Good Neighbor Citizenship Company Grants through State Farm Insurance — This program provides support for community development initiatives including small business development and neighborhood revitalization efforts.

4. SPECIAL EVENTS

Exposing new people to Portland will help keep the community thriving. Creating several different types of community events that can not only bring in new people but also help reinforce the existing community. One of the challenges faced by many communities is how to get new people to visit and offering a special event that exposes people to a community is one way to do that. A special event that is focused on food trucks or other food vendors throughout the area. Other concepts could include an event related to the Delaware River, the trail network, or an arts or antique festival that would be compatible with Portland's character and capture the history and culture of the community. Another event could be one that highlights the landmarks of Portland including the Pokey. Many communities have used arts events, arts districts, and cultural heritage as centerpieces of their redevelopment efforts.

The events also provide an opportunity to build a sense of community and bring together neighbors. Participation by the business community is important. It is recommended that Portland develop several annual events over a period of time. It is important to build events slowly to ensure that they are executed well so that people have a good experience and want to return. Not all events need to be on a large scale, there may be some opportunities for smaller events that do not take as much effort.

During several stakeholder interviews, there was mention of a joint arts festival with Columbia, NJ. Re-establishing the arts festival may be one of the opportunities that can be considered.

Growing the number of special events in Portland can be a way to highlight all that the Borough has to offer. Ideally it is important to work with the existing businesses to see if there is a way to highlight their efforts. A joint marketing effort between the businesses and a potential festival is ideal. Since one of the biggest challenges with holding special events is securing volunteers, it is recommended to reach out to some of the larger companies included those that are in the Portland Industrial Park as a source for volunteers and support.



Next Steps:

- Identify the type of event that the Borough would like to develop
- Identify potential dates for special events
- Develop a volunteer committee to help organize events
- Work with Business Committee to identify technical support groups and potential sponsors

Funding Sources:

- Sponsorship opportunities with local and regional businesses
- Work with local banks to support events



5. INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENTS

One of the many assets that sets Portland apart from other communities in the area is the availability of public water and sewer. These amenities are crucial for economic development and the expansion of jobs in the Borough. Maintaining these systems is a priority for the Borough and differentiates it from other nearby communities. There are resources available to assist communities with necessary upgrades to systems. While it can take time to pursue the funding, grant funding can help leverage funding from the municipality. There are resources available that can support small projects such as the ones identified by the Borough's engineer. Infrastructure improvements directly relate to the potential for new businesses and economic development activities that are possible.



Beyond just maintaining the systems, it is important to ensure that site locators and economic development organizations are aware of the existing system and its capacity. Northampton County and Lehigh Valley Economic Development Corporation should be aware of the Borough's capacity and incorporating the information when working with site selectors. The capacity that the Borough has in its system is an asset for attracting and securing new businesses.

Next Steps:

- Identify priority projects from the Capital Improvement Plan
- Work with the Borough engineer to determine investments that need to be done
- Confirm that the appropriate engineering design work, cost estimates, and environmental and other approvals are complete for the project

- Begin to pursue grant funding

Funding Resources:

Funding for these efforts can come from several sources. These include the following:

- PA Small Water and Sewer — grants for small water and sewer infrastructure projects. Eligible projects that have a total project cost of not less than \$30,000 and not more than \$500,000.
- Pennsylvania Infrastructure Investment Authority (PennVest) — low-interest loans for design, engineering and construction of publicly owned drinking water distribution and treatment facilities, storm water conveyance and wastewater treatment and collection systems.

I. STREETSCAPE IMPROVEMENTS

Streetscape improvements help to distinguish a community and improve the pedestrian experience. The Borough has taken steps to introduce streetscape improvements including new lighting and banners. Streetscape improvements are intended to enhance the pedestrian experience in a community as well as making it visually pleasing. Enhancements can encourage cars to slow down as people begin to look around and take in the area.



There are several different improvements that can be installed including sidewalk design, bike racks and a pedestrian crossing over Route 611. New streetscape features offer an opportunity to introduce design elements while also being functional. Streetscape elements can be architectural, brightly colored and visually interesting. While the Borough's architecture is generally more traditional, bringing in different elements provides a nice contrast without taking away from the character of the downtown. Portland should continue to celebrate its rich architectural history but there is an opportunity to introduce new elements.

One component would be bike racks to create a welcoming atmosphere and to get potential cyclists to stop in the Borough. As the Borough continues to promote the trail network and recreational opportunities, it is important to create a welcoming environment for those outdoor enthusiasts. One such way is to provide bike racks near restaurants and key landmarks. Bike racks do not have to be traditional and instead can be colorful, artistic and visual interesting. Several communities have undertaken design competitions for artists to create a piece of art in the form of a bike rack.



In addition, a designated crosswalk across Route 611 would ensure the safety of pedestrians to cross the street. Currently there is a yellow pedestrian sign located in the middle of the road to identify the crosswalk. The current width of the road feels very wide leaving pedestrians exposed. Many of the cars are driving above the speed limit. The installation of a new defined crosswalk would help pedestrians. As the Borough continues its revitalization efforts, there will be more people visiting and it is important to have a safe environment for pedestrians that is welcoming. Creating a crosswalk that has visual interest will also help to signal to drivers to slow down when driving through the downtown. The cross walk can be made up different materials that are still easy to maintain but bring in a design element to the downtown. The variation in materials also provides a signal to motorists to slow down. A new crosswalk provides an opportunity to explore different types of materials and design.



In addition, a defined gateway to Portland would be another element that would help create a sense of place. A gateway can involve large “welcome” signage, a small park or monument, or some other landscaped location that lets visitors know they have arrived at a special community. Material selection for a formal gateway design can complement the façade composition of the Borough’s downtown; perhaps reflect similar colors and patterns that are found on sidewalks or signage; and reflect some aspect of the community’s heritage.

Next Steps:

- Finalize list of improvements to be completed
- Engage an engineer to create detailed specifications for the improvements along with cost estimates for each of the elements
- Develop phasing approach to break down the various proposed elements and costs associated with the improvements
- Meet with PennDOT on any proposed improvements across Route 611 to determine approval process
- Meet with State Representatives to discuss proposed improvements and elicit support for State funding
- Prepare grant applications to secure funding for the proposed improvements

Funding Resources:

Funding for these efforts can come from several sources. These include the following:

- Department of Community and Economic Development Multi-modal funding — funds may be used for the development, rehabilitation and enhancement of transportation assets to existing communities, streetscape, lighting, sidewalk enhancement, pedestrian safety, connectivity of transportation assets and transit-oriented development.
- PennDOT Multi-modal funding — funding priorities are consistent with the Department of Community and Economic Development Multi-modal funding.

2. BUILDING ACQUISITION AND REDEVELOPMENT

Building acquisition and redevelopment will provide the most impact on the Borough. Large scale projects will need the right partner and funding but will be catalytic. These types of transformational projects will encourage other development. The downtown corridor would be the priority location for a first project. It is recommended that the project be mixed-use in nature. Any new projects should be of consistent massing and scale to the current structures in Portland. A mixed-use project can be done on a scale that is consistent with the surroundings.

New infill development and redevelopment projects have an impact on a community. Bringing new investment to a community can lead to additional projects being generated. There are several underutilized properties along Delaware Avenue that should be prioritized for reuse. The location of these properties provide the greatest opportunity for impact on the Borough.

Where there is a vacant or underutilized structures that has the potential for revitalization, the Borough has two basic redevelopment approaches: 1) acquire the property; or 2) work with the existing owner. Property acquisition may be appropriate if the building is a hazard to health and safety and needs to be condemned. In a case where the Borough might need to acquire a property through condemnation or eminent domain, however, there should be a definitive strategy and the necessary funding in place to demolish or rehabilitate the structure. Otherwise, the Borough will assume liability for its ownership. Working with an existing owner to envision a reuse and/or the sale of the property to an interested developer may have more potential. In such cases, the Borough could acquire the property and market it; or work with the owner to facilitate the property's sale and reuse. For example, a formal Request for Proposals could be assembled describing the building, citing the geographic and market potential of the Borough, and outlining the type of redevelopment envisioned. The RFP would then be distributed to large residential and commercial brokers in the region and beyond. Where a current owner cannot be identified (and in such cases the building is likely in tax arrears), the Borough could proceed independently to market the structure, acquire the ownership given the tax delinquency, and then transfer ownership to a qualified developer. "Development Agreements" are tools that are often used between developer and municipal government to ensure that properties are redeveloped in accordance with the understandings that have been reached.

Below is a map of several underutilized properties in the downtown that are identified by the green color.



