

IX. Development Strategy and Plan

The analyses completed during the process of producing this report all clearly point to a need for a comprehensive development strategy and plan for the revitalization of Downtown. For many years, 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.

What follows is a development strategy and plan. It should be emphasized that the strategy and plan presented are by no means the only approach to revitalizing Downtown. The strategy and plan are intended to be flexible and should be reviewed, adjusted and revised often to respond to both the needs of the community and the market forces in effect at differing points in time. However, the main objectives of creating and maintaining a vibrant, active community center that provides the services needed by residents and visitors alike consistently must be the focus of any revision. This will result in the most successful community.

The community will have an opportunity shortly after the release of this report to participate in additional public visioning sessions and a design charette to further develop the recommendations and opportunities outlined in this section of the report.

The following strategy and plan is organized according to the major topics covered in the analyses. Also included are suggested steps to begin the implementation of revitalization, as well as criteria by which to evaluate progress during the implementation process.



A. DCP

A healthy, vibrant Downtown, with related healthy growth, will contribute to the City's overall tax base and alleviate the tax burden placed upon its citizens. Many downtowns throughout the country are the center of activity and the pride of their community. For these reasons, most city governments actively participate in ensuring the well-being of their downtowns.

The Wilkes-Barre City Administration has primarily taken a limited role over the past several years with regard to maintenance, capital improvements, support of existing businesses, and the promotion of Downtown. The general absence of City involvement with, and in some cases neglect of, Downtown—as reported during the focus group discussions—has impelled the creation of DCP and its assumption of an active role regarding Wilkes-Barre's economic health, planning and physical needs.

In order to ensure that DCP's future plans dovetail with the community's overall goals and objectives, DCP has been serving as a coordinator of Downtown's many ongoing projects and activities, as well as acting as a stimulator to encourage both public and private investment. In assuming a coordinator role, DCP has exercised a strong degree of oversight in guiding the efforts of Downtown. However, City involvement in Downtown—especially funding—is needed and encouraged.

LPC has the following suggestions regarding DCP and its purposes:

- Maintain a leadership role in Downtown. Most downtown success stories are public/private partnerships led by organizations similar to DCP.
- Create a public/private partnership with all stakeholders of Downtown, including:
 - the City Administration and Council
 - residents
 - property owners
 - businesses
- King's College, Wilkes University, Luzerne County Community College, and other institutions.



- Continue to support the efforts of the Business Association and the Residents Association. Strengthen the relationship of these entities through quarterly or biennial joint meetings and other joint programs and projects.
- 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. SSDs are particularly successful in providing management, operations and a regular funding source for security, clean and green programs, promotional activities, and streetscape improvements. SSDs 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 College 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 potential projects and existing uses.

B Business Climate

“Business climate” is generally defined as the level of support for residents and businesses present in a community and how it is viewed by outsiders. As discussed, addressing the business climate issues that exist in the City of Wilkes-Barre is key to the revitalization of Downtown. The Focus Group discussions indicted a concern regarding the City Administration support for all stakeholders of the Downtown. The lack of infrastructure maintenance and capital improvements was also a concern. Taking the following steps will improve the generally negative business climate that currently exists in Downtown Wilkes-Barre:

Communications & Relations

- Develop strong, harmonious leadership for the City.
- Facilitate the creation of a public/private partnership between all stakeholders to achieve Downtown’s revitalization goal. Reduce the level of politics and friction between interest groups, and create a cooperative and supportive environment.
- Adopt a business friendly, customer service oriented approach. Every City department should adopt this ideal.
- Review the City’s rules, regulations and review/approval processes, and develop recommendations where opportunities exist for more flexibility and for creating a ‘one-stop shop’ application process. Compare and contrast best practice models with existing City policies and procedures, and explore a process that could streamline the review process.
- Designate an ‘Omnsbudsperson’ to address local business concerns.

Marketing and Promotions

- Promote a strong image of Downtown through positive marketing.
- Assist the Business Association in their marketing efforts on an ongoing basis.
- Work with the Business Association to assist in developing advertising campaigns and marketing strategies. Emphasize the positive aspects of Downtown - cultural activities, Farmer’s Market, restaurants, and special events and programs – as part of the marketing strategy.



