

Downtown Design Workshop
Public Input Meeting:
November 11, 2003

THE QUESTION:

"In one sentence, describe your vision for the future of Downtown Wilkes-Barre. This can take the form of something that can help to realize your hopes for Downtown, like an initiative or a certain project or business, or it can take the form of an example to be emulated, like another place that you've visited."

THE RESPONSES:

THE CHARACTER OF DOWNTOWN:

- People walking down streets enjoying area attractions such as restaurants, shops, urban fabric, coffee shops, and fine dining.
- Museums, theaters, dining - consistently varied.
- Development with thought - not ego - "A place where people want to go to work, live, play and learn.
- Restaurants downtown, nightlife, bookstores, outdoor cafés, upscale supermarket.
- Riverfront: bring in bars/restaurants.
- Destination clusters (spot for nightlife, spot for sports/recreation).
- Facades, riverfront, recreation, culture, pedestrian friendly, cleanliness.
- We want to promote recreation and cultural enhancement through downtown, riverfront and residential enhancements. Downtown must be clean, safe and pedestrian friendly. Give young people a place to "skate", bike, and recreate safely instead of banning these activities.
- Connect people to the river and green spaces throughout the city.
- Midtown Plaza, an outdoor lunchtime destination. (tables, outdoor cafes).
- Create a sense of vitality and life into the atmosphere to allow the younger market to begin to appreciate and love the city.
- We need to create a downtown where people want to visit, spend time, and live: an environment that pleases the mind, body, and economic needs of all.
- Walkable/livable downtown.
- Clean, friendly and safe.
- Encourage "convention" type uses - make W-B fun, similar to New Orleans - connect to renovated riverfront.
- Support diversity in all ways.
- Keep young people here.
- A place of excitement where community grows.
- Safe and positive places where teens can go.
- Convert brown space and old factories into viable manufacturing and retail.
- Strong King's and Wilkes intellectual stimulation.

DOWNTOWN HOUSING:

- Middle and upscale housing accessible to the city, consistent with

entertainment opportunities.

- Riverfront housing.
- Develop artist and craft housing and studio space in vacant lofts.
- Provide housing throughout key areas that support new, diverse commercial development.
- Loft apartments.

DOWNTOWN DINING:

- Small cafes for college students, like State College taverns. Stay open later than 6pm.
- Gear toward larger cities with restaurants like the Hard Rock Café.
- Ethnic restaurants.
- Build more Katana, Hottle's, etc.
- Restaurant row on Northampton Street.
- Ethnic restaurants other than Italian.
- Non-chain restaurants/pubs.
- Restaurant row on South Main Street.
- College based restaurants, bars and clubs.

DOWNTOWN SHOPPING:

- Focus on younger generation - stores like Abercrombie and Fitch, Express. Higher end stores, specialty shops.
- Retail shops for college students.
- More "trendy" retail.
- A nice retail area.
- Ethnic hair-care supplies.
- Department stores.
- Get a health food store/grocery store.
- More department stores, definitely more department stores, and don't let Boscov's leave.
- Year round Farmer's Market.
- Laundromat with game room/billiards.
- Support incoming businesses such as Rides and Rhythms into downtown.
- We need outlet retail shops.

- Increase multi-family housing in downtown.
- Warehouses to become loft apartments/condos.
- Loft apartments.
- Develop housing that compliments architectural significance of Wilkes-Barre.
- More housing renovation.

- More and different restaurants.
- More places to eat like Katana, open after 5pm.
- More restaurants.
- Starbucks.
- I want to see a specialty coffee shop with seats!
- Nice places to eat.
- Outdoor café and market.
- Downtown restaurant/dance club combo. (A few of them).
- Restaurant on top of the Sterling.

- Small chain stores downtown (Blockbuster, specialty grocery).
- Small "funky" boutiques; "different" critical mass of new retail.
- Small/boutique/unique stores, uniform storefronts.
- High end specialty shops - i.e. Kitchen, Williams Sonoma, The Kitchen Chef, clothing, bookstores, nationally known mid and high end retail.
- Local artists' guild store and shop.
- More unusual shops/services not available in the malls, i.e. boutiques, galleries, etc.
- Specialty stores such as novelty and fine dining.
- Develop small businesses to gear sales to colleges and student population.

