

# Beautiful YORK

Action Plan  
2006-2007  
Summary



Prepared for York County Community Foundation  
YorkScape Endowment for City Beautification

Brown & Keener Bressi Urban Design  
Genevieve H. Ray / Urban Conservation & Design

May 2006  
York PA  
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**BeautifulYORK Action Plan 2006-2007**  
**Summary Report**  
 prepared for  
**York County Community Foundation**  
**YorkScape Endowment for City Beautification**

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**May 2006**

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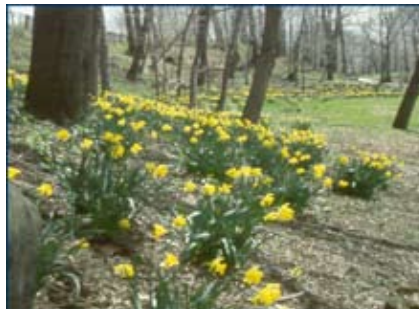
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### In this Summary:

	Projects shown with a star are high priority.
	Projects with a YorkCounts logo help advance that agenda.
	Projects shown with a check are completed or well on their way.



Example    


### IV. 1 Daffodil Dig

A two-season community event will bring hundreds of volunteers out to plant daffodil bulbs in the fall, and out again in the spring to celebrate the results.

**1st Action:** Already initiated by Endowment, the first Dig was held in fall of 2005. Planning is under-way for a 50,000-bulb event in 2006.  
**Project Drivers:** *YorkScape Endowment*  
**Partners:** *City Dept. of Public Works, multiple others*

# Background & Context of the Action Plan

BeautifulYORK is an initiative of York County Community Foundation, which in 2003 began an effort to bring to a single table most of the groups actively engaged in City beautification activities. It was hoped that cooperative ventures would net greater impact and better quality of life in the city. After preliminary issues identification, a large group of civic, business and neighborhood leaders were invited in 2004 to a “Summit on City Beautification.” Summit attendees ranked as high priorities the drafting of a comprehensive plan for city beautification, the creation of a beautification endowment to be housed at the Foundation, and the development of a public art plan and program.

The 2005 year was pivotal, with a second Summit held in May to kick off the start of work on the comprehensive Action Plan — one product of which is this Summary Report — and with the establishment of the YorkScope Endowment for City Beautification, its purposes to raise funds for beautification and long-term maintenance, and to coordinate and encourage complementary and collaborative ventures. The Endowment has initiated grant-making programs to serve these ends.

This BeautifulYORK Action Plan is intended not as a fixed “blueprint” for action in 2006-07, but rather as a guide for decision-making in times when budgets are thin and need for improvement is great. Its contents and recommendations, and those in a collection of more detailed technical memoranda prepared by project consultants, have direct application to inform the Endowment’s grant-making program, and it is hoped that they will be of use to other partners as they plan their future beautification activities.

Participants in both Summits and members of the YorkScope Endowment’s Advisory Committee helped focus the BeautifulYORK program. In the process, ten guiding principles emerged. About 40 programs or projects aimed at addressing those principles were identified and recommended for use in over 200 sites across the city. Summary descriptions of most of the projects follow over the next pages.



The BeautifulYORK Action Plan concerns itself with much more than “making things pretty.” The Plan has also been drawn in a larger context, to serve ambitious goals of the YorkCounts program.

The Action Plan’s recommendations include items that, while focused primarily on York City, work in small ways or large to advance six of the “30 Ready Solutions” found in the YorkCounts agenda:

- Clean up and dress up York County’s urban centers and neighborhoods
- Improve housing stock and increase homeownership and affordable housing opportunities
- Establish redevelopment-friendly policies and procedures that will encourage private and public reinvestment in downtown and distressed communities throughout York County
- Encourage mixed income housing and other desired development by exploring the use of zoning, impact fees, tax incentives, and other land use tools.
- Support community-based housing programs with a 2009 goal of 100 new or rehabilitated homes
- Develop and deliver tools and training to foster responsible, sustainable natural resource and land use planning.

... Genevieve Ray

# York: Becoming a ‘Destination of Choice’

BeautifulYORK, as an endeavor or “project,” is based on a simple idea. The way a city looks — the impression it makes on visitors, the experience of walking along a downtown street, the appearance of its parks and community spaces — has a great impact on whether a city succeeds.

This is an endeavor with a long tradition in York. It’s why the city’s business, civic and religious leaders invested their precious resources in the architecture of buildings like the Fluhrer Building, the old York County Court House, York Water Co., and the stained glass at the Episcopal Church of St. John the Baptist, which can still take one’s breath away today. It’s why the City set up protections for its fabric of historic architecture. And it’s why the community recently embarked on a process of re-envisioning the Codorus corridor as a great chain of parks, civic spaces and recreational trails that will complement and make more desirable the commercial and residential redevelopment sites along the river.



