

Team Notes from 11/15/03 DCP Downtown Design Workshop
Section 2 - South Street to Northampton Street

Although Wilkes-Barre may not suffer from the traffic woes of many larger cities, it's always nice to give the pedestrian the option of being away from the noise and tension of street traffic, so they may enjoy the other sounds of the city: conversations among neighbors, a performance by a street musician, children playing together, grocers bartering their goods. Team 2 endeavors to knit together various disparate neighborhoods of downtown between South and Northampton by weaving a network of "pedestrian ways" through the neighborhoods that will allow citizens to reconnect with the city and enjoy such experiences. Of course, the intent is not to restrain these "ways" to just this section, but to find a means of connecting the rest of the city as well. Among other features, these paths might be cobbled for an " old-world" effect, be well lit with historic era street lamps, and offer moments of respite with benches or even small cafes. Many of these paths currently exist in fragmented form, and need only to be clarified to achieve more effective ends.

This section of downtown also holds several hidden opportunities that can then easily become "nodes," or features, along these paths:

- The Luzerne County Medical Society building sits, quiet and dignified, in the rear lot of a South Franklin Street mansion. An under-utilized dirt parking lot backing up to it on South Main Street can utilize this architectural gem as a backdrop for a new mid-block green space, enfronted by retail, where it is needed most.
- An addition to the back side of an existing parking garage that serves South Main Street provides plenty of parking to serve a new adjacent neighborhood marketplace, support for a theater on the north side of East Northampton Street, and general parking for neighborhood residents.
- A community folk art, fine art, and wellness center is proposed as an anchor for the east end of this section, between Wilkes-Barre Boulevard and Pennsylvania Avenue. Positioned across from Bishop Hoban High School, it provides a positive influence for the students and faculty (and replaces a bland strip mall), tempts residents of the somewhat geographically-disconnected Heights neighborhoods to migrate into Downtown, and invites all citizens and visitors to engage in all that the Arts has to offer!