- Bring shops in that are not chain stores ... unique!
- Upscale grocery store, a la Percy Brown's.
- Boutique type art, antique shops.
- Outlet shopping.
- Support local businesses - specialty shops to create a business "family" to expand from our current assets (people) in Wilkes-Barre.
- Antique shops, small specialty stores.
- Retail shopping on S. Main Street. Small and large shopping centers.
- Specialty shops (arts, crafts, one of a kind items).
- Bookstore/coffee shop on Public Square with community area for musical events.
- Bookstore - Main Street (university).
- Call Center could house retail outlets.
- The need for a quality department store here - so many people travel to New York City, Philadelphia, etc. to spend their retail dollars.
- Bookstore.
- Flower shop.
- Boutiques.
- At Penn Plaza, try to get another supermarket to replace the "BiLo", and improve safety.
- Mini mall at the Sterling.

DOWNTOWN INSTITUTIONS, ARTS, AND ENTERTAINMENT:

- Formulate a community Diversity Center - to allow different cultures to learn and accept one and another.
- Museum of art.
- Colleges as "anchors" of downtown: King's to the north, Wilkes to the south, at Franklin, Main, and Washington Streets.
- Museum/cultural centers.
- Children's hands-on museum, ex. Legos/science.
- Art galleries, museums, playhouse, and studios.
- Local history and cultural museums.
- Combine Wilkes & Kings bookstore: cut down on books (prices); bring community together, outside community to be involved with colleges.
- Theater Row - selection of theaters offering cultural diversity.
- Museums/Art center - cultural enhancements, lots of collaboration.
- A movie theater.
- Nightlife enhancements.
- Movie theater.
- Get the movie theater project up and running.
- Activity center for 16-18 year old group.
- Movie theater - mucho pronto.
- Bring back the "Station".
- Creative Arts workshop.
- Impromptu theater for experimental theater.
- Consulting services for newcomers of different nationalities.
- Daycare for businesses.
- Expand Sordoni, perhaps to Main Street, Sterling, or Irem Temple.
- Capitalize on tourism: river tours, historic tours, foliage, etc.
- Conference Center.
- Restored Ballroom (Sterling) for common use.

MASS TRANSIT AND TRANSPORTATION ISSUES:

- Trolley - electric trains to colleges.
- Tie in Highland Park with Center City.
- Smaller buses - less pollution.
- Train stop in downtown for Scranton/New York train.
- Bike lanes.
- Smaller buses and better schedules.
- Coal Street extension "gateway" improved traffic flow.
- Longer hours of operation for the bus service.
- Increase bus schedule.
- Train.
- Mini-buses to support transportation needs, past 5pm.
- Mini-bus/trolley service.
- Extend rail service from New York City to Wilkes-Barre.
- Smooth driving surfaces.
- Safe way to walk to riverfront (bridge?).

DOWNTOWN PARKS AND RECREATION:

- Biking, skating park on Riverfront or in park.
- Isolated area, course for biking, skating (1 km loop).
- Indoor velodrome (only one other in country) could draw national and international events and it could have dual use i.e. basketball, volleyball.
- Community gardens/dog run.
- Ice Skating Rink on Public Square.
- Skateboard park/ice skating rink outdoor.
- Public gardens - trees.
- Develop a skateboard park.
- Small gardens in many places - green spaces.

- Recreation system - Marina, Water sports.
- A Riverside amphitheater.
- Take the fence off of the fountain so we can run through!

