

IV. Institutions and Public Facilities

Downtown Wilkes-Barre houses some of the most diverse institutions in the region, and these private and public facilities, including cultural, government, religious, education and health care centers, are important pieces of the fabric of Downtown.

There are 76 institutions located in Downtown occupying over 1 million square feet of space. Private institutions and public facilities in Downtown employ approximately 3,200 people. The map to the right indicates (colors red, blue, dark purple, teal, light purple, green and orange) the location of the various institutional uses. A list of institution and public facility property information is included in Exhibit A.

A. Institutions

Most Downtown institutions are thriving, with several engaged in major capital improvement programs.

The local universities participate in the Council of Presidents, which are working with DCP and other stakeholders to improve Downtown. The three colleges located Downtown create new opportunities for housing as well as retail. In addition, the two major colleges function as extremely important anchors for Downtown Wilkes-Barre.

The following is summary information on many of the Downtown institutions:

Cultural

Dorothy Dickson Darte Center for the Performing Arts

Owned by Wilkes University, the Darte Center, on River Street, is a fully equipped, professional facility. The University holds its Theater Arts program at the Center.



Greater Wilkes-Barre Chamber of Business & Industry

Located at Two Public Square, the Chamber’s origins go back to the 1884 establishment of the Board of Trade. The Chamber sponsors a variety of programs and events in pursuit of its mission of representing the Voice of Business within the community. The Chamber is the major force behind several of the Downtown initiatives including the Diamond City Partnership and the Susquehanna River Landing Project.

Irem Temple

This historic landmark building is located adjacent to the Susquehanna River at 59 North Franklin Street. It was built in 1907 by Wilkes-Barre’s Shriners, and is a nationally renowned example of the Moorish Revival style of architecture. It is currently rented out for community meetings and events as well as used for Irem Temple functions. Approximately two acres of land fronting River Street are included as part of the property.

The Irem is in need of significant capital improvements and maintenance. The Temple is targeted to be a significant part of the planned Susquehanna River Landing Project.



Kirby Center for the Performing Arts (F.W. Kirby Center)

Located at 71 Public Square, the Kirby Center was originally opened in 1938 as an Art Deco–style movie house, and operated as a single-screen theater until 1977. Thereafter, the building went through various incarnations including a vegetable market, and a diner, before local residents formed a group to save the building, which was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1978.

In 1985, Albert Boscov helped raise the money necessary to acquire and revive the building, which opened as the Kirby Center in 1986, named for a cofounder of the Woolworth chain. It was restored in 1997-98 at a cost of approximately \$4.3 million.



Luzerne County Historical Society

The Society, occupying a museum and library located at 49 South Franklin Street, was renamed from the Wyoming Historical and Geological Society in 2000. It was founded on February 11, 1858, by a group of citizens celebrating the 50th anniversary of the first successful burning in an open grate of anthracite coal. In pursuit of the Society’s mission of promoting and preserving Luzerne County history, the Society records and interprets regional history, traditions, events, people, culture and life.

Osterhout Free Library

One of the first public libraries in Northeastern Pennsylvania, the Library was established as the result of an 1882 bequest by merchant and real estate magnate Isaac Smith Osterhout. It is housed in the 1849 Gothic-style First Presbyterian Church, 71 South Franklin Street, which was purchased in 1887. The Library has been renovated and automated, and has Internet service available.

Sordoni Art Gallery

The Gallery is owned by Wilkes University and located on the ground floor of the University’s Stark Learning Center at 150 South River Street. It was founded in 1973, and houses permanent collections of 19th- and 20th- century American painting. The Gallery also presents local, regional, national and international artist exhibitions of traditional and contemporary art. Lectures and other programs are offered, and the Gallery is open to the public free of charge.

Westmoreland Club

Located at 59 South Franklin Street, the private Club (shown in the picture to the right) serves breakfast, lunch and dinner to its 1,400 members. It has approximately 18,000 square feet of meeting space, and is used frequently for community programs and events.

Significant improvements to the facility have been completed over the past three years.