- Explore the possibility of conducting marketing workshops, and assisting businesses in developing attractive window displays, that could be contracted and performed by consultants.
- 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.
- Promote small business technical assistance available through Wilkes University and the Commonwealth.
- Develop marketing materials on socioeconomic data, funding programs and incentives that can be utilized City-wide. Review materials used by other municipalities and adapt successful materials that could be published for the City or for specific districts within the City.

Retention and Attraction

- Carry out business retention and recruitment activities to maintain a low vacancy rate in the business district.
- Provide outreach/recruitment efforts. Continue to evaluate the business planning and assistance programs available through the Commonwealth and County Departments of Commerce and Economic Development, and refer Wilkes-Barre businesses to these agencies as opportunities present themselves.
- Provide liaison and technical assistance to businesses where appropriate to strengthen their ability to implement economic development projects.
- Create a mentor and/or peer program for new businesses, institutions, and residents.

Misc.

- 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 a site 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).

C. Infrastructure

Downtown contains a significant amount of basic infrastructure such as roadways and utility lines. In addition, special infrastructure elements, not found in many downtowns—such as Public Square and Kirby Park—are present. Downtown also contains a variety of building façades and parking facilities that are to be considered as part of the infrastructure of a downtown. Downtown’s existing basic and special infrastructure create a unique opportunity for revitalization.

LPC’s analysis indicates that there has been a significant amount of public and private infrastructure neglect and deferred maintenance in Downtown over the past years. The current condition of streetlights around Downtown is a classic example. LPC recommends that DCP, in conjunction with the City Administration and community stakeholders, create a plan that improves the physical and aesthetic quality of Downtown. This can be achieved through a combination of public and private investment, and should be done in accordance with the priorities developed by DCP during the visioning process.

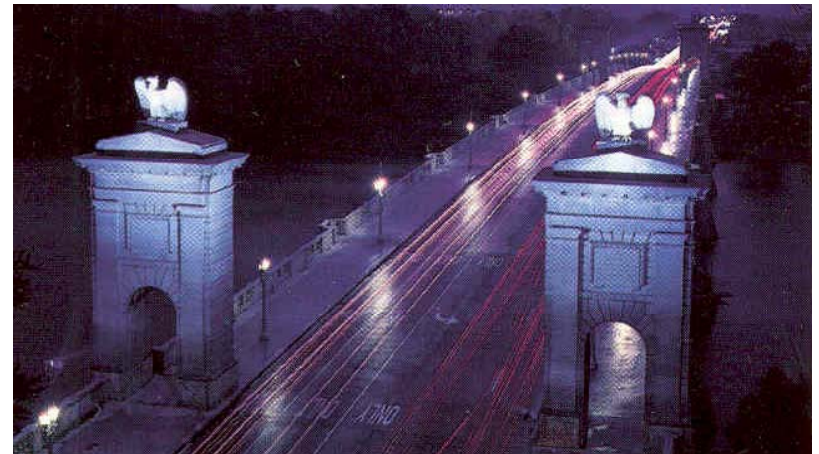
Federal, state and local funding sources, with additional incentive programs may need to be designed to encourage the City and property owners to invest in improvements to their properties. Creative funding opportunities through corporate/individual sponsorships, TEA –21, HUD 108, and CDBG sources should be pursued. A reimbursable façade grant, coupled with appropriate design guidelines, can be a more direct way to influence the quality of architectural design, reinforce the City’s character, and expand the City’s tax base.

Even more important than infrastructure improvements and enhancements is the need to develop a maintenance and capital improvement program for all Downtown infrastructure elements.

LPC suggests the following infrastructure enhancements in Downtown:

Streetscape Improvements

- Create a streetscape improvement program. Concentrate on simple, less complicated and less expensive improvements (street trees, benches, refuse cans).
- Replace the existing streetscape and pedestrian lighting. Immediately repair/replace streetlights that have failed.
- Develop special lighting for bridges and the riverfront, as pictured to the right.



- 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.
- Develop a phased gateway/wayfinding signage program.
- Consider eliminating large sections of the existing canopy where appropriate to expose architecture of interest and window displays. Where canopy sections remain, an enhancement such as lighting should be installed to emphasize the structure.
- Provide banners to highlight each of the cultural institutions and major events (this was previously done on a limited basis).

Public Open Spaces

- Continue and expand efforts to tie the core of Downtown to public spaces, parks, open space, regional trails, and the riverfront.
- Enhance existing open/public space in the Downtown. Consider public/private maintenance and improvements to Public Square and other spaces such as Midtown Plaza.
- Create *activity* through events and design elements.
- 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 and or seasonal draw for Public Square such as an ice rink.