DOWNTOWN DESIGN ISSUES:

- Refurbish original retail facades.
- Original facades.
- Block off the first block of South Main Street and create a pedestrian mall.
- The area coming into Wilkes-Barre from Market Street Bridge should be more presentable (beautify).
- Pedestrian friendly Main Street.
- More amenities (parks/street furniture) trees/lighting.
- Restore historic facades of buildings.
- Give incentives to businesses to bring back/or create a historic façade.
- Coordinated street light standards, benches, and garage, receptacles that work together.
- Clean and prune and weed our beautiful River Common.
- Restored historic storefronts (cornices too).
- Utilize steam r.o.w. for advanced fiber optic "broadband demonstration city".
- Tree-lined streets, similar to S. Franklin Street.
- Downtown lighting from parking areas to the square and Main Street.
- Parkades with street level retail space.
- More green space ... square, gardens, mini parks.
- Clean up visual entrance to Wilkes-Barre at Coal Street and along W-B Blvd.
- Get rid of the Canopy.
- Keep the Canopy.
- Rebuild/preserve historic sites. Cleaner and brighter streets/areas.
- Block traffic between Northampton and S.

Washington to create a mall area for theatergoers.

- Improved sidewalks and sidewalk furniture (waste receptacles).
- Better street lighting.
- Shade tree commission.
- Additional/development of a lot more greenscape (i.e. landscaping - trees).
- Cut off all vehicle traffic 2 blocks around the Square. Make it pedestrian only for shopping, dining and theater.
- Garbage containers and flowerpots in downtown.
- Close off Square permanently.
- Get new holiday decorations and get rid of the old ones: they are dated.
- Preservation of cherry trees and river edge. (clean industry and appealing jobs).
- Clean this city!!! Leaves, clutter, garbage. Involve the city's civic organizations to help do this - Rotary, Lions, etc.
- Exploit river access.
- Stop littering.
- Green space.
- Develop Cafés and green outdoor space.
- Clean sidewalks. They still look dirty.
- Develop the Jewelcor plot!
- Enhanced riverfront.
- Beautify square - move farmer's market to hole in the ground.
- Marquee - signage for use by local vendors.
- A pedestrian mall like Downtown Denver.

DOWNTOWN PARKING ISSUES:

- Free parking.
- More affordable/more available parking.

- Diagonal parking to businesses similar to Lee Park or Stroudsburg downtown area with meters.

- Diagonal metered parking and create more parking in front of businesses.
- Offer free parking throughout downtown.
- Longer parking meter times near colleges.
- I would like to see an underground parking lot.
- Deal with parking and transportation.

DOWNTOWN EVENTS:

- Sponsor more races, i.e. Race for the Cure, cycling races, music, theater fest.
- More athletic activities.
- Weekend film festivals.
- Something like Philadelphia's "First Friday" - first Friday of each month, with shops, galleries, art studios, and museums open late; activate streets at night in a positive way.
- Farmers Market on Saturday.
- Use our heritage and history to strengthen the D&L's vision of a partnership between the tourism industry and architectural development.
- Flea Market on Sundays.
- Communicate with downtown retail when affairs are being held on square; get the businesses/retail involved in the community events and college events.
- Cherry Blossom festival.
- Public Square artwork/performances on going.
- An activity every night.

DOWNTOWN PUBLIC SAFETY:

- Safety.
- More cops on the streets.
- City must be safe! Need more police on the street.
- Safety - increase police protection.
- More police protection downtown to end prostitution.
- Better street lighting.
- Get rid of the crack houses, Toppers, etc.
- The downtown area must be made safe at night for pedestrian traffic. This necessitates a police presence at all times in addition to bright lights.
- Increase force to reduce crime - work towards a higher expected standard of living in this community. People often stay away because of "fear" - especially our older population.
- Improved lighting on all spaces of pedestrian traffic - safety.
- Get the duck/geese waste under control in Kirby Park.
- Police walking the streets downtown to make businesses and shoppers feel safe again.

PLACES TO EMULATE:

- Great town w/same assets as Wilkes-Barre - Red Bank, NJ - Water, schools and shops.
- Study Naperville, IL and Bethlehem, PA for ideas.

DOWNTOWN ORGANIZATIONAL ISSUES:

- More manufacturing/help for retail stores.
- Make rents conducive to bringing in businesses.
- Have Mayor/Council and the Chamber of Commerce work together. Follow lead of professionals at the Chamber of Commerce.
- Debt collection like Scranton.
- Balanced budget for City of Wilkes-Barre.
- Growth has to start from the Square outwards. (The heart of downtown).
- Residents, as well as marketers, need to stress positive images and feelings about living in the city. There are good things going on here and many good people living here.

