

**ASSESSMENT REPORT
LEHIGHTON, PENNSYLVANIA
AUGUST 12 – 14, 2013**



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a subsidiary of the
National Trust *for* Historic Preservation

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§ I. INTRODUCTION

This report is a summary of the observations and recommendations of a National Main Street Center (NMSC) Assessment Team that visited Lehigh, Pennsylvania, on August 13-14, 2013. This report is based on several meetings and interviews with individuals and groups, a tour of the community, an on-site assessment of the commercial district, an examination of the background materials provided before the team's visit, and an evaluation session with team members.

The purpose of the visit was for the NMSC Assessment Team to deliver community assessment services to the Borough of Lehigh that would respond to the community's efforts to preserve the integrity of the downtown district, while generating economic vitality through the application of smart growth principles and a proven process for downtown revitalization strategies that uses the comprehensive Main Street Four Point Approach[®]. Specifically, the NMSC Assessment Team concentrated its study on providing strategies that respond to the following issues identified by the Borough of Lehigh as key to the revitalization of the downtown district:

- Reduction in the number of vacancies in downtown commercial buildings
- Encouraging investment in commercial properties in the downtown district
- Development of the riverfront area and integration with downtown commercial district
- Improving the appearance and functionality of the 1st Street corridor, including the "gateways" into downtown
- Development of organizational capacity and sustainable district management initiatives.

The assessment visit and this follow-up report of the assessment team's findings and recommendations were provided to the Borough of Lehigh through a Smart Growth Grant awarded to the Carbon County Board of REALTORS[®] by the National Association of REALTORS[®] (NAR). The NAR has given Smart Growth grants to local realtor networks in the interest of promoting smart growth principles in communities across the country.

It is worth referencing a few general principles of smart growth in discussing this assessment, particularly:

Smart Growth principles emphasize development and density in the core of the community (vs. uncontrolled growth of "Greenfields," i.e. undeveloped or agricultural land on the outskirts of town), and recognize the importance of community character to entice residents and shoppers to the community and core. Therefore, any and every effort should be made to retain the historic character, fabric and buildings in city's core, while controlling growth on the periphery.

THE ASSESSMENT TEAM

The Assessment Team consisted of the following members:

Doug Loescher brings more than 30 years of experience in the community development field, leading successful initiatives on both the local and national level. Before entering private practice, Doug served as Director of the National Main Street Center for 10 years, helping to build a network of successful state and local downtown revitalization initiatives throughout the U.S. Trained as an urban planner, Doug has received additional degrees and certificates in Adult Education and Training, Consulting, and Creative Problem Solving. He has co-authored several publications, including the most comprehensive manual in the field on commercial district development: “Revitalizing Main Street.” As a frequent speaker, writer and thought leader, Doug has in recent years focused on creating opportunity and innovation in the commercial revitalization field by integrating smart growth principles and tools into his approach, and has assisted local leaders in small cities and urban neighborhoods to develop vibrant local economies and sustainable revitalization programs.

Teresa Lynch is a former Senior Program Officer for the National Main Street Center (NMSC). During her 14 years with the Center, she provided Main Street technical assistance and training to small and mid-sized communities and urban neighborhood commercial districts across the country. Teresa also managed NMSC special projects, such as the Army-Community Heritage Partnerships Program, through which she provided organizational development and commercial revitalization services to communities and adjoining Army installations in New York, Georgia, Arizona, Kansas, Pennsylvania, North Carolina, Virginia, Louisiana, and Kentucky. Before joining the NMSC, Teresa worked in a variety of Main Street roles. She began her downtown redevelopment career more than 29 years ago – first as the state coordinator for the fledgling Main Street Arkansas program and then as then as the manager of the statewide Virginia Main Street program. In 1995, applying skills learned from years of teaching the Main Street Approach, Teresa became executive director of the Orange Downtown Alliance, a Main Street program in Orange, Va. Now in private practice as a commercial revitalization specialist, Teresa continues to work with the NMSC on special projects.

Holly Moskerintz, a Community & Political Affairs Representative of NAR, joined the assessment visit to observe the process and to provide input to the team members. Holly works on NAR’s Housing Opportunity and Smart Growth Programs where she plans and manages community outreach programs and provides technical assistance to state and local Realtor® associations. Holly also develops partnerships and initiatives with national and regional housing, community and economic development organizations and presents at their conferences. Holly is originally from Jim Thorpe, a neighboring town to Lehigh, and participated in the project because of her strong connection to the area and her desire to see the area grow and prosper and become a destination for tourists. Holly has created a Facebook page (https://www.facebook.com/CarbonCountyCitizensSoapbox?ref=br_tf) to make the local residents aware of resources and programs and to encourage them to become involved in preserving the County’s culture, heritage, assets and environment.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The team is grateful for the contributions of the NAR in making the assessment visit and follow-up study possible through the award of a Smart Growth grant. The team is particularly appreciative of Joe Molinaro, NAR Managing Director of Community and Political Affairs, for his help in planning a framework for the visit that would result in implementable outcomes; and for the valuable guidance he provided to the team prior to its visit to Lehigh. The team thanks Holly Moskerintz for her particular insight on the economic, social and cultural conditions of the region. The information she provided was invaluable before, during, and after the visit.

Special thanks go to Kathy Henderson of the Carbon County Association of REALTORS® for developing the Smart Growth grant proposal and for all her help in organizing the visit and touring the team around the district; to Nicole Beckett, Borough Manager, who provided background information to the team prior to the visit and who coordinated meetings and interview sessions for the visit; to Elissa Garofalo, Executive Director of the Delaware and Lehigh National Heritage Corridor (DLNHC) and Dale Freudenberger, DLNHC Regional Coordinator, both of whom provided background information for the team about the D&L Corridor Market Towns Initiative.

The team also wants to recognize Borough Council President Grant Hunsicker and the entire Council for the Borough's funding of the assessment team's travel expenses.

The assessment team could not have completed this report without the assistance of so many people in the Borough of Lehigh. This report reflects observations and recommendations based on meetings and interviews with a large and varied cross-section of individuals and groups who generously gave their time to provide the team with insight on opportunities for moving the Borough's downtown revitalization objectives forward.

THE NATIONAL MAIN STREET CENTER®

The National Main Street Center (NMSC) is subsidiary of the National Trust for Historic Preservation (NTHP). The NMSC accomplishes its mission of revitalizing historic and traditional commercial district through its comprehensive methodology—the Main Street Four Point Approach®. Created by a Congressional Charter in 1949, the NTHP is the leading advocate of historic preservation in the United States.

Established by the NTHP in 1980, the National Main Street Center has worked in 46 states. Through these efforts 473,535 net new jobs have been created, \$55.7 billion have been reinvested in Main Street commercial districts, 109,693 net new businesses have been created, and 236,418 buildings have been rehabilitated.

The NMSC offers the National Main Street Network®, a professional membership program for individuals and organizations involved in commercial district revitalization. It produces publications, a bi-monthly journal, a weekly e-newsletter, and serves as a clearinghouse for information on community redevelopment issues.

THE MAIN STREET FOUR POINT APPROACH®

The Main Street Four Point Approach® incorporates the following work areas into a comprehensive, long-term commercial revitalization strategy:

Design takes advantage of the visual opportunities inherent in a downtown by directing attention to all of its physical elements: public and private buildings, storefronts, signs, public spaces, landscaping, merchandising, displays, and promotional materials. Its aim is to stress the importance of design quality in all of these areas, to educate people about design quality, and to expedite improvements downtown.

Promotion takes many forms, but the goal is to create a positive image in order to rekindle community pride. Promotion seeks to improve retail sales events and festivals and to create a positive public image of downtown in order to attract investors, developers, and new businesses.

Economic Restructuring strengthens downtown's existing economic assets while diversifying its economic base. This is accomplished by retaining and expanding existing businesses to provide a balanced commercial mix, converting unused or underutilized space into productive property, sharpening the competitiveness and merchandising skills of downtown business people, and attracting new businesses that the market can support.