200ft

State of New Jersey, Esri, HERE, Garmin, INCREMENT P, USGS, EPA, USDA

There are four properties that are specifically identified as opportunities where investment is needed and can have a substantial impact on the downtown. Proposed properties for redevelopment include the former vehicle repair building next to the new Dunkin Donuts as well as the building next to Duckloe on the corner near Main Street. In addition, the former Train Station is identified. While work has begun on the Train Station it will take time and effort to complete. The last parcel that is identified is also currently vacant. The building is located between two others that are either currently active or where work was done to improve them. These parcels should be considered when looking to support a catalytic project since they all would have an impact on the downtown area.

Using the market analysis data collected, there are identified gaps that can be accommodated in the downtown area. There is a need for additional restaurants and specialty food places. These types of businesses could be incorporated into a redevelopment project.

A mixed-use project will increase the amount of commercial space as well as add additional residential units to the Borough. The intention of such a project is to add activity to the street while also bringing in additional residents. A redevelopment project should complement the existing character of the Borough. Besides introducing additional commercial space, the Borough could accommodate the addition of office space to the downtown. The office space could be located on the upper floors of a project, so that the first floor would remain active. When possible, it is important to create an active street level, which can encourage pedestrian activity.

A redevelopment project will take time and effort. It is important to find the right partner for the project. The community needs someone who understands the vision for Portland and wants to work with the community. The Borough and residents can reach out to developers that may be interested to pitch them on a potential project. Securing someone that is willing to work with the community is a priority.

Next Steps:

- Identify potential developers that may be interested in new projects in the Slate Belt region
- Meet with developers to discuss potential properties and goals of the Borough to ensure that interests align
- Work with the developer to identify resources for the proposed project
- Continue to provide support and feedback through project completion

Funding Resources:

Funding for these efforts can come from several sources. These include the following:

- **Redevelopment Assistance Capital Program** - The Redevelopment Assistance Capital Program (RACP) is a commonwealth grant program administered by the Office of the Budget for the acquisition and construction of regional economic, cultural, civic, recreational, and historical improvement projects. Proposed projects must be submitted by a Pennsylvania Legislator (State Senate or House) and subsequently itemized in an RACP funding bill before becoming eligible for funding consideration.
- **Keystone Communities** — is a flexible funding source for use in community and economic development for a variety of uses including planning activities, façade grant programs and development grants.

3. PROMOTE AND LIGHT UP THE PEDESTRIAN BRIDGE

Promoting the Bridge

The pedestrian bridge that crosses the Delaware River between Portland, Pennsylvania and Columbia, New Jersey is a tremendous asset for a number of reasons. First, there are very few pedestrian crossings of the Delaware River that are limited exclusively to pedestrians and/or cyclists. This is a tremendous safety consideration for people seeking to walk or bring their bikes across the river. Furthermore, the fact that the bridge is located in proximity to so many trail linkages — both planned and present — makes it an obvious connection that can be promoted for inclusion in the expanding trail system in northern Northampton County.

Second, the bridge has tremendous potential as a tourism asset. There are a number of possibilities here. By providing a pedestrian linkage between Portland and Columbia, New Jersey, there are ways that the two communities can easily partner on joint festivals and events that encourage participants to cross the bridge between the two communities.



The Appalachian Trail, one of the most heavily traveled and most popular walking trails in the entire Country runs directly through Portland. But, curiously, the trail directs hikers across the heavily trafficked highway bridge. One of the recommendations of this plan is to provide an official rerouting of the trail so that it crosses the pedestrian bridge. This makes considerably more sense and provides additional safety for the hikers. The Borough would then have a much more captive audience to which many of the retail, dining, and other hospitality services provided in the community could be marketed.

The bridge also has stand-alone value as a tourism attraction. Aside from its value as one of the best places to view the Delaware Water Gap, the bridge could be the location for light shows that could draw hundreds of spectators on a regular basis. The bridge itself could be lit with decorative lighting during the summer months simply as a way to bring people to the community after hours to dine or recreate in some

fashion. Or, it was suggested that a “Lantern Festival” could be organized where artists and cultural organizations could line the bridge at night with lit lanterns that they created or that symbolize their culture. Such an event would create the type of unique spectacle that could be easily marketed to draw people to the Borough and promote local businesses.

More significantly, the bridge could provide a regular venue for a summertime or seasonal light show that would be offered regularly on Saturdays or on special holidays. Laser shows, themed holiday lighting, and other unique lighting themes could attract large numbers of visitors to the area.

A recent article on pedestrian bridge lighting from [*Lighting Equipment Sales*](#) helps to provide some general parameters for such a project.

Pedestrian bridges are illuminated by sunlight during the day, but they require an additional light at nights. This lighting also makes pedestrians feel safer at night. It helps reduce crime rates. Pedestrian bridges should be illuminated best both in terms of functionality and in terms of decorative elements.

General lighting at a pedestrian bridge is provided by lighting poles (3-4 meters) that are not too high placed on the edge of the passage. It is also possible to make different settlements by using the building elements of the bridge. For example, lighting elements that provide special light distribution to be placed on pedestrian guardrail can also be provided with sufficient amount of illumination. The important thing here is to provide a sufficient amount of illumination without disturbing pedestrians, without creating light pollution.

Generally, 5 lux light levels are recommended on pedestrian bridges and similar pedestrian walking paths. Lighting at these levels creates a safe environment for pedestrians. Decorative lighting is done by highlighting the architectural details of the bridge with light. This accent lighting is done by wall washer, floodlights, pixel LEDs, flexible neon LEDs, and similar lighting solutions. A well-lit pedestrian bridge, where compatible colors are used, can create a great landscape in the night. Pedestrian bridges that attract attention with lighting will be located in the background of many photographs and will contribute to the promotion of the (sic) community.³

By making the pedestrian bridge a marketable attraction in and of itself, it will draw more patrons to the community and help to give Portland a branded identity. There are a couple of project avenues that can be pursued here — one involving the bridge’s link to the expanding trail network and the second being its visibility as a tourism attraction. The following paragraphs explore ways these concepts can be implemented.

³ October 2018 Blog/<http://lightingequipmentsales.com/pedestrian-bridge-lighting.html>

Where to Start Exploring These Concepts

Connecting the Bridge to the Greater Trail Network

The best places to start to link the pedestrian bridge to the regional trail network are with those organizations that are responsible for mapping and managing the trail systems. There is a logical progression of steps that are suggested.

- a. Define the trail network that can be connected or linked to the bridge. For starters, this would include: the September 11th and Liberty-Water Gap Trails.
- b. Once the Borough has decided this is something it wishes to promote, it will need the support of the major trail developers and managers. This list includes first and foremost the Delaware River Joint Toll Bridge Commission, the owner and manager of the bridge. Other prospective partners include Northampton County, the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation & Natural Resources (DCNR), the Pennsylvania Department of Community & Economic Development, (DCED), the National Park Service (in the case of the Appalachian Trail), and local legislators.
- c. Working with Northampton County, the Borough should prepare narratives and maps showing how trails can be routed across the pedestrian bridge. These proposals can then be shared with local Pennsylvania Assembly and Senate representatives and, in the case of the Appalachian Trail, with the Borough's U.S. Congressman and Senators.
- d. Modifications and promotions can be made to brochures, websites, and other materials to market the inclusion of the bridge as part of official trail networks. Press events can be held that attract local, regional and in some cases national attention to the bridge as a new addition to the trail systems. These events can help brand the Borough and raise the profile of both the community and the bridge.
- e. Funding for these efforts can come from several sources. Once the Borough has identified and secured the support of its partners and agreed on the strategies it wishes to pursue, there are a number of programs and agencies that might assist with funding specific initiatives. These include the following:

- Pennsylvania DCED Greenways, Trails, and Recreation Program. This program provides up to \$250,000 for a wide range of related uses which promote active recreation. The application period typically opens in February of each year.
- Pennsylvania DCNR RecTAP Grants. These grants, typically limited to \$2,500 can assist local organizations in crafting concepts and proposals to address park and trail issues and needs.
- Pennsylvania DCED Marketing to Attract Tourism Program. Applications are accepted year-round to promote a community's tourism assets. Once support is official for linking the bridge to various trail networks, this program could be used to generate the electronic and hard-copy media that would promote the bridge's and the Borough's linkage to the trail systems.
- The National Park Service. The NPS prepares literature regularly to highlight its national resources, including the Appalachian Trail and the Wild & Scenic Upper Delaware River. As one of the premier vantage points for viewing the Delaware River Water Gap and for the pedestrian bridge's potential inclusion as an official part of the trail network, the NPS can be a valuable resource.

