

I. Executive Summary

Introduction

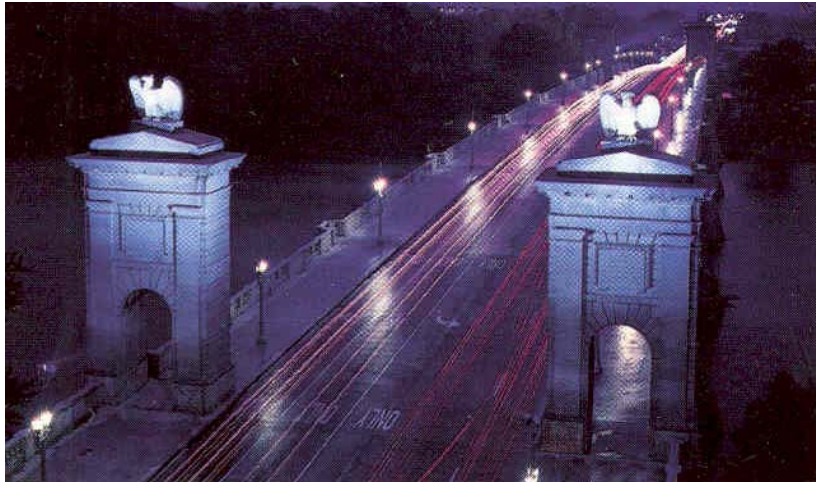
This Strategic Market Development Plan was prepared by Lincoln Property Company (LPC) in conjunction with team members Gibbs Planning Group (GPG) and Chance Management Advisors, Inc. (CMA), to assist the Diamond City Partnership (DCP) in building upon the Downtown revitalization efforts made to date. The purpose is to create a reality-based plan to enhance Downtown's positive attributes, viability and economic health, as well as transform Downtown into an active, livable center. Retail and entertainment, hotels, office space, education and cultural institutions, parking and public transportation, and residential development all form components of this Plan.

Downtown Wilkes-Barre has the opportunity to compete successfully with its suburbs and other communities in the region for employment, retail sales and the creation of housing units. It can become a true destination within the Region. As a result, the City will enjoy increased revenue from economic development projects and increased spending within the Downtown.

The analyses completed during the process of producing this plan all clearly point to a need for a comprehensive development strategy for the revitalization of Downtown. For many years, the Downtown has lacked a clear vision as well as the leadership needed to move forward. The organization of DCP, the visioning process that was engaged in, and the identification of the Six Strategies for Change have begun to address the issues and take the first steps toward the vital Downtown desired by the community as a whole.

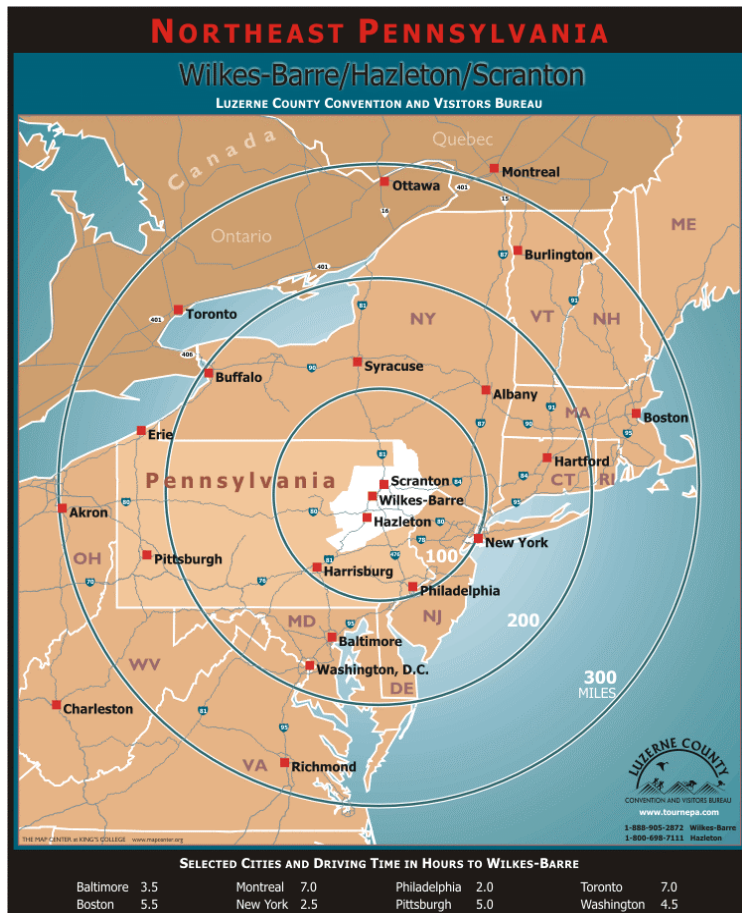
It should be emphasized that the plan does not suggest, in any way, that there is only one way to revitalize Downtown Wilkes-Barre. The strategic plan is intended to be flexible, and it should be reviewed, adjusted and revised often to respond to both the needs of the community and the market forces in effect at different points in time. However, the objective of creating and maintaining a vibrant, active community center that consistently provides the services needed by residents and visitors must be the focus of any revision. This will result in the most successful Downtown.