Organization establishes consensus and cooperation by building partnerships among the various groups that have a stake in the downtown. This will allow the Main Street revitalization program to provide effective, ongoing management and advocacy of downtown. Diverse groups from the public and private sectors (city and county governments, local bankers, merchants, the chamber of commerce, property owners, community leaders, and others) must work together to create and maintain a successful program.

While the Main Street Four Point Approach® provides the format for successful revitalization implementing it is based on eight principles that pertain to all areas of the revitalization effort. These eight principles are overarching values for the four points:

- **Comprehensive.** Downtown revitalization is a complex process that cannot be accomplished through a single project. For successful, long-term revitalization, a comprehensive approach must be used.

- **Incremental.** Small projects and simple activities lead to a more sophisticated understanding of the revitalization process and help to develop skills so that more complex problems can be addressed and more ambitious projects undertaken.
- **Self-help.** Local leaders must have the desire and will to make the project successful. The National Main Street Center can provide direction, ideas, and training; but continued and long-term success depends upon the involvement and commitment of the community.
- **Public-private Partnership.** Both the public and private sectors have a vital interest in the economic health and physical viability of downtown. Each sector has a role to play, and each must understand the other's strengths and limitations so that an effective partnership can be forged.
- **Identifying and Capitalizing on Existing Assets.** Business districts must capitalize on the assets that make them unique. Every district has unique qualities, like distinctive buildings and scale that give people a sense of place. These local assets must serve as the foundation for all aspects of the revitalization program.
- **Quality.** Quality must be emphasized in every aspect of the revitalization program. This applies equally to each element of the program, from storefront design to promotional campaigns to educational programs.
- **Change.** Changes in attitude and practice are necessary to improve current economic conditions. Public support for change will build as the program grows.
- **Implementation-oriented.** Activity creates confidence in the program and ever greater levels of participation. Frequent, visible changes are a reminder that the revitalization effort is under way. Small projects at the beginning of the program pave the way for larger activities as the revitalization effort matures.

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

Downtown Lehighton's Decline and Revitalization Efforts

The team was able to trace a pattern of downtown redevelopment and revitalization efforts that were made in Lehighton over the past 30 years.

In the early 1980s, Carbon County Redevelopment Authority led an effort to provide assistance for redevelopment of the historic town centers within the county. At that time, both Jim Thorpe and Lehighton were seeking strategies to help in the revitalization of their downtown districts. The central business districts of those communities – like so many across the nation -- had fallen into decline based on, among other issues, loss of local industries and the influx of shopping malls and big box stores.

In the Borough of Jim Thorpe (the county seat), community leaders decided to adopt the Main Street Four Point Approach® to guide the revitalization of its downtown district, using preservation of the built and natural environment as the basis for expanding economic development opportunities.

In the Borough of Lehighton, community leaders utilized the county's funding assistance to rehabilitate downtown building facades, but without the benefit of preservation design guidance. As a result, many of the district's historic structures received inappropriate renovations to their facades; and several downtown buildings were demolished with the idea that new buildings would rise in their place – which did not occur.

It was during this period of time that a major anchor, Bright's Department Store, departed 1st Street (the "main street" in Lehighton's downtown commercial district) and, following that occurrence, many other long-time businesses departed downtown or moved off of 1st Street.

In the early to mid-1980s, a one-way bypass roadway was constructed, starting at the intersection of S. 1st Street and Bankway Street. The purpose was to by-pass Lehighton's Main Street (1st Street) in order to more quickly move traffic traveling in a northerly direction toward Jim Thorpe. At the same time that the bypass (called the Sgt. Stanley Hoffman Blvd.) was constructed, 1st Street was converted, at the northerly intersection of 1st Street and the bypass, from a two-way to a one-way. This converted traffic flow caused 1st Street to become a speedway that acted simply as a conduit for traffic traveling in a southerly direction from Jim Thorpe, through downtown Lehighton, to the Pennsylvania Turnpike.

Coinciding with these negative occurrences, strip commercial development began along Route 443, bringing into the retail mix the establishment of major big box stores, such as a Walmart Supercenter and a Lowes.

All of these conditions had serious consequences and contributed to the declining economic health of Lehighton's downtown business district, with particular deleterious effects on the 1st Street corridor.

In 2002, the Delaware & Lehigh National Heritage Corridor, in association with the Pennsylvania Downtown Center, began a 5-year pilot project to assist in the revitalization of the commercial centers of 11 communities along the spine of the Heritage Corridor in Luzerne, Carbon, Lehigh and Northampton Counties. Lehighton was one of seven primary (larger) towns that were served by the pilot program, which was called "Corridor Market Towns Initiative." A shared Market Towns Manager was hired to assist communities develop and implement revitalization strategies that followed the Four Point Main Street Approach® -- which had been successfully utilized for the downtown community of Jim Thorpe.

The Market Towns Initiative program ended in 2006 and, in the five years of its existence, there were numerous activities, projects and benefits that accrued to downtown Lehighton, such as:

- Plans were made for gateway improvements for the Bankway and Bypass and North First Street and Bypass intersections.
- Committees were set up to work on Design, Marketing, Economic Development, and Heritage Development projects; and work plans established for each committee.
- A façade grant program assisted in the implementation of 15 building improvement projects.
- A Historic Resources inventory was developed for the Lehighton-Weissport area – identifying about 25 sites of historic significance in the Borough of Lehighton.
- A downtown marketing tabloid for downtown Lehighton targeted to attract customers and new business development was published.

In the summer of 2007, a year after the Market Towns pilot project ended, a private non-profit organization titled, "Lehighton Downtown Initiative Committee" (LDIC) was formed with a goal of revitalizing downtown Lehighton's business district. Its main purposes and objectives revolved around beautification projects and the creation of community events to bring people into downtown Lehighton. The LDIC began meeting regularly and forming strategies to move the revitalization effort forward. Subcommittees addressed Downtown Design, Marketing, Parking/Traffic, Historic Preservation and Tourism. Partners to LDIC included the Borough, the Chamber of Commerce, and the Shade Tree Commission.

In the first year of its existence, LDIC created a vision statement; listed goals and priorities for the organization; began a downtown business and property inventory; worked on façade design guidelines; made parking recommendations; and created an overall downtown planting and beautification plan

However, in the recent past, the organization has faltered in volunteer support. It has become more and more difficult to get interested business owners and community

residents to help plan and implement activities. The LDIC, as it is now constructed, lacks board officers and the committee structure is not currently operating.

The major accomplishments for the LDIC during the last few years have been the implementation of promotional activities. Chief among them has been the successful operation of Bike Night, an annual festival held the second Saturday in August, in the town park and surrounding streets, that brings several thousand into the downtown commercial district. LDIC also sponsors “Santa in the Park,” a two-hour event, during the winter holiday season, which provides family fun in the park and gifts for children. Both of these promotional activities are covered in Section V below, entitled “Marketing of the Downtown District.”

Community Assets

There are numerous assets in the Borough of Lehigh on which to build a climate of investment that can create economic vitality within the downtown commercial district, including:

Stable Community. Looking beyond the specific economic and physical conditions of downtown, the Borough of Lehigh presents the appearance of a stable community, with good neighborhoods and facilities; notably the new school complex, as well as the regional hospital.

Regional Access. The Borough of Lehigh enjoys a historical economic advantage as a regional market center, thanks in part to the easy access provided by the turnpike, as well as U.S. 443. Lehigh currently serves as a gateway for other adjacent communities, such as Jim Thorpe, with a regional tourism draw that could benefit Lehigh in the future as well.

Natural Amenities. The Lehigh River and recently opened trailhead to the 165 miles Delaware and Lehigh Heritage Corridor Trail system, opens the potential for significant outdoor recreational uses and activities adjacent to the downtown.



Downtown Buildings and Public Spaces. The numerous historic buildings of architectural significance provide a foundation for refurbishing facades, and providing space for small-scale local business development. Other amenities, such as the Borough Amphitheater and park, street trees and ornamental lighting can be leveraged for renewed pedestrian activity.