Lighting the Bridge

Lighting the bridge can occur in one of a couple ways. It can include basic rudimentary lighting to support the use of the bridge after hours or as noted earlier as a tourist attraction through an elaborate lighting display that could occur on set occasions. Obviously, the costs for these options would vary considerably based on the breadth and scope of the project. Like the bridge's linkage to the regional or national trail systems, a protocol needs to be followed to advance any lighting project.

- I. Develop the Concept. The Delaware River Joint Toll Bridge Commission is the owner of the bridge. Obviously, the support of this agency is the key to any improvements or other work on or use of the structure. So, working with the Commission is the place to start in developing any type of lighting concept.

2. Secure Local and Regional Support/Mission. What types of lighting concepts are being envisioned? What level of support has been obtained from local partners? These and other questions need to be answered in fostering support for the lighting concept(s).
3. Create a Phased Approach for the Project. Structural improvements of any kind can be expensive and depending on the scope or mission of the project can have widely ranging costs. The project can be made more affordable by phasing the approach. Creating more fundable steps in the process can advance the project, although perhaps more slowly. For example, these phases might include:
 - Preliminary Concept Development
 - Preliminary Engineering Design
 - Final Engineering Design
 - Installation and Construction
4. Engineering Cost Estimates for Phased Project. Once the various phases have been identified, cost estimates need to be assigned to each.
5. For More Elaborate Concepts. Light shows involving lasers and other complex displays require professional lighting firms. The internet provides easy access to some of these firms. Costs will vary widely based on the complexity and duration. But, today, such shows draw huge crowds and can be accompanied by music, special festivals, or holiday events.



By tying either ideas for the basic promotion of the bridge through tourism brochures, trail integration and other ideas, or by augmenting the bridge with lighting and festival displays, funding can also be targeted for these ideas from special festivals and events.

4. RAILROAD STATION REDEVELOPMENT

The railroad station is a prime redevelopment project for the Borough. The project can be adaptively reused. There is a lot of potential to bring new businesses with the addition of new spaces that well-maintained. The building can easily be broken up into smaller spaces. The station provides an opportunity for a restaurant, visitor center or retail opportunity. There continues to be demand for food services and drinking places along with specialty food services based on the data collected for this plan. In addition, an overwhelming number of residents are looking for new food options.



The railroad station has distinctive historic character that should be maintained. The building has a long history for Portland part of the reason Portland grew was the railroad. Keeping the historic linkage is important to the residents of Portland but also creates an opportunity to modernize the structure for new uses. Keeping the shell and bringing new life to the structure will fill in a gap on the street.

Beyond just the building, the green space next to the building has a lot of flexibility. It could continue to remain an open space that could include benches and other outdoor amenities, which could complement the reuse of the train station. The lot could also be a prime location for redevelopment.

Needed site work and public improvements around the building can be done utilizing public financing and grant funding. There may be an opportunity to support a quasi-public visitor center or other public portion of the building. These proposed public improvements would help support the overall redevelopment of the building.

Next Steps:

- Continue to work with owners of the property to ensure a consensus in the vision for the structure
- Discuss ways to qualify the building for public funding opportunities
- Identify ways that public improvements adjacent to the property can enhance the viability of the structure's rehabilitation and its marketability for alternative uses. Public landscaping, sidewalk improvements, and other public investments can highlight the building as an asset and encourage market interest.



Funding Sources:

Funding for these efforts can come from several sources. These include the following:

- Historic Preservation Tax Credit (HPTC) — provides tax credits to qualified taxpayers who will be completing the restoration of a qualified historic structure into an income producing property.
- Keystone Communities — is a flexible funding source for use in community and economic development for a variety of uses including planning activities, façade grant programs and development grants.
- Redevelopment Assistance Capital Program (RACP) - is a commonwealth grant program administered by the Office of the Budget for the acquisition and construction of regional economic, cultural, civic, recreational, and historical improvement projects. Proposed projects must be submitted by a Pennsylvania Legislator (State Senate or House) and subsequently itemized in an RACP funding bill before becoming eligible for funding consideration.

5. HOME OWNERSHIP STRATEGY

A multi-prong approach to home ownership will address the concerns of residents. The strategy must include resources to support existing homeowners, education of code requirements and the promotion of the Borough as a place to purchase a home. Another key component is how best to incorporate new housing units in the Borough.

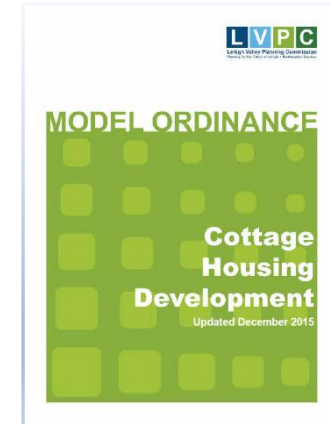
There are several ways to support existing homeowners including making them aware of the resources available. Northampton County has funding available for the rehabilitation of owner occupied units for persons that are low to moderate income. One of the issues that came up during the planning process was that properties weren't being maintained, including rental and owner occupied units. Continue code enforcement and education are one of the ways to enforce property standards. Consistent enforcement of the codes is key for people to understand their responsibilities. Beyond just code enforcement it is important to follow up and make sure that the codes are addressed in a timely manner.

In order for Portland to grow, additional housing needs to be part of the strategy. Throughout the process, there were discussions about encouraging new homeownership units. Lehigh Valley Planning Commission has a model ordinance for small, cottage style development. These homes are often clustered together in order to preserve open space. The housing type requires a smaller lot size and can be more affordable. This new type of housing could be an asset for Portland. The cottage style appeals to both the baby boomers and millennials, who are looking for a smaller housing footprint. There are some vacant lots in the North end of the Borough that could be considered for new housing.

The County offers a small First-Time Home Buyer grant that can be marketed toward potential residents in Portland. Additional resources may be available through local banks and organizations that can be compiled for residents.

Next Steps:

- Develop one page flyer that outlines key elements of the code
- Ensure that the flyer is easily accessible, marketed regionally and includes the locational, recreational, and other assets that the Borough has to offer
- Include an element from the code in each Borough newsletter



Funding Sources:

Funding for these efforts can come from several sources. These include the following:

- Northampton County Housing Rehab Program — up to \$20,000 in partially forgivable, interest free loans are available to low and moderate income homeowners in the boroughs and townships in Northampton County to make necessary improvements to their homes.
- Keystone Communities — is a flexible funding source for use in community and economic development for a variety of uses including planning activities, façade grant programs and development grants.
- Northampton County First Time Homebuyer — provides loans to eligible first-time buyers of Northampton County homes. These loans provide up to \$5,000 to help with the cost of the house and closing costs. The funding is forgivable over a 5 year period.
- PNC Foundation — This funding can be used to support community and economic development projects and could be used to develop a housing project

6. APPALACHIAN TRAIL CONNECTION

The Appalachian Trail, one of the most heavily traveled and most popular walking trails in the entire Country runs just north of Portland. But, the trail directs hikers across the heavily trafficked highway bridge. It is recommended to provide an official rerouting of the trail so that it

crosses the pedestrian bridge. This makes considerably more sense and provides additional safety for the hikers. The Borough would then have a much more captive audience to which many of the retail, dining, and other hospitality services provided in the community could be marketed.

The change could be an alternate route that would be added to the official Appalachian Trail Map. The Borough would be asking for the Commission to add an alternate route to their information. The additional link to the Appalachian Trail would build off of the other trails that connect through the Borough. This would also help establish Portland within the trail network as a place where hikers could start their day hikes. The change may be a challenge but would provide a real opportunity for Portland. Portland can certainly make the case that the pedestrian bridge is a much safer route for hikers to get across the Delaware River and to continue on the trail.

Connections to the trails in the Delaware Water Gap are already in progress through Northampton County. The County has been working on an identifying and connecting the trail systems throughout the County. Providing improved connections keeps pedestrians safe and allows for a better experience.

Next Steps:

- Meet with Northampton County to discuss request and get their support
- Meet with the Appalachian Trail Commission to discuss the request
- Draft petition to submit to the Commission.



Funding Sources:

The proposed project would not require any specific funding. The project would require time for discussion and continued follow-up.

7. RIVER ACCESS

One of the key assets for the Borough is the Delaware River. The ongoing challenge for the Borough is to create a better connection to the River, which would improve access for residents and visitors. Access in the downtown is over active Norfolk Southern railroad tracks. The pedestrian bridge provides visitors with one of a kind views of the Delaware.

