

MARCH 1, 2025

LANSDALE IMPROVEMENT ACTION PLAN

THE VISION

To create a thriving and economically viable downtown by increasing and diversifying business attraction and retention, improving overall facades, signage, cleanliness and accessibility. To attract investment in our main street and beyond through marketing of existing businesses and the promotion of available real estate. To create a pro-business atmosphere by forming coalitions, committees, and alliances, with local businesses, council, non profits, and private donors to convene together to get this job done

HOW WE GET THERE

- Uplift business voices and create a culture of collaboration and problem solving
- Identify business leaders who can be influencers in the borough
- Identify experts in town who can offer their expertise/services to this campaign
- Develop relationships and seek advice from successful, neighboring towns
- Craft a realistic plan with actionable items that we can report back on
- Find alignment, meet regularly, asses progress and keep pushing forward



WAYS TO MOVE FORWARD

1 *A Business Improvement District*

2 *A Full Time Main Street Manager*

3 *A Marketing Plan for the Borough*

4 *Coordination with the Economic Development Committee, the Lansdale Business Alliance and Discover Lansdale*



- Funding \$\$\$ and the man hours needed
- Rent Prices, Diversifying Businesses
- Parking Concerns
- Local business alignment and buy in
- Local government buy in and coordination

CHALLENGES WE FACE

IDEA 1 A BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT



What the heck is it? And why should we care?

A Business Improvement District would create an independent board, district and entity, comprised of the *businesses themselves!* Different from the Lansdale Business Alliance, a BID is a legal entity, able to access revenue streams such as public and private grants, donations, loans and local subsidies. This would happen independent from the borough budget and so would not affect our overall tax base. The BID could determine how big or small their budget needed to be and how they wanted to raise funds, borrow, or apply for grants without being shoe-stringed by council.

An Entity Run By Businesses and Stakeholders



BIDs also have the freedom to create policies for downtown such as norms for public spaces, sidewalks and facades in the district (much like a homeowner's association requires lawn upkeep, discourages unsightliness etc). A BID would allow business owners themselves to determine their policies and vision- only policies and plans by businesses in the BID could get approved. In this way a BID can act independent of the local government to improve the services and quality of the district and downtown, providing agency to and acting in the best interest of the businesses themselves, without being hindered by the governmental process.

There are many resources to explore when establishing a BID, including the [Main Street Matters program](#) through PA DCED



Almost all of our neighbors with successful downtowns revitalized through a Business Improvement District or Main Street Program

More Examples of what a BID could do

Business Recruitment and Retention:

Conducting market research, managing financial incentives to entice new businesses.

Parking and Transportation Management:

Solving public parking problems, managing public parking, maintaining public transportation

Design: Managing façade improvement programs, outlining urban design guidelines for renovations and/or new construction.

Maintenance:

Collecting trash, removing graffiti, washing sidewalks, landscape maintenance, shoveling.

Strategic Planning:

Developing a vision and plan for the area.

Security and Hospitality:

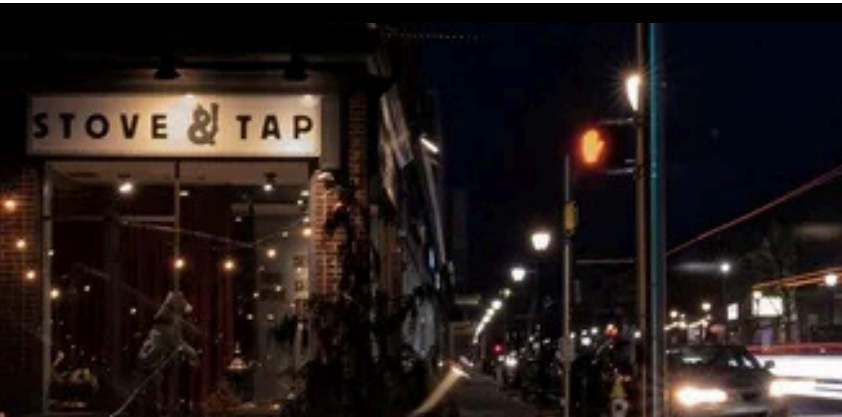
Hiring uniformed security, installing cameras, staffing tourism information centers.

Marketing to Consumers:

Organizing festivals and events, promoting the area with advertising, newsletters, and special events, installing signage and producing maps

Streetscape Improvements:

Installing new lighting and aesthetically pleasing street furniture or landscaping.