The following summary information is outlined according to the major topics covered during this engagement. Suggested steps related to implementing the strategic plan are also included.



Downtown Market Strengths

- Centrally located in the Scranton - Wilkes-Barre - Hazleton Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA).
- 625,000+ people in the MSA, 310,000+ within a 20-minute drive of Downtown, 85,000+ people within 3 miles of Downtown.
- Thriving institutions – 76 located directly Downtown – including three colleges and universities with a total of 6,500 students.
- The region’s largest employment center – 12,000 employees.
- 4,000 residents live in Downtown.
- Significant infrastructure in place including Public Square and the Susquehanna Riverfront.
- Mixed-use, pedestrian-friendly community with interesting architecture.
- Seat of Luzerne County Government.
- In-place public transportation system.
- Average commute less than 15 minutes.
- Affordable office and retail rental and operational costs.
- High quality of life/low cost of living.
- Strong community commitment to Downtown.



Location and Access

Findings

- Wilkes-Barre is almost equidistant from New York City and Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.
- Easy access to the Wilkes-Barre area is provided by I-81, I-84, I-476 and I-380.
- Direct access to the Downtown via several major arterial roadways including the Cross Valley Expressway (US 309), Wilkes-Barre Boulevard, and the Market and North Street Bridges.
- Two Class I railroads—Canadian Pacific and Norfolk Southern—serve the Wilkes-Barre area.
- The Wilkes-Barre Scranton International Airport is used by US Airways, COMAIR, Continental Express, Northwest, United Express and US Airways Express.
- Daily bus service to Philadelphia and New York City.

Opportunities

- Access and visibility are two important factors in attracting retail, office, entertainment, and regional recreation. Downtown has both.
- The Coal Street Extension Project will improve access to Downtown and create a direct connection with I-81. Gateway signage elements identifying Downtown should be added to the scope of work.
- Extensive transportation network in place that provides convenient commuting times and accessibility.
- In-place public transportation system.

DCP Organization

Findings

- DCP is viewed by the community as a positive force effecting needed change and improvement to Downtown.
- At this time, DCP is the entity best suited to facilitate the revitalization of Downtown.
- DCP should be commended for its efforts to address and implement the Six Strategies for Change that resulted from the community visioning process.
- DCP, in conjunction with the City, needs to take the next steps to revitalize Downtown.

Opportunities

- Maintain leadership and coordination role in Downtown (most downtown success stories are public/private partnerships).
- Work with all community stakeholders to guide the revitalization of Downtown.
- Continue to support efforts of Business Association and Residents Association.
- Enhance the successful “Clean and Green” program. Provide more frequent cleanings and install seasonal plantings throughout the Downtown core.
- Address “safety” issues associated with Downtown; consider a Community Service Rep Program, and facilitate the implementation of lighting improvements.
- Move forward to create a Special Services District. SSD’s are particularly successful in providing management and operations

for a regular funding source for security, clean and green programs, promotional activities, and streetscape improvements. SSD’s go beyond what government typically is capable of providing.