Untapped Market Potential. As many local residents have commented, the review of demographic and economic data for the area indicates that the majority of Lehighton residents have disposable income that could be captured in downtown Lehighton.

Growing Organizational Capacity. Broad interest and commitment by local leaders to downtown revitalization, as evidenced by the Borough's taskforce for Downtown Revitalization, the Lehighton Downtown Initiative, the Carbon Chamber & Economic Development Corporation, Industrial Development Authority, as well as the Carbon County Realtors Association's application to National Realtors Association, for the Smart Growth Grant, which made this assessment possible.

Engaged Citizens and Leaders. And finally, Lehighton is fortunate to have the passion and engagement of a diverse group of great people, representing virtually every segment of the community; many with deep roots to Lehighton.

Downtown Challenges

There are specific challenges for downtown that are widely recognized by many local leaders, and were apparent to the assessment team during our visit, including:

Bypass Development. The development decisions made in recent decades – such as the building of the bypass, conversion to one-way streets downtown and the development of strip retail on U.S. 443 – have all contributed to an accelerated decline of the downtown, pulling both businesses and customers out of the 1st Street district. Such developments

are irreversible, and will continue to put downtown Lehigh at an economic disadvantage.

Vacant and Underutilized Properties. The assessment team confirmed the findings of local leaders that – despite a small core of high quality businesses and owners – a significant amount of the downtown properties are either vacant or significantly underutilized by the current businesses and tenants that are in place. These “occupied vacancies” provide retail offerings of marginal value to many Lehigh residents, who now prefer to shop elsewhere.



Absentee Landlords and Dilapidated Buildings. Based on an evaluation of previous reports, as well as current community input and assessment team observations, Lehigh suffers from a chronic issue with dis-engaged and indifferent property owners, many who live outside of the borough. Despite the good intentions and efforts by local leaders and a small number of well-maintained properties, these “absentee landlords” will likely not be motivated to improve the conditions of their properties without some significant change in market dynamics or regulatory mandates.

Critical Mass and Quality of Retail. As noted earlier, previous development on Rt. 443 and elsewhere has depleted downtown of most traditional retail anchors, and 1st Street no longer maintains a critical mass or quality of retail needed to entice many local residents downtown. The resulting spiral of disinvestment has resulted low-end retail and low rental rates, neither of which can support the type of reinvestment in the buildings for façade improvements and structural repairs needed on many properties.

Parking and Utilities. As with virtually every small community, parking was cited as a significant obstacle. However, on-site examination indicates that the issue may be more about parking perception and management, than parking supply. Regardless, many residents see parking as a major obstacle to redevelopment, and this focus has immobilized leaders to some extent to tackle other issues downtown. (See Recommendations section for parking strategies.) In addition, there appears to be a lively debate regarding the impact of commercial utility rates on downtown businesses and

property owners. While it is beyond the charge and purview of this assessment to address this issue, it should be noted that utility rates are just one part of the equation for businesses looking to locate downtown, and may be “balanced” by the lower property taxes enjoyed by commercial property owners in the borough.

Downtown’s Negative Image. One of the biggest challenges that downtown Lehighton will have to face is the negative image that 1st Street currently presents to local residents and those visitors to the region who are traveling through the community. The assessment team heard several comments during interviews and meetings about 1st Street’s appearance as one that is “not welcoming.” Unattractive gateways to the downtown district, the lack of upkeep and dilapidated facades of many of the commercial buildings on 1st Street, the low-end residential rental units that have populated the commercial buildings in the last several years, and the ramshackle appearance of the backsides of buildings facing the bypass were all brought up as fostering a negative image of the downtown that is keeping visitors and local residents away from the district.



Organizational Capacity. With the substantial challenges and opportunities for growth, downtown Lehighton needs a “go-to” organization or entity. Currently, a number of uncoordinated and under-resourced organizations are attempting to fill that gap, but they currently lack the capacity to adequately tackle the work outlined in this report. Without a clarification of roles, coordination of efforts, and development of organizational capacity, downtown Lehighton cannot be revitalized nor will the negative image that many share about the downtown district be reversed.

There are specific challenges for downtown that are widely recognized by many local leaders, and were apparent to the assessment team during our visit, which will be reviewed – along with specific recommendation for improvements – under Section IV, “Downtown Revitalization.”

§ II. RIVERFRONT DEVELOPMENT

RIVERFRONT OBSERVATIONS

The properties lining the river and Sargent Stanley Hoffman Boulevard, (commonly referred to as the “bypass”), remain as one of the greatest under-developed assets for downtown Lehighton. Specific issues and opportunities include:

- **Fragmentation of Uses.** Scattered and unrelated property development has left the area without a clear image or purpose, creating a risk that future development opportunities to create an “anchor” for downtown and the community will be lost. Many of the current uses do not take advantage of the inherent assets of the site and location. Therefore, the limited and unfocused development to-date has hindered the potential for this area to become a compelling “gateway” to the community.
- **Recent Real Estate Transactions.** During the assessment team visit, a large parcel of private property lining the river was under purchase by a private whitewater rafting company; a positive development, which could bolster the emerging outdoor/recreational use potential for the riverfront area. Combined with the new heritage trailhead, these two uses can provide an anchor for future recreational development, if done cohesively.



- **Poor Orientation for Motorists and Visitors.** Currently, the new Lehigh Heritage Trailhead empties onto an unimproved and unsigned gravel lot, offering an uninviting entrance into the riverfront and downtown area. Furthermore, there is no directional signage that would alert motorists or visitors to the trail, river, or downtown.
- **Lack of Activity or “Anchors”.** The area between the bypass and river is underutilized and devoid of activity, with the exception of an occasional farmers market. Without an “anchor” business or activity, the area is not enticing to those driving along the bypass.

RIVERFRONT RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation #1: Build Consensus on Riverfront Uses. Despite the scattered and unfocused land development to-date, there are still considerable undeveloped properties and an opportunity to create a synergistic land use pattern that will benefit the downtown and integrate the community. The assessment team agrees with the local sentiment expressed by many that outdoor/recreational uses should become the focus and strategy for future development. This would include boating, fishing, biking, hiking and passive recreational uses. The borough leaders can play a role in guiding future developments by aligning zoning and codes to support this direction. In addition, the Borough, along with the Carbon County Chamber & Economic Development Corporation, (CCCED), should actively solicit prospects for remaining private properties available that are consistent with these priorities.



Recommendation #2: Develop Heritage Trailhead. With the completion of the 165 miles Delaware and Lehigh Heritage Corridor Trail system and terminus at Maidens Lane, the Borough should capitalize on this regional tourism asset through improvements to the new trailhead. Basic improvements would include landscaping improvements, signage and a possible visitor/heritage kiosk, as well as bike racks and picnic facilities.



Example of Trailhead orientation kiosk

Funding for trailhead improvements may be available from Lehigh Valley Greenways, which is one of seven Conservation Landscapes supported by the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR). Funding is provided to the Delaware & Lehigh National Heritage Corridor, to administer this mini grant program. The 2013 Mini-grant round includes eligibility for the D&L Trail Alliance and regional councils. D&L Trail Alliance includes a council of land managers who own portions of the 165-mile D&L Trail and three regional councils that include partners, volunteers, and concerned citizens in the northern, central and southern sections of the Corridor to sustain stewardship of the D&L Trail network in eastern PA. For more information:

<http://www.delawareandlehigh.org/index.php/community-outreach/program/lehigh-valley-greenways-conservation-landscape/>

Recommendation #3: Redevelop Historic Properties.

The vacant Coal Stove Manufacturing Building, which is adjacent to the new trailhead, could catalyze redevelopment of the riverfront area, serving as a base for recreation-focused businesses located throughout the area. Over time, the property could also provide an incubator space for local enterprises; focused on regional food, crafts, arts and music. Thoughtful historic restoration and reuse of this significant structure could be a key strategy, anchoring the completed heritage trailhead as part of a new gateway to downtown. (See Gateways section below.)



