



**SECTION 1: OVERVIEW**

**CHAPTER 2: IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES**

**INTRODUCTION**

The market assessment provides detailed information on the consumer market that is available to support new venues, including recreational uses, medical uses, residential development and restaurants on the Fifth Street Highway / Allentown Pike Corridor. There are a number of factors, however, that will impact Muhlenberg Township’s ability to recruit new uses to the Corridor. Physical changes, redevelopment, and transportation improvements will be required before the Township can effectively compete in the region to attract new retail and/or restaurants to this Corridor.

**FACTORS IMPACTING THE CORRIDOR**

**IDENTITY/SENSE OF PLACE.** The four-mile Fifth Street Highway / Allentown Pike Corridor offers an array of retail, hospitality, service, restaurant, and employment centers. As other areas within the region have experienced recent growth, the Corridor saw little or no activity during this same time period. Interviews with real estate firms revealed the difficulty that property owners and real estate brokers are having with the recruitment of mid-tier retail to the Corridor. Retail development has changed over the past decade to meet the consumers’ preferences and demands. The



Stagnant Development along the Corridor



rebirth of down-towns and cities has caused suburban development to transform from strip centers to lifestyle and power centers that contain the amenities currently provided in a downtown environment: ornamental street lighting, benches, banners, trees, and planters. The image on the bottom left of this page was taken from High Construction’s website promoting the power center in Wyomissing. This new center has been successful in attracting the mid-tier retailers that Muhlenberg Township is having difficulty attracting. To compete in today’s retail market, the Fifth Street Highway / Allentown Pike Corridor will need to transform into a corridor that provides the pedestrian amenities that will create the sense of place that appeals to today’s consumers. The investment made by Target and Giant on the Corridor reinforces the fact that the demographics are not the deterrent from recruiting mid-tier retailers.

**RATIO OF COMMERCIAL SPACE TO EMPLOYMENT USE** The current ratio of commercial use (2.9 million square feet) to employment use (351,000 square feet) on the Corridor is 8 to 1. During the time that NGK Metals was fully operational, the Fifth Street Highway / Allentown Pike Corridor was vibrant and growing. The facility’s closure removed consumers who would typically frequent stores and restaurants located on the Corridor. The Township should work toward rebalancing the ratio of commercial space to employment space/recreational space by creating opportunities for new employment centers, hospitality, and recreational uses. The fact that Unique Pretzel and TrimMasters chose to expand their facilities within the Corridor underscores the fact that this area provides a strong foundation for employment.

**ESTABLISH A THEME/CONSISTENCY ON THE CORRIDOR** The length of the Corridor makes it difficult to have a common theme or any type of retail consistency. There are natural and man-made breaks in the retail areas along the entire length of the Corridor. These breaks which include the Quarry Lake, school district campus and residential neighborhoods, create three separate nodes that should be developed with a consistent theme.

This implementation strategy focuses on each of these three nodes separately, providing a plan for how to improve the entire Corridor by establishing a different plan of action for each node. In the end, the Fifth Street Highway / Allentown Pike Corridor should become a place where people want to live, work, play, and visit.

**RE-CREATING THE CORRIDOR**

**GATEWAY VILLAGE DISTRICT (FOCUS AREA 1) – A PLACE TO PLAY (NORTHERN GATEWAY TO TUCKERTON AVENUE)**

Node 1 is the gateway to the Corridor and should provide a hospitable, welcoming entrance. This area is a combination of residential and retail. Major anchors include Wal-Mart and Sam’s Club. Smaller supporting uses include the McDonald’s Restaurant, 5th Street Diner, Tractor Supply, Bower’s Marine Sales, Dunkin Donuts, dental offices, a garden center, and other smaller retail and office uses. Unclaimed Freight relocated to this area in November 2012. Tuckerton Road serves as the southern boundary for this node.



Wal-Mart

According to the market assessment, the Fifth Street Highway / Allentown Pike Corridor lacks a mid- to upper-tier hotel, conference center, and an indoor soccer facility with outdoor fields (sports complex) to support tournaments and other activities. A hotel/conference center and a sports complex are two synergistic uses that will help to strengthen the smaller supporting retail that currently exists, while creating a new consumer market to support new retail and dining on the Corridor. Also, the large anchors that currently exist will provide retail services to those using the sports complex and conference center.

