

**Downtown Collegetown Initiative
Recommendations for a “Student Friendly” Downtown
March 2004**

a) Discretionary spending among college students

- Form a "Downtown Businesses/Merchants and Campus Partnership" to:
 - Determine how existing businesses can adapt and promote their offerings for college students
 - Develop a detailed, longer-term marketing plan with students as target market
 - Design a mix of advertising, sales promotion and public relations to pursue marketing objectives.
- Try out a “Downtown Collegetown Dollars” program where pre-paid cards could be used to make purchases at participating business. Market these pre-paid cards to parents and students for use as gift certificates, etc.
- Use the resources of college faculty and students enrolled in business courses to accomplish these objectives.

b) General ambiance of downtown

- Illuminate the streets and darkened windows
- Clean up storefronts with attractive window displays, even if buildings are vacant.

c) Safety and security

- Show a presence of police or security guards after dark.

d) Transportation and parking

- Encourage Wilkes and King's students to walk to destinations.
- Develop a 5-campus shuttle service for students, with a drop off and pick up point on Public Square.
- Negotiate with Luzerne County Transit Authority for free or reduced fare to downtown destinations with student ID

e) Housing

- Work with landlords and Board of Realty to establish standards for student renters and landlords, based on well-maintained properties, fair rental rates and accountable behavior by students. Develop a “student housing seal of approval” for off-campus housing
- Create incentives for investors to renovate older buildings for rentals to college students and young professionals.

f) Restaurants and cafes

- New or expanded restaurants should offer food and beverages at affordable rates and menus that appeal to young adults
- Add tables outdoors in good weather; extend evening hours; offer special discounts for students and their families, etc.

g) Entertainment

- Finalize a deal for a downtown movie theater, whatever it takes, as soon as possible
- Increase use of the Kirby Center and its lobby for inexpensive live entertainment on "off nights" when big name performances are not booked.
- Sponsor outdoor evening festivals for college students on Public Square at least once each semester. Feature varied live music, food, activities. Involve students in designing and promoting the festivals through internships and coursework.

h) Shopping

- Offer "convenience" items close to downtown campuses: prepared foods, snacks, personal care items

i) Communication

- Develop an intercollegiate website with bulletin boards for real time communication and links to campus activities page of existing college websites

k) Life after college

- Develop new strategies to attract higher paying, knowledge-based employers
- Promote diversity in life style, housing choices, entertainment and demographics.

Special recommendations to sustain college student involvement in downtown revitalization:

- Provide incentives for more faculty at all five institutions to offer community-based, "service learning" courses through which students earn credit for research and planning that contributes to Wilkes-Barre's revitalization.
- Create a permanent voice for college students in planning for revitalization of downtown Wilkes-Barre. Student representation at more than a token level should inform all decision making about the future of the Downtown by city government, college executives and civic leaders.