Recommendation #4: Reintroduce Lehighon Downtown Farmers Market. Based on a review of income and demographic data for the area, the assessment team believes there is still unmet demand for locally-grown produce and distribution, (in addition to the Mahoning Farmers Market now located on Rt. 443). This riverfront/downtown market enjoys a distinct niche that could be focused on local producers and regional crafts; potentially capturing in-town residents, heritage trail visitors, and regional north-bound traffic along Sgt. Stanley Hoffman Boulevard. More importantly, such a market would provide an activity anchor that would re-introduce residents to this area, strengthening the connection with downtown.

§ III. BYPASS & GATEWAYS

BYPASS AND GATEWAY OBSERVATIONS

“Gateways” to downtown were frequently discussed during the assessment team visit, usually in a negative manner. Improving the “gateways” to downtown will be critical in redefining the image of – and accessibility to – downtown Lehighton.

In addition to the “entrances to 1st Street (at Bankway on the South and near Coal Street on the North), the entire “bypass” will be included in this section, as it impacts on the image and entrances to downtown overall. The team observations are the following:

- **Bypass as Divider.** Rather than connecting downtown with the riverfront, trailhead and neighborhoods, the design of the Sargent Stanley Hoffman Boulevard has inhibited connections and development that could integrate the community.
- **Incompatible Highway Design.** The standards to which the boulevard was constructed are not conducive to the goals of community and downtown revitalization. Rather, the design facilitates vehicular speed at all other costs; thus the “bypass” design has contributed to downtown’s decline.
- **Dilapidated Buildings.** The “face” of downtown is currently created by the backs of dilapidated buildings lining 1st Street. Given the extensive deterioration and fragmented property ownership, it would be difficult in the short-to-mid-term to make a significant improvement in these properties.



- **Lack of Visibility.** Given the steep topography and “eyesore” appearance separating 1st Street buildings from the riverfront, the visual access and appeal of downtown is limited and negative.



Extensive asphalt and dilapidated buildings present a negative impression

- **No Gateway from the South.** Due to the bypass design, there is virtually no gateway from the south – at the intersection of South 1st Street and Bankway Street – into downtown, undermining any efforts otherwise made to attract residents or visitors into downtown. The “bypass” of Sgt. Stanley Hoffman Boulevard efficiently moves motorists quickly past the few cross streets where downtown can be accessed. Furthermore, there is no signage or inviting facades visible from this route.
- **Uninviting Gateway from the North.** The traditional entrance into downtown Lehighton from the north (from Jim Thorpe area) is mostly defined by the dilapidated and underutilized structures at the intersection of North 1st Street and the bypass. Minimal streetscape amenities further impact the negative image for downtown.

BYPASS & GATEWAY RECOMMENDATIONS

In order to successfully revitalize the commercial core, the approaches and entrances will need to be made more attractive, visible, and efficient. Gateway improvements can become a strategy for targeted improvements that shape public perceptions about downtown, and set the stage for long-term revitalization. Some of these changes will involve a reconsideration of the boundaries of the commercial district; others will involve physical improvements on the periphery of the district. The assessment team’s recommendations are as follows:

Recommendation #1: Re-think the Definition of “Downtown Lehighton”.

Overwhelming public sentiment regarding the negative appearance and vitality of downtown Lehighton is almost exclusively focused on 1st Street. Since 2002, when the Corridor Market Towns Initiative, (CMTI), began revitalization in Lehighton, the long list of problems with 1st Street vacancies, dilapidation, absentee landlords, and problem tenants has been well cataloged.

Despite promising progress during the CMTI, (2002-2006), little has changed or improved since this program was ended. The recommendations for improvements downtown – as well as at the “gateway” entrances, are still valid, and should be incorporated into any future coordinated revitalization initiative. Clearly the scale and intractability of these problems have kept true revitalization – as well as public opinion – frozen.



Leighton has many amenities which define “downtown”

To change the perception and dynamic, the definition of “downtown” should be expanded, to capitalize on inherent assets adjacent to 1st Street; one which can integrate downtown with the surrounding community, including:

- Downtown bandshell and park
- Strong 2nd Street business cluster
- Public institutions, such as the Leighton Public Library and Borough Hall
- Nearby recreational facilities that could be linked.

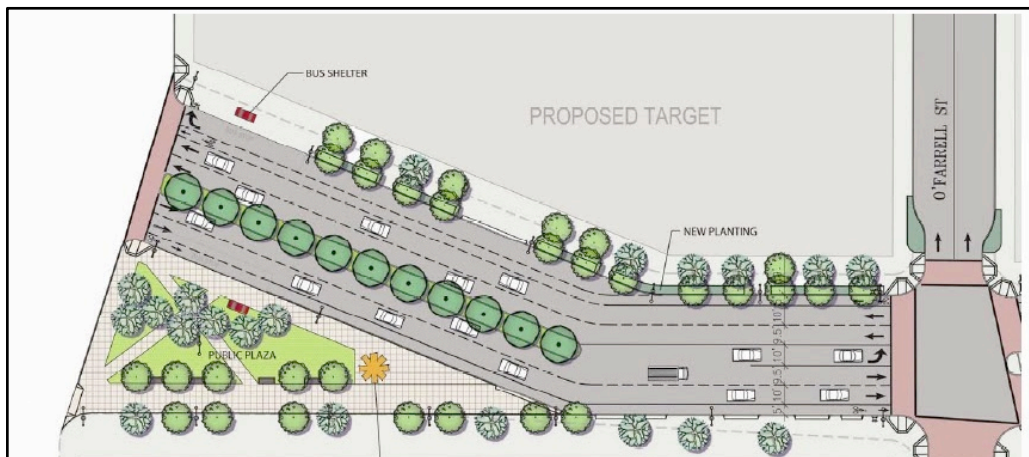
To redefine downtown, there needs to be more than just a perception change regarding the boundaries of the district; there needs to be substantial improvements made on how the linkages are made. These changes are detailed in the next three recommendations.

Recommendation #2: Mitigate Eyesores with Boulevard Enhancements. Given the extensive dilapidation of the rears of multiple buildings (on 1st Street) and the negative visual appearance they present to those traveling north on the bypass – the assessment team recommends a series of landscaping improvements be considered along the length of the bypass, from Bankway Street on the South to the intersection of Coal Street to the North.



Example of a landscaped median and trees as a “visual screen”

In addition to the “visual screen” from the negative appearance set by the rear of 1st Street properties, a series of landscaping improvements at gateways and on the bypass could provide a more attractive impression for Lehighton overall. The first steps would include the development of a Landscape Master Plan for Sgt. Stanley Hoffman Boulevard. On it’s most basic level, such a plan would identify specific vegetation placement, as well as grading changes, sidewalk and intersection improvements, and possibly lighting and signage enhancements. For further ideas and exploration of this topic, see “Highways to Boulevards” initiative of the Congress for New Urbanism at <http://www.cnu.org/highways>.



Example of a basic landscape master plan

The costs for such a landscaping plan could be mitigated by in-kind support from the Borough or other Carbon County agencies tasked with redevelopment. Specifically, funding to develop such a plan could be solicited from the following sources:

- ***The Commonwealth Financing Authority***, which provides funding for capital improvement in Carbon County, from the allocation of gaming funds for community and economic development projects. (Last year, for example, \$800,000 was awarded to four Carbon County projects). Contact: Representative Doyle Heffley 122nd District Pennsylvania House of Representatives www.RepHeffley.com.
- ***Pennsylvania Growing Greener II grants***, for municipalities and nonprofits to help a community's downtown redevelopment effort, focusing on the improvement of downtown sites and buildings. The eligible projects may include public improvements in core communities. Typical grants average between \$250,000 and \$500,000. For more information: <http://www.newpa.com/find-and-apply-for-funding/funding-and-program-finder/growing-greener-ii>

Recommendation #3: Install Directional/"Wayfinding" signage. Due to both topography and past transportation route changes, automobiles traveling north through the borough could easily never see or be aware of downtown.