*Other cities’ beautification projects can inspire similar efforts in York*

Across the country and the world, small cities like York once thrived as central places with markets, courthouses and banks that served a network of businesses, villages and farmlands. But that advantage is disappearing and small-city, main-street America is repositioning itself as a destination of choice. Small cities and towns are realizing that they must leverage their historic, cultural and architectural legacies and capitalize on the unique niche of accessible, manageable urbanism that they can offer. Places like York may, indeed, be the next frontier.

York is similar to countless other places that have already discovered this path. Right now, York is challenged with a deteriorating building stock, dwindling population and pressing fiscal needs, factors that are not entirely in its control. Yet York’s assets are tremendous — a rich cultural legacy, a diverse and committed core of civic leadership, a full range of cultural and environmental assets, and an intact urban fabric.

The BeautifulYORK project is making the visionary argument that improving the city’s visual appearance is a perfectly good way to begin changing the city’s course — that small accomplishments in improving the city’s appearance can help initiate a longer-term trajectory of strategies for strengthening the city.

... Mark Keener & Todd Bressi / Brown & Keener Bressi Urban Design

# The Action Plan's 10 Guiding Principles

The BeautifulYORK Action Plan for 2006-07 is organized around ten guiding principles that emerged from the Summits. Within this framework are numerous projects or programs, some located or applicable Citywide, some directed to specific sites scattered around the City, some focused on neighborhoods and many aimed at beautifying Downtown York, which was almost universally identified by business, civic and neighborhood leaders as a clear priority.

## I. Make Arrival in York a Welcoming Experience

When visitors come into York City along one of its main streets — Market, George, Carlisle and others —it should be clear that there's a “there there.” And as they progress through the city, arriving downtown should convey the same impression. For first-time visitors or for persons travelling city streets on a daily basis, the first impression should be lasting and positive. *[Selected sites Citywide]*

## II. Conserve the City's ‘Good (Architectural) Bones’

York's historic architectural legacy is one of the City's greatest visual and cultural assets, but severely deteriorating buildings are a reality in many neighborhoods. The City's architecture needs managing to contribute to a healthy residential and commercial environment and to realize the buildings' inherent value. “City Beautification” must include programs and tools to help owners improve their properties. *[Citywide]*



*Tile-fronted Fluhrer Building,*

## III. Celebrate Placemaking Sites

Nearly every neighborhood in York is graced with “place-making” sites — citywide treasures like the Codorus Creek, Continental Square and the farmers' markets; prominent infrastructure like bridges; neighborhood landmarks like fire stations, churches and “triangle” parks. By focusing beautification projects on these places, BeautifulYORK can send the message that every neighborhood matters and can help support renewal in every corner of the city. *[Citywide and selected sites]*

## IV. Green the Cityscape

Cities are discovering the aesthetic and environmental values of “greening up,” from ornamental plantings to creating natural linkages that extend parks into every neighborhood, to using landscape strategies for improving stormwater management. Flowers and landscaping should be a hallmark. Greenway/blueway systems should be enhanced and connected. And vacant land should be greened and cared for to boost the chances of returning it to productive use. *[Citywide]*

## VI. Embellish the City with Arts & Light

York's artistic and creative community can be involved in all aspects of beautification in order to convey a sense of excitement, energy and freshness. Downtown streets, recreation corridors, place-making landmarks and neighborhood gathering places can all be a canvas for the fresh, engaging ideas that artists can bring. One of the arts to be employed is lighting, not only for safe streets but to provide dramatic, even theatrical, nighttime views of York's landmark structures and special open spaces. *[Downtown, selected sites]*

## V. Create a Quality Walking Environment

One of York's key assets is that it is an eminently walkable place. The pace of blocks, the nearness of churches, schools, corner stores and downtown, are all assets whose value will grow as the cost of automobile use increases. Engaging shop fronts, tidy residential blocks, safe pedestrian crossings and greenery everywhere can help York realize the potential of its walking environment.

