

A Vision for the Future Downtown Waynesboro



**Prepared for The City of Waynesboro, Virginia
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1. Overview and Purpose

The City of Waynesboro is pursuing a renewed life for its downtown commercial center. The path ahead is directed at finding new economic energy, momentum for entrepreneurial opportunity and community sustainability. By building on its unique cultural and geographic positioning around the South River, Downtown Waynesboro will reinforce a quality living environment while attracting tourists and festival goers to spend time and money there.

The City and its Partners are launching a multi-pronged economic restructuring project, centered on the Downtown. The visioning process plus other community organizing activities will facilitate next stage planning efforts including an economic restructuring plan, physical improvements plan and funding search. Downtown restructuring and revitalization is a long term incremental process but is much more feasible with careful attention to targeting of resources to strategic projects, and building on catalytic opportunities.

The economic restructuring strategies and physical improvements plan will position the commercial core for a revived, robust future. The focus of this project was on the first stage in the process--- the building of a consensus Vision—representing the community, key stakeholders and leaders.

Approximately 75 residents, business and property owners, elected officials and regional representatives convened on December 10, 2009 for the Visioning Session, to build from the downtown's past accomplishments, learn from its challenges, and to think creatively about new opportunities. This level of community response was excellent and reflects genuine, broad based interest in the future of Downtown as well as effective outreach and marketing for the event. The focus question was:

“What do we want to see in place in Downtown Waynesboro in 2015?”

The Agenda for the evening included:

- Table by table introductions
- A quick focus on events to celebrate as well as challenges to overcome
- An overview of community characteristics
- A group process to create a picture of the Downtown in 2015 and identify the themes that connect the elements of that picture



On the following day, the consulting team met with staff of the Management team to review data from the evening before, develop a draft Vision Statement, and consider next steps.

The Management Team staff consists of:

Michael Barnes – Director of Planning, City of Waynesboro

Tom Carlsson – Waynesboro Redevelopment and Housing Authority

Jim Shaw – Assistant City Manager, City of Waynesboro

Kimberly Watters – Executive Director, WDDI

Sunny Yang – Associate Planner

The Vision Report is broken into key components as follows:

- **Project Context** on the planning process to date and **Future steps** in the planning process
- **Background and Current Reality: Key Community Characteristics**
- Notes from the downtown visioning process, capturing brainstorm **data and consensus themes, in addition to a draft Vision Statement.**
- A Review of **Community Assets**
- **Implications and practical considerations** for taking the Vision to practical action
- **Agenda and a Attendance List** from the Visioning Session



• 2. Project Context and Next Steps

The Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development awarded the City of Waynesboro a CDBG Planning Grant in the Fall 2009. Following the prescribed process connected to that funding stream, the City has undertaken several initial steps to launch their plan including:

- Convening a Management Team meeting to identify stakeholders and generate community buy-in to the project. The Management Team is a diverse group of people representing public, civic, historic, business and residential interests in the community.
- Completion of a downtown inventory, including a database of all business establishments, buildings and properties in the downtown study area.
- Hiring of a skilled facilitator to lead the Management Team and Community through a Downtown Visioning Process
- Post-Visioning the City has committed to moving forward with the development of economic restructuring strategies and a physical improvement plan that will support these strategies. The intention of the City is to come back to DHCD in the spring of 2011 with a CDBG implementation grant application for appropriate activities outlined in the plan.

Following these activities, the City will be in a position in early 2010 to move forward with next phase activities that include the development of an Economic Restructuring Plan, Physical Improvement Plan, phasing plan and a resource development strategy.

Finally, with appropriate, fundable strategies in the areas of physical improvements, business retention/recruitment, and marketing/branding, the downtown will be better positioned to attract investment partnerships locally, regionally and statewide.



3. Background and Current Reality Assessment

In a brainstorm of historical accomplishments to celebrate and continuing challenges, Waynesboro community members listed the following:

What can we celebrate about our downtown?

- Distinct historical district
- South River
- Natural beauty
- Proximity to parks
- Small town atmosphere
- Streetscape
- Location
- Battle of Waynesboro
- Downtown buildings-look
- Strong core groups
- Talent in arts
- Welcoming, friendly
- Community of faith
- Involved citizens
- Two museums
- Still here!!!

What have been our continuing challenges?

