

JENKINTOWN REVITALIZATION MASTER PLAN

Borough of Jenkintown, PA



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In association with:
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INTRODUCTION

Over the past twenty years, a number of planning efforts have been conducted to revitalize Jenkintown Borough and recover its former reputation as a regional destination. Most notably, the planning firm of Venturi, Rauch & Scott-Brown completed a study in 1980 entitled "A New Main Street for Jenkintown." Since public participation and support was minimal during the planning process, the Venturi Study was never fully implemented. Just a few years ago, a debate over parking revived interest in the Venturi Study and in community action to solve Jenkintown's most pressing problems. The parking debate led to the construction of the "Town Square" and the formation of the Jenkintown Community Alliance (JCA), a non-profit organization focused on the creation of a "vibrant, diverse, and economically strong business district. Recently, the JCA worked with the Pennsylvania Downtown Center to create a Vision Statement for the entire borough and Action Plans for their organization. JCA's efforts were the catalyst for the current efforts to create a Revitalization Master Plan for the borough. The ultimate purpose for Jenkintown's Revitalization Master Plan is to take the next steps and build upon these previous planning efforts, by focusing the community's future efforts on a set of discrete projects with the best potential for implementation over the next 10 years.

Jenkintown Community Alliance

In January 1999, Jenkintown experienced a conflict that turned into an opportunity. At a standing room only meeting at the elementary school, after weeks of local controversy, the Borough Council reversed a previous decision that would have abandoned the Borough's Open Space plan in favor of a parking lot at the corner of Greenwood Avenue and Leedom Street. The proposed parking lot would have been located in the heart of the "New Main Street" identified almost twenty years before in the Venturi Study. At this meeting, Borough Council voted unanimously for a town square with parking. It was through this park versus parking debate that the seeds of the Jenkintown Community Alliance took root. Most importantly, the debate revealed that many in the community, including residents and business owners alike, cared deeply about the future of Jenkintown and were willing to attend meetings and voice their opinions. Both sides of the debate based their positions on what they felt was best for the future of Jenkintown.

After this watershed meeting, a small group of residents, business owners, and government officials continued to meet to discuss what the town square debate meant for Jenkintown's future. This group became convinced that a larger vision was needed, so that important decisions about the Borough would be made on a consistent, not ad hoc, basis. After receiving input from the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development and the Pennsylvania Downtown Center, members of the group talked to other people in town and reached three conclusions:

- There was a considerable support for developing a consistent vision.
- Members of the community had the right to be involved in creating the vision.
- The only way to create an implementable vision would be if the community created and supported the vision.

In October 1999, a meeting of 60 stakeholders took place at the invitation of the small working group. The stakeholders, vested in Jenkintown's future for many different reasons, heard a representative from the PA Downtown Center describe the community visioning process, and soon after, endorsed the process for Jenkintown.

Following this meeting, the Jenkintown Community Alliance (JCA) was formally organized. JCA's first goal was to make the visioning process a reality. Between January and May 2000, JCA hosted four town meetings, facilitated by the PA Downtown Center. Each meeting drew an average of 100 stakeholders, including residents, business and property owners, and government officials. The meeting attendees expressed overwhelming support for establishing a revitalization effort. Through the visioning process, the following pieces were put into place: a community vision for Jenkintown was developed; and, three task force groups were formed for the JCA--Design, Promotions, and Economic Restructuring--with a set of goals, objectives, and work plans. The visioning process, combined with the Town Square project, has permanently recast the future of Jenkintown in two crucial ways. Jenkintown now has a shared vision of the future, and has a focus for a walkable Uptown area centered on the Town Square.

Jenkintown Vision Statement

Jenkintown is and should remain a diverse, tree-lined community with family-friendly neighborhoods, quality schools, and a small-town atmosphere. By working together, the residents, businesses, property owners, and government of Jenkintown can improve upon our inherent strengths while developing and promoting a vibrant, diverse, and economically strong central business district that reaches its full potential as an attractive and walkable retail, professional, and entertainment destination.

Since JCA's new set of goals, objectives, and work plans would only provide short-term direction, the Borough and the JCA decided that a new Master Plan would be needed to help translate the Vision Statement into reality. So, Jenkintown entered into partnership with the Montgomery County Revitalization Program to obtain funding for a Revitalization Master Plan.