



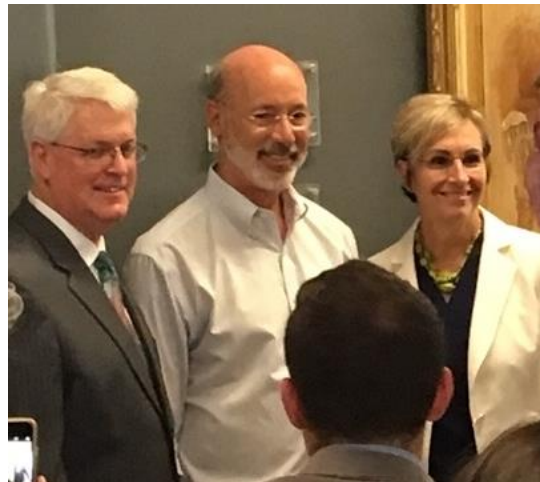
137 North High Street | West Chester PA 19380 | 610-738-3350 | DowntownWestChester.com
Malcolm Johnstone, Executive Director

West Chester BID 2019 Annual Report

Presented to West Chester Borough Council, July 2020

HIGHLIGHTS

In 2019, West Chester continued to see a record number of businesses downtown, reduced crime, and a robust social media outreach.



Pictured (L-R): Malcolm Johnstone, Gov. Tom Wolf, and Mayor Dianne Herrin.

>> On August 8, 2019, Governor Tom Wolf and officials from the Department of Community & Economic Development (DCED) walked alongside West Chester BID Director, Malcolm Johnstone, and local business owners through downtown West Chester, commending local efforts to maintain unique spaces for residents and tourists. “It’s always great to get out and visit Pennsylvania’s historic downtowns,” said Governor Wolf. “Driven by a fatigue of sameness, people are looking for places that have their own unique meaning, and West Chester has done a great job at repurposing its buildings, while keeping the borough’s wonderful, historic charm.”



>> Because the BID is a nationally accredited Main Street program, it was able to apply for a grant from the National Trust for Historic Preservation to receive \$150,000 for the Chester County Historical Society (CCHS). Funds were provided by the Historic Preservation's Partners in Preservation program, which were matched by a grant of \$80,000 from the Pennsylvania Historical & Museum Commission (PHMC). The grants are used to replace the failing CCHS roof, which threatens the priceless collections housed there due to leaks. An additional grant of \$10,000 was also provided to increase public awareness of CCHS and build grassroots support for our Main Street district. The total value of the campaign was \$240,000.

To reflect the need for roof and chimney repairs, CCHS gave the campaign the title of *Under One Roof*. Between September 24 and October 29, community supporters were asked to *Vote Your Main Street* online for their local historic structure connected to women's history. In 1852, Pennsylvania's first Women's Rights convention was held at Horticultural Hall, now part of CCHS. More than 1.1-million votes were cast. West Chester received 89,476 votes and ended the campaign in 4th position.

>> The Borough of West Chester saw \$172,205,872 in commercial and residential building permits for 2019, a record amount. This is an indicator that West Chester has one of the strongest local economies in Pennsylvania.

>> Mayor Dianne Herrin, her Clean & Green committee, and 200 volunteers participate in an *Earth Day Downtown Clean-up* on April 27. A gum removal machine, operated by the Mayor's newly inaugurated Gum Blasters Team was also put to work to restore a little luster to the sidewalks. Several local sponsors helped make the event a success, including: Pillar Real Estate Advisors, LLC for the gum removal machine; E. Kahn Development, J. Loew & Associates; Unruh, Turner, Burke & Frees; Gawthrop Greenwood; Kildare's; Brandywine Valley Heating & Air Conditioning, West Chester Downtown Foundation, Lorenzo And Sons Pizza, Yori's Church Street Bakery, Saloon 151, Open Haus Studio, Taurus Private Markets, Zukin Realty, Fulton Bank, New Haven Pizza, Bartlett Tree Experts, West Chester BID, Oscar Lasko YMCA & Childcare Center, Ace Hardware of West Chester, Goshen Signs, and the Borough of West Chester.

SECTION 1 | INTRODUCTION

The 2019 Annual Report is provided to the West Chester Borough Council and stakeholders of downtown West Chester pursuant to Section 9, (1) and (2), of the Pennsylvania Neighborhood Improvement District Act of 2000.

The West Chester Business Improvement District Authority (BID) was established in 2000 by the West Chester Borough Council, with the approval of downtown property and business owners, to provide community and economic development with a focus on downtown revitalization. The expertise and hands-on involvement of over 50 community volunteers that contribute a total of 1,200 hours per year has added to the success of the BID and continues to establish West Chester as a world-class shopping, dining, business, and event destination for visitors and residents.