- Flooding
- Empty buildings
- Parking
- Sustained effort
- Entrances
- Loss of industry
- Funding
- Residual industrial mentality
- No downtown draw
- Reconcile conservative vs. progressive
- Neighborhood support
- Closed at night
- City investment
- Pessimism

Current Realities:

The City of Waynesboro had a population of 20,614 people in 2008. It is located in Augusta County -- just west of Afton Mountain on I-64. Waynesboro is located directly between and almost equidistant from Charlottesville and Staunton, both home to institutions of higher education. Waynesboro has benefited greatly from



commercial development located near the I-64 interchange during the past decade. These big box retailers, smaller shops and restaurants have become a successful regional attraction to shoppers and diners. Over time, the successful development of this area has supplanted the traditional role that Downtown filled as a regional retail and entertainment hub. And like in most small downtowns, Waynesboro's future downtown will target a different commercial market.

Since its earliest days, Waynesboro has been the home to manufacturing activity. Large industries have fueled a solid middle class and a highly educated workforce that supported a strong research and development sector within these industries. Over the last few decades, these industries have reduced employment, shut down and moved away resulting in a dramatic change in the community's economic base.

A walkthrough of the downtown area reveals a number of vacant and underutilized buildings that underscore a previous era when the local economy prospered and business was more diverse. There are a significant number of historic, commercial structures in the downtown area whose design and style reflect the booming economy of the area that stretched from the early part of the century through the 1970's. The Wayne Theatre is an example of an historic structure that reflects the prominent economic and cultural traditions of the community.

The City has completed a survey of downtown buildings and businesses. The survey assessed both occupied and vacant structures. The findings of the survey confirm the fact that downtown has suffered dramatically over the past few decades. More than a third of the space in downtown is vacant and nearly a quarter of the buildings suffer from some measure of deterioration or blight. While discouraging, these conditions are also pre-requisites for the Community Development Block Grant funding that is one source of investment to help jump start revitalization and renewal in the area.

Additional surveying of active businesses and customers will add to the inventory of information on the current functionality of the downtown district. The patterns of downtown business activity, including their hours of operation, the characteristics of their customers and how far they travel to shop in Waynesboro will require additional assessment. Business and property owners will also be asked what they see as key issues for the area and what improvements they would like to see in the area.

Parking, traffic patterns, gateways and pedestrian access have already been identified as key concerns within the downtown business community. The next phase of the work should seek to engage these businesses more directly in the restructuring planning process.



Demographic Indicators:

The population of the City has been growing steadily despite the shifting economic base and the loss of manufacturing jobs. Virginia Employment Commission population projections suggest a continuation of this trend with growth to 22,000 in 2010 and to 28,000 by 2030. These double digit percentage increases over the decades reflects the City's changing role to that of a bedroom community serving employment centers throughout the region.

The median age in Waynesboro is above the state average but in line with similar communities. Almost a quarter of the population is under the age of 18 which makes the City somewhat younger than similar rural communities and reflects a healthy family component to the population.

The City is quite homogeneous in terms of race with 86% of the population white, 11% black and 3% Hispanic.

Economic Indicators:

While Waynesboro lags significantly behind the State and region in terms of income and wealth, it is not significantly out of line with similarly sized and situated communities. The average family income of \$42,771 is well below the State average of \$59,975 but nearly equal to neighboring Staunton. Just over 15% of the population lives below the poverty line (9% is the State average).

In 2009, total employment in Waynesboro stood at 9,697 jobs. The number of jobs, however, has been falling in recent years with a 6.7% reduction from 2000 to 2007 – a timeframe when the number of jobs in Virginia rose by 10.1%.

The average home value is \$200,000 compared to a state average of \$270,000 – Waynesboro has relatively high housing costs for a community its size, however, it is influenced by the Charlottesville market which is one of the highest markets in the state outside of Northern Virginia. Since home value is the primary route to wealth development in the US, this is a positive economic factor for current homeowners in the community but may point toward affordability issues for lower income residents. The community also has a relatively high percentage of its housing stock in multifamily structures – perhaps a heritage of the “factory” town status.

Labor Force:

The unemployment rate in Waynesboro stood at just under 8% as of October 2009. It rose sharply in the first half of 2009 – exceeding both the Virginia and US levels. During the second half of the year, it has improved but still is well



above statewide levels. This reverses the trend that had been in place over the past decade where the rate in Waynesboro had closely shadowed the statewide rate. Unemployment peaked in the early months of 2009 and has been declining slowly since. The manufacturing sector leads in unemployment with a rate over 14% - this has been offset by the relatively low unemployment rates in the retail and hospitality sectors.

The strongest job growth over the past decade has been in the retail, hotel and restaurant sectors – the slowest has been in manufacturing. The relatively low wages in the former as compared to the latter has an overall downward impact on labor force income.

