Mayor George C. Brown

2024 City of Wilkes-Barre Year in Review

SUMMARY

The City of Wilkes-Barre completed another year of progress in 2024. The top accomplishments included major improvements to Kirby Park, specifically the installation of ADA Accessible walkways and a scenic pier overlooking the park's pond, the construction of the ADA Accessible Special Needs Bathroom, repaving and ADA upgrades to the Kirby Park entrance roadway and parking lot, and the construction of the Kirby Park Recreation and Maintenance Facility.

The City also paved and installed ADA ramps to four city streets and demolished one dilapidated property. In 2024, improvements were made to the city's traffic signal infrastructure, and renovations were made to City Hall. The Brookside Levee was rehabilitated to increase the safety of residents, businesses, and their properties. The Hazle Street retaining wall was repaired.

A skid steer loader and bucket truck were purchased and delivered for use in the Department of Public Works. Additionally, a new pickup truck and dump truck were purchased and are scheduled to be delivered in Spring 2025. Over 25 DPW employees completed training for the bucket truck. Four department of Public Works employees earned their CDL license through a collaborative effort between the City, PA CareerLink®, and Luzerne County Community College. DPW patched 265 potholes and used 2,975 tons of salt on city roads during winter weather events. DPW crews also completed field and building renovations to Casey Park's softball field, field renovations to Barney Farm's Gibby Baseball Field, and upgrades to the fields, signage, and painting in Kirby Park.

The Wilkes-Barre City Police Department added a Bicycle Unit, consisting of 6 patrol E Bikes and twelve officers assigned on a voluntary basis. An additional K-9 team (Officer Olshefski and K-9 Tenshi) was added to K-9 Unit in 2024.

The Wilkes-Barre City Fire Department upgraded $220,000 worth of emergency equipment and made upgrades to fire stations, including the South Station's Apparatus Bay Doors, though CDBG Office funding. There were $1.5 million in upgrades to the Fire Headquarters, including HVAC improvements, fire stations doors, and an emergency generator. A new, $850,000 state-of-the-art Pierce Fire Engine was added to the fleet.

The Wilkes-Barre City Health Department instituted new software for food establishment inspections, completed 3,261 rental inspections, and administered 1,391 vaccines. The animal control officer was certified as an animal humane officer. The Bureaue of Preventative Health participated in seven community events, reaching over 4,700 people. During the 2024 Farmers Market Season, the Health Department sold SNAP vouches to market-goes with ACCESS cards.

The City of Wilkes-Barre hosted or co-hosted over a dozen events in 2024, including the annual St. Patrick's Day and Christmas parades. 2024 marked the 100th Anniversary of Kirby Park and the anniversary of baseball legend Babe Ruth's historical homerun in Wilkes-Barre was celebrated with the inaugural "Sultan of Swat Homerun Derby". 25 new businesses opened in the city in 2024.

OFFICE OF ECONOMIC & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

2024 Street Paving & ADA Ramps: $960,463.00

- McLean St
- Caffrey St.
- Cumminsky St.
- North Main St. (entire street)
- *Additionally, the City partnered with PA American Water to pave 28 street in 2024*

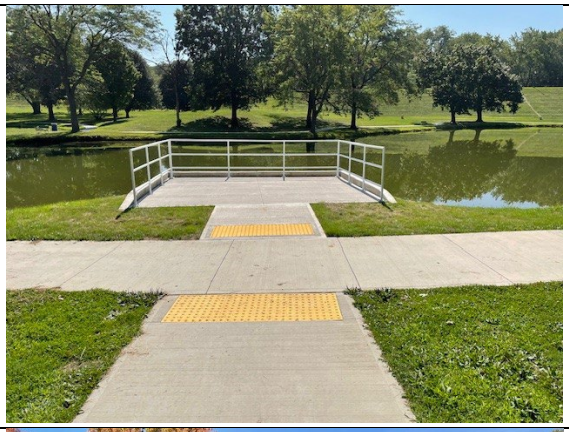
The City Has Taken Steps To Protect Our Street Investments and Ensure Their Safety

- The City passed a more stringent pave cut ordinance and partnered with an engineering firm to oversee and inspect all pave cuts

Kirby Park Upgrades: $1,952,143.92:

- **Kirby Park pond ADA Accessible Walkway Completion and Scenic Pier Project (accessible to special needs): $204,575.00**