Borough support for the BID fulfills the goal from the West Chester Comprehensive Plan (adopted November 28, 2000) to "continue to assist and financially support the West Chester Business Improvement District Authority to help promote and administer downtown commercial activity."

Each year, an Independent Auditor's Report is provided to the Borough and made publicly available when completed. The full 2019 audit, performed by Dale R. Umbenhauer, CPA, Maillie LLP, of Mont Clare, PA, may be found at DowntownWestChester.com under *About the BID*. Periodically, recommendations are found in the audit to ensure that fiscal "best practices" are observed. When this occurs, the BID Board and administration make immediate policy adjustments to keep fiscal activities efficient, transparent, and accountable at all levels.

SECTION 2 | CHANGES IN BENEFITED PROPERTIES

The 2019 BID Budget received a majority of its income from an assessment of 3.00mils on the commercial components of properties within the Business Improvement District.

SUMMARY (Compiled by Steve Pitcherella from Chester County Assessment Office, April 2019).

- Total Assessed Value of Benefited Properties went from \$130,964,840 in 2018 to \$131,090,270 in 2019; an increase of \$125,430.
- Total BID Assessment before mixed use adjustment went from \$392,894.52 in 2018 to 393,270.81 in 2019; an increase of \$376.29.
- Total BID Assessment after mixed use adjustment went from \$309,316.44 in 2018 to 309,418.11 in 2019; an increase of \$101.67.

Number of BID Benefited Properties went from 262 in 2018 to 261 in 2019.

Summary of Changes in Benefited Property List

1. Parcel 0109 01160000 (7 N Church St) is now retired and merged into 0109 01170000 (9 N Church St). The assessed value of 0109 01170000 did not increase, so the net result is decrease of \$96.80 BID assessment revenue from this property.

2. These parcels have different BID assessment payments this year, due to changes in assessed value and/or commercial-to-apartment square footage ratio. The retired parcel mentioned in #1 is also included in this list.

Parcel	Street Address	BID assessment change '18 to '19
0105 03670000	135 E GAY	+ \$207.39
0109 00100000	151 W GAY	(\$6.77)
0109 00840100	106 W GAY	+ \$29.48
0109 01160000	7 N CHURCH	(\$100.64) retired parcel
0109 01170000	9 N CHURCH	+ \$3.84
0109 02510000	27 S CHURCH	+ \$80.92
0109 02730000	28 S HIGH	+ \$58.50
0109 02980000	22 E MARKET	(\$171.04)

3. Land Use Changes: Land Use Codes changed on 6 properties, but all of these remained within the 2015 BID Plan’s definition of “benefitted properties.”

SECTION 3 | PROFESSIONAL RECOGNITIONS

- The BID continued to be nationally accredited by the National Main Street Center, a subsidiary of the National Trust for Historic Preservation.
- While the BID was among the first communities to be selected as part of *Classic Towns of Greater Philadelphia* by the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission, that program was retired in 2019.
- West Chester continues as one of the *Towns of the Philadelphia Countryside* by VisitPhilly.com.

Such achievements demonstrate that the West Chester BID meets or exceeds the highest standards for a Main Street program. The national accreditation provides advantages for funding opportunities and recognitions.

SECTION 4 | HISTORIC PRESERVATION

The National Main Street Center's guidelines for accreditation require that the organizations perform local preservation events and activities. The BID, along with its 501(c)(3) partner, the West Chester Downtown Foundation, continues to recognize Borough-wide projects that respect the historic integrity of the community.

The BID sponsored National History Day, in collaboration with the Chester County Historical Society, to welcome over 800 students and their families over a two-day period in March. This event provides an excellent opportunity for Middle School and High School students to engage in history, while enjoying what historic Downtown West Chester has to offer.

SECTION 5 | BY-THE-NUMBERS in 2019

EXPANDED VALUE

- Number of businesses opening: 91 in 2019 vs 58 in 2018
- Number of businesses closing: 73 in 2019 vs 32 in 2018
- Net increase of downtown businesses: 18 in 2019 vs 26 in 2018

PEOPLE INVESTMENT

- Total number of volunteer hours contributed: 1,513

2019 BID SOCIAL MEDIA REPORT

Elle Steinman, Communications Specialist

Total Social Media Reach: 2,757,347 → 4% increase

Increase/decrease values are based on 2018 to 2019 numbers

- Facebook Reach: 2,395,597 → 1.4% decrease
 - Downtown West Chester, PA: 2,322,343 → 1% decrease
 - Brandywine Traveler: 73,254 → 13% decrease
- Instagram Reach: 328,782 → 91% increase
- Twitter Reach: 32,968 → 41% decrease

