

Dear Reader: Thank you very much for downloading this free book about moving to The Villages. This is one of two travel books I wrote on this subject. This book is the fun one. The other is a dose of reality as I tried to buy a home in The Villages. Amazon was my publisher at the time and they found no fault in their review of this book. I finished the book titled **Why is Everybody Moving to The Villages?** at address:

<https://letsgopublish.com/covid/villages1.pdf> in March 2020. I hope you enjoy the book as it hopefully will make you find The Villages a great place to visit or live. By the way, that is my wife in one of the very many pools that are available for free at the Villages. She is as nice as she is lovely.

The Villages Lifestyle gives the opportunity to get a room for a week for as little as \$99.00 a night. That makes it something even we can afford.

Most of my books had previously been published on Amazon.

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Why Is “Everybody” Moving to The Villages?

**“If your friends & relatives can afford
a home in “The Florida Villages,”
how about you?”**

By
Brian W. Kelly

**Start with just a week visit. There are many reasons why—
Come as a one week or a one month a year snowbird—
you will definitely want to come back. This book tells you why!**



Why Is “Everybody” Moving To The Villages?

**“If your friends & relatives can afford a home
in “The Villages,” why can’t you?”**

Start with just a week visit. There are many reasons why—Come as a one week or a one month a year snowbird-- you will definitely want to come back. This book tells you why!

The Villages is unique. My wife and I have been there three times First one day, then four days and then seven day Villages Lifestyle adventures. Each time, we were more inclined to buy a nice home. Maybe some day we will but in the meantime we will be snowbirds. Next time, it'll be a month. #1 rated, the Villages is the largest gated over-55 community in the world. It holds more than 126,000 residents in an area bigger than Manhattan. Everyone gets around via golf cart.

Three years ago, Yogi Bernardo, one of my Meyers High School classmates invited me to his home in the Villages for a Florida reunion. It prompted me to take a Florida vacation. My wife and I were happy to have been able to book a room after being on a waiting list for the Magnificent Waterfront Hotel in Sumpters Landing in the Villages. As a Villages resident, Yogi called the hotel and got me a reduced rate of \$193.64 in February 2017. What a great place. At other times than February, the hotel has better prices. The reunion was at noon. Pat's sister joined us at Yogis, and at 5:00 PM left for the Waterfront. We found a great place next door called Cody's Roadhouse and had dinner. Pat and her sister went shopping in Sumpter' Landing—Magnificent.

Two years ago on Nov 18, we took a Villages Lifestyle 4-day vacation. The cost was special too--\$99.00 a night with an included two bicycles and a golf cart for the four days. The Villages puts us up in one of their three bedroom new homes—beautiful;. While there we took a Saturday trip to Gainesville and saw the Football Gators rip apart UAB 36-7. Great fun at the villages. This past February, we spent seven days and still did not have enough time at the villages. When we left on February 13, we had just enjoyed 4 days of 86 degree sunny weather with plenty of great swimming in one of the Villages 57 pools at last count. We don't golf but we might soon as there are 41 championship golf courses in the Villages. Since we came in peak season the price was \$199 per night in a brand new home. Wow!

That's just part of it. The Villages is unique because it was built to be unlike any other community. 126,000 happy residents cannot be wrong. There is something for everybody. With over 3000 clubs/activities, you'll run out of days to have fun before you run out of Villages activities to keep you interested. How does free music and dancing on the public squares from 5 to 9 sound with top bands. How about pickleball, paddle tennis, swimming, polo or fun bars with two-fors from 12:00 Noon? The Villages has the largest Red Hats club in the nation so you'll have lots of friends. Triathlons, running, cycling, bowling in one of 86 leagues. Art shows and clubs from basic drawing to pottery. Special gold cart roads to get you anywhere in the villages. Whether or not you golf, everyone has a golf cart. For those that love movie, there are three huge theatres showing eight attractions each per day. Learn about all this and more in this tell-all book about America's greatest playground for those 55 and older.

On my last trolley tour of The Villages, for example, the guide talked about the few rules there are in The Villages. She cited one of the softball rules you'll surely enjoy. Pinch running is permitted for Villagers over 80 years old. There is one caveat. To prevent ringers, the rule is no pinch runner in softball can be younger than seventy years old.



BRIAN W. KELLY



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Dedication

*I dedicate this book to my wife Patricia A Kelly, and
our three wonderful children,
Brian Patrick Kelly,
Michael Patrick Kelly, and
Kathleen Patricia Kelly*

Brian W. Kelly

Preface

Since Henry Ford invented the automobile, families have been piling into their cars and heading to Florida to avoid the cold of northern winters. The Snow Bird migration continues yearly to this day. The crowd comes from all over and the state is loved as a vacation spot to many for the beachfront views. What is a little different today is that the migration is not just to Spring Break, Disney, and Swim Week. Not since The Villages has become popular. It is a whole other demographic of 55 and older who like having a good time as much as college students and the moms and dads with little ones headed to the magic of the Magic Kingdom.

Seniors like partying just as hard but in a slightly different manner. This new 55+ demographic finds life in Lake, Marion, and Sumter counties in Florida to their liking as they live the good life at The Villages. Places like the villages have seniors thinking that fun in their lives is anything but over as they opt to age gracefully in their retirement years.

So college students are not the only ones who can choose to have a great life at Spring Break and times away in the most southern state. Maybe Ponce De Leon found a fountain of youth way down south and the fountain spews sunshine and warmth upon all residents young and old.

College once was seen as a place to escape parental oversight for the many new arrivals. But now seniors, looking for an easier life in retirement are finding places like college campuses as the perfect new spot to take up roots—without text books. Seniors want a life and they are moving to get it. Hard as it may be for many to believe but there is a growing trend on college campuses—to place retirement homes near the dorms. Perhaps one day some students will be asking themselves: “Is that grandma over there on the quad?”

Seniors are enjoying being alive more and more

The NY Times wrote a piece about this new trend. In it, they highlight Mary Jane Karger and her husband, Tom, both 74. These two seniors put down a 10 percent deposit on a retirement community to be built on 40 acres of the 500-acre Purchase College campus. It is a former

cattle farm that is now part of the State University of New York (SUNY). They'll never be alone.

And when they pass on in a zillion years, if the College's treat them well, the institutions are likely to receive an unexpected bequeath courtesy of the relationship. Though it may not be warm in upstate NY, nobody can deny that there are a lot of things happening on every college campus in America.

Purchase is one of a growing number of colleges sponsoring retirement communities on campus or thinking about it. It is a marketer's dream, monetizing spare land, while milking the baby boom generation's affluence by appealing to their obsession with staying forever young. So, it may not be that there are all these places attracting Seniors. Can it be that seniors, after putting their time in the workplace are ready to have life a lot easier in retirement. If there were no place called The Villages today, the active senior community would demand that they be built.

The good news for seniors willing to pack up and move south is that although no other community comes close to the mega-size of The Villages, there are least 16 other active communities with over 10,000 residents. The Villages itself today is at about 126,000 residents but the many villages in The Villages makes it seem like each community is scarcely about 10,000 residents. When you go through the gates of your village such as Pennecamp, deep in The Villages complex, just across the road or down or up a spell, there will be another 10,000 strong village waiting for you to examine.

The fact is that 10,000 residents represents a size sufficiently large to provide a comparable range of amenities and clubs to those enjoyed by the over 126,000 residents of The Villages. In addition, there is another large group of communities with more than 5,000 homes. Think of a local football game with 5,000 fans and you know that just about fills the stadium. Even villages with 5,000 residents have extensive amenities packages. They exist in the East and in the West with many in the states that are in-between.

If you prefer the less humid temperature of Arizona, for example you might like a place with an inviting name such as Sun City. It is in Peoria, Arizona. The experts say that it is probably the second largest active adult community after The Villages. For people on the West

coast it is not as big a decision to buy in Sun City than to uproot and move all across the country. Yet, those who have come to The Villages from Western states are not in a hurry to get back.

Sun City has 48,000 residents. It was founded by Del Webb in 1960. There are many Del Webb communities in various locations including Florida.

Born in 1960, Sun City Arizona is the original active adult community in the world. It boasts every conceivable activity – 7 recreation centers, 11 golf courses, 3 country clubs, 2 bowling centers, Sun Bowl, Viewpoint Lake – plus hundreds of clubs. Like many communities established long ago, at 75 the average age in Sun City is well up there. Sun City West, which is close by the original, has almost as many residents and similar amenities.

The Del Webb and Pulte (largest home builder in USA) organizations consistently offer some of the largest active adult communities in the world such as the already mentioned Sun City and Sun City West. Others include: Sun City Texas (near Georgetown) with 7,500 homes, Sun City Anthem (Las Vegas) with 7,200 homes and an 86,000 sq.ft. clubhouse. Sun City has other locations all over the country, including at least 4 in Nevada alone. There are also numerous Sun City communities in the East.

Florida has its share of Del Webb properties. Sun City Center is a large active adult community near Tampa, Florida. It is a self-contained village complete with retail establishments, grocery stores, worship centers, and a hospital. Over 11,000 residents enjoy this 55+ community for its reasonably priced homes, great amenities, and an active lifestyle with nearly 200 clubs and interest groups.

Of course this is not a complete list but then again, I think the Villages is the best. It is not however, all there is. I mentioned only the big guys in the active community list above. They can compete with The Villages and when in your comfortable bungalow, you won't care that you are one in 1000, 10,000, or 100,000.

Speaking of 1000-resident communities. There are many of them. Before you search only for the largest communities, you should decide just how large a community you want to live in. The Villages is in a class by itself – but the truth is that any community over 1,000

residents is going to offer plenty to do and many interesting people to meet. We can't spend our lives looking for the perfect community and that is why so many select The Villages. It's like you can't go wrong.

It is tough to say exactly when The Villages came about but by 1991, it looked like success had reached the founders. They changed the name of their fledgling development to The Villages. They credit two major factors for their success and we will discuss this in more detail in the main body of the book, for now, let's say that two key things propelled The Villages forward—the creation of the first town center and new form of financing called Community Development Districts (CDDs). The first town center made The Villages more charming and the CDDs made it easier to finance and build new homes.

FYI: A community development district (CDD) is a local, special-purpose government framework authorized by Chapter 190 of the Florida Statutes as amended, and is an alternative to municipal incorporation for managing and financing infrastructure required to support development of a community.

Having traveled through almost all of the US and throughout Europe, I believe The Villages is the easiest and probably the best retirement community to be a part of. I am obviously not the only one as the growth of this community has been astronomical and it is still growing.

To me it seems like, it is the hands down choice in America. The Villages is proud to self-proclaim itself as Florida's friendliest retirement hometown is just about 60-90 minutes out from Orlando in Central Florida. I see no obvious countervailing notions that The Villages is not the friendliest. My wife chatted with everybody she met on our three visits and she loved the people and they loved her.

I would recommend that you start by spending a day at the Waterfront in Sumpter Landing on an already planned vacation or you plan a dedicated week. There are many reasons why—whether you come as a one week or a one month a year snowbird, you will definitely want to come back. This book tells you why? Read this book and you will feel like you are in The Villages and that folks, is a good thing.

Brian W. Kelly wrote this book because he is impressed with Florida's The Villages retirement resort. Since dad and mom plan to come back and they are still considering buying a home in the Villages, dad's doing the research for the book has already help unearth more things to check out on the next visit.

I am publishing this book because I care about my father and it would be nice if he and mom lived comfortably in the Villages so my significant other and I could be frequent guests in the winter. Together, BWK and I hope we have given you enough of a reason to make your first trip to The Villages. What's not to like?

I hope you enjoy reading this book and that you get some great ideas about where to spend your retirement years. For now, I wish you all the best!

Sincerely

Brian P. Kelly, Editor & Publisher

Final note to readers before you read this book:

The Villages is home to a lively 55 and over community of a strong 126,000 plus people and over 50,000 **households**. This golf cart-driving community resides in non-jobholding bliss. Hey who needs a job at 55+?

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Brian W. Kelly". The signature is written in black ink on a light-colored background.

Brian W. Kelly
Wilkes-Barre Author

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About the Author



Brian Kelly retired as an Assistant Professor in the Business Information Technology (BIT) Program at Marywood University, where he also served as the IBM i and Midrange Systems Technical Advisor to the IT Faculty. Kelly designed, developed, and taught many college and professional courses. He continues as a contributing technical editor to a number of technical industry magazines, including "The Four Hundred" and "Four Hundred Guru," published by IT Jungle.

Kelly is a former IBM Senior Systems Engineer. His specialty was problem solving for customers as well as implementing advanced operating systems and software on his client's machines. With this new book, Brian is now the author of 222 books and hundreds of magazine articles. Over half of his books and articles are about patriotic topics or sports topics. Brian has been a frequent speaker at computer conferences throughout the United States.

Kelly was a candidate for the US Congress from Pennsylvania in 2010 and he ran for Mayor in his home town in 2015. He loves America but like most Americans, he has no love for corrupt officials.

Chapter 1 Introduction to Your “Villages” Experience

Today is Monday, February 17, 2020. I have been home from Florida exactly three days and three hours. Saturday I was on the trail again as my brother-in-law turned 80-years-old and his son had a catered celebration affair with all the relatives on the Piotroski side. I was the only non Piotroski who made the event celebrating Marty's 80th birthday. It kept up the surreal atmosphere of being on vacation and the Dago Red Wine was exceptional.

We slept overnight at Marty's nephew Scott's home. Scott had thrown the party for Marty and it was just what one would expect, Erste Klasse as if we were still at The Villages and we had not yet returned. Yet, I dreaded driving the 100 miles from Wilkes-Barre to Harrisburgh but to cheer Marty on, I could not selfishly stay home though I needed a vacation break.

Scott had to take Aunt Sue (younger than me—my wife's sister) for a 6:00 AM train ride to NYC so he stopped at Dunkin Donuts quite early on Sunday. She is working her way back to her Snowbird Palace in Estero Florida. Sue likes the Villages but is not looking to make a change anytime soon. Scott picked up a ton of egg sandwiches on his return from the Harrisburg Train Station and he snagged a few boxes of donuts including the Valentine heart shaped variety. I had a sammich and a jelly heart shaped item. Getting up after the big party was tougher at 72 than at 71. I turned 72 just two weeks ago. If it were not for my body giving my brain pain signals, everything about me would be like as if I were a kid.

I almost asked Scott to call the police as after my first morning look, I thought a Martian was occupying my face. It took a few hours longer before my wife Pat convinced me I was safe to drive the 100 miles back home. I am still not sure if I should have believed her.

She went home with my middle son Mike who looked himself. My daughter Katie drove with me and she slept most of the time so I knew that it was me when I checked the mirror at home so she could not have been too scared of Martians.

At 1:45 we pulled into our own driveway and I looked forward to a few weeks if not then perhaps at least a few days of nothing to do and no place to go. I was finally home from Florida.

Before I knew it; I was asleep on Sunday night after a good dose of my neighbor Carol Anstett's great beef stew that she made for us.

Welcome home Pat and Brian! If her husband John is hungry today, I am proud to be the reason.

Now, as I said at the top, it is Monday. Now what? Now, I got to begin the writing of my book about the Villages. It is colder than ice right now so if I had my way, I'd be back in the 86 degree temps of the Villages in our most attractive lifestyle bungalow home. Wow! What did I do for God to give me such a great life and a great wife and kids?

In Chapter 2, I'll tell you all about our most recent fourteen days in Florida—a first for Pat and I.

For now, let me go back to the front of the book and introduce the villages again. Don't forget to read the preface for a full perspective before you digest this chapter

From what you may have read, you already know that The Villages is unique. This "The Villages" trip, which came after seven great days in Kissimmee/Orlando with my brother Joe and sister-in-law Diane, as great as those days were at the time, the Village days made those seven days less impactful because of all the Villages had to offer, including better weather.

We stayed at the Microtel Hotel just outside the Villages for our first day/night. The Yogi sponsored Meyers reunion was on Saturday. The Microtel was because I had signed up for a day less than I needed at the Villages three-bedroom world.

My wife and I had been to the Villages proper three times before Sunday Feb 9, 2020, the day of our checkinski. We were there first one day, then four days and then seven days. We both loved it each time.

They call the excursions the Villages people give you to test the premises as *Villages Lifestyle Experiences*. Each time, we stayed even at the magnificent Waterfront Inn, we were more inclined to buy a nice

home. Maybe some-day we will. However, in the meantime we will be part timers—AKA Snowbirds. Next time, it'll be a month.

Research tells me that the #1 rated, *The Villages* is the largest gated over-55 community in the world. It holds more than 126,000 residents in over 50,000 residences in an area bigger than Manhattan. Everyone gets around via golf cart. My lifestyle experience provided me a free golf cart, two bicycles, and a few rounds of golf. Since I do not golf some villager must have received my tee time. I made sure I sipped my

Why did I come to The Villages?

Three years ago, in 2017, Yogi (Nazzarra) Bernardo, one of my Meyers High School classmates invited me to his home in the Villages for a Florida HS reunion. It prompted me to take an unplanned Florida vacation. My wife and I were happy to have been able to book a room after being on a waiting list for the Magnificent Waterfront Hotel in Sumpters Landing in the Villages.

As a Villages resident, Yogi called the hotel and got me a reduced rate of \$193.64 in February 2017. What a great place. At other times than February, the hotel has better prices. The reunion was at noon. Pat's sister joined us at Yogi's, and at 5:00 PM the family was ready to leave for the Waterfront. We found a great place next door called Cody's Roadhouse and we had dinner. Pat and her sister went shopping in Sumpter' Landing—Magnificent. Mitch and I had a few beer cocktails waiting than then we had dinner. One day trip #1 was a wonderful experience so we came back.

Two years ago on Nov 18, we took a Villages Lifestyle 4-day vacation. Mitch and Sue came up again from Estero to join us. The cost was special too--\$99.00 a night for a three-bedroom with an included two bicycles and a golf cart for the four days. The Villages puts us up in one of their three bedroom new homes—beautiful.

While there we took a Saturday trip to Gainesville and saw the Football Gators rip apart UAB 36-7. Great fun at The Villages.

This past February, we spent seven days and still did not have enough time at The Villages. When we left on February 13, we had just enjoyed 4 days of 86 degree sunny weather with plenty of great swimming in one of the Villages 57 pools at last count. We don't golf but we might soon as there are 41 championship golf courses and 12 country clubs in the Villages. Since we came in peak season the price for the experience was just \$199 per night in peak season to live in a brand new home. Wow!

That's just part of it. Pat and I have learned that *The Villages* is unique because it was built to be unlike any other community. There are 126,000 happy residents who cannot be wrong. There is something for everybody.

With over 3000 clubs/activities, I suspect that a body will run out of days to have fun before they run out of Villages activities to keep them you interested.

This time through Pat knew what to expect. Dinners were inexpensive and drinks were encouraging to sip with most outside bars having two-for-one from noon on. It is as if they expect seniors to want to have some fun for their money.

While Pat and I were experiencing the two-fors, with a great musician playing on Sunday until 4:00 PM, eventually Pat heard the Tom Tom. This time, it was at Brownwood Center and a great band had just begun at about 5:00 PM and it was hell bent on playing until 9:00

So, for *The Villages* town center experience folks, how does free music and dancing on all of "*The Villages*" public squares from 5 to 9 sound with top bands.

How about for the athletically inclined 24-hour a day, you can play pickleball. How about paddle tennis; swimming; polo; or the fun outdoor cocktail that I like with two-fors from 12:00 Noon until XXX O'clock.

Some women, like my Aunt Cathy, RIP, love the Red Hats. The Villages has the largest Red Hats club in the nation so you'll have lots of friends. Triathlons, running, cycling, and bowling in one of 86 leagues are part of the activities' scenario.

More than that, there are all kinds of arts. Art shows and clubs from basic drawing to pottery. How about special golf cart roads to get you anywhere in the villages without traffic.

Whether or not you golf, everyone has a golf cart. For those that love movies, there are three huge theatres showing eight attractions each per day. Learn about all this and more in this tell-all book about America's greatest playground for those 55 and older.

On my last trolley tour of The Villages, I learned that the Villages has a personality and understands humor. For example, the pretty trolley tour guide talked about the few rules there are in The Villages.

She cited one of the softball rules you'll surely enjoy. Pinch running is permitted in games for Villagers over 80 years old. There is one caveat. To prevent ringers, the rule is no pinch runner in softball can be younger than seventy years old.

We began this tour of the villages with the Trolley Bus and it was amazing in what it divulged about The Villages. Pat and I would recommend it. We took the Futures tour from Brownville. There are two other tours from the other town centers. When we go back next year or sooner, we'll take the other two trolley tours and we'll take the Sumpter Landing Boat Ride. Life in The Villages is good.

Chapter 2 The Villages: Our First Trip February 2017



The Waterfront Inn Sumter Landing in The Villages

Three Trips to the Villages and I am coming back

We own our home in Northeastern Pennsylvania and have for some time but we are not at the point where we are ready to sell it, take the proceeds and buy a new home in the Villages. I admit it is tempting, especially as the grey Northeast and the cold weather impacts living in our family home. Because of the Northeast weather, however, we have become avowed partial snowbirds. Over the last few years we have come to love Florida and especially The Villages

A real true snowbird of course may be defined as a northerner, who lives in Florida from November through March. My wife Pat and I love the Fall and early winter holidays—Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Years. We have never been away from home during these important holidays so at least for now, November is way too early for us to begin my snowbird period. Right now, our goal as snowbirds is to leave the north in mid-January and come back in early April or a bit

sooner for the Easter Holydays. We have too big a family with many birthdays in January to not celebrate them all before we go away.

Ironically before going south to Florida, we typically go north to Tunkhannock PA, about 30 miles from our PA home. We spend an early weekend of January at the Comfort Inn right by the Susquehanna River. We may adjust this celebration to the second weekend when we become real snowbirds.

It may not be a plan yet, but we are getting closer to making it a reality. I'm hoping that next year, like my sister Mary did this year, Pat and I go will to Florida for the entire month of February or maybe the first two weeks of February and the first two weeks of March. We're thinking hard now about the plan for next year.. The following year 2022, is not yet in our line of sight.

Every adventure begins someplace

In our first trip to the Villages, we were non-committal on spending much time there. We did not take The Villages very seriously. It just happened. We were invited to a Florida high school reunion by a classmate at his home in The Villages. That is the only reason we made our first trip to the Villages. It was not on our radar.

On this trip, we spent just one night. We first vacationed at Universal Studios for the most part of a week and then spent the night after the reunion in The Villages at the magnificent Waterfront Inn. I got a \$98 a night rate at Universal with a great military discount. Universal Studios in Orlando was a great place to stay.

We had a rental car. So, after a few days by Orlando, we used our GPS and some written directions from the Airport, MCO. We took the Florida Turnpike to the Villages. With the GPS as a crutch, it was a cinch. It was about 66 miles and it took a little over an hour.

We learned of another new way to get there if we ever decide not to drive. Groome is what it is called. Their company says it is very excited to be serving The Villages® Community. The company offers up to 20 daily roundtrip shuttles between The Villages® Community and Orlando International Airport (MCO) for just \$19 each way with

complimentary home pickup and drop-offs. Hours of operation are 6:00 am to 10:00 pm—7 days a week—(352)539-9664. Maybe one of these years!



The Waterfront Inn- First Class Lady Lake, FL in the Villages

Pat and I checked into the Waterfront Inn, changed, and took off for the reunion. My wife’s sister Sue and husband Mitch live in Southwestern FL in Estero. We wanted to see them so we got them invited to the reunion.

The Waterfront was filled so they stayed at the Microtel about five miles away. They arrived about a half hour after we did at Yogi Bernardo’s place. After celebrating what could be called our 52nd Meyers reunion on Saturday at noon in the Village of Pennecamp, it was time to go, we called it a day. We wanted a few hours to spend with Pat’s sister.

Mitch and Sue followed us from Yogi’s to the Waterfront about 5:00 PM and we drove the five miles and we went to our room at the Waterfront. We had not figured out what to do yet. Mitch and Sue were staying at the Microtel about five minutes away in the other direction. We were all greeted by a huge very attractive outside porch with massive rocking chairs available for the rocking. The lobby was charming of beautiful wood and tile floor throughout.



Enjoy the Innards of the Waterfront Inn at Sumter Landing, Villages – Nice

The Waterfront Inn was most enjoyable from check-in to check-out. When we finished our evening that Saturday after dinner, we found a seat in the lobby as the dancing in the dining room was overflowing. If Pat and I were not so tired, we would have joined in.



Cody's Original Road House – right down the path from the Waterfront Inn



Nine Graduates of Meyers High School at Yogi's Reunion Pennecamp Village

It was dusk in February after we had checked in to the Waterfront. The girls wanted to freshening up after the party. Mitch and I were reading material from the Villages. We had a copy of the section of the Sun Times Villages Newspaper that was a half-inch thick with things to do. Mitch and I were amazed. It is recommended reading. In fact, I would recommend getting a subscription for a month. They'll deliver it to your home. You can see what is going on.

Pat and her sister Sue wanted to go to the shopping areas of Sumter Landing. They did not buy anything this time but they enjoyed the shopping “eye-candy.” Mitch and I did not expect a quick retreat of the girls from shopping and we were not disappointed. They checked it out fully and enjoyed but did not buy this time.

Meanwhile, while leaving the front entrance of the Waterfront and not knowing anything about the venue to which we were heading, my brother-in-law Mitch and I heard some pleasant noises about a hundred or so yards down the road from the Waterfront's front entrance. It was a very fun sounding noise.

So, we followed the noise and it took us past an array of golf cart that you can see in the picture. The golf cars seemed to be there for a purpose. As Mitch and I walked down the path of golf cars from the front of the Waterfront, we came closer to a spot that had a healthy line in front of it.

Never having been there before, we both felt that since the ladies were shopping we had time to engage the line. We were all hungry and thirsty so we decided to wait for a dining spot in this active venue.

Everybody in the waiting line was friendly after we reached it but nobody was volunteering to give up their spot in line. Nor were we. After about ten minutes we reached the front of the line so we could put our names in for a booth for four. Mitch and I found two spots at the big bar. After another ten minutes, the girls found us at the bar. In a short while, our names were called and we were able to all get seated in the thick of the place within this fun establishment. Check out the Cody's Ad on the next page.

I skipped something. Mitch and I were actually able to get into the Cody's before the girls came back from shopping. He and I found two seats at the bar. We both ordered brewskis. He ordered a Coors Light , and I ordered a Stella Artois and a red wine to keep my cholesterol down—a nice Merlot.

When the bartenders delivered the Stellas to each of us, they also brought the Merlot for me. Wunderbar! The best news on the price was yet to come.

Mitch and I soon learned that Cody's had an everyday two-for-one deal and that, like it or not, our purchases entitled us to another of the same. Eventually, we both consumed beer one and almost immediately, the barkeep brought us our second one. I began to drink the wine and finished it and then voila, I got a second Merlot. Wow. Whatever the name of this place was Mitch and I wanted to know it forever for it was a great deal.

10 Year Anniversary Celebration - Get \$10 FREE! Monday October 28th!
ALL DAY LONG!! ONLY at Cody's Original Roadhouse - Lake Sumter
Landing Location!

CODY'S
Original ROADHOUSE

2009 **10th** 2019
ANNIVERSARY

ONLY WAY

CODY'S
Original ROADHOUSE **At Sumter Landing**
Is Celebrating It's
10 Year Anniversary!

Receive A \$10.00 Bonus Voucher For Every
\$20.00 Purchase Of Food To Enjoy
On Your Next Visit At Cody's Sumter!

And...FREE Live Music - Prizes - Giveaways
& Drink Specials On Our Outdoor Patio!

We had not noticed the name when we came in but soon when we got menus as the girls caught up with us. We had been experiencing Cody's Original Roadhouse at Sumpter's Landing in the heart of the Villages. It is a great place—highly recommended by us. It is still our favorite place. The prime rib special is my favorite. .

I forget what we had for dinner this night but it was great. It was fun and packed with happy people. The food was great and inexpensive. The girls enjoyed it also.

After we finished, we walked back to the Waterfront. The four of us found seats in the lobby and we enjoyed watching the Villagers dance to their Saturday Night Hoe Down music at the Waterfront. We were all tired so we did not participate. When we had our fill, Pat and I walked our guests to their car in the parking lot. They were staying at the Microtel as the Waterfront was filled when they decided to join us.

We bid them adieu that night. In the morning, they went back home to Estero, FL.. After our one night-stay stay at the Waterfront in The Villages, we packed up and went off To Port New St. Lucie where my good buddy Mark George lives with his lovely wife Joyce. What a hospitable host he was before we flew home from Tampa.

When we got up the next morning, Mark had a big treat for Pat and I lined up. It was a big breakfast at one of the best places in Florida Caposey's Whole Works Restaurant in New Port Richey. I think one of those tables in the picture below was where we sat.



Caposey's Whole Works Restaurant in New Port Richey – A cut above!

When Pat and I came back to the Villages in November 2017, we were so impressed with Cody's that we looked for this fun place in all the Villages' Town Centers. In addition to Sumters Landing We found one in Brownwood where our bungalow was located and there is also a Cody's in Mulberry, which we have yet to experience. So far, there is not a Cody's in Spanish Springs.

Chapter 3 The Villages: Our Second trip November 2018

Pat and I were so pleased with our first Villages experience in February 2017 at the Waterfront Inn and Pennecamp Village that we got five more family members lined up for a Villages Lifestyle Preview. We expected seven Villagers in November.

FYI, the Preview includes a stay of 4-7 nights in a two or three-bedroom villa as a Villages' guest. Depending on the season, the price is either \$99.00 or \$199.00 per month. In November, off season, the price was \$99.00. The homes are all newly built and beautiful. Most of them if not all nowadays are in Brownwood.

The Villages offers these two packages in the form of like a try and buy. However, unlike other offers from other resorts; when you experience your preview, there is nobody pestering you during your stay—bugging you to sign on the dotted line. You are treated in all ways as a permanent resident and have all of the amenities of The Villages for the length of the stay. To get us to buy, we may need a third preview in 2021.

In both of our two Lifestyle Preview experiences, (2018 and 2020), the great treatment began with a gift of free tickets to a play on the second night or a dinner theatre experience at various venues at The Villages.

The Lifestyle Preview is a great idea. Guests experience what life could be like living in The Villages. Play golf, pickleball, swim, or try some new activity while staying in a private, fully furnished cabana complete with golf car and bikes already in your garage. How can you beat it? It is really quite remarkable and enjoyable. It's like living in The Villages as a permanent resident with all the perks.

Before we visited the Villages in November, 2018, I had purchased tickets for seven for a Florida Gators home game in Gainesville. It is just 62 miles up Route 75 from the Villages. Unfortunately, my brother-in law Marty came down with a health issue that he would not recover from until some-time after our Villages Experience. Thank God he is better now and we just celebrated his eightieth birthday at a gala in Harrisburg this past weekend.

Though Marty had discussed his plans for the Preview with Villages' Agents, he and his son Scott, and daughter-in-law Lynn were forced to cancel their plans. Moreover, my wife's sister Sue and her husband Mitch canceled their Lifestyle Preview in the Villages also. Maybe some time soon in the future. Pat and I kept our plans and we made the Lifestyle Preview in November and we went to the game with Sue and Mitch. It was our second time at the Villages and first Lifestyle Preview.

Marty ate the cost of the Gators ticket but Mitch and Sue decided to drive up from Estero on the West Coast and they made the game with Pat and I. We started the vacation before we began the Lifestyle Preview. We flew into Tampa and drove to Bonita Springs, FL to begin our vacation. We first visited John Martinson, one of my Meyers High classmates from 1965.

Unfortunately, even John could not use Marty's tickets for in September, Hurricane Irma had wreaked havoc on this home in Bonita Springs. Cathy, John's wife went home for a few months while John worked with a talented friends to bring his home back after the hurricane.

By the time Pat and I got there in November, John had made great progress. he had about a week's work left—mostly carpeting. I did not come empty-handed. At about noon, I showed up with some snacks and a 12-pack of Stella. John was most appreciative as with all the hard work, he needed to replenish his own supply of beer. John gave me a big hug and a big thank you to beat all thank you's. I did not drink it all.

After a few hours of a nice front-porch visit, a light helping hand in packing, and a full progress report, Pat and I left him to his wrap-up chores. He rejoined joined us about a week later at Yogi's place in the Village of Pennecamp for dinner on his way back North. He had been separated from his wife Cathy for about two months. The Villages was on his way when he was driving home for the holiday season.

After signing off with John at his home, we moved from Bonita Springs up the road to Estero, FL, where Mitch and Sue lived and we visited with them on our way to the game. While we were there, we

drove separately to the Microtel Motel outside of the Villages and we spent the night. We got up early the next day, November 18 and we went in my Blazer rent-a-car to the game in Gainesville. It was a great experience for the four of us. UAB did not do as well as Florida ripped them apart.

We spent another night at the Microtel and bright and early on Sunday, Sue and Mitch got on 75 South and went home to Estero while Pat and I checked in at the Villages Sales Office in Brownwood for our Lifestyle Preview. What a great experience overall and the preview had not even begun.



Alden Bungalows

Pat and I arrived mid-morning at:

**The Sales & Information Center
2705 West Torch Lake Drive
The Villages, Florida 32163**



Beautiful Brownwood Sales Office

At the sales office each Lifestyle Preview client is assigned an agent. The agents like to meet the prospects when they register but it sometimes does not happen. Below is an interior view of the Sales Office.



This time, we did not get to meet our representative but she communicated with us and provided us with free tickets to a nice Villagers-produced play. There are other people whose mission for first-timers to the villages is to take you to your bungalow.

You meet at a table in the sales office and you get a packet which contains some contracts and information as well as a house key, a FAUB to open the garage and a golf-car key. Our person was a very nice pleasant lady. We had a million questions and she answered them all with dignity.

Villages golf carts are referred to as cars. She had a large golf car. Pat went in her golf car and I drove. I followed her to the bungalow in the Alden Village. See below picture. She showed us how to get there from the Sales office by Paddock Square in Brownwood. When she arrived at the bungalow, she escorted us inside and went over the material again as she turned the home over to us.

She then took us to the garage and showed us how to start, operate, and drive our golf car. There were also two bicycles in the garage for our use but we did not need them this time

The bungalows were all very attractive such as the one below:



Bungalo in Alden Village

A sample interior is shown on the next page. Get ready for your Wow!



Typical charming Villages bungalow interior

Unlike hotel rooms with some issues like dead light bulbs etc, everything works in your very own Villages bungalow. I mean, even the toaster worked in our Lifestyle Preview sample home in The Villages. Moreover, I could not find a speck of dirt anywhere in the home.

Even before you step inside, you will be captivated by the charm of the Village, the neighborhood, and the outside look of your 4 to 7 day personal bungalow. When you get inside, if you are like my wife and I, your jaw will drop. It is a “wow” experience for sure. Even if you think you cannot afford a home like the one in which you are temporarily living, you will want to have it. If you decide that you might want to figure out how to afford it, there are many counselors available to show you how a unit like yours can be yours.

Chapter 4 The Villages: Our Third Trip February 2020



I love warm weather

Each trip to The Villages both Pat and I agree that we like the place even more. Today is February 20. We've been home now about a week as I write this chapter about our third Villages experience. I admit that we are having a little separation anxiety as the weather here just climbed up to fifteen degrees last night. It was 86 on our last day at the villages. A seventy degree difference is enough to make you pine

for the warmth of The Villages for sure. Writing this book now gives me a constant reminder that we could have stayed a little longer. My sister Mary and her husband, Bill Daniels are still not home from their Florida vacation. Jealous? Yes!

Despite our liking for warm weather, this fourteen day trip is the longest I have lived away from homes in warm weather since I was twenty-one years old the last time when I completed my Basic Training at Fort Jackson, South Carolina followed by MP School at Fort Gordon, Georgia. The temperature back then was about 40 degrees warmer than home as I was not in Florida. I'll take Florida.

When I think of Florida, I am always grateful for the work of Ponce De León who it is said discovered Florida when looking for the mythical *Fountain of Youth*. In rechecking my facts, I am right that it is Juan Ponce de León who is credited with being the first European to reach Florida. Back in April 1513 he landed on the coast of Florida at a site between Saint Augustine and Melbourne Beach—nowhere close to The Villages. He named the region Florida because it was discovered at Easter time (Spanish: Pascua Florida). I bet Ponce was glad he did not head due north after his discovery. I am too!

Is the third time the charm?

They say the third time is the charm. I can say this, for Pat and I, it was great. My brother Joe has a time share and he gets ten getaways as part of his deal. This year, he got a getaway for him and a getaway for me. The venue was Kissimmee Florida—the Westgates Resort. I added my Villages Lifestyle Preview time to the week in Kissimmee. And, so, Pat and I were in Florida two weeks for the first time ever. It sure was the charm for us. As we closed out our Villages time, the weather got sunny and stayed at 86. Perfect. Both halves were great even though my brother and wife Diane chose not to go to the Villages with us. Maybe next time for them.

My sister Mary and husband Bill rented a four bedroom home in Kissimmee for the month of February. Dorie and Keith Zinn, friends of the family, visited my brother for a few days in their two-bedroom getaway during our stay. Mary invited us all to their place on

Sunday February 2 for the Super Bowl. All of us enjoyed the game. Those of us who are long-time Eagles fans loved seeing Andy Reid finally bring home all the marbles.

We visited Epcot and Ragland Roads while we were at Westgate and we did a lot of socializing in the warm weather. On Saturday, February 8, I drove my brother to Orlando Airport MCO and from there Pat and I went to the Villages for the annual Yogi Bernardo Meyers Reunion in the Pennecamp Village. It was great seeing everybody.

This time we stayed in Atwood Village which is adjunct to Alden where we stayed the last time. Both are about a couple hundred yards *as the golf car rolls* from Brownwood Paddock Square. See Chapter 5 for more information on Brownwood.