**TARGETED SITE FOR DEVELOPMENT** The parcel that sits directly behind Wal-Mart and the North Reading Plaza should be targeted for new development. The site, currently being marketed for \$900,000, is approximately 51.89 acres and has access from Fifth Street Highway / Allentown Pike and Leesport Avenue. Water, sewer, and dark fiber are readily available to service the site’s development.





**CHALLENGES FOR THE SITE**

Development on the site does not come without its challenges. The site contains 230kV (high tension) and 69kV transmission lines. As shown on the picture to the right, these lines form a partial triangle on the site, which makes it challenging to use the site for significant development. Preliminary discussions with First Energy have revealed that the 69kV transmission lines fronting Fifth



Site Targeted for Development

Street Highway / Allentown Pike can be moved to facilitate development on the site. The costs, however, would be borne by either the developer or the Township. The cost to relocate could range between \$500,000 and \$1,000,000 per pole depending on the relocation plan. Additionally, a portion of this property is located within Ontelaunee Township. Ontelaunee Township will need to be included in the early planning process for this development.

**COMMERCE CENTER DISTRICT (FOCUS AREA 2) – A PLACE TO LIVE AND WORK (BELLEVUE AVENUE TO TUCKERTON ROAD)**



Target Development

Node 2 was selected by Target, PetSmart, and Giant Food Stores as the site for their new retail location within the Town Square Shopping Center. Their investment in the Corridor underscores the fact that the demographics of the primary trade area are not a deterrent to recruiting new retail.

Employment anchors include TrimMasters, Unique Pretzel, and the Muhlenberg School District campus. Residential neighborhoods provide an immediate consumer market for this area.

The strategy for continuing to strengthen Node 2 concentrates on adding new employment uses as well as mixed-use development that combines retail, commercial, and residential uses. There are two sites within this node that offer opportunities for redevelopment/development. The first is the NGK Metals site, and the other is the land between the Quarry and the Town Square Shopping Center (Quarry Lake).

**NGK METALS SITE**

Redeveloping the NGK Metals site would greatly improve the eastern gateway to the Corridor. The site once served as an important employment center for the Township and the Corridor, but this site now has its challenges. As with many brownfield sites, addressing environmental liability and the demolition and remediation costs presents the greatest barriers to redevelopment. The Township should work with the owners of the NGK Metals site to secure an established developer that is accustomed to redeveloping brownfield sites.

To accommodate industrial development, the site could potentially be subdivided to minimize impacts to the regulated landfills. This would require coordination with both the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), using the Pennsylvania Land Recycling Program as the redevelopment tool. Suggestions for dividing the site include the following:

- First-tier frontage along Tuckerton Road – prime office space
- Light industrial users
- Solar photovoltaic (PV) panels could potentially be placed on EPA- and DEP-regulated landfills to generate electricity for a future site’s end user, with excess sold back to the electric grid
- CNG/LNG Fueling Stations

To facilitate industrial development and meet regional rail demand, re-establishing rail access would make the site a highly marketable industrial location. The railroad adjacent to the site is the Pennsylvania line of the Reading and Northern Railroad, and it is also a Norfolk Southern line. The Township should work with state and federal officials to secure funding to improve this line and provide a rail siding to serve the NGK Metals site.



NGK Metals Site

**Quarry Lake**



Quarry Lake

Currently owned by the Township’s water authority, the property, which sits adjacent to the Town Square Shopping Center, offers an excellent opportunity for quality mixed-use development. By using sensitive, low-impact development techniques and

LEED certification standards, the pristine environment found at this Quarry site could be preserved. New development should include outdoor cafes, office use, and market-rate residential units. Trails should be included to improve the quality of life for residents and provide pedestrian connections to the shopping center and Fifth Street Highway / Allentown Pike Corridor.

This site offers the best opportunity for Muhlenberg Township to continue the momentum started with the expansion of TrimMasters and Unique Pretzel, and the new addition of the Town Square Shopping Center. Capitalizing on the Quarry as the unique asset in this area will allow the Township to effectively market this site to potential developers.