*[Downtown]*



## VII. Promote In-City & Downtown Living

One of York's great challenges is at the same time one of its exciting opportunities — promoting the city, and downtown in particular, as a desirable place to live. Rebuilding a long-term, stable residential population is a foundation of urban success. Beautification efforts that help stabilize blocks, create neighborhood anchors, and contribute to the vitality of downtown can send the signal that living in the city is desirable again. *[Citywide, special focus on Downtown initially]*

## VIII. Abolish the Eyesores

A quick and effective step towards beautifying the city would be to remove elements that clutter and mar the appearance of the street. Many of the intrusions are there illegally, and energetic code enforcement could make immediate and dramatic improvements to the streetscape. *[Citywide]*

## IX. Build Social Capital: Collaborate

A key underpinning of YorkCounts is the importance of building “social capital” by encouraging partnerships and collaboration among diverse groups and interests. The success of BeautifulYORK will depend upon continued teamwork: agreeing on agendas and priorities, pooling financial and volunteer resources and developing a shared, long-term vision as projects are considered. *[Citywide]*

## X. Build for Excellence: York Deserves the Best

Given the choice of a smaller-scale project at top quality versus a larger scale project where quality corners are cut to save or stretch money, always choose the former. Where a tone of excellence is set, the project itself will be the best “sales pitch” for future expansion, support and funding. *[Citywide]*

# I. MAKE ARRIVAL IN YORK A WELCOMING EXPERIENCE

## 1 City Gateways & Entry Corridors



Improvements to city gateways, attractive landscapes, directional signs and well-kept buildings should announce that York is a good place to shop, live, play and invest. Trees, landscaping and removal of visual clutter are also needed along secondary but highly-traveled roadways like Pennsylvania, Kings Mill, Highland, Prospect, Jackson, Sherman and Loucks Mill. Specially designed gateway elements should be located at these intersections: N. George St. Bridge on the north; S. George and Rathton on the south; Harrison St. on the east; and two western locations, West Market at Richland, and West Market at Carlisle.

**1st Action:** Give first priority to gateway sites. Establish Gateway WAG (Working Action Group) to plan, secure funding and design overall approach that is consistent but encourages individual flair for each separate Gateway site. Detailed design and funding should be led by a small group of neighbors and stakeholders at each gateway.

**Project Driver:** YorkScape Endowment

**Key Partner(s):** Stakeholders in neighboring areas



*“Welcome” and “Do Not Enter” signs at E. Market and Harrison give a mixed message to visitors arriving in York. More unified and attractive signs could be designed as shown below.*

## 2 Closing the Loop

Traffic patterns should welcome visitors and work to benefit the City. The Market and Philadelphia Streets “Loop” is a public nuisance, encouraging late-night mischief and discouraging downtown residents.

**1st Action:** Seek and secure funding for engineering drawings and construction documents for restoring two-way traffic on E. Market St. from Duke St. to Harrison St.

**Project Driver:** Dept. of Public Works

**Key Partner(s):** YorkScape Endowment



*Until two-way traffic can be reestablished on most of Market Street, this solution is recommended for the “mixed message” at E. Market and Harrison. The unified approach shown here will help send a message to visitors that York is one destination, not a hodge-podge of separate and competing attractions..*

### 3 Downtown Sign Program

A handsome, coherent, consistent and thoughtfully designed graphic system of signs, flyers, and web-based information can welcome and direct and inform visitors and residents about York's offerings and events. Improving signage at downtown parking lots and garages should be part of the design package to make visitors welcome at each stage of the process — locating parking, entering, finding their destinations, re-finding their vehicles and departing.

**1st Action:** Convene Sign System WAG (Working Action Group) to secure funding to hire graphic and environmental designers to develop coordinated system.

**Project Driver:** *Downtown Inc.*

**Key Partner(s):** *General Authority (for City-owned parking)*



*In words or icons, the graphics on lots and garages can also help reinforce nearby uses that they serve (here, Library, County, Shopping).*

### 4 Re-imagine Strip Shopping Centers

Where most York streets are still well-defined by structures built right to the sidewalk, the edges of the city — as well as a growing number of streets within the city — are ragged and frayed from the presence of strip shopping centers set back behind parking lots. To re-knit and reinforce the urban fabric, all new shopping areas should be designed with buildings at the sidewalk and parking in the interior of the block. Where strip shopping areas pre-exist, landscaping, strong edge treatment (e.g., low walls at the building line) and removal of cluttered signs will help strengthen the continuity of the block and the sense of entry to the city. South George Street north of Rathton Road offers the chance for a joint demonstration project between the city and Spring Garden Township. This several-block-long area includes Colonial Shopping Plaza.

**1st Action:** The region's landscape architects might be approached with a proposal to interest their chapter's American Society of Landscape Architects to conduct a weekend design workshop for selected "ragged edge" sites or blocks. The workshop could involve citizens, local businesses, artists and officials from the City and its abutting municipalities.