Atwood does not have its own pool but Alden has a nice sized (bigger than Olympic-sized) pool. Pat and I used the golf car to get to Alden from Atwood. The weather was really nice. Pat went in to her knees and I got some pool walking and pool swimming done during our trips to the Alden Pool. We could have walked but the golf car is just too neat to leave sitting in the garage.

Sumter Landing Square

We spend a day at Sumter Landing and almost took the boat ride but chose to walk the town square instead. We parked at The Waterfront Inn and used its facilities as needed. Shhh!!! Don't tell anybody! We sat out on the Waterfront Inn Deck for a lengthy period of time enjoying the tranquility before we walked down to Cody's and then on to R.J. Gators outside porch bar. It was another Villages patented two-for establishment. Pat went around the Square shopping and made some purchases which made her smile.

When we were no longer thirsty, we prepared to go “home.” It was beautiful outside. We walked the sidewalk past Cody's and into the Waterfront Inn lobby. We checked out their facilities again in anticipation of our drive in our headed past, took a few pictures of the beauty of the place, found our car, and headed “home.”

Spanish Springs Town Square.

In our second visit to The Villages, Pat stayed home sunning herself and I went to Spanish Springs for the day. I stopped at a Villages HQ spot and dropped off a few AS/400 Tech books that I had written—for the IT staff. The Villages is a big IBM AS/400 (IBM i) system shop and that is my area of expertise. After that I found a large parking lot and put the car there for about an hour.

Spanish Springs Town Square and surrounds is beautiful for sure. It has a Spanish / Mexican look about it as you would expect from the name. It got me thirsty for a Margarita. After I walked through most of the huge Bowling Alley, I took a side exit and found a porch bar, a part of Amerikanos Grille, picture below, where I nestled for a half hour or so. I enjoyed, yes, correct verb, enjoyed two Margaritas and took my time to settle down as the trip from Spanish Springs to Brownwood is substantial. I



Amerikano's Porch Bar in Spanish Springs – Nice

Since Pat had not been to Spanish Springs the first time that we enjoyed the Lifestyle Preview, I got into our attractive rent-a-car Blazer and took Pat up to show off the architecture of this Town.. It took a bit more than a half hour to get there. We parked in the same spot that I had on our second visit. Pat and I entered the back of the bowling alley from the parking lot and Pat enjoyed the tour of the lanes.

We walked around a bit and Pat enjoyed the look of the town. It is charming. We found Americanos and we had a few Margaritas—just a few. After we had our fill, we got a spot inside where we had a nice meal that was also very inexpensive. I like The Villages.

When we went inside to eat, the menu expanded past Drinks.



SPECIALTY DRINKS

LIMONCELLO MARTINI

FEATURING KETEL ONE CITRUS VODKA, CHILLED TO PERFECTION AND PAIRED WITH SOUR MIX AND GARNISHED WITH SUGAR RIM AND LEMON WEDGE 8.00

AMERIKANÓS MULE

A HARMONIOUS MIX OF GINGER BEER FIGENZA FIG VODKA AND FRESH LIME JUICE. FIGENZA'S TWIST ON AN OLD CLASSIC 8.00

GRAND MARGARITA

JOSE CUERVO AND GRAND MARNIER ARE SHOWCASED IN THIS DELICIOUSLY TART AND SWEET, SALT RIMMED MARGARITA 9.00

OUZO LEMONADE

FEATURING OUZO PAIRED WITH FRESH LEMONADE AND GARNISHED WITH LEMON AND FRESH MINT 7.00

CLASSIC MOJITO

SMOOTH BACARDI RUM COMPLIMENTS FRESH MINT AND TART LIMES IN THIS

After this wonderful experience, since we had already dined, we were ready to go home without heading to Brownwood Paddock Square for dinner (right by our bungalow). We arrived safely. The Blazer and its driver, had gotten us safely back to ground zero.

Since we lived in Atwood, which is a stone's-throw from Brownwood Paddock Square, we spent a lot of time in our home town square which was called Brownwood Paddock Square. The next chapter talks about the three great town squares. We have already discussed Sumter Landing and Spanish Springs so most of what is in Chapter 5 is about our home square, **Brownwood Paddock Square**. Enjoy!

Chapter Five Three Great Town Centers & More Coming???



[Golf](#) | [Recreation](#) | [Shop & Dine](#) | [Entertainment](#) | [Health & Wellness](#) | [Our Homes](#)



[Golf](#) | [Recreation](#) | [Shop & Dine](#) | [Entertainment](#) | [Health & Wellness](#) | [Our Homes](#)



[Golf](#) | [Recreation](#) | [Shop & Dine](#) | [Entertainment](#) | [Health & Wellness](#) | [Our Homes](#)

One, two, three, Brownwood Paddock Square dancing, Spanish Springs pic from the center, Lake Sumpter Square activity. The Town Squares in the villages are the center of attraction. Nobody can capture it all but I can show you what we did on our Lifestyle Preview and a normal human being cannot handle much more than that. That's why even after a Lifestyle Preview, there is lots to see in a subsequent visit for those that are just not sure.

For the investment minded, my guest coordinator Jill, who I asked to submit her listings to this book, told me she bought a home in the villages because it is a great investment. She already lives in The Villages so, if you are not sure you want to live here just yet, her suggestion is to buy while the price is low and rent out your place, making money along the way, and when you want to come to the Villages for a month, your place is available to you and you are in charge. You'll never be shut out from prime-time spots in the cold weather as an owner. Thank you Jill for that tip.

I would put your full listing here if you had sent it but your tip stands. Thanks you.

Sumter Landing® Market Square



Front of the Waterfront Inn

Most people reading this book so far know that there are three great town centers in the Villages. The first, Sumter Landing, Pat and I experienced in February 2017 when we stayed at the Waterfront Inn for one evening. It was located at Sumter Landing. Here is a mini-review

Lake Sumter Landing’s colorful waterfront setting reminds many folks of quaint seaside towns they visited during their childhood. With a boardwalk nestled along Lake Sumter, you can enjoy the picturesque views and fun atmosphere. Pat and I sure did.

Once we were introduced to all of the stores, shops, restaurants and bars of Brownwood Paddock Square, we did not need much more than that to have fun.

In November, 2018, we used our golf car to go to a nearby Publix Store more than we probably needed. We loved riding the golf cars without worrying about getting hit by real-sized vehicles. Thank you to the Villages. At Publix, we probably bought more wine than butter.

It was a nice golf car ride to any place we went and anything we bought at Publix fit right in the back of the golf car. It was reasonably warm in November 2018 but we had no really hot days so it was not warm enough while we were there to feel like swimming. So we swam in the showers. Hah! The third trip was when the temperatures were in the 80’s and the swimming was great. The bungalow was a great spot where the sun went down while in each visit, we enjoyed an evening wine to coax the sun just a little.

In all of the Villages, there are a ton (twenty or more) recreation centers that are little more than a golf car ride from any bungalow in any of The Villas in the Villages. Pat and I, however, were intrigued by all the town centers and the abundant stuff to do everyday to avoid the workout recreation activities that we had actually prepared for.



Spanish Springs Town Square

We were happy to get a break from Northeast style physical activity and body strengthening but there would have been all we needed if we so desired. When we took our first golf car ride into Brownwood Center and Paddock Square. We knew that exercise would not be part of this trip. Not that it could have been.

I was a pinboy for example, when I was 12 years old in Wilkes-Barre PA. I told the story already about how I dropped off a few IBM AS/400 books that I had written at the Spanish Springs Town Square. To get there from the main parking lot, I had to walk either around or through a great big Bowling Alley. The rear was in the parking lot and the front was on the Spanish Springs Square.

I was tempted as it was a great bowling alley to throw a few. Like I said, Pat was sunning herself outside of the bungalow on our first Village Preview and did not want to make the run to the Spanish Springs Town Square. I could have bowled but did not. Pat would have forgiven me. There were no Margaritas at the bowling alley in 2018, so I came home a while later after I found a few at Amerikanos on the Square.



That’s me in the light green shirt on the Porch Bar at Amerikanos

I admit that I enjoyed watching the action in Spanish Springs for awhile. What a relaxing, beautiful experience. My stop for a Margarita or two before I disembarked for Brownwood was most enjoyable. After this visit, I had seen all three of the magnificent Town Squares. My wife had not yet seen Spanish Springs so in our third visit, we corrected that, thank you.

The Town Squares are the major attraction for us in the Villages besides the warmth of Florida. No wonder the folks in the southern Villages of say *Finney* are clamoring to get their own Town Square and the associated stores and restaurants that come with a Town Center. It will come soon I hope. The trolley tour guides get asked the question about additional Town Centers all the time.

Whenever I got home in Alden or Atwood no matter where our day had taken us, Pat was always ready to go to the Brownwood Square festivities. They are super. The only reason we did not go one time was that she was tired and so we decide to eat-in and enjoy our bungalow. It was always a great night in the Villages.

Here are some other fun things which we participated in or ate on our Villages vacations or perhaps the last:

These places were all intriguing with some really neat names. In most of these spots, we over-sampled grog in their porch-like outside covered bars.

In our third visit, from which we just returned, we tried to reenact our first visit when we stayed at the Waterfront. So, of course we hit our second Cody's located on Meggison in Brownwood . We also relived some great haunts from our second visit which was our first Lifestyle Preview. The prices in every eatery or gin mill that we experienced in any of our trips were never close to exorbitant and the quality was superb.

Here are some of the stops we made in visit # 2 and visit # 3. Of course we hit Cody's in Sumter Landing in visit 1 and Cody's in Brownwood in visit two and three. I wish all these places were in my own home town. Villages Town Centers are a big reason why Pat and I may one day become Villagers. The selections are from our Brownwood experience:

City Fire American Oven & Bar



This spot has one of those patented Villages front porch with a full-view of the Square. It portends to be an upscale-casual eatery offering American fare from sandwiches to steaks, plus a full bar.

Located in: [Brownwood Paddock Square](#)

Today as I write this, the date is February 19.

Here are some attractions scheduled starting on Fri, Feb 21 at 8:00 PM
The Boogie Bros Band at City Fire Sumter Landing in The Villages

Sat, Feb 29 8:00 PM City Fire

Mon, Mar 9 6:00 PM The Big Bad Duo at CityFire Brownwood

Here is another place

Gator's Dockside Brownwood



This is a family-friendly sports-bar chain offering American fare, including signature grilled chicken wings. Check the prices:



Bluefin Grill & Bar



Steak, seafood & cocktails offered in a modern, nautical-themed dining room with sea-blue decor. **Get \$12 Off Your 1st Order**

World of Beer



Hangout featuring 500+ global beers, lots of craft drafts & tavern food in pub digs with TVs.

Pat and I are sure we were at every one or mostly every one of these spots. We would recommend the Villages and these spots because it is hard not to be able to afford a meal or a few drinks at two-for prices. After two for one's from noon, the entertainment on the Square is every day from 5:00 PM You can go to the Paddock Square or stay in your porch seat at the taverns circling the Town Square. You will be entertained.

You can have fun anytime on Brownwood Paddock Square

Here are two events on the schedule for the month that we spent our third Villages visit.

February 2020



Cece Teneal & Soul
Kamotion

February 20 | 5:00 pm - 9:00 pm

Brownwood Paddock Square

The funkiest musicians to ever touch the stage.

Band (4 Piece +)
Classic Rock
Dance
Entertainment
Motown
Pop



Brownwood Strawberry
Festival

February 21 | 3:00 pm - 9:00 pm

Brownwood Paddock Square

2020 The Villages Brownwood Strawberry Festival

Entertainment
Special Events



If you would like your own look at what is going on at Brownwood’s Paddock Square, feel free to take the link below. You’ll need a StarTrek Transporter to get there for today or tomorrow but the list of attractions goes on so that if you are coming to Paddock Square any time soon, Check them out:

<https://www.thevillagesentertainment.com/venue/brownwood-paddock-square/>



The restaurant / bars on the last few pages are on or near Paddock Square. An Eight theatre Barnstorm Theatre tops it off. How do you like the looks of this Town Square at Brownwood.



The pictures all spell fun. Every day at 5:00 to 9:00 a top band from Anyplace USA is featured for four hours. This picture was taken from the top of the back bleachers. The seating gets filled up by 5:30 so Villagers often bring their own seats as there is a lot of room on the sidewalks.

The folks get up and dance when they want and it is Fun, Fun, Fun. To help better quench your thirst, the pourers at the concession stand pour doubles from 5 to 6 PM. Yes, my friends, that does make the stands fill up a lot sooner. The libations attract Villagers for early seatings and whistle-wetting.

If you would like to spend a quiet daytime in town come on Market Basket day when things look good enough to eat



Yours truly at Cody's at Meggelson Street in Brownwood Center

How about these fine veggies snagged for some home cooking at Brownwood Paddock Square’s Market Days.



The Farmer’s market is another treat as the local farmers bring their wares and the local people literally gobble them up..

Chapter 6 Brownwood’s Paddock Square Is for Me



Paddock Square Entertainment

Everybody has an opinion. For my wife and I, the Brownwood Paddock Square is our Favorite spot in the Villages. So, I guess we would say that for those of us living in the Villages, even temporarily on Lifestyle Previews, Brownwood’s Paddock Square and the rest of the town center is the place to be. They say this Square is the third and final planned town square for The Villages. The other two town squares of course we have already discussed. They are Lake Sumter Landing Market Square and Spanish Springs Town Square.

I don’t believe it folks. I don’t believe that Brownwood is the last Square unless the Villages’s growth is going to slow down and I don’t see it. The Villages is growing and the Villagers in the southern area such as the Village of Fenney are already looking for their own Town Square and the secret word on the street is that it may not be tomorrow but Brownwood’s Paddock Square will not be the last.

Those of us who follow The Villages are acutely aware that it is the fastest-growing metro area in the United States. It is referred to as “the sprawling Central Florida retirement community. An article in 2019 showed that The Villages population has ballooned by nearly 38 percent since 2010, according to data by the U.S. Census Bureau. You’d think Disney would make Orlando #1 but no, it is The Villages.

Orlando is no slouch in terms of growth as it clocked in at ninth-fastest nationally, at a clip of over 20 percent since 2010, putting the Orlando area at No. 22 in population among U.S. metros. The July 2018 population of nearly 2.6 million nudged past Charlotte, N.C., and was closing in on Baltimore.

The fact is that no other place in the nation even came close to the staggering pace of growth at The Villages between 2010 and 2018, when the once-rural community grew by more than 35,000 people. And each frigid, frozen blast of winter across the Northeast or Midwest only accelerates the trend. Retirees as a rule do not like cold weather, especially after getting accustomed as Snowbirds to enjoying warm winters. So, what do they do? Like you perhaps, they increase the amount of snowbird time from two weeks to a month, to two months and then to three and more.

Snowbirds often decide to buy or build in the Villages. They might rent a home for a winter season or two but most buy after staying for a week or two at the Villages. It is that impressive. We know that a snowbird is a person who migrates from the colder northern parts of North America to warmer southern locales, typically during the winter. For the politically correct, not me, mind you “Winter visitor” is actually the “proper” term for a snowbird. I know of nobody who uses “Winter Visitor.”

Once somebody moves to The Villages, they often become Holiday Visitors and they show up back in the old neighborhood between Thanksgiving and New Years Day. I have not figured out a one word name for them. Holidaybird just doesn’t do it for me. How about you? Send me your ideas.

After a Lifestyle Preview, for those who continue as snowbirds, the Villages often takes up the whole southern snowbird time as the

experience is so impressive. In talking to a number of Villagers, many make the decision to move to The Villages after one Lifestyle Preview and they do not regret it. Others who might need more time decide to make the move and they buy in The Villages. Once settled in the Villages, they reverse their old Snowbird trend and instead they visit their northern roots just every so often. Holidaybirds just doesn't sound like a good description.

“Yes, I hate to say it, but a bad winter up North helps us,” said Nancy Deichman, a RE/MAX Premier Realty broker who has witnessed the area mushroom over the past decade. “We actually have three offices in The Villages ... and right now, there's another 49,000 homes being planned.”

The Villages is centered on a master-planned, 55-and-over community in Sumter County. In recent years, this community began growing most rapidly into Lake and Marion counties. It's amazing. People are drawn to The Villages by their clever advertising but they buy because they speak with residents all over the place who are happy and willing to talk to anybody about how great living there actually is.

“The Villages has completely transformed that area,” said Rich Doty, a research demographer at the University of Florida's Bureau of Economic and Business Research. “In 1970, the median age of that area was about 30. By this year, 2020, it's expected to be about 67.”

Back to Paddock Square and Brownwood. This section of the Villages opened on October 12, 2012. It is located in the Southwest corner of The Villages, west of Buena Vista Boulevard and north of County Road 44. This area is not yet as built up as other parts of The Villages, which many believe is why the developer took so long to start Brownwood which makes sense. Next door to Brownwood will be Antrim Dells, a 500,000 square foot commercial development/shopping mall. Pat will like that.

Many speculate that because of Brownwood's location in a corner of The Villages bordering major roadways and the addition of a major shopping/commercial development, it will be more open and accessible to those living outside of The Villages. However, most residents were looking forward to the completion of Brownwood,

especially since it was intended to help alleviate some of the crowding that was happening at the other town squares, especially in the months of January through April when all the snowbirds are in town. As I said, now that Brownwood has been in place for awhile, the Villages growth will spawn other Town Squares just as Brownwood was a product of Villager demands. That's my opinion on that and I am sticking with it.

The theme of Brownwood (everything in The Villages has a theme...you'll see) is "Old World Florida." Look at the Old Barn Movie Theatre for the right perspective. It takes residents back to a time in the 1800's when Florida's cattle hunters and cowboys roamed the state." Brownwood and Antrim Dells Mall have become great additions to the amenities Villagers have at their doorstep. Just a golf car ride away.

By the way, as I was researching and writing about my Villages Experiences and preparing to talk about what the Villages has to offer as a first-read, I came across an author who has been writing about The Villages for years—since 2008. He has two web sites that you might want to visit titled after his Villages-famous book Inside the Bubble.

<https://www.insidethebubble.net/about/>. And thevillagesfloridabook.com

From everything I have read, you might want to have Inside the Bubble in your own Villages library if you can afford it. Here is a note from the author of Inside the Bubble:

Hi, I'm Ryan Erisman.

I've been researching and writing about The Villages, the most popular retirement community in the known universe, since 2008.

I imagine some people might think that sounds like a pretty boring job, but this place definitely keeps me on my toes! There’s rarely a dull moment around here.

Thanks for stopping by to learn more about my journey

Why the name “Inside the Bubble”?

This website was originally named “The Villages Florida Book” which was the title of my book when it first came out in 2008. At the time, it seemed like a pretty logical way to describe a book about The Villages.

Unfortunately the developer didn’t think so. They don’t like anyone using the words “The Villages” in their name, so their lawyers sent me a letter telling me to change the name of my book and website, or else.

Villagers often refer to themselves as living in a bubble, so with the developer’s lawyers blessing...welcome to “Inside the Bubble”!

Why is there a Frog in your logo?

Villagers are commonly referred to as “frogs” ... because they’re here ’til they croak!

If we can’t laugh at ourselves what can we do?

Anyway, I really appreciate you taking the time to “hop around” on the site!

Please don't hesitate to [reach out](#) if you have any questions.

Ryan

Here is a very interesting readers comment to Ryan the Author. I include it in this book just for your perspective.

Don Blankman says:

Not so fast Frosty, it is not the investment by Villagers in their homes that made the town squares a success. It is the additional contributions and patronage of people who visit the centers from outside the Villages that make the restaurants and retail shops successful. They would die without support from outside.

The same is true of the championship golf courses, and clubhouse restaurants. If they were used exclusively by Villagers, you would see them close down in no time at all. There would not be enough revenue to keep them open.

My wife and I lived in a private golf and racket club community in Palm Beach County for a few years before coming to The Villages in 2002. Although guests of residents were permitted to play our two courses and eat at our two clubhouses, each resident was assessed \$900 at the beginning of each year for food at the clubhouse restaurant, whether they ate there or not. The annual golf membership fee was \$12,000, the cart fee was \$1,500 and as people grew older, they no longer wanted, or were able, to play golf. Consequently, they refused to pay the fees.

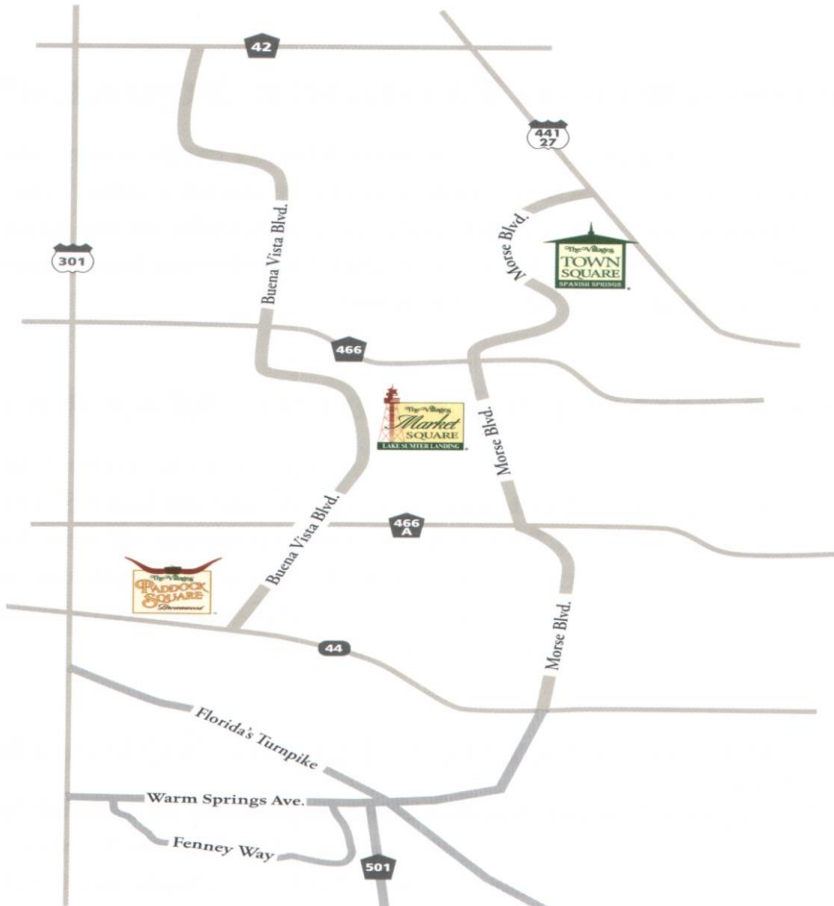
There were only 850 homes to share the burden of two 18 hole golf courses and two clubhouses. They needed to open up the golf courses and restaurants to the public in order to curb the ever-increasing costs of operation. Another smart thing the developer of The Villages did was to

make the streets public so that revenue from the county wide taxes goes to maintain these streets.

Our streets where we lived in Palm Beach were private and although we had far fewer amenities available to us, our monthly amenity fees were \$300. Here in The Villages we all enjoy the luxury of semi-privacy and excellent private amenities at bargain prices. Enjoy them! Don

Bravo to the Villages!

Where are the three Town Centers? From bottom to top we have Brownwood Paddock Square, Lake Sumpter Landing Market Square, and at the top, Spanish Springs Town Square. They are all lots of fun.s The newest development, Fenney is at the bottom .



Chapter 7 Town Squares at The Villages Are Fun



Lots of Good Times

At the heart of The Villages community , you will find three old-fashioned, sorta Disneyesque town squares. These are places where you'll find plenty of modern-day fun . The Founder of the Villages, Harold Schwartz, felt strongly that every great hometown needed a special place to gather and socialize with friends and neighbors. Today, all three of the Town Squares accomplish his mission by featuring FREE nightly entertainment 365 nights a year, modern movie theaters, and a colorful assortment of shopping, dining, and libation opportunities. Whichever Town Square you choose—so far my favorite is Brownwood Paddock Square—you will soon see that they are all “where good friends gather for a great time!”

Brownwood Paddock Square®

The most recent Town Square is not only charming in its own right, it is reminiscent of an early 19th century Florida cattle town. When I first saw Brownwood, I felt that Disney’s Imagineers had a play in its interesting design. The sights and sounds of Brownwood arc sure to delight both cowpokes and city slickers alike.

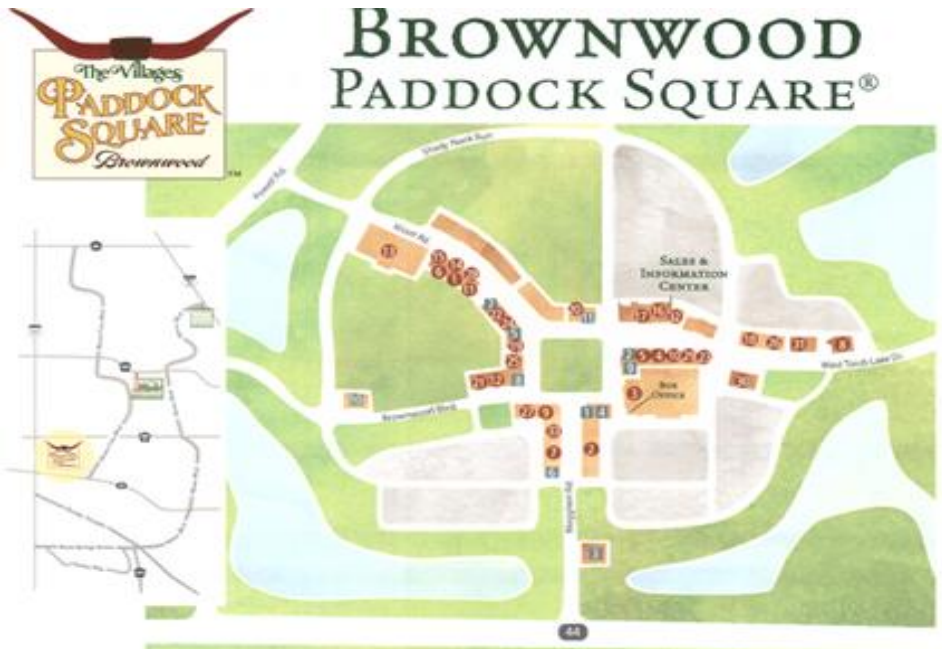


A Quiet time at Brownwood Paddock Square

The Barnstorm Theater which looks just like a big barn from the outside, features the eight of the latest Hollywood movies to choose from. Moreover, right in the middle of the square, there is a neat log cabin stage surrounded by enough watering holes and grandstand seating for you to avoid thirst for quite a spell. The Paddock Square offers free entertainment nightly and a farmers market on Saturday. You are invited and if you are anything like my wife Pat and I, you’ll love it—and you’ll meet a lot of fellow villagers.

Lake Sumter Landing Market Square®

Lake Sumter Landing’s waterfront setting placid, tranquil, and exciting all at the same time. It reminds many folks of quaint seaside villages they visited during their childhood. It was the second Town Square built by the founders. You’ll find a bona fide lighthouse on Lake Sumter that has become a landmark to all. It signals food, fun and FREE nightly entertainment all year long! Market Square is home to the Old Mill Playhouse movie theater and variety of boutiques and restaurants that offer indoor and street-side dining, and are sure to satisfy a variety of tastes. Be sure to take in a boat or trolley tour. They are offered 7 days a week!



SHOPPING & SERVICES

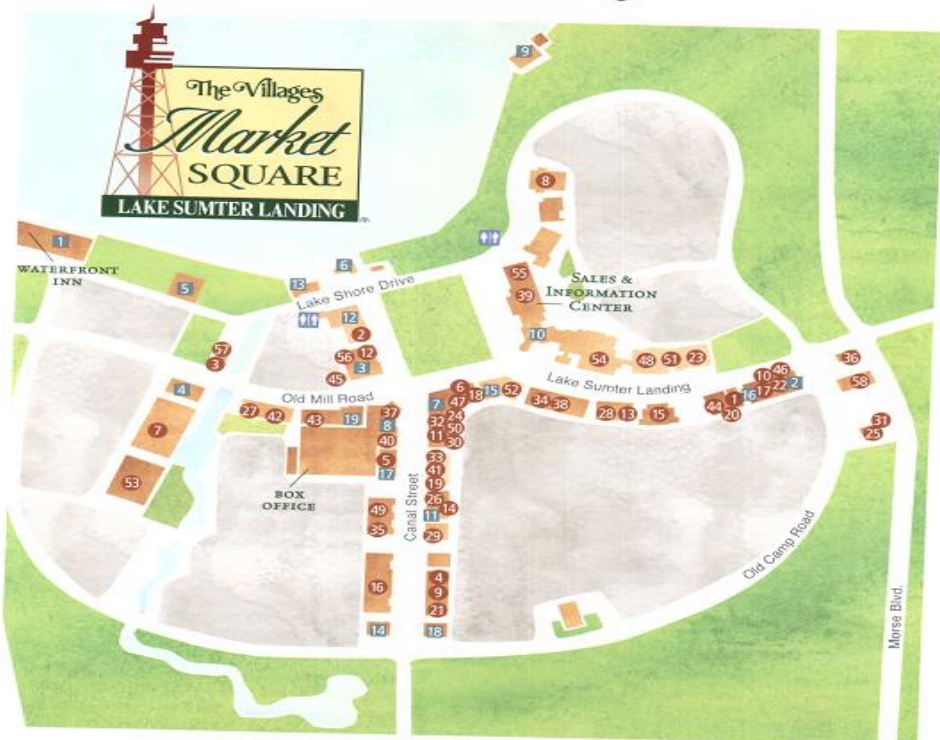
- 1 Advanced Dermatology & Cosmetic Surgery – (352) 571-7000
- 2 Babbette's Furniture – (352) 643-6430
- 3 Barnstorm Theater – (352) 259-1111
- 4 Brownwood Jewelers – (352) 750-3759
- 5 Brownwood Jewelers Boutique – (352) 750-3789
- 6 Cal's Barber and Beauty – (352) 750-5334
- 7 Christine's – (352) 259-3993
- 8 Citizens First Bank – (352) 751-2030
- 9 Citizens First Wealth Management
- 10 Evelyn & Arthur – (352) 399-5732
- 11 Golf Central – (352) 633-5059
- 12 HearUSA – (352) 561-2017
- 13 Kylie's Closet – (352) 399-5261
- 14 MVP Athletic Club – (352) 674-7000
- 15 Nail Saloon – (352) 391-9391
- 16 Parady Financial Group – (352) 750-4029
- 17 Peninsula Land & Title – (352) 259-5090
- 18 Properties of The Villages – (352) 753-2270
- 19 Raymond James – (352) 430-1351
- 20 Rustic Rose – (352) 399-5407
- 21 The Rustic Rose Fashion Boutique – (352) 571-5256
- 22 SAS Comfort Shoe Store – (352) 674-0434

- 23 Shoe Biz – (352) 399-5422
- 24 The Spice and Tea Exchange – (352) 633-4780
- 25 Tommy Bahama – (352) 205-7198
- 26 United Health Care* Medicare Store – (352) 674-1240
- 27 Van Heusen – (352) 674-9544
- 28 Villages Cycles – (352) 430-3600
- 29 The Villages Daily Sun – (352) 753-1119
- 30 The Villages Golf Cars/Goedken's Garage – (352) 205-8909
- 31 The Villages Insurance – (352) 750-3100
- 32 The Villages* Logo Store Banner Mercantile – (352) 753-2270
- 33 Woof Gang Bakery & Grooming – (352) 775-4654

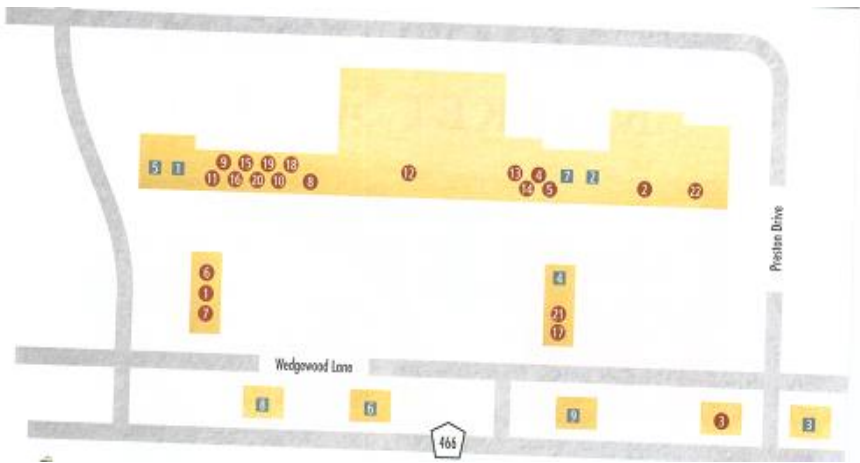
DINING

- 1 BlueFin Grill & Bar – (352) 571-5344
- 2 City Fire – (352) 561-2078
- 3 Cody's Original Roadhouse – (352) 430-2996
- 4 Dunkin' Donuts – (352) 689-2007
- 5 Five Guys – (352) 399-5535
- 6 Gator's Dockside – (352) 775-4071
- 7 McAlister's Deli – (352) 399-5934
- 8 Ricciardi's Italian Table – (352) 391-9939
- 9 Scoopies – (352) 750-6263
- 10 Toojay's Gourmet Deli – (352) 350-2122
- 11 World of Beer – (352) 633-9519

LAKE SUMTER LANDING MARKET SQUARE®



Market Square Shops Sumpter Landing



Sumter Landing Shopping & Services

SHOPPING & SERVICES

- 1 Ameriprise Financial – 352-350-2397
- 2 Bealls Outlet – 352-753-0593
- 3 Circle K – 352-430-2407
- 4 Coast to Coast Jewelry – 352-751-4460
- 5 Custom Apparel – 352-750-1600
- 6 Edible Arrangements – 352-391-1334
- 7 Edwin Watts Golf Shops – 352-633-3270
- 8 Eyes at Southern Trace – 352-751-0060



- 9 H&R Block – 352-753-2730
- 10 Miracle Ear – 352-751-5712
- 11 Plantation Flower Designs & Gifts – 352-751-6821
- 12 Publix – 352-751-6280
- 13 Publix Liquors – 352-259-8785
- 14 Salon Jaylee – 352-259-6700
- 15 Safe Ship – 352-674-0936
- 16 Softball's R Game – 352-751-4007
- 17 Southern Trace Cleaners – 352-633-2688
- 18 Southern Trace Dental – 352-751-5777
- 19 Sprint – 352-430-3210
- 20 The Villages Insurance – 352-751-6560
- 21 UBreakFix – 352-775-3777
- 22 Village Ace Hardware – 352-751-6680

DINING

- 1 Beef 'O' Brady's – 352-751-7169
- 2 China Buffet – 352-751-6866
- 3 Culver's – (352) 268-3375
- 4 Darrell's Diner – 352-750-1719
- 5 Habaneros Mexican Grill – (352) 633-2080
- 6 Dunkin' Donuts/Baskin-Robbins – 352-430-0758
- 7 Giovanni's Ristorante and Pizzeria – 352-751-6674

SPANISH SPRINGS TOWN SQUARE®



Spanish Springs Shops & Services

SHOPPING & SERVICES

- 1 All About Hearing Aids – (352) 391-5710
- 2 Bath Fitter – (352) 268-2368
- 3 Bermuda Bay – (352) 205-8201
- 4 Cal’s Barber Shop & Beauty Salon – (352) 391-5842
- 5 Carter Healthcare – (352) 753-8802
- 6 Chico’s – (352) 751-3276
- 7 Citizens First Bank – (352) 259-3280
- 8 Citrus Sew & Vac – (352) 307-0061
- 9 Comfort Keepers – (352) 259-0893
- 10 Compassionate Care Hospice
of Lake & Sumter – (352) 415-0778 - *Second Floor*
- 11 The Corkscrew Winery – (352) 751-1787
- 12 Cozco Handcrafts – (352) 430-0386
- 13 Generations Bowling Pro Shop, LLC – (352) 753-7200
- 14 Golf & Country Club
Administration – (352) 753-3396 - *Second Floor*
- 15 Habitat for Humanity – (352) 483-0434 - *Second Floor*
- 16 Hertz – (352) 430-1039
- 17 Kindred at Home – (352) 751-9033 - *Third Floor*
- 18 The King’s Gallery – (352) 259-6998
- 19 Marriott TownePlace Suites - (352) 753-8686
- 20 MVP Athletic Club – (352) 753-6910
- 21 Patchington – (352) 751-1086
- 22 Picture You – (352) 633-5496
- 23 Peninsula Land and Title – (352) 259-5028 - *Second Floor*
- 24 Properties of The Villages – (352) 753-2270
- 25 Rialto Theatre – (352) 259-1111
- 26 Serenity Dentistry Spa – (352) 350-1933
- 27 The Sharon Performing Arts Center - (352) 751-7799
- 28 Soft Surroundings – (352) 561-3271
- 29 Soma – (352) 391-5583
- 30 Spanish Springs Lanes – (352) 750-9440
- 31 Sparks Jewelers – (352) 633-5961
- 32 Stretch Zone – (352) 753-4554
- 33 Synergy Wealth Alliance – (352) 259-8498
- 34 Talbots – (352) 775-3040
- 35 Tervis Tumbler – (352) 750-0035
- 36 UnitedHealthCare® Medicare Store – (352) 674-7160
- 37 The Villages Daily Sun – (352) 753-1119 - *Second Floor*
- 38 The Villages Insurance – (352) 751-6622
- 39 The Villages® Logo Store Banner Mercantile – (352) 753-2270
- 40 2K Nails and Spa – (352) 750-2634

DINING

- 1 Amerikano’s Grille – (352) 633-8027
- 2 Ay! Jalisco – (352) 259-6582
- 3 Demsha’s – (352) 633-3007
- 4 Dunkin’ Donuts – (352) 633-1445
- 5 Flippers Pizzeria – (352) 750-1919
- 6 Gator’s Dockside – (352) 430-1377
- 7 Katie Belle’s – (352) 750-9411 - *Second Floor*
- 8 Kilwin’s Chocolate & Ice Cream – (352) 630-4704
- 9 Margarita Republic – (352) 753-4660
- 10 McCall’s Tavern – (352) 750-9441
- 11 Panera Bread – (352) 750-3909
- 12 Ruby Tuesday – (352) 751-1801
- 13 Toonjays Gourmet Deli – (352) 753-3510
- 14 World of Beer – (352) 633-4787



Town Square Entertainment Galore 365 Days a Year.

