



Stakeholder Interviews

Stakeholder interviews were scheduled via email and conducted via phone call by a member of the LaBella team throughout July. Due to time constraints, one stakeholder was sent the questions via email, wrote in their answers, and emailed it back. Among those interviewed were:

- Tricia and Joe Marshall - owners of Lilly Belle Meads and President of the Village Merchants Association;
- Peg Riexinger - Lancaster Beautification Committee;
- Sally Stier - Board Chair of the Lancaster Chamber of Commerce;
- Jeff Kupka - Depew Unit Director, Depew-Lancaster Boys and Girls Club;
- Marybeth Gianni - Recreation Supervisor, Lancaster Senior Center;
- Chief Paul Stencil - Lancaster Fire Department;
- Captain Jonathan Ziders - Lancaster Police Department;
- Andy Kufel - Assistant Superintendent, Lancaster Central School District;
- Kara Stock - Library Director, Lancaster Public Library; and
- David Bondrow - Executive Director, Lancaster Opera House.

Feedback from the interviews is organized by question and summarized. A number following the comment indicates that the same general comment was made by more than one stakeholder.

QUESTIONS:

What are Lancaster's greatest assets?

Stakeholders overwhelmingly indicated the Village should continue its successful efforts in attracting new businesses to the downtown area in order to build a critical mass of retailers, service providers, and eating and drinking establishments that will attract more patrons and revenue. Several stakeholders felt the greatest opportunity to strengthen the commercial core is by attracting a greater variety of small, locally-owner shops, while other stakeholders felt the greatest opportunity is in attracting an anchor business, such as a large employer.

Responses:

- Massive growth and revitalization (5);
- Size/ ease of travel/ communication (4);
- People/ families (3);



- Central location in area/ proximity to highway (2);
- Hub for events (2);
- Safe;
- Space for people to recreate;
- Walkability;
- History/ historic buildings; and
- Opera House.

What are Lancaster's greatest challenges?

Most respondents indicated that parking was an issue, but they weren't sure if it was a matter of enough parking, or if people just didn't know where to park. Stakeholders were concerned with one popular business taking up most of the parking for long periods of time, while patrons of other businesses had to walk further. A large number of stakeholders also indicated that "naysayers" and people that fear change may be difficult to convince of new efforts to attract people to the Village and feared they would slow the momentum. Some stakeholders felt as though the core of the Village was too small and wished small business growth would expand to adjacent streets, while still receiving the same attention in promotional materials that businesses along Central Avenue receive.

Responses:

- Parking- lack of spaces or where to find it (6);
- Naysayers/ people that don't want anything to change (5);
- Space (3);
- Traffic/ incidents (2);
- Wayfinding (2);
- Communication;
- Slow processes;
- Keeping volunteers; and
- Not a coherent vision.



What new trends and opportunities have you experienced in Lancaster and how do you imagine that the Village could build on these opportunities?

The majority of stakeholders love what has happened in recent years, with the increase in local businesses and restaurants, hosting local events, and the green space that has been created, and want this to continue. They enjoy the strides the Village has made in attracting new people and believe great ideas spawn as the result of established residents mixing with the new. Some respondents feel as though the small businesses don't have enough of a variety for long-term support or long enough hours for those that work to patronize their business afterwards. Others feel bringing in an anchor store, such as Whole Foods or Trader Joes, would give seniors more food options in the Village and boost the support for the locally-owned small businesses by drawing people in from the surrounding area.

Responses:

- Keep doing what the Village is doing by bringing in new businesses (7);
- Bring in an anchor business (2);
- New folks mixing with established residents (2);
- More variety in shops (2);
- Supporting local businesses (2);
- Keep historical aspect of buildings, but modernize;
- School system;
- Additional hours for small businesses;
- Bars/ breweries;
- Partnerships;
- More apartments;
- Extending business district; and
- Walkability.



What unique needs and opportunities do you see for Lancaster, given your organization's role and experience?

The greater part of the stakeholders mentioned that they wished for a greater number of family-friendly and senior-friendly events, but worried that parking makes it difficult for seniors to get to where they're going and deters others from attending these events. They wished for a committee to coordinate new and standing events so that there was constant activity. Other stakeholders said that many seniors walk, and safety was an issue while crossing the streets. Many stakeholders that indicated parking was an issue thought that wayfinding and guiding guests to other parking options may alleviate some of that concern, while also directing visitors to other nearby amenities. Nearly every stakeholder mentioned that the green space throughout the Village made it more attractive and welcoming to guests, but the reliance on volunteers to maintain all of that green space is making it difficult to keep attractive; full time staff may be needed to maintain and expand beautification efforts. One stakeholder suggested including school children in the revitalization of the Village. The Lancaster School system has several "academies," or areas of study, some of which are engineering and technology, hospitality and tourism, and skilled trades, all of which could play an important role in the future of the Village and give young people the impetus to stay when they're older.

