RE-THINKING DOWNTOWN WESTFIELD

DOWNTOWN VISIONING:
APRIL 4, 2009
INTRODUCTION

INTRO

RE-THINK

WHY NOW?

WHAT YOU TOLD US

VISIONING

RE-THINKING DOWNTOWN WESTFIELD

LARRY SMITH
WESTFIELD CITY PLANNER

DOWNTOWN VISIONING - APRIL 4, 2009
The work of this project involves a dynamic planning process that flows out of a series of downtown community design workshops and interactive events.

This work builds on existing efforts already underway, makes the best use of limited time and resources, incorporates meaningful public involvement, and addresses critical implementation.

The work will be documented through two reports produced in conjunction with the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission; a Comprehensive Downtown Housing and Development Needs Assessment and a Downtown District Plan and Action Steps.
WHO IS INVOLVED

The Downtown District Plan Committee:

- Mayor Boulanger
- Larry Smith, City Planner
- Ann Lintini, Executive Director-Domus Inc.
- Lisa McMahon, BID
- Bob Plasse, Westfield On Weekends and WSC
- Mark Cressotti, City Engineer
- Hilda Colon, Westfield Spanish American Assoc.
- Matt VanHeynigen, Planning Board member
- Jeff Burkott, resident
- Kathy Witalisz, Realtor
- Officer Dickinson, Community Policing
- Peter Miller, City Councilor
- Daniel Hitchcock, resident
- Shanna Reed, Mayor’s Office
- John Bonavita, Tavern Restaurant
- Agma Sweeney, member of the Westfield Spanish American Assoc.
- Lynn Boscher, Chamber of Commerce Brent Bean, Westfield State College
WHO IS INVOLVED

Pioneer Valley Planning Commission
UMASS Amherst Architecture + Design Program
Westfield State College
Northeastern University
Center for Urban and Regional Policy
City of Westfield
Office of Planning and Community Development

Funding provided by a Gateway Plus Action Grant from the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development

INTRODUCTION

LARRY SMITH
WESTFIELD CITY PLANNER
DESCRIPTION

INTRO

RE-THINK

WHY NOW?

WHAT YOU TOLD US

VISIONING

RE-THINKING DOWNTOWN WESTFIELD

DOWNTOWN VISIONING - APRIL 4, 2009
Collecting Information

Listening
Stakeholder Interviews
Survey
Focus Groups

Working in Collaboration
Community Workshops

Creating a Plan
WE CAN’T MISS THIS OPPORTUNITY.

THINGS ARE HAPPENING IN WESTFIELD!

WHY NOW?
GREAT RIVER BRIDGE PROJECT

EST. COMPLETION: 2011

STATUS: IN CONSTRUCTION

GREAT RIVER BRIDGE PROJECT

WHY NOW?

RE-THINKING DOWNTOWN WESTFIELD

RE-THINKING DOWNTOWN WESTFIELD
MAIN / BROAD STREET / PARK SQUARE

WHY NOW?

STATUS: 100% DESIGN

EST. COMPLETION: 2011
COLUMBIA GREENWAY

WHY NOW?
STATUS: 50% DESIGN
EST. COMPLETION: 2014

INTRO
RE-THINK
WHY NOW?
WHAT YOU TOLD US
VISIONING

RE-THINKING DOWNTOWN WESTFIELD

DOWNTOWN VISIONING - APRIL 4, 2009
WHY NOW?

STATUS: 75% DESIGN

EST. COMPLETION: 2012

GAS LIGHT DISTRICT

WHY NOW?

RE-THINK

WHAT YOU TOLD US

VISIONING

DOWNTOWN VISIONING - APRIL 4, 2009
WSC DOWNTOWN ARTS DISTRICT

WHY NOW?

STATUS: PRE-DESIGN

EST. COMPLETION: 2010-12

INTRO

RE-THINK

WHY NOW?