- Continue the process of applying for the Pennsylvania Main Street Program designation and related funding sources. DCP’s Main Street Manager should focus on retail recruitment, marketing, technical assistance on window/façade/signage improvements, and organizing events.
- Continue partnership with King’s MAP Center and the Small Business Center at Wilkes University. Seek out similar relationship with other institutions and quasi-public entities that will enhance and improve Downtown. View proposed and future Downtown projects comprehensively. Do not isolate or ignore the synergies between projects and uses.





Business Climate

Findings

- Focus group discussions demonstrated that the City Administration is not perceived as user-friendly by its citizens, businesses, and visitors. This is a deterrent to new investments in Downtown by existing and potential residents, businesses and institutions.
- There continues to be a negative and declining image of Downtown by those living and working in Downtown and the region.
- City bureaucracy provides limited assistance and guidance to existing and potential businesses, and residents interested in

improving their property. There is no formal City based program for resident and business retention and growth.

- Limited cooperation, coordination, and assistance exists between businesses and institutions.
- The lack of infrastructure maintenance and capital improvements have an adverse effect on Downtown's ability to keep and attract businesses, residents, and visitors.
- The current lack of cohesive leadership in the City and the level of infighting and conflict is a major negative factor.
- The City regulatory/approval process does not promote flexible, quality development.
- The perception that Downtown is unsafe is a major impediment for shopping, office site locations and after-dark activities in Downtown. Safety concerns include lack of lighting, police presence, and perception of increased crime.
- Existing tax structure is often criticized. Cost versus benefit and return were often cited during focus group discussions.
- KOZ site designation of City Hall and Public Square do not benefit the City or Downtown.
- Clear mandate by Downtown community (residents & businesses) for change.

Opportunities

- It is possible to turn the business climate around.
- Develop strong, harmonious leadership for the City.
- Promote a strong image of Downtown as a location for residents and businesses – engage in positive marketing.

- Emphasize the positive aspects of Downtown - cultural activities, Farmer's Market, restaurants, and special events and programs – as part of the marketing strategy.
- Work with local media to create and disseminate positive stories and accomplishments regarding the Downtown. A systematic approach to provide and produce these stories is vital to the enhancement of the Downtown's image and to change its current negative reputation.
- Adopt a business friendly approach. Every City department should adopt this ideal.
- Bring together all stakeholders to create a better Downtown.
- Streamline the approval process - create a 'one stop shop' for governmental approvals. Designate an Ombudsperson to support and assist businesses.
- Evaluate existing zoning ordinances, and amend them if necessary to ensure that it provides development flexibility while creating buildings that are compatible with the historic qualities and pedestrian scale of the Downtown.
- Create a mentor/peer program for new businesses, institutions, and residents.
- Promote small business technical assistance available through Wilkes University and the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.
- Develop City Economic Development Programs to support and grow existing businesses while attracting new opportunities to the Downtown.
- Revise the City's Keystone Opportunity Zone designations that maximize the benefits of KOZ sites for new development.
- Evaluate the services provided by the City. The current tax structure provides a significant disincentive to economic

development, as well as investment in home ownership. Tax rates cannot be lower without evaluating service inefficiencies or the increase in revenues (more businesses, residents, and spending).



Infrastructure

Findings

- Downtown is very walkable and pedestrian-friendly.
- Mixed uses along the street and historic architecture provide visual interest and create the feel of a small town.
- A significant amount of public open space and parkland is located within the Downtown. However, there are poor linkages between those spaces and the Susquehanna River. The River is limited in use by pollution and access issues.
- Infrastructure grant and funding opportunities are not pursued by City administration.

- Lack of cleanliness (improvement since DCP Clean & Green Program began).
- The City has no local historic district guidelines and/or protections in place at this time.
- Downtown's canopy, sidewalks, and street furniture are in below-average condition and are poorly maintained. Street lights have failed and have not been replaced.
- There is a lack of directional and wayfinding signage in Downtown.
- Public spaces such as Public Square, the River Common, and Kirby Park create unique opportunities for Downtown. However, Public Square is underutilized, and all these parks are poorly maintained with minimal improvements since they were redesigned after the 1972 flood.

