

Kyle Wenger – Written Statement
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My name is Kyle Wenger. I live and work here in Lebanon County. I own a redevelopment company called Revital Home Co., where we buy distressed, vacant, and underutilized properties and renovate or redevelop them into better housing. I also own rental properties and work directly with contractors, municipalities, lenders, and tenants. I am not here as a housing expert in theory. I am here as someone actively trying to create housing and seeing firsthand what works, what does not, and where the bottlenecks are.

One thing I have learned is that housing affordability is not just an affordability problem. It is a supply problem. We simply do not have enough housing options, especially for working people, first time homebuyers, young families, seniors looking to downsize, and people who want to stay in Lebanon County but cannot find a place that fits their budget or stage of life.

At the same time, building housing has become harder than most people realize. Construction costs are up. Labor is expensive. Insurance is up. Interest rates are higher. Engineering, utilities, permitting, stormwater requirements, and soft costs all add up quickly. What people often miss is this: many times developers are not choosing not to build attainable housing, the math just no longer works.

I think one of the biggest things we can do is take a serious look at zoning and ask ourselves if the rules we have today still make sense for the problems we are trying to solve.

In Lebanon County, a lot of zoning unintentionally prevents smaller scale housing that historically existed in our communities. Duplexes, triplexes, quads, carriage homes, courtyard apartments, and smaller 10 to 18 unit apartment buildings are largely missing. Not because nobody wants to build them, but because many places simply do not allow them or the requirements make them impossible to financially justify.

Density matters more than people think.

A project often only works financially if there are enough units to spread out land cost, infrastructure cost, financing cost, and construction cost. Parking requirements, setbacks, lot minimums, and density restrictions frequently make projects stop penciling.

A practical example would be a run down house or a vacant lot sitting on a quarter acre. Today, maybe one family lives there. In other cities, a developer may buy that property, tear down a house that is beyond saving, and thoughtfully subdivide the land into two or four smaller homes. Maybe it becomes townhomes. Maybe it becomes a duplex or triplex. Maybe it becomes a small 10 or 12 unit apartment building that fits the character of the neighborhood. Instead of serving one household, that same land now serves multiple families.

We are not talking about skyscrapers in Lebanon County. We are talking about thoughtful infill and neighborhood scale growth.

I think there are several practical things Pennsylvania and municipalities could consider.

First, municipalities should be encouraged to modernize zoning and allow what many call “missing middle housing” by right in more places. Duplexes, triplexes, quads, small apartment buildings, and accessory units should not require an uphill battle every single time. If a project meets clear design standards and neighborhood requirements, it should move quickly.

Second, I think municipalities should consider a fast track approval process for smaller housing projects. If someone wants to redevelop a vacant building, convert upper floors into apartments, or build a modest infill housing project, there should be a streamlined process with predictable timelines instead of months of uncertainty. Time kills deals. Delays add cost, and cost gets passed on to renters and buyers.

Third, I think we should revisit parking minimums and lot size requirements. Parking matters, but in many cases we are requiring more parking than a site realistically needs. Every parking space required can eliminate housing units and increase cost. The same goes for oversized lot requirements that prevent land from being used efficiently.

Fourth, Pennsylvania could create incentives for adaptive reuse and infill housing. We have vacant upper floors over storefronts, old industrial buildings, schools, churches, warehouses, and run down homes throughout Lebanon County that could become housing. A simple state level redevelopment incentive, permit reimbursement, tax credit, or infrastructure assistance for smaller projects could unlock a surprising amount of housing. Maybe this exists already and I am not aware.

Fifth, and this may sound simple, municipalities could benefit from a housing “SWAT team” or housing concierge model. Small boroughs do not always have staff or experience to navigate redevelopment efficiently. Imagine if developers and municipalities had access to a regional housing team that could help move projects through engineering, zoning, permitting, financing resources, and problem solving faster. Many projects die simply because nobody knows how to navigate the process. I am dealing with this in my hometown of Myerstown Borough. For such a small borough with little to no new development, they make the process extremely difficult.

I also think municipalities should look at pre approved housing concepts. If someone wants to build a duplex, quad, or starter home subdivision that already fits local standards, why reinvent the wheel every time? Having pre approved templates could dramatically reduce cost and time while keeping quality and neighborhood fit.

At the end of the day, I think most people want the same thing. We want healthy neighborhoods. We want housing people can afford. We want communities where young people can stay, families can grow, seniors can age in place, and employers can attract workers. We want places that are going to attract and retain talent.

The challenge is that many of the systems we have today unintentionally make the housing we say we want difficult to actually build.

My encouragement would be to think smaller, faster, and more practical. Sometimes solving housing is not about massive developments. Sometimes it is about making it easier to build four homes instead of one, making upper floors livable again, or allowing a small apartment building where today nothing can happen.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my perspective and for having this conversation.