Education

James M. Coughlin Junior-Senior High School

Part of the Wilkes-Barre Area School District, the High School has an enrollment of approximately 1,113 in grades 9 through 12. It is located at 80 North Washington Street. Focus group discussions suggested that the School District may consider consolidating its three high schools in the future resulting in the closure of this facility.

Bishop Hoban High School

Bishop Hoban, located at 159 South Pennsylvania Boulevard and owned by the Catholic Diocese, opened in 1971. It is a coeducational diocesan secondary school serving the Greater Wyoming Valley. It has a strong academic tradition and a wide range of extracurricular programs, as well as student service projects including Geisinger Children’s Hospital, Habitat for Humanity, Mercy Services, Catholic Social Services, McAuley House, Riverside Manor, Mercy Hospital, Wilkes-Barre General Hospital, Deutsch Institute, Manor Care Health Service, St. Vincent DePaul Soup Kitchen and Project Remain.

King’s College

King’s College, 133 North River Street, is a 33-acre urban campus with an enrollment of approximately 2,300. It is part of the Holy Cross network, and was founded over 50 years ago by University of Notre Dame Fathers and Brothers. The School of Business has been ranked by *Barron’s* as one of the best on the East Coast.

King’s College has recently increased its capital improvement program. Rehabilitation of the Margarida Apartments into Alumni Hall, a student housing facility is underway for \$4.5 million. They also recently completed reconstruction of Sheehy-Farmer at a cost of \$9.6 million, and began plans for the \$800,000 plaza to be constructed as a result of the closure of a portion of North Franklin Avenue.



Wilkes University

Founded in 1933, Wilkes is an independent university with liberal arts, sciences and professional programs, including the Nesbitt School of Pharmacy. A total enrollment of approximately 2,700 students includes 1,500 full-time students from 20 states and 15 foreign countries. The 27-acre campus located at 170 South Franklin Street includes 7 academic buildings, 17 residence halls, 4 administrative buildings, the Eugene S. Farley Library, Henry Student Center, Annette Evans Alumni and Faculty House, Sordoni Art Gallery, Burns Alumni Bell Tower and Carillon, Dorothy Dickson Darte Center for the Performing Arts, Arnaud C. Marts Sports and Conference Center, Ralston Field Athletic Sports Complex, Munson Fieldhouse, and Kirby Center for Free Enterprise and Entrepreneurship.



Human Services

Catholic Youth Center

The Center, owned by Catholic Youth Center of Wyoming Valley, an incorporated nonprofit organization, is located at 36 South Washington Street. The Center provides a variety of youth programs, including an afterschool program. The Child Care Center program operates 24 hours a day from Sunday evening through Saturday morning, in three shifts, and there is a day camp program. The Center was recently awarded a \$50,000 grant by Luzerne County to use toward capital expansion and renovations.

Children's Service Center of Wyoming Valley

Owned by Children's Service Center, Inc., the Center's main address is 99 Bridge Street. The Center complex includes the Martha Bennet Building, Martha Bennet Children's Home, Milford E. Barnes Building, the Everett Building on River Street, and the Children's Home of Wilkes-Barre on South Franklin Street. Founded in 1862, the Center is a JCAHO-accredited behavioral health care organization providing a variety of services and programs to promote the mental health of children, adolescents and families, addressing emotional disturbance, severe and persistent mental illness, pervasive developmental disorders including autism, and developmental disabilities. The Center's Assessment,

Crisis and Referral Services are staffed 24 hours a day. The Center’s total staff is almost 400, and its budget exceeds \$10 million. In 1998-99, 6,500 people were served by the Center. Most recently services were expanded to include adoptive services.

Jewish Community Center

The JCC is located at 60 South River Street and owned by the Jewish Community Center of Wyoming Valley. Along with offering sports, fitness and cultural programs, the JCC runs a day camp in Idetown, and sponsors Cub Scout Pack 32. The JCC is a participant in the United Way of Wyoming Valley. Recently, additional programming was added, and physical improvements have been completed throughout the facility.