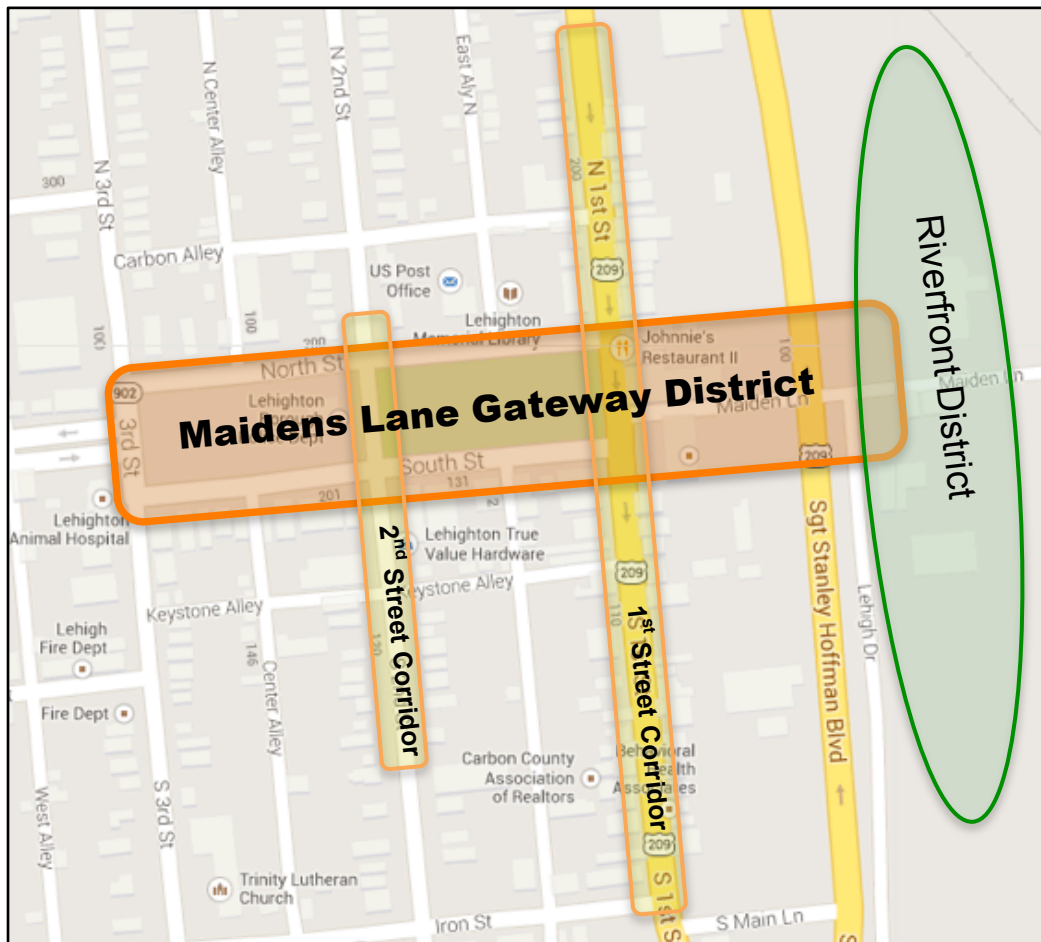


Examples of basic downtown directional signs and map kiosk

A “wayfinding” system of signs, infrastructure improvements and landscaping can help people know where they are, and how to find community facilities, including downtown. Wayfinding can range from highly detailed and complex systems of signs, markers, structures and signals to basic directional traffic signs. Recommended elements for Lehighton would include:

- Downtown directional signs located at North Main/Maidens Lane intersection, as well as at the north end of bypass and 1st Street split.
- Downtown map kiosks located at corners of South Street and 1st Street, as well as at Lehigh Drive and Maidens Lane.

Recommendation #4: Create New Downtown Gateway at Maidens Lane. Steep topography creates a visual and physical barrier that inhibits integration of the greater downtown's assets and amenities, such as the riverfront and 2nd Street businesses. By focusing improvements and investment along Maidens Lane, a stronger linkage and gateway into downtown can be made. Such improvements, in addition to the other bypass and gateway improvements listed above, could include signage, landscaping, and targeted property improvement and business recruitment to Maiden Lane properties.



By focusing redevelopment on the cross-axis of Maidens Lane, all downtown assets are integrated.

§ IV. DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION

DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION OBSERVATIONS

In addition to the general observation about downtown noted earlier, there are specific conditions and issues impacting the ability to achieve revitalization, noted here:

- **Lack of “Critical Mass” of Retail Businesses.** Despite the presence of several strong businesses on both 1st and 2nd Street, there is a general lack of shopping choices in virtually all categories. While it is not possible to regain the dominance now enjoyed by strip retail on Rt. 443, it will be essential to attract targeted categories of businesses that can serve local residents, particularly those located in the senior housing at 1st and Maiden Lane.
- **Vacancies and Absentee Landlords.** As mentioned previously, the lack of tenancy of several storefronts contributes to degrading building maintenance issues. This downward spiral must be addressed by a combination of incentives and regulations.
- **Parking.** Whether it is real or perceived, the issue of parking must be addressed as part of an overall revitalization strategy, in order to gain credibility with local residents and leaders.

DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION RECOMMENDATIONS

Regardless of which priorities are chosen and pursued, it will be important that revitalization proceeds in incremental stages that are appropriate to the market conditions and organizational capacity of each phase. As such, some of the recommendations below should not be pursued until preliminary steps in organizational development and consensus-building have been taken. (*Note: Specific recommendations for marketing and organizational development will follow this section*).

Recommendation #1: Gather Information for Building and Business Inventory. A comprehensive accounting of building conditions and business uses can provide a clear indication of revitalization priorities, from analyzing retail mix to evaluating the need and scale of business improvement incentives. The process of gathering information for that inventory is a crucial first step in attaining a clear understanding of the buildings and businesses located in the downtown district. (*Note: See Appendix A for Building and Business Inventory template.*)

Recommendation #2: Develop a Façade Improvement Incentive. As noted earlier, the dilapidated conditions of 1st Street properties are the #1 complaint by residents and shoppers alike. Between 2002-2006, promising progress was made on façade improvements, through the Corridor Market Towns Initiative. There is a strong reluctance by property owners to reinvest, without adequate finances or a clear idea of how small improvements can enhance revenues. In many communities, small, targeted

façade or storefront improvement incentives can demonstrate the return on investment that will make property owners more confident to invest on their own. Such incentives could include:

- Storefront and sign matching grants, in amounts up to \$500, offered in “rounds” of awards, based on funding in each cycle. (Funding is usually provided by nonprofit or foundations, rather than public sources).
- Low interest loans for building rehabilitation, negotiated through local financial institutions and municipal government.

Recommendation #3: Implement a “Minimum Maintenance Ordinance”. In addition to increased enforcement of existing building codes and ordinances, the Borough should evaluate the efficacy of this tool, which has been successfully employed in many similarly-sized communities across the country. By requiring property owners to address basic and severe dilapidation issues, the market responds over time by encouraging changes in ownership and improvement in maintenance. Examples of such ordinances in comparable communities include:

- <http://www.town-eastonmd.com/Charter%20and%20Code/THE%20CODE%20CHAPTER%2011.pdf>
- <http://www.gwinnettcounty.com/static/departments/planning/pdf/propmain.pdf>
- http://www.douglasstownship.org/media/7377/2013_proposed_property_maintenance_ordinance.pdf

Recommendation #4: Implement Basic Parking Management Plan. As noted earlier, parking was cited as an issue, with the assumption that “supply” was the problem. However, the assessment team noted that, except for a few peak hours in the week cited by some residents, there were available spaces on virtually every block of downtown throughout the day. Comment made regarding employee parking in on-streets spaces indicates that basic steps to better manage existing supply could relieve some “supply” issues, such as:

- Employee Parking Guidelines, printed and distributed to all downtown businesses, along with presentations at downtown group meetings.
- Directional signage, indicating location of off-street parking spaces available.
- “2 Hour Parking” signs for on-street spaces, encouraging appropriate turn-over of spaces without entailing further enforcement or metering.