Opportunities

- The Susquehanna River Landing scheduled to open in 2007 will tie Downtown to the riverfront and provide recreational and cultural attractions. If pollution and access issues are properly addressed, the Susquehanna River could be an important feature of Downtown, and provide important recreational opportunities.
- Continue and expand efforts to tie the center of Downtown to the waterfront, to regional trails, and other open/public spaces.
- A revised master plan and maintenance program for Public Square would ensure this important open space takes on its full functionality and value for Downtown. Create a year round or seasonal draw for Public Square, such as an ice rink.
- Provide banners to highlight each of the cultural institutions and major events (this was previously done on a limited basis).

- The Clean and Green Program inaugurated in November 2001 has vastly improved the level of cleanliness in Downtown.
- The planned changes to Coal Street will create a new entrance to Downtown adjacent to King's College's main entrance, which will offer a unique opportunity for the creation of a true gateway to Downtown from the east.
- Study the proposed location of the Intermodal Center – consider a location adjacent to the former train station.
- Create design guidelines. Examine a Conservation Overlay approach, which can provide greater flexibility and standards for the redevelopment of existing structures.
- Using the Main Street Program as a basis, develop a commercial façade/building rehab program. Tie grant funds/low interest revolving loans to guidelines.
- Investigate the creation of local historic district guidelines. Emphasize the economic development value of historic preservation.
- Create a Streetscape Improvement Program – concentrate on simple, easy improvements. The canopy, sidewalks and street furniture should be evaluated, and replaced and enhanced as necessary to create a comfortable pedestrian experience and reveal more of Downtown's architecture and retail windows. A new lighting plan will enhance Downtown's image and functionality.
- A wayfinding signage program should be implemented to direct users of Downtown to major attractions, cultural facilities, and parking, as well as create a sense of identity in Wilkes-Barre's core.
- Design special lighting for landmark buildings and structures, following the example of the Market Street Bridge, Saint Stephen's Pro-Cathedral, Saint Nicholas Church, and others. Consider special events spotlights at the major gateways to the Downtown, Public Square, and the River to emphasize Downtown's central location in the region.



Institutions and Public Facilities

Findings

- There are 76 institutions located Downtown, occupying over 1 million square feet of space.
- Private institutions and public facilities employ 3,200 people in Downtown Wilkes-Barre.
- Most institutions are thriving—several are engaged in ongoing capital improvement programs.
- Since 1998, over \$20 million of capital improvements have been completed by Downtown’s various institutions.

- Because the seat of Luzerne County government is in Wilkes-Barre, most county departments, including the court system, are located in Downtown.
- The institutions located in Downtown historically have not been recognized for their contribution to the community.
- Wilkes University, King’s College and Luzerne County Community College serve as important economic and activity anchors for Downtown.
- The Downtown institutions tend to isolate themselves and do not coordinate efforts and events.

Opportunities

- Position the core of Downtown as a cultural district. Create opportunities for artist live/work space, studios, etc. Solicit schools to participate. Provide public incentives, including grants and tax breaks, for arts related activities and uses.
- The three Downtown colleges create built-in demand for housing, retail and entertainment uses.
- Continue to focus on capturing this latent demand through a partnership of DCP and the COPS Downtown/Collegetown initiative.
- Support/grow existing smaller institution programs (YMCA, JCC, CYC). Capture parents & visitors through synergies with retail opportunities.
- Promote larger institutions. Maximize their resources and programs, creating coordination among the various entities. Leverage existing cultural attractions through joint programs such as pre/post dinner packages.

- Facilitate the creation of a joint King/Wilkes project within the core of Downtown such as a classroom building, housing, recreation, etc.
- Facilitate City/County/ State lease/purchase of less marketable (desirable) office space in Downtown.
- Develop historic and architectural tours and programs that take advantage of the holdings of Downtown's institutions.
- Downtown's religious institutions are critical activity anchors. Their activities and events should be promoted and facilitated.