It is recommended that the Borough continue to pursue a connection to the Delaware closer to the Portland Hook and Ladder building. A connection would be made to land owned by Northampton County. This access point would be utilized for the rafting and kayak trips that are currently unloading in the downtown. This would make the unloading of people and loading of boats much safer for everyone. Shifting the



Northampton County parcels are highlighted

access point could also provide an opportunity to expand river trips or provide a rest stop. A better access point could better accommodate the number of vans, people and boats that overtake the area near the pedestrian bridge during the summer months.

Next steps:

- Continue to meet and have conversations with Northampton County on a potential access point(s)
- Engage regional river outfitters to discuss current points of access and needs
- Develop and coordinate design concepts with State and Federal Regulatory Agencies
- Determine the costs associated with creating a new access point and boat launch
- Secure Funding to establish the connection

Funding Sources:

Funding for these efforts can come from several sources. These include the following:

- Northampton County Municipal Park Acquisition, Development and Rehabilitation Program - provides funding for municipalities to update facilities, purchase new recreational lands and rehab existing structures
- Department of Conservation and Natural Resources Community Parks and Recreation Grants — provides funding for both planning efforts and park development
- Department of Conservation and Natural Resources Small Community Development Funding — provides communities with populations of less than 5,000 with a \$20,000 grant with no match and an additional \$20,000 with a \$20,000 match

8. BROADBAND ACCESS

The Morning Call published a piece about the low number of residents in Portland Borough that are connected to broadband. Limited access to broadband in the Borough could hinder future growth. Broadband is a necessary tool for all ages. Children are often required to access school assignments through the internet. Many get their news and complete daily tasks via the internet. The long term implications of lack of broadband could potentially hinder the Borough and its residents.

Increasing access across the Borough would be helpful to existing residents but help to encourage entrepreneurship as well as provide an amenity for tourists. The Borough could consider partnering with other organizations and utilizing grant funding to provide free broadband access across the Borough. Expanding the availability and accessibility of broadband will serve both the residents of Portland and be an asset for visitors.

Next Steps:

- Meet with local providers to discuss options for the Borough
- Identify other providers not currently serving the area to see if there are any future plans to serve the area
- Work with providers and stakeholders to develop cost estimate to provide service to entire Borough
- Work with local legislators to identify other funding opportunities
- Secure funding to increase broadband service

Funding Sources:

Funding for these efforts can come from several sources. These include the following:

- USDA Rural Broadband Access Loan and Loan Guarantee program — provides loans and loan guarantees to provide funds for the costs of construction, improvement, or acquisition of facilities and equipment needed to provide service at the broadband lending speed

- **USDA Telecommunications Infrastructure Loans & Loan Guarantees** — provides financing for the construction, maintenance, improvement and expansion of telephone service and broadband in rural areas

E. SUMMARY

The Portland Neighborhood and Redevelopment Plan is intended to lay out a framework for resident and stakeholder engagement. The success of the plan will require leadership by residents of the Borough, the business community, Slate Belt Rising and Borough officials. Many of the projects and initiatives are intended to be transformational. That means that a successful implementation of these projects will increase the visibility of the Borough, bring renewed investment to the downtown and bring new residents to the community. It also means engaging partners at the local, regional and national levels who can provide connections to funding and technical support for this effort.

Implementation of a plan is critical. Implementation allows for the community to be engaged and for real change to occur. It is important to engage a variety of key people and organizations in the process. Developing an Implementation Team allows for a variety of skills and interests to work together on various projects. The Implementation Team could include representatives from the Borough, County, Slate Belt Rising and local businesses. Additional members can be added as the Team identifies skills necessary to undertake particular projects or if someone shows interest in participating. It is recommended that the Team meet on a quarterly basis to discuss progress and strategize.

It is important to share the achievements of the Neighborhood and Redevelopment Plan in order to continue the momentum that is already underway in the Borough of Portland. Each time there is an event, it is an opportunity to share the plan and on-going projects as a way to encourage new volunteers to participate in the process. At a public meeting on May 15, 2019, over 20 interested citizens and residents expressed opinions and offered new ideas for advancing the plan. Those suggestions now appear as part of this final document. It is important to note that plans are not static things. If for example, a commuter rail line that would link the Pocono Region with New York City moves toward fruition, this could radically change the character of the Borough. Opportunities and challenges as they arise require new initiatives and approaches to marketing and implementing the plan.

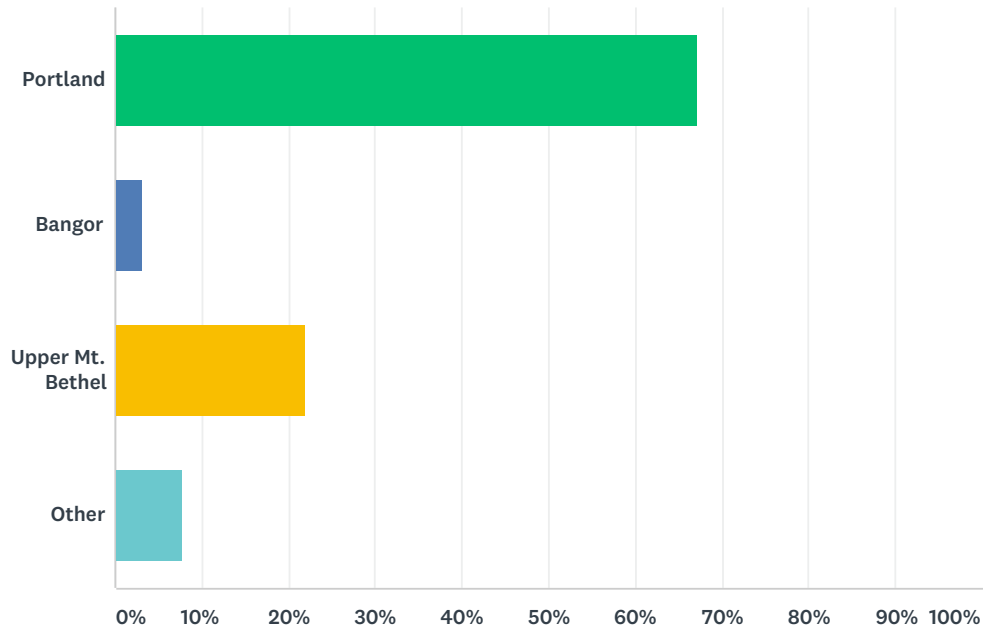
The Borough of Portland has tremendous potential and the completion of this plan is just a first step in the process.



APPENDIX A

Q1 Where do you currently live?

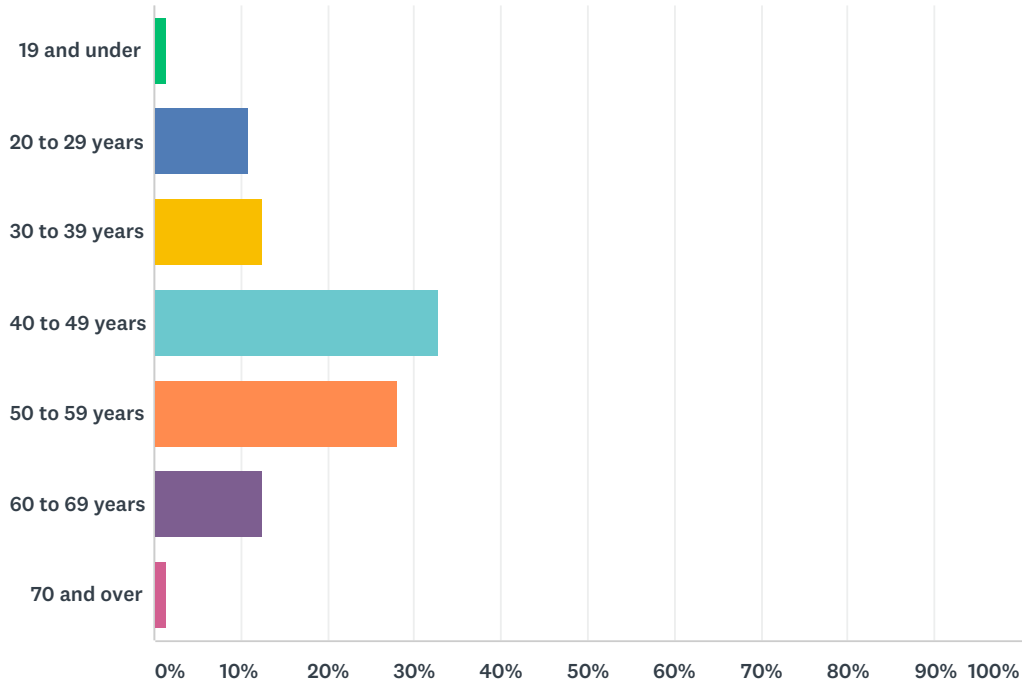
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ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Portland	67.19% 43
Bangor	3.13% 2
Upper Mt. Bethel	21.88% 14
Other	7.81% 5
TOTAL	64

Q2 What is your age?