Kirby Memorial Health Center (Angeline Elizabeth)

Comprised of the main building at 71 North Franklin Street, the Annex I building at 63 North Franklin Street, and the Annex II building at 57 North Franklin Street, the Center was started as a nonprofit health institution in 1931. It offers laboratory services including environmental, clinical, toxicological and food testing, as well as a low-cost dental clinic for children.

Other health-related nonprofits are also housed in the three buildings, including the Wyoming Valley Children’s Association, American Heart Association of Northeast PA, Arthritis Foundation, American Lung Association of Wyoming Valley, The Advocacy Alliance, American Cancer Society, The Interfaith Resource Center for Peace & Justice, Vital Records, Candy’s Place, Planned Parenthood of Northeast PA, American Diabetes Association, Alzheimer’s Association – Greater PA Chapter Northeast Regional Office, Family Service Association of Wyoming Valley, the Greater Wilkes-Barre Association for the Blind, and the Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program – Pinnacle Health.



Wilkes-Barre Family YMCA

Located at 40 West Northampton Street, the YMCA is a member agency of the United Way of Wyoming Valley. It provides recreational and other community services, including special programs for the disadvantaged, disabled, and area youth. The YMCA offers an afterschool tutoring program, and runs additional programs at Camp Kresge and in Frances Slocum State Park.

The YMCA recently completed a major capital improvement program. The membership has been concerned with the lack and convenience of adjacent parking and the ability of a pick-up/drop off.



Religious

Downtown Wilkes-Barre is home to many faiths as listed in this section. Several have undertaken recent capital improvements such as the St. Nickolas/St Mary’s Elementary School on South Washington Street. Other are expanding in Downtown such as Yeshiva Bais Yaakov, an Orthodox Jewish residential school, which recently acquired the property at 148-150 South Franklin Street for its school and residential purposes.

Saint Stephen’s Episcopal Church

Located at 35 South Franklin Street, the Victorian Romanesque–style Church is the Pro-Cathedral of the Diocese of Bethlehem. The Church doors open daily, and there is a Parish house used by the community. The nave’s seating capacity is 800. The Church has an outreach program, operates an Interfaith Clinic in conjunction with Mercy Hospital, and has three clothes closets for women, children and men in need. Seven self-help groups use St. Stephen’s for meetings, including Alcoholics Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous, Alanon, and Alateen. *Music from St. Stephen’s* is broadcast on WVIA 89.9 FM, National Public Radio, every Sunday afternoon.

St. Mary’s Church of the Immaculate Conception

The cornerstone of this 134 South Washington Street, Roman Baroque edifice was laid in September of 1870. The parish includes 1,031 families, with 2,230 total members. The Church is a member of many ecumenical, interfaith and community groups including the Wyoming Valley Council of Churches, Downtown Ministerium, Interfaith Council of Wyoming Valley, Interfaith Resource Center for Justice and Peace, Martin Luther King Committee, United Way of Wyoming Valley, Children’s Service Center of Wyoming Valley, Catholic Youth Center, Catholic Social Services, St. Vincent DePaul Kitchen and V.I.S.I.O.N. Shelter for the Homeless.



Temple Israel

Incorporated in 1922, the Byzantine-style building has three copper domes and is currently having its exterior restored. It is located at 236 South River Street.

Congregation Ohav Zedek

Located at 242 South Franklin Street, this major Orthodox synagogue serves a Jewish community of 3,000 with daily services and a full complement of classes.

Other religious institutions located Downtown include:

- First Baptist Church, 48 S. River St.
- First Presbyterian Church, 97 S. Franklin St.
- First United Methodist Church, 47 S. Franklin St.
- Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, 190 S. Main St.
- Greek Orthodox Church, 32 E. Ross St.
- Jehovah's Witnesses Kingdom Hall, 72 W. North St.
- King's College Chapel, N. Franklin St.
- Memorial Presbyterian Church, 29 W. North St.
- Salvation Army Citadel, 17 S. Pennsylvania Ave.
- St. Nicholas Roman Catholic Church, 226 S. Washington St.

B. Public Facilities

The City of Wilkes-Barre houses most of its administrative functions in facilities located within Downtown. Downtown Wilkes-Barre is also the County seat, with most of the County's administration and court functions located Downtown.

