

## **Summary of Stakeholder Visioning Workshops**

**November 12-13, 2008**

**City Council Chambers**

The Planning Department issued an open invitation using multiple modes of communication for members of the community to attend and participate at one or more of the following “Stakeholder Visioning Workshops”:

- Wednesday, November 12, 2008; 11:00 AM..... Public Officials
- Wednesday, November 12, 2008; 1:00 PM..... WVU Officials
- Wednesday, November 12, 2008; 5:00 PM.....Downtown Residents (concurrent)
- Wednesday, November 12, 2008; 5:00 PM.....Neighborhood Residents (concurrent)
- Thursday, November 13, 2008; 8:00 AM.....Downtown Merchants/Businesses
- Thursday, November 13, 2008; 11:00 AM.....Downtown Property Owners/Managers
- Thursday, November 13, 2008; 11:00 AM..... Public Service Providers

Kennedy Smith of The CLUE Group and Glenn Walters and Hillary Gerstenberger of Design Workshop facilitated the workshops. Glenn Walters served as lead facilitator and began each session by stating the “Goals” of the Visioning Workshops.

### **Goals for the Visioning Workshops:**

1. Introduce planning project
2. Introduce team
3. Begin to create a vision
4. Document SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats)

Walters stated that the one of the objectives of the project from an economics standpoint will be to provide downtown merchants with new economic tools that have been deployed in other similar markets. He noted that the team will be meeting with all stakeholder segments as the downtown is everyone’s downtown. The team will be looking at solutions and choices for economic success as well as other comparative successful programming. Walters noted that the team will endeavor to go through a thorough list of economically viable options and present them to the community to see what seems most wanted and liked.

The following questions were presented to each stakeholder group. Each of the questions below is followed by input recorded during the above noted visioning workshop sessions. The input enumerated below is not organized by nor intended to represent preference or importance.

### **Introduce a vision for 10 years from now: What will Downtown Morgantown be?**

- Pedestrian friendly by being walkable (reach all your needs in the downtown area)
- Public transportation (neighborhoods connected, everyone connected)
- Environmental and economic sustainability.
- Sensitivity to historic preservation (adaptive use) especially of historic buildings downtown

- Downtown that serves as a true regional destination.
- Friendly for all ages, especially from 5 PM to 10 PM because there is a lapse between nighttime entertainment and daytime shops. Opportunity to make 5-10pm a kid and family friendly time.
- Commercial uses and business hours that meet the consuming needs of heterogeneous markets and not just students.
- Greater emphasis and significant investment in downtown gateways.
- Is highly visible and draws from the region and beyond.
- Activity during all four seasons.....perhaps with ongoing regular special events, not just seasonal or once a year festivals
- Will include affordable housing...students can't afford to live in higher echelon housing. Some type of lower income housing (subsidized) needs to be included because they cannot afford it.
- High density housing in the downtown for all household types.
- Community commits to vision, which provides good foundation for decisions.
- Places to go without having to spend money.
- Youth involved in planning.
- Continuing development patterns along the waterfront and wharf district.
- Will be considered a regional cultural hub that includes performing arts, visual arts, etc.
- Perhaps a residential overlay district could be placed over the waterfront.
- Will include safer, more inviting, and more efficient pedestrian crossing locations especially between the waterfront and the central downtown area (across University Avenue)
- Will include improved green spaces, greenways, pocket parks, etc.
- Will include food production, food sales, and unique food tourist restaurants.
- Will include more housing but not high-rise towers of students.
- Will be more bike-friendly.
- Police officers will be deployed to walk the streets and be more visible especially during nightlife hours.
- An improved relationship between City and University.
- The original town center needs to be promoted.
- An alternate route for heavy trucks driving through downtown will be provided and enforced so that sidewalk areas can become livelier through café seating, merchandise, etc.
- Increased advertising to let people know there is something going on in the downtown.
- The "Love It" in Main Street's moniker of "Shop it, Dine it, Love it" needs to be more of an emphasis.

- A better comprehensive system of serving the needs of homeless people while preserving the quality of life, enjoyment, and vitality of the downtown.
- Will include an urban outdoor recreational community.
- Development incorporates the Rail-to-trail into design.
- Strong orientation to the river.
- Facades have been revitalized.
- An urban design standard is implemented.
- Additional riverfront development continuing through Sunnyside and connecting to Star City.
- Presents assets and resources are maximized.
- Congestion is addressed by improving traffic flows, maximizing connected alternate forms of transportation
- Find creative ways for people to park outside downtown but still be able to access downtown (satellite or remote parking).
- Student housing in neighborhoods around downtown are converted back to single-family occupancy.
- Significant investment in public art in the downtown has been made.
- Sidewalk and outdoor dining is available.
- Invest in a civic plaza, not just county courthouse square, to create a sense of place.
- Covered arcade from river to Spruce Street.
- A clear vision that is developed by the community and implemented by the City.
- Downtown needs to be the region's central core with a mix of uses.
- Synergy between waterfront and central downtown.
- Concentration of fine arts and entertainment.
- Sustainable development.
- Lower density growth rather than high-rise development.