Waynesboro is currently still a net in-commuter community, however, there is evidence that the trend is shifting and the City is becoming more of a bedroom community.

Social Indicators:

Education levels for the City are in line with the state averages through high school. They are significantly below state averages for college and post graduate. As mentioned earlier, there has been a loss of significantly educated work force members over the past several decades as the R&D sector for area industry has declined.

While there is no higher education presence in Waynesboro, a prominent private school – Fishburne Military School is located adjacent to the Downtown.

Crime is not an issue in the City – ranking in the lowest quartile for the State.

Local and Regional Developments:

The City of Waynesboro and the surrounding area benefit from a wide variety of social, cultural, recreational and economic opportunities. The City is located on I-64, a major east – west thoroughfare for the region. It is within several miles of the Blue Ridge Parkway, Shenandoah National Park, Skyline Drive and Appalachian Trail – all major tourist attractions for the Eastern section of the nation. The South River cuts through the center of Waynesboro offering recreational opportunities for fisherman and boating enthusiasts including kayakers.

Waynesboro is also positioned geographically as the gateway to the Shenandoah Valley – an area that is rich in natural beauty and history. The region also boasts major higher education centers in Charlottesville and Harrisonburg – both locations for major State Universities as well as Staunton which houses Mary Baldwin College – a highly rated private school with a long tradition of excellence.



The City also has a rich tradition in the arts including the Shenandoah Valley Art Center, the P. Buckley Moss Museum and an emerging Artisans Center at the South River Complex. Local performing arts are also well established; two groups based downtown include the Waynesboro Players and the Wayne Theatre Alliance which has created the River City Radio Hour. The Wayne Theatre itself is in the midst of an historic rehabilitation. Upon completion, the theater will serve as an anchor for arts attractions to the community that could be one of the critical economic drivers for resurgence of downtown.

The potential for Heritage and Cultural tourism combines attractively with recreational tourism that includes hiking, cycling, canoeing, fishing and other outdoor activities. With Waynesboro's spectacular natural setting, surrounded by mountains to the east and the Valley to the west, it offers a quality of life experience that is not possible in many places. All of these opportunities exist within close proximity to the City - providing an excellent opportunity for Waynesboro to develop its own "niche" to tap into these tourism markets.



4. Vision Workshop and Draft Statement

What do we want to see in place in 2015?

Recreation and Arts Destination	Diverse, Developed Riverfront	24 Hour Community	Attractive Appearance Reflects Our Uniqueness	Leadership that Supports Vision	Higher Education Presence	More Diverse Economy
<p>Let's eat downtown</p> <p>People</p> <p>Vibrant arts</p> <p>Visual and performing arts</p> <p>Bring back the arts (ex. Artisan center)</p>	<p>River walk</p> <p>River cafes</p> <p>A center on river</p> <p>Focus on Shenandoah Park</p> <p>Trophy trout fishing</p> <p>Greenway connected to Crozet Tunnel</p> <p>Flood safe use of downtown parking lot</p> <p>A recreational educational hub on South Hub</p> <p>Walk, bike, shop</p> <p>Developed riverfront</p> <p>Greenway</p> <p>Life within walking distance along the river</p>	<p>Vibrant nightlife (2)</p> <p>People living downtown (2)</p> <p>Restaurants and nightlife (3)</p> <p>Active and vibrant Wayne Theater</p> <p>Downtown residents</p> <p>Security</p> <p>Busy streets</p> <p>Gathering places downtown (2)</p> <p>Diverse scene downtown: age, ethnicity of people</p> <p>Pedestrian walkway</p> <p>Parking problem</p> <p>Outdoor cafés</p>	<p>Landscaping reflective of natural beauty of valley</p> <p>Attractive streetscape (underground lines)(2)</p> <p>No billboards</p> <p>Aesthetic appeal: flowers, trees, awnings, renovated buildings</p> <p>Parking building</p> <p>100% occupancy of storefronts</p> <p>Physical gateway to city</p> <p>Arches in Arch Avenue</p> <p>Less obvious asphalt</p> <p>Back alleys beautiful for walking with small shops and cafés</p>	<p>Positive leadership (goals, vision, investment)</p> <p>Finished city projects</p> <p>Flood plan and zoning plan</p>	<p>Education (green skills, health care, technology, school of the arts)</p> <p>Center for Coldwater Restoration</p>	<p>Large commercial outdoor retail outlet (i.e. LL Bean)</p> <p>Commerce friendly environment that will leverage our data communication infrastructure</p> <p>Broad dining options (w/ outdoor café)</p>



Draft Vision Statement

Our vision for Downtown is a vibrant 24-hour Riverfront community where people live, work and play.