In addition, it may be worth exploring the possibility of converting some blocks of South Street along the park to angled parking, as is done elsewhere.

Recommendation #5: Offer Assistance to New Entrepreneurs. Although the potential for wide-scale recruitment of retail businesses to relocate in downtown Lehighton is low in the short-term, there are opportunities to package business development assistance to local residents with potential to launch their own enterprise. The Carbon County Economic Development Corporation can serve as a clearinghouse for information and partners offering funding or technical assistance. In addition, the Northeastern Pennsylvania Alliance (NEPA) provides limited small business assistance and

infrastructure monies to eligible applicants. For more information: <http://www.nepa-alliance.org>

Recommendation #6: Recruit “Anchor” Institutions and Attractions to Downtown.

Virtually every downtown is strengthened by the presence of “anchors”; many of which are not retail or commercial in nature. The Borough Hall is one such institutional example. Other “anchors” may be important attractions that could be accessed or brought to downtown. Below is a short list of potential anchors that could be attracted or strengthened in downtown:

- Lehigh Gorge Scenic Railroad – The assessment team was told of the possibility of an extension from Jim Thorpe to the riverfront – at the new trailhead in Leighton, if riverfront were developed with parking.
- Lehigh Carbon County Community College is looking for a satellite location – possibly a few blocks from downtown. Why not encourage them to use an underutilized or vacant building in the downtown?
- Leighton Public Library – Located directly on the park in downtown, an expansion of this institution could offer more facilities as a communal gathering place, and become an even greater partner as a hosting venue for activities.



The Borough Hall stands as an institutional anchor to downtown

§ V. MARKETING THE DOWNTOWN DISTRICT

MARKETING OBSERVATIONS

Promotions reverse negative perceptions of a community and draw people back downtown for shopping, dining and entertainment. While other projects may take years to achieve, volunteers can often produce promotions quickly. Although labor-intensive, these projects give the downtown's main street early, highly visible successes. Main Street programs generally concentrate on three types of promotions:

- ✓ **Image Development.** Some marketing campaigns specifically dispel negative images and create positive ones. Advertising campaigns are popular image development activities, but brochures, logos, and slogans can accomplish the same goal.
- ✓ **Business Promotions.** Because these promotions highlight businesses, they should generate sales. It is important to promote qualities other than price – an area where the downtown businesses may not be very competitive. Avoid the all-too-common sidewalk sales and discount coupons. Concentrate on promotions that showcase the variety and quality of goods and services available in your commercial district.
- ✓ **Special Events.** While business promotions “ring the cash register,” special events provide opportunities for people to enjoy downtown in a variety of ways. Some special events, such as festivals or craft fairs, draw large crowds; others—a concert series, for example—may attract a smaller audience. Special event themes can come from almost anything, but community heritage in particular can provide excellent ideas for promotional activities.

Ultimately, all promotions work to enhance downtown's image in the minds of customers, employees, visitors, and the community at large. An annual, successful promotion calendar is a crucial part of any downtown revitalization program's goal to get more people to use the district's businesses, resources and assets.

The goal for Lehighton will be to build a marketing program that responds to the regional audience and the visitor market while serving the needs of the local community.

The team had the following observations about the current promotional/marketing issues affecting Lehighton's downtown district:

- **Downtown Lehighton lacks an organized promotions program.** It appears that individual businesses in downtown Lehighton have been charting their own promotional waters and that there has been no collective effort to market downtown as a social gathering place where individuals and families could enjoy a shopping, dining, or entertainment experience.

Downtown promotional activities play a key role in supporting an enhanced business environment and a vital commercial district. Up to this time no group has taken the responsibility for organizing a unified promotional program for downtown businesses. While there are a few special events that bring local residents and visitors into the downtown for a day or two of fun activities, the primary purpose of events held downtown is not on ‘ringing the cash register’ or otherwise benefitting the businesses within the district.

- **Little work has been done to reverse negative impressions about downtown.** The D&L Corridor Market Towns Initiative attempted to assist the downtown by publishing a marketing tabloid that promoted Lehighton community assets and projected the positive aspects of the downtown business district. There were no subsequent efforts to counter negative perceptions after the publication of that tabloid. The team was not provided with any examples of advertisements, brochures, or other image-enhancing materials that showcased the downtown business district as a place to shop, dine, or to come to for social interaction.



One of downtown's prime assets – its beautiful historic architecture

- **Downtown lacks a calendar of promotional events and activities.** Borough staff keep a schedule of events that are booked for the upper and lower park areas, but a complete calendar of promotional events that occur downtown, which would be available to the public does not appear on the Lehighton Downtown Initiative Committee (LDIC) or the Borough websites.
- **There are currently two special events that occur downtown for which LDIC is responsible:**
 - ***Bike Night***, an annual festival in Lehighton, held the second Saturday in August.
 - ***Santa in the Park***, a 2-hour event, during the Christmas holidays, which provides family fun in the park and gifts for children.

- **LDIC has discontinued operations for the Lehighon Farmers Market.** The market, which was to be held every Saturday, from 8 am – 2 pm, from May to October, on a grassy area alongside the route 209 bypass, had been a very successful enterprise last year for both vendors and the public. However, this summer, the Mahoning Valley Farmers Market, which was closed last year, reopened and drew away most of the customers who would come to the Lehighon Farmers Market.
- **LDIC has little connection with several of the special events that occur in the downtown district.** These events are developed and coordinated by various church and civic groups. Most occur in either the upper or lower park areas. Many of these events are music-related performances; but, there are also holiday celebrations in the mix.
- **A full-blown marketing strategy can't be developed until a comprehensive downtown revitalization program is up and running.** Promotions take a huge amount of coordination and lots of volunteers. Many of those volunteers do not actually own businesses but they are community members who want to see a vibrant business environment in the downtown district. LDIC can lead the charge for promoting the downtown district, but until that organization is restructured, there will be limitations on what the LDIC group can undertake.

MARKETING RECOMMENDATIONS

The marketing recommendations below address the special events that are being conducted in the downtown district either through LDIC or other community organizations. They suggest ways in which LDIC can expand on existing events or create new ones – particularly those that attract families. Other recommendations speak to developing business promotions that generate sales. But the greatest initial efforts will have to go toward creating a marketing campaign that can dispel negative images and create positive impressions of the downtown district.

The LDIC is the obvious entity for taking the lead in the areas of special events, business promotions, and image development for the downtown district. It has already taken a large role in the development of special events and is encouraging business owners to participate in these promotional activities. But it will need to get its organizational house in order so that it can lead. (See recommendations in Section VI – Organizational Development)

Once the LDIC is reorganized, here are recommendations for ramping up promotional activities in Image Development, Special Events, and Business Promotions:

Image Development

Recommendation #1: Look for special events and activities that can attract families with young children. A Halloween Parade is a longstanding annual event in Lehighon

that is produced by a special parade committee. This year the event is scheduled for October 19th. However, the parade is not held in the downtown business district and so it has little effect on attracting families into district. Halloween celebrations have become a major attraction in downtowns across the country for families with young children. LDIC can create a Halloween celebration that highlights the district as one that is safe and welcoming to that family market. Downtown Halloween celebrations serve three purposes – they are great image development vehicles for the district; they are a special event that brings a family-fun activity into the downtown; and they highlight downtown businesses in the district that the customer market may not have known existed.



A typical downtown Halloween celebration

Recommendation #2: Create imaginative materials that promote downtown special events and business-related activities. These need to project a unified image of the businesses in the district and promote the fact that LDIC is either sponsoring the event or is playing a significant role in facilitating the event.

Recommendation #3: Promote and tell the stories of the good businesses in downtown. This can be accomplished through newsletter articles, on websites, through social media, and by submitting articles or press releases to local media.

Recommendation #4: Decorate windows of empty storefronts. Get permission from property owners with vacant storefronts to use them for displaying merchandise from other downtown shops, historical artifacts or photographs, art exhibits.