- **The Kirby Park PPE/ADA Accessible Special Needs Bathroom: $479,568.92**

Exterior

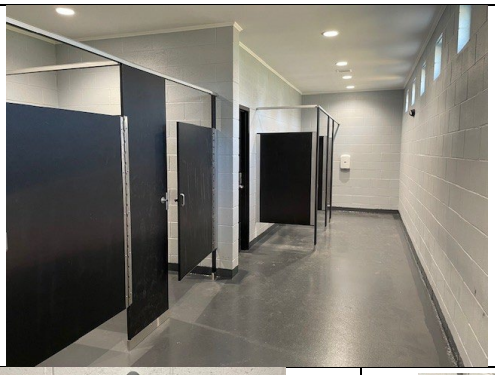






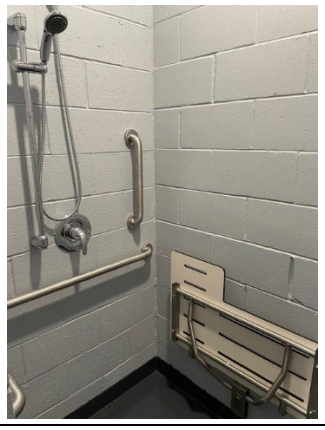


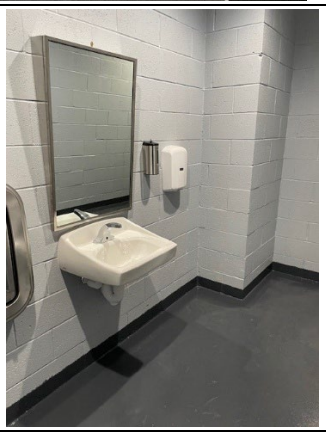
Interior











Kirby Sewer Remediation Project: $90,000

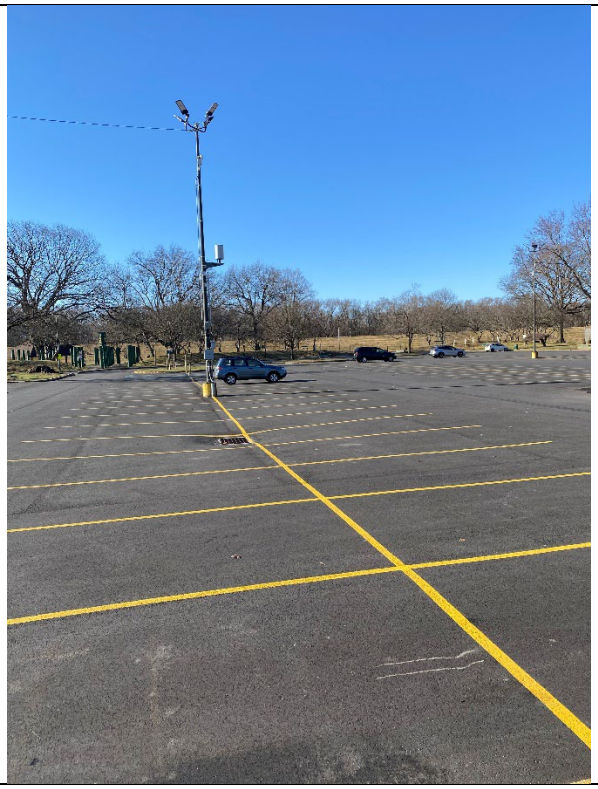
- Entrance Road/Parking Lot & ADA upgrades: $256,000
    - The project consisted of installation of ADA compliant pathways from the parking lot area to access the main softball field, track area and restrooms. Also, new ADA curb cuts and ramps were installed from the parking lot area to the ADA pathways. Lastly, ADA parking areas were designated and the parking lot area and main roadway into Kirby Park were repaved and re-striped.

BEFORE







AFTER	
	
ENTRANCE ROAD REPAVING	
	

- The Kirby Park Recreation and Maintenance Facility: $920,000 (City contributed $250,000)
    - The City of Wilkes-Barre partnered with the Luzerne County Flood Protection Authority (LCFPA) to construct a multi-use facility building in Kirby Park. The new facility serves as the city's recreation maintenance building and serves as a secure facility to house the LCFPA's trailers that contain the Market Street Bridge Flood closure structure components. The size of the building is 130 feet X 50 feet or 6,500 square feet. It houses 6 truck trailers (37 feet X 9 feet) each containing flood closure gates & components. Also, the new building contains a common area, public restrooms, and storage for the City's Department of Public Works (DPW) equipment. The location of the facility in Kirby Park, only a quarter mile from Market Street Bridge, reduces the Authority's flood fighting response time.