The Muhlenberg Township Water Authority has identified this site as a location for a future water treatment plant. The treatment plant has been in the planning stages, but cannot move forward due to the high cost of construction. The number of users on the system is not currently sufficient to cover debt service. Now is the time for the Township officials to begin to work with the Water Authority to advance their needs while maintaining this valuable land for redevelopment. Identifying another site for the treatment plant would be the first step in developing a plan for Quarry Lake. The plant could be relocated closer to the rail line with water from Quarry Lake pumped to the plant site.

If the Township can work with the Water Authority to identify a new site, the next step would be to attract a developer for the mixed use project. The Township would need to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Water Authority to secure the site for development. The sale of property and/or long term lease could then be used to offset the costs for the treatment plant. Once an agreement has been finalized, the Township could develop a Request for Qualified Statements (RFQS) from potential developers.



This RFQS would do the following:

- Stipulate conditions identified within the Township/Muhlenberg Township Water Authority MOU
- Provide market information on the study area
- Stipulate the types of uses required within the development
- Identify site improvements and required pedestrian amenities
- Identify Low-Impact Development requirements (LEED Silver is suggested)

**TOWN CENTER DISTRICT (FOCUS AREA 3) – A PLACE TO VISIT (BELLEVUE AVENUE TO THE CITY OF READING)**

The southern-most portion of the Corridor (Node 3) currently serves as the retail hub, and it should continue to serve in this capacity. Anchors include the farmer’s market, Fairgrounds Mall, Muhlenberg Square, Maderia Plaza, Penn Plaza, and K-Mart. BJ’s and Lowes are also located in this node. Approximately 1.7 million square feet of commercial space exists in this area of the Corridor.



Fairgrounds Square Mall

In order to strengthen and eventually recruit new retail to this node, the Township will need to develop a major non-retail anchor that creates additional foot traffic in this node to support the current retail, while creating the demand necessary to support new retailers. The market assessment identified a Medical Mall as a viable option. The Medical Mall would also provide a service to the region as well. It should be noted that the K-Mart site may not be available for years. The process of pulling together the medical institutions, partners, and financial investors will also take years. The development of a Medical Mall will only become a reality with time, commitment, and the pooling of financial resources.

The Township should begin the process by taking the following steps:

- Meet with officials from Reading Regional Health System, St. Joseph Regional Health Network, and Penn State Hershey Medical Center to discuss the continued expansions of their health systems onto the Fifth Street Highway / Allentown Pike Corridor.
- Meet with corporate officials from K-Mart to discuss their long-term plans for the K-Mart site

- Meet with property owners/commercial realtors for the Penn Plaza and Maderia Plaza to discuss the expansion of the areas health systems onto the Fifth Street Highway / Allentown Pike Corridor



Station Medical Center, Altoona, PA  
Source: Blair Medical Associates

**RE-ENERGIZING THE CORRIDOR**

**GOAL 1. IMPLEMENT A DESIRED LAND USE PROGRAM**

**Recommendation 1: Develop, implement, and administer land use regulations that promote revitalization of the Fifth Street Highway / Allentown Pike Corridor**

**STEP 1: AMEND THE TOWNSHIP’S COMPREHENSIVE PLAN**

The Township should amend its Comprehensive Plan to include the adopted Fifth Street Highway / Allentown Pike Corridor Revitalization Plan.

**STEP 2: ADOPT OFFICIAL ZONING CHANGES TO ENCOURAGE REDEVELOPMENT**

Township’s zoning code should be amended in order to encourage and permit the types of redevelopment envisioned in the Fifth Street Highway / Allentown Pike Corridor Revitalization Plan. The Township should determine the appropriate changes for the Fifth Street Highway / Allentown Pike Corridor that promote the vision created within the Revitalization Plan, specifically:

- **Gateway Village District (Focus Area 1) – A Place to Play** – The purpose of the Gateway Village District is to strengthen the design and appearance of existing and future development along the Fifth Street Highway/Allentown Pike Corridor at the northern entrance to Muhlenberg Township. In addition, this district also promotes the appropriate infill of quality and integrated commercial, hospitality, and recreational uses and to provide for a logical transition from these more concentrated business uses to neighboring residential developments (e.g., Cherokee Ranch and Temple neighborhoods) and recreational uses. Appropriate design standards will be used to achieve high quality

architectural design, building repositioning and site design, and multi-modal accessibility.