Recommendation #5: Publish on the LDIC website a complete calendar of community and special events. The Borough can provide information on all activities and events it books in the upper and lower park areas and other areas of the downtown district. LDIC can become a better voice for the downtown if it serves as the communications vehicle for all things happening downtown.

Recommendation #6: Start referring to Lehighton's central business district as "downtown" and stop referring to 1st Street as if it were a separate entity. The team heard too many negative comments from individuals it interviewed about "1st Street" being a problem. Several comments differentiated businesses on 1st Street from downtown businesses that operated in other parts of the central business district. There needs to be a common understanding that 1st Street is downtown's "main street" and that the rise and fall of every business in the downtown district relies on 1st Street's economic revival. It's time that everyone pulled together and worked as a community on 1st Street's revitalization and stopped pointing to it as if it were a step-child of the downtown district.

Special Events

Recommendation #7: Integrate some LDIC-sponsored activities into events that are being mounted by other organizations. In this way, LDIC won't have to create new special events, but can provide integral assistance and produce special activities for events that are run by other entities. Here are a couple of events that currently occur in the Park in which LDIC can lend a hand and/or in which it can actively participate:

- Easter-time Celebrations in the Park
- Band Concerts during June, July, and August

Recommendation #8: LDIC should continue to coordinate and expand on existing special events that attract market segments which can benefit downtown businesses. The two special events in which LDIC has taken the lead are: Bike Night and Santa in the Park. Both of these special events can be beefed up and made even more successful.

- ***Bike Night*** this year attracted 10,000 to 12,000 people – many of them local families with young children. Besides acting as a celebration that brings locals and visitors together into the downtown district, the event also serves as a major fundraiser for LDIC. The funds that are generated from this event can be dedicated to supporting a more comprehensive revitalization organization as described in Section VI below.
- ***Santa in the Park*** is a two-hour event that includes a band, Christmas Carol singing, Santa lighting the Tree, and a raffle that awards bikes and other gifts to attending children. This holiday celebration is certainly one that can be expanded upon. The Christmas Holiday Season remains the largest retail sales season in the country. There are ample opportunities to bring more families and individual shoppers into the downtown district during this time of year. Examples of activities that are mounted by downtown programs – particularly Main Street organizations in Pennsylvania -- can be easily found.

Business Promotions

Recommendation #9: LDIC should consider doing ribbon cuttings for new businesses that come into the district. This can be a joint activity with the Carbon County Chamber and Economic Development Corp. (CCCEDC)



Recommendation #10: Create a simple business directory that promotes all businesses in the downtown district. Again, this could be a joint venture between LDIC and the CCCEDC.

Recommendation #11: Use the Christmas holiday season as an excellent opportunity to establish a joint advertising effort. LDIC can bring together all of the businesses – retail and service – into a unified advertising campaign that encourages the community to enjoy downtown Lehighton during the holiday season.

§ VI. ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

ORGANIZATIONAL OBSERVATIONS

None of the recommendations the team has given in Sections II, III, IV, and V of this report can be accomplished without Lehighton putting together a committed coalition of local government officials/staff, community residents, downtown stakeholders, and civic organizations dedicated to downtown's revitalization. In order to tackle the issues that have been outlined, a sense of unity and common purpose must be gained.



The recommendations below go toward creating an organizational entity that unifies stakeholders, establishes a common mission, identifies objectives, defines strategies, and manages a comprehensive approach to downtown revitalization. This downtown revitalization organization would adopt a bottom-up process that depends on small incremental steps, relies on a broad base of community support and directly involves those on the grass roots level.

This organization will not transpire overnight. While a nucleus of that organization already exists within the LDIC, it is going to take a while to educate the public, to build consensus, and engender the broad-based community support that will be needed.

The team believes that the LDIC is the group to lead the charge and articulate the common goals and the steps to achieving objectives. It is also the group that can broadcast those goals to the widest audience possible and involve enough volunteers to complete the necessary tasks.

But the team also believes that LDIC will need to expand its board member composition, define a more comprehensive mission, establish an expanded work plan, and engage a

much broader constituency of community support. The recommendations below, if acted upon, will accomplish those objectives.

ORGANIZATIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS

Under the leadership of the Borough Manager and the LDIC President, begin the steps for restructuring the LDIC into a comprehensive revitalization organization. This restructured organization will work in the areas of business and property development, marketing and promotions, and design/preservation activities within the downtown business district.

Recommendation #1: Expand membership on the LDIC board to ensure representation from all downtown stakeholders. The team will provide specific internal recommendations and advice to the Borough Manager and the LDIC President on the member composition of that board.

Recommendation #2: Invite ex officio members to sit on the board by virtue of the position they hold with a group, organization, or office. These ex officio members would be non-voting members; however, they would participate in the board meetings when there is an opportunity to discuss how their agency's/organization's projects can intersect with, or support, LDIC activities. The team will provide specific internal recommendations and advice to the Borough Manager and the LDIC president on representatives of partner groups that may be involved.

Recommendation #3: Elect board officers. Once the board of directors is in place, it should move to electing officers. Those officer positions would be:

- **Chair** (or President) -- develops agendas for meetings; is the chief spokesperson for the organization; chairs meetings; manages daily supervision of program; and facilitates participation
- **Vice Chair** (or Vice President) -- the Chair/President in training
- **Secretary** -- takes BOD minutes; and keeps program records
- **Treasurer** -- keeps the organization's books, handles the money; and does financial reports



Recommendation #4: The re-organized LDIC should define geographic boundaries for the downtown district. The revitalization program’s project area should include the “natural” boundaries of the downtown commercial district – generally this is the area that has been recognized as the historic or “traditional” commercial core. Once the geographic area has been established, create a simple map that can be used as a visual when communicating the purposes of the revitalization effort to the community.

Recommendation #5: Consider re-naming the formal downtown revitalization organization. In order for the Lehigh Downtown Initiative Committee (LDIC) to gain credibility as the leader of a comprehensive downtown revitalization program, it may need to change its name to reflect that change in status. If it decides to go that route, here are a couple of suggestions for possible new names for LDIC: “Lehigh Downtown Partnership”; “Lehigh Downtown Alliance.”

Recommendation #6: Amend LDIC bylaws to accommodate any changes that have been made in name, mission, board member composition, etc. It is suggested that an attorney be added as a board member because the restructured organization will need legal advice on how to accommodate changes that impact the current bylaws and articles of incorporation.

Recommendation #7: The downtown revitalization organization should begin to:

- Educate the community on its mission and goals
- Develop public relations written materials (newsletters, brochures)
- Upgrade the existing LDIC website so that it serves as a primary source of updated information about goings-on in the organization as well as in the downtown district.

Recommendation #8: Set up a process for securing funds to pay the expenses for administering the revitalization program. Develop a system for soliciting contributions and creating other revenue streams to fund the revitalization organization’s operational budget. The operational budget will need to cover all program activities as well as the

salary for a program manager. Funding should come from a variety of public and private sources so that the revitalization program will not be threatened if any one source dries up. Typical Main Street programs are funded through local government contributions and private donations through membership programs, corporate sponsorships, and fundraising events.

Recommendation #9: Create a committee structure that covers the four work areas of a Main Street program – Organization, Design, Promotion, and Economic Restructuring. Establishing these four standing committees and work plans for each will provide opportunities to engage more members of the community in the revitalization effort. It will gain additional support for the organization and broaden community participation as more volunteers will be needed to serve the organization as committee members. The following are the general work areas assigned to each of the four standing committees:

Organization

Public Relations
Volunteer Development
Fundraising

Design

Historic Preservation/Design Education
Architectural Assistance
Building Improvements
Developing underutilized space
Public Spaces
Design Regulation & Review

Promotion

Image Development
Business Promotions
Special Events

Economic Restructuring

Identifying market opportunities
Strengthening existing businesses
Filling vacancies with complementary businesses
Assembling incentives and capital

Recommendation #10: Develop a Work Plan based on the recommendations made in this report. Turn the recommendations into goals, objectives and tasks. Determine which committee will be responsible for undertaking the work. Assign responsibilities to individuals/groups, identify timeframes for completion of projects, and list any expenses that will be entailed in the planning and implementation stages. (Note: A sample work plan template is included as Appendix B.)