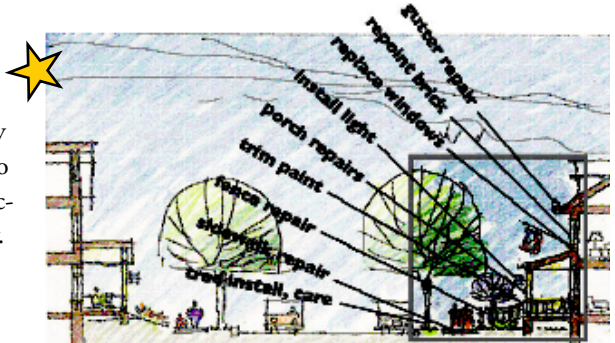
**Project Driver:** *Endowment Advocacy Committee (temporarily), to find a dedicated Driver and identify partners. The Neighborhood Alliance, arts groups and members of ASLA would be good starting points for the search.*

## II. CONSERVE & ENHANCE THE CITY'S 'GOOD BONES'

York's extraordinary architecture represents a continuum of styles and periods from mid-1700s half-timbering through today's contemporary glass and steel structures. Our buildings are among the city's most valuable assets. Vigorous City and nonprofit programs are an essential component of a successful beautification plan in York. They will provide money, manpower, and expertise to repair and maintain York's historic homes, civic landmarks and industrial and commercial structures.

### 1. Historic Rehab Brochures

York's rich architectural fabric and historical treasures should be treated as such and also as key assets for city redevelopment. Tools are needed to assist property owners in conserving these resources economically while maintaining their integrity.



**1st Action:** Secure funding to illustrate and print guidelines used by the City's Historic Architectural Review Board (HARB) to review property alterations. The guidelines should be written with a user-friendly (not severe or regulatory) tone, and can be crafted in ways that will provide helpful rehab information in all parts of the city. Perhaps most importantly, they will add transparency to a process that is seen by many as arbitrary and capricious. Where guidelines are made clear in advance and are administered even-handedly by HARB, owners and developers come to expect a predictable and fair process, and appropriate renovation is encouraged. The document can also promote use of federal tax credit programs for rehabilitation of historic buildings.

**Project Driver:** *YorkScape Endowment with HARB*

**Key Partner(s):** *Historic York, Inc.*

### 2. Streamlined Code Enforcement & Permitting

Explore ways in which enforcement and permitting functions, now understaffed and departmentally fragmented, can be streamlined and processes made simple, swift and responsive to help stem deterioration and to encourage rehabilitation and redevelopment.

**1st Action:** Assess roles and responsibilities to determine opportunities to place permitting functions with one department or under one supervisor. With or without that change, expand the recently employed practice of convening all relevant city divisions in "predevelopment" sessions with owners and redevelopers. Encourage building permits personnel to strive for a reputation as the most user-friendly desk in City Hall. Redeploy staff or seek new funding to increase staff capacity to carry out code enforcement and to assure that it is consistently and regularly applied.

**Project Drivers:** *City Administration / Dept. of Community Development & Fire Department*

### 3 Updated Comprehensive Plan & Zoning Code YorkCounts

The City plan and zoning code should encourage owners, merchants and advertisers to reduce practices that clutter, mask or mar the cityscape, and should encourage rather than discourage persons wishing to improve and invest in their properties. City agencies should consider the innovative “form-based zoning” approach, which turns on its head the old, rigid land use restrictions of traditional zoning codes and encourages mixed-use development that gives higher priority to designed form than to use or density. Form-based zoning codes are based on a physical plan or on a shared vision for a specific place, and buildings help shape the public realm. Form-based codes are especially useful in areas like York County where new models are needed to negotiate the tension between farmland/open space preservation, suburban expansion and strengthening of the city core.

***1st Action:*** Investigate the possibility of developing a pilot for form-based zoning, and test it first in the Northwest Triangle, where there is desire for high degrees of flexibility in land use and development mix than is allowed in traditional zoning. Secure funding for a comprehensive plan update and zoning code update to be carried out with active public participation. Work with Board of Realtors, YorkCounts and others to co-sponsor community explorations on the applicability of form-based codes in York County.

***Project Drivers:*** *City Planning Commission with City Council Development Committee*

***Key Partner(s):*** *Northwest Triangle (initially), Realtors Association of York & Adams Counties, City boards and commissions, special-interest groups including neighborhood associations, business & civic groups*

### III. CELEBRATE PLACEMAKING SITES

#### 1 Reclaim Continental Square

In the heart of the city, a design plan is needed to re-invent Continental Square as a vibrant, intriguing town center. The current design is dated and tired, and it does not take advantage of the opportunities for innovative and artistic interpretation of the historical events that took place at or near the Square. These events are important to York County and the nation, and a talented design process can bring them to new significance for contemporary life.

***1st Action:*** Fundraising for a public improvements plan has been initiated by Foundation leaders. The next step is to select an urban designer to assist in drafting a new design for the Square. Nearby bankers have expressed some interest in helping fund a design plan.