- **Commerce Center District (Focus Area 2) – A Place to Live and Work** – The purpose of the Commerce Center District is to encourage reuse, continuation and/or expansion of industrial and quality commercial uses that are dependent upon frontage and access to the Fifth Street Highway/Allentown Pike Corridor. Preserving the integrity of neighboring residential uses and promoting a complete streets atmosphere to increase pedestrian safety, accessibility and walkability is of utmost importance. Sensitivity should be given to protecting Laurel Run and the Quarry Reservoir through Low Impact Design stormwater best management practices and where feasible, LEED-certified facilities.
- **Town Center District (Focus Area 3) – A Place to Visit** – The purpose of the Town Center District is to encourage the development of a lively, mixed use area, consisting of retail, office, residential, township governmental, and hospitality uses. It is intended that this district will be a primary focus of community activity. More specifically, purposes of this district are as follows:
  - Promote the development of a commercial service district in which a variety of retail, commercial, office, civic, entertainment and residential uses are permitted in a pedestrian accessible environment;
  - Preserve the integrity and value of existing nearby single- and multi-family residences;
  - Provide flexible regulations regarding streetscape design, landscape design, parking, architectural and façade design, residential dwelling units, and setback standards; and
  - Encourage the development of new and, where appropriate, the adaptive reuse of existing commercial buildings that are harmonious with each other and with the Revitalization Plan recommendations.

Each of the above described districts provide a unique mix of redevelopment and reuse opportunities that will require amendments to the Township’s zoning regulations that are consistent with both this Revitalization Plan and the Township’s Comprehensive Plan. To this end, amending the Township’s zoning regulations is a key implementation step following the adoption of this Revitalization Plan. The amendment process should rezone each of the three districts based on their respective purpose and intent statements outlined above and incorporate specific site development and architectural design criteria.



In addition, future rights-of-way (i.e., public streets, waterways, parks, etc.) that are deemed imperative to achieving the desired vision should be legally identified and preserved by enacting an Official Map pursuant to enabling legislation specified under the Pennsylvania Municipalities Code. The Official Map should identify such rights-of-way both within the Fifth Street Highway/Allentown Pike Corridor and throughout Muhlenberg Township. Logical connections with neighboring municipalities' existing or planned rights-of-ways should also be considered.

**STEP 3: DEVELOP AND ADOPT DESIGN GUIDELINE PRINCIPLES AND DEVELOPMENT GUIDELINES**

Creating a sense of place and an environment that will set the Fifth Street Highway / Allentown Pike Corridor apart from the region's competitive developments should be considered a high priority for Township officials. The Township should accomplish the following:

- Develop design guideline principles
- Establish development guidelines
- Develop incentives to encourage quality development
- Adopt Low Impact Development Guidelines for development and redevelopment projects. Examples of these types of guidelines are included in the Land Use Recommendations.

**GOAL 2. DEVELOP FINANCIAL INCENTIVES**

**Recommendation 2:** Many of the development projects, transportation projects, streetscape enhancements, and pedestrian amenities will require public funding. Additionally, the Berks County Industrial Development Authority participated in the Fifth Street Highway / Allentown Pike Corridor Revitalization focus group session. **The Township should formally meet with the Berks County Industrial Development Authority to identify additional financial incentives to assist with the implementation of this Plan.**

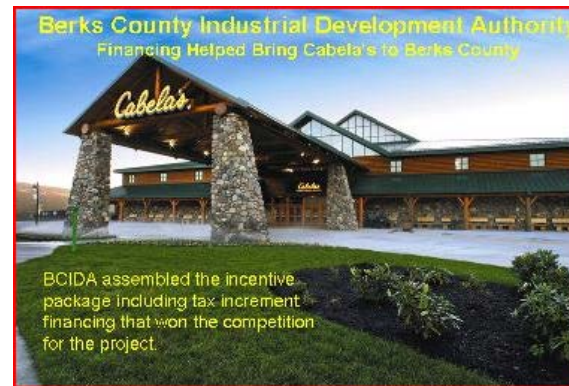
The Township will need to develop various partnerships in order to effectively implement the steps required to revitalize the Fifth Street Highway / Allentown Pike Corridor. A financial partner will be critical in providing the financial incentives required to attract new development to the Township.