Façade Improvements

LPC suggests the establishment of a low- or no-interest façade/building improvement program, possibly utilizing CDBG or HUD 108 funds. A program can be designed to couple the CDBG/HUD funds with local bank funds to create a loan pool. The CDBG/HUD funds are then used to write-down the interest on the commercial-rate bank loans.

The criteria would allow review of buildings on a case-by-case basis to determine their effect on blighting conditions within Downtown. These conditions could be defined by the number and types of code violations received. A façade program will vastly help improve the appearance of buildings within the community.



Misc.

- 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. Try a Conservation Overlay approach, which can provide greater flexibility and standards for the redevelopment of existing structures.
- Investigate the creation of local historic district guidelines. Emphasize the economic development value of historic preservation.

D. Institutions & Public Facilities

Institutions and public facilities are extremely important to Downtown. During the past decade, while several businesses relocated away from Downtown, existing institutions and public facilities have helped keep Downtown viable. LPC strongly suggests that all stakeholders facilitate support for these entities.

Smaller institutional programs such as the YMCA, JCC, and CYC should be supported and grown to create retail and entertainment use opportunities for parents as well as children. Joint programs, such as pre/post dinner packages, can be created to leverage the synergies between cultural and retail resources. Downtown's religious institutions also are critical activity anchors. Their activities and events need to be promoted and facilitated. The following is a summary of the major Downtown institution and public facility opportunities:

Riverfront/Landing

The Susquehanna Riverfront/Landing development is one of the most important projects conceived for Downtown during the last decade. The Wilkes-Barre area, already known for its recreation uses, will greatly benefit from the connection with the existing recreational facilities and urban core of the region. The national trend is towards combining retail, entertainment, and recreation uses. These uses should be incorporated into the core of Downtown, through the Susquehanna River Landing and other potential projects identified in this report. LPC suggests that major retail components conceived for the Landing be incorporated into the core of Downtown along Market and Main Streets.

Cultural District

Downtown currently has a large concentration of cultural institutions all within a few blocks of each other. These institutions have prospered over the last decade, experiencing increased attendance and membership, and completing major capital improvement programs. The creation of a Cultural District, leveraging the resources of each, will allow the development of additional programs including formal historic/architecture tours. The Cultural District can be packaged with promotions and advertisements created for the proposed Retail/Entertainment District discussed later in this section of the report.

The creation of opportunities for artist live/work space and studios could also be pursued within the Cultural District. The local schools, colleges, and universities should be requested to participate in the planning and funding. Programs that provide public incentives, including grants and tax breaks, for arts related activities and uses should be developed.

Government Facilities

LPC suggests that DCP facilitate the City and County's lease/purchase of less desirable/marketable office space in Downtown. This will help reduce the overall vacancy rate of Downtown office space and create additional pedestrian traffic. The existing City Administration complex should be enhanced to better reflect a revitalized City. At the very least improvements should be made to the landscaping, signage and lighting at the site.

Enhancements should be implemented to orient the County Campus more towards the core of Downtown. Improvements to pedestrian circulation and lighting could promote the interaction between the complex and the services offered in the core.

Universities/Colleges

The three Downtown colleges create built-in demand for housing, retail and entertainment uses. In addition, the other colleges and universities located outside the Downtown provide a market niche to develop within Downtown. DCP should continue the focus on capturing this latent demand through a partnership with COPS Downtown/Collegetown initiative.

LPC suggests that DCP promote the development of a joint King's College/Wilkes University/Luzerne Community College project within the core of Downtown. Such a project could be a meeting/conference center, classroom building, common research facility, library, athletic facility, student center, or housing. The most promising of these concepts are housing and the meeting/conference center. Housing concepts are discussed in the housing section of this report.

Several sites are viable for the creation of the joint facility. The most obvious site is the Irem Temple. This site is well suited for the meeting/conference center facility with its orientation toward the River, proximity to the three college facilities, and adjacent existing hotels and retail services.