*Southeast quadrant Continental Square, redesigned.*

***Project Drivers:*** *YorkScape Endowment*

***Key Partner(s):*** *Bankers on or near Continental Square, City Public Works, City Economic Development, Downtown Inc*

#### 2 Recapture the Riverfront



Winning strong interest at both Summits was the vision of a flowering, clean Codorus Creek flowing along parks and trails connecting city neighborhoods and attracting new investment. This series of over a dozen separate projects is detailed in a companion “Recapture the Riverfront” booklet issued by the Codorus Watershed Endowment of York County Community Foundation.

***1st Action:*** Construction of improvements to Codorus Boat Basin and Foundry Plaza, including a public art project called the “Gear Garden,” already initiated by the Codorus Watershed Endowment. In a companion effort begun by the YorkScape Endowment, a Bridge WAG (Working Action Group) has been organized to plan and secure funding for bridge lighting, artwork and landscaping.

***Project Drivers:*** *Foundry Plaza Inc., City Public Works*

*Multiple partners for each project including York County Community Foundation’s Codorus Watershed and YorkScape Endowments, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, PA Dept. of Environmental Protection and PA Dept. of Neighborhood and Community Development*

### 3 Central & Farmers Market Survival Plan

A strategic viability plan is needed for York's landmark Central Market and Farmers Market to be financially strong, beautifully maintained and lighted, and each serving as a vibrant place of interchange between York County and York City.



The scope of work for a thorough survival plan will include operations, product mix; standholder recruitment and retention, farmer/ local producer participation, marketing, economic factors affecting survivability, issues related to the buildings themselves, potential other uses and joint programming opportunities with other local institutions, a series of relationships (the markets to each other, to other city redevelopment efforts, to potential partners, to York County) and finally an assessment and recommendations on the sustainability of the markets and their partnership.

***1st Action:*** Already initiated by board leaders from both market houses. City Administration and Lancaster-York Heritage Region have both pledged partial funding, additional fundraising is underway for a consulting team to conduct the planning effort.

***Project Drivers:*** Boards of Central Market & Farmers Market

***Key Partner(s):*** City of York, Downtown Inc, York County, Lancaster-York Heritage Region

## IV. GREEN THE CITYSCAPE

### 1 Daffodil Dig — See Page 1



YorkCounts

### 2 Heritage Rail Trail Extensions & Improvements

The extension of the Rail Trail north to Rudy Park and west to Hanover will enrich the region and support quality development opportunities. The existing trail should be upgraded, especially downtown and at the southern entry to the city. Markers and an interpretive sign program with historical and ecological and information should be added along the trail.



**1st Action:** York County Rail Trail Authority has launched a fundraising campaign and engineering for trail extensions.

**Project Drivers:** York County Rail Trail Authority

**Key Partner(s):** York County Parks & Recreation; York City Dept. of Public Works

### 3 Stream Restoration/Riparian Buffers/Trails at Willis & Tyler Runs

A joint project with area schools, colleges and North York could improve both sides of Willis Run. A landscaped trail along Tyler Run would connect downtown and the Heritage Rail Trail with York College's main campus and the Tech Park envisioned by York County Economic Development Authority (YCEDC). Planting of riparian buffers along these streams is a model for use elsewhere in the county.

**1st Action:** A Willis Run program has already been initiated by Codorus Creek Improvement Partnership. The group must determine whether to pursue additional funding and program expansion, and whether (and when) a Tyler Run program is feasible.

**Project Drivers:** Codorus Creek Improvement Partnership for restoration work; YCEDC for development of Tech Park

**Key Partner(s):** York City School District, North York, others as project develops; potential for YorkArts, other arts groups



YorkCounts

### 4, 5, 6 – Other projects initiated but needing continued attention:

#### Broad Street Greenway

Lush shrubbery and flowering plants, added over time, connect schools, parks and neighborhoods along the Broad Street Greenway.

**1st Action:** Already initiated by City of York. Additional funds will be needed for generous plantings and year-round care.

**Project Driver:** Dept. of Publ. Works

#### Heritage Parkway

With a creekside parkway linking Harley-Davidson to downtown York, center city tourist attractions may draw more visitors.

**1st Action:** Feasibility study has been commissioned by Lancaster-York Heritage Region.

**Project Drivers:** Lancaster-York Heritage Region, County Planning

#### Philadelphia St. Median

★ Motorists and neighbors will admire a beautifully planted and maintained Philadelphia St. median (from Sherman to State). **1st Action:** Already initiated by **Project Driver**, the Garden Club of York. The median needs more plants and regular maintenance.

## 7 City Park Signs & Amenities

Artist-designed markers or other “percent for art” features at entrances to city parks will be evidence of community interest in family-centered activities, nature, and local heritage. Park seating, fencing, lighting, landscapes and play space should be thoughtfully designed, regularly maintained and improved in response to community needs, demographics and interests.