**STEP 1: MEET WITH THE BERKS COUNTY INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY (BCIDA)**

The Berks County Industrial Development Authority has been assisting business and industry in Berks County since 1969. More recent projects completed by the BCIDA include:

- Unique Pretzel's Tax Exempt Bond Financing
- Exeter Commons Shopping Center – Tax Increment Financing and Infrastructure Facilities Improvement Program

- Berks Park 78 – 323 acre park assembled by the BCIDA. Tenants include the Dollar General Inc., and PetSmart Distribution centers. The development of the park included a combination of state, federal and local funding



The Township should meet with the BCIDA to introduce the Revitalization Plan and discuss financial incentives and funding mechanisms that can be utilized to encourage the growth and development envisioned within the plan. The BCIDA would also be helpful in identifying potential development partners for the hotel, sports complex, medical campus, and the residential development.

**STEP 2: DEVELOP A LERTA PROGRAM AND TIF PROGRAM**

Local Economic Revitalization Tax Assistance (LERTA) districts are defined areas that provide property owners forgiveness on real property taxes that are directly attributable to a property's increased valuation brought about by new construction or other improvements. According to state law, a LERTA district shall be established for a period not to exceed 10 years.

A taxpayer who applies for an exemption any time before the LERTA district expires is entitled to the full exemption schedule authorized by local ordinance. Local ordinances typically establish an exemption schedule that abates a percentage of a property's assessed value. After the exemption schedule has been satisfied, property owners resume paying all real estate taxes based on their property's full assessed value. Properties located within a LERTA district must continue to remit taxes associated with the property's base value (i.e., the assessed value prior to district establishment).

Pennsylvania's LERTA law gives local government complete discretion in how they structure tax abatements in a LERTA district. Some taxing bodies provide different tax abatements for new construction vs. building renovations and/or might extend the abatement period for projects associated with significant job creation. It is less common that a taxing body would provide 100% abatement

for a full 10 years without attaching specific capital investment and/or job creation requirements.

Tax Increment Financing (TIF) districts are defined areas that capture a portion of tax revenue above a property's initial assessed valuation and utilize that increment to retire debt used to finance public or private improvements related to a new development. TIF-generated financing must be used to pay debt service on improvements associated with the TIF district. Pursuant to Pennsylvania's Urban Redevelopment Law, properties to be included within a proposed TIF district must satisfy the criteria for "blight" and be designated as such by the local municipality. In order to qualify for TIF, projects must be able to satisfy a "but for" test – "but for" TIF the development would not occur. TIF is most beneficial for real estate development projects that have significant up-front infrastructure costs that cannot be supported in the project pro forma based on anticipated revenue from land sales and/or tenant leases. Developers benefit from a TIF because this finance mechanism does not rely on a project's revenue stream (e.g., land sales, tenant leases) to finance improvements. The percentage of incremental tax revenue captured for debt service is often referred to as the "diversion rate" or "capture rate." Each of the 3 local taxing bodies (e.g., municipality, school district, county) must agree to opt in OR opt out of the TIF district and via ordinance or resolution must establish their particular "diversion rate." Each taxing body can establish its own unique diversion rate, but ultimately, the taxes diverted must be sufficient to service TIF debt or there must be a developer agreement sufficient to offset debt service costs not supported by diverted tax increment.

Steps to developing the LERTA and TIF Districts include:

- Identify areas to be designated as LERTA Districts and TIF Districts. These two programs should be used on sites identified as high priority development/redevelopment sites. The LERTA should be applied onto the entire corridor; the TIF should be used for key redevelopment projects such as the NGK site, the site adjacent to Wal-Mart and the Quarry Lake
- Meet with Muhlenberg School District and Berks County to discuss the LERTA and TIF programs.
- Develop LERTA Program. Guidelines should include:
  - Boundaries of the LERTA program
  - Amount of exemption (percentages of taxes to be abated)
  - Number of years for abatement
  - Other stipulations as discussed with local municipal officials
- Develop a TIF program. Guidelines should include:
  - Sites where TIF can be used



- Improvements to be financed through the TIF:
  - Roadways
  - Rail
  - Sewer/Water
  - Utility Relocation
  - On-site improvements
- Develop authorizing ordinances to be adopted by each of the participating municipalities, as well as resolutions for the County and School District.
- Develop a marketing brochure that promotes the LERTA and TIF Programs.