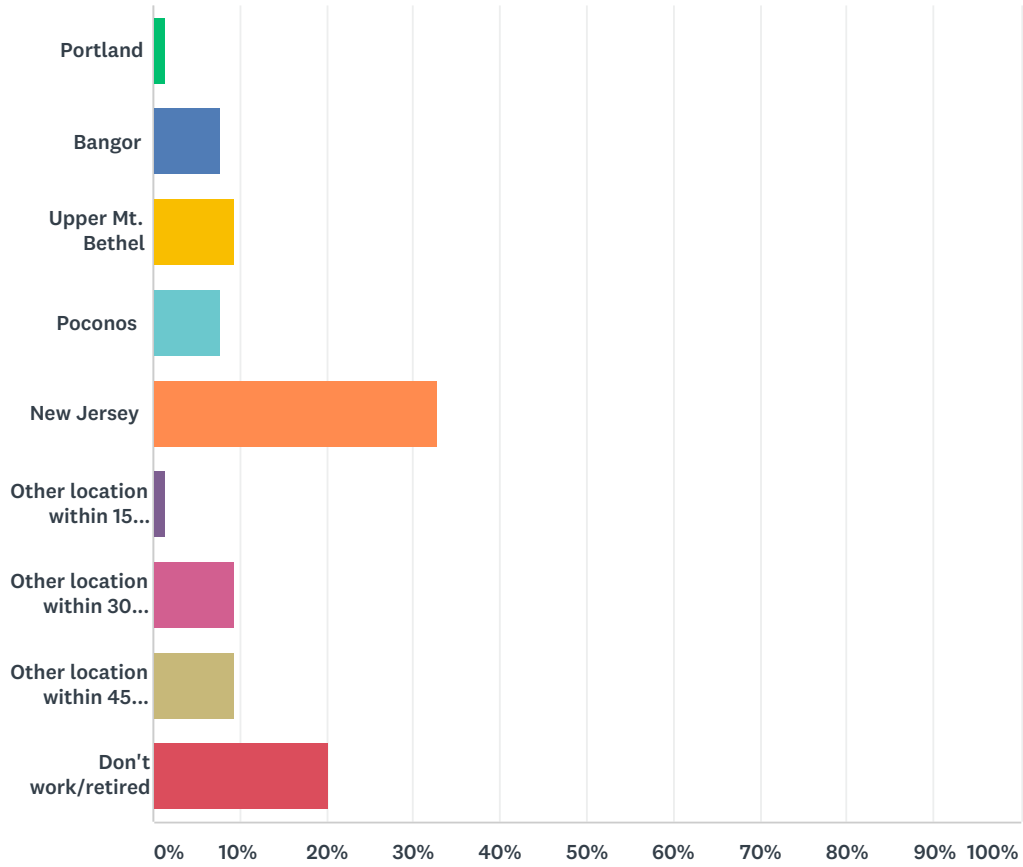
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ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
19 and under	1.56% 1
20 to 29 years	10.94% 7
30 to 39 years	12.50% 8
40 to 49 years	32.81% 21
50 to 59 years	28.13% 18
60 to 69 years	12.50% 8
70 and over	1.56% 1
TOTAL	64

Q3 Where do you currently work?

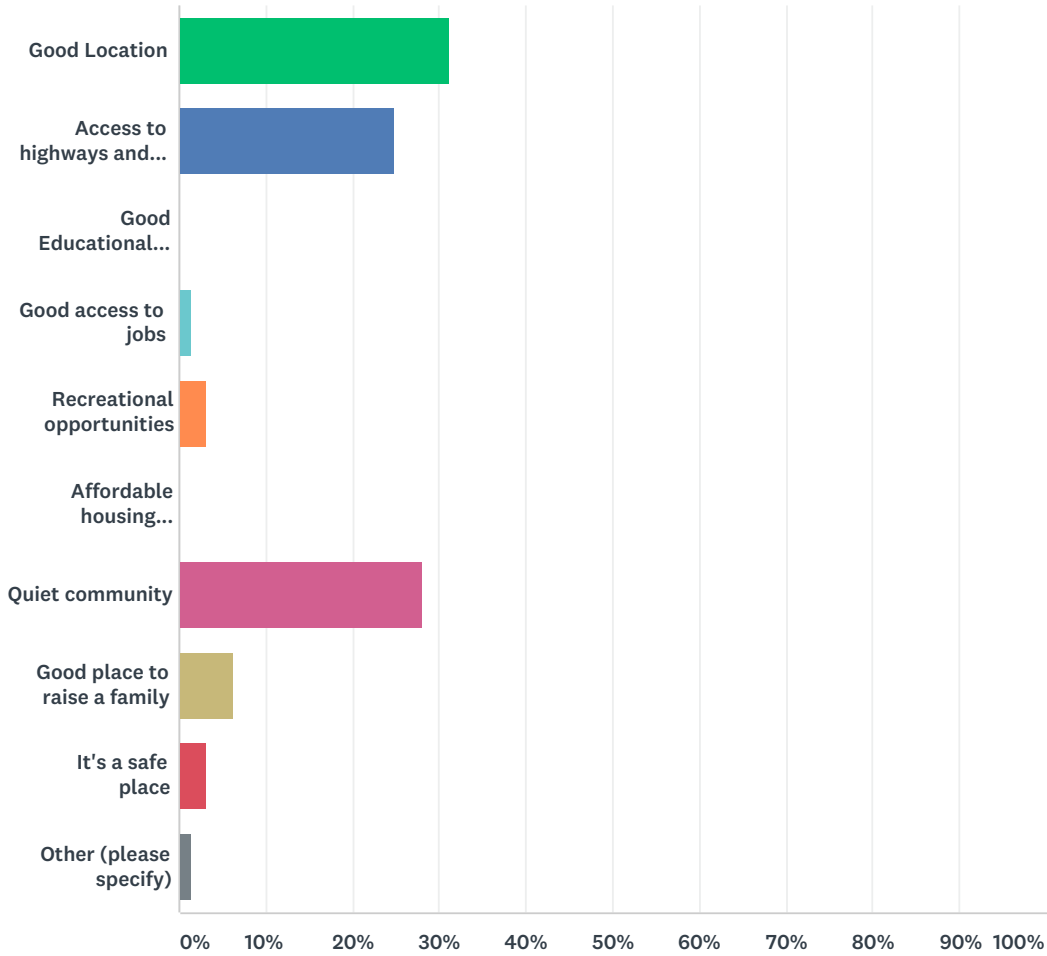
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ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Portland	1.56%	1
Bangor	7.81%	5
Upper Mt. Bethel	9.38%	6
Poconos	7.81%	5
New Jersey	32.81%	21
Other location within 15 minute drive	1.56%	1
Other location within 30 minute drive	9.38%	6
Other location within 45 minute drive	9.38%	6
Don't work/retired	20.31%	13
TOTAL		64

Q4 What do you think Portland's greatest strength is?