City of Wilkes-Barre Complex

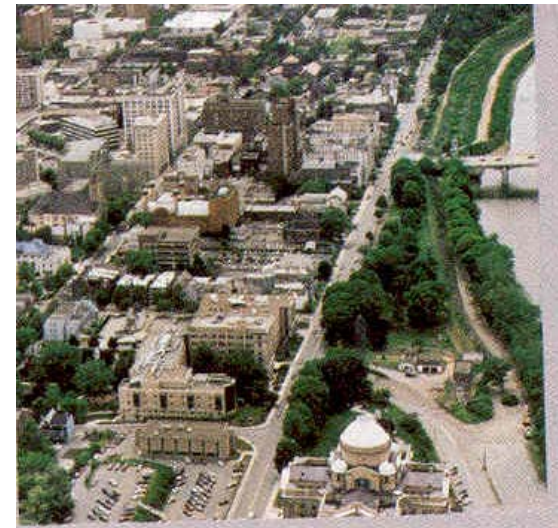
The City of Wilkes-Barre Complex, located at 40 East Market Street. The complex includes City Hall and an adjacent Public Safety Building housing the Police Department. Parking is provided on-site and at the adjacent parking garage located across the street.

City Hall, shown in the picture to the right, is in need of capital improvements and shows from lack of maintenance.



Kirby Park

Owned by the City of Wilkes-Barre, this 52-acre park adjacent to the Susquehanna River on East Market Street includes 2.6 acres of water. The park is administered by the Department of Parks and Recreation. Park facilities include a 0.3-mile track, 4 softball fields, 10 tennis courts, 2 multipurpose court areas, 2 tot lots, 2 picnic pavilions, 18 picnic tables, 10 barbecue pits/grills, a 1.0-mile fitness trail and an outdoor amphitheater seating 25,000. Amenities include 6 restrooms, 5 drinking fountains, a food vendor, 186 parking spaces, 1 maintenance building and 0.2 miles of road.

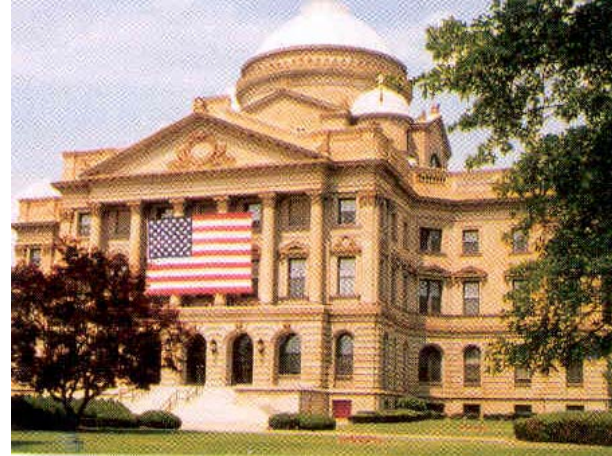


Luzerne County Convention and Visitors Bureau

The Visitors Bureau provides information on Luzerne County accommodations, entertainment, events, education, transportation, shopping and more. It is located at 56 Public Square. The Bureau is partially funded through a tax on hotel room rates.

Luzerne County Courthouse

The Courthouse, shown in the picture to the right, is located at 200 North River Street, and houses County administrative offices and courts, as well as the Wilkes-Barre Law Library Association. Additional County space is located in several buildings adjacent to the Courthouse.



Luzerne County Transportation Authority

The Authority’s headquarters are located at 315 Northampton Street in Kingston, PA, but there is a major hub located in Downtown Wilkes-Barre. Bus service is provided for the City of Wilkes-Barre and surrounding areas Monday through Saturday. Fares are free for seniors and small children, and coupons for reduced fares are available at Boscov’s. No bus service is operated on Sundays or holidays.

Max Rosenn U.S. Courthouse

Located at 197 South Main Street, the Courthouse (shown in the picture to the right, serves as a United States District Court for the Middle District of Pennsylvania.