I am convinced that without knowing a thing, I could sit out on one of the Town Squares alone in a public seat or one under one of the porches of a restaurant or tavern, or perhaps even a nice inviting curb and I would find something to keep me busy and keep the noodle functioning. There is always something going on at the Villages, especially the Town Squares. .



Johnny Wild & the Delights are among the groups that perform on the holidays.

Michael Johnson took the above picture for the Daily Sun at holiday time. And Senior writer Kristen Fiore, wrote this nice piece . She can be reached at 352-753-1119, ext. 5270, or kristen.fiore@thevillagesmedia.com. In her inclusive article about the holidays, Kristen she explains how the Town Squares never shut down—even at Christmas time.

Here goes:

Lovers of live entertainment can keep on rockin’ around the Christmas tree. Many businesses close on the holidays, but all three town squares will remain open for nightly live entertainment from 5 to 9 p.m. on Christmas Eve, Christmas Day and New Year’s Eve. And entertainers like Scooter the DJ and Johnny Wild & the Delights say that holiday crowds are usually big and lively. “Christmas night is funny,” said Michael Miller, also known as Scooter the DJ.

“When I first got it, I thought it was going to be dead. But it is anything but. It’s one of the busiest nights of the year that I’ve ever seen on the square. I love it.”

Brian Russo, director of entertainment, said the entertainment department wanted to make sure that live entertainment on the squares remained available on the holidays for people who want to go out in the evening, as well as for those who do not celebrate the holidays. [And those who are eternally looking for fun.]

Plus, many people will have family and guests in town. “The squares are such a great place to show guests what The Villages is all about,” Russo said.

Miller joked that having guests and family in town for the holidays can also make people feel a little claustrophobic.

“They open presents in the morning, have a meal in the middle of the day and then Grandma and Grandpa are like, ‘Get out of my house, Scooter is on the square,’” Miller said.

So get out of the house, pick a square, grab a drink and dance away the holiday stress.

Christmas Eve

Choosing which entertainers will play on the holidays usually just comes down to availability, Russo said.

“These are the hardest nights of the year to book because so many groups are either playing events elsewhere or are trying to take the time off themselves,” Russo said.

But the Blake Guyre Band plays on the holidays almost every year, Guyre said.

This year, the band will play on Christmas Eve at Spanish Springs Town Square.

“We love playing on the holidays because there are amazing crowds and a fantastic energy,” Guyre said.

Guyre said those who attend can expect a high-energy performance with some religious Christmas songs.

“I hope that they really feel welcome and have a great time singing along,” he said.

At Lake Sumter Landing Market Square, dance band Blue Stone Circle will perform, and the entertainment on Brownwood Paddock Square will be the Andrew Morris Band.

Christmas Day

Crossfire has entertained crowds in The Villages for 15 years, but this year will be the group’s first Villages Christmas performance, according to band member Pat Waddell.

“We are all excited about the opportunity to do it,” he said. “We’re really looking forward to it.”

The group recently added a fifth member, who is a good keyboard player and singer, Waddell said.

“And he’s also a master violinist,” Waddell said. “That has enabled us to expand our song list. So you can expect a variety of music and new line-dance songs, as well as some Christmas songs.”

Crossfire will perform in Spanish Springs.

Lake Sumter Landing’s Christmas band is Dance Express. Steve Birthisel, of Dance Express, said it will be the band’s first Christmas in The Villages.

“We’ll do some Christmas songs and try to get them up dancing,” he said.

Scooter the DJ will perform in Brownwood.

“I’ll just wear them down,” he said. “There will be a ton of audience participation.”

New Year’s Eve

Scooter the DJ also will perform on New Year’s Eve, this time in Spanish Springs.

Meanwhile, Johnny Wild & the Delights will take over Lake Sumter Landing.

“We look forward to the New Year’s Eve show all year-round,” said Andy Matchett, also known as Johnny Wild. “The energy is electric. There’s no other way to describe it.”

The group will do tributes to some of the musicians who died in 2019 and will rock new outfits for the event.

“We like to establish what they can expect from the year,” Matchett said. “And we want to let everyone know we’re always looking to improve and give a new spin on what it is that we do and get great feedback from the audience. I hope people get inspired to start the new year off right.”

The Hooligans will ring in the New Year in Brownwood. It will be the group’s first New Year’s Eve performance in The Villages, and band member Matt Bloodwell said the band is excited to spend the holiday with their fans in The Villages.

“There’s always such a great energy on the squares when we’re there, and we want to help celebrate the holiday,” Bloodwell said.

Chapter 7 Food Shopping, Shopping, & Dining

Shopping & Dining

Of course shopping and dining are important parts of our lifestyle in. When the stores are Winn Dixie or Publix, which are aplanty in or near The Villages, the shopping often results in some fine home dining. In this chapter, we discuss where to find shops, food stores, and restaurants that are not necessarily associated with the Town Squares and which may simply satisfy the need for all humans to eat and clothe themselves. OK, you might need gasoline, medicine, lottery tickets, and even some pre-prepared victuals on the cheap. At 126,000 residents strong, there are a ton of places in and around the Villages to make sure these needs are met.

The Villages does not take a second place to any community. With hundreds of shops, boutiques, bistros and nationally known restaurants and stores to choose from, you'll find many ways to enjoy shopping and dining throughout The Villages community.

Shopping destinations are numerous, from quaint boutiques to the national brands you know and love. Grocery and clothing stores, pharmacies, home improvement centers and superstores are all here, and all are close by. Residents of The Villages can select from a never-ending array of restaurants; if it's a special occasion, and the only thing you like to make for dinner is "reservations," it's in there and you can find it.

Let me give you a personal example. In the early chapters of the book I described the reason for my first Villages trip. I stayed at the magnificent Waterfront Inn at Sumter Landing. When you move to the Villages and your two or three bedroom bungalo is filled up with guests, the Waterfront Inn will be a special treat for any of your guests even if it takes them two to ten minutes to reach your place.

Yogi Bernardo, a fine catcher for Meyers HS and St. Theresa's Teeners League in the 1960's, held a reunion for about twelve couples from Meyers High. That prompted me to come to the Villages but Yogi's Inn in the Village of Pennecamp was filled so he got me a resident's discount at the Waterfront Inn. It was certainly on par with Yogi's bungalow and most appreciated.

Additionally, when I told Yogi that my wife Pat was celebrating her seventieth birthday the day of our reunion, he told me about the Publix stores catering and cake making prowess. I ordered a \$55.00 cake that was double decker huge with butter cream icing. Both the Seven and the Zero double decker pieces which looked like on cake celebrating her 7-0 birthday were huge.

I paid for it from up north by credit card. When I asked Yogi for directions to the Publix to pick it up, he and his wife Carol overwhelmed me by saying they would pick it up. They not only picked it up, they bought candles and had it all ready to go when Pat and I arrived for the party. Carol led the Happy Birthday to you Pat... and I almost cried. Thank you Yogi, Thank you to the Villages for having such great stores and such great amenities. Their three bedroom villa in Pennecamp was enough to sell anybody on the Villages.

If Yogi had not fed us so well at the two reunions we attended, Pat and I would have been able to satiate ourselves in any of the restaurants in the Villages three town squares feature a variety of satisfying cuisine, or we know we could have chosen to dine at any of the Villages twelve distinctive country clubs. No matter what your favorites, we know we could have found it there— among the friendly local establishments, and well-known national favorites. And, don't forget folks, on our lifestyle preview trips, Pat and I could get there by golf car! So could you.

Shopping Outside of Town Squares

Unlike places like Westgates and other fine, reasonably priced 7-day resorts where you might like to stay when visiting Orlando and surrounds, the founders of the villages knew they were designing a

haven in which people would live permanently . Thus a few little stores in the complex would not do. The Founders of the Villages set apart land for others to take advantage of a new customer base that would exist in the villages. They chose not to build proprietary corner stores among the villas but instead, they commissioned areas the size of normal shopping malls in other communities so that once settled shopping would be a natural thing for Villagers and the stores would not all be owned by The Villages.

There are many different regular sized malls surrounding the villages and a number of mini malls in some of the villages. You do not want me to list all the stores and their specialties in this book because it would stilt your fun reading.of a fun experience. However, I am betting you would like me, ina few pages if possible, to identify the malls and their locations and suggest that you do not have to go to Orlando to do your shopping. It's all here.

Malls and mini-malls across the many villas in The Villages

So that you know where to go when you live here temporarily or permanently, let me please introduce you to a number of spots to which you can easily travel from your home in The Villages. I will highlight the major area where outside shopping is provided as well as highlight the types of establishments you will find:

Grand Traverse

Another small mall by Brownwood but famous for Publix and Publix Liquors. This is where Pat and I spent a lot of Golf Car time when we stayed at Alden and Atwood. The spots to look for in the Grand Traverse are Advanced Physical Therapy, Camous USA Credit Union, Eye Store, Dental Care, Hair Care, Nails & Spa, Oublix & Publix Liquors, Quest Diagnostics, Chiropractic Center & Wellness, Villages EAT, Villages Big Health Center. Dining can be had at China Wok, Dickey's Barbecue Pit, Flippers Pizzeria. Villages Subway.

Colony

This is a small mall but with a lot of stores. Such as Ladies Apparel, banks & barber shops, Chiropractic, Cleaners, Dental, Hearing Places, Financial Houses, Expedia, Beauty shops, Publix & Liquors, Flooring, Gas station, Nails, Patio & Pool, Car Care, Insurance, Golf Cars, Vitamins, Walgreens, Beef O' Brady's. Bob Evans, China Gourmet, Fiesta Grande Mexican, McDonalds, Mezza Luna PDQ, peachwave, Sakura, Subway.

Buffalo Ridge

This mall has a lot of shopping and services as well as dining choices outside the villages.

<https://www.mallsinamerica.com/florida/buffalo-ridge-at-the-villages>

It is located between 101 and 105 routs, 466 on the right, and Woodridge Drive on the Left, There are lots of shopping services and Dining experiences in the Buffalo Ridge area.

You will find Outlet stores, Urgent Care, Dental care, Hearing, Assisted Living, Skilled Nursing, Animal Hospitals, Chiropractic, Financial, GNC, Hanger Clinic, Funeral Services, Nails, PetSmart, Fresh Market, Tire Choice, Verizon, Walmart. Dining options include arby's BowlBar, Bonefish Grill, Burger Kings, Cheng's Golden Corral, McDonalds, Metro Diner, MYPD Oizza, Olice Varden, Red Lobster, Steak & Shake

Sarasota

This mall area is below 466A between Heald Way & Farner Place. It isn't big but it is convenient highlighting Hand & Stone, National Cremation Society, Johns Bros. Financial, Nail clippers, Walmart Market. Liquor Sore, & Fuels Stations,

Pinellas

If you are travelling on route 466 near Pinellas, there are another load of mall stores and services such as Alliance Labs, Some banks, Hearing Centers, Animal hospitals, Hair cutting & nail service spots, Tax prep, Gas stations, Financial Planning, T-Mobile, UPS, Insurance, Health care, Dental, Walgreens, Winn Dixie.

Lake Deaton

Let's start off Route 44 in Lake Deaton. In this mini mall, you will find shopping services that include banks, financial advisors. Hair Salons. Tax Consultants, Dental Offices, Gas stations and convenience stores., Hearing Specialties, Places for your nails, Liquor stores, and Drug stores. oN nslls Off Route Ro.

Spanish Plaines

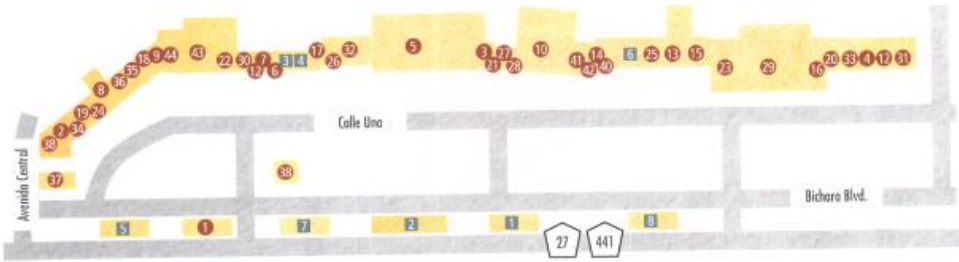
If you are traveling by Golf car or by Private Owned Vehicle (a regular car) POV, between El Camino Road, and Bella Cruz Drive, also bordered by Banderas Avenue and Buenos Aires Blvd, this are has a lot to interest you. From the regular hair and nails salons to banks, Ear Fixers, Blood spots, Publix food and liquor spots, UPS, Walgreens, and Pet Supply Places. If you're humgry, you can find Denny's Dunkin Donuts, Baskin Robbins. Asian Express, Ollies, & Subway.

Rolling Acres

There is shopping & services as well as dining in Rolling Acres. It is the area up from La Plaza Grande on the other side of Avenido Central. Its venues are mostly off Route 27/441. The rest is to the right

(on a map) of Rolling Acres Road. Here you can find home centers, hearing centers, drug stores such as CVS, golf shops, shoe stores, Major pets stores, import shops, salons, Staples, Target, Tj Maxx, and Walgreens.

La Plaza Grande



One of the largest shopping areas in the Villages is calle La Plaza Grande. It is located opposite Colle Uno, up from the combination of route 27 & 441. It includes the area East of Avenida Central and North of Bichara Blvd. There are forty-four major shopping and service areas and eight dining areas. You can get a lot of shopping in in one trip to La Grande Plaza as well as getting a lot of other things such as AAA Travel & Insurance Services, Tax services, Bath & Body Works, Eye care, Belk, Hair salons, Ace Hardware, Carpeting, Furniture, Hearing, Physical Therapy, Wireless, Dental, Decorative

Glass, Hallmark, GNC, Jewelry, Pets, Spirits, Lab Corp, Nutrition, Massage, Cosmetics, Boutiques, Publix, Rock & Wash, Shoes, Financial, Sewing, Mattresses, Florist, Car Wash, Pack 'n Ship, Diet Centers, Winn Dixie, Liquors.. Dining such as Applebees, Burger King, Chicken Salad Chick, Darrel's Diner, Perkins, Sakura, Taco Bell, and Wendy's.

Mulberry Grove.

Seventeen Shopping & Services Areas are associated with Mulberry Grove as well as five dining areas. For example, there's Bealls Outlet, Circle K, Health & Rehab, Hearing, Hair, Nails, Medical Imaging, Chiropractic, Dental, Pep Boys, Publix & Liquors, Shipping, Insurance, Veterinarian. Dining options include Beef O'Brady's, One of my favorites, Cody's Original Roadhouse Restaurant & Tavern, Sammy Joe's Pizza, Chinese Restaurant, and Subway.

Chapter 8 Country Club Dining



Outstanding Country Club Dining at Belle Glade

As a resident of the villages, you automatically receive free lifetime membership to all Championship Country Clubs. Located throughout The Villages, the Championship Country Club restaurants boast some of the finest dining options available, and serve as great locations to gather with your neighbors after a round of golf, or visit with friends for drinks and dinner. Let's take a look at some of these great venues

1. Belle Glade

352-205-8208 • BelleGiadeRestaurant.com

This “old Florida” restaurant is nestled in the outskirts of Brownwood, just off Morse Boulevard, and brings the beauty and delicious tastes of “times gone by” to The Villages. Enjoy!

2. Bonifay

352-205-7455 • BonifayCountryClub.com

This comfortable neighborhood restaurant brings a new American cuisine inspired by an accurate interpretation of Florida flavors, with a focus on fresh, clean, and local products. You're going to like it there.

3. Cane Garden

352-750-0627 • CaneGardenCountryClub.com

Specializing in both great food and great value. This popular country club serves breakfast, lunch, and dinner 7 days a week. Enjoy wood-fired pizzas, fresh salads and hearty entrees, as well as community-famous meatloaf. You can enjoy it all on the patio overlooking the scenic championship golf course.

4. Evans Prairie

352-750-2225 • EvansPrairieRestaurant.com

Evans Prairie Country Club is a casual fine-dining restaurant inspired by a Western flair, while serving delicious cuisine. You will find our rustic decor pleasing to the eyes, and our exceptional food a delight to your palate.

5. Glenview Champions

352-753-0077 • GlenviewRestaurant.com

Enjoy your dining experience surrounded by sweeping vistas that overlook the beautiful Glenview Champions Golf Course. Can't miss!

6. Hacienda Hills

352-753-0100

The former greeting for this one time attractive top spot was: *Experience traditional country club hospitality in a beautiful tropical atmosphere, while enjoying expertly prepared meals. Old-world Florida architecture, featuring a beautiful 35-foot rotunda at the center of the restaurant, complements your dining experience.*



Hacienda Hills – A none time great Country Club for Dining

Very few things ever fail in the Villages. We regret that as of April, 2019, this Country Club is no more. This news follows an announcement earlier by District Manager Richard Baier that the Developer is offering the Amenity Authority Committee the chance to purchase the restaurant, swimming pool, tennis courts and parking lots. The Developer wants to hang onto the golf course and pro shop. Check it out when you visit to see how well it is coming along.

7. Hemingway's at Havana

352-430-3200

Hemingway's is a fresh seafood house that centers their dishes around the life of Ernest Hemingway and his many travels and love of different cuisines.

8. Mallory Hill

352-430-2359 • MalloryHillRestaurant.com

For over a decade, this country club restaurant has been dedicated to its customers, its fine menu, and its great staff. They constantly improve and cultivate their brand, and Mallory Hill stands out in The Villages as a restaurant that people enjoy. “Nuff said.

9. Orange Blossom Hills

352-751-4501 • OrangeBlossomHillsCountryClub.com

You can get a true taste of what The Villages is all about in this newly redesigned historic restaurant. Laugh more and worry less, with their contagiously fun atmosphere, incredible view, and great food! Amen!

10. Palmer Legends

352-750-4499 • PalmerLegendsCC.com

Named after The King, and I don't mean Elvis since this is a country club for golfers and others. Palmer Legends serves only the finest hand-cut steaks that are aged to perfection, and grilled over cherry wood coals to impart a unique flavor. Our country club displays a classic old-world charm that distinguishes us from all others.

11 Tierra Del Sol

352-753-8005 • TierraDelSolTheVillages.com

Most things change for the better over time. With exciting new enhancements to Tierra Del Sol, the Country Club now features the Tierra Del Sol Bar & Grill, convenient shopping at the Tierra Del Sol Golf Shop, and a new shared space with The Studio Theatre.

12. The Legacy

352-753-1475 • LegacyRestaurant.com

The Legacy Restaurant is an award-winning restaurant and lounge that has served The Villages for over 15 years. Four oversized and elegant dining rooms can accommodate larger parties, or provide a romantic evening for just the two of you.

Find your Country Club Dining in the Villages below:





Our Story

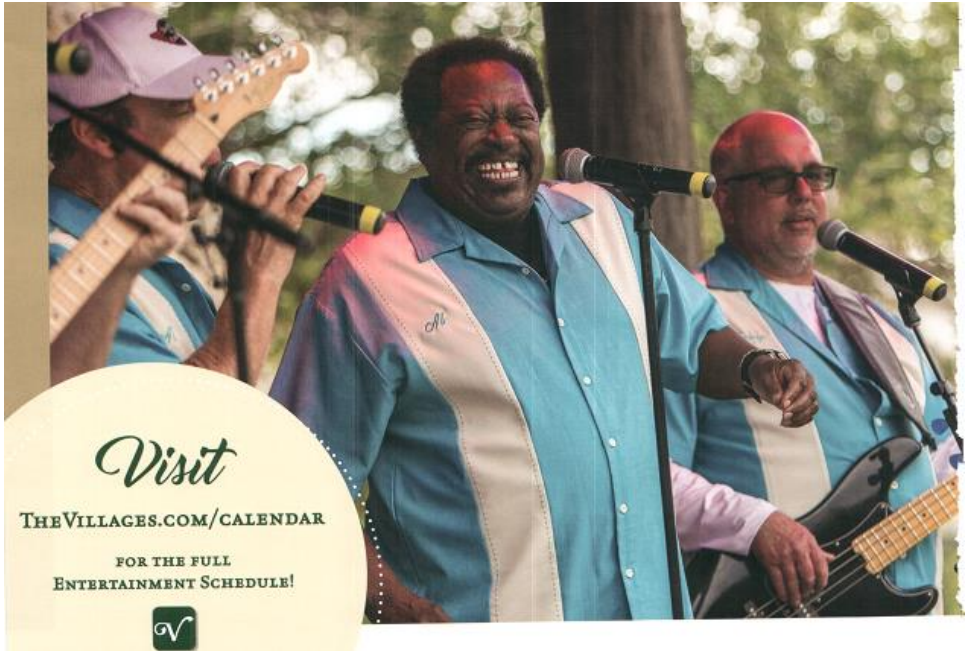


THE LEGACY RESTAURANT AT THE NANCY LOPEZ COUNTRY CLUB · WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 30, 2019 ·

We have four elegant dining rooms that can accommodate larger parties or provide a romantic evening for just the two of you. Our dedicated staff will provide you with gracious and attentive service that has earned us our stellar reputation. Our chefs realize that you have to start with the best and freshest ingredients to be able to create that memorable dish. We would be honored to have you join us at our dinner table and give us the opportunity to serve you.

5 Villages Entertainment 365 Days a Year

Free Live Entertainment



Are you ready for some fun? I am!

Villagers know how to have fun. Folks from all communities enjoy a wide variety of entertainers and many venues 365 days a year! Nights too! In fact, every night as we have previously discussed in this book, from 5-9pm, Villagers can enjoy FREE live entertainment at each of our three town squares.

Besides the three towns, many of the country clubs and restaurants feature their own unique entertainers for your enjoyment on Sunday Afternoons or other afternoons as well as during dinner or Happy Hour.

Katie Belle's, The Sharon L. Morse Performing Arts Center, The Studio Theatre at Tierra Del Sol and the Savannah Center also serve as popular places to catch a wide variety of high-quality entertainment that is well worth your time.

For years, like many other snowbirds and partial snowbirds, my wife Pat and I have been coming to Florida. Anybody with kids has been to the Sunshine State to go to the many Disney Parks and the Universal Studios venues. Walt Disney and the Universal gang sure know how to charge for their entertainment. Now that our kids are finished with the Magic Kingdom and places like that—they are old enough to have their own kids, we can save a lot of bucks by going to places that are fun and not a million dollars a night.

At seventy-two I am almost embarrassed that I have been to the Villages just three times but I am not alone. Though many visitors to Florida may flock to either Miami or Orlando, it doesn't have to be. Unbeknownst to many, a great, quiet, safe town lies only an hour drive from Orlando, and offers some relaxing recreation. It just so happens to be one of the fastest growing US cities as well,. Yes, the Villages is beginning to lose its status as a best-kept secret. Take your time while visiting The Villages. You won't believe all there is, Stroll through the state parks or beautiful town squares, or take a night to visit a museum or playhouse! There are loads of activities at the Villages and many of the entertainment options are free. Free is very inexpensive for those who have graduated from Disney Dollars and Universal Studios

How About Theatres & Performing Arts?

The Sharon L Morse Performing Arts Center

The Sharon L Morse Performing Arts Center is pleased to expand its cultural offerings by bringing Broadway-quality entertainment to Villagers and friends throughout Central Florida. The Sharon seats just over 1,000 guests in a multi-level theatre, and offers state-of-the-art audio, visual and theatrical rigging systems to create an entertainment experience like no other! Performances spotlight a variety of artistic disciplines, from concerts and comedians, to dance troupes, musicals, illusionists and opera. Some of the world's most talented artists have graced The Sharon's stage. For tickets and detailed information, please visit www.TheSharon.com

The Studio Theatre Ticra Del Sol

The Studio Theatre Tierra Del Sol is an extension of The Sharon L. Morse Performing Arts Center, and is also located in the Spanish Springs area.

The Studio is a flexible Black Box theatre, with 99 seats and options for thrust, round or proscenium-style seating.

For tickets, season subscriptions, upcoming shows, and general information, please visit www.TheSharonStudio.com

The Savannah Center



Yes, I think that the cast shown on the prior page won't be able to qualify for a few more years to be able to become Villagers. If it were up to me, I might give these very pretty ladies a dispensation but that would not be fair. This is the first rate talent that is attracted to the Savannah Center on a regular basis. The Villages is not just great swimming pools, great town squares, great golf courses, etc. The Villages is well known for top entertainemnt.

The striking, southern-themed Savannah Center is well-known for the arts and crafts festivals held there, and the big-name shows and performances featured throughout the year. A regional recreation center, the Savannah Center is known for world-famous entertainers and celebrities who speak and perform there, as well as national touring shows, orchestras and comedy acts, and it is also the venue for our own local talent.

Katie Belle Dining & Entertainment Club



When Katie Belle Van Patten, and her husband John Decker, first opened their restaurant back in 1851, they wanted their guests to be treated to a great meal and toe-tapping entertainment. Today, that tradition is alive and well. Step inside the newly-renovated Van Patten House, and be taken back to a time when the music was swinging,

and the food and drink were plentiful! Experience Katie Belle's, The Villages" tradition for nearly 20 years!

Movie Theatres



All three of our town squares feature modern, multi-screen movie theaters. The award-winning Rialto Theatre is located on Spanish Springs Town Square, the Old Mill Playhouse is found on Market Square at Lake Sumter Landing, and the Barnstorm Theater is located on Brownwood Paddock Square. Any are perfect for date night, a cool afternoon of fun, or good times with the grandkids. Grab some popcorn, candy and a soft drink, and catch your favorite releases - straight from Hollywood - day or night

The Villages Polo Club



Spend the afternoon under the beautiful Florida sun at The Villages Polo Club, where many residents will tell you is the only place to be. Champagne toasts at halftime on Sundays are only part of what makes The Villages Polo Club special to our guests. Enjoy the view from the beautiful stadium or tailgate with your friends from your car or golf car. Matches take place on Friday and Sunday afternoons during our spring and Toll seasons. For more information, visit www.TheVillagesPoloClub.com Tickets available at The Villages Box Office.

Chapter 6 Making & Keeping Wilkes-Barre Clean

3. Making & Keeping Wilkes-Barre Clean.



When you read this chapter, feel free to take a spin to the Internet to look at beautiful sites from Wilkes-Barre's past such as the Palm House and others from the golden years. Nobody can tell me that the things our grandparents did for this City are impossible for us to do! We must remember that nothing good happens overnight. George Brown, a good man is about to lead Wilkes-Barre. Hopefully he chooses the "50 Ways" to achieve his goals. This chapter is all about the third item on the list: Making & Keeping Wilkes-Barre Clean and Beautiful.

I am inclined to believe that nothing happens overnight in Wilkes-Barre and that is simply the nature of the beast. But good things do happen when good people decide they will get them done. It may take a bit longer than tomorrow, however for all the good we have defined and other good to come, to materialize fully. But, it will come. Mayor Brown is an important ingredient in assuring good things for Wilkes-Barre.

No matter how many tomorrows it takes, Wilkes-Barre will have its clean city. It will be cleaned incrementally one neighborhood at a time, and with God's grace, most of the neighbors will be pitching in. As it becomes cleaner and cleaner, with the programs we outline for artists and craftsmen in the "50 Ways," it will also become beautiful.

While the City's Administrators will be coordinating this effort, the Public Safety / Police folks will also be cleaning up the city one neighborhood at a time for another malady—bad guy removal.

City officials will handle the businesses and the downtown area for the cleanup and the maintenance. We know we cannot do it overnight but by the end of a four-year term and hopefully long before the end, the City will be remarkably clean, and it will have lots less bad guys living in town. Like many things we will be doing, we will be partnering with unpaid city resident volunteers and others, in addition to our patriotic youth to make things even better.

Under a three-prong platform, the Wilkes-Barre **Clean City Action Committee (CCAC)** will be established by the City and its focus will be a project called The Clean City Initiative (CCI). A clean city is the objective. A goal is to turn the entire project over to the people when it becomes fully functional. We will designate a liaison in the administration to assure this initiative remains a priority.

The cost of cleaning up after others is a high and it take a lot of sweat labor so our initiative will help assure the City stays clean. Let's clean the City from top to bottom one time, and then let's maintain its cleanliness through caring neighbors, caring shopkeepers, and caring volunteers. The committee itself will be set up as a non-profit organization to focus on a lot of cleaning, some greening and the overall beautification of the City of Wilkes-Barre PA.

The CCAC's mission is to assure that Wilkes-Barre becomes and stays an admirable city, and one of which the residents can be proud. To do this, the committee will need to build bridges between quality of life resources and the various neighborhood groups, merchant associations, CCAC volunteers, and Wilkes-Barre citizens.

The Clean City Action Committee is to be designed to improve and enhance the physical environment of Wilkes-Barre through beautification, solid waste management education, riverfront awareness activities, and litter abatement programs. Among other things, its mission is to educate citizens; and encourage their participation in this worthwhile venture.

As a new organization, the group is to become an affiliate of Keep America Beautiful Inc., which as you may know is a national organization with the same purpose. The committee will be set up to be successful using their proven methodology. Among other things, what I like about this organization is that we get to share a common philosophy that each of us has a responsibility for enhancing our community environment.



Keep America Beautiful Volunteers in Action www.kab.org

Like the 600 plus other affiliate cities and counties in the US, and some internationally, when we fire up, our small group will depend on volunteers to implement many worthwhile projects each year. Volunteers are sorely going to be needed for a variety of projects including litter cleanups, tree and flower planting, youth environmental education, marketing support, and more. Wilkes-Barre is a first-class city and we all will expect first class results.

The promise of a clean Wilkes-Barre focuses on beautification aspects such as cleaning up the loose dirt and trash on the sides of city streets and roads, parks, and public areas, as well as keeping residential areas and properties well maintained—and that means free of 18 to 24 inch-high weeds, baby trees, dust bunnies, and spent cigarettes' mounds. The City will also be focused to assure that we remain a clean-air and clean water community.

Philadelphia, Allentown, Bethlehem, and Easton, as well as Pittsburgh may be great cities in which to live but their air quality is listed among the worst 25 cities in America for Air Pollution. The CCAC will work with City officials to assure that our area stays clean in all ways, but we admit we are looking for that which pleases the eye first.

Clean for a city can also be defined as being functional and in good repair. A piece of junk is a piece of debris is a piece of extra-large litter. For example, what purpose does it serve to have a rusty, broken down parking meter, or a stop sign where the paint is completely worn away? How about traffic signals that do not work? What about street sign poles with missing street signs? What good is it to have a beautiful fountain on our Public Square that is dry and an eyesore?

What difference does it make to have once busy bridges becoming dirty, filthy eyesores in a major commercial area of our city? You know what difference it makes and so do I. It is the difference between a city with pride and one without.

Is the state of the City regarding something so easy to address as cleanliness a tribute to the inability of the City and its current leadership and resources to make things work? You tell me. I see what you see. Fifty millions of budget dollars does not buy much in Wilkes-Barre. It apparently gets spent on budgeted items, but I see what you see. Mayor Brown is an infinitely smart man who knows what is and what is not. We expect that when he takes on any issue, it will be solved. Mr. George C. Brown is working for the City and he thinks like a winner and he is determined to win.

Mr. Brown did not approve the analysis that I just made on wages for city employees. If every one of the 260 employees in the City made \$100,000 a year in wages and benefits, in a \$50 million dollar budget, there would be \$24 million left in the budget for everything else. I hope Mayor Brown allocates whatever is left for “50 Ways” projects to help the people.

I do not accept that there is not enough money for Wilkes-Barre to be clean. Do you? I thought not. The idea of city volunteers doing cleanup work a few times a year is not new but in the George Brown Administration it should be an after effort—after city workers get their chance to get it all cleaned up. For their efforts, all of these volunteers

will be recognized as the city heroes they are every year at the City picnic either in Kirby Park or Public Square. Thank you for your help.

If I had the good fortune to become the next Mayor of Wilkes-Barre, things would be much different for the better. I have a feeling that George Brown feels the same. Anything that is in place should work or it should be removed. If it is not in place and it should be in place, it should be built and maintained and be better than you can even imagine. My advice to Mayor Brown is to partner with the vocational technical schools so their practice work to become tradesmen becomes a useful accomplishment for a clean and beautiful Wilkes-Barre. Under no circumstances should any structure or any area of the city detract from the appearance and overall function of the City.

We need to be able to count on Mayor George C. Brown and the City Council for a better city.

The infamous fountain on Public Square

From best I can tell, there were at least three major fountains on public square, dating from way-back. I have read with great interest that the rationale for example for having a once attractive, now broken fountain on Public Square is that the City, with a then \$43 million budget (Now \$50 million) could not afford the \$40,000 to fix the fountain.

Yet, somehow, we were able to afford the fence installation to keep people away and the overall unattractiveness and the dirt and the feeling of ineptness we all got by looking at a City deteriorating in its core center—Public Square. Meanwhile the City chose to complete major grant projects costing millions in other areas of the City. It simply does not pass the smell test or the sanity test. Why should our City look bad in its most prestigious sites?

If we like drawing people downtown to Public Square for nice events, would it not be nice for the visitors to be impressed? It helps if the place looks nice and is clean. Not so much now. The broken fountain with a fence around has been a long-time eyesore in the major business district and visitor center of our City. It is a reflection of an “I don’t care” attitude when people see that. Yes, Mayor George was evaluated

first on “Law and Order,” but with a Public Square that nobody wishes to visit, he failed on a major item.

Moreover, the people noticed that there are no public bathrooms that, if they exist at all are never open during events. The bloggers don’t seem to be able to find any available. Will King’s make the old Ramada restrooms available so that there can be foot traffic again on Public Square?

Are the bathrooms on the square broken too? Do they exist? Would it not be nice for the Vo-Tech school to rehabilitate the underground latrines that once existed on the Square years ago when I was a kid? Would that not be a great project. I bet a lot of people would be willing to donate the materials for the kids to revamp the underground latrines that I used as a kid. Why say no to things that can help Wilkes-Barre?

This idea would help us save a buck, provide a service, and teach Wilkes-Barre kids how to manage interesting projects that will live on long after they graduate. It also would stop urination and defecation on Public Square. Hey, folks, this is not San Francisco. Maybe we cannot – not – afford such restrooms!

As with most new City action groups that will be formed by the Brown Administration, who have been fortunate enough to be elected, donations from Wilkes-Barre citizens; citizens from neighboring communities; those citizens with a history of a residence in the greater Wilkes-Barre area; and of course those friends of the City who simply care about Wilkes-Barre—will be accepted for the project of revitalizing the city and all other projects. Gifts to the city will be most appreciated.

Would it not be nice if there were a way to bring a Percy Browns-like operation back into downtown? How about a Boston Candy Kitchen or even a Cheesecake Factory? Yes, without tongue in cheek, I am asking the George Brown administration to welcome such overtures and if I am permitted to help, we will seek them out. You’ll be proud of what the Brown Administration can and will do.



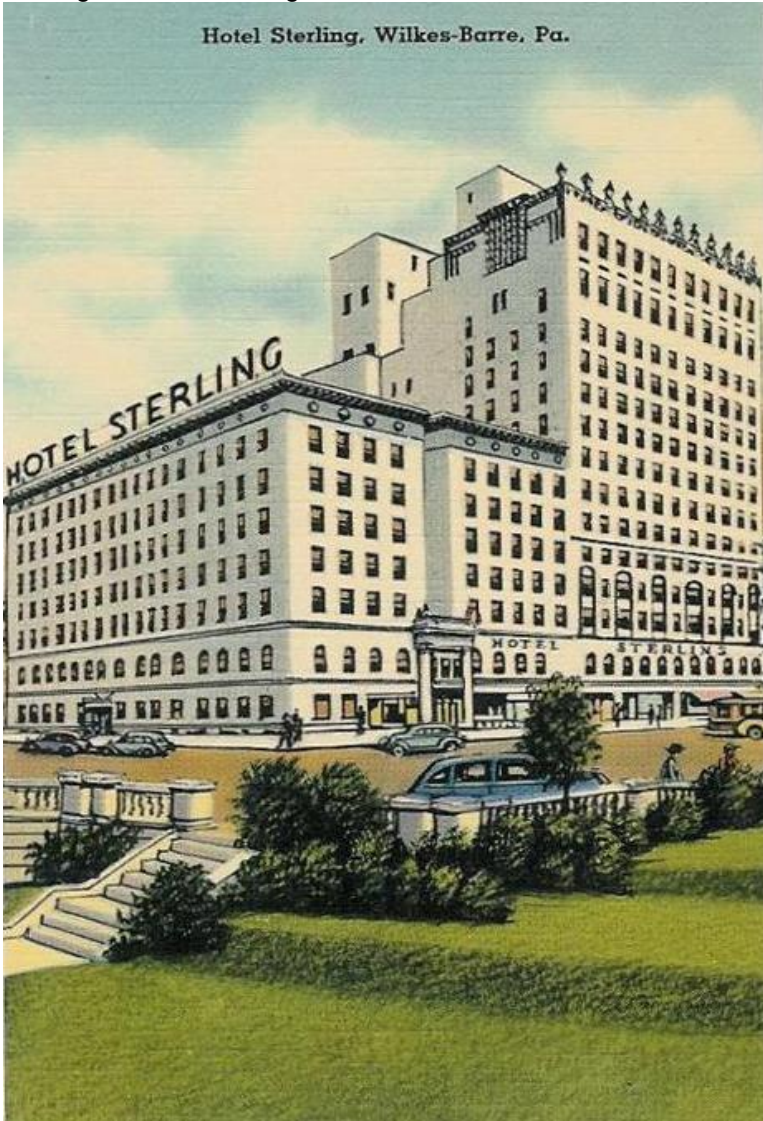
**A one-time City monument becomes a decaying building—
then a pile of debris**

This picture was one in a montage taken by a local artist before the Hotel Sterling a 113-year old landmark on the right above, a building that once overlooked the raging Susquehanna River, was quickly ripped down. The tower portion which was the highest building in the City for years had been demolished years earlier. The Ax man did it. What a shame.