What a BID Plan Could Look Like

Requires extensive research and coalition building.

- Meet with other municipal BID programs to identify first steps, resources and suggestions
- Explore hiring a lawyer or consultant to help draft the plan and ordinance to create the BID
 - Find out if our solicitor can help with this
- Input from LBA, EDC and other businesses
 - Create an education deck on BID pro's/con's and options for an ordinance
 - Schedule presentations and meetings with community and committees
 - Create a survey and find alignment with businesses
- Pursue grant and private funding opportunities
- Create a steering committee, and draft ordinance
- Create a budget proposal

A BID is not our only option, and it certainly will take time, resources and a big consensus from local businesses on what this vision and plan should look like for Lansdale. If businesses find alignment and do decide they want a BID, a separate steering committee would need to be formed and an ordinance put forth to council.



IDEA **2** A FULL TIME MAIN STREET MANAGER



Who is that? And why should we care?

A Main Street Manager is a *key* component to moving our Main Street and other businesses forward, through fostering collaboration between local businesses, government, and community organizations. On our Economic Development Committee I voted to approve our first, trial, part-time manager, however it became apparent that we need dedicated, full time boots on the ground to get this job done. A Main Street Manager is a *small* investment with huge potential return for the future of our town.

Examples of what a MS Manager can do:

- Manage grant applications.
- Plan preservation efforts.
- Organize community events.
- Promote downtown activities.
- Educate businesses.
- Serve as a listener, collaborator, and coordinator.
- Represent the community regionally and nationally.
- Develop and maintain a deep knowledge of the local business landscape.
- Manage relationships with key stakeholders.
- Assess the management capacity of downtown organizations.
- Design: Improve the physical appearance of the downtown area.
- Promotion: Market the unique characteristics of the downtown area.
- Organization: Build consensus and cooperation among stakeholders.
- Economic Vitality: Find new or better purposes for Main Street enterprises. Act as a liaison to showcase local real estate, and develop relationships with key financial stakeholders

Our Lansdale Economic Development Committee is currently in talks to find the funding for a full-time Main Street Manager in coordination with Discover Lansdale. Attend our EDC meetings to find out more about this initiative and what it could mean for the future of Lansdale. EDC meets in the council chambers at 6:30 PM the third Monday of every month. All are welcome!



IDEA **3** A BOROUGH-WIDE MARKETING PLAN



What's in a marketing plan anyway? And why should we care?

Many marketing activities can and should happen through a Business Improvement District and also a Main Street Manager, however there is no need to wait for those processes before beginning an advertising plan. Advertising and marketing campaigns can be expensive, and time intensive. It is generally not the function of local government to advertise and market (our borough is focused on everyday needs like public safety and keeping the lights on with a shoe string budget), *however*, as electeds and leaders we can help identify and coordinate partnerships with local committees, volunteers, businesses and nonprofits to greatly cut back on cost, guide this vision, and accelerate this process.

Any vision for Lansdale needs to have input from a vast array of borough stakeholders. Initially this plan can be started within the Economic Development Subcommittees and the Lansdale Business Alliance, then the bulk of the implementation should be shifted to our Business Improvement District and Main Street Manager. Finding stakeholder alignment, and the man hours and funding may be difficult, BUT, doing nothing is not an option.

What a Marketing Plan Could Look Like

Requires some funding and volunteer manpower

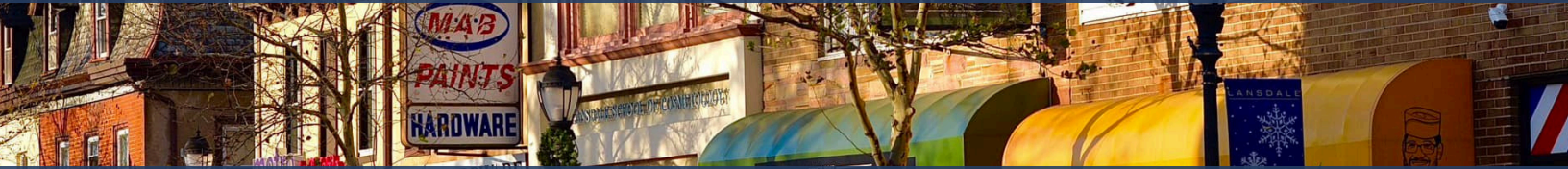
- Promote the borough by crafting a story, a vision and a brand
- Create and utilize brochures, digital ads, a website and SWAG
- Find volunteer designers in town to collaborate for free or at low cost
- Create a budget for a digital campaign and draft a budget proposal
- Develop relationships with press and media outlets and vigorously promote events in online publications both in and outside of Lansdale
- Promote real estate in coordination with local Realtors' associations
- Hire a full time, internal main street manager dedicated to this cause
- Coordinate to feature businesses in a Lansdale-centric ad campaign
- Promote borough events through coordination with Discover Lansdale and other non profits



