



City of Wilkes-Barre: Comprehensive Planning for Open Space Redevelopment

In 2015, the National Resource Network partnered with the City of Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania, to assess challenges facing the economic growth and vibrancy of the city's downtown area, including crime. Following a recent rash of violence, the Network connected City leaders with resources at the U.S. Department of Justice to explore crime reduction strategies. The Network's initial assessment also identified Public Square, a three-acre park at the heart and geographic center of downtown, as a major opportunity for downtown revitalization.

The Network's assessment was followed closely by a more targeted engagement that focused on Public Square. In this phase, the Network developed a capital and operation and maintenance funding strategy for the redevelopment of the open space. Over a six month period, the Network identified potential sources of funding for redevelopment of the park, and worked closely with the Mayor's office and local stakeholders – including the Diamond City Partnership, Wilkes University, King's College, and the Downtown Business Association – to develop a vision for the future of the open space in partnership with local architecture studio Bohlin Cywinski Jackson. Thanks in part to the Network's efforts, the City received a \$200,000 grant from the State of Pennsylvania to initiate the Square's redevelopment in July 2016.

By the end of 2018, [local news](#) was applauding the continued efforts of the City and community to improve the downtown area, highlighting the Diamond City Partnership's Downtown Action Plan, which strives to make downtown: a safe, clean, and attractive place to live, work, shop, and visit and the region's walk-to-everything urban neighborhood of choice, innovation district, and college neighborhood. Central to these efforts is the implementation of the vision for Public Square's redevelopment, which began in [October 2018](#).