

Team Notes from 11/15/03 DCP Downtown Design Workshop
Section 4 - Market Street to Union Street

Group #4 was particularly interested in the diagrams provided by DCP that compared other city plans with plans of Downtown Wilkes-Barre at the same scale. What immediately caught our attention was the very long length of Wilkes-Barre's blocks versus those of New York, Philadelphia, Rome, Paris, etc. As a result, we endeavored to find ways to break down the distances for pedestrians by creating pathways at mid-block locations.

We also focused on the opportunity to use the proposed Union Street extension of Coal Street as the new primary entrance to Downtown from Interstate 81, placing an intermodal rail and parking center at the intersection of Union and Wilkes-Barre Boulevard and making Union Street a tree-lined boulevard. The River Common end of Union Street would be marked as a destination with a building such as a recreation of the former city greenhouse or a "Tavern on the Green" -style restaurant.

An abandoned east-west rail right-of-way, parallel to Union Street, would provide pedestrian and bicycle access from the Intermodal Center to Kings College, the River Common, and the riverfront trail system.

We located new structured parking at mid-block locations to preserve prime street frontage for retail shops. New urban housing was proposed along River Street and along the perimeter of the vacant lot at the corner of Franklin and Union Streets.

We proposed the landbanking of open land along Wilkes-Barre Boulevard as athletic fields for Coughlin High School; in turn, we landscaped Coughlin's field to create a new front door on Union Street. We opened the barricaded public plaza between the Ramada Hotel and the Chamber Building to reopen pedestrian access from Public Square to Bennett Place, joining the Square to the Susquehanna River Landing, the Irem Temple, the new portal through the levee, and the riverfront trail system.