Recommendation #11: Develop a logo for the formal downtown revitalization organization. One suggestion in selecting a logo – do not present it as a “contest.” These types of efforts for selecting a logo generally do not go well. Work with professional graphic designers or talented individuals who are connected with the arts to define an image for downtown Lehigh that can symbolize the organization (used on brochures, letterhead, business cards, etc.); but also can be used in a variety of ways to promote the downtown as a unified business district.



Recommendation #12: Board members should educate themselves on proven Main Street[®] approaches and strategies for downtown revitalization. In this way they can attain a thorough understanding of the Main Street Four Point Approach[®]. This education can come through different sources:

- The National Main Street Center website contains a wealth of information about the Main Street Approach. Go to www.mainstreet.org.
- The National Main Street Center (NMSC) has published books and other materials that provide information on every downtown revitalization issue within the four work areas of Main Street. Those books and materials are for sale through the Downtown Research and Development Center. Here is the link to the publishing house that is carrying all of the NMSC's publications.
http://www.downtowndevelopment.com/downtown_research_and_development_center_books.php
- Join the National Main Street Network[®]. Learn what really works in commercial district revitalization by sharing experiences and successes of individuals and organizations working on revitalization of downtowns and neighborhood business districts across the country. Membership in the network will provide access to publications, a members' website and list serve, and a members' database of information. Here is the link for joining the National Main Street Network:
<http://www.preservationnation.org/main-street/join/>
- Read the Online Chapter of the Revitalizing Main Street manual entitled “Getting Started: Establishing a Main Street Program” at
http://www.preservationnation.org/main-street/resources/public/RMS_Getting-Started.pdf

Recommendation #13: Reach out to others by keeping the community apprised of LDIC's progress. In the early organizational development stage, this outreach effort will be particularly important. This can be accomplished in the following ways:

- Make presentations to civic groups and other associations in the community to inform them about the program.
- Develop a simple brochure so you have a take-away item to distribute during meetings and events.
- Send timely news and updates to people through a print and/or electronic newsletter.
- Keep website up to date on latest happenings and make sure website address is readily available.
- Keep the media informed of happenings.

Recommendation #14: The board should determine if staff can be hired to coordinate the downtown program's activities. After the board is fully functional, a budget and fundraising plan initiated, standing committees in place, work plans established, and LDIC bylaws amended, a decision should be made as to whether a paid staff person can be hired to support board and committee members and to coordinate all activities and projects for the revitalization program.

Recommendation #15: Build strong partnerships with agencies/organizations that have resources to assist in the revitalization efforts. Four of the groups that should be included as partners are:

- Carbon County Chamber & Economic Development Corporation
- Leadership Carbon
- Delaware & Lehigh National Heritage Corridor (D&L)
- Lehigh Carbon Community College

Recommendation #16: Contact the Pennsylvania Downtown Center for advice and assistance in establishing a comprehensive Lehighton downtown revitalization program. The Pennsylvania Main Street Program provides resources and technical assistance to its designated local Main Street® communities. It can also be a source of valuable information and guidance as Lehighton works toward establishing its downtown revitalization program. Contact: Bill Fontana, Executive Director of the Pennsylvania Downtown Center; 717-233-4675, ext. 113; billfontana@padowntown.org.

§ VII. CONCLUSION

The Borough of Lehighton has numerous assets on which to build a climate of investment that can create economic vitality within the downtown commercial district, and there is a long history of downtown revitalization efforts, as well as broad interest and commitment by local leaders to downtown. The application of “smart growth” principles, emphasizing development and density in the core of Lehighton, can reinforce the community’s historic character and attract residents and visitors back into downtown.

The challenges facing Lehighton are complex. But through a systemic and incremental approach to improving businesses, changing perceptions and improving communications among key groups and leaders, the downtown can be revived. Key to attaining the goal of a thriving downtown district will be the formalization of a coordinating entity for comprehensive downtown management. By utilizing the Main Street Four Point Approach®, workable strategies can be developed that will address and resolve the issues impeding downtown Lehighton’s revitalization.

§ VIII. APPENDIX

A. BUILDING AND BUSINESS INVENTORY FORM

B. WORK PLAN TEMPLATE

A.

Downtown Building and Business Inventory

NAME OF COMMUNITY

BUILDING INFORMATION

Building Name _____

Building Address _____

Property Owner _____

Contact name – if different from Property Owner _____

Address _____

Telephone _____ Email _____

Building Amenities

of Floors (Include basement if there is usable space) _____

of Commercial Units _____

of Residential Units _____

Square Footage by Floor:

Basement _____

Ground Floor _____

Upper Floors 2 _____

3 _____

4 _____

Building Condition Notes

Foundation _____

Structure _____

Roof _____

Façade _____

HVAC _____

Electrical _____

Plumbing _____

Assessed Value

Year _____ \$ _____ Annual property taxes _____

Property Availability

For sale? _____ What price? _____ Realtor _____ Phone _____

Terms/other information: _____

For rent? _____ What price? _____ Realtor _____ Phone _____

Terms/other information: _____

Historic Status

Original Construction Date _____

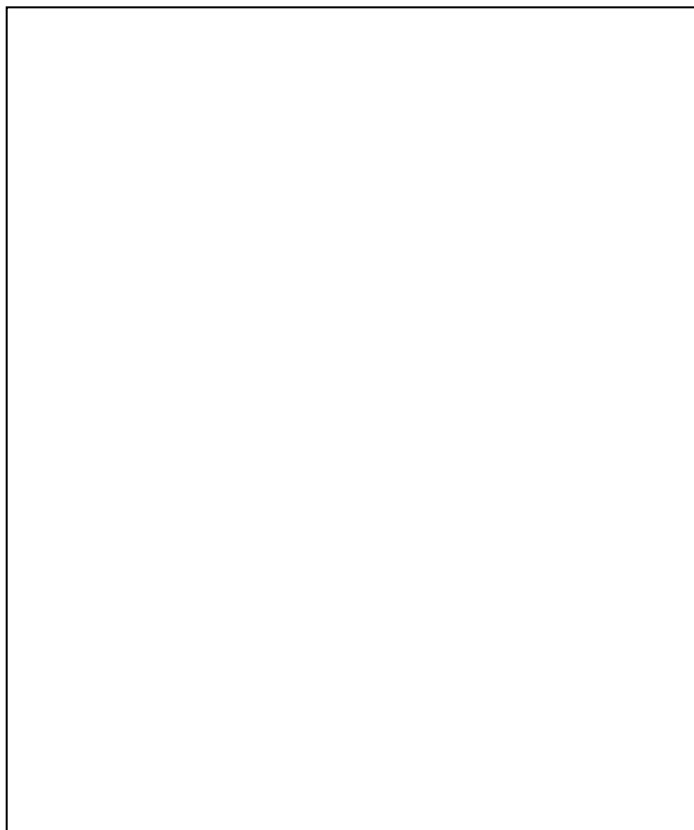
Individual listing on National Register? _____ Date: _____

In National Register historic district? _____ Date: _____

In local/state historic district? _____ Date: _____

Historic information:

Attach Photo of Building



COMMERCIAL UNITS IN BUILDING

(Record information for as many commercial units as there are in building)

1. Business Name _____

Business Owner Name _____

Contact Name if different from owner _____

Business Address _____

Business Phone _____ Fax _____ Email _____

Web Site _____

Primary Products and/or Services:

2. Business Name _____

Business Owner Name _____

Contact Name if different from owner _____

Business Address _____

Business Phone _____ Fax _____ Email _____

Web Site _____

Primary Products and/or Services:

3. Business Name _____

Business Owner Name _____

Contact Name if different from owner _____

Business Address _____

Business Phone _____ Fax _____ Email _____

Web Site _____

Primary Products and/or Services:

B.

WORK PLAN

Committee:

Objective:

Project Title:

Task	Timetable	Responsibility	Budget
TOTAL:			