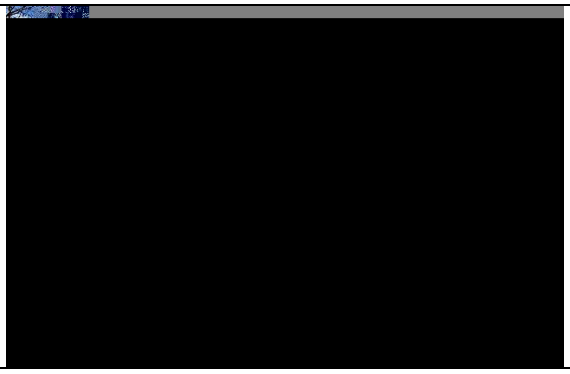
BEFORE







AFTER



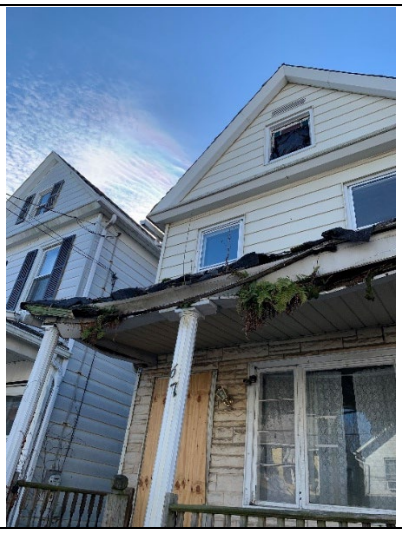


The City Leverages Funding when at all possible or available:

- •Partnered with Wilkes University for the cost of the sewer remediation
- •Partnered with Flood Authority for DPW and Flood Gate Building
- •Combined Liquid Fuels with CDBG for streets and ADA ramps
- •Parks (PPE bathroom with ADA) with Kirby Foundation Grant and CBDG-CV

Additional Projects

- Purchase of Equipment for Wilkes-Barre City Fire Department totaling $181,999.81
- Assisted 19 Wilkes-Barre City residents with emergency housing rehabilitation needs, allowing them to remain in their homes. Total $91,018.17
- Demolition of 67 Prospect Street, cost $11,800

BEFORE	
	
DURING	**AFTER**
	

Public Services: $205,152.00

- Osterhout South Branch: $11,000
- YMCA Youth Camp: $6,000
    - Approximately 10 youth from low-income families in W-B were subsidized to participate in both day and overnight camps.
- Catholic Social Services: $10,000
- Volunteers of America: $10,000
- Domestic Violence: $13,152.00
- Crime Counseling: $15,000
- Wyoming Valley Children's Association: $15,000
    - Provided 226 days of school for 5 students residing in the W-B City who would not be able to attend WVCA without such support
- Community Policing: $125,000
    - Provides nontraditional police duties within the community

GRANTS

City Hall Renovations	***Total Cost – $802,846***
Keystone Mission	**Total Cost - $314,000**
Traffic Signal Infrastructure Improvements	***Total Project Cost - $126,000***
Purchases of Skid Steer Loader	***Total Cost - $78,561***