- The Downtown will be a regional destination for visitors seeking unique experiences in the arts & culture, niche shopping, quality dining and entertainment.
- The Downtown will be a recreation friendly environment, featuring bike trails, greenways, access to the river and a gateway to mountain tourism.

We will get there through

- Downtown will become a hub of regional economic growth through fostering entrepreneurial effort and establishing a creative, alternative educational institution
- Committed citizen-stakeholders, investors and government will work collaboratively to take action steps to transform the Downtown.

5. Community Assets

Every community has assets on which to build. The City of Waynesboro is blessed with a variety of strengths. The success of the Economic Restructuring will rest upon the ability to focus on the best opportunities and understand how to leverage these to create a new economic engine for the downtown. Key assets in Waynesboro include:

- The RIVER!!
- Recreation, trails, Blue Ridge Parkway
- Historic District and unique structures
- Heritage Museum



- Success of Local Festivals (over 45,000 visitors last year)
- Location: Proximity to I-64 & I-81, Charlottesville, Staunton
- The Wayne Theatre
- Shenandoah Valley Arts Center
- Town Center Shopping Development
- Land for Development is available Downtown
- GREAT VIEWS from Downtown
- Tourism in the Valley
- Farmer's Market
- Downtown bike paths & Greenway (in the budget)
- Crozet Tunnel – future attraction
- Fishburne Military School

6. Next Steps

On December 11, the Management Team met to debrief on the Vision session participation and products. A series of questions were also discussed that will lead to the next phases of the work – developing the economic restructuring strategies, identifying the improvements needed to support these strategies and creating a catalytic development plan for the downtown. These framing questions and some italicized initial observations include:

- What are the unique assets that the City of Waynesboro can build a new economic base on ? (important places, proximity, physical/cultural/historical assets, key people and institutions, special features) *The visioning session and report identified several key areas but a more complete regional inventory is indicated. The clear emphasis centered on the river connection.*



- What is the branding message that can distinguish Waynesboro and frame its unique attractions ? *This work will follow the economic restructuring process but early indications are for emphasis on river connections, local arts and cultural venues, in addition to downtown festivals.*
- What are the regional partnerships that will facilitate Waynesboro's progress ? How can the successes we have had build momentum and create new opportunities ? *Partnerships will emerge from existing downtown players and activities broadening to regional interests that can leverage a healthy downtown into their own success. The Management Team, elected officials, business owners and businesses will be both key partners and brokers of future partners. Existing and early stage partnerships can be showcased as demonstrations of potential opportunities.*
- What is the competition doing? What can Waynesboro learn and where are there possibilities to create synergies both internally and regionally? What can Waynesboro learn from other similar communities in Virginia? *This will be part of the economic restructuring process. It will be critical to articulate a unique regional niche for downtown Waynesboro.*
- What's the strongest tourism niche and how does it tie into the other regional initiatives? *At present, both the river connections and festival events seem to be the most significant draws. Tourism partners need to be part of a larger regional assessment of potential in developing the economic restructuring strategies. The 75th anniversary of Shenandoah National Park and the Blue Ridge Parkway represents one such opportunity to partner regionally.*
- How will you manage the stakeholder expectations, keep them engaged and investing in the overall momentum of the downtown revitalization ? How can you bring local investors and entrepreneurs to the table ? *The City and its partners will develop an effective communications strategy including efforts to engage investors, entrepreneurs and the community at large.*
- How can you increase the buying power in the community and bring more outside dollars in ? *There is a need to measure the size of the hospitality and recreation-oriented tourism market - what part of this can Waynesboro capture. Measures to leverage and build upon the successful shopping/travel services area in the city's west end may be one strategy; encouraging visitors and shoppers to extend the duration of their stay and patronize downtown.*



- How can you increase housing quality and supply in order to attract new residents ? *Investigating the potential for mixed-use and upper-story housing development downtown is one avenue to explore - a housing market study could identify partners and financing.*
- What are the public and private investment resources that are a good fit for our strategic directions? How do we court these resources ? *Need to develop an inventory of financing resources and partners, while also more effectively marketing the existing development incentives at the local/state/federal level.*
- Where does Waynesboro make its first strategic investments? What will jump start the change? *This will be a major emphasis of the economic restructuring strategies. The highest priorities and most achievable actions will emerge as part of the community organizing and management team process.*

After a conversation on next step possibilities, the group consensus was to move forward as follows:

Reconstitute the Management Team/Refresh membership and update on process (next 30 days)