Residential

Findings

- Diverse (type, style, size, cost) housing stock available.
- Downtown Wilkes-Barre's existing housing types range from single-family homes to high-rise apartment buildings.
- Mix and distribution of housing stock in the central core of Downtown is impressive.
- Approximately 1,855 housing units in Downtown; 87% are multi-family units.

- No residential units were added to Downtown during 1991-2002, although several previously vacant single-family homes were restored.
- A small amount (9%) of the City of Wilkes-Barre's residential units are located Downtown.
- Limited single-family, owner-occupied homes available for sale.
- Downtown single-family homes have a low vacancy rate, and range in value from \$25,000 to \$175,000.
- A majority of the single-family homes sold in the market area since 2000 have been in the \$100,000 - \$140,000 range.
- The average time on the market for a single-family home in Downtown Wilkes-Barre is three months.
- Homes in the \$150,000 - \$250,000 range are limited in availability although market demand exists for such homes.
- Since 1950, a significant number of single-family homes have been converted into multi-family and institutional uses.
- Existing Downtown multifamily housing generally lacks many amenities, and there have not been many capital improvements.
- A significant number of Downtown's multifamily units (653 of 1,618) are located in five high-rise buildings.
- Downtown rents range from \$250 to \$1,250 per month.
- Multi-family rental property occupancy rates are strong; 95%+ for several quality properties located in Downtown and suburbs.
- Code enforcement by the City is weak. Lack of existing City housing policies and procedures.

- Many of the vacant residential buildings show significant deterioration from neglect. Some of the occupied residential buildings along South Main Street show significant deferred maintenance.
- Homeowners are very concerned about the future of the Downtown and their investment in their properties. This is evidenced by the recent activity of the new Downtown Residents Association.



Opportunities

- Proximity to shopping and entertainment, public open space, cultural institutions and universities, as well as office space, makes Downtown a desirable location for housing.
- Many residential neighborhoods are within a short walk of Downtown.
- There is an unmet demand for single-family homes in the \$100,000 - \$250,000 range.
- There is an unmet demand for market rate housing Downtown for younger professionals and older 'snow birds'.
- There is a need for additional market rate and subsidized senior housing in Wilkes-Barre, and Downtown is well positioned to capture a significant portion of this segment of market demand.
- College and Downtown business representatives report that many of their employees are interested in new or renovated Downtown housing.
- A February 2003 preliminary study by Urban Workshop revealed a demand for restored historic townhouses, restored single family homes, or loft apartments in a restored historic building, followed by low-rise garden apartments or condominiums, followed by newly constructed townhomes.
- The City of Wilkes-Barre should be able to compete adequately with suburban housing markets to make a goal of 75 new units achievable annually. Downtown should attract a significant number of these new units, assuming that the necessary changes and improvements (including Downtown's business climate) occur.

- Market rental rates and sales of quality residential properties support “new” construction.
- Recent CityVest rehabs prove market can support additional “higher end” units (\$175,000+). Continue working with CityVest to rehabilitate existing housing stock.
- Address lack of City housing policies, procedures, and code enforcement.
- Create a Town Watch Program to self-police and enhance security within neighborhoods.
- Strengthen the public school system. Explore increased pre and after school activities that promote a range of activities. Work with existing institutions such as the JYC, CYC and YMCA to serve youth in Downtown.
- Facilitate new housing opportunities through the conversion of upper story office/retail/storage into lofts and undesirable office buildings into housing units.
- Identify brownfield opportunities for market rate townhouse and garden apartment projects.
- Establish public funding opportunities for lower and middle class families to achieve home ownership.
- Target specific blocks, corners or individual buildings for redevelopment, following the example of projects completed by City Vest and King’s College, in order to create critical masses of market rate housing throughout Downtown.
- Existing buildings located Downtown that have potential for redevelopment as housing include: 17 West Ross Street, Sterling, 253 South Main Street, 11 West Market Street (PNC Bank Building), Steam Authority Property, 43-49 East

Northampton Street, Coughlin High School Site, and the Mary McIntosh Building.