Purchases of Bucket Truck	***Total Cost - $157,000***



Brookside Levee Rehabilitation **Total Cost - $1,157,245**

	
Levee Adjacent to Pump Station BEFORE	**Levee Adjacent to Pump Station AFTER**
	
Swale Adjacent to Overpass BEFORE	**Swale Adjacent to Overpass AFTER**
	
Levee Approaching Brewery BEFORE	**Levee Approaching Brewery AFTER**

Hazle Street Retaining Wall Repairs **Total Cost - $250,000**

Hazle Street Retaining Wall BEFORE



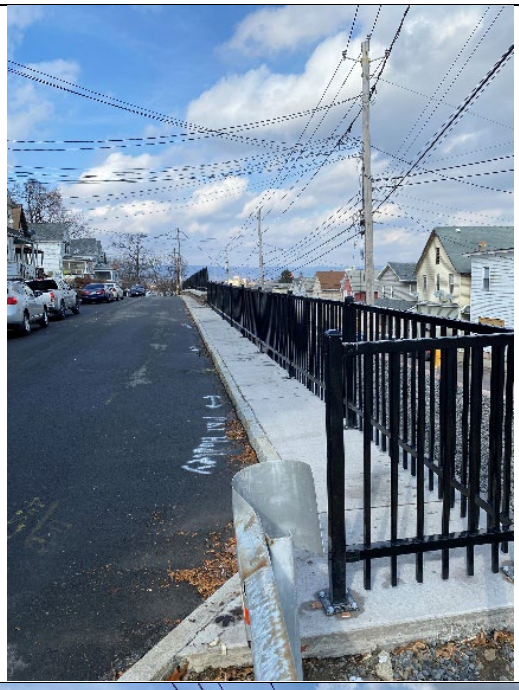










Hazle Street Retaining Wall AFTER	
	
	

POLICE DEPARTMENT

The Wilkes-Barre Police is a full-time police department serving the citizens of Wilkes- Barre twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week.

The Police Department is budgeted for **83 Police Officers**.

The Department has three major divisions: **Patrol, Operations, and Investigations**

PATROL DIVISION:

- The largest Division is the **Patrol Division**.
- Supervised by **Captain Michael Boyle**
- Patrol Division consisting of three platoons (A, B, C) Officers work 8-hour shifts with staggered days off. Supervised by 1 Lieutenant and two Sergeants

OPERATIONS DIVISION

- Supervised by **Lieutenant Jamie Sheridan**
- Records supervised by **Sergeant Kevin Steve**
- Community Policing supervised by **Sergeant Steve Lada**
- The operations division is responsible for Records, Community Policing, Training.
- Several units were combined into the **Operations Division** with the promotion of Lieutenant Sheridan and Sergeant Lada.
- ***Community Policing Unit (*Supervisor Sergeant Steve Lada*):***
- **The City of Wilkes-Barre is the only Police Department in Luzerne County with a dedicated Community Policing Unit with Officers assigned on a full-time basis.**
- The department is committed to **manning community substations throughout the** city. Manpower permitting, officers are assigned to a Downtown beat and in addition to manning the City's Police Substations.

- ***Bicycle* Patrol:** The department has recently added a **Bicycle Unit** with the purchase of six Patrol Bicycles. The unit is made up of patrol officers that were trained on the bikes that supplement Community Policing. The department has equipped a Bicycle Unit consisting of 6 patrol E Bikes and twelve officers assigned on a voluntary basis. The Community Policing efforts included the addition of a fully equipped Bicycle Unit. The Unit has participated in the manning of neighborhood substations and special events.



- ***K-9 Unit*:** The Wilkes-Barre Police K-9 unit is beneficial to both the **PATROL DIVISION** and **OPERATIONS DIVISION.** The unit just added another K-9 team with Officer Olshefski. The department will be utilizing the PackTrack Software program to assist with reporting and accountability.



INVESTIGATIONS DIVISION

- The third division is identified as the **Investigations Division**.
- Supervised by **Lieutenant Mathew Stash**
- The **Investigations Division** consists of Detectives, Anti- Crime, and the newly formed **Air/Drone Unit with the recent purchase of an unmanned aircraft.**
- The division is responsible for criminal investigation, narcotics and the Task Force Operations with the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Drug Enforcement Administration, Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms and the United States Marshals Service

The following is a summary of the body of work from and statistical information for the Wilkes-Barre Police Department PATROL DIVISION and DETECTIVE DIVISION for the year 2024:

- Calls for Service: 47,216
    - Avgeraging 3,935 calls per month
- Case Reports: 3,875
- 2,689 Arrests
    - 1,454 Criminal
    - 460 Warrant
    - 775 Summary
- 775 Non-Traffic Citations
- Accident Reports: 1,036
    - 362 Reportable
    - 674 non-reportable
- Traffic Citations: 2,783
- Naloxone Usage Reports (ODIN): 26

FIRE DEPARTMENT

All-Hazards Fire Department

The fire department maintains an emergency response fleet of twenty (20) different vehicles. The fire departments staffs three fire stations with 66 Fire Fighters and 8 Paramedics.