E. Residential

Increasing the number of housing units located Downtown will create support for additional retail development in Downtown, and help in the retention and attraction of businesses. LPC's analysis indicates a demand for additional housing units in the Wilkes-Barre market. The City of Wilkes-Barre should be able to compete within the market to attract 75 new units. LPC suggests that a minimum of 50 units be captured by Downtown annually. To achieve this goal Downtown must address the following:

- The identified business climate and infrastructure issues.
- Existing City housing policies and procedures that do not facilitate and support housing development.
- Continue working with CityVest to rehabilitate existing housing stock in Downtown.
- Conversion of upper story retail/storage into housing opportunities.
- Conversion of undesirable office buildings into housing.
- Identify brownfield opportunities for market rate townhouse and garden apartment projects.
- Create a Town Watch Program to self-police and enhance security within neighborhoods.

LPC identified the following general residential 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.

- Market rental rates and sales of quality residential properties support “new” construction.
- 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.
- 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.

LPC has identified the following existing buildings located in Downtown that have potential for redevelopment as housing:

- 17 West Ross Street
- Sterling
- 253 South Main Street
- 11 West Market Street (PNC Bank Building)
- Steam Authority Property
- 43-49 East Northampton Street
- Mary McIntosh Building
- Coughlin High School Site

LPC also has identified Downtown sites that are available for new construction:

- Original Theater Site
- WB General Hospital Site
- Genetti’s Hotel Parking Lot
- 251-267 South Washington Avenue
- South Washington & East Union Street Site
- King’s Lot/Excalibur Site
- King’s Lot

LPC suggests the following types of housing projects for Downtown:

SingleFamily/Townhouse Rehabilitation

LPC's study indicates that a limited number of single family/townhomes are available on the market each year, thus limiting the availability of such homes for rehabilitation. However, during the past decade, several homes sold have been successfully rehabilitated. Recent examples are the CityVest projects on South Franklin Street. As previously stated, these homes were sold prior to the completion of rehabilitation, and sold for double the average market price.

LPC suggests that DCP and the Residents Association identify homes that need rehabilitation, and that DCP, along with other stakeholders such as CityVest and the City of Wilkes-Barre, facilitate the development of a home loan program through a local consortium of banks to assist in the funding of improvements, especially façade-related.

Garden Apartments

The market has proven that it supports garden-style apartments in the suburban areas. LPC believes this type of product (urban version) also could be successful in the urban core if developed according to the criteria listed below. Urban garden apartments, with street-level retail and parking located behind, has been supported in many markets. LPC recently developed a similar project in Pittsburgh in a Northside neighborhood. The project has been well-received and very successful.

The City Administration's designated theater site shown in the adjacent picture would make a good garden apartment development location.

Suggested requirements include:

- Mixed-use (retail & parking on first level)
- Market rate
- Minimum 120 units
- Minimum of 5 acres
- Studio, 1 BR, 2BR
- Amenities: Parking, Community Room, Pool, Fitness



Lofts

Several mixed-use buildings, as pictured to the right, located along Market and Main Streets were identified as potential sites to develop loft-style apartments. Loft-style apartments were mentioned by several individuals during the focus group discussions. Lofts are relatively inexpensive to create compared to mid/high-rise apartments since elevators and other major mechanical systems are often not necessary.

Suggested requirements include:

- As many as feasible
- Market rate
- Studio, 1 BR, & 2BR units

Senior Housing

The report indicates a clear need for additional senior housing in the market. The Downtown is the most obvious location for this type of housing due to the services and conveniences offered. A senior housing project would be suitable on any of the sites identified for new housing construction.

Suggested requirements include:

- Minimum 90 units
- 3-4 acres
- Studio, 1 BR, 2BR & 2BR +den
- Amenities: Community Room



Townhouse Community

The Jefferson Lane townhouse community has been very successful. The few homes that have changed ownership since its completion have sold quickly for the asking price or above. LPC feels a similar project would be successful if developed correctly. A townhouse community would be suitable on any of the sites identified for new housing construction.

Suggested requirements include:

- Minimum 30 units
- Minimum 5 acres
- 2 & 3BR units

Mid/High-Rise Apartment Complex

The Sterling, pictured to the right, was the most often mentioned building for apartment/condo conversion. Several of the existing buildings listed in this section are potential candidates for successful conversion. Due to the high cost of rehabilitation and conversion of an existing buildings, public subsidized funding may be necessary to create a financially feasible project.

Suggested requirements include:

- Higher end/market rate
- Mixed-use
- Minimum 60 units
- 3-4 acres (new site), or existing building
- 1BR, 2BR & 3BR units
- Amenities: On-site Parking, Community Room, Pool, Fitness



Student Housing

There are unique opportunities to create additional student housing Downtown. The success of King's College Alumni Hall project will help determine the true need in the market for additional student housing. In addition, at the time of this report, both King's and Wilkes are in the process of completing housing need studies.