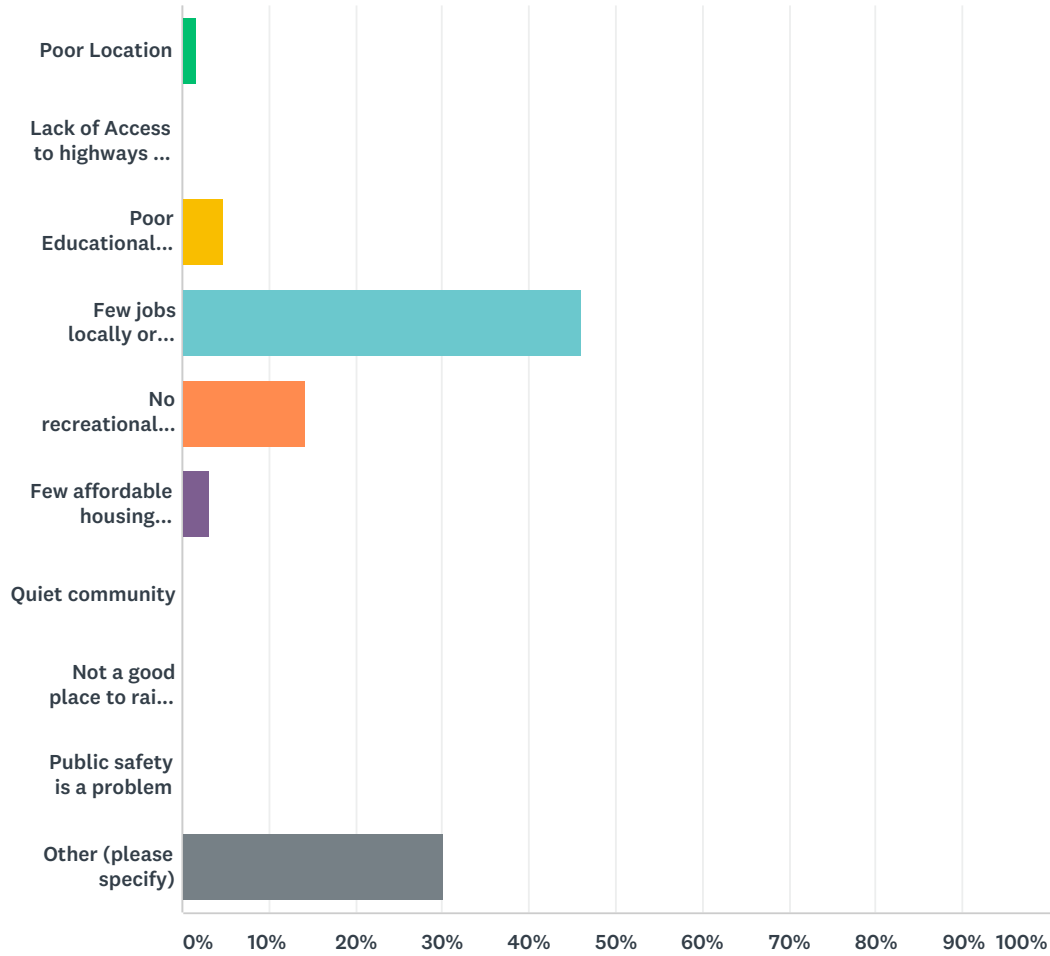
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ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Good Location	31.25%	20
Access to highways and transportation	25.00%	16
Good Educational System	0.00%	0
Good access to jobs	1.56%	1
Recreational opportunities	3.13%	2
Affordable housing opportunities	0.00%	0
Quiet community	28.13%	18
Good place to raise a family	6.25%	4
It's a safe place	3.13%	2
Other (please specify)	1.56%	1
TOTAL		64

Q5 What do you think Portland's greatest weakness is?

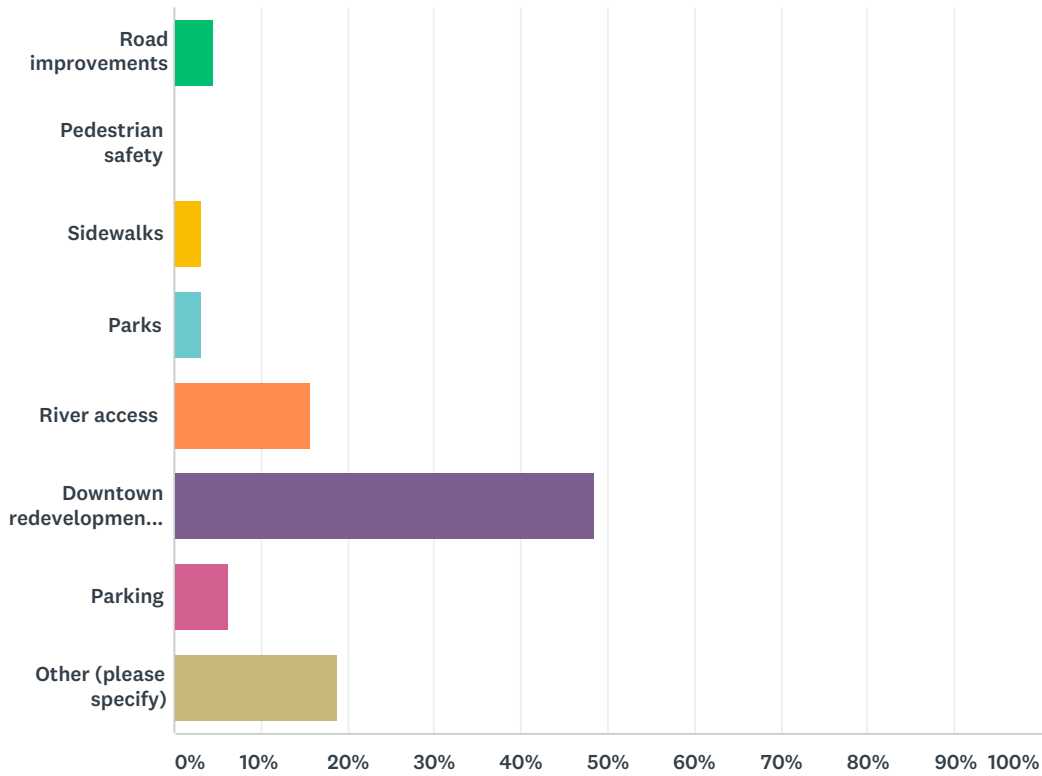
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ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Poor Location	1.59%	1
Lack of Access to highways and transportation	0.00%	0
Poor Educational System	4.76%	3
Few jobs locally or within the region	46.03%	29
No recreational opportunities	14.29%	9
Few affordable housing opportunities	3.17%	2
Quiet community	0.00%	0
Not a good place to raise a family	0.00%	0
Public safety is a problem	0.00%	0
Other (please specify)	30.16%	19
TOTAL		63

Q6 What capital improvements should the Borough prioritize?

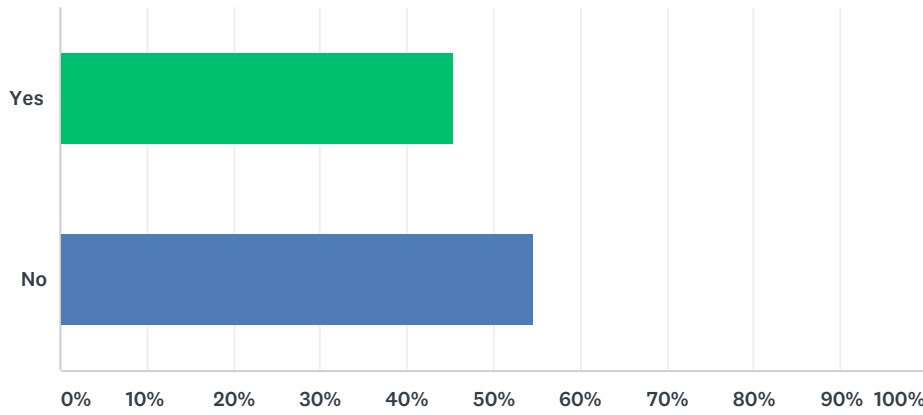
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ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Road improvements	4.69%	3
Pedestrian safety	0.00%	0
Sidewalks	3.13%	2
Parks	3.13%	2
River access	15.63%	10
Downtown redevelopment and beautification	48.44%	31
Parking	6.25%	4
Other (please specify)	18.75%	12
TOTAL		64

Q7 Do you think the current housing stock is well maintained?

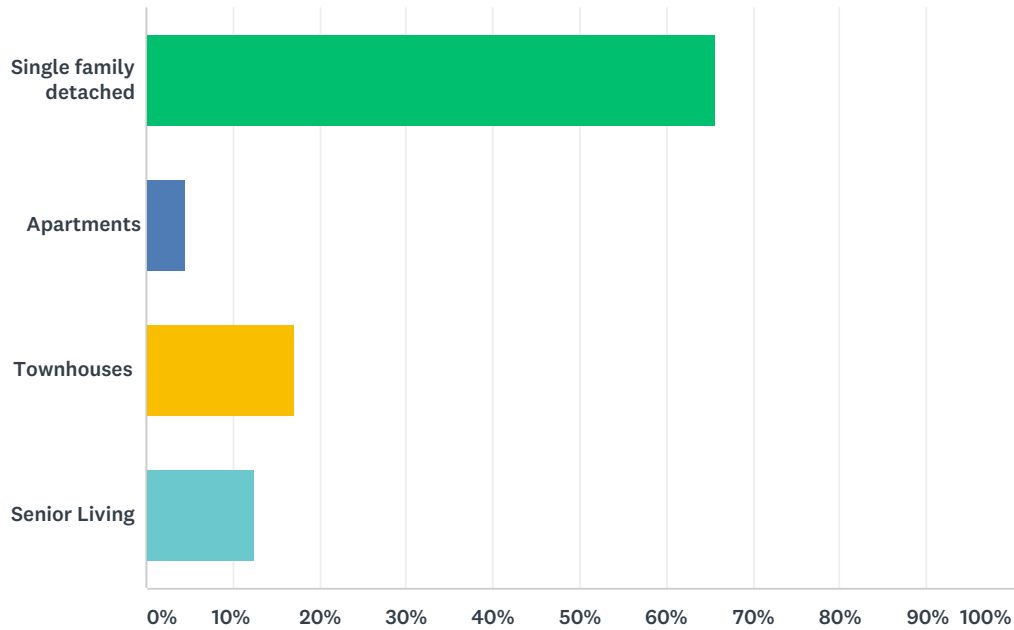
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ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	45.31%	29
No	54.69%	35
TOTAL		64

Q8 What type of housing is the most needed?