WHAT YOU TOLD US

VISIONING

RE-THINKING DOWNTOWN WESTFIELD

DOWNTOWN VISIONING - APRIL 4, 2009
DOWNTOWN WESTFIELD HAS THOUSANDS OF STORIES TO TELL

VISIONS

RE-THINKING DOWNTOWN WESTFIELD
WE’VE LISTENED TO 1437 PERSPECTIVES AND COUNTING...

WESTFIELD SHARES ITS VISIONS THROUGH:

INTERVIEWS
SURVEYS
FOCUS GROUPS

VISIONS

INTRO
RE-THINK
WHY NOW?
WHAT YOU TOLD US
VISIONING

RE-THINKING DOWNTOWN WESTFIELD

DOWNTOWN VISIONING - APRIL 4, 2009
HINTING AT THE COMPLEXITY AND RICHNESS OF WESTFIELD.

HOW DOES DOWNTOWN WESTFIELD WANT TO:

LIVE
WORK
PLAY
CONNECT

VISIONS

VISIONING
WHAT CAN MAKE DOWNTOWN A BETTER PLACE TO LIVE?

LIVE

RESPONSES FROM THE SURVEYS, STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS AND FOCUS GROUPS
“It seems like a no-brainer, apartments above retail below”

“…it is with optimism and enthusiasm that I enter into this.”

“We need more housing. Different types of housing”

“We need a balance on the type of housing, elderly, low income but not only those.”

“We are not Northampton!”

“Bringing in students brings us a chance.”

“We really need a success story. One good success story... Doing one thing and seeing it through.”

“The Domus project has done great things, but it cannot carry downtown alone”

“We are not Northampton!”

WHAT CAN MAKE DOWNTOWN A BETTER PLACE TO LIVE?

LIVE

RESPONSES FROM THE STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS AND FOCUS GROUPS

INTRO | RE-THINK | WHY NOW? | WHAT YOU TOLD US | VISIONING

RE-THINKING DOWNTOWN WESTFIELD

DOWNTOWN VISIONING - APRIL 4, 2009
What are the top three reasons you live in Westfield?

Responses from the surveys:

1. Friends or family here
2. Convenience to job
3. Family-oriented atmosphere

Other reasons include:
- Community Character
- Affordable Housing
- Job Opportunities
- Quality of Schools
- Recreational Assets
- Natural Settings
- Safety
- Quality of City Services
Which of these groups have the greatest housing needs?

LIVE

Responses from the surveys

1. Young Adults
2. Seniors
3. Affordable Rentals

Intro
Re-think
Why now?
What you told us
Visioning

Re-thinking downtown Westfield

Downtown visioning - April 4, 2009
WHAT CAN MAKE DOWNTOWN A BETTER PLACE TO WORK?

RESPONSES FROM THE SURVEYS, STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS AND FOCUS GROUPS
“It doesn’t need to be a mall, but you need to have things to do.”

“I feel that there is no reason we can’t bring Westfield to its full potential.”

“Since Newbury’s was burnt down there is no anchor downtown.”

“You have to put people’s feet on the street.”

“A bookstore!! that would draw students and non students.”

“Think Westfield first!”

“The stores that work downtown are the stores that attract people.”

“I am holding my breath. Barnes and Noble. Can you imagine?”

“I feel that there is no reason we can’t bring Westfield to its full potential.”

“It is not in your mind that Westfield is a place to go.”

“Life has been sucked out of Westfield by the big box stores.”

WHAT CAN MAKE DOWNTOWN A BETTER PLACE TO WORK?

RESPONSES FROM THE STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS AND FOCUS GROUPS
Where do you shop? Why?