**1st Action:** City Department of Public Works should develop budget, explore other partners (e.g., arts groups) and test the interest of “Angels of the Parks” groups in pursuing improvements or sponsoring a design competition for artists and graphic designers.

**Project Drivers:** Dept. of Public Works

**Key Partner(s):** Angels of the Parks, YorkScape Endowment, arts organizations



*This artist-designed fence of cavorting stick-figures is a placemaker for the city park and a whole neighborhood.*



*Mounted on utility or street-sign poles, small, triangular-arc signs with a neighborhood's name (here, Little Italy) and corresponding art work (Italian flag colors) offer a relatively inexpensive way to define a district's boundaries and build neighborhood pride.*

## 8 Upgrade Neighborhood Entries & Image

The goal of this project is to see that each York neighborhood has distinctive signage, entry features or special outdoor places that reinforce neighborhood pride and a sense of place. This is a project that could occur in concert with efforts listed under “Promote In-City and Downtown Living.”

**1st Action:** Neighborhood Alliance determines interest in project and potential partners.

**Project Drivers:** Neighborhood Alliance, community development corporations

# V. EMBELLISH THE CITY WITH ARTS & LIGHT



## 1 Downtown Lighting Plan

Illuminated buildings, streets and public places are designed with theatrical-quality lighting for a safe, dramatic nighttime downtown. In this way the streets are not only well-lighted for safety, but help create a comfortable ambiance and a place that draws people to the public streets. [The BeautifulYORK resource book provided to the Endowment includes a scope of work for a lighting consultant.]



*Light from inside and outside shopfronts*

**1st Action:** Convene Lighting WAG (Working Action Group) to review scope of work and seek funding for a lighting designer, also to explore Women’s Giving Circle’s citywide “Safe City” program, which includes grants for lighting.

**Project Driver:** *Downtown Inc*

## 2 Public Art Strategy

Build upon recommendations of Mayor’s Arts District Task Force. Develop professionally-administered systems for including artists in the design of sites and buildings; secure support for adoption of a Percent for Art ordinance (1/2 to 1 percent of construction costs) for public and private construction projects. Working with City Administration, Endowment’s Advocacy Subcommittee help publicize and strategize implementation of the Task Force’s recommendations for public art programs.



*An artist-designed fence encircles a tree and flower bed in a small downtown shopping district.*

**1st Action:** An interested sponsoring group or groups research public art programs in other cities, perhaps planning a learning session in which a group of public art administrators are invited to present their programs at a public forum.

**Project Driver:** *To be determined. Candidates are City of York, Cultural Alliance, YorkArts, other arts groups, YorkScape Endowment. The Endowment’s Advocacy subcommittee may wish to “shop” this endeavor to find the appropriate Driver.*

## VI. CREATE A QUALITY WALKING ENVIRONMENT



*Coordinated, well-composed and creative storefronts, signs, shop windows, plantings and incorporation of public art are all among the features that will make downtown York a pleasant, safe, interesting place for strolling, shopping and people-watching.*



*Unless otherwise noted below, either the Driver or Key Partner for these projects, many focused on Downtown, is likely to be Downtown Inc or the City Economic Development Department*

### 1 Retail at the Center

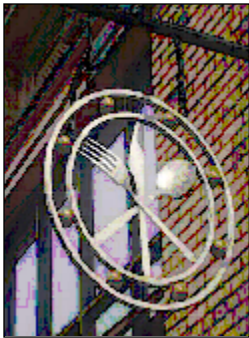
High priority should be given to regulating and recruiting activities that will add more retail on first-floor frontages in the center of downtown. The blocks within a four-minute walk from Continental Square form the core of the city's shopping/ dining downtown district. As ground-floor spaces open up, all efforts should be made to lease or sell to visibly active uses like shops and restaurants (with clear windows allowing views from inside and out), rather than office uses.

***1st Action:*** Downtown Inc subcommittees and York City's marketing specialist should map street frontages that should be continuous retail, i.e., where non-retail, service-related uses should be discouraged. Develop profiles of the preferred merchant mix to guide recruitment, and seek cooperation of local realtors in marketing and achieving the mix. Demonstrate to property owners that this approach has brought increased rents, stable tenants and shortened vacancy periods elsewhere.

### 2 Sidewalk Merchandising & Outdoor Dining

Downtown merchants and City regulators can unite to encourage a vibrant street life – with engaging sidewalk displays, outdoor cafes, and fun – where the offerings of downtown shops and restaurants spill out into the street.

***1st Action:*** Downtown Inc can interview businesses that have already begun outdoor service to learn about their customer preferences and design or operational challenges related to security. Create "How To" brochure and establish small grant program to give owners incentives and keep quality high. Identify demonstration projects. Establish and adopt design guidance for facades, sandwich board signs, merchandise display, furnishings, and operations.