- Existing sites that have the potential for housing: Original Theater Site, WB General Hospital Site, Genetti Hotel Parking Lot, 251-267 South Washington Avenue, South Washington & East Union Street Site, King’s Lot/Excalibur Site, and King’s Lot.





Office

Findings

- The Scranton–Wilkes-Barre–Hazleton MSA has approximately 8 million square feet of office space.
- 750,000 square feet of multi-tenant and owner-occupied space was added to the market area over the last decade in suburban areas, leaving higher vacancies in urban areas.
- Downtown has the largest concentration of office space in the region: a total of 4 million square feet including institution/government/public facility office space (an estimated 1 million square feet), office space above retail

storefronts (approximately 400,000 square feet), owner-occupied office space (650,000 square feet), and multi-tenant buildings (1.6 million square feet).

- Wilkes-Barre’s office multi-tenant submarket contains 2.2 million square feet, with approximately three-quarters located in Downtown.
- Over 12,000 employees work in Downtown daily.
- A variety of major corporate office space users and several regional corporate headquarters are located Downtown.
- The national office market currently is soft, with limited expansion and growth of businesses throughout the country.
- Northeastern Pennsylvania’s employment growth rate during the five-year period 1997-2002 averaged 1% annually; as a result there has been a weak demand for office space.
- Realtors presently report little or no interest by most prospective tenants in leasing space Downtown.
- Downtown Wilkes-Barre office stock generally has not experienced capital improvements in recent years, and a significant number of Downtown multi-tenant office buildings would be considered undesirable for contemporary office tenants.
- Major Downtown employers are concerned about the existing Downtown business climate. Several businesses have vacated Downtown or are currently considering relocation to suburban areas.
- Downtown multi-tenant office vacancy has increased significantly since 1992, from 9% to 27%.
- No availability of large floor plate (10,000 sq. ft.+), and contiguous space in Downtown for new and/or expanding

businesses. Most existing buildings face a lack of amenities desired by contemporary businesses and parking concerns.

- Speculative office buildings are not viable in today's market and Downtown rents currently are too low to support new construction or substantial rehabilitation. Moreover, lending institutions are reluctant to finance a project without significant pre-construction leasing (minimum of 60% of the building's total square feet) and/or significant public guarantees and/or assistance.
- There are few sites available for office development in the Downtown that have already been assembled and can be offered for redevelopment.

Opportunities

- Once the national economy improves, expansion of local companies and relocations of businesses from larger East Coast metropolitan areas may create significant demand for office space in Northeastern Pennsylvania.
- If City government, the business community, and local office building owners take steps to attract future users and facilitate existing local business growth, Downtown can capture a significant portion of the potential growth.
- There is an unmet demand for tenants requiring contiguous office space containing 20,000 square feet or more in the market.
- Two pending projects will enhance Downtown's ability to serve office tenants demanding cutting edge technology: the Innovation Center at Wilkes-Barre (anticipated completion Spring 2004) and the Wilkes-Barre Advanced Technology Business & Communications Center (anticipated completion 2004).

- Focus City, County, State, and institutional office needs in Downtown. Concentrate government functions in Downtown to draw more people from the region and focus activity in the core.
- Develop opportunities for conversions of undesirable office buildings into housing, hotel, and institutional uses to decrease the vacancy rate of office space in the Downtown.
- Identify two sites for new office-related "Economic Development opportunities." Assemble the necessary base information on these sites, including available parking, etc. Provide subsidies for the development and attraction of a quality office development and tenants.
- Potential sites for new large-floorplate office development include: Penn Miller Lot, Genetti Lot, St Stephen's Lot (21-27 South Franklin), Wilkes-Barre Boulevard & East Union Street, Guard Property (South River), and South Washington & East Union Streets.
- Establish a formal process to track build-to-suit opportunities and potential leases of large blocks of space by private companies and the government agencies and departments.