Total Social Media Following: 42,815 → 21.4% increase

- Facebook Followers: 31,897 → 13.4% increase
 - Downtown West Chester, PA: 29,553 → 14.6% increase
 - Brandywine Traveler: 2,344 → 0.17% decrease
- Instagram Followers: 8,543 → 70% increase
- Twitter Followers: 2,375 → 12.4% increase

Total Social Media Engagements: 289,849 → 5% increase

- Facebook Engagements: → 19% decrease
 - Downtown West Chester, PA: 204,964 → 15% decrease
 - Brandywine Traveler: 4,287 → 76% decrease
- Instagram Engagements: 78,964 → 410% increase
- Twitter Engagements: 1,634 → 32% decrease

Total DowntownWestChester.com Activity: 482,450 → 8% decrease

- Total Website Visitors: 108,204 → 5.6% decrease
- Total Social Media Sessions: 142,541 → 6.8% decrease
- Total Page Views: 231,705 → 9.4% decrease

MARKETING RESOURCES & PUBLICATIONS 2019

PUBLISHED STORIES (11)

Culinary vision sets the pace in West Chester

- *Malcolm Johnstone / Photos: Timlyn Vaughan, County Lines Magazine, January 2019*

How West Chester grew and flourished

- *Malcolm Johnstone, WC Press, January 2019*

Setting the standard in Downtown West Chester

- *Malcolm Johnstone, WC Press, February 2019*

Transforming West Chester – How community change-makers created a sustainable economy for downtown.

- *Malcolm Johnstone, WC Press, April 2019*

Map of West Chester landmarks

- *Text: Malcolm Johnstone, Fig Magazine, May 2019*

Art, Artists, and Galleries in West Chester

- *Malcolm Johnstone / Photos: Timlyn Vaughan, County Lines Magazine, June 2019*

West Chester Co-op

- *Interview with Malcolm Johnstone, Fig Magazine, October 2019*

Present-day visitors can still hear echoes from the first Pennsylvania Women's Rights Convention.

- *National Trust for Historic Preservation, October 2019*

Chesco Historical Society wins six-figure prize in national women's history contest

- *Robby Brod, November 19, 2019; WHY radio*

Winter Lights in Downtown West Chester

- *Malcolm Johnstone, County Lines Magazine, December 2019*

Shop Small in West Chester

- *Tara Smith, Fig Magazine, December 2019*

BLOGS (9)

Ten Individuals selected for their historical significance and connection to West Chester for the next Banner Project

- *Malcolm Johnstone, February 2019*

Creating a West Chester Symbol with the Borough Flag

- *Malcolm Johnstone, February, 2019*

WC Food Co-op Restaurant Promotion Partners

- *Staff, April 2019*

Main Line Today's Best of the Main Line and Western Suburbs

- *Staff, May 2019*

Aqua replacing water main on Gay Street

- *Staff, May 2019*

West Chester Sidewalk Sale

- *Elle Steinman, July 2019*

Chester County Historical Society wins grant from National Trust

- *Malcolm Johnstone; October 30, 2019; news release*

2019 Holiday Decorating Contest Information

- *Elizabeth McGuire, Elle Steinman, October 2019*

2019 Christmas Parade Weekend Events

- *Staff, November 2019*

PARTNERS:

- Greater West Chester Chamber of Commerce
- Chester County Conference & Visitors Bureau
- West Chester University
- Pennsylvania Department of Community & Economic Development
- VisitPhilly.com
- ClassicTowns.org (DVRPC)
- LongwoodGardens.org
- Pennsylvania Downtown Center
- West Chester Borough

MEDIA PARTNERS:

- County Lines Magazine
- Vista.Today
- WC Press
- West Chester Views
- West Chester Together

SECTION 6 | PARTNERSHIPS

Downtown Volunteers

Leadership, expertise, and organizational development comes from more than 50 volunteers that contribute over 1,200 hours of their time to make downtown BID events and programs successful. Further, community service hours are used when available to help keep downtown litter free. D.G.S. Landscaping Co. now manages sidewalk clean-up and select planters.

Vital Partnerships

The Borough/BID partnership is vital to the business community. As the public sector continues to shrink, it will be the private sector that will pick up more of the investment. The objective will be to maintain a balance of leadership between elected officials, the community, and downtown stakeholders that govern the activities of the BID. The Board of Directors, more than ever, appreciate and depend on the support of Borough Council, clearly downtown's most valuable partner. Without such support, the BID cannot continue to be an effective program.

As a supporting partner of the BID, the West Chester Downtown Foundation is a non-profit, 501(c)(3) organization that promotes community interest in the vitality, culture, and livability of Downtown West Chester through education, preservation and collaboration. Programs include development of the local *Historic Preservation Awards* program that recognizes outstanding achievements for historic preservation in West Chester, and organizing *Up on the Roof*, an annual fund-raising event that benefits the promotional and Clean & Green programs of the BID.

