



September 14, 2018

Greetings from the Diamond City Partnership, Wilkes-Barre's nonprofit downtown management organization!

As DCP Board Chair, I would like to update you on your investment in the Downtown Wilkes-Barre Business Improvement District.

As you know, the Downtown Wilkes-Barre Business Improvement District ("DWBBID") began in 2007. The DWBBID was initially tasked with the challenge of making our Downtown cleaner, safer, and more attractive, in order to preserve and enhance the investments of Downtown property owners.

During the prior decades, Downtown Wilkes-Barre had struggled. Litter blew across sidewalks, graffiti marred buildings, and storefronts sat empty. After work and on weekends, Downtown became a ghost town as workers retreated to the suburbs. Downtown property values reflected a lack of interest by potential entrepreneurs and businesses in investing in our center city.

It became clear that Downtown needed a champion: an independent organization that would do the work necessary to protect property owners' significant investments. With your support, the DWBBID, an entity run by Downtown stakeholders, was created to serve your interests and improve Downtown's competitive position within the market.

Downtown has come a long way since 2007. Our efforts have made a difference, but we also know that this is still a work in progress. To date, the DWBBID has:

- Removed **more than 1,400 graffiti tags** from buildings and properties within the District. Imagine a Downtown where storefronts, building walls, and street furniture are lathered with graffiti - that was our reality prior to the DWBBID's Clean Team. Now, graffiti is generally removed within 24 hours of being reported to our office.
- Removed **62 tons of garbage** from Downtown's sidewalks and doorways. As a result of the DWBBID's attention to cleaning, we've seen more and more businesses providing sidewalk café-style dining. This simply did not occur before the BID.
- Provided **thousands of hours** of additional security within Downtown. One of the first tasks of the DWBBID was to ensure our District was safe. Today, we fund "special detail" police patrols, we carefully monitor downtown crime statistics, and we maintain a relationship with the City's Police Department to address Downtown property owners' areas of concern.
- Implemented many different initiatives - from **seasonal flower baskets** to **wayfinding signs** to **new events and marketing** - which have collectively enhanced the Downtown experience.

Since its inception, the DWBBID has helped to create a better Downtown environment, generating positive momentum that has pushed our center city forward. Since the DWBBID began, we've:

- Seen businesses move back Downtown. In fact, the DWBBID has seen a net gain of 47 occupied storefronts since 2007. Business owners recognize that progress is being made, and firms of all sizes and types are now choosing to be part of Downtown's revitalization.
- Seen people move back Downtown. Since 2007, 205 new housing units – many in buildings that have been vacant or underutilized for decades – have been added to the Downtown inventory. As Downtown has again become a desirable place to live, the number of young college graduates residing in our center city has doubled.
- Seen a dramatic positive improvement in perceptions of Downtown. More and more people are coming Downtown to eat, to shop, to enjoy a movie or a show, or to attend special events. There's a buzz about Downtown that simply didn't exist a few years ago.

There's still much to be done. Keeping the District clean, safe, and attractive will always be our top priorities. However, based on your feedback, we've identified other items needing attention in the coming years if we want to continue to enhance Downtown's market position.

We've enclosed a preliminary plan developed by DWBBID property owners, staff, and board members for your review. I hope you will take time to read through the document and join us at one of the two ratepayers' meetings that we will be hosting in early October to review the DWBBID's work to date and plan for its next decade.

The ratepayer meetings will be held at the THINK Center, on the lower level of the Innovation Center at 3 South Main Street (between Barnes & Noble and Boscov's), on the following dates:

- Wednesday, October 3, 2018 @ 6:00 PM
- Thursday, October 4, 2018 @ 8:30 AM

On behalf of the Board of Directors and staff of DCP and the DWBBID, we want to thank you for your continued support. Your belief in our efforts to date has enabled us to foster the revitalization of Downtown Wilkes-Barre, and we look forward to continuing this work on your behalf.

Sincerely,



Steve Barrouk
Chair, Diamond City Partnership