Retail & Entertainment

Findings

- Greater Wilkes-Barre currently enjoys a healthy retail market.
- Larger scale retail development opportunities outside Downtown in the adjacent suburban areas are limited due to infrastructure costs, high land values, and availability of financing.
- Approximately 1.2 million square feet of retail space currently is located in Downtown.

- 195 retail businesses are in operation, occupying 950,000 square feet.
- Approximately 292,000 sq. ft. (24%) of space is vacant.
- Of 292 total storefronts, 77 (26%) are vacant. 50% of space is attractive with minimal improvements/upgrades necessary.
- Focus group participants identified the business climate, crime, a lack of restaurants, and other issues as reasons that Downtown retail is not thriving.
- Average rent of \$9.50 per sq. ft. is less than most surrounding suburban areas.
- Downtown Wilkes-Barre's primary trade area has an estimated 2002 population of 45,900. Downtown Wilkes-Barre's secondary trade area has an estimated 2002 population of 156,700.
- The median age in the primary trade area is 40.2, although this does not include students at the local universities. The median age in the secondary trade area is 42.3.
- 31% of the households in the total trade area have an income of \$50,000 or more.
- Competitive shopping areas are the Wyoming Valley Mall and the Arena Hub in the Highland Park area. Two shopping centers have been proposed for the Highland Park area, anticipated to open late 2003 or early 2004: the Wilkes-Barre Township Marketplace, 312,000 square feet anchored by a Wal-Mart Super Center; and a 300,000 square feet Target Center.
- Currently, Downtown captures approximately 4% of regional spending. However, Downtown should capture just over 7%.

- The proposed theater is an important component of a revitalized Downtown, but it is not the key. There is strong market support for theater project - limited “public” assistance is necessary.
- Retailers need to exhibit “pride of ownership” of their buildings, whether they are or not property owners.
- It is illogical for Boscov’s to close its downtown store. The store, in its current condition, still generates \$21 million annually. By closing the Downtown store, Boscov’s would give up their market share due to limited opportunity to develop a store outside Downtown – most people will not travel to the Scranton or Hazleton stores.
- Many buildings and areas Downtown that would be desirable for retail development are poorly maintained.
- Existing Downtown hotels require upgrades, and they have experienced lower occupancy rates than its competitors in the suburban areas.

Opportunities

- Capitalize on the market’s existing healthy retail climate and the ability to create a unique retail and entertainment area in Downtown.
- Restore a cohesive retail center, featuring restaurants, shops and pedestrian activities. Choose retail opportunities to create a concentrated retail district along North and South Main Street, and tie the Public Square area and Market Street to that retail spine.
- Cater to the existing captured market: 4,000 residents, 12,000 workers, 6,500 students.

- Downtown’s greatest ability to grow its existing retail base is through the addition of businesses and housing units.
- The best retail niche for Downtown to capture would be specialty retailing: unique stores with moderate, not low-end, price structures. Highly upscale stores are unlikely to be very successful at this point, but they may be in future years.
- Another potential niche is restaurant development, capitalizing on the success of Katana and Hottle’s. Downtown’s 12,000 employees, together with its institutions, represent a built in market. Work to create a “restaurant row” atmosphere.
- Emphasize Downtown’s entertainment and cultural market niche through the creation of an “entertainment” district. Tie retail/entertainment opportunities to existing facilities such as the Kirby Center for Performing Arts.
- Market support exists today for a movie theater development. Minimal public funding is necessary.
- Under existing conditions, and if business climate issues are addressed, Downtown can support an additional tenant mix of 187,200 square feet, including 35,000 square feet in junior department stores, 18,000 square feet of quality restaurants, 45,000 square feet of grocery store, 20,000 square feet of dollar/variety stores, and 10,000 square feet of home furnishings.
- With the addition of the movie theater and 50 housing units per year, the supportable tenant mix increases to 211,250 square feet and would include 37,500 square feet of junior department store, 24,000 square feet of quality restaurant use, 47,000 square feet of grocery store, 11,500 square feet of bar/tavern, 21,000 square feet of dollar/variety, and 11,250 square feet of home furnishings.