You can see the unkempt overall appearance of the street, the curb, the tree lawn, the dirt and the look of disrepair wherever your eyes look upon these sad pictures. Look closely and you will see. This is page 1 of Wilkes-Barre for many visitors. We can do better folks, I promise.

We need to be able to count on Mayor George C. Brown and the City Council for a better city.

Original Hotel Sterling With Tower, the Picture of Grandeur



Think about the decay of the Hotel Sterling and you get an idea of how things have been for too many years. Compare the two pictures—the one above to the one on the prior page.

Nobody knows how to waste money more it seems than those involved in repairing the Hotel Sterling a few years ago. Perhaps you remember that over \$6 million dollars was invested in the structure before it was demolished. I guess we could call that debacle,

demolition prep. The Sterling had no chance when the most needed repair – the roof – was overlooked by the wizards.

In essence the \$6 million was apparently used to make parking lots out of several surrounding buildings and the leaky roof of the Sterling was never fixed. Thus, the once magnificent building kept getting worse and worse. Six million dollars of the people's money was wasted. Before it was torn down it was a tribute to inept City management. Four years later, the area is still a pig-sty even without the Sterling. Why?

All I really know is that it will not be like this if Mayor George Brown adopts the "50 Ways."

We need to be able to count on Mayor George C. Brown and the City Council for a better city.

Doesn't the whole Sterling deal frost you? It sure gets to me. Would you have been able to build a roof for starters for \$6 million? I sure think so. By the way, it was \$6 million in federal tax money and casino profits that a company called Citivest claimed they poured into the property. Look at the picture of the Sterling and the Annex several pages back, not the picture of the original Sterling, and tell me if Wilkes-Barre City officials were adequate custodians over such a prestigious landmark. The Annex is still in a major state of disrepair but it looks like some construction wizards are doing something with it. The City chose to rip the Sterling down but only after somebody chose not to fix it properly.

And then while the building was in such a sad state of affairs minus the \$6 million, a major section of the city on River Street was completing a river beautification project. At the very same time, the Sterling side of N. River Street was continually maintained as a pig sty. How were City Officials not partly responsible for that?

In fact, the area for what seemed like forever was partially shut down giving visitors an even longer look at the demise of our City and the demise of a landmark that the people thought should and would be saved. Check the article on the Sterling demolition and the Historical

Society right here:

http://opacity.us/article136_hotel_sterling_to_be_demolished.htm

What happened would not have happened if people who cared about the people were in charge of the city at the time. Though there is great hope with the George Brown administration taking charge, there is still the same ole WB skepticism from City residents because we have been burned so many times before by promises that did not materialize. When George Brown announces that he has accepted most of the “50 Ways” and plans to implement as soon as possible, I know that I will breathe easier. When you have a moment, send the Mayor and Council a letter letting them know how you feel. .

Take a look at this snapshot on the next page from inside the Sterling before the building met its demise. Clearly no work was done inside or outside. You can almost get the sour smell of the debris just by looking at the picture. Destruction such as this does not happen overnight. What a shame! Sure does not look too clean. Can you tell where any of the \$6 million dollars may have been spent? How could something once so good ever get so bad? What about the things we cannot see?

Despite the travesty of the Sterling, I don't feel embarrassed saying that as a lifelong city Resident, I still love Wilkes-Barre. After all, I grew up here and I am happy to live here. Our fine City is far from a perfect City; but I know it can be closer to perfect than it is. When Mayor George Brown begins to believe in the “50 Ways,” Wilkes-Barre will be on its way back to its glory days. Why should God give this city many more chances if we do not act when we can?

There certainly is excessive taxation for the poverty-level of the city as well as other issues of which most people are too aware as they drive through the town. Unfortunately, because of the real issues from which they suffer, some City residents have a hard time singing any praise at all for our fair City or its past leaders. George C. Brown has been elected Mayor because he indicated he was very prepared to change that. The “50 Ways” is the blueprint ready to be used.



Surfing through the blogs about Wilkes-Barre, PA, there are an awful lot of people who care like I do about the City. There may even be some that care even more than I do but not many! There are also a lot of people who are disgusted with the dirty politics as well as what they call a dirty city in what overall seems to them to be the dirtiest area of the state.

What a legacy! We're going to change that. With Mayor George C. Brown now at the helm, armed with at least "50 Ways" to improve the city, we will all help the Mayor change the legacy of the neglected past and move towards making Wilkes-Barre a model city. We can change the past with the future. I know at least "50 Ways."

We need to be able to count on Mayor George C. Brown and the City Council for a better city.

If dirt and dust and debris and weeds had value, the Tony George Administration would have had a rich and prospering town to brag about. But the items listed are not of value and they detract immensely from our otherwise fine city. And, so of our population, in what can correctly be characterized as our dirty city, over 35% of the residents find themselves trapped under the federal poverty level. That is not good. It is a shame. We can do better for sure. Living in squalor and having almost just enough money to sustain life, is not a promise any Mayor wants to bestow on the residents of their city.

I ask Mayor Brown to promise to engage the Congress for its help in solving our elderly crisis. There are many ideas in the "50 Ways"

including some other innovative notions to spruce up and stop foreclosures of properties owned by the elderly. Why has this not been a priority? One might say that if Wilkes-Barre loses its elderly population, it will be on its way to being a ghost town. And, so, we must solve our elderly crisis which is part of our poverty crisis. One of the ways of course is to make our city affordable for all. Yes folks, that is one of the more than “50 Ways” to improve our City.

Unfortunately it is not hard to discover dirt and dust and an overall blah look and feeling in far too many places in our City. We must give some credit to certain areas that have been improved but still are not as clean and as inviting as they should be. These include the Cinema on Northampton Street in the area in which Percy Brown’s once stood—in Wilkes-Barre’s one-time heyday. In our city, in addition to our war on crime, we need a war on dirt, and we need to make or revitalized city affordable to our most needy residents.

I am not talking about the blah of the future, but the blah does represent the present and the recent past. My reason for writing is because with faith, with hope, and yes, with some down home charity we can make it all much better as long as we do not give up.

Like the Ghost of Christmas Future, which I wrote about in February of this year, we can make Wilkes-Barre better and not accept its future demise. It does not have to be our destiny. Many bloggers show their blah and disgust for what has happened physically and politically with Wilkes-Barre when they write what is on their minds. Mayor George C. Brown has a very important job being in charge of Wilkes-Barre City’s returning to its prosperous roots where everybody had a shot at a good life. He will need our help for sure. There are at least “50 Ways” that are already defined to help Mr. Brown as he leads us back.

I agree Wilkes-Barre should not be in the doldrums—it should not be this way—but nonetheless it is. The bloggers do not feel good about the chances of the City surviving. They expect the people to vote in the same people that made it this way. Some go so far as to say that no one cares about Wilkes-Barre. Well, the people did not vote in just anybody. We voted in a good man who is donating a portion of his salary to help the City. This will not be the most significant action that our new Mayor will have to take to begin to get things rolling. Having at least “50 Ways” to lead the way is a big advantage.

The bloggers have their opinion and for the most part it based on their observations. They add that it is because it is a big part of Northeast PA, which they say no one visits --because it is an expletive hole. That's being kind from many of the posts I have read. Even those of us who love Wilkes-Barre cannot deny what she has become. We can and will change the City and by doing so we will change that perception.

I have re-read the "50 Ways" from start to finish in its unvarnished state as presented in my first three books from this year. I took the plan defined in those books and remade the plans and recast them as "50 ways." I added to the plan and made it more understandable since the books earlier this year. The essence is that the ills must and shall be purged and the good shall prevail in all ways for no dallying will be permitted, period. Please indulge me again as I remind you that George C. Brown ran for Mayor to accomplish a lot of good for the City. Mr. Brown is a big reason for my hope in the new Wilkes-Barre.

We need to be able to count on Mayor George C. Brown and the City Council for a better city.

Would it not be nice to tap much of that negative energy for positive purposes to help the City overcome its many issues? All things are possible. Some cite that in their opinion there are dirty towns up and down the Valley along with dirty bars. Some go so far as to call this area the arm pit of the state. Even those of us who love it here for our own reasons, wish it could be better. I know we can make it better but not without paying attention to details such as keeping Wilkes-Barre City clean, if not pristine and beautiful. I say we do all three --safe, affordable, and clean.

Rather than offer all teachers \$45,000 per year as Governor Wolf suggested recently, why can we not get the Governor to invest dollars into cities that prior state administrations have dismissed as lost causes. Wilkes-Barre has potential but Wilkes-Barre could use some help for sure from alumni of the City and from our government in Harrisburg. There is a perspective that Philadelphia and Pittsburgh gets all the Governor's help? The Governor has the power to change that as he is Governor of the whole state.

Does Wilkes-Barre Need a Ramada or a Crossgates?

In a series of posts from less than a year ago, a number of bloggers chose to comment that Wilkes-Barre had just lost its most modern hotel, the Ramada to King's College. Historically, the hotel was built as the Sheraton, who named it the Crossgates. Nonetheless, it did not survive as a Sheraton.

It was bought and it became a Ramada. A local entrepreneur ran it successfully for many years but as the Public Square stopped being a major attraction, few out of towners came to the hotel to visit the City.

Recently it was sold to King's College, and this great college just made it part of its campus. But it looked so nice as an inviting hotel right on Public Square. What could be more attractive for businesses entertaining the possibility of relocating? Now, Gus Genetti's great hotel up the road from the Square is what we have after many hotels in the past. Including the glorious Hotel Durkee" have disappeared from the always active work of the wrecking ball—mostly right after the flood. One or two new hotels in downtown Wilkes-Barre would be nice. I would like to see Mayor Brown promise that his administration will bring in one and possibly two hotels as part of our rejuvenating WB City Plan.

If there is nothing else, in my queries about life in Wilkes-Barre, I have learned that there is an overwhelming disdain for taxes in the City because they are unaffordable. Even the bloggers are aware of the tax implications of the Ramada going to a non-profit. And, so, King's plans for the Ramada as noble as they may be, were not all met with citizen approval.

Many citizens think that the Ramada as a hotel added to the Wilkes-Barre good feeling. It was an attractive and clean establishment. Most of us saw no reason for the only hotel on Public Square to become part of a private campus, especially with the magnificent Pomeroy's structure on the other end of the block being occupied by Luzerne County Community College. This feeling is reflected in several blog comments below:

1. "Just more tax revenue the city will lose to a So called "Non Profit" What a joke!

2. “Oh wait, let’s just wait and let it become another Hotel Sterling.....instead of expanding the local colleges to attract more out of town or even local students to attend and then become professionals and stick around to better the area!!

By the way, <http://wbtruth.blogspot.com/> is one blog that has no love for how the City has been managed. There is no room for corruption in Wilkes-Barre. We simply cannot afford it. Besides, corruption is too ugly for our clean city initiative. In this section, we are talking literally about a clean city in terms of its beauty, but to repeat, nobody wants to live in a city that is dirty—politically or otherwise.

Admittedly the King’s building and the LCC building do make that side of Public Square look attractive. A great idea would be to have our most marketable storefront area, Public Square be the city’s finest commercial area for stores and restaurants and to bring as much traffic into downtown for shopping and business purposes as possible. The city needs business taxes for sure as I agree that the people are overtaxed.

From the Outside In—Bloomsburg is Attractive

When traveling through Columbia County, you and I have often thought how nice it would be if downtown Wilkes-Barre were as inviting as downtown Bloomsburg, a much smaller burg. In Bloomsburg, for example, the City has a wide range of companies and bustling establishments and stores that contribute to a vibrant local environment. The city look and feel is quite attractive especially near Main Street, Bloomsburg, for sure. In other words, when you appear on Main street in Bloomsburg, it actually looks like more than it is because it is well decorated, and it is clean.

The architectural heritage and the overall 'feel' of the downtown area in Bloomsburg make it a big draw for visitors. Nobody has to convince me to go to Bloomsburg for the FAIR or for picking apples or cutting down the family Christmas trees or whatever. Visitors to The Bloomsburg University campus, which directly adjoins the City’s downtown area are invited back by the pleasantness of the surroundings.

The University ranks as one on the really great things to see in Bloomsburg PA. Just as Wilkes-Barre has seen property deteriorate when leased out to students who are here for just four years, Bloomsburg, and most college towns in the state report some blighted and slum areas, once populated by working families that have been made less attractive by student incursions (renting the places).

From my observations, unfortunately, Wilkes-Barre suffers from blight much more than Bloomsburg as our blight is almost immediately obvious whereas in Bloomsburg, you are deep into the community before you spot an issue. Wilkes-Barre needs about 10,000 Michael Anthony's to visit our city and hopefully soon. But since he is no longer available, we'll have to do it ourselves. I do think we can. Nothing in life worth having is easy

Wilkes-Barre could surely use more companies and bustling establishments and stores that contribute to a vibrant local environment. Unlike Wilkes-Barre, in its presentation on Main Street, the small community of Bloomsburg (14,000) shows off a charm that is catchy, and it makes you want to come back. My wife and I love that City. With George C. Brown as Mayor, I will remind him to not forget the impact of Bloomsburg on Wilkes-Barre eyes. We surely can have a city as nice and even much nicer than Bloomsburg. You can count on that.

We need to be able to count on Mayor George C. Brown and the City Council for a better city.

I have a story about when a couple, who after they first got married, bought a fresh Christmas tree in Millville, which is right down the road from Bloomsburg about ten miles. They celebrated well after loading the fresh well-shaped tree into their van. Since that day, Bloomsburg University has taken over a major part of the Hotel Magee. But it was there back in 1975 and the newly married couple enjoyed a great feast at Dick Benefield's Groaning Board at the Hotel Magee.

It was a great experience. They surely did not favor Bloomsburg over our city but... They still love Wilkes-Barre and they still live here but they commented that they would sure love anybody with an idea like Dick Benefield to come by to Wilkes-Barre for a visit—and yes, we

would give a high five to any idea about setting up a nice Groaning Board in our fair City.

One more Bloomsburg story before I have taxed your patience. Most of us have been to the Bloomsburg Fair. The same couple came back to the Bloomsburg Fair and stayed at the Hotel Magee overnight. The couple brought friends, Karen and Ken Evans. They stayed at the Hotel Magee and saw Bob Hope in person at the Bloomsburg Fair.

Bob Hope was already seventy-five years of age. The couples all remember how Mr. Hope began his act by describing how thrilled he was to have landed at *Bloomsburg International Airport*. They thought the comedian was kidding but he was serious. He landed in Bloomsburg. However, it was really Bloomsburg Municipal Airport—minus the International part. You can see it in the picture below.



The look and feel of Bloomsburg has not changed much for me over the year. Wilkes-Barre needs to come up to the Bloomsburg or better standard so we too can enjoy a certain pride in the beauty in our city. Just by focusing on something important often gives us all more of a tendency to help make it happen the way we want rather than if we ignore it. Wilkes-Barre will become a much cleaner and more beautiful

city now that we all have elected George C. Brown as our Mayor. It makes me want to turn the clock right now to January 2020.

Chapter 7 Making & Keeping Wilkes-Barre Affordable

4. Making / Keeping Wilkes-Barre an Affordable City.



Our City must be affordable for its people

This story tells it like it was for many in Wilkes-Barre

On the average, the people of Wilkes-Barre are very rich in spirit but unfortunately, not very rich in material wealth. Most, like my friend and his wife grew up in a three-bedroom standard issue coal-heated home. They lived on High Street in the Rolling Mill Hill section of the city. Their major heat plant was a “Heatrola” stove right between their dining room and what they called the “parlor.” Some other people in the City had coal furnaces to heat the whole house. Not theirs.

They had an aging rental on High Street for which the family paid just \$25.00 a month for about 30 years before the landlord had to raise the

rent to \$50.00. The dad did all the maintenance, never wanting to wake up the landlord to the major rental deal he was getting. Nine of that Irish family lived in the small home, half a double. The dad took care of the grand-mom and grand-pop on the mother's side; as well as his wife, the young mom, and their five children.

They said that despite having little, they never knew they were poor. They lived in Wilkes-Barre, and nobody at the time in Wilkes-Barre knew they were poor. Nonetheless, there were many people who were not well-off. The mines were just about closed and there was little for anybody. Crime at the time, was almost non-existent.

Wilkes-Barre is still not a well-to-do town; but people manage somehow. Surely, more and more are close to the end of the rope financially. Powerball and the Megamillion lotteries for many offer much more hope than the local economy. Unfortunately, there is little industry and so it seems that unless you have a corporate or government job, life is tougher than in most other places in the state.

Though I have been fortunate in my business employment, many of us with friends with city or county or state government jobs over the last ten years have watched their salaries, pensions and benefits moving upward while those in industry have been spiraling in the opposite direction. Government officials have achieved only limited success negotiating union contracts favorable to taxpayers, even though taxpayers are less able than ever to handle the increasing tax load.

Many of us remember quite vividly that for 2013, Wilkes-Barre Mayor Tom Leighton initially proposed a back-breaking 31% property tax increase on all Wilkes-Barre residents. The population was going down so why a bump in the taxes? Many wanted that answer; but it never came.

After sharpening his pencil, the Mayor settled for "just" 26%." This is substantially more than the meager raise in social security payments and the salaries of private sector workers who live in the City. It did not matter that it was unaffordable by the masses, the Mayor said Wilkes-Barre needed it. The implication was that *Wilkes-Barre needs the money more than you do*. I do not think so folks. There are few people who do not have a measure of hurt in our City as it gets tougher and tougher to make ends meet.

It is nobody's imagination. It is real. For city residents, the price of groceries, gas, rent, and home maintenance, and mostly everything else has been growing really fast. We all know that household incomes have not moved anywhere close to covering increased costs. If the federal government was not lying about the real cost of living in their published consumer price index, we seniors in the City would be getting a daily affirmation about how the cost of everything is out of control.

A substantial number of residents get by on Social Security and some have a paltry pension besides. The cost of living raises in Social Security are needed desperately to keep from foreclosure, especially with a 31%, even 26% property tax. During Obama's presidency there were paltry social security raises. In fact, three years there were 0.00 percent increases and another year there was a 0.30 percent. That is point three percent folks. Meanwhile inflation including huge increases in property taxes were killing the elderly.

On top of everything else, the federal government was cheating the elderly by telling us there was no inflation and then they would tell SSR recipients that there is no COLA increase because costs are not climbing. Yet, the storekeepers were increasing prices and for years gas was going up and up and up. How were SSR recipients with no other means to keep up with it? They starve or stop paying taxes and lose their homes. Meanwhile there is nothing to help matters considered by a federal government that feels OK lying about the real cost of living.

You have heard the underpinnings of the government rationale for cheating on the consumer price index. Economists convinced the government that when people cannot afford steak, they'll eat hamburger, so they substituted hamburger for steak in the CPI cost formula to cheat seniors out of a raise. They said the protein was the same.

Then when hamburger rose in price, and cans of tuna were cheaper, the CPI moved from hamburger to tuna. Then, when people were beating the system by using cat tuna, they priced cat tuna into the CPI instead of regular tuna. You can't find this on the Internet anymore as Google does its best to please the federal government. The public

remains uniformed about the feds ripping off seniors. Yet, Washington takes before Social Security ever gives.

I wrote a short book in 2018 that was able to help seniors come to grips with what the government was doing to them. It is called *Government Must Stop Ripping Off Seniors' Social Security!* It is still available at <https://www.amazon.com/dp/1947402641>. It explains a lot.

The point is that seniors in Wilkes-Barre received nothing extra to pay their 2013 City property tax bill it. That's a fact. Seniors were going broke while City employees were getting nice wage increases. With a poverty rate of 35%, Wilkes-Barre leaders should have been ashamed of what they were doing to the entire population of Wilkes-Barre.

Dear Mayor and Council, before this General election even comes, please know this: The pockets of the people are empty. Get used to it. Cut something! Cut something else and then Cut something else. How about giving the population of the City a break?

George Brown is about to become Mayor. I would ask him to promise as Mayor that he will remember the 35% and the higher poverty rate and that he will keep city finances in line and I surely hope he can reduce the rate to further help the Seniors living in Wilkes-Barre.

The average homeowner's property tax went from a 2012 payment of \$591 to \$744 in 2013. On the average, the amount was \$152, a 26 percent hike. Some pay a lot more than that. The Mayor at the time also increased the price of several city fees, including recycling service and city-issued garbage bags. These are budget busters.

I had a friend who before the blue garbage bags used to put his garbage out in metal cans after taking the plastic bags, dumping them into the cans, cleaning them out, and then putting them back in the kitchen bucket. That's how close some seniors cut it every week. Even the Mayor's increase in fees in 2013 was beyond the meager increase in retirees' social security payments. This made an already unaffordable tax burden even less affordable.

There are those who say nothing can be cut or you'll lose services? What services? The people, mostly poor, pay all kinds of fees for any

service the City provides. With 53 job titles of City Employees having large *overtime* budgets, I see no reason for tax increases. It is time for tax decreases and no overtime so seniors can afford to live here. I am counting on Mayor George C. Brown to see to that folks.

Few people had the money to pay the Leighton increases without major cutbacks in their ability to live their lives. Yet while the City was going broke or, so it's said in 2013, and thus needed a 26% bump in taxes, for 2014, all city employees received a standard 3% raise. Seniors got no increase at all in COLA from president Obama that year.

Obama had not gotten the same memo that Leighton got. The citizens of Wilkes-Barre were not so fortunate. Some suggest that this clearly demonstrates that the full 26% increase in the millage rate for 2013 was not entirely necessary. I would like to assure the people that the George C. Brown administration will consider the people first. Though that is what we all hope, George C. Brown not you or I are the new Mayor. So we remind Mr. Brown of the city's plight. Please permit me to say again:

We need to be able to count on Mayor George C. Brown and the City Council for a better city.

Many residents have family working for the City, and they are enjoying the fact that their relatives and friends have such fine wages and benefits. It is a wonderful thing when someone we know gets a job at the City or the County or the School District because that is one person who will be able to keep up with the cost of living. Not the rest of us and that is unfortunate. The governor does not realize we are not Philadelphia.

Unfortunately, the reality is those fine wages and benefits must be paid for by people in this City, who, at poverty income levels, are barely surviving.

Average Resident's Paychecks v. City Worker Paychecks

As many know, the Mayor posts a budget document each year, and all are welcome to view it. The salaries for all City employees by title are

included in this report. To demonstrate the disparity between the taxpayers and the wage and benefit receivers, I have taken this information and analyzed it further so that you can see the big differences between the payers / citizens and the receivers / employees.

It is not my intention to suggest that all of the employees of the City are not worth their wages, for I believe that indeed they are. However, to be honest, I do not see how Wilkes-Barre citizens can continue to last much longer under such a huge tax burden. The poor in Wilkes-Barre cannot pay the city's stiff taxes.

They ask the City Administration to figure something out. But nothing changes. In the George C. Brown administration, as it is to come, and God please bring it, I will be one of many pleading with the new to figure out how to keep our seniors from having to give up their homes in order to eat. I am sure Mayor Brown has this message loud and clear.

We need to be able to count on Mayor George C. Brown and the City Council for a better city.

In the following chart, please recall that city employees have received 3% per year increases in the last four years so these numbers are lower than the 2019 figures,

The following chart from 2015 shows ranges of salary for city employees. This data is not presented this way in the Mayor's reports. The first chart below shows just those employee titles, whose salaries are less than \$40,000 per year. There are only twelve or thirteen of them, and so, it is not difficult to write these in a chart, and it is not difficult for a taxpayer to read these titles, and salaries. Here they are:

Lowest Salaries of City Employees – Those less than \$40,000 per year. All others exceed \$40,000 and they have gotten four years of wages with raises since this chart was established.

City Employee Job Title	Salary per year
Police Secretary	\$24,825
Parking Enforcement Attendant II	\$24, 931
Parking Enforcement Attendant I	\$27,702
Civilian Clerk II	\$31,328
Custodial Worker City Hall	\$32,450
Disease Specialist	\$34,472
Protective Inspection Clerk	\$35,444
CA Coordinator Comm. Director	\$36,050
Revenue Clerk III	\$37,806
City Assessor	\$37,863
Driver IV	\$38,030
Driver IV	\$38,030
Disease Specialist / Inspector	\$39,388

Nobody in the City makes less than \$25,000 per year.

In this next chart, I show the distribution of salaries within various categories. We begin with the category in which the lowest salaried employee in the City in 2015, the Police Secretary, who made \$24,825 per year is in the first grouping of employees making \$20,000 or more. We end with the Police Chiefs, and the City Administrator who are in a league of their own in the highest salary bracket—even higher than the Mayor's, and not including overtime. Here is the chart:

2015 Salary Distribution within dollar categories:

Lowest Salary for City Employee = \$24,825
260 of 260 employees make \$20,000 or more
257 of 260 employees make \$30,000 or more
248 of 260 employees make \$40,000 or more
187 of 260 employees make \$50,000 or more
108 of 260 employees make \$60,000 or more
015 of 260 employees make \$70,000 or more
006 of 260 employees make \$80,000 or more
003 of 260 employees make \$90,000 or more
Highest Salary for any City Employee (Chief) = \$91,305

*** None of these salaries include overtime wages.

The highest city salaries in 2019 are now well above \$100,000. Moreover, in the most recent budget, fifty-three city positions were budgeted overtime. Fifty-three! Who are we kidding folks? Fifty-Three! There should be zero overtime. We all know that.

To help put these City wages in perspective, here are some numbers about the regular citizens who hold private sector jobs in Wilkes-Barre.

Statisticians have found that the median earnings for males in Wilkes-Barre is \$27,232. Across the state, the median wage for males is \$38,788. It's a good thing that our people do not live here and have to eat someplace else. At the Federal level the median wage for males is \$38,921

The median wage for females in Wilkes-Barre is \$18,961. Across the state, the median wage for females is \$22,899, and at the Federal level the median wage is \$23,115. Somehow dollars shrink in value on their way to Wilkes-Barre. As your Mayor, Mr. Brown will find out why and hopefully he will stop it or scream about it to the CV, the TL, the Radio and TV so the plight of the poor in our city can be addressed. .

Using these statistics, we can approximate the average wage of all employees, by combining the median values for males and females. There are slightly more females working in Wilkes-Barre than males. There is just a 3.8% difference in the number.

To average this out, for argument purposes only, because the difference is so small, let's use a 50/50 split in the number of females and males. The average of the two median figures would therefore be calculated in this way: Male median wage (\$27,232) + female median wage (\$18,961) = \$46,193. Now, to find the average (mean) -- not the median since we do not have the raw data, we simply divide \$46,193 by the number in the sample, which is 2 (male and female).

\$46,193 divided by 2 is \$23,096.00. Therefore for reporting purposes, the average wage for all Wilkes-Barre residents is \$23,096.

So, how do regular employees in Wilkes-Barre compare to those employed by Wilkes-Barre city. The lowest wage of any unelected city employee is \$24,825. Therefore, the lowest wage earner employed by

the City makes \$1728.00 more than the average wage of Wilkes-Barre residents who are not employed by the City.

Using the data from the tables above, we can approximate the median (most frequent / mid-point) wage of a City Employee at just about \$58,000.00. That means that if all 260 employees were in a listing numbered from 1 to 260 in ascending sequence by wage, employee number 130 would be making \$58,000. Half of the employees would be making less, and the other half of City workers would be making more than \$58,000.

If we take this \$58,000 wage and divide it by the average wage for Wilkes-Barre residents, which by the way includes the Wilkes-Barre City employees' salaries, we would have a calculation like this:
 $\$58,000 \text{ divided by } \$23,096 = 2.511$.

This means that the "average" City employee makes approximately two and a half times more in earnings than the average non-City worker. It is these taxpayers, making 2 1/2 times less who pay the salary of all City employees. These citizens of Wilkes-Barre are not fortunate to be employed in the much better jobs that exist in City government.

Not all police in the state of PA are in fat city. Considering the average income of residents, Wilkes-Barre treats officers quite well. In other areas of the state, the police wear the same uniforms, take the same risks and train to the standards of all Pennsylvania police officers. Yet state records show about 28 percent of municipal police officers who patrol communities in Western Pennsylvania are employed part time, making \$10.50 to \$16 an hour with no health benefits. It makes one think if Wilkes-Barre might be a bit too generous. Just saying.

WB Bloggers have an opinion

To City employees, they may find themselves scraping along with about 250 employees making over \$40,000 plus overtime. To Wilkes-Barreans; their numbers are not as good. On blogs that highlight Wilkes-Barre issues, citizens of the City are outraged with the disparity. The recent 3% across the board raise did not go over well. The average Joe in the City makes so little that he would need an 8%

raise to match the average dollar raises awarded to City employees by the Mayor just in 2014. Here is a typical blog comment:

“This really ticks me off because in this time of financial hardships for most, these city employees are getting a raise. How about we pave more roads and actually try to stop crime before it happens instead.”

There was also an open message carried in the Independent Gazette. It is addressed to Members of Wilkes-Barre City Council, the Mayor, and the Staff. It is well written and expresses the dire financial straits of a large percentage of city residents.

It is in another blog entry. This one is signed Ray Arellano:

“Before I am out of time, I wish to state unequivocally that I am opposed to any tax increase or increase in any of the fees currently in force, except for maybe the parking.

I live in the Rolling Mill Hills district. My neighborhood is comprised of mostly septuagenarians and octogenarians, some of which are borderline ninety. At age 77, I am considered the “kid” on the block! Most are widowers or widows. They came up when there were no 401(k)’s or reliable pension plans, so most rely on their Social Security checks and meager savings.

All of them hope that they can outlive major repairs to their homes. They are one water heater or furnace away from a major financial crunch. They pee in their toilets three or four times before flushing to save on their water bills. They only put garbage out every other week because of the cost of garbage bags. They pay exorbitant school taxes even though they have not had a child in school in fifty years!! They cannot get to the store for groceries, so they have to pay to have what meager things they buy delivered.

They worked hard all their lives to pay their bills, raised a family, and through no fault of their own, have lived too long. Many have outlived their children, their families, and friends. They only turn on the light in the room that they happen to be in and keep the thermostat in the low 60’s, using blankets for warmth.

When they last saw their mate, they had to continue trying to fly with one wing, and for a while they were successful, but now it has

become an insurmountable task. Waiting to die has to be the most depressing for them and some go to bed wondering if maybe tonight it will be over. If they are forced into a nursing home the speculators will buy their homes, and they will rent them to the dumpster overflow from out of state, until they are no longer habitable, then walk away.

It shouldn't have gotten to this point, and it wouldn't have if you had been better stewards."

Ray Arellano, Wilkes-Barre

Here are a few other comments from the Independent Gazette regarding the taxation situation in Wilkes-Barre. This one is from Linda Urban:

"A few comments for the City of Wilkes-Barre's elected and highly paid insiders. How much is enough? How much money do you need in order to be happy?"

You have brought our city to its knees and bankrupted us.

You have stolen from us. Your neighbors for the most part despise you after finding out just what you have been taking from us.

The practice of rewarding certain pals with excessively high paid jobs for votes in order to maintain your lifestyles is passé'. We know your game.

We live within our means and always have. We punched a clock or logged our hours and didn't expect a fellow employee to cover for our absence from our job.

We won't pay for your ridiculously excessive salaries and benefits, campaign donations to local pals, new homes, vehicles, gas, cell phones, vacations, pricey clothing and shoes, private school educations, or your family lifestyles with our money any longer.

You aren't special anymore. You are rather a disgraceful cornered den of jackals.

Your wealth and social prestige is all because of us so remember that when you walk or drive through our dying neighborhoods or bask in the sun aboard a cruise liner or on southern Florida beach. It's all because of the past Wilkes-Barre naive or foolish baited voters.

I suggest that those of you that have been milking us for decades go and try to find a non-taxpayer funded job that even remotely compares to what the city salaries are. Even from years ago!

If it weren't for the city taxpayers in most cases many of you would be either moved on or living in a normal day to day survival mode.

Greed has destroyed our city.

So again, how much is enough?

Reduce your salaries or clean out your desk. We cannot afford your lifestyles.

Linda Urban, Wilkes-Barre

*****End of bloggers' comments*****

Do we pay too much in taxes?

The latest statistics, which we have cited from 2015's election time above were provided for 2012. They show that 26.8 percent of Wilkes-Barre residents live in poverty. In 2019, the number below the poverty line is now 35%. That does not provide much room for city officials or any taxing authority to increase taxes or fees of any kind. In fact, it really says the pendulum ought to start swinging in the other direction. Wilkes-Barre must begin to reduce taxes, before the City or its people all go bankrupt.

City residents believe that any increase in any taxes or fees is too much. Wilkes-Barre residents feel they already pay ala carte for services such as garbage, recycling, and even flood protection in addition to huge taxes. One could rightfully believe that "you pay for everything here."

Besides a safe city, one of my top objectives for the Mayor is to create an affordable city and a clean city for all. At a minimum that means no tax increases or fee increases during the new Mayor's next term(s). In fact, my pledge is to do my absolute best to convince those in power to reduce taxes—most notably property taxes. Increasing taxes or fees on a bleeding public needing a big break hurts Wilkes-Barre's people even if it enriches the City government coffers.

May I suggest that Wilkes-Barre residents pay more attention to the state government representatives debating Act 76 as real tax savings—the kind that would make a major impact on seniors would come about if this were to pass.

Lingering recession effects & high taxes

Worsening the problem for the public's ability to pay is the lingering effect of a recession that has whacked Northeastern Pennsylvania with crippling poverty and for a time a 9.5 percent unemployment rate – the worst in the state. When things get bad, in recent times, Wilkes-Barre gets them worse than any other municipality?

Wilkes-Barre has been hit worse than the rest of the state and the nation. The unemployment rate in our area is the highest in a state which is now recovering simply because the former governor was an advocate of enhanced gas drilling. The current governor wants to whack all gas heat users in PA with a new tax that he says will affect just the drillers. Humph. No driller will continue to operate if they would not pass the tax on to John Q. Public. John Q simply cannot afford any new taxes.

It is too bad that there is no oil or gas in Wilkes-Barre, and the coal mines have been shut down for more than fifty years. The current governor's tax on drilling will increase the people's heating and hot water bills. How does that help the citizens? The current governor wants teachers to make \$45,000 per year by law. Will he say how much senior citizens need to take home to pay the increased school district taxes for his unfunded mandate? Can any senior citizen in a poverty-stricken state live in Wilkes-Barre with taxes exploding all around?

I root for my City but facts are facts. In our City, as noted above, in the past, more than one in three people have lived below the poverty line. This means in 2015, these people were below a yearly income (2015) of \$22,811 for a family of four with two children. This is according to the U.S. Census Bureau. Meanwhile, though I do not begrudge them of their fair wage, the lowest salary for an employee in the City of Wilkes-Barre other than a parking attendant is substantially more than the average wage of most citizens of Wilkes-Barre.

The taxpayer's ability to pay over the last ten or more years has been degraded and this has been totally ignored. Yet, as previously explained, city salaries have increased substantially. In fact, the most lucrative jobs in town are held by those who work for the City, the County, the State, and the federal government. How is that fair to the poor residents of this community?

There are few suggestions that increases in taxes have not been needed to pay for government services. Of course the money has been spent. But, one can argue that the price of such services is not affordable to a good part of the citizenry of Wilkes-Barre. But, they have no power to opt out of services they never receive.

There is a growing number of Pennsylvanians that have targeted the property tax, as the number one enemy of senior citizens in Pennsylvania. One group that takes this fight seriously is the Pennsylvania Taxpayer Cyber Coalition (PTCC). These folks are dedicated to equitable tax funding of Pennsylvania schools. They see the property tax as the enemy of mankind's ability to live in a comfortable home.

Their concern is that many people who own their homes outright and have for many years, find that they are paying more in property taxes per year, than they would be paying in rent. In many cases this is because of poor fiscal management by school districts and municipalities such as Wilkes-Barre, but sometimes it is because it is simply easier to give huge pay raises than to say no, "we cannot afford that."

Property tax increases are the easiest way to steal from taxpayers. Considering that most home owners buy their homes, so they do not

have to pay rent, this is a perplexing phenomenon indeed. This group introduces the problem on their web site in these words:

“Many Pennsylvanians lose their homes and a lifetime’s work to sheriff’s sales each year because they can no longer afford to pay their property taxes. Senior citizens on fixed incomes are increasingly forced to sell their homes because of unrelenting increases in their tax burden. Young families cannot afford to purchase a home because the per-month property tax escrow is simply too high.

“Multigenerational family farms are being sold piece by piece to pay property taxes, devastating Pennsylvania agriculture. School districts in areas of the state with limited population and no commercial tax base are in distress and are unable to afford to give their children a quality education. Job losses, outmigration, and abysmal state economic performance caused by burdensome property taxes are devastating Pennsylvania’s economy.” The PTCC also notes the following:

“Over the past few years the PTCC and PCTA— (*Pennsylvania Coalition of Taxpayer Associations*) has been asking homeowners to send us their real-life stories telling how relentlessly increasing school property taxes are affecting their quality of life. The response to this request has been overwhelming; the letters starkly demonstrate the frustration, fear, hopelessness, and anger that is widespread throughout ALL age groups and families from all areas of Pennsylvania over the lawmakers’ inaction in addressing this issue.”

