

Introduction –

My name is Michael Malcanas – I am highly invested in the revitalization of New Kensington, where I own 20 buildings, have brought in 14 new businesses and opened up a brewery. I also own three buildings in Johnstown and will be opening a Voodoo Brewery location there also this year. I bought my first commercial buildings in New Kensington in 2018 and started in 2012 buying foreclosed, residential properties and bringing those back online. We have rehabbed almost 100 properties to date.

What we have achieved:

In New Kensington, we worked with local entrepreneurs to move their business either from their house, or from another location in or outside the City, or even to start a brand-new business. We fostered new growth and development, added jobs and provided opportunities for mostly low-income residents and gave them hope and a future that they could control.

How we achieved it:

We worked with the local residents to encourage them to move their business downtown by building out spaces for them, providing free rent for a start up period, partnering with Penn State NK to provide business classes, and providing advice and support where they needed it.

What our roadblocks were:

Utilities – mostly Electric companies requiring utilities to be moved outside.

Code problems – ADA, Elevators/Sprinkler requirements

How you can be successful:

Eliminate the roadblocks, and bureaucracy associated with building out new spaces. If you want to foster new growth and development and provide an opportunity for low-income residents to own and operate their own businesses, then there needs to be provisions based on variances for code compliance. It is too difficult and expensive for disadvantaged individuals in these areas to build out space like we have. If you want historical buildings to be maintained, then there needs to be provisions for that also. Utility companies need to understand that it is cost prohibitive and hindering for businesses to move all utilities outside. It is also not always possible on buildings that butt right up to sidewalks. Without these provisions, you will end up with cities that look like new strip malls.

Make is simple for people. Be welcoming and accommodating.