Outside Westfield: 55%
- Greater Selection

Strips in Westfield: 38%
- Why?
- Parking

Downtown Westfield: 9%
- Why?
- Support the community
- Insurance
- Haircuts

Work

Intro  Re-think  Why now?  What you told us  Visioning

Re-thinking Downtown Westfield

Downtown Visioning - April 4, 2009
**WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE MORE OF IN DOWNTOWN?**

**RESPONSES FROM THE SURVEYS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>WORK</strong></th>
<th><strong>RE-THINK</strong></th>
<th><strong>WHY NOW?</strong></th>
<th><strong>WHAT YOU TOLD US</strong></th>
<th><strong>VISIONING</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>INTRO</td>
<td>RE-THINKING DOWNTOWN WESTFIELD</td>
<td>DOWNTOWN VISIONING - APRIL 4, 2009</td>
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</table>

**What You Told Us**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bookstore</th>
<th>Movie Theater</th>
<th>Family Restaurant</th>
<th>Music and Theater</th>
<th>Specialty Shops</th>
<th>Clothing Stores</th>
<th>Performing Arts Center</th>
<th>Ice Cream Shops</th>
<th>Sandwich or Deli Shops</th>
<th>Coffee Shops</th>
<th>Ethic Restaurants</th>
<th>Diners</th>
<th>Bike Shops</th>
<th>Music and Theater</th>
<th>Taverns or Microbreweries</th>
<th>Bowling Alleys</th>
<th>Sporting Goods Stores</th>
<th>Hotel and Conference Center</th>
<th>Fitness Centers</th>
<th>Sports Bars</th>
<th>Pool Hall</th>
<th>Fast Food Franchises</th>
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<tr>
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</table>
RE-THINKING DOWNTOWN WESTFIELD

WORK

WHAT ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES SHOULD BE INCLUDED?

RESPONSES FROM THE SURVEYS

What You Told Us

1. Partnership w/ College
2. Start-up Businesses
3. Historic Character

Partnership with College
Policies for Startup Businesses
Promote Historic Character
Attract tourists
Promote shopping locally
Create a city staff position to represent the interest of citizens

INTRO
RE-THINK
WHY NOW?
WHAT YOU TOLD US
VISIONING

DOWNTOWN VISIONING - APRIL 4, 2009
WHAT CAN MAKE DOWNTOWN A BETTER PLACE TO PLAY?

RESPONSES FROM THE SURVEYS, STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS AND FOCUS GROUPS
“All up and down Elm Street there is a lot of character.”

“I can remember coming to Westfield Saturday night there were theaters.. there were people.”

“There are some nice buildings in Westfield and others need a facelift”

“A community tag sale in the green...”

“They are raising the green 3 ft... I can’t understand why”

“We need to value our downtown historically, architecturally...”

“We have some glorious buildings downtown.”

“Any city that has a river uses it!

“We need to value our downtown historically, architecturally...”

“Like the farmers market we started, it is not about selling food it is about getting people together, losing the anonymous.”

“Any city that has a river uses it!

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**Which recreational facilities do you or your family visit?**

**Play**

- Stanley Park
- Amelia Park
- Westfield State College
- Public Schools
- Country Clubs or Golf Courses
- Grandmother's Garden
- Westfield Boys and Girls Club
- Hampton’s Pond State Park
- Cross Street Playground
- Municipal Playground
- Chapman Playground
- Whitney Playground
- Westfield River Walk
- State Park
- Sadie Knox Playground
- Other
- YMCA Camp Shepard
- Woronocco Soccer Complex
- Little River Playground

**Responses from the surveys**
HOW SHOULD WE INCREASE RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES?

PLAY

RESPONSES FROM THE SURVEYS

INTRO                             RE-THINK                        WHY NOW?                             WHAT YOU TOLD US                             VISIONING

RE-THINKING DOWNTOWN WESTFIELD     DOWNTOWN VISIONING - APRIL 4, 2009

Preserve Space for Nature Trails
Create Rail to Trail System
Increase Access to River
Improve Neighborhood parks
Upgrade School Playgrounds
Expand Senior Facilities
Increase Recreational Activities
WHAT CAN MAKE DOWNTOWN A BETTER PLACE TO CONNECT?

RESPONSES FROM THE SURVEYS, STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS AND FOCUS GROUPS
“People aren’t going to know that there is a new bookstore, a new restaurant, if they are gutting to get to the next stoplight.”

“The rail-trail… oh yes, absolutely!”

“You have everything you need to develop a culture around the rail trail.”

“Cars are going by 45 miles an hour.”

“I am hugely in favor of the town-gown possibility. But heavens help us if they all flush at the same time.”