“These politicians who refuse to support elimination and offer nothing, but lame excuses MUST be shown that their inaction and endless political games are jeopardizing the welfare and the lives of many thousands of Pennsylvanians. They MUST understand that what they are doing (or not doing) is destroying the future for good, honest people who only want to live their lives without the fear of financial ruin.”

If lawmakers truly care about homeowners in Pennsylvania, they will consider carefully the letters written to PTCC—two are shown below. These clearly demonstrate that just as in Wilkes-Barre with so many struggling to make ends meet, this is a contagion. Here are some REAL faces of the property tax issue and how the procrastination and

cowardice towards eliminating school property taxes is affecting the lives of REAL people in a plight similar to the taxpayers of Wilkes-Barre.

PTCC Letter # 1:

“My husband and I wish to thank the Coalition for all the effort put forth to help save homes in Pennsylvania. Our local representatives have done nothing to show taxpayers they are serious about tax relief, just the usual rhetoric.

We personally have had to list our home for sale since last October due to the \$7,000 school tax bill we can no longer afford as working middle class residents. This is not a mansion, but a 200- year-old house that we have worked to restore for the last 16 years. We can pay our mortgage, but we can't possibly pay the \$584 per month tax payments.

The “relief” from slots is a total joke, a slap in the face of taxpayers. At today's oil costs it has become a choice to have heat or pay taxes. I am sure our home can't be saved in time, but my hope is others will benefit.

We are not sure we will ever own a home again in PA, renting is far more affordable and stable and after losing so much on this home at our ages (55 & 53), it does not make sense to start over again, until we move to another state that does not penalize homeowners.

It goes without saying that the taxes are keeping us from selling in this district. - Anonymous, York County

PTCC Letter # 2:

“My husband & I are on Social Security now, & though we have some savings, it won't be long before we have to use it for the ever growing taxes that are due in Spring & Fall.

The PA school tax is especially burdensome as you well know. We had hoped for a resolution to this long before now by the abolishment of that tax.

If our savings are used up with those taxes, what will we use when an emergency comes along?? With the ever-rising prices of gas & oil & food, the money we have to work with is getting less & less.

We urge you to please put into law the END of the huge Property tax before ours & the savings of countless others is gone, homes lost, & hope erased. We have worked hard all our lives to maintain & keep our home, & now the resources that we thought we had, are like water sadly slipping through our hands.

– Folks from Elverson, Chester County

Taxation Without Representation is still alive in Wilkes-Barre



The above reality check on government spending is from the Wilkes-Barre Taxpayers Association. Former Mayoral Candidate Frank Sorick is the long-term president of the group.

Though the letters on the prior page are not from Wilkes-Barre residents, they could very well be as we suffer from the same exorbitant taxation system as the rest of the state. That's why HB 76 is so key.

What Can Wilkes-Barre Officials Do?

To address citizens' complaints that our City is becoming unaffordable, what can Wilkes-Barre City Officials enact in terms of a lean budget in coming years that cuts the property tax rate and adds very few new employees and services and perhaps even cuts some.

I have the answer. It is the same answer that we all have been using in order to survive this poor economy. We have had to do it and we do not expect our City to make our burden worse.

Wilkes-Barre City must live within its means. If we cannot afford 260 employees to dote over us and provide for our every need, then we must reduce the size of the city workforce. Another option is to reduce the salaries of some of the employees who work for the City. But, it would be nice if we did not have to do that.

Can we afford an average salary of \$58,000? How about \$70,000? Can we afford a minimum salary of \$25,000? Can we afford a maximum salary without overtime of over \$100,000? You tell me. I can certainly say that my objective is to reduce expenses and lower taxes – especially the property tax rate. That is what I am expecting our new Mayor to do to help the citizens survive.

If you cannot afford to buy groceries, what do you do? You cut back. While the population of Wilkes-Barre is declining every year, there should be no need for our budget to be ballooning out of control. We must fix this, or we will have no City. I am sure our dedicated City employees will do their part to help this City recover and once again become affordable.

The City income tax of course is reasonably low compared to most cities that impose such a tax, but compared to surrounding communities, it is higher than most. So, we need to look at that even though it is not as pressing as property tax relief. Many residents are

saying no to all taxes and they are packing up and heading for greener areas to live.

With the School District getting ready to finance a big Taj Mahal High School, and the City always looking for more, who will be living here supporting City employees if we all decide to pack up and leave? With City employees' earnings increasing while the citizens' own earnings are decreasing, it is a tough sell to convince anybody in Wilkes-Barre that they should have to cough up a little more for the Gipper!

It would be nice if we could afford high salaries and a high number of employees to match. The facts "on the ground" sure are pointing to a conclusion that we cannot.

People who love Wilkes-Barre may choose to help us.

Let's invite those with something to spare, who are good friends of Wilkes-Barre to help our City become affordable. We should have a Donate to Wilkes-Barre Web Site so whatever we might receive does not have to be shared with Go Fund Me! We have other ideas in the other "50 Ways" as we examine them following this chapter on affordability.

Besides many tax reduction notions, the City could set up trusts / funds so that we can take gifts from residents who love this City and we can take "bequeathments" from prominent citizens and others who choose to direct the proceeds of their estates for the betterment care of poverty-stricken Wilkes-Barre City residents .

If we had some revenue from those who credit Wilkes-Barre with part of their lifetime success, that would be wonderful. Of course recipients would have to promise to work hard to get back on their feet, so they would not need handouts as their life and their prospects improve.

To make this work, we first would need to announce that it is not a stupid notion to donate to your city instead of giving it all to an errant nephew or a church, which may be torn down tomorrow. Would it not be a great service for a resident to set up a will that includes Wilkes-Barre as a recipient? Many people feel a debt of gratitude for living so many wonderful years in our City that they would love to give

something back. And, of course we need it to help make this city regain its stature as the great a city that these folks remember.

We would need part of a job description / job or a person in the administration to become adept at grant writing and being able to solicit those Wilkes-Barre alums who may have the means to help the City. Other ideas are included in other parts of the full "50 Ways."

To do this of course, we would need a well-structured schedule of gift accounting and gift recognition. It would be appropriate to see statues in Parks etc. for those benefactors so kind that they would choose to help our City. There have been those in the past such as the Kirby Family (Kirby Park), or the Miner Family (Miner Park) so that such benefactors can be recognized in the same fashion as the wonderful plaques in churches for donors being so generous for the wonderful causes for which they contributed.

In our case, of course it would be to keep our city safe, clean, and affordable. Thanks ahead of time for those willing to help Wilkes-Barre. Our new Mayor can ask the people who have more to give, to help in this way.

We must give credit where it is due, but we should not have to endure a 3% raise for city employees already doing OK in Wilkes-Barre when the Social Security bump is less than 2% and sometimes zero. Tom Leighton already began a good job by collecting donations from nonprofits. Payments compared with Scranton and Hazleton are quite nice, and we must credit Mr. Leighton for that. His "windfall" came from Wilkes-Barre General Hospital and King's College, who were major contributors to the \$437,000 prize from payments in lieu of taxes which the city budgeted in his time in office. Unfortunately the dollars were used to give out raises to many people already doing quite well.

And, so, my thinking is that Wilkes-Barre's finest taxable commercial properties are now occupied by colleges, hospitals, and many other non-profits, many of whom do not directly benefit Wilkes-Barre taxpayers as The General and King's did last year (2015).

I would be happy to stand corrected. However, I personally know of not one city scholarship granted by any of the colleges to a Wilkes-Barre high school student simply because they happen to be a citizen

of Wilkes-Barre. I bet there are ten or twenty such students or more who could use such help. Do you know of any who got help? How about a few free hospital days for selected City residents?

I know of not one resident of the City who was treated to an extended hospital stay simply because they were a Wilkes-Barre resident. I know it is not so simple, but, I think you can see my point. The leader of Wilkes-Barre should do the best for Wilkes-Barre while the leaders of other organizations or institutions should look out for their best interests. I would like to see even more financial cooperation between the non-profits and the City. Mayor Brown, your public is in need of your wisdom Please remember:

We need to be able to count on Mayor George C. Brown and the City Council for a better city.

The colleges and the hospitals and other non-profits gain substantial tax breaks that you and I would not have, and most people think these institutions help Wilkes-Barre. It may help some merchants downtown and this in turn helps the City, but for the most part, Wilkes-Barre is not the big gainer. Tuition in all colleges is a hundred thousand dollars or more for 4 years. Kids then go into hock for their whole lives trying to pay back their loans.

There is no deal of which I am aware, which gives residents of our City any priority in our City Colleges just because the student is home grown. That sure would be nice. Perhaps Mayor Brown will ask for Wilkes-Barre City scholarships. And, perhaps he will see what can be done to help the poor in our City who are in need of medical care.

There is some good news and bad news about the affordability of Wilkes-Barre's taxation system on its residents. Here is the good news:

The cost of living in Wilkes-Barre is 16.5% less than the Pennsylvania average and the cost of living in Wilkes-Barre is 15.2% less than the national average. So, if Wilkes-Barre residents had the same money as all Pennsylvanians on the average, and as all Americans on the average, we would be doing quite well on the cost side of affordability, independent of taxes. But our taxes are crippling and only a few citizens benefit from this in their paychecks.

There is more good news:

In Pittsburgh, the median price of a home is about \$120,000; in Wilkes-Barre, the median home value is \$52,800. This is good unless after twenty years, you are trying to sell yours. So, Wilkes-Barre Residents can theoretically afford a home easier than those in Pittsburgh. But, in what conditions are these homes, as most Wilkes-Barre taxpayers cannot even afford the paint to make their properties shine.

And, so there is some bad news:

Homes are more noticeably larger in the Scranton Area, and though they are not as inexpensive as Wilkes-Barre's properties, they are much more elegant, and the people buy them because they somehow have the money. In Wilkes-Barre few have the money to afford a Scranton home.

For example, the median list price per square foot in Wilkes-Barre is \$46, which is lower than the Scranton Metro average of \$89. The median price of homes currently listed in Wilkes-Barre is \$63,500 while the median price of homes that are sold is much less, so the sellers are always unhappy with a median sale price of \$51,485. The median rent price in Wilkes-Barre is \$625, which is lower than the Scranton Metro median of \$750.

The bad news is that in a nutshell, life in Wilkes-Barre or Scranton is not as good of a financial deal as life in Pittsburgh using home values are a gauge. But, life in Wilkes-Barre sure seems to be somewhat worse than life in Scranton. Check the murder rate.

Minimize your tax burden by doing certain things:

Property taxes can be extremely burdensome for a homeowner. They tend to rise steadily over time and, even once you pay off your mortgage, the taxes keep on coming. The good news, however, which is minimal, is that there are some things homeowners can do to reduce their property tax burden. City officials should tell the people how to make their tax obligation be only as large as it must be. In the Brown administration, I would suggest that counselors be deployed to help the people make good financial choices as it can only help the City.

Permit me to repeat that property taxes can be extremely burdensome for a homeowner. For Wilkes-Barre City homeowners, this is more the rule than the exception. Property owners in Wilkes-Barre not only have to pay the real estate tax to Wilkes-Barre City, at the local level; we also must pay a County Tax, a huge School District Property Tax, and a Wilkes-Barre City income tax.

All tax rates mysteriously tend to rise steadily over time and, even once you pay off your mortgage, the taxes keep on coming. For some people, the tax is much more substantial than what they would have imagined as the amount for which they could rent their property to a passer-by.

There are ways that individual home owners can minimize their property tax burden. The Mayor's office can offer tips in that regard but the goal of the new Mayor of Wilkes-Barre must be to reduce the amount of taxes all of our citizens pay. If the Mayor's office can offer a tip for you to reduce your tax burden because of your special circumstances, I hope he is inclined to do so. It is not a right to pay taxes. It is clearly a burden, which most Americans cheerfully take on to help their communities. But, have communities become too grabby? Is Wilkes-Barre asking for too much?

I would advise that you keep reading to learn some simple tips that any homeowner can follow to lessen the pain when tax time rolls around. (For related reading on tax issues and mortgages, see *The Mortgage Interest Tax Deduction and A Tax Primer For Homeowners*.)

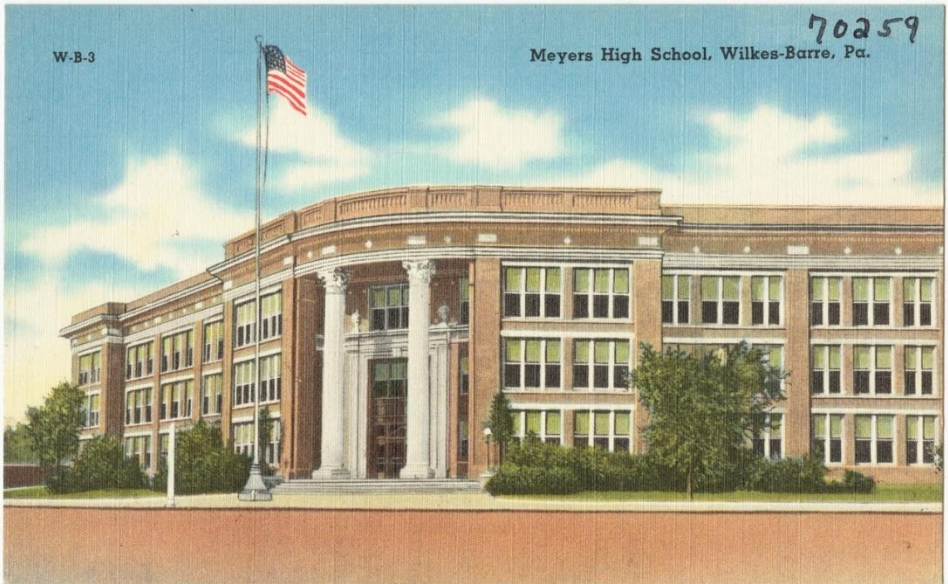
<http://www.investopedia.com/articles/pf/06/mortgagepoints.asp>)

You might consider reading *The Mortgage Interest Tax Deduction and A Tax Primer For Homeowners*, for additional information about saving on real estate taxes. If you are already aware of these devices, then I regret stealing any of your time to evaluate them so I will end this chapter right here and right now. Hopefully, our new Mayor will help our city become more affordable. That is the bottom line.

Chapter 8 Support Building Society & Preserve Historical Monuments

5. Support Building Preservation such as Coughlin High School etc.
6. Support Building Preservation Society – No more wrecking ball

Stop the Axe Man from Doing More Damage



Three City High Schools to be Demolished?

Before I explain this, please know that unlike the Mayor George administration, which failed to act, I am encouraging the Mayor Brown team to do its best for Meyers, G.A.R. and Coughlin. All three high schools are in danger of the Wilkes-Barre axman at the insistence of what some would call the corrupt Wilkes-Barre Area School Board.

It can only make a Mayor's job more difficult to keep jobs and businesses in the City when even our own high schools are bailing out of Wilkes-Barre. I have already written a defining book for the issue titled, *The Big Toxic School: Wilkes-Barre Area's Tale of Corruption, Deception, Taxation & Tyranny*. I will do my best to advise Mayor

Brown to put a stop to this as it will damage our City. We cannot have a successful city when we can't even keep our high schools in the City. Here we have Wilkes-Barre looking for renaissance not decay and neglect. Yet we are ready to leave three WB communities to the rats and mice and other vermin as we rip down city schools. Here is what we know so far.

From <http://preservationpa.org/uploads/2018-PresPA-At-Risk-newsletter.pdf>

AT RISK ELMER L. MEYERS HIGH SCHOOL Luzerne County
341 Carey Avenue Wilkes-Barre, PA Threat: Demolition Beginning
in May 2008 and extending through April 2012.

[Yet, here we are at the end of 2019, and Meyers is still here, and it is still functional and still in working order.]

Preservation Pennsylvania worked with the National Trust for Historic Preservation and the United States Environmental Protection Agency on a program entitled, "Helping Johnny Walk to School:

"Sustaining Communities through Smart School Siting Policies." This program encourages school districts to retain historic schools, to locate new ones in locations where a portion of students can walk or bike to school, and to use schools as a center of community activities beyond regular school hours.

The Elmer L. Meyers High School, built in 1930, stands as a testament to the importance of continuing such programs. As a Depression-era construction project, the school embodies the grand design of early 20th-century public architecture. It serves a diverse neighborhood and is located in a central location that children can walk to.

The Wilkes-Barre school board has planned to consolidate several of their schools, including Meyers and the historic James M. Coughlin High School, and build a new school approximately four miles from Meyers. The plan was created as a reaction to several feasibility studies done by the district indicating that renovation of their historic high schools would be cost prohibitive.

The plan ultimately concludes with Elmer L. Meyers being demolished in order to build a park. This historic school serves as a community anchor and ties the residents to the area. Losing this school would mean that children would be bussed out of town for school.

Wilkes-Barre Area Save Our Schools has been advocating for the school to remain in use, and locals are preparing a National Register nomination for the Elmer L. Meyers School. Preservation Pennsylvania hopes to work with the district's school board and the local community to encourage the building's preservation either as a school building or new community use.

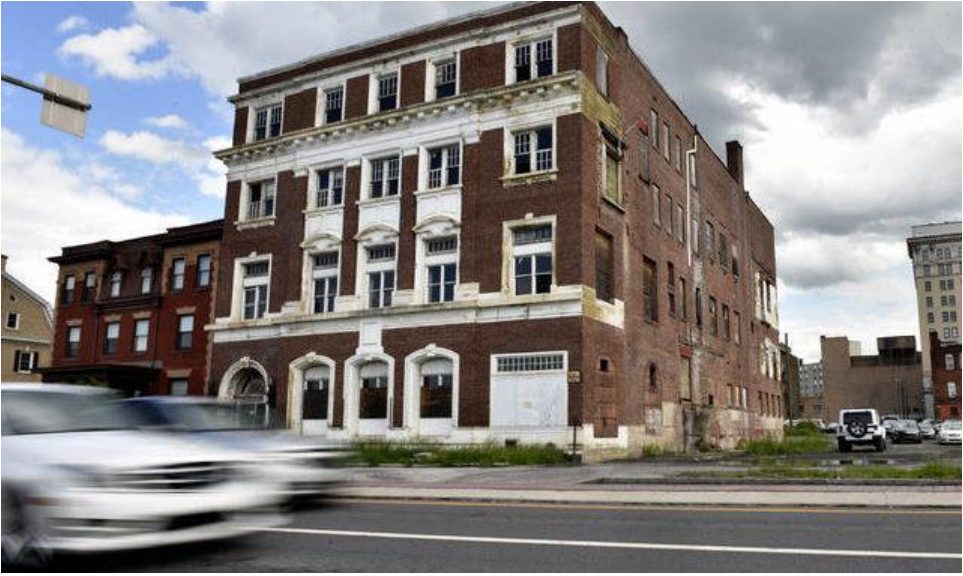
Special landmarks do not have to be destroyed

Throughout this book, as we examined one neighborhood or section after another, we found a lot of holes in our City. There are many vacant lots where once magnificent buildings stood. The latest of course is the Hotel Sterling, but our history is replete with the Axe Man delivering damaging blows to our future, and the City wimpishly agreeing with the anti-public school board to take down one monument after another – three city high schools -- that can never be replaced.

We have two more monuments that are about to come down if they are not cared for—The Irem Temple Mosque, and The Hotel Sterling Annex. This must be stopped. There is recent good news on both of these as we know the Annex is being rebuilt and the Irem Temple Restoration Project is collecting donations to bring back the Irem treasure. See picture of the magnificent Irem Temple on the next pages. Finally good things are happening regarding the few grand buildings left in Wilkes-Barre

Good News on the Sterling Annex

The CEO and President of FNM Capital Funding LLC in New York, on a Thursday in May 2019, announced he and others are developing the Sterling Annex into an apartment building and putting \$3.5 million in private funds into the project. That is great!



Sterling Annex next to ground where Sterling once lived.

Good News on Irem Temple

There are good people in Wilkes-Barre trying to save our City independent of the government and the ax man. There is now something called the Public Square Pop Up Museum, which has been in the works for months. It officially opened at the end of December 2018.

"Our purpose here is to really showcase our area's local history," said Beth Archer. "We know we have a great history here, and we want other people to learn about it!"

The pop up museum is part of a joint fundraising venture between the Wilkes-Barre Preservation Society and the Irem Temple Restoration Project.

The Irem Temple is a century-old structure on North Franklin Street that has sat vacant for about 15 years.



The magnificent Irem Temple—repairs are progressing

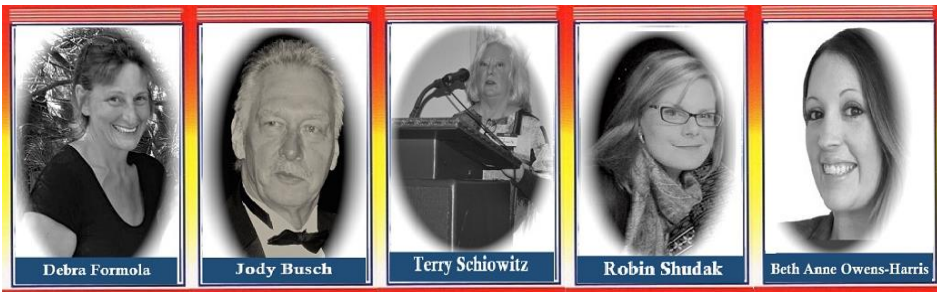
"We're looking to turn the main auditorium into a venue space with things like concerts, flea markets, vendor shows, and weddings," said Archer.

The remaining 17,000 square feet will become a permanent museum and the beginning of the heritage tourism industry in the Diamond City.

Admission to the pop up museum is free, but donations are greatly appreciated. The Irem Temple Restoration Project is expected to take at least five years to complete. Yeah Wilkes-Barre, this is a clean victory for the people.

Bye Bye Wilkes-Barre High schools.

Besides other treasures in the City, the Wilkes-Barre Area School District, whose mission seems to be to not care at all about Wilkes-Barre per se, wants to rip down Wilkes-Barre's three solidly-built high schools and replace them with a huge Plasticville building in a different venue – Plains Twp. The new structure is being built over toxic material and compared to the existing high schools, it may or may not last thirty years. Five candidates for the School Board are being endorsed by the Save Our Schools Project. The candidates are as follows



Formola and Busch are write-ins so when you vote, you won't find them on the ballot so simply write them in.

I am 100% against this "consolidation. It is bad for the kids and bad for their morale and their education. I wrote a letter way back and have been very active in assuring this school is not completed while there is time to recoup any funds expended.

I sent this letter in protest of what is going on. I sent it to both papers. The Citizen Voice printed it on the day before New Year's Eve, 2014. The Times Leader chose not to print it. Here it is in its entirety as printed. It says it just as Kelly meant it. Many in Wilkes-Barre have thanked Brian me for writing the letter as it represents the feelings of those of us who care about the City.

LETTER TO EDITOR

Published: December 30, 2014

Editor:

The fixes required for Wilkes-Barre Area School District high schools have been depicted as unaffordable by taxpayers regardless of the approach — fix it or demolish and build it again cheaper. I don't think so. I don't buy it. It would have been interesting if the numbers and "plans" had been presented at Wednesday's meeting along with the impact on millage. We all know the school district has not been a tax bargain for local taxpayers. More importantly for all of us living in Wilkes-Barre Area, the question should be, "Do we really want to destroy historically important, well-built school buildings and replace them with cheap quality 30-year models?"

Wilkes-Barre High was established in 1890. It later was renamed Coughlin High after GAR opened in 1925. This old Coughlin school building is in fact the oldest public high school building in Pennsylvania. Can you believe some people want to tear down the oldest public-school building in the state? The Coughlin Annex structure was built in 1952. The original Coughlin building was occupied in 1909 though construction had begun much earlier. Citizens of Wilkes-Barre Area need to get involved and think about what is being proposed and we must ask ourselves if there are not better ways to solve this problem without doubling [or possibly quadrupling] our already unaffordable school tax burden.

In March 2005, Cliff Greim wrote an excellent piece titled "New Construction vs. Renovation for Older School Facilities." Though 10 years old, it still covers the issue quite well. It is available for all to read online.

Greim offers readable counsel on the big decision for Wilkes-Barre Area:

“Generally, schools built in the 1950s or earlier have impressive architectural character and often are fixtures in their neighborhoods. They are structurally sound and can accommodate new systems. In addition, there is often strong sentiment to keep them in some form.

“Newer schools built in the 1960s and ’70s generally lack architectural character, are not energy-efficient and are constructed of cheaper materials. These get torn down more often or become hand-me-down conversions from high schools to junior highs or from junior highs to elementary schools.”

All of the buildings in question were built before 1950 other than the Coughlin Annex, which was built in 1952. I think it is safe to say that the same logic Greim discusses for post-1950 buildings applies to the Coughlin Annex.

I admit I was taken back by board members who said, “It’s going to cost a lot but it’s something we have to do.” I would ask whether they would vote to tear down historic Independence Hall if it were within their responsibility back in 1860? It helps to know that at that time, this famous Philadelphia structure was about the same age as Coughlin is right now. We all know that Independence Hall is the birthplace of America. We also know that the Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution were both debated and signed inside this remarkable building. Independence Hall was built between 1732 and 1756 to be the Pennsylvania State House. It still stands and thrives.

Would Independence Hall have been torn down by WB School Board?



Originally, this building housed all three branches of Pennsylvania's colonial government. Yes, it was built even before the U.S.A. became the U.S.A. It is now two and a half times older than Coughlin High School and it has a lot of life left. Think of the famous graduates of Coughlin, GAR and Meyers, and think of all the memorable events at those schools. These buildings are special landmarks in our home area, and they do not have to be destroyed.

GAR is almost 90 years old and Meyers is the baby at 85 years of age. Why would we give up these historically significant, well-built structures and replace them with 30-year throwaway, square buildings made of sheet metal, plastic, and other cheap materials? We have historical buildings with grand designs, granite and limestone interiors, and exquisite stained glass auditoriums. Who are we to cast this all away so that in 30 years another study like this can be done as we rip out the structures to be built and go with even cheaper

buildings with 20-year lifetimes or perhaps a modular school or a few trailers?

Where there is a will, there is a way. Somehow we lost our will with the Hotel Sterling after spending \$6 million without fixing the roof. Let's keep our will and our wits as the board tries to shove a huge millage increase our way ... for a less desirable outcome than the status quo.

One off-hand suggestion I have is to budget about \$1 million or more per year if we can afford it. We can bring in a great building contractor from our area to allocate five or 10 artisans just for Wilkes-Barre Area, to begin work on these buildings, one year at a time, one objective at a time. Let's get the hazards out of the way first. When real emergencies occur in the other buildings, we can dispatch this crew of experts along with Wilkes-Barre Area maintenance personnel to fix the problems posthaste.

I would also use our political representatives to get waivers for the beams that can withstand lateral forces. This is a very costly undertaking and should be ruled out immediately. Clearly all of the Wilkes-Barre Area buildings in question have not been blown over by big puffs of wind in the 85 to 105 years in which they have been standing and they are not going to be blown over tomorrow or any time soon. I would also try to get waivers for increasing the physical size of the classrooms. They seem big enough to have been able to be used for conducting classes for many years and surely they could continue to be used. Waivers would save a lot of money and they are practical and safe.

I would bet that the local and state historical societies would help in gaining the waivers. How can we consider destroying such history for a promise we know will be broken 30 years from now? After all, citizens make the laws. If the laws do not fit, waivers are a good way to save money and still have the benefits of a safe school.

When all the emergencies are fixed, I would put the new team of artisans to work on one floor at a time of one building at a time. I would use as many vocational students to help in the effort as possible. Think of the training they would get. Additionally, Wilkes-Barre Area also has a lot of maintenance personnel, who I bet would love to learn new skills working with the best artisans in the valley in building, plumbing, electrical, carpentry and other endeavors. Where there is a will, there is a way. Nothing in life truly worth having is easy. Why give up the best for a solution that may not even be good enough to be second-best?

Brian Kelly

Wilkes-Barre

Have we not learned our lesson with the wrecking ball?

Your author is disgusted with what the school board is doing to Wilkes-Barre. To help the people know the extent of the issue, he wrote a book about what some are calling the Mine Shaft High debacle. Brian released it August 12, 2019. Hard Copies are selling very well in the Wilkes-Barre Area. You can download a free copy of the book titled The Big Toxic School for free at the following URL: Savewbschools.com/toxicschoolfree.pdf

There is a full page picture of the book next page.

The URL for the hard copy of the book is as follows:

Paperback-- <https://www.amazon.com/dp/1947402862>



The Big Toxic School!

**Wilkes-Barre Area's Tale of Corruption,
Deception, Taxation & Tyranny**

A struggle for safe, enduring neighborhood schools.

By Brian W. Kelly

*We can't wait until there are no WB high schools
& the tax burden is unsustainable.*



Chapter 9 Safe Biking, Jogging, & Walking

7. Safe jogging, biking & walking trails – bike parking and rentals



Around Town Bicycles kicks off Saturday Morning Ride series
April 8, 2017 Times Leader Local, News, Top Stories 0
Katherine Pugh - For Times Leader

WILKES-BARRE — The brisk weather on this particular Saturday morning didn't stop a group of about 30 cyclists from gathering at Around Town Bicycles for the start of their annual "Saturday Morning Rides."

A dream, and an idea for Wilkes-Barre

Please do not get sick of dreams. If and when George Brown's mayoral administration adopts the "50 Ways," the Mayor will be offering a plan full of dreams, ideas, plans, and actions, and we all should want it that way. The overall dream is about getting Wilkes-Barre City out of its temporary rut. While working to do that, I think we can at the same time be making our city safe, affordable, and clean as discussed. But that too is not all. Among many ideas that would help the city prosper, the idea discussed in this chapter will help our City become desirable by those people, such as entrepreneurs, who might fall in love with Wilkes-Barre as we all have. Maybe some

people who can help can move here and gain some great opportunities for exercise and fun. We'll all love them for it while they are peddling safely from hither to yon.

Why not make the City better than it ever has been by making it accessible and friendly to biking, jogging, and walking from point A to point B. Providing recreational opportunities to stay fit and healthy is a critical part of being an asset to residents for any community.

And, so it is incumbent upon any mayor and council to want to be sure that there are bike paths and well-maintained sidewalks and city streets without potholes. These, along with walking and jogging paths would encourage a healthy lifestyle in safety. It would also make our City a lot more fun, and what is wrong with that? Rest assured folks, it is item #7 in the "50 ways."

So, let's examine the notion of safe streets and bike paths for both biking and walking. Wilkes-Barre is not a large city geographically and therefore mostly everybody in this City is within a half-mile of what could be interconnected bicycle facilities. Such facilities should be able to take those people on bikes or walking from very close to where they live to work, to shop, and to green spaces without fearing for their safety.

There are many gaps in today's pedestrian network though many sidewalks and handicap curb structures built in recent years, have made the situation much better. But, the job is not yet completed.

Clearly all of this is not in the Mayor's sole purview as there is a City Council involved, which in past administrations has been a rubber stamp for the Mayor's whims. Any mayor must develop a good working relationship with City Council to work as a team for the betterment of the City and its people. Having been on Council, I expect Mayor Brown will have a great relationship with Council.

First, there would need to be community meetings to assess needs. Then, officials would need to develop long-range plans to address those needs, while being consistent with funding availabilities and land-use requirements.

Would it not be nice if Wilkes-Barre adopted an enhanced bike sharing program that put say, 50 bikes in operation in 2019 or 2020? Yes, we have the beginning of such a program right now: <http://wilkesbarrebikeshare.com/>, so, for some, this is not such a new idea, but it has never been formalized and adopted by the City.

BTW, in addition to Gus Genetti, a major advocate of the program, the WB Rotary Club is behind the bike share notion for Wilkes-Barre. Is it not wonderful that Wilkes-Barre's # 1 entrepreneur, Gus Genetti is behind the bike share idea in Wilkes-Barre?. It is nice of Gus to help out.

With more pick-up and drop off points, the program could be much better. There are many programs in other cities such as Pittsburgh, which added 500 bikes in 2014. Biking is good for a lot of reasons and if we make it safe, it can also save the expense of gasoline.

Major cities are placing more focus on biking and walking as a means of getting around with less focus on recreation for the sake of recreation. It is a great idea. In order for Wilkes-Barre to do this, we would have to examine our streets, and help quickly redesign those, with minimal costs, to be amenable as much as possible to both bike and pedestrian traffic.

We have some great parks and we have two huge bridges connecting parts of our City with recreation areas that are also part of our City. I am talking about Wilkes-Barre's Kirby and Nesbitt Parks. We can do lots more than we think. We have the asphalt path on the dikes which are blacktopped and are as nice a path as any, anywhere—and they have a great view of the Susquehanna River.

Even here, it would help to have pedestrian and bike lanes so that nobody is injured from not knowing the "rules of the "road." We don't want joggers being accosted by high speed bikes when both are merely recreating. And, we need to come up with a better way to permit pass-through when the top of the dike seems to end.

Where needed, we might try to carve out a special one way or perhaps wider two-way bike path in the dirt away from the asphalt on the dikes. We need to use our heads properly. Some things will work, and others will not. When the cost is not prohibitive, we can test out ideas

and see if they work. But we first need dreams, ideas, and then plans, before we take action. What we do not need are negative thinkers.

The objective would be for our City to have significant, well maintained, bike paths, park bike paths and wonderful walking areas that can be shown as a commitment to encourage biking, jogging, and walking. And yes, of course, we would need to monitor this use so that it continually works. Having a citizen committee interested in pedestrian and biking activities with the steady ear of Mayor Brown, would help make this even more feasible.

Leading cities for bicycling are implementing innovative bicycle infrastructures (a.k.a. cycle tracks, green lanes, intersection enhancements, bicycle boulevards, etc.) to encourage people who are interested, but very concerned to ride a bike in the city.

We should examine ways to implement these types of innovative bicycle facilities to attract even more Wilkes-Barre residents to ride bicycles and to be assured that the chances are low that they will be harmed by cars or that they may harm pedestrians. Our objective of course is to use funds sparingly so we could implement the least costly enhancements first and of course we can accept donations for special projects that make the bicycle mission better.

Clearly in our City as in others, in just about every neighborhood, besides the idea of safety period, one of the top concerns is drivers simply going too fast, driving aggressively, and/or not yielding to pedestrians. We need a plan in Wilkes-Barre to calm traffic and make our neighborhoods safer and more comfortable for us to walk and bike? What speeder does not regret the accidents they cause. Is everything so important today that we cannot take the time for safety. Neither you nor I think so.

We first must identify the problem areas and then put forth workable solutions. Have you ever heard a city official talk about making the city safer for pedestrians and bicyclists? Me neither? It is not on their lists of important items—aka—the items that will get them reelected. Well, folks it is up to us to put them there. As an inherent part of the “50 Ways,” Mayor George would be a major advocate.

It all starts by making the public aware. Police can be counted on to do their jobs and to keep us safe. Our obligation does not end when there are police willing to help. All of us can drive more safely—but we could also use friendly, yet firm reminders.

Of course this program would involve more focused police enforcement of existing traffic laws. I know the police are stretched thin, but we may be able to use them to lead volunteer emergency police that could be used in problem areas. These extra people can be used in similar fashion to the school crossing guard system. Why not if it helps the kids, and if it helps the population of WB in general.

The auxiliary “police” would be self-policing, with the authority to issue warnings to drivers that become part of their unofficial driving record. Local citizen patrols could be formed, and they could be asked to help create greater citizen awareness. After all, it is our City!

The Director of Public Safety and the Chief of Police must be intimately involved in the safety of cyclists and pedestrians as we permit people the free access to streets designed now only for automobile traffic. Bicycle and pedestrian safety should be a city priority. Hopefully, in due time, the City will hire a Public Safety Director with a major mission to make it all work, who reports directly to the Mayor.

The Public Safety Director would continually work in operational matters with the Police Chief and would also help codify and explain any new regulations needed so that Council can get them passed for the good of the City. When Council needs to approve them, the Director would present them to Council for their approval.

The Director would “direct” that the Chief apprise his officers of the City's priorities. They would need to look closely at jaywalking and gridlocking and to create awareness of potential problem areas and to alert motorists to requirements of giving bikers proper clearances.

If there is a will, there is a way. A nice billboard about bicycle safety factors may help our out-of-town driving guests as to how serious we are about protecting our bicycling and walking public.

Open Streets Wilkes-Barre

To the extent it is possible with the problem of street parking today being the most efficient form of parking in our City, open streets would surely be wonderful. Even periodic open streets can be enormously popular events as we have seen in nearly 80 cities and communities throughout the U.S. As long as residents understand the goals and the rules, they will not purposely try to impinge on good ideas to help us all.

Open Streets temporarily restrict motor vehicle traffic on one or more streets at a time so that people can use them for scheduled physical activity—walking, biking, running, playing, or even a block party with street dancing. The Mayor should work with community stakeholders to make Open Streets Wilkes-Barre a reality?

The City of Wilkes-Barre must act as a cheerleader in the implementation of a comprehensive education program that is pervasive in its ability to increase and maintain a constant positive awareness related to traffic safety, infrastructure, and way-finding. It is one of our basic jobs

Wilkes-Barre residents want the Mayor to take the scarce resources of our City and use them to gain the most benefit for all the citizens in all areas. I see no problem with this proposal. I love it in fact.

I am an advocate for common sense quality of life issues, which certainly include bicycling and walking. Even our fine Police, who make Wilkes-Barre safe for us all, can be more visible on City Police bikes in our neighborhoods.