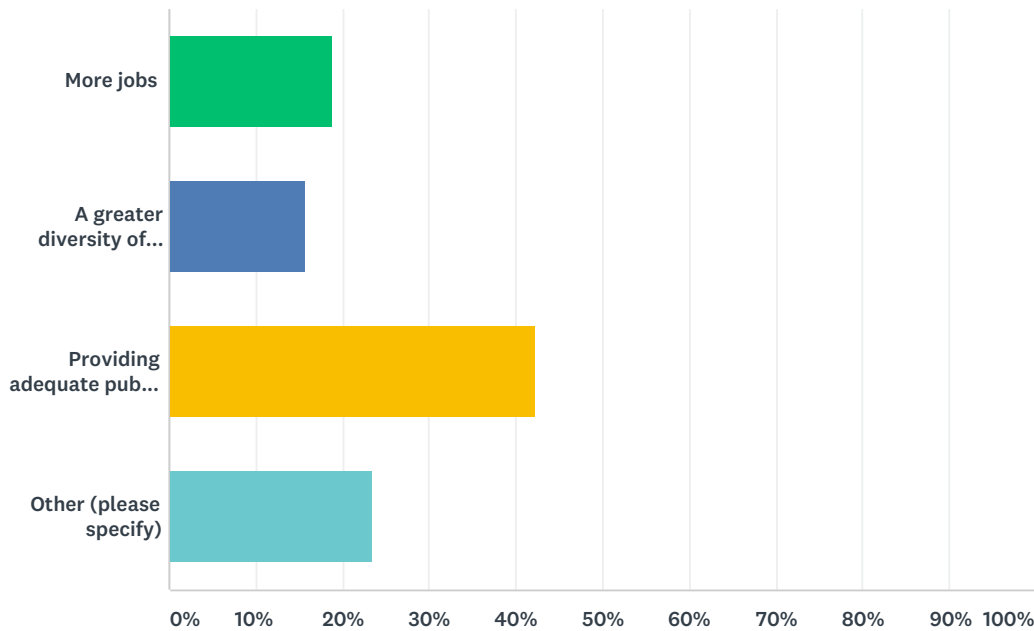
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ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Single family detached	65.63% 42
Apartments	4.69% 3
Townhouses	17.19% 11
Senior Living	12.50% 8
TOTAL	64

Q9 When it comes to encouraging new people to live in Portland, what should be the top priority?

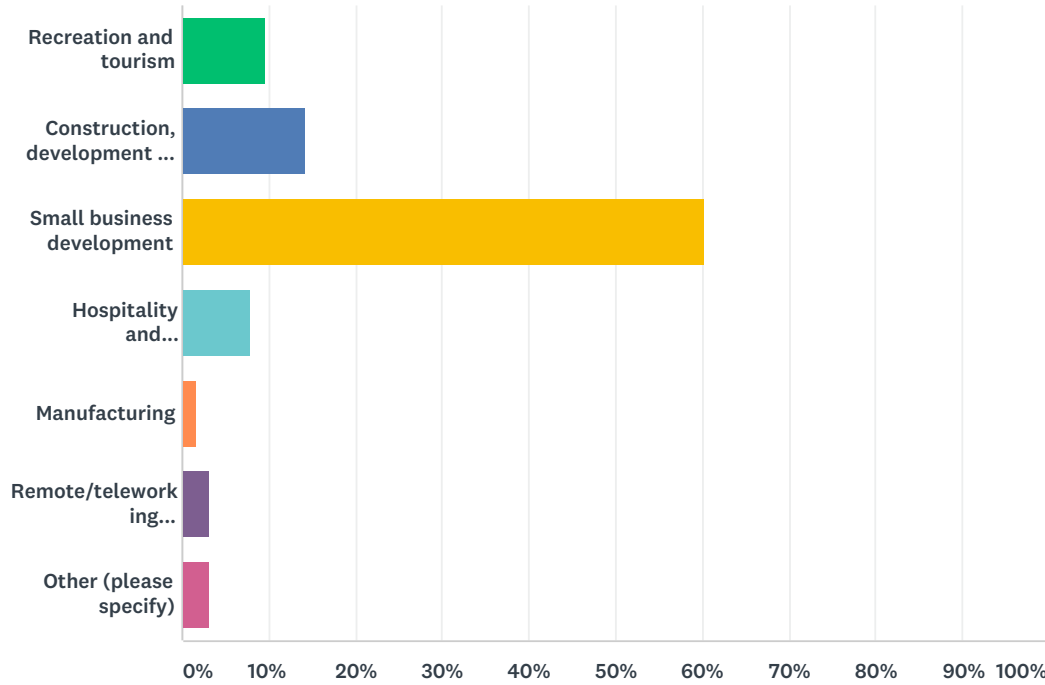
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ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
More jobs	18.75%	12
A greater diversity of housing	15.63%	10
Providing adequate public services and amenities	42.19%	27
Other (please specify)	23.44%	15
TOTAL		64

Q10 What should be the top economic development priority for Portland?

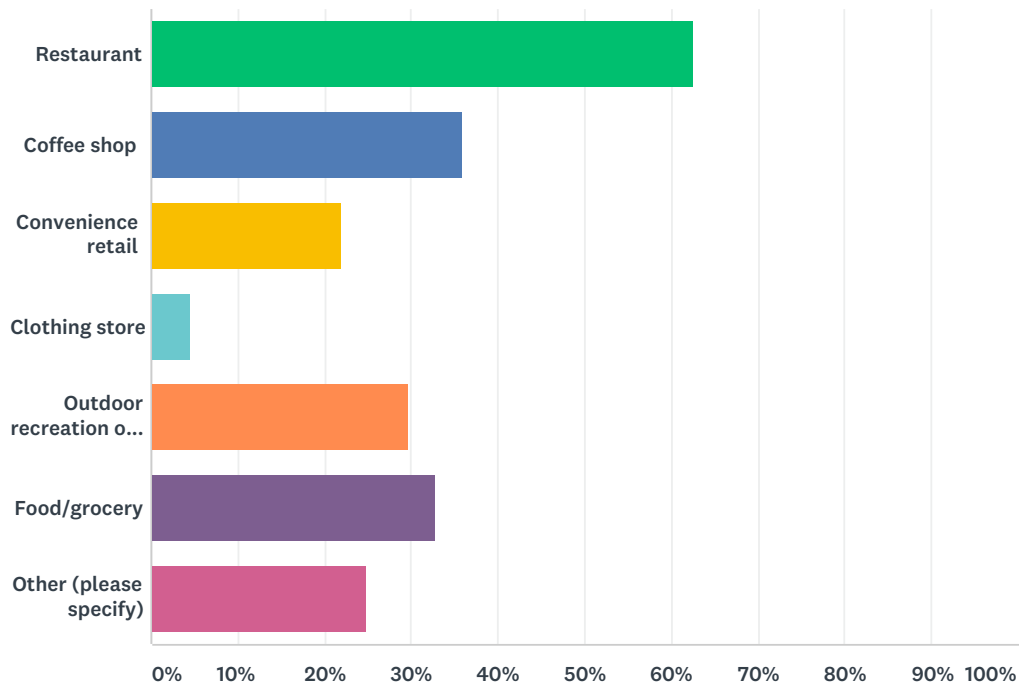
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ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Recreation and tourism	9.52%	6
Construction, development and redevelopment	14.29%	9
Small business development	60.32%	38
Hospitality and recreational amenities	7.94%	5
Manufacturing	1.59%	1
Remote/teleworking opportunities	3.17%	2
Other (please specify)	3.17%	2
TOTAL		63

Q11 Which of the following retail or community facilities do you believe are needed most in Portland?