### **Recorded input of the S.W.O.T. exercise**

#### **What are Downtown's Strengths:**

- Recession resilient...the community has never really been affected by national economic downturns because the community's healthcare, education, and government.
- Students.
- University.
- History.
- Historic buildings.

- Economic stability.
- Neighborhoods within walking distance.
- Affordable leasable square footage in downtown.
- Available medical care.
- Superior public school system.
- Parades and events.
- Downtown WVU campus.
- Existing businesses.
- Neat architecture.
- Ongoing special events.
- Mountain Line Transit.
- Rail-trail and amphitheater.
- Decorative lighting and baskets.
- High level of education.
- Locally-owned businesses.
- High standard of living.
- Cosmopolitan for West Virginia.
- Financial stability of City government.
- Captures people/centrally located.
- Jobs.
- Infrastructure.
- Variety of cultures.
- Bars.
- Walkability of downtown because of the size and layout.
- Mon Arts Center.
- The City's streetscape improvement project has made downtown seem more walkable.
- Walkable from some neighborhoods.
- Strong Main Street Morgantown.
- Entertainment, bars and sports clubs, nightlife, billiards, pool halls.
- Warner Theater.
- Low crime rate compared to other "urban" centers.
- Farmer's market.
- Multiple public parking venues.

- Parades and events that happen every year.
- Community spirit.
- Cultural diversity.
- Adjacent to river.
- The rail-to-trail along the Monongahela River.
- The trail and dog park along Deckers Creek.
- City government that is economically stable and has the capacity to support downtown and community projects and programming.
- Geographical location and proximity to larger metropolitan areas.
- Feels safe.
- History of community involvement through Chamber's Vision 2000 and Vision 2020 committee structure.
- Met Theatre.
- Dog park along Deckers Creek.
- Energy.
- Civic engagement.
- PRT's Walnut Street stop.
- Religious institutions.
- Library.
- Easy interstate access.
- Active arts community.
- Monongahela River.
- Morgantown Museum.
- Two international markets.
- Boat docks.

**What are Downtown's Weaknesses:**

- Students.
- Poor trash management (no back alleys for trash collection)
- Lack of a recycling program.
- Litter.
- Student drivers.
- Confusing meter system i.e. varying time frames.
- Growing out instead of up.

- WVU as a real estate developer.
- Falling owner-occupancy within the City.
- Affordable workforce housing.
- No bike racks.
- Illegal drug sales and gang activity.
- Transit doesn't run late enough.
- Merchant employee parking.
- Homeless population.
- Lack of orientation to and vistas of river.
- Bars and nightlife that attract undesirables from out of town and out of state.
- Heavy trucks cutting through downtown.
- WVU growth that over runs community.
- Gateways (there aren't great gateways to enter city).
- Lack of wayfinding (historic and others).
- Lack of passive and active green space.
- Lack of benches to encourage social gathering.
- Morgantown High School students skipping class.
- Developers need to understand that developing in the downtown is different than developing in other areas of town and in the suburbs.
- Lack of WVU's assistance in promoting downtown, activities, events, etc.
- No dedicated space for public transportation (no bus stops, wayfinding, etc).
- Developers seem to be picking the low hanging fruit.
- Storm drains smell.
- Mountain People's coop is not working.
- End of nightlife time not managed well.
- Post-football game traffic encouraged to drive through/past downtown.
- Government rules and regulations that have unintended consequences.
- Business minded folks are not on City boards and commissions.
- Not a lot of park or green public spaces...downtown streets have to be closed for larger festivals and events.
- Not bike friendly.
- Conflict between people with good vision and people with money.
- Limited town-gown relationships.

- Lack of emphasis on aesthetics and innovation...design matters.
- Lack of book stores.
- Perception of lack of safety.
- Traffic congestion.
- Quality and dependability of taxi service...market competition could help.
- Lack of essential goods and services i.e. groceries, bakery, hardware, etc.
- The lack of anchor/magnate stores like the malls have.
- The fact that all regional traffic is funneled through downtown.
- Street or right-of-way dimensions are what they are but limit opportunities to provided dedicated bike lines and/or widen sidewalks.
- Two many one way streets in the downtown...not easily understood by newcomers.
- Parking lots are over managed and wayfinding to parking it not good.
- Lighting needs improved in alleys and behind buildings.
- The supply and location of accessible parking.
- People are tripping over recently installed tree curbs.
- Recently installed tree curbs functionally reduced the width of the sidewalk.
- Needs more decorative receptacle trash cans and they need to be cleaned once in awhile.
- High profile buildings that used to have retail space open now are open only for offices. Ground floor is the new second floor.
- Visible police presence...not in right spaces...bars can not hire them to sit outside of their doors.
- Challenges of highway not leading people INTO downtown for economic purposes.
- Too many of the downtown streets are controlled by Charleston.
- Maintenance of public improvements (i.e. gum and dirty look of new sidewalks) after implementation.
- No public restroom facilities in the downtown.
- Everyone wants to be on High Street so that other streets are dying.
- There is not a good way to cross university to get to wharf. It's the perception that you are crossing a huge road and dangerous.
- Students under the age of 21 are permitted to enter downtown clubs.
- Topography impact on redevelopment and expanding right-of-ways.