Responses:

- Family friendly activities (2);
- Help elderly more through services, community center, and events for them (2);
- Parking (2);
- Wayfinding (2);
- Graffiti;
- Road markings;
- Timing of traffic lights;
- Variety of restaurants;
- Green space;
- Including the school/ students in the revitalization, new projects;
- A committee to take control over scheduling of events;
- Needs a unique identity;
- Mental health services; and
- More people to manage green space (currently volunteers).



Are there uses that you would like to see more of in Lancaster?

An overwhelming amount of stakeholders wanted an increase in the number of events and restaurant and shopping options in the Village, but were concerned that there weren't enough places that accommodated kids. There was also a concern that there is an increasing amount of trash as more and more people came into the Village and that garbage pick-up needed to be increased to have a safe, clean Village.

Responses:

- Amount of activities/ events (5);
- Restaurant/ shop options (3);
- Places for kids to go (2);
- Continue the welcoming environment;
- Support of older clubs;
- Garbage pick-up;
- Need more volunteers;
- Handicap accessibility;
- Recreational parks/ splash pads;
- More resources;
- Parking;
- Wayfinding;
- Ride share;
- Safe pick-up spots;
- Traffic; and
- Tourism.

Are there uses that you would like to see less of in Lancaster?

Although not a use, speeding and traffic were identified by stakeholders as something they'd like to see less of. While they acknowledged that traffic was bringing people to the Village, they thought a coordination of traffic lights may alleviate the back-up during heavy traffic hours. Speeding was identified as a deterrent and safety hazard for walking seniors and children. Several stakeholders also mentioned that they were concerned about the types of businesses that may open in the Village and the type of clientele they would bring; others thought that the Village had enough bars and were looking for a more family-friendly environment.



Responses:

- Traffic/ speeding (3);
- Cannabis/ vaping shops;
- Bars;
- Areas for volunteers to maintain- not less but don't add more; and
- Small town politics.

As the LPC makes decisions on what projects to advance to the implementation phase, what criteria should be used in these decisions?

Most stakeholders felt that projects that benefitted the entire community should be scored higher and looked at more seriously than those that didn't; issues such as quality of life, accessibility, and attracting people were important criteria to consider. Some non-profit organizations wanted the LPC to consider that any money donated or made by their organizations went directly into programming and that critical building repairs should be addressed and supported.

Responses:

- Benefit the entire community/ consider public input (4);
- Highlight history (2);
- Most bang for the buck;
- Make sure diversity is considered and that newcomers feel welcome/ included;
- Whatever attracts people;
- Consider supporting building needs for groups whose money goes towards their mission and can't afford building repairs;
- Variety in retail;
- Support for community that walks;
- Accessible parks for kids/ seniors;
- Quality of life;
- Forward thinking; and
- Spend money where people can see it.



Are there community needs that should be given special weight in these considerations?

Accessibility to the Village's historic buildings was the number one answer given by our stakeholders, who also placed inclusion for families and kids as a priority. Other stakeholders agreed that anything that brought more people and increased attention to the Village should be given special weight.

Responses:

- Accessibility (2);
- Recent track record;
- Inclusion;
- Places for families;
- Established businesses;
- Park space;
- Services for kids;
- Structural repairs; and
- Anything that will bring more people and attention to the Village.

Are there any hot button issues that we should be aware of/ general comments that haven't already been discussed here?

While most stakeholders didn't have anything additional to add, there were a few notable responses. One stakeholder indicated that there was a goose poop issue in the parks that was making the parks unfriendly and unsanitary to use. Communication issues between the residents, businesses, and the Village were also cited as events had been canceled or moved seemingly without any prior notice. Another concern was getting more people involved; the green space is largely maintained by volunteers, and while most people stated they liked it, there are not enough volunteers to maintain all the garden beds and pocket parks and keep them attractive.

Responses:

- Goose poop in the park;
- Communication issues between residents/ businesses and the Village; and
- Need more people to get involved.