### 3 Assist Business Owners with Signs & Shopfronts

To sharpen the design presentation of merchants' offerings, Downtown Inc. can add to the effectiveness of its ongoing work by developing a "Design Guide for Signs and Shopfronts" brochure. Periodic "Design Days" events can be planned to provide technical assistance to merchants and business owners.

**1st Action:** Downtown Inc. organizes Design Days services — where two to four owners meet with a designer, a sign fabricator, a contractor, a city agency representative, and a merchandising expert to talk about their ideas and ambitions; following up with a recommendations memorandum, as well as cost and financing information.

### 4 Postcards from the Center

Building on the success of the recently initiated "First Friday" program, Downtown Inc. can continue producing postcards to let shoppers, workers, and visitors know about special events, temporary exhibits, and main attractions downtown. Posters, web, print mailings and broadcast media and other regularly updated downtown graphic installations are also necessary to a well-rounded advertising program, but the postcard motif should be continued as a hallmark of Downtown Inc's marketing efforts. The fact that they are displayed and distributed in all downtown venues reinforces the image of downtown York as a single, lively, attractive destination where shopkeepers and business owners are working together, not at cross purposes.

**1st Action:** Downtown Inc inventories additional locations, including those outside downtown, as distribution points for postcards and other promotions.

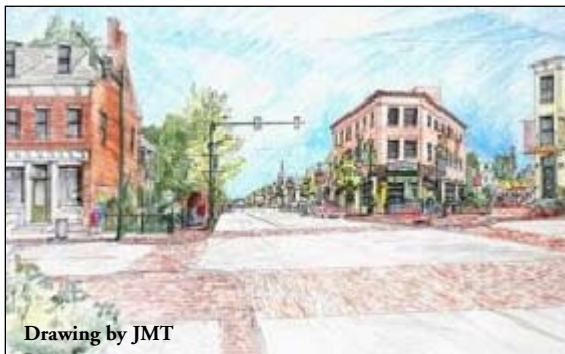
### 5 People & Cars Intersect Comfortably

Specialty paving, starting at the intersection of Market and George and coordinated with Continental Square improvements, will alert drivers that they have entered a district where walking predominates. Identify other priority pedestrian crossing intersections: at a minimum, striping should be refreshed every three years. Demarcate the Cherry Lane crosswalk with ornamental paving or streetprint and signature artist-designed warning elements. Downtown and in neighborhoods, explore artist-designed crosswalks using paving or paint.

**1st Action:** Identify and map all points in downtown and neighborhoods where special features are desired.

**Project Driver:** Neighborhood Alliance with City Police

**Key Partner(s):** City Police/Traffic, arts groups, YorkScape Endowment



*Paving can signal a special place. As part of the YWCA's Oldtowne East Renaissance project, special paving around the York Spanish-American Center will increase pedestrian safety, make it clear that a "district" has been entered, and give the Center new prominence as a neighborhood landmark and a community gathering place.*



## 6 A Green Downtown Is Good Business

A tended urban landscape that pleases the eye and provides shade will convey an overall sense of a hospitable, cared-for place. It will also produce a return on investment in the form of increased customer purchases, longer shopping visits downtown, and a higher likelihood that visitors will patronize multiple businesses.

***1st Action:*** Downtown Inc, the City Dept. of Public Works and the Garden Club of York should complete a downtown planting program to be implemented over several years. The plan will include street trees, hanging baskets, shrubs and ornamental trees selected for drought tolerance, form, beauty and four-season interest.

***Project Driver:*** *Garden Club of York, Downtown Inc, City Public Works Dept. can split “driver” responsibilities depending on specific planting project.*

## 7 Citywide ‘Pick Up the Litter’ Campaign

A citywide goal is to have the sidewalks, alleys, and streets downtown and in all neighborhoods free of trash, and to have individual property owners, business people and residents from age 3 to 93 feel that they must make York a well-kept and well-loved city.

***1st Action:*** Keep York Beautiful convenes WAG (Working Action Group) to brainstorm the essential components of a citywide campaign, then to organize it and secure funding. Pro bono work from advertising, marketing & events professionals are desirable for this early planning stage.

***Project Driver:*** *Keep York Beautiful*

***Key Partner(s):*** *City Dept. of Public Works, multiple others*

## 8 Bridges Join Instead of Divide

It will seem a shorter walk when streets and bridges crossing the Codorus Creek are transformed by art, lighting, and landscape improvements (the Garden Club began bridge flower baskets last year).