“We do see the future, and we are invested in Westfield.”

“What you told us
VISIONING

“There is a lack of parking”

“I would say a perceived lack of parking.”

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“We should focus on green to become a leader in that area.”

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“What you told us
WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE MORE OF IN DOWNTOWN?

RESPONSES FROM THE SURVEYS

- Improve Sidewalks, Signage, etc
- Enhance access to River
- Beaches, Seating
- Street trees
- Flowers
- Traffic Calming Measures
- Bike Racks
- Free wireless access
- Pocket Parks
- Public Art
- Extend PVTA bus service
- Increase frequency of bus routes
- Parking Garage
- Kiosks/Public Bulletin boards

CONNECT

RE-THINKING DOWNTOWN WESTFIELD

DOWNTOWN VISIONING - APRIL 4, 2009
## Responses from the Surveys

### How Important Are the Following Strategies to Use Energy Wisely?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Municipal Pursuit of Alternative Energy</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Use of Alternative Energy</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zoning Laws for Residential Use of Alternative Energy</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incentives for New Buildings to be more Energy Efficient</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fuel Efficient Municipal Vehicles</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bike Lanes and Paths</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zoning to Promote more compact and Mixed Use Developments</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improved PVTA Bus Service</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Connect

**Intro** | **Re-think** | **Why Now?** | **What You Told Us** | **Visioning**
---|---|---|---|---
**Re-thinking Downtown Westfield** | | | | **Downtown Visioning - April 4, 2009**
WHAT'S YOUR VISION OF DOWNTOWN?

SHARE YOUR VISION. BE A PART OF THIS STORY.
VISIONING

THE RE-THINKING DOWNTOWN WESTFIELD PROCESS
SHARE YOUR VISION. BE A PART OF THIS STORY.

INTRO RE-THINK WHY NOW? WHAT YOU TOLD US VISIONING

RE-THINKING DOWNTOWN WESTFIELD

INPUT AND RESEARCH: THROUGH SURVEYS INTERVIEWS ANALYSIS

IDENTIFY OBJECTIVES

VISIONING

CREATE VISION STATEMENT

DESIGN WORKSHOPS

DEVELOP PLANS / ACTIONS

DESIGN SYNTHESIS
## Primary Downtown Design Objectives

**LIVE:** Objectives regarding Housing and quality of life downtown

- Provide a variety of Housing Options: for young adults, seniors, fixed-income and students

**WORK:** Objectives regarding downtown economic development

- Provide for a variety of specialty stores and restaurants to create a downtown destination

**PLAY:** Objectives regarding the arts, entertainment and recreation

- Create and support local entertainment and performance venues. Coordinate with WSC plans

**CONNECT:** Objectives regarding infrastructure and sustainability

- Slow down traffic in downtown. Promote walk-ability, pedestrian safety, biking and re-think downtown traffic patterns

### Objectives

<table>
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<td>Develop mixed-use buildings with residential above retail</td>
<td>Encourage anchor store (such as Bookstore).</td>
<td>Enhance access to River</td>
<td>Publicize parking options and examine surplus needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promote and Protect Historic buildings</td>
<td>Support for locally owned businesses through strategic planning and ongoing technical assistance</td>
<td>Preserve and enhance downtown green spaces and neighborhood parks</td>
<td>Improve sewer Infrastructure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WSC housing plans should complement and integrate with city housing needs</td>
<td>Partner with area colleges and universities to encourage innovation, new businesses and workforce development</td>
<td>Promote Biking throughout downtown</td>
<td>Pursue alternative energy, green building incentives and public transportation projects</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**INTRO**

**RE-THINK**

**WHY NOW?**

**WHAT YOU TOLD US**

**VISIONING**

**VISIONING**

**INTRO**

**RE-THINK**

**WHY NOW?**

**WHAT YOU TOLD US**

**VISIONING**

**DOWNTOWN VISIONING: APRIL 4, 2009**

**RE-THINKING DOWNTOWN WESTFIELD**

**DOWNTOWN VISIONING: APRIL 4, 2009**