

Easton Main Street Initiative Transformative Strategy 2025

Bridging Campus and Current: Easton's Future as a Vibrant Riverfront College Town

Easton stands at a unique intersection of opportunity, where our historic riverfront setting at the Delaware and Lehigh confluence, coupled with our growing collegiate presence, combine to create a distinctive identity as a riverfront college town. These two assets naturally complement each other – our enhanced riverfront space will provide gathering places for students and community members alike, while our growing college town atmosphere will bring consistent activity and vibrancy to our waterfront areas.

By focusing on both Riverfront Development and Town & Gown initiatives, we create a synergistic approach to community development. Students seeking outdoor recreation opportunities will find them along our riverfront trails and parks, while our riverside amenities will attract visitors who then discover our college town's dining and shopping options. This integrated vision will strengthen Easton's appeal to both prospective students and young professionals, creating a sustainable cycle of growth and community engagement.

The following transformative strategies outline how we will leverage these complementary assets to create a distinctive destination that celebrates both our natural heritage and our academic future.

RIVERFRONT DEVELOPMENT

The convergence of the Delaware and Lehigh Rivers presents a unique opportunity for Easton to leverage its waterfront as a vital community asset. Our riverfront development strategy focuses on creating vibrant spaces that connect downtown to the water while promoting outdoor recreation and river-based activities.

Several projects spearheaded by our Design Committee strive to enhance the connection between downtown and the riverfront. In partnership with the City of Easton, we plan to implement cohesive wayfinding signage linking downtown to riverfront attractions, while making streetscape improvements along key corridors leading to the rivers, including enhanced lighting, public art, and pedestrian-friendly design elements. The committee will support the creation of gathering spaces and viewing areas along the riverfront that celebrate our waterways, complemented by the installation of amenities supporting outdoor recreation.

The Economic Vitality Committee will work to strengthen partnerships with outdoor recreation organizations, particularly the Delaware & Lehigh National Heritage Corridor (D&L Trail). Through these collaborations, we are promoting Easton as a trail town destination and supporting businesses that cater to outdoor enthusiasts.

The Promotions Committee aims to develop new riverfront-focused events and enhance existing programming to activate these spaces throughout the year. Our calendar now includes several events and recreational activities along the riverside location, which we are actively working on enhancing, as well as further utilizing the amphitheater located along the riverbank. Beyond this, the committee plans to pursue partnership opportunities with environmental education organizations such as the Nurture Nature Center, located in our Main Street district, to further engage our community with the riverfront.

Special attention is being given to Sitgreaves Street as a vital connector between the downtown core and the waterfront. This pedestrian-priority corridor will feature enhanced lighting and safety features, complemented by public art installations celebrating our river heritage. Working with City of Easton staff, we will work to improve crossings at Larry Holmes Drive, making this corridor a seamless connection between our downtown shopping and dining with riverfront amenities.

TOWN & GOWN

The partnership with Lafayette College remains a cornerstone of our strategy, as the symbiotic relationship between the college and downtown Easton continues to strengthen. The college's presence enhances our community's vibrancy, while our dynamic downtown serves as a valuable asset for student recruitment and retention. As we embrace our identity as a college town, the entire community benefits from the expanding array of amenities and services. The consistent presence of students, faculty, and college visitors creates the customer base needed to support a more diverse mix of businesses, from casual cafes to upscale restaurants, independent retailers to service providers. This expanded business ecosystem serves not just the college community but all Easton residents. Additionally, the college's influence helps attract cultural programming, arts venues, and entertainment options that enhance quality of life for everyone, making Easton a more vibrant place to live, work, and visit.

Our commitment to integrating Lafayette students into the downtown community is exemplified by our new Easton Farmers' Market welcome tradition. Each incoming first-year student receives market "bucks" and participates in a community walk along the riverfront to the Farmers' Market, creating an immediate connection to both our historic downtown and our natural resources.

The Promotions Committee continues to organize initiatives that introduce students to downtown Easton. We offer narrated walking tours highlighting the district's amenities, coordinate special events and promotions targeting the student population, and strive to maintain active social media campaigns showcasing student-friendly businesses and activities.

Our growing collaboration with Lafayette's Dyer Center creates valuable opportunities for students to gain hands-on experience while supporting local businesses. This partnership encompasses student research projects analyzing downtown business opportunities, internship programs placing students with local entrepreneurs, mentorship connections between students and business owners, and collaborative projects addressing real-world business challenges.

The Economic Vitality Committee actively works to identify and recruit businesses that serve student needs, while creating opportunities for student entrepreneurship. We develop programs that encourage students to shop locally and support businesses in marketing effectively to the college community.

EMSI staff will continue to strengthen ties with Lafayette College through plans to add student representation on all EMSI committees, and regular communication with college administration. We emphasize collaborative planning for major events and initiatives, while integrating student volunteers into downtown programs.

SUMMARY

These transformative strategies position Easton Main Street Initiative to build upon our successful foundation while embracing new opportunities. By focusing on Riverfront Development and Town & Gown initiatives, we will enhance our city's economic vitality while celebrating the natural and institutional assets that make Easton unique. The synthesis of these strategies – creating a true riverfront college town – will distinguish Easton from other communities and establish a strong foundation for sustained growth and community engagement. Through careful implementation of these strategies, we will continue to strengthen Easton's position as a vibrant college town with exceptional recreational and cultural amenities that capitalize on our remarkable riverfront setting.