The Mary McIntosh Building pictured to the right, often is suggested as a potential building that can be converted to additional student housing for King's College. Similar buildings exist on the south side of the City that Wilkes may be able to utilize for student housing. Several vacant Downtown buildings could be converted to student housing projects.



F. Office

LPC's office analysis indicates that the Downtown office market at this time is very weak, and unable to support the construction of speculative office space. The entire region is experiencing the same condition.

The analysis also indicates that a portion of the existing Downtown vacant space is having trouble attracting tenants, is in poor physical condition, and lacks amenities that many tenants today require. This space would be considered to be substandard in quality and undesirable as it pertains to office space due to its physical condition and lack of amenities such as parking.

However, opportunities related to the office market exist. They include:

- 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).
- 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.



To reduce the amount of undesirable office space in Downtown and reduce the overall vacancy rate, LPC suggests that DCP, the City and the County facilitate the conversion of existing substandard office space and buildings into residential, hotel and/or institutional uses. This approach has been successfully completed in several communities across the country.

Listed below are some examples of the existing Downtown office buildings that have the potential for such conversion:

- 17 West Ross Street
- 253 South Main Street
- 11 West Market Street (PNC Bank Building)
- 43-49 East Northampton Street
- Citizen's Bank Center (11 West Market Street)

An added benefit of conversion to residential units, as shown in the retail section of this report, is expanded support for existing retail and the creation of new retail demand. Should the need for additional hotel rooms increase, the same office buildings can be converted into hotels.

Another option is conversion into classroom space for the universities or other institutional uses. LPC also suggests that new and/or expanding government space should be directed to available office space in Downtown.

Although the office market in the region and Downtown is currently very weak, potential sites for new office development should nevertheless be identified. As discussed in the office section of this report, the lack of large floor plates Downtown and 'new' constructed space was listed by several companies as the reason they either relocated or are considering relocating away from Downtown.

LPC suggests that DCP identify sites within Downtown that are available for new large floor plate office developments. Shown below are potential sites identified by LPC that meet the necessary office development criteria. Future office development projects should be designed to meet the 'future' expansion space needs of existing Downtown companies, and companies interested in relocating to Downtown.

- Penn Miller Lot (North River Street)
- Genetti Lot (East Market Street)
- St. Stephen's Lot (21-27 South Franklin Street)
- Wilkes-Barre Boulevard & East Union Street Entrance
- Guard Property (South River Street)
- South Washington & East Union Street

LPC also suggests that steps be taken to create the necessary information to show that “ready-to-go” sites are available Downtown, including conceptual site and building plans, city commitments for approvals and infrastructure, and financial/marketing packages. DCP, the Chamber and the City should consider partnering through a public/private partnership with local landowners and/or developers to complete these packages.

At least two sites for new office development should be identified, with consideration of the following criteria:

Amenities:

- On-site parking
- First-floor retail
- Daycare facilities
- Recreational facilities
- State-of-the-art telecommunications

Design:

| | |
|---------------------|-----------|
| Minimum Acres | 3 acres |
| Minimum Square Feet | 60,000 SF |
| Minimum Floor Plate | 15,000 SF |
| Maximum Floor Plate | 25,000 SF |

LPC has also identified several buildings that—although occupancy is low and capital improvements have been limited—could still supply suitable office space for the market. These buildings have larger than average floor plates for Downtown Wilkes-Barre, and are in need of significant capital improvements. The buildings identified in this category include the Blue Cross Building (70 North Main Street), shown pictured to the right, and the Citizen’s Bank Center (11 West Market Street).



G. Retail and Entertainment

The retail analysis completed by GPG indicated that the Wilkes-Barre retail market is in poor shape. Several major retailers have left Downtown due to business climate issues and concerns. Vacancy rates are high, and several property owners are allowing their buildings to deteriorate contributing to the decline of Downtown.