Both LERTA and TIF result in the taxing bodies forgoing future taxes for a predetermined time period in order to stimulate future economic growth. The LERTA program should be used as an incentive for property owners to undertake major improvements on the facades of buildings, as well as internal improvements to buildings that would result in new tax revenue. Because the LERTA program does not require the taxing bodies to incur debt, this program will not put the Township at risk. The Township will benefit by the improved facades, updated commercial buildings, and future tax growth.

The TIF program should be used to incentivize new development. As with LERTA, the TIF will eventually result in new tax growth, but unlike the LERTA, the taxing bodies are at risk for the debt incurred. Care must be taken to review the project to ensure it meets the “but for” test. The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania does offer a TIF guarantee program whereby \$5,000,000 of the principal and interest of the TIF debt can be guaranteed by the State.

**GOAL 3. DEVELOP A TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM TO INCLUDE ACCESS ROADS, TRAILS, PEDESTRIAN CONNECTIONS, AND STREETScape ENHANCEMENTS**

**Recommendation 3: Implement a comprehensive transportation system that balances the needs of vehicles, buses, and cyclists, while creating a safe and comfortable environment for pedestrians to stroll, shop, and explore.**

Providing for safe movement and providing pedestrian connections and amenities throughout the Fifth Street Highway / Allentown Pike Corridor will play a key role in redeveloping the Corridor as envisioned within the Master Plan.

**STEP 1: PRIORITIZE FIRST PHASE TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENTS**

The Fifth Street Highway / Allentown Pike Corridor Revitalization Plan provides for a number of street improvements, trails, pedestrian crosswalks, connections, and public realm enhancements. The Township should prioritize the improvements based on those that will provide a greater impact and encourage private investment.

**STEP 2: MEET WITH THE BERKS COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION/READING AREA TRANSPORTATION STUDY TO DISCUSS INCLUDING PROJECTS ON THE TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM**

Providing access into the site and creating ways for traffic to circulate within the site are key priorities for redevelopment. The Township should meet with the Berks County Planning Commission/Reading Area Transportation Study in order to have the priority projects added to the region’s Transportation Improvement Program. This will enable the Township to apply for transportation funding in the future.

**STEP 3: MEET WITH STATE AND FEDERAL OFFICIALS/AGENCIES TO DISCUSS PRIORITY PROJECTS**

The Township should meet with state and federal officials and agencies to discuss the priority transportation projects. This will permit the officials/agencies to gain firsthand knowledge of these projects prior to the Township applying for state and federal funds. The Township should develop briefing booklets that highlight the following:

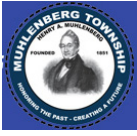
- Fifth Street Highway / Allentown Pike Corridor Revitalization Plan
- Priority projects, benefit and cost
- Vision for the Fifth Street Highway / Allentown Pike Corridor

**STEP 4: APPLY FOR STATE AND FEDERAL FUNDING**

**USING THE FUNDING MATRIX PROVIDED IN THIS REPORT, THE TOWNSHIP SHOULD CONTINUE TO MONITOR STATE AND FEDERAL AGENCIES TO DETERMINE THE APPROPRIATE TIME TO SUBMIT APPLICATIONS FOR FUNDING. THE TOWNSHIP SHOULD DEVELOP A FUNDING CALENDAR THAT NOTES THE PROGRAMS AND DEADLINES FOR SUBMITTING APPLICATIONS. THE TOWNSHIP SHOULD SUBMIT APPLICATIONS FOR FUNDING, WHEN APPROPRIATE.**

**FUNDING STRATEGIES AND POTENTIAL PARTNERSHIP**

Target Site	Private Sector	Public Sector	Other
Northern Gateway Site – Hotel/Convention Center and Sports Facility	Financial Investment to Construct and Operate Hotel	Tax Increment Financing: Relocate Utility Lines, Access Roads  Zoning Changes Required to Facilitate Development	Tourism Bureau to books events at the Convention Center and Sports Complex  First Energy: Relocation of Transmission Lines
NGK Metal Site	Financial Investment to Rehabilitate/New Construction: Office and Light Industrial	Work with owners of NGK Metal Site to secure developer for site.  Tax Increment Financing  Zoning Changes Required to Facilitate Development  Seek and Secure Funding for Rail Improvements and Remediation efforts	DEP/EPA: Pennsylvania Land Recycling Program  BCIDA – assist in seeking developer; secure grant funding