3,774 Fire Department Responses

- 47% were Medical First Response Calls
- 519 Service calls to the fire Department
- 593 False Alarms
- 160 Fires reported, including several major fires

7,873 Emergency Medical Services ambulance calls

- 109 doses of Naloxone administered, decrease from 2023 (148 doses)

Bureau of Inspection, Investigation, and Training

- 63 Fire Investigations
- 25 Fire Inspections
- 255 Fire Pre-Plan Reviews
- 28 Building Plan Reviews
- 88 Opening Burning Complaints with 12 citations filed
- 45 Fire Drills
- 18 Fire safety classes for schools and residents of high rises

Fire/EMS Training Classes

Advanced Cardiac Life Support; Pediatric Advanced Life Support; Salvage, Overhaul, and Scene Preservation; Forcible Entry; Ventilation Training; Multi Mete; Sepsis; 4 Hrs.; Tractor Dran Aerial Ladder Training; Water Rescue Training; Rope Rescue Training with members of the New York City Fire Department; Rapid Intervention team FAST Board Training; Aerial Operations; Operational Cancer Preventions; CPR Certification; Hybrid Vehicle Training

Grant Applications & Improvements to Equipment and Buildings

In 2024, grant applications for Fire and Emergency Medical Service Equipment were written to PA American Water Company, Pennsylvania State Fire commissioner, and Federal Emergency Management Agency Assistance to Fire Fighters Grant (AFG). Total grants received: $79,500

The WBFD upgraded $220,000 worth of emergency equipment and fire station upgrade (Fire Turnout Gear; Miscellaneous Equipment; Fire Hose; Fire Station Doors) funded by the 2024 CDBG Office.

South Station Apparatus Bay Doors.



$1.5 Million upgrade to Fire Headquarters: HVAC, Fire Station Doors, and Emergency Generator (below):



$850,000 new, state-of-the art Pierce Fire Engine



HEALTH DEPARTMENT

Bureau of Environmental Health

- Instituted a new SharePoint site for all inspectors to track and view the status of all food establishments.
- The animal control officer was sworn in as a certified animal humane officer.

Child Care Facility Inspections	31
Child Care Facility Follow-up Inspections	0
Emergency Investigations in Food Service Establishment	3
Food Service Inspections (Routine)	338
Food Service Inspections (Follow-ups)	92
Food Service Establishments (Plan Reviews Conducted)	13
Temporary Food Service Establishments	122
Food-Related Consumer Complaints	8
Heating Complaints Initial Investigations	12
Heating Complaints (Follow-up Inspections)	10
Heating Complaints (Citations Filed)	0
Nuisance Complaints Initial investigations	2,613
Nuisance Complaints (Follow-up Inspections	2,077
Nuisance Complaints (Citations Filed)	226
Nursing Home Inspections	3
Nursing Home (Follow-up Inspections)	0
Public Bathing Place Inspections	15
Public Bathing Place (Follow-up Inspections	0
Public & Private School Inspections	0
Solid Waste Complaints Initial investigations	4
Solid Waste Complaints (Follow-up Investigations)	4
Solid Waste Complaints (Citations Filed)	0
Training Sessions	19
Vector Complaints Initial Investigations	15
Vector Complaints (Follow-up Inspections)	4
Rental Inspections	3,261
Other Inspections Housing, Tattoo, QOL's	181

Bureau of Personal Health

Vaccines Administered: 1,391
Communicable Disease Investigations: 1,024
STD Testing: 130
Lead Cases: 123
Community Educational Events: 18

Bureau of Preventive Health

Public and Educational Events

2024 Farmers Market (June 21st through November 14th): In 2024, the Wilkes-Barre Health Department sold SNAP vouchers to Farmers Market visitors with ACCESS cards. This year the amount sold was $3,129.00

During the seven community events listed below, nearly 4,740 people within the community received outreach from the City of Wilkes-Barre Health Department

1. Health & Wellness: Fair (partnered with NAACP)
2. April 25, 2024: Luzerne County Health & Wellness Fair
3. June 15, 2024: Juneteenth
4. Head Start Registration Day (served 197 Head Start Families)
5. August 15, 2024: Downtown Children's Day
6. September 27, 2024: Wilkes-Barre School District Neighborhood Event
7. December 14, 2024: Santa Dash on the Square









Department of Public Works

- **265 Potholes Patched**
- **2,975 Tons of Salt on city roads during winter weather events**
- **Purchase of a new pickup truck and dump truck, with delivery scheduled for Spring 2025.**

Upgrades to the City Parks completed by DPW

- **Field and Building renovations to Casey Park Softball Field**
- **Field renovations to Barney Farms (Gibby Baseball Field)**
- **Kirby Park: upgrades to fields, signage, painting.**

DPW Employee Training

DPW employees are committed to learning new skills and enhancing their productivity.