The goal of the BID is to create partnerships among the business and property owners to achieve long-term economic growth for business in Downtown West Chester.

SECTION 7 | THE CURRENT BID

In a meeting that took place Tuesday, November 17, 2015 at 6:00pm at Borough Council Chambers, the West Chester Borough Council passed an ordinance authorizing a new five-year term for the BID, commencing January 1, 2016 through December 31, 2020.

It came after the 45-day period for BID property owners to object to the Final Plan ended at 5:00pm on Friday, November 6, 2015. For the first time, there were no objections filed.

That action followed a Public Hearing held September 22, 2015 at the Borough of West Chester Municipal Building, where the West Chester Borough Council voted to adopt the West Chester BID Preliminary Plan for 2016-2020 as the Final Plan.

This was the result of the request of the West Chester Business Improvement District Board of Directors to extend the West Chester Business Improvement District (BID) for a period to end on December 31, 2020. In accordance with Pennsylvania state law governing special assessment districts and found in P.I. 949 No. 130, the West Chester BID provided a Preliminary Plan of 17 goals with objectives, plus the list of all properties to be assessed, for review and comment. The new plan had an increase of 9-percent rate change from the previous BID.

With the Preliminary Plan adopted as the Final Plan, re-authorization became subject to a negative vote by persons representing ownership of 40% of the properties within the proposed district. Any objections to the Plan or re-establishment of the West Chester BID must have been filed, in writing, by benefited property owners with the Borough Manager, c/o West Chester Borough, 401 E. Gay St., West Chester, PA 19380 by close of business on Friday, November 6, 2015. For the first time, no objections were filed.

The Final Downtown West Chester Five Year Plan for 2016-2020 and Destination: Downtown West Chester (PDF) on "How the BID does it!" is linked at About the BID on DowntownWestChester.com.

SECTION 8 | FUTURE OF BID

There are three essential projects that will take the BID and the downtown to the next level for fiscal vitality and quality of life.



Plaza development

The E. Kahn Development Corporation is currently developing 44WEST, a plaza framed by a four-story structure at the corner of Gay & Church Streets. It calls for retail space on the ground floor and office space on the upper levels. The previous structures were part of the County offices, which relocated.

Proposed hotel

A 110-room, full-service hotel has received final approval for development on the corner of Gay & Walnut Streets. West Chester BID is responsible for HotelsInWestChester.com that provides a landing page for The Brandywine Traveler that will be staging promotion of the hotel when it opens.

Wayfinding improvements

The BID is eager to work with the Borough to improve directional signage for wayfinding purposes for the parking garages and attractions of the Borough as identified in the Comp Plan and Master Parking Plan.

SECTION 9 | BOARD and COMMITTEES

2019 Board of Directors

Sandy Riper; Chair; Sunset Hill Jewelers & Fine Art Gallery; term expires end of 2019

Mike Reese, Treasurer; Fulton Bank; term expires end of 2021

Matthew Holliday, Secretary (ex-officio); West Chester Downtown Foundation; term expires end of 2019

Diane LeBold, Borough Council; term expires end of 2019

Thomas Crisp; Balance Hair Salon; term expires end of 2019

Dr. Julie Dietrich, West Chester University, term expires end of 2023

The Honorable Michelle Kichline; Chester County Board of Commissioners; term expires end of 2019

Jonathan Long, Buckley, Brion, McGuire & Morris LLP, term expires end of 2023

Richard May; RKM Advisors Inc; term expires end of 2020

Lance Nelson; MacElree Harvey, Ltd; term expires end of 2022

William J. Scott, Jr; Resident, Borough Council member; term expires end of 2022

Adam Wetzel; Side Bar & Restaurant; term expires end of 2020

Kenneth Winston, Resident, term expires end of 2020

Denise Wroten, 123 Market Realty, term expires end of 2023

Mark Yoder; Greater West Chester Chamber of Commerce; term expires end of 2023

Staff

Malcolm Johnstone, CMSM; Executive Director

Elizabeth McGuire; Administrator

Elle Steinman; Communications Specialist

Carol Lady; Bookkeeper

Meetings

The West Chester BID had the following Board and committee meetings in place for 2019. All meetings occurred at the BID office, 137 North High Street, at 8am, and are open to the public.

Board of Directors – Sandy Riper, chair
Meets 2nd Tuesday of the month; 8:00am

Advocacy & Design Committee – Dr. Julie Dietrich, chair
Meets 4th Friday of the month; 8:00 am

Customer Attraction Committee – Sandy Riper, chair
Meets 3rd Thursday of the month; 8:00 am.

Business Attraction Committee – Denise Wroten & Ken Winston, co-chairs
Meets 1st Tuesday of the month; 8:00 am.