Target Site	Private Sector	Public Sector	Other
The Quarry Site	Financial Investment to Construct Mixed-Use Development  Pedestrian Connections to Shopping Center and Fifth Street Highway / Allentown Pike	Facilitator of Development: MOU with Water Authority  Issue RFQS  TIF for Construction of Access Roads and Infrastructure  Seek and Secure Funding for Trails	Township Water Authority Agreeing to Development Project: Provides Stipulations
The Medical Mall Concept	Financial Investment for Improvements to Retail Space/Conversion to Medical Mall	Facilitates Development: Creates Partnership between Private Sector and Health Sector  TIF Used for Redevelopment Costs	

**GOAL 5. CREATE A BUSINESS DISTRICT ASSOCIATION AND DEVELOP PROGRAMS FOR THE CORRIDOR**

**Recommendation 5: The Township should establish a Business District Association (BDA) that can provide a leadership role to market and promote the Corridor. The BDA should also develop a retail incubator program for the Corridor.**

**STEP 1: IDENTIFY MEMBERS FOR THE BDA**

The Township and the Greater Reading Economic Partnership (GREP) should identify business members within the Corridor that would serve in leadership roles to implement business services for the Corridor. These leaders would serve as the initial board members for the BDA. The Township should identify at least nine business members to serve, liaisons to the BDA should include one member from the Township, one member from the GREP, one member from the BCIDA, and one member from the County.

**STEP 2: ORGANIZE THE BDA**

The BDA should be established as a 501(c) 3 which would allow the organization to accept donations and secure grants. The board members should develop the Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws to be used to govern the organization and its membership.

**STEP 3: DEVELOP COMMITTEES**

The BDA should establish committees to assist in the effort of promoting and revitalizing the District. Committees should include:

- **MARKETING AND PROMOTION** – would develop the Brand/Image for each of the three Districts. Develop marketing and recruitment materials for the Corridor.
- **SPECIAL EVENTS** – establish signature events within the Corridor to draw families and visitors to the Corridor; help promote the visibility of businesses within the Corridor
- **PHYSICAL IMPROVEMENTS** – work with the Township in identifying physical improvements needed for the Corridor. Would include pedestrian street lights and banners, gateway signs, benches, fountains and other pedestrian type amenities to improve the character of the Corridor
- **FINANCE AND BUSINESS SERVICES** – develop budget, membership dues, secure grants and corporate sponsorships, work with BCIDA to develop small business loan packages for the Corridor

- **RETAIL INCUBATOR** – would work with PA DCED and the Greater Reading Chamber of Commerce, the Berks County Latino Chamber of Commerce to develop a retail incubator program for the Corridor. The retail incubator would encourage all types of small retail within the corridor to meet the needs of the market. The retail incubator will take a concerted effort and should not be implemented until the BDA is well established.

**STEP 4: DEVELOP THE BRAND**

As each of the three nodes begins to re-evolve into the places envisioned in the Revitalization Plan, the Township should work with the BDA to create a brand that distinctively markets each area for the region’s consumer. The brand will be a unique identity that will differentiate each node from the other, and the Fifth Street Highway / Allentown Pike Corridor from other competitive locations within the region.

**STEP 5: DEVELOP A PUBLIC RELATIONS AND MARKETING PLAN**

The Township should work with the BDA to develop a Public Relations and Marketing Plan. This plan should include specific elements:

- Media to be used and budget (newsprint, magazines, billboards, brochures, television, and radio)
- Web site development, including social media
- Target audiences and marketing pieces to be used (e.g., developers, residents, new business targets, consumers)
- Press release format, consistent message to be used, and person designated to prepare and distribute press releases

**GOAL 4. CREATE PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS**

**Recommendation 4: Develop partnerships to facilitate development along the Fifth Street Highway / Allentown Pike Corridor.**

Each of the target areas will require commitment from the public sector and financial investment from the private sector. Developing partnerships will be critical in achieving the development envisioned for each target area. The Greater Reading Economic Partnership (GREP) has been involved throughout the Revitalization Plan. The Township should continue to work with GREP to identify potential retailers and investors to partner with.