- **Over 25 DPW Employees Completed Training for new bucket truck**
- **CDL Licenses**
  - Four Department of Public Works employees, Tyler Kurilla, David Iskra, Jr., Michael Simon, and Matthew Williams earned their CDL licenses. In 2023, during a meeting with the Public Works employees and Mayor Brown, Mr. Kurilla and Mr. Simon expressed an interest in developing their skills, including the pursuit of CDL licenses.
  - Mayor Brown and his administration collaborated with PA CareerLink® and Luzerne County Community College to coordinate the CDL training opportunity. Having additional employees with CDL licenses will increase the number of operators who can be utilized for snow plowing, garbage pickup, and emergency operations. It also encourages the employees to remain with the City and grow within the Department of Public Works. Workforce development training programs benefit the City and its residents.



Pictured, left to right, are Matt Sobieski, LCCC/Ancora Education CDL Program Director/Instructor; Dave Lewis, DPW Supervisor/Inspector; Michael Simon, DPW; Andy Strutko, PA CareerLink® Business Services Representative; Tyler Kurilla, DPW; Wilkes-Barre City Mayor George C. Brown; Pauline Rinehimer, PA CareerLink® Business Services Representative; David Iskra, Jr., DPW; Susan Spry, Luzerne County Community College's Associate Vice President of Academic Affairs; Matthew Williams, DPW; and Christine M. Jensen, PA CareerLink® Administrator, Luzerne County. Absent from the photo is Trina Moss, Luzerne/Schuylkill Workforce Development Deputy Director

SPECIAL EVENTS

March 10th the **St. Patrick's Day Parade** came down South Main St from South St to Public Square with a large crowd braving the changing temperatures, snow and hail.

March 30th the Wilkes-Barre Fire Department brought the Easter Bunny to town for the **Downtown Wilkes-Barre Business Association's Easter Egg Hunt**







April 27th and April 28th the **Cherry Blossom Festival** had large crowds bringing food and craft vendors to Kirby Park for a fun filled weekend. With nearly 9,000 in attendance on Sunday enjoying the carnival rides and musical entertainment from Eric Ruddy and Portland Frank





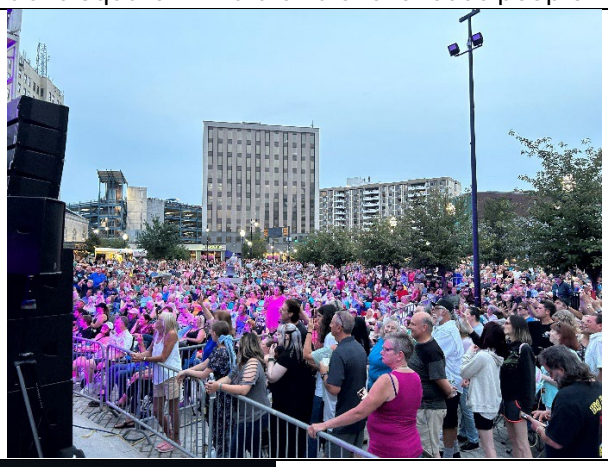
May 3rd, 4th and 5th brought the **Cavalcade of Jazz** back to downtown Wilkes-Barre. Friday night was a walk through the downtown restaurants with great local jazz acts packing hundreds of people into each restaurant. Saturday was a sold-out Kirby Show with 10-time Grammy Award winner, presidential Medal of Freedom and 2024 Kennedy Center Honoree Arturo Sandoval. Sunday finished off with a sold-out jazz brunch at the Mary Stegmaier Mansion.

June saw the beginning of another **Farmer's Market** season. With 11 farmers, 10 Food Trucks, along with 23 craft and service vendors Public Square is alive every Thursday with fun, food and live entertainment.