**What are Downtown's Threats:**

- Unregulated development and unplanned growth outside the City.

- Lack of a clear and articulated vision.
- Lack of aggressive enforcement of building and property maintenance codes.
- Students.
- Downtown WVU campus.
- Competition from sprawl.
- Lack of civic responsibility.
- Homogenous living demographic in downtown.
- Loosing the quality and character of adjacent neighborhoods.
- Maintaining river edge green rather than allowing more Boathouse Bistro type of development.
- Knee-jerk reactions by City Council.
- Too big and too diversified of an area for the same set of zoning regulations.
- Fragile customer base and low average daily counts.
- Lack of political will to deal with traffic problem.
- Underutilization of Met Theater and lack of professional booking/programming.
- The look of some new development doesn't seem to fit in with older downtown buildings.
- Too many non-profits and not enough money to go around and have a noticeable impact.
- Haven't gained anything downtown in the last few years
- WVU wants to build their student body that in turn is driving housing market. We will have this housing no matter if we want it or not. It needs to go downtown rather than out into the sprawling areas.
- City and developers don't have a vision as to what is too big, what is the right mix of uses, how much housing is too much, etc.
- No rules to protect buildings, particularly brick buildings, from being painted with loud colors.
- Lack of a "housekeeper" downtown to address vomit, broken bottles, gum on sidewalks, litter, graffiti, appearance, etc.
- "Old boy politics".
- Not making student accountable for their behavior.
- Some developers appear to be motivated solely by self interest and indifferent to community.
- Poor communication between City, property owners, and merchants.
- New sidewalks are dirty-looking.
- No clear vision development scale or density.
- Lack of funding assistance to upgrade buildings for elevators and security.
- Continued business expansion that only serves students i.e. bars, sandwich shops, etc.

- Loss of surrounding neighborhoods to student housing.
- Inactivity will cause Morgantown to fail.
- Gentrification.
- Lack of “student citizen” as a part of the University and community’s expectations of it student population.
- Conflict between local developers and out-of-town developers.
- Loss of traditional family occupied single-family units resulting from the lack of density in the downtown and Sunnyside Neighborhood.
- Mountain Line Transit Authorities eagerness to work with sprawling development.
- Displacement of existing businesses.
- Lack of affordable housing, not low income.....but for school teachers, policemen, etc.
- Growth within the downtown that is too quick.
- Lack of planned growth.
- Police Department is not as visible as it should be...get officers out of cars.

**What are Downtown’s Opportunities:**

- Building on diversities.
- Available public and private resources.
- Attractive destination for retirees.
- Utilizing the University and its workforce.
- Transitioning PRT to community transportation facility.
- Make cars inconvenient.
- Reuse of federal building.
- City’s effort to develop a new community vision for the downtown.
- Grocery store, pharmacy, hardware store, gym etc.
- Sunnyside up: group that is trying to rebuild and restructure the neighborhood. That could create a ripple effect to get others involved.
- Use assets that town already has...emphasize the nightlife.
- Increase pedestrian traffic and promote nightlife.
- Capture the underutilized 5 to 10 market.
- Streetscape project should expand to other places other than High Street.
- Shared car services i.e. Zipcar.
- Home rule.
- Partnership with WVU police to help cover downtown.

- Promotion piece, more effective brand marketing.
- More reasons for people to come downtown before work, i.e. breakfast service.
- Farmer's market opportunity for more year round, more product, etc tied to a natural food store, crafts.....people leave right after farmer's market because there are no places to go downtown on Saturday morning.
- Reestablish downtown as main hub.
- Use Met Theatre as an anchor.
- Opportunity to rebrand.
- Downtown needs an identity.
- Linking the neighborhoods to the downtown.
- University can help with growth downtown.
- Use young minds.
- West Virginia has TIFF financing. Wharf district and some parts of downtown have used TIFF financing.
- Community gardens along trails particularly along Deckers Creek.
- Closing downtown streets to vehicular traffic after certain times like European cities to create pedestrian malls.
- Play off area's glass industry history.
- Expand farmer's market in terms of space, vendors, and days.
- Shift the marketing of downtown to overcome perception that downtown is only for students.
- Promoting to WVU Alumni and include Alumni weekend events downtown.
- Cooperative planning between City and County.