Contact DHCD for their approval on moving forward (next 30 days)

Recruit and Retain Consultant team to Develop Economic Restructuring Strategies and Physical Improvements Plan – ensure close coordination (next 3-6 months)

Develop a Messaging Strategy to keep interest high during the planning – Kimberly (next 30-60 days)

7. Attachments

- **Agenda from Visioning Session**
- **Participant List**



Waynesboro: A Vision for the Future of Downtown December 10, 2009

Agenda

- **Welcome and Purpose**
- **Connecting to Our History**
- **Considering Our Current Reality**
- **Forming Our Community Vision**
- **Next Steps**
- **Close**

Staff in Attendance:

Michael Barnes – Director of Planning, City of Waynesboro
Tom Carlsson – Waynesboro Redevelopment and Housing Authority
Mike Hamp – City Manager, City of Waynesboro
Jim Shaw – Assistant City Manager, City of Waynesboro
Kimberly Watters – Executive Director, WDDI
Sunny Yang – Associate Planner, City of Waynesboro

Participant List

Weldon and Phyllis Scrogam	Brian Schlicting
Courtney Ledbetter	Cindy Lewis
David Ledbetter	Jennifer Jones
Jody Jones	Constance and Bruce Paradiso
Latane Long	Charles Garner
Jeanie McCutcheon	Lorie Smith
Mac Jones	Webber Payne
Maggie Van Huss	Ellen Winter
Sue Wright	David and Heidi Lanford
David Cauldin	Clair Myers
Ray Collins	Justin Leach
April Butler	Eric Thompson
Paul Gayda	Len Poulin
Deborah Bansemer	Mary Poulin
Greg Bruno	Linda Banton

City of Waynesboro: Downtown Vision



Gary Critzer
Terry Kent
Brenda Curry
Shirley Bridgeforth
Steve Dowdy
Bob Hanshaw
Bill Hausrath
Sara Howlett
Kenneth Wilfong
Urbie Nash
David Gauldin II
Jeffrey Grosfeld
Dave Segars

Deborah Henshaw
Mary Katharine Froelich
Kim Arehart
David Carathers
John Fersner
Mary McDermott
Frank Lucente

City of Waynesboro: Downtown Vision



Invitations to the Vision Session were sent to all members of the Project Management Team. The majority agreed to participate and attended the session.

Project Management Team

<u>First Name</u>	<u>Last Name</u>	<u>Representing</u>	<u>Business</u>
Jeannie	McCutcheon	Resident	Resident
David	Beale	Resident	Resident
Greg	Bruno	Resident	Resident
Roy	Zinser	DT organization	Fishburne Military School
Sharon	Plemmons	Industry rep	South River Complex
Tom	Reider	EDA	Economic Development Authority
Rev Bob	Humphrey	Churches	Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church
Lorie	Smith	City Council	City of Waynesboro
Frank	Lucente	City Council	City of Waynesboro
Dr. Jim	Perkins	Community College rep / EDA	Blue Ridge Community College / EDA
Mary	McDermott	Local internet service	nTelos
Dr. Robin	Crowder	School system	Waynesboro School System
Constance	Paradiso	Historical Society	Historic Society
Mary	Froelich	DT business owner	Stone Soup Books
Webber	Payne	DT business owner	Waynesboro Florist
Len	Poulin	DT Building owner	LBP Enterprises, Inc.
Stacey	Strawn	DT Building owner	Blue Moon Galleries
Clair	Myers	Artisans / Musicians	Wayne Theatre Alliance
Mike	O'Donnell	RE professional / private dev	C B Richard Ellis
Tom	Carlsson	Housing Authority	Waynesboro RHA
Lee	Wolverton	Local media	The News Virginian
Mac	Jones	Building owner	Barnwell & Jones/Willow Oak Plaza
Dave	Segars	DT organization	Segars Engineering
DuBose	Egleston	WDDI/Farmers Mkt	Resident
Joe	Honbarrier	building official	City of Waynesboro
Terry	Short	VDOT planner	VDOT
Bonnie	Riedesel	Planning Dist. Comm.	Central Shenandoah PDC
Jim	Shaw	Economic Developers / Planners	City of Waynesboro
Shirley	Bridgeforth	Heritage Museum	Heritage Museum
Bill	Hasrauth	RE professional / private dev	Montague, Miller & Co.
Gary	Critzer	Emergency Services	City of Waynesboro
Latane	Long	Resident	Resident
Kimberly	Watters	WDDI	WDDI
Piper	Groves	Shenandoah Valley Art Center	SVAC