- Provide customer amenities in retail district (street furniture, ample lighting, wayfinding signage, convenient public transportation, and parking).
- Promote outdoor vending and dining. Create an ordinance that promotes these types of uses.
- Retail rents are currently too low to support significant fit-out of retail space. New businesses will have to pay for a portion of these improvements, or be provided with public funding assistance.
- Find a temporary indoor location for the Farmer's Market during the winter months.
- Work with the existing Downtown hotel owners/operators to update and enhance their facilities.
- Develop retention and recruitment efforts through a Main Street Program. Provide technical assistance to existing retailers and service providers.



Parking & Public Transportation

Findings

- The overall Downtown parking management and operation issues are significant. Additional study is necessary to address the many issues that currently exist.
- The present on-street parking management arrangement (staffing, organizational location and ticket procedures) would not promote on-street conditions vital for downtown development.
- The availability of convenient parking for businesses and their employees is an issue of major concern for the community.

- Daytime occupancy of Downtown parking facilities averages 74%, with a high 92% occupancy rate for the Park and Lock Ramada.
- Evening occupancy of Downtown parking facilities averages 37%, with more than 1,000 parking spaces available at 8:00 p.m.
- 76% of Downtown meters were occupied, but only 30% were legally occupied.
- Paid meter rate of 30%, compared to national norm of 80%.
- Meter violation rate of 43%, compared to national norm of 7%.
- Violation capture rate of 10%, compared to national norm of 33%.
- Enforcement of parking laws and meters is sporadic and ineffective, and substandard compared to industry norms.
- A significant number of violations occur in the vicinity of King's College and Wilkes University, indicating a potential need for extended meter time limits in these areas. King's College parking lots are not filled up by student use.
- The City of Wilkes-Barre parking enforcement staff in Wilkes-Barre is understaffed and/or deployment is ineffective, with only two civilian enforcement officers for approximately 700 meters. 1 officer to 200-250 meters would result in more effective coverage.
- Parking fines and the processing of such fines are inadequate.
- Downtown's low paid meter rate also indicates disregard for violation sanctions, calling into question the effectiveness of the ticket processing & collection and adjudication systems.

- Short-term parking for institutional and retail customers is insufficient, and seasonal shopping at holidays creates conditions that result in on-street double-parking.
- Parking facility occupancies may be reduced by weak on-street enforcement, fueling perceptions of unavailable parking downtown.
- Parking problems have more to do with management and less to do with quantity.

Opportunities

- Complete a detailed review of the City Parking Authority operations and capital funding process. Develop a Parking Authority role in assisting businesses.
- Although a limited review of evening off-street parking indicates sufficient capacity, final determinations should be made only after further study.
- Adopt a more effective model for on-street parking management activities and infrastructure, to include staffing, organizational location, and ticket processing systems.
- Increase parking enforcement staffing and ticket processing.
- Increase the parking fine and penalty structure to discourage illegal parking.
- Regulate longer meter durations in the vicinity of Kings College and Wilkes University, and consider evening meter regulations where appropriate.

- Evaluate destination wayfinding requirements with the goal of better communicating available parking locations.
- Create additional on-street parking opportunities along Public Square, Market Street, and South Main Street.
- Implement traffic calming/pedestrian safety improvements per the new PennDOT guidelines (bump-outs, frequent crosswalk painting, street trees, etc.). Pursue traffic flow enhancements without diminishing the pedestrian feel and walkability of Downtown.
- Address public concern regarding safety and maintenance of both public and private parking structures in the Downtown.
- Create a shared parking strategy among users. Identify private lots that are utilized during the evening and/or weekends only that may be made available to the public during other times.
- Evaluate the need for additional parking facilities (lots, structures, etc.) as part of the development of various components of the Downtown.
- Public transportation routes should focus on Downtown attractions; specifically, a loop route should be developed to connect the colleges, other cultural institutions, and the proposed retail and entertainment area. The Wilkes University shuttle serves as a precedent; it could be supported by other partners (including LCTA) and expanded into a downtown loop route.
- Educate business owners to the best practices regarding parking (e.g.: storefront parking for customers only).