However, tremendous Downtown retail potential has been identified by GPG. The following opportunities exist:

- Capitalize on the market's existing healthy retail climate and the ability to create a unique retail and entertainment area in Downtown.
- Emphasize Downtown's entertainment and cultural market niche through the creation of a retail/entertainment district.
- Restore a cohesive retail center, featuring restaurants, shops and pedestrian activities. Choose retail opportunities to create a concentrated retail district (as shown on the map to the right) 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.
- Tie retail/entertainment opportunities to existing facilities such as the Kirby Center for Performing Arts.
- 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.
- Market support exists today for a movie theater development. Minimal public funding is necessary.



- 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.



The supportable retail identified by GPG is shown below:

- Junior Department Store (Kohl's)
45,000 - 75,000 square feet
- Supermarket (Specialty)
45,000 - 65,000 square feet
- Restaurants/Bars
3 - 5 Quality (liquor), 2 - 3 Family, 1 - 2 Fast Food, 2 - 3 Bars/Taverns
- Misc. Retail
71,200 - 167,100 square feet
- Entertainment
50,000 square feet

Downtown already has a significant amount of infrastructure in place to house and support the retail square footage identified by GPG. LPC identified the following potential buildings/sites for components of the supportable retail identified:

Jr. Department Store (Kohl's)

- Call Center Building
- 227-241 South Main Street
- YMCA Lot



Restaurants

- 59 Public Square
- 76-78 South Main Street (Theater)
- Wilkes-Barre Center
- 100 block of North Main Street
- Greater Wilkes-Barre Chamber office space
- 85 South Main Street
- Hotel Sterling

Supermarket

- Victorian Station Site
- King's Lot/Excalibur Site
- Wilkes-Barre Boulevard Industrial Site



H. Parking & Public Transportation

Like much of Downtown, parking conditions need to be improved and enhanced. The portion of this study completed in relation to Downtown parking was limited in scope, and much more should be reviewed. A comprehensive parking management plan, to make better use of public parking spaces and facilities, should be completed.

The following is a list of the opportunities and recommendations identified by CMA during their review of Downtowns current parking management and facilities:

- 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).



I. Next Steps & Evaluation Criteria

Throughout this section of the report, steps to improve and enhance Downtown were identified. Based on the recommendations and opportunities, the following is an outline of the major steps DCP and Downtown stakeholders should begin during the next year to revitalize Downtown. Also included, when applicable, is evaluation criteria to assess the progress of each step.

Improve the Business Climate

This was identified as the single most important step. It is important for DCP to maintain its leadership role, and work with all Downtown stakeholders to adopt a business friendly/customer service approach. As a result of the improved business climate, interest in Downtown and the decrease in complaints should be achieved.

Hold a Visioning Sessions/Design Charette

The visioning sessions/design charette should be held within six months completion of this report. A significant number of concepts and ideas should be generated by the public as a result of this effort. Each participant should be asked to complete an evaluation of the process to determine the effectiveness of the event.

Increase Residential Units

The report indicates that increasing the number of residential units located Downtown will help create a livelier community, and generate additional retail opportunities. The number of rehabilitated and new units should be tracked by DCP against the established goal of 50 new units a year.

Address Safety Issues

There is an immediate need Downtown to replace the failed light standards, increase the presence of the police department, and introduce community self-policing through a Community Watch Program. Crime statistics should be documented by the City to determine if a decrease in crime resulted from these efforts. Also, the public should be solicited to determine if they feel safer as a result of the enhancements.



Facilitate the Development of the Theater Project

The report indicates that the theater project is an important part of the proposed Retail/Entertainment and Cultural Districts. DCP should participate with the City to make this project a reality for the community. As indicated in this report, market support exists for such a use and the need for public funding is minimal. The number of businesses that open as a result of the theater development should be determined by DCP.

Apply for Main Street Program

The Main Street Program will enable DCP to tap information and funding sources previously not available. The availability of ‘other’ sources of public funds also should be pursued.

Complete a Comprehensive Parking Study

As stated, the parking scope completed for this report was limited in scope. A comprehensive study of Downtown parking facilities and management is necessary.

Identify New Office Development Sites

The report suggests that at least two new sites be identified that can accommodate exiting companies expansion plans or new companies looking to relocate Downtown.

Continue Partnership with COPS Downtown/Collegetown Initiative

The five Wyoming Valley colleges recently received a “Stay and Invent the Future” grant to increase the involvement of the collegiate community in Downtown revitalization. DCP should continue to work with the COPS and their Downtown/Collegetown initiatives.

Implement a Façade Program

Develop a façade program based on the information provided in this report. Monitor the number and increase in value of Downtown properties as a result of the program.