### STEP 6: DEVELOP A MARKETING BROCHURE

The Township should work with the BDA to develop a retail/restaurant marketing brochure and should include the following key information:

- Population
- Educational attainment
- Household income
- Consumer spending potential
- Map of each node
- Proximity of college and universities
- Medical institutions
- Major employers
- Key anchors
- Testimonials from current retail/restaurant establishments

### GOAL 6. BEGIN TO RECRUIT RETAIL AND RESTAURANTS

**Recommendation 6: Identify and recruit new retail and restaurants based on the findings from the Market Assessment.**

#### STEP 1: IDENTIFY RETAIL AND RESTAURANTS FOR EACH NODE

The Township and BDA should develop retail and restaurant targets to recruit to each node. A tool used by other communities is a subscription to *Retail Lease Trac*. This subscription provides access to information on retailers and restaurants looking to expand within the Township's geographic area. The information includes the footprint required by the retailer (square footage); whether the retailer will locate within a commercial strip center, power center, or stand-alone site; and what other retailers are needed within the area in order to be considered. The name of the retailer's leasing representative, including the contact information, is also provided.

#### STEP 2: BEGIN TO RECRUIT

Once the list of potential retail suitors is developed, the Township can begin to actively recruit new retail and restaurants to the Fifth Street Highway / Allentown Pike Corridor. The Township should become a member of the International Council of Shopping Centers (ICSC). The ICSC assists its members with networking, education, research, information, deal-making, and action on legislation and regulations. Regular membership costs \$100 per year. The ICSC's Retail Real Estate Convention (RECon), held annually in Las Vegas, is the world's largest gathering of retail and real estate professionals, and provides the opportunity to network, make deals, and learn from industry experts. The Township should attend the convention to promote space available in Muhlenberg Township and begin networking with national retailers.

### STEP 3. DEVELOP AN INCUBATOR PROGRAM TO ENCOURAGE SMALL NICHE RETAIL/RESTAURANTS ON THE CORRIDOR

#### STEP 3A: IDENTIFY THE LOCATION

The Retail Incubator Committee should begin to meet with property owners with vacant retail space who are having a difficult time renting the space. A memorandum of understanding should be developed between the property owners and the BDA.

#### STEP 3B: DEVELOP THE PROGRAM

There are a number of agencies and organizations that can assist the BDA in developing a retail incubator program that works for the Corridor. These include:

- **NATIONAL BUSINESS INCUBATION ASSOCIATION (NBIA).** The NBIA advances business incubation and entrepreneurship. The organization provides information, education, advocacy and networking resources to assist early-stage companies.
- **JUMP START INCUBATOR (JSI).** The mission of JSI is to be a catalyst for innovation and entrepreneurial development, to cultivate viable business concepts, provide a solid foundation of support through their critical start-up phase, accelerate commercialization and stimulate growth; enabling emerging companies to secure long-term sustainability, create jobs, increase the tax base, diversify the economy, and enhance the quality of life in the Reading, Pennsylvania region. Partners include:
  - Berks County Community Foundation
  - Small Business Development Center
  - Small Business Administration
  - PA Department of Community and Economic Development
  - City of Reading
  - Reading Business Resource Center
  - Kutztown University
- **PENNSYLVANIA MINORITY BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY (PMBDA).** The PMBDA's loan program is designed to stimulate the creation, retention and expansion of minority owned businesses. Eligible applicants are for-profit business enterprises owned or controlled by one or more socially or economically disadvantaged persons who are residents of Pennsylvania. The disadvantage may arise from cultural, racial, chronic economic circumstances. Such persons include, but are not limited to: African Americans, Hispanic Americans, Asian Americans, Native Americans, Eskimos and Aleuts. (program guidelines have been attached as Exhibit ).

- **GREATER READING CHAMBER OF COMMERCE AND THE BERKS COUNTY LATINO CHAMBER OF COMMERCE.** The Greater Reading Chamber of Commerce and The Latino Chamber of Commerce provide leadership and support for economic development activities in the region. Services include education workshops, free online workshops for entrepreneurs, advocacy and general information.