I do bike myself but not as frequently as when I was a kid. I make it a point to frequently walk the dike and sometimes even the streets in my neighborhood. I admit, I also use my recumbent bike and treadmill when it is cold like many days in NEPA winters.

I understand how our open spaces, bike trails, jogging paths, and bike paths have been utilized where they exist. I have personally seen the difference when a road does not have a bike lane and I have come dangerously close to being hit by passing cars. This is not good for the cyclist or the driver.

If we can make it better, we should make it better. Over time, almost all identified issues can be solved. But we must identify and track them, and then solve them. Those that appear unsolvable may even be solved at a later time, as we get better at what we are doing.

I understand the prioritization and seriousness of bicycle/walking related issues. I know that safety is number one but let's start thinking about what we can do once we feel safe rather than wringing our hands wondering if that can ever be. It can.

Our police are great. With the proper leadership, they will make our City as safe as the safest cities in the country. If there are not enough police, we can encourage the Mayor to figure out how to give them better tools and if we still need more police, we should get more though we must watch to assure our city remains affordable.

I recommend that the Mayor quickly adopting the “50 Ways” Upon taking office, the Mayor can use the “50 Ways” as a basis for building a comprehensive long-range plan, which would build on current assets. I think we need a one-year plan and also plans that go out five, ten, and as much as 20 years. The administration must also vigorously respond to new solutions. Public initiatives, undergoing constant review, should be brought forth, and examined, and implemented as appropriate.

I would expect that we can do this seamlessly but nothing worth having is ever easy so there will always be some lumps and bumps. I would expect that before we see any smooth roads, we will encounter a lot of bumps on the way to a lot of great solutions.

I am not naïve enough to believe that Wilkes-Barre citizens can ride bicycles all the time as an alternative to nice warm transportation. But there are lots of times during the year that we would be able to do just that. I know this from experience.

For example, in the where there's a will; there's a way category, when I went to King's College on River Street from 1965 to 1969, I lived in the Rolling Mill Hill on High Street. My dad fronted me some cash after HS graduation from Meyers and "we" bought a Honda 50 for me to go back and forth to school from home. I got a job at King's under

the Work-Study program and so long before I had my first King's class I was using my Honda to get to work and back five days a week in the summer. It was a two-mile ride or so. Though unable to achieve breakneck speed, a Honda 50, I could travel a lot faster than a bike. It looked a lot like a moped without the petals.

When I reached King's after two miles for class in December and January of my first two years, with my multiple layers of hoods and masks, and other necessary clothing, I literally had ice forming from my watering eyes.

Yet, I took the little Honda, because it was easy and inexpensive to get where I needed to go, and there was no problem parking it at the time. Since bicycles go slower, and since the rider does not always have to get to an 8:00 AM class, perhaps less icicles would form. If it were today, I probably would have simply gotten a bike and could have done the same thing in about ten minutes longer if back then, I had thought that was a good idea. In retrospect, "I guess I just wanted my Honda 50 and I got it and paid my Dad back for it, but it did get me there faster." I see more and more people riding bikes in the winter.

Somerville et al and Wilkes-Barre

You may have heard of Somerville, a small community adjacent to Boston Massachusetts. It is at the top of the game for bike commuting in the Northeast, so says the League of American Bicyclists. Other top areas include Cambridge, New Haven, Philadelphia, and Pittsburgh. Maybe one day Wilkes-Barre can be on such a list. Everything good starts with an idea. Massachusetts, by the way, like Pennsylvania, is not a warm state.

Somerville is dedicated to bicycling. The city has 14 miles of bike lanes, 6 miles of bike paths, and 25 miles of shared roads marked for bicycle travel. With all that in place, the city went forth and completed its first cycle track as a protected bike lane. A cycle track is in fact, a bike lane that is separated from the roadway and traffic by some form of physical barrier. Beacon Street, which runs into Boston, has never looked better.

And so, we have Wilkes-Barre Pennsylvania and Boston Massachusetts (Somerville), two cities with little more in common

than long cold winters, and the hardiness of its people. The only objection I could think of to the utility of making Wilkes-Barre more bike friendly would be the cold weather we share with Boston. Yet, Boston has proven it can be done and that the people love it. Soon, if we choose to move on this, other communities in NEPA would want to be involved.

Can we stretch Wilkes-Barre to Pittston?

Stretch your imaginations, please. How about a nice bike / walking trail adjacent to the "choo choo train" that one day may be circling the Square two-blocks out, each day in the future. How about extending a train from Wilkes-Barre past Eighth Street and right on into Pittston PA, the home of the greatest Tomato Festival on the planet. I see there is a lot of track already on that side of the river bank. A bike path right next to it sounds like a pretty good idea.

Since a train around the city is more than just a little project, if we gain the interest in bicycling and we act on it, we can surely create a bike path along the same route. Even without the train, which I know is a dream, and not yet an idea, why not be able to ride a bike, reasonably unencumbered from Wilkes-Barre, along the river to Pittston? Now, there's an idea. While others say, "Why?" Let's help Wilkes-Barre be known in the future as "the City that says, 'Why Not?'"

In June 2005, many of us recall that Mayor Thomas Leighton suggested to Wilkes-Barre residents and friends: "The biggest obstacle that we must overcome, is the negative attitude of a small, but pervasive, segment of our population. We must reverse this negative attitude. We must be taught how to believe again." I believe!

At the same time, the Mayor unveiled a new slogan for Wilkes-Barre: "I believe." The slogan turned up on buttons, key chains and signs distributed by the Mayor's office. Mr. Leighton's Pep Talk to the City was a good idea, no buts about it.

I believe we need to believe we can, but we also need to dream, to create ideas from our dreams, discuss those ideas with City leaders, decide what our priorities will be; plan to achieve them, and then get the job done.

Believing we can, is a great start in forming a great attitude. Those who believe they can, do! Those who believe they cannot, are almost always 100% right.

In 2015 , Wilkes-Barre held a major election. We are embarking upon another election cycle in 2019 which, because we live in America, will give all citizens of the City the opportunity to bring in the leadership of our choosing. There is already leadership in place. The Current Mayor and a number of Council members are running again. This Mayor, Tony George has been defeated in the Democratic Primary by the expected new Mayor, George C. Brown.

Before they ran in the primary, I suggested that we challenge both candidates to reveal their plans to make Wilkes-Barre better before we revealed our vote at the polls. I had used a fictitious John Q Doe at the time to represent the “John Doe Plan” for the City which has morphed today into the “50 Ways.” You could see my plans in the books released earlier this year. Many of the John Doe items have been transported to the “50 Ways” and the rest and more will be shown right here in this book. I hope you are pleased so far. With George Brown at the helm, I would be pleased to have him be the major implemented of the new “50 Ways.” I think Mayor Brown would be a fine Skipper.

After twelve years of hard work by Mayor Tom Leighton and his administration, the Tony George team and the current Council had had their own four years (2015-2019) to improve our City. Though they moved us forward a bit, they did not meet expectations and so George Brown and his team are taking over in January 2010.

We need to be able to count on Mayor George C. Brown and the City Council for a better city.

Soon we will be discussing the "Choo Choo" project now that we are about wrapped up with the description of the pathways / bicycles project for biking, jogging, and walking. Wilkes-Barre does not have to be number two in anything.

Of course, we will hit some potholes along the way for sure, but we can look to the future now that local elections are in front of us again. We can see the opportunities for some great improvements. We'll be

exploring Mini-Malls as well as a little town and hotel by Barney and Horton Streets? These are unique ideas and they are part of the “50 Ways” to make Wilkes-Barre even greater than anyone can imagine.

Surely, we should thank Mayor Leighton and his administration and our prior Council before 2015 for their service and we must likewise thank Mayor George and his administration and our Council before 2020 for their service as we move on to select our next leaders for terms from 2020 to 2023. George Brown is more than likely very ready to be our Mayor and as have seen and will see more. He has a lot of work in front of him.

With effective leadership, there will always be new dreams and new ideas. Whatever the composition of our political officials, we must remember they work for us—each and every one of us. And so, it is up to us to help our leaders make the right decisions about our future. We have to engage the system until we correct it. We can achieve a better Wilkes-Barre one step at a time. We all want better for Wilkes-Barre? There is nothing political about safe biking, jogging, and walking so we should be able to get a positive answer and get on with the tasks at hand.

We live in America. In our country and in our state and city, the people run the government. We often forget that, and we get stuck voting for politicians when we should be voting for representatives of the people. Public officials may think that they run the government but that is not true. It is the people. We the People are in charge. We determine the government we get, and we determine the government we choose to keep. Remember that in 2019 and always.

By having a vibrant city, when Mayor George finishes his time with the City, we need to solidify our Primary selection for new leadership in the person of George C. Brown. This is why I feel so good about our prospects as I gain the opportunity to continue my role as Jiminy Cricket helping assure that Wilkes-Barre and its leadership are in synch.

George Brown will hold the reins but we the people will be in charge. Democracy means that every four years in Wilkes-Barre, we pick the people we want to lead us for the next four years. Let’s not blow our

opportunity. George Brown is well prepared to be a great Mayor for our City.

From reading the local blogs and talking to people for years about our City, it is clear that the citizens of Wilkes-Barre would like things to be better. Like myself, they would like a safe city, an affordable city, and a clean and beautiful city. They would like jogging paths and bicycle paths. They would like safe roads to travel by car or by bike or when walking.

Surely, there have been great improvements in the uptown areas of the City and during the Leighton years, many have been substantial. Yet, the people you meet on the street continue to openly discuss making the changes necessary to put Wilkes-Barre back on the map again. The way I see it, Wilkes-Barre is a city ready to return to its roots. The people are sick of the dark days of poor government. I am ready to help be a conscience to Wilkes-Barre leaders to help assure our future destiny in becoming a fine city again.

I would suggest to Mayor Brown that one of his first decrees have consequences. The decree would say that "Dreams are back in style in Wilkes-Barre Pa." Pursuing dreams about our community and its people is a prerequisite for bringing back the glory days of Wilkes-Barre, PA. I am ready to help as much as I can, thank you.

Let the dreaming begin folks, and soon after, let our great ideas, plans, and actions help make our dreams come true. And if I might add, let none of us sit on the sidelines or somebody may deflate our goals. Get in the game called Wilkes-Barre!

Now, how about going to a Wilkes-Barre bike shop and picking out a beauty!

Chapter 10 Downtown Transportation — CityCircle Railroad

8. Build a railroad around the City with a train garage by the river
9. Create 4 mini Stations for the CityCircle railroad
10. Create a RR Spur to Barney Street Mall
11. Create a RR spur to Pittston and Scranton and on to NY & Phila.
12. Run Tram cars downtown in warmer weather
- 13 Enable safe Rickshaw and Rolling Chair like transportation downtown



A Nice Choo Choo Woo Woo for Wilkes-Barre

Though I like all of the ideas that we present in this book, this one comes from what some have said is the creative mind and continually churning fun brain of Brian Kelly. OK, maybe it was my mom who said that. But, I do love thinking outside the box. Not everything outside the box can be implemented however, but the time to rule out a great idea is not without a logical test-run. Only after it is a 100% certainty that it cannot be achieved should it be put aside. I think everything can happen in time. Where there is a will; there is a way—especially if you can find a person with a big enough wallet to fund a great idea.

I wrote up this idea about four years ago and fine-tuned it in the three books from earlier this year. This is the fourth tuning Think of this as a dream but if we can find a multi-billionaire out there someplace who would like to adopt our fair city—and we just might—surely he or she could help us with a number of our special projects. This would be a dandy for sure. I would definitely support it if we could get the interest

and get the funding. Otherwise it will be given a well dusted-off spot on the back shelf. FYI, I still have the nice Choo Choo Woo Woo for Wilkes-Barre on the front of my cranium. I just love the idea.

How about a full-sized railroad around Public Square? – by Brian W. Kelly

My sons Brian and Mike like Lionel Trains as well as LGB. LGB did not come to our home, however, for about thirty years or so after I got my first train when I lived on High Street.

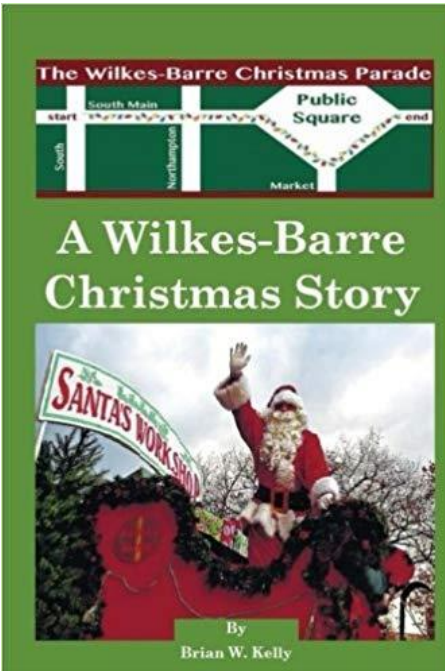
When our boys were little, they called trains either Toot Toots or Choo Choo Woo Woos. The names were taken by the time Katie, our daughter was born and she was OK with that as long as she got to run the trains with all of the older brother competition and companionship.

Without mincing words here, let it be known that I have often thought about a full-rail sized "choo choo" train circling the outer Square from say two blocks out. Within the train track circumference, there would be minimal City automobile traffic. Only vehicles to benefit the

severely handicapped at say 5 miles per hour would be permitted.

That's faster than most can walk, anyway. There would be other transportation such as Trams, Rickshaws, and Rolling Chairs like on the Atlantic City Boardwalk to move the folks within the confines of the tracks.

There would be lots of free parking spaces on the perimeter and if there was not enough parking in certain areas, I figure we could build them somehow without busting the City's budget. I think our City would need to be adopted in order to get this project off the ground, but it can be our dream and we can



publicize it. Until we get financing, and real backing, Wilkes-Barre can be *The City that Almost Got a Train*. To read about a Wilkes-Barre Christmas Story involving a boy and a train, it helps to know that I wrote such a book two years ago and it is available at <https://www.amazon.com/dp/1947402161>.

Though improbable, it would be an even greater accomplishment if, for this big train project, we could get the tracks on the river side of North and South River Streets and have them go all the way up to North Street on the river side of the dike from perhaps South Street. The tracks of course would need to be built like a fortress and would have to strengthen, not weaken the dike system in those places. Moving from South to North, the tracks would be built for the railroad train to go under the Market Street Bridge and the North Street bridge before the tracks made their next right turn after North Street.

In a staged build, this would end phase 1 of the train tracks. On each side—South and North, there would be a turnaround loop to bring the train back in the opposite direction. This would be easier than going two blocks out from the square before we had a functioning train system. So what we would have would be a train that went about four or five blocks on the river side of the dike. In Stage 1, that would be it.

Stage 2 would go from around North Street past Pennsylvania Avenue to join with the old railroad tracks between Stegmaier and Penn Avenue. This would be an expensive and time consuming build. To keep traffic flowing properly on River Street, North Main Street, N. Washington Street, and North Pennsylvania Avenue, I envision a lot of digging from the River to just past Pennsylvania Avenue. Over each Street a steel bridge would need to be built for proper traffic flow.

Stage 3 would go from around Scott Street where the old trestle that once said Lionel was situated down past Gus Genettis to South Street. Each time a stage were completed, to the extent feasible, there would be a turnaround so that the train ride for the passengers would be a section longer with a return to the origin.

Stage 4 would go along South Street back to the river. Again this would be a difficult run as there would be a lot of digging to get the train lower than the streets and then to build steel bridges over Penn Ave, Washington Street, South Main Street, and River Street. When

Stage 4 was complete, the full route would be around the square about two blocks out. There would be a “station” at each of the four major corners of the route.

Stage 5 would entail a switch that would join the section completed in Stage 1 to a spur that would connect to existing rail lines to go as far up towards Pittston as possible without spending a ton of money.

Let’s start the loop again. In this loop we may show a few alternate means for achieving the objective of getting the tracks all around the city square. Say we are back again on the river side. Instead of making a right and going up the river towards Pittston the tracks could create a left turn switch that would take us further down from South Street, towards South Wilkes-Barre from Wilkes University.

It would be just a little spur which would lead to a little garage for the locomotive and/or the trains to be kept dry in the off-hours and the off-months. Of course these special rolling stock items would need a place to be locked up in the off-hours. The spur would take the train down to around West Academy St. or thereabouts and perhaps behind Barney Farms, where its garage and repair area might be located again, on the river side of the dike.

Of course this area would need what in rail terminology, might be called a *railway turntable* or *wheelhouse*. It is a huge device like a rotary switch for turning railway rolling stock, usually locomotives, so that they can be moved back in the direction from which they came. Once the locomotive was turned the other cars could be moved into place. Something like this might be jury rigged to get the trains in the garage for rest or repair back on the tracks going in the right direction.

Let’s go through this route again to show how it might be when completed. Back up to South Street, moving from Wilkes University to King’s College, going under the Market Street Bridge, and then the North Street (Veterans) bridge, the tracks could then come up and make a right turn. They would more or less go up the Courthouse hill and then the North Street hill and eventually the tracks would come down the other side of the hill going East to someplace around Pennsylvania Avenue. The tracks might need to be trestled or tunneled to go over River Street and the other streets on the way. Hey, I am a dream and idea man, not an architect. We’re still just dreaming.

This notion is still in its dream stage and has not reached the idea stage and of course, it is a lot of miles away from a plan but it sure is exciting as a dream and with a monstrous amount of funding from a benefactor willing to adopt the City, I think it could very well be done. I have no idea as to what the Army Corps of Engineers would need to approve such as project on the City's river dike, or how long it would take but let's just say that nothing begins without a dream and somebody willing to take on a big project.

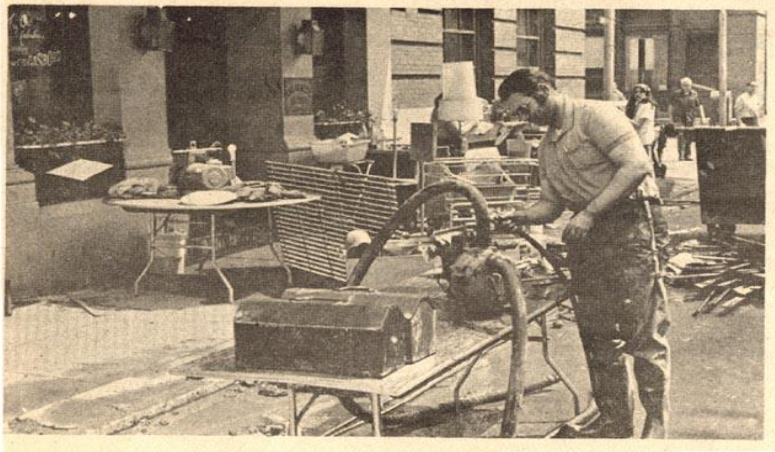
I have not mapped it all out, but I believe when there is a will, there is a way. I think it can work the more we think about it and the more we want it. Why not? Money is no object folks for if we cannot figure out how to afford it, we simply do not do it. But the dream will be out there for whenever we can afford it or for when the perfect Wilkes-Barre benefactor comes by.

With animation so real today, we could probably have the Wilkes-Barre CityCircle Train rolling over tracks on a giant movie screen such as that at the Kirby before you can say – (fill in a really long word right here between the parentheses).

As we discussed in building through stages, we might need a little bridge over the tracks here and there or we might need to dig out a section and have the train go underground – like under the sidewalks at Wilkes on South Street-- for a bit anyway. Hopefully, it could be done without major, major expenses but we would have to do it right or not at all. I would ask the engineers at Wilkes University to give the design a run through their cad-cam systems. I would be happy to guide them in terms of utilitarian function while their faculty advisor helped them in the actual technical design aspects. I say it can be done and I would bet Wilkes would live to sign up to get such a great project built from the expertise of their engineering students. Wow!

We do not have to try to get it all done at once but instead we can bring various parts online over time as noted in the staged approach introduced earlier in this chapter. The mental trip around the city that I am outlining is not complete yet. Our train from the dike at Wilkes to Penn Ave is just about half way down the tracks.

From 1972 'til today, Gus has been making Genetti's Inn ready for challenges



Gus Genetti washes pump as other employees wash office equipment.

After several more blocks on North Street, the tracks could turn right again to come down Pennsylvania Avenue, maybe on the opposite side of the Street from Gus Genetti's or perhaps over by the old Stegmaier Brewery. There are some rail-beds there already, so we would have to see if they could be used. We surely would not want to take too many of Gus's parking spots. I bet Gus Genetti would be serving coffee outside his hotel the day of the first train ride, if we are so lucky.

Another option would be to go down to the boulevard and begin the trip back. This leg would take us down to South Street again. At this point, we would probably go under the South Street Bridge and head back towards the river. The objective would be to not get in the way of traffic at all.

So, in my dream I see the tracks for this big train set being laid mostly underground with a heavy metal plate on top of it so that the tracks would not really be in a tunnel at times, but it would perhaps seem so.

Of course, we would figure it all out in time as these "dreams" again, are not yet "ideas." The Wilkes Engineers would be the guys and gals who would bring reality to the theoretical. At the river, to begin our second run around the downtown section of Wilkes-Barre with Public Square in the middle of the trip, we would have to get back to the other side of River Street, and the other side of the dike to begin a new run.

I would suspect that the best way to do this part right in front of the Wilkes Center for the Performing Arts would be to go underground. Heck, maybe we would even have an underground Train Station there also so Wilkes Students can take the train all around Wilkes-Barre. I would agree that Wilkes goes for free. Somebody at Wilkes can probably create a second verse.

What a neat idea? Thank You! But, right now as noted, it is in the "dream stage." It is not crazy, but it is way out of the box, if not a bit off the wall.

Don't you think there is some national figure like Richie Rich or a well-to-do ex-president or another philanthropist who might consider underwriting the whole thing. Wilkes-Barre could again become an oasis of beauty and innovation in Northeastern PA, for all to see and for all to visit. And I am convinced that just as in *Field of Dreams*: "if we build it, they would come."

I do not care who helps but with the right people, Wilkes-Barre can show how it can be done. I am thinking that perhaps climate change advocate billionaire, Tom Steyer or billionaire libertarians, such as the Koch Brothers, or perhaps Berkshire Hathaway's Warren Buffet, or Microsoft founder Bill Gates might want to pitch in to help Wilkes-Barre in its trail back to glory. Why not? I do propose through Mayor Brown (that sounds good doesn't it) that we put a big letter in the Wall Street Journal seeking a billionaire to adopt our City and get his or her name on all the neat stuff we hope to build to create the most unique City in the world. Why settle for green cheese when we can go for the moon.

How often do you think anybody asks these gents for a small handout for a city on its way back? In my original Wilkes-Barre book, looking at the great spirit of Microsoft co-founder Paul Allen, I wrote:

“Maybe Microsoft's Paul Allen, Seattle Seahawks owner, would like to help. God knows we could use the help.” Unfortunately in October 2018, Paul Allen passed to the angels. He was a great adventurer and a good man, and we will all miss him. Paul Gardner Allen was an American business magnate, investor, software engineer, humanitarian, and philanthropist.

Alongside Bill Gates, Allen co-founded Microsoft in 1975, which helped spark the microcomputer revolution and later, with some help from IBM, the company became the world's largest PC software company.

Paul Allen would have liked Wilkes-Barre's projects. Never say never. I bet there is a foundation out there in which noble causes such as ours can be fulfilled by making the proper request. I urge Wilkes-Barre officials, hopefully our own George Brown in 2020, to make such a request. Then, the dream can become an idea and a plan overnight.

Before he became President, while he was still loved by the media in 2015, and he had a hit show, my personal pick would have been the master builder, Donald Trump as he would know how to get the building all done and it would thus get done.

I thought that perhaps he could team with a guy like Paul Allen. Just like there is no reason to rule out Paul Allen. There is no reason to rule out the Trump Corporation or the Trump Family, or Donald Trump himself if this project tickles his fancy. If Wilkes-Barre people can keep its biases in the background we could attract anybody with a good heart and a better soul to help us in our quest to become a better city.

My point is that there are a lot of good people, liberal and conservative just waiting for a town like Wilkes-Barre to help them move on to a great project where their fortunes can mean something to regular people such as the people of Wilkes-Barre, PA.

Maybe the Wilkes-Barre Project can help us borrow a name from Reno Nevada, which we know is "The Biggest Little City in the World." Wilkes-Barre can become "*The Funnest Little City in America*" or something like that. We could bring in the professional namers or have a contest to get the right name.

Hey, maybe Mr. Allen, a sports lover like many of us, has heirs who would help us bring a "Wilkes-Barre Barons" minor league team back to Artillery Park, which arguably is in Wilkes-Barre. We know this great field on the West side in Wilkes-Barre is now used by Wilkes University's Baseball Team. They could play every now and then if not permanently when Wilkes is not at home.



<< The Late Great Frank Pasquini

Can you imagine when the new Barons would play the SWB Yankees? And, why not? Good talk sometimes creates good dreams which sometimes create good ideas. Let's keep them coming.

If I had my way, I would have Wilkes-Barre's greatest funds development person of all time, my great friend Frank Pasquini, RIP, working on all these solicitations. He would bring them in for sure for Wilkes-Barre. I would need to contact God for that one I know. But God is always on my contact list. Our great friend Frank Pasquini, a can-do guy went to the Lord on March 2, 2017. Look at the gleam in his eye. Frank would have gotten it done. The train would already be circling the Square.

I am not suggesting that all of these areas between the tracks would need to be traffic free, especially in the beginning as we perfected the notion. Remember it is all still a dream. However, the speed limit within the two-block radius around the Square would need to be reduced to perhaps no more than 5 or 10 miles per hour, while we tried our best to make this work—if of course, most of us think it is a good dream worth putting into a better idea. Nothing worth having is easy. Would you not enjoy working on something like this? I sure would and I hope I am at the side of Mayor George C. Brown, making the impossible actually happen.

Maybe the first part built would be the part on the other side of the dike. It could run from Wilkes to Kings on the river side of the dike. Why? Well, folks—why not? Wilkes-Barre could become the “Neatest Little City in the World.” I like that.

I know that this is an out of the box notion to say the least. We would have to think really big. A notion is something between a dream and an idea. Being out of the box is sometimes a very lonely notion. I hope somebody is out here with me but, rest assured, I am a quick study and

I would be pleased to tell this story as it evolves—to anybody who will listen.

I would advise our next Mayor, hopefully George C. Brown, not to take action unless there is a consensus and a probability of success. That's why we need a guy like Frank Pasquini, and his friends with the Benjamins (\$100.00 bill) in the bank.

Spurs to Pittston and a Barney Street Mall

10. Create a RR Spur to Barney Street Mall

11. Create a RR spur to Pittston and Scranton and on to NY & Phila.

14. Create a City full of mini-malls in vacant Lots

Can we stretch our Wilkes-Barre CityCircle Train to Pittston?

Stretch your imaginations, please. How about a nice bike / walking trail adjacent to the "choo choo train" that one day may be circling the Square two-blocks out, each day in the future. How about extending a train from Wilkes-Barre past Eighth Street and right on into Pittston PA, the home of the greatest Tomato Festival on the planet. I see there is a lot of track already on that side of the river bank. A bike path right next to it sounds like a pretty good idea.

Since a train around the city is more than just a little project, if we gain the interest in bicycling and we act on it, we can surely create a bike path along the same route. Even without the train, which I know is a dream, and not yet an idea, why not be able to ride a bike, reasonably unencumbered from Wilkes-Barre, along the river to Pittston? Now, there's an idea. While others say, "Why?" Let's help Wilkes-Barre be known in the future as "the City that says 'Why Not?'"

Can we stretch Wilkes-Barre the CityCircle Train to Barney Street?

There are train tracks right alongside Barney Street at Horton. Our WB CityCircle Train can have a spur from Genetti's to CrisNics on Barney Street and then when the Barney Street Mall is completed, it will connect right to downtown. Let's talk about it.

How about a great new neighborhood mini mall?

14. Create a City full of mini-malls in vacant Lots
15. Create a street mall between Horton St & the Creek on Barney St.

One of my favorite neighborhood haunts has always been the Barney Inn in the South Wilkes-Barre Section. Its tradition of great food and great refreshments is well known even as the ownership has changed over the years.

The current place, CrisNics is as good as it gets. With regular fare such as Lobster and great steaks, and as my friends Barbara and Dennis enjoyed just a short-time ago, Liver and Onions, and a Haddock platter. Dennis said "the Liver & Onions was as good as he had in his life," and Barbara felt that her fish dinner was almost as good as Lobster Tail.



I love the Chris Nics' Reuben's, Irish fare, and their pizza with light cheese, extra sauce and extra onions. Can't beat it! And their drinks are fine too.

So, in my dreams, I see this little section of Barney Street cut off from the world and made into a mini mall with wooden sidewalks, hitching rails, bannisters, bike racks, and a few

wooden canopies. CrisNics already has a huge parking lot, and its own great canopy which covers its "outdoor pavilion" in the rear. Why not invite some horse groomers in to take the kids on some pony rides in the summer? Where else in WB can we get this treat?. It does not all have to come back to Public Square. How about Barney Square as a name for this first SWB mini-mall. ?

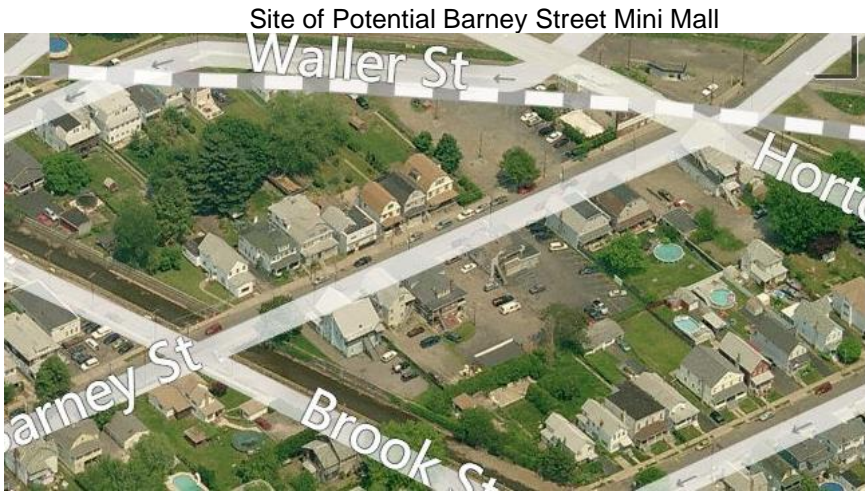
The “CrisNics” family is very supportive of Wilkes-Barre and I bet they would love to see their immense parking lot become a multi-story parkade, paid for by the efforts of guys with the same spirit as Frank Pasquini. There would be no traffic on this Barney Street block and the parkades would be accessible only from Waller or Regent Streets. It would take just a few steps to arrive at CrisNics or any other finery in the new Barney Square Mini-Mall.

I also am thinking about a back alley in between Regent Street and Barney to take the traffic over the new bridge. It would be a shame not to use that brand-new bridge. Perhaps some novel store can emerge by the creek and make use of the creek when it has enough water. I am not sure what—right now but my noggin is always cooking something up. How about a stocked fishing pond? How about kids fishing in Solomon’s Creek? How about a big fisherman’s grill taking the freshly caught items and serving them to those ready to eat at the “Barney” or another seas food restaurant.

Abe's and the Barney Street Lunch are already in place as two of the best Hot Dog luncheonettes in the State, and they would fit in perfectly in this new Barney Mini-Mall.

Both have a ton of parking that the possible alley from Horton Street or from Regent Street could reach effectively. For big time parking availability, there is a huge vacant lot right now on the corner of Horton and Barney Streets caddy-corner to the CrisNics.

It is amazing what you can accomplish if you actually think it is possible. If you are not sure of what is possible, and what is not possible, that's where dreaming comes in. If you think Wilkes-Barre can afford none of this; that's where a great dreamer like Frank Pasquini comes in. All things are possible. By the way, as a reminder, the late and great Frank Pasquini did a great imitation of Congressman Dan Flood. And he smiled all the while.



There are also train tracks across from CrisNics, which might be a way to connect to the Public Square Choo Choo if that separate dream ever materializes. How about a quick way uptown and back down to Barney Street to CrisNics or Abe's, or the Barney Street Lunch or the new Barney Street Mini-Mall.

What about a SWB mini-hotel or bed and breakfast?

Ah, c'mon Brian are you nuts? While we are building the Barney Square Mini-Mall, we would need to dress up the existing houses a bit with a common old-west or old-Wilkes-Barre theme as a façade or a real front-face. That's how I see it. CrisNics is already in-theme as is the Barney Street Lunch, but the irreplaceable Abe's might need a façade to make it look like the Abe's retro of yore.

Once we have the houses looking nice on the front, there may be those willing to sell to the site developer or make further changes to fit the business plan. I can envision craft stores in some of the houses or perhaps a Wawa or a multi-building hotel.

There are two or more large former bar and store buildings across Barney Street from CrisNics. One was once a store called Williams where as a kid, I window shopped and found lots of board games. They look like apartments now. If you live in one of those, or any home on this block on either side of Barney Street, fear not! My

brother-in law, Bill says on the corner was a great place called Mahon's which sold beer by the bucket in the war years.

Success breeds success! Nothing happens overnight in Wilkes-Barre or Scranton so there would be plenty of time for your voices to be heard. Owners of these facilities would have as we would say in the olden days—"first dibs."



The look for Craft stores, bed & breakfast, & mini hotels

If the owners were amenable, the buildings could become the anchor for a nice multi-building hotel to include other homes that remain on the block. You would check in across the street from CrisNics and be assigned a room in one of the homes that were part of the "First Dibs Hotel Complex."

Obviously, this part would take a lot of planning; but can you envision how nice this would be? Why not? Again, benefactors and developers would be needed. The people left behind could not be left behind or this dream, almost reaching an idea, could never happen. Maybe they become owners, or their separation packages are so huge, they would not want to say "NO."

Show a vacant lot & I'll show a future mini-mall

There are some pretty large vacant lots in our City in most sections and neighborhoods. Many of these are big enough to support a mini-

mall. I am not talking about strip malls with big stores that often become rundown and unsightly. I am talking about attractive places that might include a nice restaurant and/or a great specialty grocery store and/or a gourmet fish market as the anchor. Satellite Thrift stores run by churches or the Salvation Army can also serve as nice anchors in the mini malls.



A nice mini-mall with Thrift Shop in North Lake Tahoe

How about four to ten small stores surrounding a mini Thrift shop above in the same area with parking or Tram Car or Push-Cart service close by. How about a restaurant with a bar etc.? How about a once a half-hour Cable Car gasoline vehicle made available a few days a week taking people from the High Rises to the mini-malls for shopping—and then even bringing them back! Only those who say they can't, can't. When you say you can and you act like you can...you can. By the way, my friends in the high rises feel close in when the busses are not running.

Think about it! With good design and planning we can do anything.

There may be many other areas of the City in vacant spots of town or almost vacant spots, where rejuvenation and a return to prominence is practical, but the folks who would be clients and the owners may have already given up. Another slogan and a reality check may be necessary: *“No giving up in Wilkes-Barre will be permitted.”*

I'd love to find the ghost of my buddy and John Anstett's good buddy Frank Pasquini to make a house call on anybody, who seems to have given up on anything, and he will bring his personal buddy "ole cheerios" Gus Genetti in to work to close the deal. There is no reason to fail just because success has not yet arrived at the doorstep.

My message in this chapter of course has been that to *Make Wilkes-Barre over as a New Wilkes-Barre--it* all starts with a dream. Dreams become ideas when they seem practical; ideas are translated into plans, and then action is taken to implement the good things that are planned. We can do whatever we choose. If we dream and ultimately pick our best ideas, we might even be able to get a lot of them done. Wouldn't that be nice?

George C. Brown—please pay attention:

Who knows what the next great idea will be for Wilkes-Barre? I am waiting to hear the existing WB Official Administration or the next if need be, fire off a few affirmations or a few counter ideas to the ones I have discussed in this chapter. Whoever the Mayor may be in 2019, (We're expecting it to be George C. Brown) we should not care so much if he or she embraces the notion of thinking through dreams and ideas that can be worked one way or another to become winning action plans and implementations. Nothing that has never been proposed ever works. It can't. I know George Brown can do it if he chooses for sure.

Think about this—Are these the ramblings of a mad man?

Think of this covered, warm and heated passenger train on these tracks in winter, with its windows wide open to the world in the summer. It would need a number of stops, say four—one at each corner at least, to make it effective.

In my ideal dream, the train would be electric, which might convince Tom Streyer to invest in the dream. Additionally, if I had my way, there would be no charge to ride this train. However, if a ticket were issued and verified at some stores, a small percentage (less than one percent perhaps) of the purchase price could be passed back to the City in this electronic age to pay any expenses. These are just raw thoughts. It would be better if it were totally free.

I would not want any novel idea such as this to cost taxpayers as for sure the people in Wilkes-Barre, the County, and the School District are well overtaxed.

If this notion of a train circling Wilkes-Barre idea were made possible, it would surely be a remarkable accomplishment for Wilkes-Barre—don't you think? People would come far and wide to experience our experience as we took one big step towards returning Glory to our great City. We would be a model of a City that stepped up to meet its challenges.