IDEA

4

COORDINATION WITH THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE, THE LANSDALE BUSINESS ALLIANCE & DISCOVER LANSDALE



What does this mean? And why should we care?

There are many entities and groups of stakeholders already in existence in the borough. In some cases we don't need to reinvent the wheel, we simply need to coordinate the existing structures and make sure all of the pieces are talking to each other and moving forward with a shared vision in a similar direction. Discover Lansdale has done incredible things for our town, providing free entertainment and events to our borough. Our Economic Development Committee, under Councilman Carroll's leadership has already developed subcommittees working on many of the objectives in this plan already. And our newly formed Lansdale Business Alliance represents a vast array of owners who are invested, engaged, and having meaningful discussions to move our borough forward.

Fixing a town and implementing a marketing plan is a HEAVY lift. To get these ideas off the ground, we will need input, coordination and help from all stakeholders in the borough. Committees and non-profits have different compositions of people and also different skillsets to offer. To enhance cohesive planning and implement more efficiently and quickly, we should coordinate, share resources and develop plans together wherever possible.



What Coordination Could Look Like

Requires engagement and coalition

- Promote the Lansdale Business Alliance and Economic Development Committee
 - Door knock or lit drop businesses to inform them of grants and to invite them to meetings
- If meetings don't work for folks, promote accessibility by posting news, updates, and opportunities to engage in a central location for businesses to follow, utilizing a FB page or an email list serve and administering surveys to collect input from businesses who can't attend
- Foster a relationship with Discover Lansdale to cross-promote events
- Ensure coordination of EDC and LBA through designated liaisons and sharing campaign planning
 - Host regular gatherings with delegates from each group to share resources, update groups on the work they are doing, check in on campaign progress, and work toward a common vision

Other Issues Facing the Borough

Parking

According to some, we don't have a parking problem. According to most, it's atrocious. One of the tasks of our BID and Main Street Manager would be to use their expertise to offer us multiple solutions to choose from, or to help us find funding. However, current options include advocating for free parking and/or utilizing funding currently sitting in the Parking Authority to purchase a local lot.

Real Estate Prices & Vacancies

The borough can't control rent prices in town, nor what businesses go where. Nor do I think our business friends want us to put a cap on their income or tell them whom they can rent to. But we have heard that commercial rent is high and a deterrent when realtors show properties. How can we attract businesses who can afford to be here? Can we assist businesses with online sales and marketing to make the rent worth their while? These issues could be addressed through our EDC or marketing plan. Any plan to address vacancies should be incentive based and *not* punitive to small businesses.

A Disconnected Corridor and Connecting Beyond Main

Another complaint I hear from our friends on the North end is the disconnection of Main Street. It's true that we have some commercial gaps, and there's not much we can currently do about it. But, thinking creatively, how can we promote ALL of our businesses, and not just those on Main Street. Can we address this through zoning? Can we organize a North End and Off Main business festival?

We Have to Start Somewhere...

This plan is not all encompassing, but a list of suggestions and ideas. A springboard for further discussion. A calling to collaborate and communicate in a productive way like never before. If business owners decide they don't want a BID, then no BID. At least we will have the venues and information to explore this and other topics further. **We have to start somewhere.**

Who wouldn't want a music venue or theatre? How can we come together to attract these private investors and promote our town? Most of these ideas involve heavy community organizing and a concerted lift from members of our community. Whatever our vision ends up being, I believe **there are enough willing hands and thoughtful minds in Lansdale to make it happen.**

But we need someone to put things to paper, coordinate between the businesses and the government, forge new connections, and keep everyone communicating and on track. **To keep bringing new ideas to the table, and to LISTEN to community members and business owners.** As your mayor I would make it the staple of my office to be this liaison and organizer, to offer my services and skills in marketing, public affairs, campaign management and relationship building to pull all of the pieces together. Above all, I promise to be #TeamLansdale. Now, let's get to work! ----- Rachael