The largest **4th of July Celebration** in Northeastern PA was a rainy day this year but still brought 18,000 people into Kirby Park to see the Fireworks, live bands, and experience the rides, food and craft vendors

In August, **Starship featuring Mickey Thomas** graced Public Square with a crowd of over 6000 people.







September started with a special day commemorating the 100th Anniversary of Kirby Park, with the Northeast Philharmonic and PolkaBanski playing songs from the 1920s. There were carnival rides, a petting zoo and hot air balloon rides. Members of the Kirby Family were present for the park's 100th centennial anniversary



There were 8 softball tournaments, 22 5K races, 21 Birthday Parties, 12 weddings, along with company picnics, memorial services, church services in Kirby Park. Even a major Latin Pop Group came to Kirby Park to play! Also in September there was the annual Multi Cultural Parade and Festival. With dozens of cultures recognized from throughout the city with ethnic food, traditional dress and entertainment.

This October we marked an incredibly significant historical event in Kirby Park. As some may know the great Babe Ruth hit what he believed to be his longest homerun in Wilkes-Barre. We commemorated this achievement with the Sultan of Swat Homerun Derby. In a City vs County Homerun Derby the City came out victorious, there was also an individual Women's and Men's winner.





October brought the Downtown Trick or Treat. With a beautiful October day there were thousands of children dressed in their favorite costumes to collect candy from the local business and organizations.



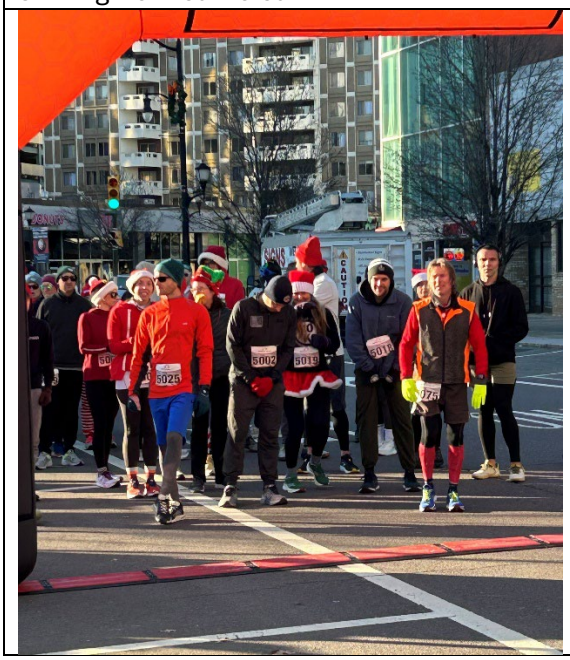


November Santa came to town in the Wilkes-Barre Christmas Parade. There were thousands of people downtown to see the giant inflatable balloons, marching bands and the Big Guy Himself!





In December runners braved the freezing temperatures for the Inaugural Santa 5K to benefit Coffee Inclusive. With Santa suits and apparel on they ran over the Market St Bridge, through Kirby Park and then down South Main St. Pictures with Santa after with ice skating on the Public Square Ice Rink had children smiling from ear to ear.





Business Development

Businesses opened in 2024 (*SPARK Recipient)

Businesses opened in 2024 (*SPARK Recipient)	
• Amber Indian Express	• Next L3vel Studio, LLC*
• Artistic Designs by Helene	• OCG Next Level Service, LLC*
• Bob Kal Media, LLC*	• Party Express Multi Services
• Building Blocks Learning Centers	• South BBQ & Coffee Shop, LLC*
• Evergreen W-B*	• Starbucks—Kidder St.
• Express Employment (C&C Staffing, Inc.) *	• StratSimple
• Fish & Meat Market Corp.	• Sti Hazleton Transport, LLC*
• Halibut Blue, LLC*	• The Burnt Norton (DDR II LLC)
• Isa Magic Nails*	• Villa Atlixco
• La Choza del Sabor	• Virtual Fairways
• Los Dos Carnales	• Wilkes-Barre Climbing Gym
• NABI Medical Aesthetics*	•



Express Employment (C&C Staffing, LLC)
September 2024



Evergreen
June 2024



Building Blocks Learning Center
Downtown Wilkes-Barre Location
May 2024