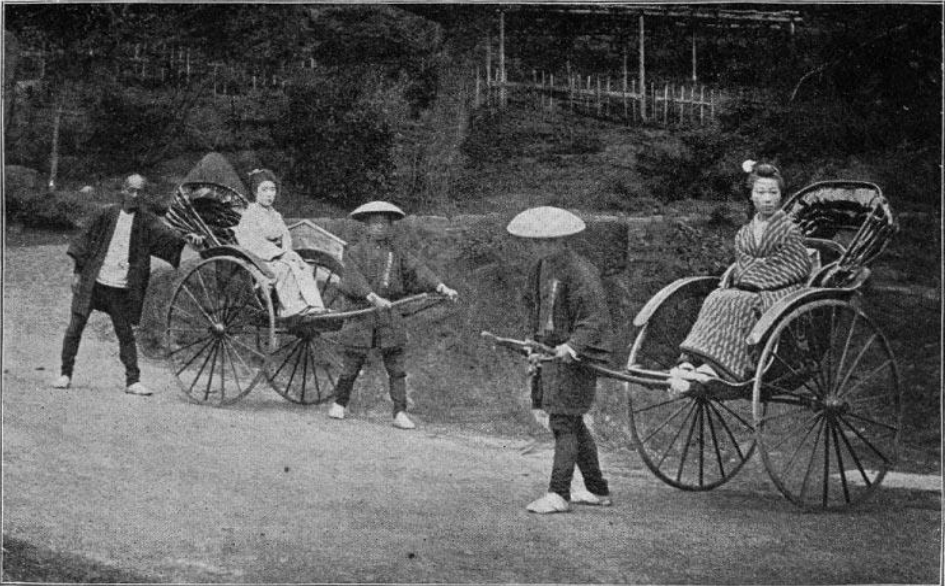
Our City would become a magnet for customers and patrons for our shopkeepers. It would spawn other industries and the job opportunities would benefit us all big time. Those living in this new City and this area of the State would smile each time they walked outside. After all, the success of our local businesses has a lot to do with our own success as a City.

Stop the Tram Car, please!

12. Run Tram cars downtown in warmer weather
13. Rickshaw and Rolling Chair like transportation downtown

Getting around the new Wilkes-Barre Shopping District.

Between the four major perimeter train stops and Public Square, I can envision rechargeable battery powered electric tram cars carrying people from the various stops on the perimeter to the Square... just like at Disney World. Maybe Disney will give us a few of their Tram Cars to help us out! We'll have to ask a member of the Frank Pasquini clan about those possibilities.



Rickshaw



Rolling Chairs

There would be no need for a switching station at the Square for Tram Car transfers as each car would go the full route and hit all the streets and stop at every block within the perimeter in which an egress was made possible. It would be a nice ride unto itself. In my vision, this also would be no charge but perhaps we would ask for a donation, please. How many tram cars would we need? Thank you for the question. Answer: As many as we need!

As the big train stops at major Tram Car drop off points, there could also be entrepreneurs with push carts, like those on the Atlantic City Boardwalk or the Far East. Perhaps you've seen these clever vehicles on the Boardwalk recently. They seat about two if large people such as me are in the cart; three to four otherwise.

They have weather protection as you can see in the picture for short-distance travel on bad rainy days. With a strong push-man working to please passengers; expecting and getting his or her recompense (tips) for a job well done, the trip could be swift, full of great Wilkes-Barre sights, and a lot of fun.

These entrepreneurs would take their carts full of passengers over a smooth trail (provided by Wilkes-Barre engineers and craftsmen) to any destination within the perimeter, including another train stop. There would also be drop off rental bikes available as are now prevalent in major cities. Don't ask why! Instead, ask why not?



For a time as many recall several years ago, Wilkes-Barre had these rental bikes available at Gus Genetti's. Bikes would be permitted to go anywhere in the train or tram area. There could also be defined bike

lanes for personally owned bikes to get to and from safely. How about some bike parking spots within this area. There would be very few if any cars, and those that were permitted on the uptown streets would be going very slowly. Of course a challenge for City officials would be to use the parking spaces in the City without creating a danger.

Challenges are welcome and all problems are solvable with the right attitude. If you like any of the ideas that are presented in this book, ask the official you plan to elect as Mayor what they think. George C. Brown would be pleased to answer.

Always elect the right officials (George Brown is the most recent choice) and voice your opinion to the leaders of the City to represent your line of thinking for a great start on returning Wilkes-Barre to a higher level of greatness one step at a time. If your leaders have no interest in you, perhaps they deserve a return favor.

There are naysayers in every project. You may know that it took about fifteen to twenty years for the beautiful Luzerne County Courthouse to be finally finished in 1909. But, the forebears of ours at least had a dream, then an idea, then a plan to make it happen eventually, and they took the action to make sure this beautiful structure now graces the River Common and River Street. .



Luzerne County Courthouse in WB -- a monument to good planning 1909

Naysayers are good as long as they do not simply declare that Wilkes-Barre is not worth saving, and they move themselves and their belongings out of town. I would advise naysayers to stick around and see what Wilkes-Barre can do when we have a mind to.

I know it is easy to declare anybody like me with such dreams as a nut for putting such "out-of-box" solutions out there to be seen by the public. I am not running for office so there is no ulterior motive.

I would bet that since I know what I am doing in making these notions known, most psychologists would say that because I am coherent in that understanding, I am not nuts. Your opinion may differ but that is what life is about—honest debate before action.

But, then again, the final determination is yours. I think that if the Wilkes-Barre Project (The train and tram & people push carts, & bike paths and mini-malls, etc.) are not on your list of good ideas, please at least select officials that have an open mind about crime prevention and a more inviting public infrastructure that is clean and overall a City that is affordable.

I do encourage all of those who still use their brains, to think independently of government. Government pushes its thoughts upon us all but when we wake up, we find a great crony of government taking his or her cash to the bank. Let's hold government accountable so that we, the citizens of the City can get the best we can from living in Wilkes-Barre with an honest *no favorites* government.

I would suggest that we all use those God-given minds of ours to come up with our own dreams for Wilkes-Barre—big and small dreams alike. We must all think for ourselves? What good is a City official who sits around waiting for another federal grant to pave a few streets or tear down a few more monuments or great homes or buildings? Our leaders must be like the fictitious character named John Doe. They must come up with real ideas and goals and take action to achieve them. If a candidate does not want to serve the people, they should not run for office....please!

I think we can even do a lot more than that, even if in the end, we cannot convince anybody to fund our Choo Choo train off and around Public Square. I sure am no Walt Disney, for sure, but can you imagine if the greatest Imagineer in America, was shut down simply because he chose to imagine?

Chapter 11 Six Great Ideas for Wilkes-Barre

16. Facilitate Industrial Comeback -- 5 large mfgs. for new jobs in the City
17. Help Anthracite. Coal Industry In NEPA Come Back Some Day? -- for jobs
18. Target desirable small businesses such as micro-breweries for city
19. Find Downtown Developer for Sterling Property & the Annex.
20. Invite developers to offer a new Palm House by Courthouse
21. Create several adopt a street programs – 1 financially and 2 for anti-litter

Bring back some big manufacturers

The huge Muskin Plant in Parsons/Miners Mills is still available as are other manufacturing venues in the City for some heavy industry. We've got some good space for some nice manufacturing businesses. Back in its heyday, Wilkes-Barre proper had a lot of plants as did those areas just outside of the city. And, that is not including the mines.

16 Facilitate Industrial Comeback -- 5 large mfgs. for new jobs in the City

Would it not be great if Wilkes-Barre with the help of the Chamber of Commerce and others were able to attract businesses of consequence right into a great spot in the City.

Wilkes-Barre once had lots of industry

Story by Brian Kelly

I can remember even as a kid, many manufacturing and distribution industry plants and factories right here in Wilkes-Barre, PA. When I was in my early twenties working with IBM, there was still a lot of industry here in WB. Did local policies and union favoritism cause these industries to bail to other industry favorable states?

Ask the one-time owners of Muskin Corporation in Miners Mills their opinion of that? Did all of Wilkes-Barre and our politics contribute to Muskin choosing Midway Georgia over Miners Mills in Wilkes-Barre? I was the IT consultant for Muskin in Miners Mills and then for a year or so later helping them get established in Midway Georgia. I know the answer. I do not remember any top officials in Wilkes-Barre

offering to mediate a resolution. Such care from WB officials may have been able to stop the Muskin departure. They did not want to go and ultimately went out of business in Georgia. No official from WB City tried to stop them.

For many years in NEPA, I worked with IBM Marketing Representatives, who other companies would call salesmen. My job was to assure the installation of some of the biggest computers in the larger businesses in Wilkes-Barre and surrounds. IBM knew Wilkes-Barre had potential and its businesses responded to the new computer revolution by spending a minimum \$100,000 at the time to become technologically more capable.

One of the longest lasting large business manufacturers was Air Products who close its manufacturing plant near Wilkes-Barre after 62 years of operation because of a prolonged lag in demand for the liquefied natural gas equipment made there. One of the reasons cited was an inconvenient location. The Sans Souci facility connected just three miles down the road to the interstate highway system so that excuse holds no water.

You may remember Klein Candy and the Key Stores, in the 1950's on the first or second block from the Square. My dad would stop at one of those places with me in the Christmas season to buy good candy at the lowest price possible.

Klein engaged in other endeavors such as distributing convenience store products such as candy, canned soup, lettuce and vegetables, cigarettes and soda.

Klein's customers were anybody in business that would buy what they were selling. They even found gas stations who otherwise would not be interested in anything, but gas and oil, proceed to sign up with Klein for convenience goods.

Pantry Quick's, Quick Mart's, Orloski's and the like were all served from Klein's huge warehouse in Wilkes-Barre. These stores most often sold gasoline in most cases and they still do.

Klein eventually bought the old Economy Store Warehouse in Hanover Township, just outside of Wilkes-Barre and they continued

growing as a company. They expanded their business and became a billion-dollar enterprise operating in eight states. Wilkes-Barre was their home base. They were doing business in about eight states in the East when they had to sell the business because of financial reasons. Before this, they felt that they were invincible.

Unfortunately, for a lot of professionals who worked for Klein in technology and accounting, the company could not make it as it approached invincibility, and they had to sell the business. This all happened in the last ten years. Perhaps it was bad management? Perhaps it was too much debt? I choose not to judge.

The new Canadian-based company, Core Mark, though not American, is doing quite well in the same location, but without a lot of the excellent NEPA jobs that were once here. Core-Mark brought the big jobs back to Canada. It was another big loss for Wilkes-Barre and Hanover Township.

So, even Klein Candy, a very successful enterprise found they could not make it because they grabbed too hard at being big. So, with their huge debt, they were still able to sell the whole deal to a Canadian Company, Core-Mark for a profit.

Core-Mark as most businesses cared about one thing—the ability to sustain the business at the least possible cost. Therefore, as one of their first actions, they fired just about all of the professional people. As a side show, they got rid of their huge IBM computers and they hooked themselves up to their home office in Western Canada. The home base was using the same IBM technology as Klein, so the adaptation was less costly.

Unfortunately for Wilkes-Barre, the Klein story has been repeated in one way or another for far too long in Wilkes-Barre and throughout the Wyoming Valley. How could our officials let a billion dollar company with major roots in Wilkes-Barre get away without trying to get them to change their thinking?

Let's look at another major company, Kay Wholesale Drug. They were originally located just outside of the City right next to the former Leslie Faye building. Leslie Faye of course is another story. When Kay got bigger, they were too big for the Route 315 facility, so they moved

to the former Alta Footwear plant on the Sans Souci Highway right outside of Wilkes-Barre on the other side. They had grown their business from \$10 million to \$300 million by using IBM technology properly.

When larger competitors began to invest even more in their technology infrastructures and their marketing teams, Kay was taking in some profits for the owners, and so they fell behind their competition. When they could no longer sustain the business, they were \$50,000,000 in debt.

After work on September 27, 1994, 121 otherwise happy Kay Wholesale Drug Co. employees chipped in for an "it's-all-over" party, and afterwards, they all went home for good. The 54-year-old firm, which sold drugs at wholesale prices to pharmacies in an expanding number of states, shut down and began a liquidation process.

I have seen far too many endings like this in the greater Wilkes-Barre job market. Kraft Associates on Scott Street was another. Where is a countervailing force to help companies like these stay in business? We need to create an industry support group to help companies come here and be successful, and we need them to stay successful.

The Mayor George Administration is one that will endeavor to understand business. Now that George Brown is just about Mayor, perhaps we will be on our way to an industrial comeback.

We need an industrial comeback

When I was in my teens, people would walk or take the bus to work or even ride a bike to work in most months of the year. Stegmaier Brewery, Gibbons Brewery (still open under a new name Lion, Inc.), Carter Rubber aka Carter Footwear, Craft Associates, who made fancy furniture were among the many WB City Plants that hired hundreds and thousands of residents. Other than Lion, Inc., they are all gone. Now, for all intents and purposes, Klein is gone, and Kay wholesale is off the radar. Hundreds of jobs are gone for Wilkes-Barre and surrounds. With so many lost businesses and jobs, can we not begin a comeback? We still have a lot of plants that are ready for a comeback.

There are remnants of possibilities but try to get a job in manufacturing in Wilkes-Barre. I dare you. Try to find some place in Wilkes-Barre that makes something other than a pizza or a pie or a cup-cake. Even the 18-store Old River Road Bakery, and its successor, Boulevard Bakery, as well as the Barney Street Bakery, Kornblatts, and Keystate, are all gone. They were great, but it did not matter. Did Wilkes-Barre officials ever figure out why? Mayor Brown is now charged with that determination. My bet is that he will figure out why and change our City to bring business back.

The major industry in all of Wyoming Valley in the 1970s was garment manufacturing. These shops made ladies dresses, pants, suits etc. Leslie Faye, originally just outside of Wilkes-Barre by Miners Mills had a billion dollar company headquartered right there on Highway 315 that went south sometime in the 1990's with hundreds of employees displaced. The company survived and moved what was left to the Hanover Industrial Complex, but then what? Was any of this good for the garment worker?

On May 6, 1995, Leslie Fay closed its last U.S. plant. Saying it was no longer possible to make dresses profitably in the United States. Leslie Fay Cos. said in its last hurrah that it would close its only domestic plant at the end of July 2018 and eliminate 600 jobs. Now Leslie Faye is gone, gone, gone.

There were literally hundreds of small *cut and sew shops* in NEPA. There were also other big-time apparel manufacturing companies such as Rex Industries and Carter Rubber. There was a huge Silk Mill on high street making textiles and just down Blackman Street a bit was the Atwater Throwing Company, who also made textiles. So, what happened?

Planters Peanuts and the infamous Peanut Man were also a big part of the landscape. They of course were bought out and were moved from Wilkes-Barre. There was a time when all you had to do is want to work, and there was a nice job.



This job more than likely was in Wilkes-Barre and it was probably fun, and it paid well, just waiting for you to want it.

Additionally, the milkmen not only existed; they competed. Purvin and Woodlawn Dairies—Dolly Madison ice Cream, were in town also and they all contributed to the economy,

and their employees were tickled for their paychecks. Yes, they enjoyed working there!

There were also lots of lumber houses and there were lots of building of buildings and homes though much of the action was in the suburbs of Wilkes-Barre. There are many homes in need of repair in Wilkes-Barre so a local lumber company that could compete with Lowes and Home Depot ought to be able to make it—especially if they had a team of craftsmen to build (Put together) what they sold.

Places such as Wickes, Ryman Lumber, Scouton-Lee Lumber, Franks Lumber, and others had their day in the sun. And, of course there was International Color Corporation, and the Sunday Independent helping the newspaper industry.

Mining had its great days here for years headquartered by the Glen Alden and the Lehigh Valley Coal Companies. Miners worked in the Red Ash Mine, Prospect Colliery, Pine Ridge Breaker, Stanton Colliery, and the South Wilkes-Barre Colliery. Other industries

included General Cigar Company, Penn Tobacco Company, and E. A. Roos, etc.

The Railroads were here big time in Wilkes-Barre with the Wilkes-Barre and Eastern Railroad and the Delaware and Hudson. Coal always needed rails for shipping.

Sports figures made a few bucks in Wilkes-Barre. Eddie White may be the only sports industrialist that I know about. In addition to entertainment, the sports teams such as the Baseball Wilkes-Barre Barons, and the Basketball Wilkes-Barre Barons were sports employers in our area until they disappeared. It was lots easier in the former glory days to get a good job—even in sports. Remember, not all employees in sports enterprises are athletes.

You may have heard of the Vulcan Iron Works. They were instrumental in the war effort (WWII). Big time industry. They were a big-time manufacturer and employed lots of people and when the war broke out, they were very busy during the war years. They were right in the middle of South Wilkes-Barre. They were not into small stuff. They made train locomotives. They were a nationally known manufacturer of railway locomotives from 1849 to 1954. We're ready for more of the same.

The Delaware & Hudson RR Freight Station, its Round House, etc. Wilkes-Barre Coal Company, Wilkes-Barre Stove Factory. Seltex Factors, Hazard Iron Works, Wilkes-Barre Carriage Company, Ma's Old Fashioned Bottling Company, Eagle Bottling Works, John Zubris Sr.'s Star Beverage, and many others. People worked there and they got a fair wage in Wilkes-Barre's glory days. They are all gone.

So, how do we ever get back to those days? My best answer is that we take it up as a goal and every goal has a shot at being achieved. We dream; we come up with ideas; we plan; and then we take action. We never give up despite the corpses of huge companies that lay in Wilkes-Barre's wake. The wake shows us the task will not be easy. George Brown will try to bring industry back to Wilkes-Barre for sure. Perhaps this chapter will help him know just how much is gone. Getting just five of the businesses such as these back would help the City quite a bit. With the economy booming now and the labor supply in our area

looking to boost wages, George Brown may be able to turn things around. One thing for sure is May or Brown will be giving it his best.

All things are possible but not when none of them are on anybody's agenda. Let's put the return to glory days of Wilkes-Barre on all our to-do lists.

Let's all stop saying "NO" to everything just simply because we live in Wilkes-Barre. Let's start by saying a big "YES" to everything simply because we live in Wilkes-Barre. When we think that we can, our return to glory will be right around the corner. Let's change the rise and fall of Wilkes-Barre, to the fall and rise of Wilkes-Barre. It's time. Yes, we can and then some. But we have to believe! Tom Leighton's saying from way back is true today. Nobody can work miracles but new Mayor George C. Brown signed up for a big job. He is ready to get us off the dime for sure.

17. **Help Anthracite. Coal Industry in NEPA Come Back Some Day? -- for jobs**
18. **Target desirable small businesses such as micro-breweries for city**
19. **Find Downtown Developer for Sterling Property & the Annex.**
20. **Invite developers to offer a new Palm House by Courthouse**

Help Coal Prosper

Besides several needed designer positions, the City needs a good person on the team, preferably funded by donors or outsiders who can work with the businesses we have – even the Anthracite Coal Companies in our areas to help keep them here and get them interested in hiring people from Wilkes-Barre.

Micro-Brewery

This same person can work to find other businesses that would fit in our mini malls or in available plant space. We already have the long-lasting Lion Inc. How about a nice micro-brewery in a new WB mini-mall ?

Big Hotel in the Sterling Complex on top of big parkade

I know there are downtown hotel projects that have gone south and there are some sparks about the Sterling Annex and there was even

some work done there recently. Hopefully the Sterling Annex will be back to life soon.

We need to find somebody who loves Wilkes-Barre to help us find a way to make these properties work for Wilkes-Barre. Why not a big Trump hotel?. Why not ask Michael Bloomberg to come do something in Wilkes-Barre. How about a Bloom hotel? As a city, let's get reduced postage and let's start sending out the cards and letters and never stop. When somebody adopts Wilkes-Barre and gets their name shared with the name Wilkes-Barre, the doors will open to us.

The Beautiful Palm House

I bet there are some people who love flower gardens who might be interested in being the Miffintiff of a great flowery opportunity by the Courthouse in Wilkes-Barre's River Street. Look at these beautiful pictures of the Palm House the way it was in Wilkes-Barre's golden years. It can be yours to rent from the City. Look at these pictures to show you how you can put in a beautiful greenhouse with the finest horticultural array ever seen in the Northeast.

There must be a bunch of great gardeners out there who have Wilkes-Barre ties who would love to create a beautiful spot to visit to see their wares. Plus, why not put some exotic vegetables in this masterful greenhouse. Somebody must want to bring this back. The Palm House was so beautiful. It can be again.



PALM HOUSE AND GARDEN, WILKES-BARRE, PA.

In the background, the Coal Company Building became King's College-- a great perspective.

How beautiful it can again be!



How about “owning” a street in Wilkes-Barre?

21 Create several adopt a street programs – 1 financially and 2 for anti-litter

Looking for ways to improve neighborhoods? Well, I am pleased to say that other cities have found great opportunities to do exactly that with what they call *adopt a street programs*. There are two opportunities to adopt a street. One is for a well-to-do person who would like to help in a small way rather than adopt the whole city. The other is to engage in anti-litter and street beautification projects that do not cost a million dollars.

Neighbors on the street could join the cohort and recommend things that could be done to freshen and beautify a particular City street and / or build some small homes in vacant lots or a mini mall or eliminate eyesores. This would cost somebody some money.

Then, of course the street can be adopted to assure it remains clean. These residents should have permission to call upon the big city sweepers and the Public Works crew right after they have an effective anti-litter campaign.

In cities such as Charlotte for example, volunteers join in to keep Charlotte streets litter-free. There are many active volunteer groups who clean up hundreds of miles of city streets across the country. Neighborhoods, businesses, families, and individuals can make a difference in their community by adopting a City street through this grassroots litter removal program.

As an Adopt-a-Street volunteer in Charlotte for example, you would receive:

- Two "adoption" signs with your name installed along the adopted route
- Clean up supplies (litter pickers, gloves & safety vests loaned for the duration of volunteer service)

Volunteers must submit a report after each clean up. Minimum of three annual cleanups required / 2-year commitment. Volunteers are asked to remove illegal signs along the roadway during each clean up. Additional opportunities include storm drain marking and graffiti spotting

Overall, Adopt-A-Street is thus a program that empowers volunteer groups to keep their neighborhoods litter-free one street at a time. To date, more than 19,000 volunteers from 20 cities have removed over 211,000 pounds of litter from adopted streets!

How does participation benefit neighborhoods?

- Increases property values
- Reduces litter-removal costs
- Fosters pride (people litter less in clean neighborhoods)
- Frees up maintenance crews to perform other tasks

Chapter 12 Ask for Help, Please

22. Hire a Grant Writer / New Business Coordinator Paid for by outside funding
23. To extent possible, this new ventures paid for by outside funding
24. Hire a City Designer for building / infrastructure projects Paid by outside
25. To extent possible, this new ventures paid for by outside funding
26. Hire a designer / coordinator for smaller special projects artists Paid by outside
27. To extent possible, this new venture paid for by outside funding
28. Create Major Funding / Donation Opportunities for the City
29. Write letter to NY Times: Adopt WB cost \$100 million for RR & mini malls
30. Change City charter and all signs to say this city adopted by [name]



Most of these notions are self-explanatory and so in this chapter, we will not elaborate on these notions. They reflect the fact, that Wilkes-Barre is like a small poor southern town that was spoiled by a major coal boom in the 1800s. Jobs were once plentiful, and wages were once higher than most. Now neither is true.

Yet, there are graduates of WB High Schools and alums of Wilkes-Barre itself who have gone on to be very successful. None of these fine people want to see another person in Wilkes-Barre have to lose their home just to survive. So, we must ask for help beyond the poor tax base of this City.

Some who have done well in life and moved on may blame this City for holding them back while others may credit Wilkes-Barre—perhaps a neighbor, a teacher, a grocer, a businessman, who helped them know that the world was theirs to conquer. If those people were made aware that Wilkes-Barre now needed help to begin to become the town it was when they first became successful, I would bet that this town with George C. Brown as its leader would be able to make the finest comeback.

Adopting all of the “50 Ways” to improve Wilkes-Barre City is the recommended methodology designed to bring this City back better than any city in distress in America could ever do. We need to reach the people who have benefitted from Wilkes-Barre and now would be pleased to return the favor.

So, it is not just good police for crime fighting that we need or good firemen for home protection, it is also some bright people from the community that we can hire to help represent our city in talking to the people out there who might be willing to help us in any number of ways.

A novel idea is that Wilkes-Barre as a city in distress would put itself up for adoption. I would not let the city be adopted cheaply. Instead, I am thinking about \$100 million dollars. We can take it from one donor or a consortium of people who want to have a definable accomplishment to top their bucket list.

Ten wealthy people who want to help Wilkes-Barre can become lawful adopters of this city. They would be able to meet the \$100 million adoption fee and know for time eternal that they helped a one-time great city when it was down.

Whoever adopts the City will always have the best seat at any Wilkes-Barre event for sure from the parades to the Kirby center for major events with our thanks for sure. Additionally, in the signs that would typically say George C. Brown, Mayor of Wilkes-Barre, there would be an addendum to the sign which says adopted by so and so on such a date as a kind benefactor to help this city provide for its people – a better writer might come up with a better catch phrase.

To make this offer, I would suggest that Wilkes-Barre officials pen a letter to the Wall Street journal and/or the New York times advertising that Wilkes-Barre is looking to be adopted.

I think it will happen if we ask.

Remember the words,

If you build it, they will come.

In our case, *if you come, we will be able to build it* is more appropriate. I think offers for adoption of the City and for funding of special projects will come out of the woodwork. Don't you?

Besides the adoption program, it would be good for a person from the City to maintain contact with those who would like to help the city in any meaningful way. In this regard, I am thinking about creating programs in which former locals who have made it in life, are asked to donate and help to start businesses and help startup businesses.

They would feel good and our City would herald their efforts and thank them profusely.

Chapter 13 Help for Elderly to Pay Taxes / Avoid foreclosure

31 Form Committee for private donations to help poverty-stricken citizens avoid foreclosure



Say you've lived in Wilkes-Barre all your life and you never earned a lot, but you were able to buy a house way back when everything was inexpensive and everybody seemed to be able to make ends meet. So now, you retire and since your earnings were never high, your Social Security check is minimal and since you never had a job for more than ten years, your multiple pensions do not amount to much.

Yet, somehow for years even after retirement, you have been able to get along—until about ten years ago. Then you found property taxes from the school district and the county and even the 26% property tax increase from the Leighton Administration made it tougher to afford the basics. With a 35% and growing poverty rate, there is not much money in Wilkes-Barre to go around. More and more people in Wilkes-Barre and across the state are having to give up on their homes despite how long it took to pay them off. Taxes are now so high, they

have made it seem to poverty-stricken home owners that they are again paying rent. The big difference of course is that landlords would have them out on their ear if after one month, they were overdue on their rent. For property taxes, they get three years before their property is seized in a foreclosure action. It just isn't fair.

The new landlords, City, County, and School District let the people go for three years without paying by adding unpaid penalties. In other words, when you don't pay one year, you owe more. Somehow you are expected to pay more when you could not afford the lesser amount. But nobody bugs them like a landlord but eventually their time is up. So, after three years, some figure they don't have to pay the taxes and it helps them survive.

Then, out of nowhere, they get registered letters. The new landlords who never bugged them—their friendly local governments go ahead and put an ad in the paper that their homes of many years are being sold at a tax sale. Then it is all over for the dignity of owning one's own home.

These once proud Wilkes-Barre citizens become wards of the state, dependent on the state for crumbs to sustain their lives. Some adjust to life in a one-room flat, others despair and soon die. It is a casualty of property tax and social security payments that just don't match expenses.

It's not just Wilkes-Barre. It is a nationwide epidemic and it is a scourge against the elderly and disabled no matter how you look at it.

New Jersey has a story about a 90-year old lady named Gloria Turano. Like most people who buy a home, she thought she'd be living on Skillman Avenue when she died, in the ranch home her late husband Louis built for them in 1953. She never wanted to leave it, and the decades of memories of raising a family it holds for her. "I thought the undertaker would take me out of here," the 90-year-old Turano said with a smile recently, sitting on a couch in the home's den. But as she spoke being interviewed, the house was not hers anymore.

The house now belongs to Fannie Mae, the government-sponsored mortgage company, which bought it for \$100 at a sheriff's sale last year after a reverse mortgage company foreclosed on it - shutting down a

loan Turano took in 2004. The sorrowful, tear-jerking stories about foreclosures on the elderly and the handicapped could fill an encyclopedia, yet they go on.

Is there a way Wilkes-Barre could eliminate property taxes? Probably not but there are a few other communities that have been able to do so, but the replacement dollars have to come from someplace.

Property taxes are typically based on a certain dollar figure per \$1,000 of a property's assessed valuation —are how American cities and towns fund the vast majorities of their respective local budgets. One town that eliminated its property tax is Dewey Beach. Some of you may have vacationed there in the summertime.

Dewey Beach does not have a conventional form of taxation. The town has no property tax, and so it gets its revenue through fees and permits imposed on the homeowners and businesses. It is annoying but there is no property tax. Nobody loses their home. If a homeowner wants to cut down a tree in Dewey Beach, they have to pay the town for a permit, and if a restaurant wants to push some tables out of the way and make a dance floor for one night, they have to pay the town for a permit.”

Yes, homeowners are nagged by regular fees and permits as well. A group called DelawareRight.com claims that it ends up being “the business owners who pay the lion's share of the cost for running the town and providing the services that all citizens benefit from. Wilkes-Barre has had a long term problem with businesses leaving town so at least for now, this is probably not the solution for us.

Stafford, Texas has no property taxes either. So how does Stafford do it? The Texas city, is reportedly the largest of about a dozen municipalities in Texas without property taxes. They get their revenue through sales taxes, franchise taxes and permit fees.

In Texas, the statewide sales tax is 6.25 percent, and local communities can then add on a maximum of another 2 percent. These are all novel ideas and worth examining but the bottom line is Wilkes-Barre must do its best to reduce its expenses overall while at the same time keeping the city safe, clean, and affordable..

The folks from The Pennsylvania Coalition of Taxpayer Associations PCTA, has been moving forward on property tax for a number of years. They say that for school districts there is no “Holy Grail” of property tax reform. Any property tax reform measure involves shifting the tax levy from one type of tax to another – there’s no free ride. But there are ways to fund our schools and to ensure a better education for our children that are fairer and more effective than property taxes. We wish them well and support them 100%

To the extent that this group and the PA State Lawmakers are able to gain tax relief for the huge burden of school taxes on the elderly and disabled and the poverty-stricken, the more money is available for families to meet their needs and expenses, even if cities such as Wilkes-Barre cannot reduce property taxes by much.

We have demonstrated that many Pennsylvanians, including far too many from Wilkes-Barre lose their homes and a lifetime’s work to sheriff’s sales each year because they can no longer afford to pay their property taxes. Senior citizens on fixed incomes are increasingly forced to sell their homes because of unrelenting increases in their tax burden. Young families cannot afford to purchase a home because the per-month property tax escrow is simply too high.

Job losses, outmigration, and abysmal state economic performance caused by burdensome property taxes are devastating Pennsylvania’s economy. Property tax relief is needed for sure.

HB 76 and SB 76, the Property Tax Independence Act, is supported by the Pennsylvania Coalition of Taxpayer Associations.

An Answer on Tax help for Wilkes-Barre

People are foreclosed upon for two reasons related to unpaid debts. One is they don’t pay their mortgage and two, they don’t pay their real estate taxes. Either of these will cause you to lose your home. Neither is a good thing. The sorrowful stories about foreclose based on a mortgage default or a tax default are very similar. In the Ilyce Gink story about crowdfunding below, her example is about a mortgage, but the same crowdfunding notion would apply for a situation involving real estate taxes.

How can Wilkes-Barre help the elderly, indigent, disabled, and poverty stricken?

Back in 2013, on July 30, Ilyce Glink wrote a compelling article for MoneyWatch about people helping people. It is still relevant. Her article title is very novel, but it makes the point.

Can a crowd save a house?

I thank MoneyWatch for my being able to print this article below.

Homeowners fight foreclosure through crowdfunding

Homeowners facing foreclosure certainly hope so. Struggling borrowers are turning to new crowdfunding sites to raise money from friends, family and even strangers to keep up with their mortgage /tax payments.

Ruth Caspary, 45, has launched a crowdfunding campaign on GoFundMe after losing her job in 2009 as a visual effects artist. Finding a new job was tough, so instead she joined her husband's dance instruction business, "Salsa with Juan," as a marketing manager and dance instructor.

Although her new career reduced her income, the two made ends meet for a while through the business and various side jobs. But late last year they started falling behind on the mortgage payments for their three-bedroom Oakland home.

This spring, Caspary received a letter that her home would fall into foreclosure on August 3 unless she could catch up on her mortgage payments, totaling \$15,000. The couple tried working with their lender, but to little avail. So last month, Caspary and her husband, Juan Gil, decided to ask for help.

"I just figured we'd reach out to our community and sort of bare our souls," Caspary said.

She's not alone. Listings asking donors to "Help save my children's home" and "Help avoid foreclosure" are popping up across dozens

of fundraising websites like GoFundMe, Indiegogo, FundRazr and GiveForward. Unlike Kickstarter, the popular crowdfunding site known mostly as a place where artists, inventors and entrepreneurs can raise funds for creative projects, these sites allow people to request funds for any purpose. The site then takes a cut of the donations ranging from 4 to 10 percent.

Most of these crowdfunding sites were established for people who needed a platform to help them organize fundraising for a specific cause, whether for an athlete raising money to compete in a national competition or a family asking for help paying off medical bills after an emergency.

"Some of the earliest campaigns were split in half," GoFundMe CEO Brad Damphousse said. "On one side you had life's most exciting chapters: weddings and honeymoons and youth sports and education and travel -- the fun stuff. On the other you had the really challenging times: an accident or an illness and associated medical expenses. It really was split from the get-go, and we've seen that trend continue."

In contrast to a health crisis, and fairly or not, foreclosures are often regarded as an avoidable crisis. That may explain why homeowners so far are struggling to raise money. In the 100 or so campaigns on GoFundMe, less than 1 percent have been successful. On other sites like Indiegogo and FundRazr, not a single home has been saved.

Caspary said she has detected some skepticism regarding her fundraising campaign, with one friend calling it "trust fund" and others pointedly refusing to donate. Yet her campaign is one of the most successful, having raised more than \$7,500 and passing the halfway mark of the couple's fundraising goal.

Indeed, Caspary is far from discouraged, even as the time ticks down for her to send the money to the bank. The community has rallied around them, offering emotional support and help with promoting the business and finding them more work, she said. "It's just nice to me that people acknowledging what we're going through, and also that they're willing to help us grow," Caspary

said. "If you've been good to your community, they will be good to you."

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Ilyce Glink



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A Wilkes-Barre Committee for helping poverty-stricken citizens of the City

31. Form Committee for private donations to help poverty-stricken citizens avoid foreclosure

We can and we must address this as a City administration. First of all, we need a committee of volunteers working with the City. We need an effective chair person. We need a procedure whereby somebody in tax trouble and in danger of foreclosure can approach the committee and meet with them. A second and very important part is to have donors contribute what they can through an on-line mechanism or through checks to the committee / City which can be stored in a separate account. Perhaps the committee can orchestrate its own crowdfunding.

For those approved to receive some forbearance from their taxes through this mechanism, the city would receive funds from this account and the individuals would be placed on solid footing thus avoiding foreclosure. Wyoming Valley for years has been *The Valley with a heart*. Wilkes-Barre must be a *City with a heart*.

Chapter 14 Nineteen Other Great Ideas for the City to Mull Over



All Part of John Q. Doe’s WB City Plan

These ideas are all part of the “50 Ways.” All of these notions from #32 to #59 must will be given major weight in the George C. Brown Administration. The other thirty-one points in the platform are discussed in detail in the prior chapters.

This chapter begins with a list of the 19 platform points so they can all be seen at once. They are numbered 32 to 50. Following the points being revealed below, the next part of the chapter shows the details behind these 19 platform points.

32. Programs for affluent former residents, donate & help startup businesses
33. Use WB Public Square even more effectively – local concerts, speeches
34. Support candidates for office – Use City Hall Council Chambers
35. Create Seniors Transportation Committee
36. Create Youth Activity Committee – such as CYC dances etc.

37. Continually explore recreation opportunities
38. Build / Rehabilitate Swimming pools for City Residents
39. Make better use of bike trails in Kirby Park – other side of dike
40. Bring back Charles Miner Memorial with flowers
41. Keep reading tips like those in article to make city more attractive :- 101 small ways you can improve your city--
<https://www.curbed.com/2016/9/22/13019420/urban-design-community-building-placemaking>
42. Invite Artists to decorate bus stops
43. Redesign crosswalks... Artists go to town with signature work & donors
44. Make designer seat benches in city spots --parking meters / bike rack.
45. Fight crime with neon.
46. Foster a guerrilla garden uprising-- permission for gardens in vacant lots--
47. Seed donations for gardens
48. Encourage amazing block parties in neighborhoods throughout the City.
49. Add the public libraries to the bus routes
50. Make some creative bicycle parking spots

Director of Development

Story by Brian Kelly

32. Programs for affluent former residents, donate & help startup businesses

The City should hire a person to help bring in funding from various sources to help Wilkes-Barre in its goals of revitalizing the city.

Whether this needs to be a full-time position or perhaps somebody working for the City Administrator should be determined shortly after the new Mayor (I endorse John Q. Doe) takes office.

Public Square is a gift from City planners

Story by Brian Kelly

33. Use WB Public Square even more effectively – local concerts, speeches

Those who study history know that our City, Wilkes-Barre, was founded in 1769 by John Durkee and a number of colonists from Connecticut. The City originally was known as Wyoming. Later, it was renamed in honor of two British members of parliament, John Wilkes and Col. Isaac Barre, who had defended the American colonies in parliamentary debates. The founders of Wilkes-Barre were smart as

they laid out the downtown in a way to accommodate public and business uses. Their design works still today.

Wilkes-Barre, nicknamed the “Diamond City,” was laid out in 1770 by the Connecticut settlers in what is known as typical New England fashion. They set aside two public spaces: common land along the riverfront (known today as the River Common), and a central civic square (known today as Public Square). The boundaries of the original town plan encompass most of today’s Downtown Wilkes-Barre.