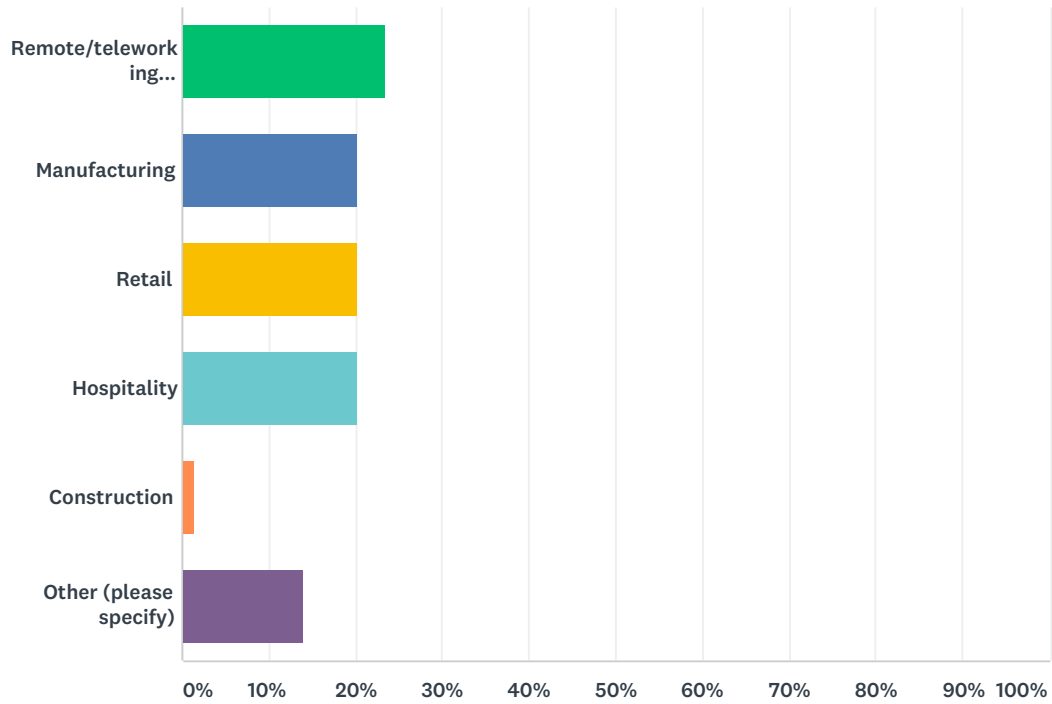
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ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Restaurant	62.50%	40
Coffee shop	35.94%	23
Convenience retail	21.88%	14
Clothing store	4.69%	3
Outdoor recreation or sporting goods store	29.69%	19
Food/grocery	32.81%	21
Other (please specify)	25.00%	16
Total Respondents: 64		

Q12 What types of jobs are best suited for Portland?

Answered: 64 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Remote/teleworking opportunities	23.44%	15
Manufacturing	20.31%	13
Retail	20.31%	13
Hospitality	20.31%	13
Construction	1.56%	1
Other (please specify)	14.06%	9
TOTAL		64

Q13 What is your vision for Portland?

Answered: 42 Skipped: 22

What is your vision for Portland? (question 13)

Open-Ended Response

1. It could be a Great town if everyone took care of their properties
2. Could be a Nice Clean Town with some Help.
3. We are planning to put our home up for sale next month, but we're concerned about the impact that our neighbor's messy yard across the street will have on our own selling price. His dead grass is about 2 feet high, there is some beat-up old furniture and a rusty pickup truck that is on the yard itself and he has a terrible-looking trailer with a broken window in the driveway that he uses for storage. We asked him to clean the mess up and even offered to help, but he just laughed and said that the way he maintains his property is none of our business. So my vision of Portland is to enforce all the Codes pertaining to Properties.
4. Again, I would like to see a borough clean up. The borough gives the impression of being depressed and sloppy, and not attractive to potential new residents. Portland is a very small town and should be redeveloped that way. People like the charm of small towns and unique opportunities. A cute restaurant or two with weekend opportunities for a craft/farmer fair would be something g to attract people to the area.
5. I believe the best option for Portland's future is to market it as a safe, attractive, middle-class bedroom community for people who work in NJ, in the Lehigh Valley, in Stroudsburg, etc. Obviously I do not know who owns every single parcel of land in town, but it would seem there is ample land in this town on which a new sub-division or two might be built. Who wouldn't like to see a dozen new middle-class houses built along, say, Hester Street or down by Maki? How about a developer converting some of the empty storefronts or abandoned buildings into townhouses (or razing them and building new)? There is supposed to be a new commuter station going in at DWG in a couple of years. Portland should prime itself for commuter-fueled residential growth, and market itself (well, to the extent that is feasible) as a lower-tax alternative to New Jersey. I am a professional who works in NJ and prefers to live here rather than somewhere in Warren, Sussex or Morris counties, where the taxes are higher, housing costs are higher, and residents are subject to the caprices of NJ state govt. Portland could be a saner alternative. I do not think its future is as an industrial hub or mecca for business. Its future is as a smart-growth bedroom community for middle-class commuters.
6. River town, small town feel Tourism, Geo Tourism, Lots of events on main St. Façade make over on main st
7. Described above. Use your assets. History and riverfront. There's nothing to bring people to Portland. It's really for locals but even for us there's not much outside of convenience. Downtown should remain a walking city area in which people can walk around and enjoy themselves. Go to the river. Have lunch. Look at historic homes and train station. Shop. Think about areas like New Hope. Definitely need a cafe. Perhaps a semi-urban winery (like in Easton). Keep all the good, slower community oriented pace of things. Tree lighting and singing. Add in Christmas cookie show-down (like the

- popular cupcake show down and chili bake-off).
8. Portland is located in a beautiful area, many commuters pass through, we are not that far from ESU, a restaurant or diner with takeout options, more apartment options that are reasonable for young people, etc. Could really help revitalize the area.
 9. For the borough to get rid of the harassing police dept.!! To learn that the septic system is a joke!!
 10. Small businesses. Maintaining the small town feeling.
 11. If it keeps going the way it is, Portland will become just like Grand Central Waste Dumps...If it turns around and the borough officials start enforcing the Laws of the town, it could be a beautiful place to live. Scenic, close to major highways and the del. river...
 12. My vision is that the town would be full of homeowners looking to settle down and stay, rather than the revolving door of renters who have not ties to or interest in the town.
 13. Being a resident here my entire life I hope to be able to start and raise my own family here with the same fun, safe, and community feeling I had
 14. Get some decent stores in the downtown area.
 15. A great family-oriented growing businesses
 16. Newer and younger leadership and ideas. More small businesses and retail. No more antiques and needless stores. More jobs. More places and activities for all residents.
 17. Slightly smaller version of Nazareth. Clean, with nice opportunities for small and mid-size businesses.
 18. I would like to see a total face lift. Portland is so depressing, so many empty store fronts, PNC isn't even pretty.
 19. When we got are home it was a great town to live in. But now with the people that rent the house across the street don't take care of the homes and it brings down the street.
 20. To merge with UMBT
 21. A place for our community to come together on weekends and holidays and get to know our neighbors
 22. Small town feel, coffee shop, diner, more retail in town. More homes repaired.
 23. Cute quaint quiet community that comes together for each other and welcomes visitors to downtown fun
 24. Active downtown with businesses that make it a destination spot, not just a drive through or around
 25. To be an attraction for tourists and to have convenient stores and restaurants for the community to enjoy. A bike trail to Dwg would be amazing!! Someone needs to turn the train station into a restaurant/bar/shops. Think of all the people that come off the river! We could partner with the rental places and they could do packages that include food and pick up at the restaurant.
 26. To be as beautiful and busy as it once was
 27. To maintain its small sleepy town appeal, while not falling prey to chain stores and large housing developments.
 28. This is a wonderful town. I would love to see our business area thrive. There is such

- natural beauty all around us, it's sad to see our downtown area in such a sad state...
29. Quaint town offering dining, light shopping and outdoor amenities
 30. Rebuild downtown
 31. That it stays a quaint quiet little town
 32. Small town community
 33. A place where kids are welcomed and the ones who run it are friendly and approachable.
 34. I'd love to see a decrease in empty/abandoned storefronts. Tourism is key... I'd love to see people visit Portland for the same reasons they are drawn to New Hope, PA... clean historical appearance, fun shops, local artisans, a few good eateries, easy access to recreational activities, all within walking distance of town proper.
 35. Similar to Delaware Water gap, small businesses cute restaurants, recreation.
 36. Should strive to be residential mostly. Too many years of no success in forcing business development. Town ultimately not biz friendly
 37. I would like to continue to see more of the arts in Portland. I have seen cities that have grown through the arts. Squim, WA, or Wilmington DE (<http://www.delawareartsalliance.org/arts-economic-prosperity-reports/>)
 38. Being the gateway to the Poconos. Bring in tourism by using our river front .Also jobs are needed badly.
 39. Seeing that the properties are fixed and kept up would be a good start
 40. For the store fronts to be occupied and thriving. Owned and managed by local families! Small mom and pop shops.
 41. More local things to do, and shop. And a PARK for the kids