The Public Square was always a busy place. After all it was the deemed center of town as well as the actual center of town. Its uses in the early period was as a spot for the Luzerne county Courthouse and a fact not bragged about in recent times, Wilkes-Barre had gallows on Public Square where they performed hangings for serious crimes.

On September 25, 1786, the Pennsylvania General Assembly passed a resolution which created Luzerne County. They took a hunk of a larger Northumberland County and named our county after Chevalier de la Luzerne, a French soldier and diplomat during the 18th century. Wilkes-Barre became the seat of government for the new territory. For years, until 1909, the Courthouse was located on Public Square.

We are blessed with our Public Square For all the good work that was done in making the City beautiful, there were always those who, for their own reasons, did not care as much about its beauty and wanted beautiful areas to be replaced for commercial reasons. Over the years, Public Square Park for example was always at risk of being ripped out and replaced with roads and buildings.

How about no Public Square?

In 1930, for example, The Wilkes-Barre Almanac documents the attempts of City Councilman John Nobel to extend Main and Market Streets through Public Square. At the time G.A.R. Members had been proposing a monument to be built where Nobel wanted the new road to go.

Thankfully more insightful minds than Nobel's were making the decision though Council did entertain destroying the Square for this

purpose. Without the criticism of the G. A.R. members and veterans of many wars, today, there might not be a Public Square.

For years, the downtown was built around public share and with a population approaching 90,000 Wilkes-Barre at one point was quite a city. WB Transit Buses and Martz Busses once saturated the Square bringing shoppers to a great downtown. In 1972 after the Flood, things went downhill and many of the historic buildings were taken down. Shop owners were able to cash in with the Redevelopment Authority if they did not revitalize and bring back their businesses. Wilkes-Barre has not fully recovered from the 1972 bulldozer mania fostered by redevelopment money. However, we can for sure.

In our recovery, it would help to find another prominent role for Public Square and the downtown area. Public Square is a major Wilkes-Barre asset in its uniqueness. Surely, the fountain should not be in a state of disrepair.

Besides small concerts and fiestas, and such, and the Farmer's Market, it would be good to permit the Square' use as a spot in which major issues can be discussed and speeches can be given on a regular (weekly basis) when the weather is acceptable.

Speakers and performers can be invited, or they may petition to be included in weekly day-long sessions that are both entertaining and informative. Those running for office for example, should be invited to give ½ hour speeches on the designated day of the week that Wilkes-Barre opens up the Square for discussions.

The Square should always be a discussion point and at Council meetings and in other business meetings of the city, the potential public uses of such a magnificent area should frequently be discussed.

Make it easier for WB citizens to run for office

34. Support candidates for office – Use City Hall Council Chambers

When Brian Kelly ran for office he asked Mayor Leighton for use of Council Chambers to have small public meetings. Ideally the City should permit and sponsor such events to keep the citizen talent alive and fresh for a job in public service.



Wilkes-Barre Council Chambers

Seniors – vital part of transportation routes

35. Create Seniors Transportation Committee

Seniors, especially those in high rises, without public transportation like to get out of the confines in which they are “trapped,” more often than city planners might think. Committees of seniors and others with an interest would more than likely be pleased to offer input to the planning of LCTA or other City run transportation on their behalf.

Need strong public committees – *youth activity*

36. Create Youth Activity Committee – such as CYC dances etc.

Nobody knows what the youth need or want more than the youth. And so, committees can be formed in the high schools to help guide city planners with recreational opportunities and others that would gain buy-in from the youth in our communities..

Wilkes-Barre needs public swimming

Story by Brian Kelly

37. Continually explore recreation opportunities

38. Build / Rehabilitate Swimming pools for City Residents

We must work to continually explore recreational opportunities so that our children can enjoy healthy lives in Wilkes-Barre

Sports, Swimming Pools, Games & Theatres

Besides the great restaurants and other eateries that have always been part of Wilkes-Barre, there were many other places that catered to teenagers who had a buck or two to spend, in the “olden days.” There were many great opportunities to do neat things in Wilkes-Barre. Many of the places I mentioned in my Wilkes-Barre book are now gone or are smaller in size; and their absence and/or right sizing has taken away much of the good feeling of our town. I think we need to bring them back as soon as we can. Swimming pools for the public more than likely top the list of needed fun things to bring back.

KIDS DEFY OLD MAN WEATHER AT GRIFFITH SWIMMING POOL ON HEIGHTS



COURTESY OF THE WILKES-BARRE PRESERVATION SOCIETY On July 8, 1936, 5,000 kids broke the attendance record at the Griffith Pool in the Heights on the hottest day of that summer.

Look at the fun they were having. Why not today?

There was a time in which a boy or a girl could play hardball, softball, whiffle ball, basketball, or football at Eyerman Park off Gilligan and

Andover Streets; the Company Yard on High Street by Parish, Espy Park by Espy St. Parsons, Scott Street & WB Blvd, Huber Park in the Mayflower, Miner Park on Old River Road and Hanover Street, Pine Ridge in Parsons, Coal Street Park off Coal Street. Kirby and Nesbitt Parks across the Susquehanna

There were a host of places across the city to play organized sports such as Little League, Teeners' League, and Senior Teeners' leagues. Soccer eventually came to Wilkes-Barre, but it is a recent phenomenon. Most importantly, there were vacant lots upon which homes had never been built, such as the one by the Homestead Tavern on Brown Street and the one by Mamary's Funeral home on Parish before Mamary's was even there. There was vacant-lot football aplenty. Every Neighborhood had its places.

And because there was not always a field or a vacant lot available, there was always the street where tag football, whiffle ball, and basketball were played from morning to night. And, of course there were the night time games—Hide and Seek, Relieveo, Statue of Liberty and others that made early evening life in Wilkes-Barre's “olden days,” worth waiting for the sun to go down.

It was as nice as it could be. Nobody was poor because we all had Wilkes-Barre to make things better. Maybe neighborhoods would be closer and friendlier and safer today if we could bring some of these notions back. Maybe WB officials can fulfill a promise and make Wilkes-Barre safe, clean, and affordable. That would go a long way to accomplishing lots of other great things.

This nice article about Swimming pools in Wilkes-Barre was written by the Citizens Voice' Sarah Scinto Staff Writer and it was published JULY 2, 2017



A boy goes off the diving board where the Kingston pool was packed Friday afternoon. Mark Morancv02poolsp3



Kingston still has a nice pool.

Before the flood of 1972, there was the flood of 1936. It was very early in the year and the City got the Griffith pool operational after the flood of 1936.

Sarah Scinto's article follows:

On the hottest day in 1936, 5,000 children spent the day splashing and swimming in the Griffith Park Pool.

According to Wilkes-Barre city councilman and historian Tony Brooks, that hot July 8 day marked the highest attendance the pool had seen since it opened as the city's first public pool in 1917.

"Can you imagine that, 5,000 kids in the pool?" he said. "If that was still the case all these pools would still be open."

[Mayor George and new Mayor Brown: It can be a bit like this once again so kids can socialize more in the summer. Kingston has managed to keep their pool going and it is doing well. What do they know what Wilkes-Barre doesn't?]

The Griffith Park Pool, like many others that once dotted the city, no longer exists, and as summer temperatures climb, publicly funded ways to keep cool have steadily declined in the area. Where Wilkes-Barre once had as many as five public pools in various city parks, lack of attendance and maintenance costs have left the city with only one public water attraction — the splash pad at the Coal Street complex.

The City has followed a county-wide trend. This summer, Kingston borough's pool is open, but the borough administrator said they may be the only one in Luzerne County other than a pool at Frances Slocum State Park.

"The last pool we had that was marginally functional was Coal Street," Butch Frati, director of operations for the City said. "It had a lot of issues."

[Butch: everything has issues especially when it is not cared for and maintained well. Nothing is free!]

Frati said maintenance costs and issues like leaks and availability of lifeguards prompted the city to close that last pool and open the splash pad that stands on the site today.

“It’s a quarter of the cost,” he said. “You have to maintain a pool, that takes care of itself. It chlorinates itself, it’s a pretty self-contained unit.”

Brooks recalled swimming in the Coal Street Park Pool as a child — even when it was an “aquadome,” a heated, covered pool open year round.

“The Aquadome came down maybe in 1980 because of expenses,” he said. “They converted it for just the summertime.”

[Poor leadership lets things get run down and then blames the fact that they are run-down on nobody taking care of maintenance... Dah!]e

At one time, Wilkes-Barre residents enjoyed pools at Griffith Park, Miner Park, Hollenback Park and on Parrish Street or they could visit smaller, wading pools at Scouten Lee Park and Eyerman Park, Brooks said.

“Each one of them closed for lack of use over time,” he said. “It was part expense and lack of use that each of these pools declined over time.”

Forty Fort’s 81-year-old pool did open for the season, but an expensive leak forced officials to close the pool to seek repairs. “We were open for just a few days,” said borough manager Bonnie Arnone. “We were losing 40,000 gallons of water every day. Between the water and chemical loss it was \$500 a day we were losing.”

Arnone said Forty Fort values providing a community pool for residents, but this year, the borough’s financial responsibility to the taxpayers had to outweigh the value of recreation.

“You have a fiduciary responsibility ... to spend tax dollars wisely and you have to say, ‘Is this the wisest choice?’” she said. Arnone has a specialist coming in to look at the pool and see if it can be repaired, but she’s prepared for the possibility of bad news. “It may have outlived its lifetime,” she said.

The pool had become a financial burden on the borough in recent years. Arnone said between lifeguard wages, chemicals, repairs, maintenance, water, electricity and other factors, the pool costs between \$40,000 and \$50,000 to run each summer.

“It’s hard to make that money back,” she said. “We’ve taken a loss on the pool for as many years as I’ve been here, which is seven.” Council always budgets for the pool, Arnone said, because of the value it adds to the community.

“It’s a community gem,” she said. “It offers somewhere for kids to go during the summer.”

But with pools popping up in backyards throughout the community, attendance and membership has dropped. Arnone said the borough even lowered membership and day pass fees last year in the hope of generating more attendance.

...

“It’s very important to the community and it’s always been,” he said.

Kingston officials secured a \$750,000 grant and poured some borough funds into the pool to complete a \$1.4 million renovation that debuted last year.

“There was too much history and value in that pool to not keep it going,” he said. “It made sense for us to invest ... to turn over the pool for the upcoming generation.”

Attendance at the Kingston pool broke borough records in 2016, and Keating said the lack of other pools in the area will likely keep those numbers high.

“Last year was a very, very good year,” he said. “We ended the year, I believe, with about \$16,000 in our checking account and roughly \$13,000 in a money market account. I expect to do much better this year.”

Anyone from the area can use the Kingston pool, Keating said, provided anyone over the age of 18 signs a liability waiver and provides some form of identification for staff to keep on file.

...

Fрати said while a public pool is “off the radar” in Wilkes-Barre for the time being, city officials will look out for grants that might help bring residents more ways to keep cool in the summer.

“I do feel there’s a need for the pool, at least one pool,” he said.

[What a shame that Kingston and Forty Fort can maintain their pools but a much bigger City with a \$50 million budget has to punt on the people. Wilkes-Barre can spend more wisely than having 53 different job titles budgeted for overtime!]

[I am counting on George Brown doing a great job for the City. For \$50 million dollars, what does the city do for the people? Ask yourself that one folks and you won’t come up with much.. We sure can do better.]

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Pools bring communities together.

Old fart politicians are why Wilkes-Barre has no swimming pools. I apologize for the effect that sentence may have had on your olfactory senses...but it is true. I’d get rid of the politicians before the pools. With a 2018 budget of almost \$50 million, it is hard to believe that there was not enough budget to keep a couple pools alive in a City as large as Wilkes-Barre. Our politicians somehow have little pride in their City and it sure bugs the heck out of me.

That’s why I ran for Mayor a few years back. Poor politicians and officials equal poor results. We have had that for sure for a long time in Wilkes-Barre. I am glad that George Brown ran for Mayor and I hope to help in any way I can.

If you think like me, always make sure you watch who you vote for. Forty Fort and Kingston are not forcing our leaders on us so they can look good. We do it to ourselves. With George Brown, we have hope again and hopefully the hope will not diminish as the accomplishments come rolling in.

Somehow the ice skating rink charges \$8.00 and \$4.00 for skates and they make it. Remember, at one time everybody in WB had to buy a patch for their bathing suit. Our current politicians have lost their concern for the people of Wilkes-Barre. Folks, that is why we need a Mayor who cares.

We are told that everybody has a pool today. Well, maybe people with some money have a pool but the poverty rate in Wilkes-Barre is 35%. We can do much better as a city but we have to choose our officials wisely. Make sure those for whom you vote think like you do.

Pools were all there was in the 1950's

Swimming pools are near and dear to my heart. My sister Nancy is 3 ½ years older than me. She and my brother Ed would walk me to Miner Park Pool almost every day in every summer that I can remember. The beautiful shade trees where Kistler School is now were the perfect venue for eating a jelly and peanut butter sandwich for lunch and washing it down with an orange drink or soda. Arriving early in the morning often we would often find George Jones, the maestro of City pools past, chlorinating the pool perfectly before letting anybody get in.

Miner Park Pool complex was a testimony to good planning in Wilkes-Barre. It was round with a big pool and a little pool and a catwalk in between. It was huge. It had a ten-foot board and two small diving boards.

The Charles Miner family had donated the land on which the pool and the park were built to the City for public recreation. The pool had a magnificent shower/fountain in the middle of the little pool that was very refreshing for all but very scary and a little over my head. I recall being scared when I was about five years old frolicking in the pool by the fountain.

It was a big trek from the Rolling Mill Hill to Miner Park, but well worth it. Thanks Nancy and thanks Ed for taking me.

Miner Park Swimming Pool South Wilkes-Barre See Fountain in Middle



Hollenback Swimming Pool, also built by the Feds with WPA money. had been around forever and then it too disappeared. Back in 1938, there was a debate about the pool's filtering system. Some urged that hard coal would make a better filter than sand for the Hollenback swimming pool. Why is there no Hollenback Pool? If our grandparents who made little pay could afford a pool, why not us?

I have a friend who one time was my manager at IBM before we both retired. After living in beautiful Burlington Vermont and seeing how the well-to-do took care of things for everybody without raising taxes, he was amazed at his observations of Northeastern PA.

Surely the Miner family, mentioned often in Wilkes-Barre's yearly almanacs, along with the Kirby family are few and far between. For their own altruism, they have really helped and always seemed to help whenever they could..

Hollenback Pool Parsons Wilkes-Barre – A Fun Place



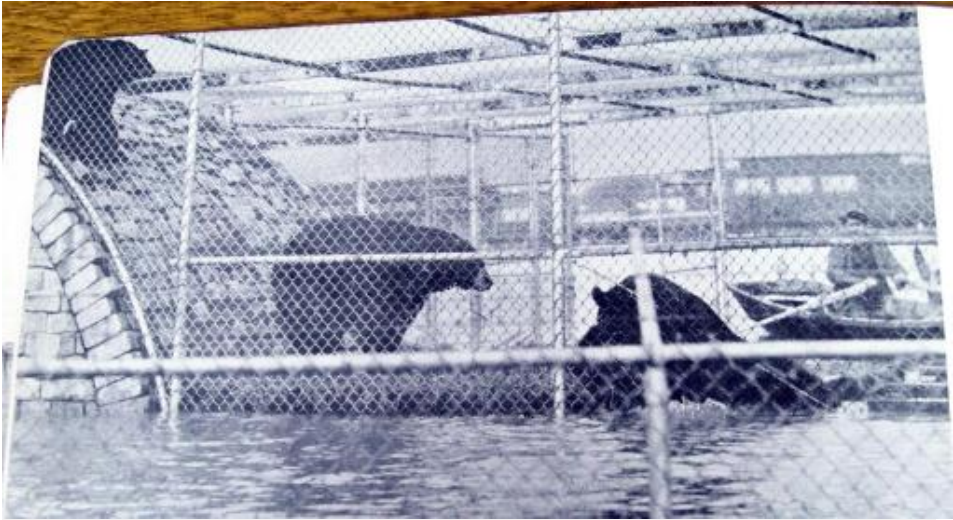
By the way, about Burlington Vermont. It should be a place that our public officials ought to try to emulate. It actually comes as no surprise to me that Burlington VT recently caught national attention for its quality of living. They were ranked #2 in Kiplinger's 2013 "10 Great Places to Live" Without dreams, there are no ideas; there are no plans; and there are no positive actions. If those running for the office of Mayor cannot identify goals that the City's residents agree are important, why should we elect them?

Revitalize Kirby & Nesbitt Park bike trails

Story by Brian Kelly

39. Make better use of bike trails in Kirby Park – other side of dike

From the time I was seventeen until my twenties I had a small Honda or a moped or a bigger Honda trail bike. I loved the bikes over the years. I even had two helmets. I took my motor bikes out to the other side of the dike quite often even after the flood of 1972. I think motor bikes were not permitted so eventually I began to obey the law.



Kirby Park Zoo Bears during the 1936 Flood, "Lest We Forget: Wyoming Valley Flood of 1936"—Luzerne County Historical Society Collection

Many people are still unaware that Wilkes-Barre owns the river frontage on the Kingston side of the dike all the way down to North Street. So, we both Kirby Park and Nesbitt Park are part of Wilkes-Barre. Wilkes-Barre needs to make these parks nice again and make them safe as undesirables now frequent (way too frequently) these one-time great areas.

As a kid, my brother Ed, who is six years older than I, would take me over to the other side of the Kirby Park dike and he would find these *bike or walking trails*. They all seemed to have great dips and turns. That area of the park on the other side of the dike close by the river shore had one time been a zoo before being wiped out in the 1936 flood –at a time when there was no dike. It was a great place to ride a bike. I took my kids there when I was a new parent. I brought the whole neighborhood on bicycles and we were careful on the Wilkes-Barre side traversing the streets with our bikes.

We must do a lot more with this area as well as Kirby Park and Nesbitt Park to enhance recreational opportunities for the City. I might recommend joining in a joint project with Kingston in Nesbitt Park and building a great big, indestructible pool. We can do anything we choose.

The Charles Miner Memorial

Story by Brian Kelly

40. Bring back Charles Miner Memorial with flowers

When I was five years old, my father paid one dollar to a bright kid across the street for a bike he had made for me. His name was Carly Blaine. He and Joe Pahler made bikes on High Street mostly for themselves. This one was for me. It had no chain guard or fenders and the pedals were iffy but when I put it in the gutter, the nine-inch curb in front of my house was enough for me to mount the bike and take off. I always had to dismount at the curb or a high spot some place in town. I was five years old at the time, but I got bigger eventually.

Every year I noticed I could throw a baseball and a football further. We played hardball where Mamary's funeral home now is in a field that looked huge at the time. When the neighbors and I got to be ten years old, we were going to Miner Park a lot to play ball and eventually we joined the little league. It was a long ride from the Rolling Mill hill but my trusty 26" bike got me to Miner Park no sweat.

I loved baseball and would travel wherever I could to get a game. I can recall one Memorial Day after all the morning festivities with the boat blowing up in the river, etc. and the big celebration ,going to Miner Park for a pick-up game. I saw a man that I knew as Corbett hitting golf balls from one end of the park to another. He hit a ton and then he would walk to the other end and hit them again. He had his own driving range. Nobody else was in the park. Just us.

We did not talk. I went everywhere looking for a kid to play catch with or to get a game. There was nobody. At the time, there was a pool called Miner Park Pool and I think it was closed for the holiday also. Or it had yet to open for the season. What a bummer.

What I remember about that day is that I stopped for the first time on the way out of the park. The end of Hanover Street was across Old River Road from the major Miner Park entrance. There was a monument there that I had never paid attention to. It was for Charles Miner who had donated the Park to the City for recreation. I suspect many kids like me had never taken the time to look at it.

It had some nice words to say about Mr. Miner. I recall thinking that it was swell that he gave so many kids such a lift in life having so many ballparks – teeners’ league, little league, softball and even tennis courts. There were red ash mini roads in the park, which were great for big riding.

I looked around the monument and noticed the absolutely magnificent array of flowers of all kinds. It was like a botanical garden, but I did not know at the time what a botanical garden was. There were zinnias and impatiens, and marigolds of all sizes all arranged to make the whole area appear sculpted in flowers. Somebody had spent a lot of time making that monument beautiful. I always noticed the monument whenever I went to Miner Park after that day.

One day after the '72 flood I was there and there no longer was a pool. Instead there was a school, a beautiful School for sure—Kistler Elementary. The monument and all of its flowers were gone. It was disappointing. I wondered if the Miner family had given permission? I still wonder

I would ask the City to find out what happened to the monument and the flowers and the trust fund that paid for the flowers. I would love to see this put back where it was for kids like I was back then to enjoy. Maybe that’s why today I appreciate how special flowers are.

Perhaps one day in the future the city can locate a picture of the monument in full bloom in its archives or perhaps the Times Leader might have it. It would be nice to see it restored for sure but even a picture of it would be nice.

Look for new, creative ideas everywhere

41. Keep reading tips like those in the article in the URL below to make our City more attractive :-- 101 small ways you can improve your city--<https://www.curbed.com/2016/9/22/13019420/urban-design-community-building-placemaking>

There are lots of ideas in books, magazines and the Internet about creative undertakings for Wilkes-Barre City. Those that follow came

from the articles referenced above. There is no reason why, with a little Cush built by kind donors and supporters of our city that we can't make a few lists for creative genius to get our big projects done. Thank you for your consideration.

Artists can create beautiful bus -stops

42. Invite Artists to decorate bus stops

Get your easels, get your paints, get your other necessary supplies. See if the City has extra. It's time to fix up your favorite neighborhood bus stop. We don't always think of our own bus-stops here in Wilkes-Barre but if we built a new one tomorrow it would present just as bland and boring a seat as a typical urban bus stop. It would be a functional, feckless box of plastic and not much more.

It does not have to be that way . Bus stops are a key part of any urban infrastructure—even Wilkes-Barre. All bus-stops need immediate upgrades and there are people around the world who right now are taking action. So can we.

We just need the right community groups to meet and make a call to action with sharp redesigns. You can see examples by heading out on an Internet journey to Bus Stop Moves in Cleveland, which covers station walls with fitness instructions, or you can sneak off to Ride, Rally, Ride in Memphis.





Interesting artistic bus-stops

Artists beautifying crosswalks

43. Redesign crosswalks... Artists go to town with signature work & donors

With a few artistic tools, the creative among us can redesign a crosswalk. Wilkes-Barre will support your effort with donated materials. This notion is not new; but it is not old either. In 2015, for example, a handful of Seattle streets were reborn when a rogue designer painted colorful new crosswalks. Instead of wiping them away, the city made them a permanent part of the landscape, and even appropriated the idea, setting up a community crosswalk program so other neighborhoods could create their own colorful street art. Great idea!

Between promoting community pride and increasing pedestrian visibility and safety, it's a quick, colorful step forward. For those interested, type in redesign crosswalks and you'll find other examples in Atlanta, Los Angeles, and Santa Monica. How about adding Wilkes-Barre to that list. Then the sentence would look like the following when the next city is talking about it:

For those interested, type in redesign crosswalks and you'll find other examples in Atlanta, Los Angeles, Santa Monica, and Wilkes-Barre. Looks kind of good there, doesn't it?.



Build Attractive Benches

44. Make designer seat benches in city spots --parking meters / bike rack.

A nice thing that carpenters and craftsmen can do for their City is build an attractive bench and place it where it's needed. The older I get

the more I appreciate a seat in the mall or a store while my wife shops. They say there is an urban seating deficit the world over and more and more cities are building their own street seats. Wilkes-Barre is the perfect city with a lot of artists and crafts-people and carpenters to help put their mark on the city and help a few people around town who could use some time off their feet. Here are two examples:



We can fight crime with neon paint

45. Fight crime with neon.



Why not try to brighten up City areas and fight crime with neon. Especially in a city strapped for cash, streetlights are always low on the

priority list as they're expensive to install, maintain, and keep powered. But they've also been proven to deter crime so when you can light up, light up with a lamppost and a bulb if possible. But short of that you can take advantage of moonlight and car-light.

Two Philadelphia artists recently took it upon themselves to brighten a dangerous South Philly block with a "neon mural." The illuminated work of art is now a social-media destination after dark, putting eyes on the street at a time when the neighborhood needs it most. No criminal likes to do their trade in full view of the world.

Wilkes-Barre flower & vegetable gardens galore

- 46. Foster a guerrilla garden uprising-- permission for gardens in vacant lots--
- 47. Seed donations for gardens

Guerrilla gardening: a horticultural revolution



If you like to create a raucous, how about trying on a guerrilla garden uprising. Even when you are not there, your garden will keep your presence alive. Green thumbs in neighborhoods most often have private plots and backyards in which to grow. This is good. As folks get older, they may not be as spry in being able to till their gardens, plant their seeds, and harvest their crops. But, chances are if there were a program that would permit neighborhood kids or adults to volunteer,

a lot of special people would have the muscle to maintain their gardens. The City can sponsor such activities.

Additionally, there are a lot of vacant lots that will remain weedy and unkempt without a lot of work during the growing season. Why not put them on the front lines of a guerrilla garden uprising. This would involve surreptitiously filling in unkempt lots or small patches of untended land with plants and flowers or tossing a "seed-bomb" at a hard to reach patch of land. The City can create signs where such Community gardening is permitted FIFO and can publish a list of t of known gardeners willing to help the neophytes . This can turn lost space into lush greenery.

You won't be the only guerilla in the garden. Guerrilla gardening is now an international movement with a small, completely unorganized contingent in the United States. The concept - to take a bare or neglected public or quasi-public space and introduce an element of gardening there - is open to interpretation and constantly changing. Guerrilla gardens are public-spirited, jaunty, but sometimes ragtag expressions of the power of a flower. They are a little bit radical, but more than anything, guerrilla gardens suggest very gently to those who notice that flowers and gardens make the world a better place.

A gentleman named Richard Reynolds, one of the leaders of the movement, maintains a blog with invaluable tips on how to reclaim "unloved public spaces." Type Richard Reynolds into your browser to learn more.

Seed Donations

47. Seed donations for gardens

The City can facilitate the distribution of free seeds for guerilla gardens and victory gardens and whatever we choose. We have that big public works facility which can accommodate a lot of seed bags which Wilkes-Barre citizens can use on their properties or in vacant lots signed for that purpose. I love the idea of seed-bombs with wild flowers and other goodies to brighten up even the most unreachable ugly terrain. Identifying seed-bomb targets would be a great adventure for scouts or neighborhood groups.

Throw a great block party for your neighbors

Story by Brian Kelly

48. Encourage amazing block parties in neighborhoods throughout the City.

Albert Peters threw the best block Party Wilkes-Barre ever had

Go ahead folks, Call City Hall and tell them what you are doing. Maybe they'll give you the loan of a flatbed trailer or the John Jacob Sauer bandshell so you can have your own entertainment.

Butchie Peters, the current proprietor of the Peters' "corner" Stores in Wilkes-Barre, and his brother Thunsie Peters the current consiglieri of the business, know what a great man their dad Albert Peters always was. Many neighborhood people would not have made it through the depression or the war without their orange "tick" books that were as good as cash at Peters'.

I know that Mr. Peters could never have been repaid for all he provided for people without the money to buy groceries, during their tough times during the depression and the war. He was our High Street neighborhood's savior for many. My dad loved him. He gave us credit and my dad paid from the book every week when he got paid by the Stegmaier Brewery.

Butchie Peters respected the work of his dad and he shared with me that his dad propped up a lot of needy people in the depression era and during the war and other times. I know that is true because everybody loved him. He was one of a kind. I suspect in other neighborhoods in the City, there are many other local merchants who were heroes during these tough times—the depression and then WWII. The Supermarket store had not really yet arrived, and because mostly everybody walked everywhere, everybody in the neighborhoods knew each other.

My father told me a great true story—they're the best kind—that happened at the end of World War II. Albert Peters called all the neighbors together to celebrate the US victory and the fact that the "boys" would be coming home. His own son Thunsie was still over in Europe at the time engaged in mop-up operations. The

celebration event happened in the middle of High Street in this area of the City. It was a neighborhood block party of the finest kind.

Mr. Peters bought the main ingredient -- a big keg of local beer and he put it in the middle of High Street, tapped it and provided all that was needed for the neighborhood people to come out to celebrate this historic event in US history. It was all on Mr. Albert Peters. He provided everything for the celebration. It was a reason to celebrate and a great man and Wilkes-Barre hero to many, Albert Peters made sure everybody had a great time. I am proud to have been Mr. Peters' Wilkes-Barre Record morning paper boy to his home on Blackman Street for seven years.

In 2015 when Peters Ice Cream on the corner of Parish and Blackman sold my book, *Wilkes-Barre PA: Return to Glory*, I stopped by to see how things were going and to drop off some more books. At the same time, I gave Thunsie his own copy of the book. I had worked for Thunsie in my youth selling Ice Cream cakes and shoveling his sidewalk and whatever else he asked. That's how I got the money to buy my first train.

When I saw Thunsie and Butchie Peters and Johnnie Hyder in the store, I asked if I could read a few passages from the book. Thunsie could not see as well as when he was bowling nothing but strikes at the Wilkes-Barre Republic's six-lane Bowling Alley on Blackman Street before the fire in 1980. I was often his pinboy. They all agreed to permit me to read a passage.

I read the story of their dad and what a great a man he was and how he put on the famed WWII block party celebration on High Street. Thunsie noticed that he was not in any of the passages that I had read, and he told me why. He was still in the war that was in mop-up operations overseas after the US declared victory. In the 2015 book, I did not know this, so it did not make it to that book until this update.

I now take the opportunity to thank Mr. Thunsie Peters for his great service in the war and I hope he lasts forever. I was his boy Friday in many ways at the time. I was too young to mind the store, but he found lots of other work for me to do for many years.

He made ice cream on Blackman and Brown streets for what seems like a million years and it was the best of the best. He is a good man, and he was a good boss. I always thought the best of him and still do. He is a man with a great sense of humor. Though I am 71 years old now as I write these words, he still treats me like a ten-year old kid – not exactly -- but I figure his demeanor towards me is just in case he needs the snow removed from the sidewalks in the future and the other “kids” are not available.

OK, I no longer have to shovel the sidewalks at Blackman and Brown, but I do remember. It helped me be a better man. Thank you Thunsie. God bless you forever. Sorry I missed you in the last book. When this book is printed, I will be up the store looking for you with your very own copy. Yes, I will bring Butchie a copy also.

Now, I am sure the Peters family would not mind somebody commemorating Albert Peters’ block party. Who’ll be the first?

Make libraries more accessible

49. Make portable libraries and add the public libraries to the bus routes

Even as the definition of libraries changes and evolves, to many of us, there is a great pleasure in the joy of reading a book. It remains a constant. In Dallas, for example, they have a project called the Little Free Libraries Project. What they did was help construct and decorate makeshift shelves positioned across the community.

This was part of a wider community literacy project and it was inspired by the wider Little Free Libraries movement. It is all about creating a real-life literary community on city streets to the extent possible

For Wilkes-Barre, the libraries such as the Osterhaut or the King’s or Wilkes libraries can create portable shelving and/or a truck and have library days in various neighborhoods. Another idea is to invite the people in the high-rises to come use the library free and add these buildings to the spots where the busses come and stop regularly.

Make additional bike parking.

50. Make some creative bicycle parking spots

Artful bike racks and bikeshare stations are sprouting up everywhere in the country. Even with this, popular roadways and sidewalks can still become overcrowded with riders angling to anchor a U-Lock. Small businesses can help make a difference by placing some DIY rack-space out front to make the bicycle parking situation more bearable at no charge to taxpayers.

Chapter 15. Eight More Great Ideas After the “50 Ways.”



51. Create more free parking in downtown and give a half hour parking time for each quarter in the meter.
52. Eliminate pot holes 100% throughout the city
53. Create an emergency citizen council to fill in dangerous potholes to save citizens the issues of travelling through the city.
54. Keep thinking about simple ways to make things better without having major price-tags.
55. Redefine Public Square as in the past as our most marketable storefront area, 55. The Square should be the City’s finest commercial area for stores
56. Bring in several new hotels in the downtown area and perhaps one or two in the new mini-malls
57. “Open Streets Wilkes-Barre” temporarily restrict motor vehicle traffic on one or more streets at a time to enable walking, biking, running, playing, or even a block party with street dancing.
58. Make Wilkes-Barre over as a New Wilkes-Barre--it all starts with a dream. Dreams become ideas when they seem practical; ideas are translated into plans, and then action is taken to implement the good things that are planned

Free Parking Downtown

Judicially create a system whereby the City create more free parking in the downtown area. Change the parking meters to give a half hour parking time for each quarter in the meter instead of 8 minutes.

Pot Holes No Longer ‘R US

To many drivers, it defies logic that governments won’t compensate citizens for car accidents caused by deteriorating roads. But in this era of penny pinching and budget shortfalls, car damage, fault and compensation can have disastrous effects on a government’s bottom

line. It is a vicious circle to be sure, but the reality is that if you've sustained vehicle damage after hitting a pothole, your chances of recovery from the responsible party are slim at best.

Create a garage area called the City Garage in an area of the City's main garage. Work out a plan to use Voc-Tec students to work on cars damaged by city pot holes. Charge 20% of the going rate for the fix plus use the City's discount on parts. The objective would be for the city to bear no cost. WB Citizens who are OK paying the 20% fee plus parts costs could bring their vehicles in for any type of service that the city agrees to fix. Great learning for students and a great gift to poor people who get nailed by city pot holes.

Let citizen volunteers use cold patch on potholes

When a citizen reports a pot hole, a citizens council can dispatch a volunteer to the pothole site and fill it in with cold patch until regular maintenance can be applied. Care must be taken that volunteers are not injured and the city faces no liability.

Citizens making the city better

Because the city can save money by preventing costly episodes of anything, it would be cost effective for the city to create awards to give to residents who report things that actually save the city real sums of money. Each winner of an award would get a coupon to defray the cost of a dinner for two at a WB restaurant. All winners would be put in a bucket at the end of a fiscal year for a bigger prize at a top rung WB restaurant. The restaurants in this scenario bear all the costs. And they get publicity. The city pays nothing. This helps in the area of simple ways to make things better without having major price-tags for the city

Bring Residents & Businesses to Public Square & first block

For years, Public Square had been the greatest area in the city for businesses that directly serve the people. If anybody has a listing of all the businesses on the square before the flood, I will print this in a revision of this book. I am thinking of One Hour Porterizing, Mal's Mens Shop, Pizza Casa, Boston Candy Kitchen, The Square can again be the City's finest commercial area for stores etc. I would ask the

thinkers to consider putting multiple escalators on the Square and the first bloc of the intersecting streets to bring patrons to a new phenomenon in Wilkes-Barre known as the Second Level. Just like an inside mall, this outside mall would provide a steel walkway above the ground level accessible by escalator and steps. A whole second level of storefronts would be made possible and a novel shopping and restaurant experience for all. These would be the most unique and thus the most marketable storefronts in the entire state of Pennsylvania.

Another idea is to create one block or less of a third layer. In this area, I could see ballrooms such as the old Stardust and Granada being built and taking just enough storefront area to permit easy egress and ingress to the public rentable ballrooms. With kitchen facilities consider the great weddings that would come in downtown when Wilkes-Barre shows it is a first class area to have a great event. The Kirby could be brought in as another positive. Why not show the guests a 20-minute special show like a Disney Adventure while the cocktail hour at the main ballroom on the third floor area is being prepared. We can do anything we choose to make WB a First Class Town.

Build a few hotels downtown.

With the second and third levels of the marketable storefronts occupied by businesses, several first rate hotels could find properties in the first blocks even reaching into the second block off Public Square as ideal spots for their hotels to connect with. Let's invite them in to give Wilkes-Barre PA a spin.

The Mini Malls have previously been described. With a pedestrian transportation system featuring a train around the city and other means of getting around Wilkes-Barre downtown without missing your car, there would be a lure to the downtown areas as in the days of the electric trolley cars. .

Make it easy to move around the new downtown city

There are lots of ways to get the pedestrian flow to be attracted and then to keep moving around the city to shopping venue and entertainment venue and restaurant venue after venue. The notion we call "Open Streets Wilkes-Barre" would be on days when traffic per se

is not necessary, the city temporarily restricts motor vehicle traffic on one or more streets at a time to enable walking, biking, running, playing, or even a block party with street dancing. The area does not have to be downtown but depending on the transportation offered to pedestrians, it may be highlighted the best.

Connecting busses to pick up the high rise population of elderly gentlemen and ladies and bring them to the slow moving transportation hub would add immense pleasure to their lives and if they bring their purses and wallets, it would give them an easy way to make purchases in the newly marketized shops with escalators to floor two and three. Perhaps a people-mover on one block would also be a great idea.

Wilkes-Barre becomes New Wilkes-Barre

Why not provide Wilkes-Barre an overall makeover with the end result being *New Wilkes-Barre*. All areas of the city would not need to be called New Wilkes-Barre but certain sections could be popularized by being known as Old Wilkes-Barre if we first create a *New Wilkes-Barre*. We can do whatever we want. The one thing an almost declared dead city like ours -- Wilkes-Barre PA cannot afford to do is to put up a sign that says: Pass us by, We're dead. Got to San Jose instead.

No way Jose! We are Wilkes-Barre!

We are the FULLY ALIVE CITY!

See if we are kidding! Thank you folks for your attention.

By the way:

Great ideas for cities as a topical area is getting much more press every day. Though when I wrote this book, I thought the idea of 50 ways for a better city was a unique idea that was uniquely mine. Since then I have seen similar ideas across the Internet for various cities. The plan we have for "50 Ways" is for Wilkes-Barre specifically so I am glad you read this book first. If you want other ideas, take the search words, and see what you get

"50 ways for a better city"

Enjoy!

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