***1st Action:*** YorkScape Endowment has begun forming a Bridge WAG, which is beginning to plan bridge improvements.

***Project Driver:*** *Yorkscape Endowment’s Bridge WAG (Working Action Group)*

***Key Partner(s):*** *Foundry Plaza Inc., W. Market St. Merchants, Downtown Inc, Codorus Watershed Endowment*

## VII. PROMOTE IN-CITY & DOWNTOWN LIVING

One of York's great challenges is at the same time one of its exciting opportunities — promoting the city, and downtown in particular, as a desirable place to live. Rebuilding a long-term, stable residential population is a foundation of urban success. Beautification efforts that help stabilize blocks, create neighborhood anchors, and contribute to the vitality of downtown can send the signal that living in the city is desirable again. A multi-layered approach, with public- and private-sector players all guided by the same overarching goal, is recommended. The initiative's components include at least the following:



★ *A new 'Upstairs Downtown' program is one piece of the promotional package.*

**City Life Campaign:** Successful events, campaigns, and ads (TV, radio and print) promote living downtown (see next item) and in York's neighborhoods with a focus on neighborliness and sense of community.

**Upstairs Downtown Program:** Promotion of living downtown in apartments or condos above first-floor retail; also includes an assistance program for owners to retrofit buildings for upstairs living. The program would provide architectural help and a code enforcement/permitting team that works with owners to "make it work."

**Strengthen Neighborhood-Park Links:** Streets bordering city parks are made special by landscape, pavements, and other design features that add value, slow traffic, and convey a sense of civic dignity.

**Citywide Sidewalks Improvement Program:** Broken sidewalks in neighborhoods (as well as other infrastructure items) are quickly repaired on an annual cycle through a City-managed five-year Capital Improvement Program. Such a program allows people to know when to expect improvements, and it lays out a five-year funding plan. Although the funding plan is tweaked and approved annually, it makes for consistency in planning for, and committing to, funding for the city's rapidly-deteriorating infrastructure.



*Vacant lot clean-up and maintenance are essential.*



**Vacant Lots Clean-Up:** The city's vacant lots are cleaned, planted and fenced – inviting constructive temporary and permanent re-uses.

**Citywide Urban Forestry / Street Tree Planting:** Neighborhood streets are lined with handsome trees that are planted, tended, and replaced when needed by the combined effort of neighborhood groups, Dept. of Public Works, and supportive state programs. A "TreeVitalize" program has been developed for use in larger Pennsylvania cities, and might be adapted for York.

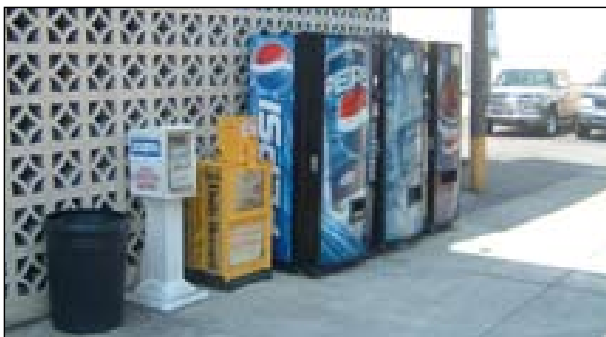
## VIII. ABOLISH THE EYESORES

York starts out as a beautiful place, with fine architecture of many styles and periods, a coherent system of major streets and alleys, dramatic waterways that shape the city form, and generous green parklands scattered through its urban neighborhoods.

So York could use some defenders: people who make a fuss when the public realm is taken over by commercial interests — scattered newspaper sale boxes and a literal invasion of cola vending machines — or when a walk down the street requires negotiating an obstacle course of giant real estate brokers' signs, weighted down with cinder blocks, and a profusion of sandwich boards blocking the right-of-way. York could use some defenders who make a fuss when the living room — or the trash heap — takes up lodging on the public sidewalk, and when flocks of satellite dishes perch on the facades of our historic homes.

A few of these intrusions are there because no one has figured out a better way to do it. With these, e.g. real estate signs, some brokers say they are willing to help other groups problem-solve to find more attractive solutions.

Some intrusions are there without required permits, and some aren't permitted at all. Energetic code enforcement — and the exercise of some old-fashioned righteous indignation on the part of York's citizens — could make some immediate and dramatic improvements to the streetscape and the quality of life in York.



## IX. BUILD SOCIAL CAPITAL: COLLABORATE

A key underpinning of YorkCounts is the importance of building “social capital” by encouraging partnerships and collaboration among diverse groups and interests. The success of BeautifulYORK will depend upon continued teamwork: agreeing on agendas and priorities, pooling financial and volunteer resources and developing a shared, long-term vision as projects are considered.

### 1. **WAGs — Working Action Groups — Carry Out Plan**

For many of the projects proposed here, it is recommended that Working Action Groups — WAGs — be formed to plan and organize the project and secure funding. Successful WAGs will assure that projects in close proximity complement each other rather than conflict, will lessen the chances of volunteer “burnout” in already-active groups, will provide opportunities for shared funding and volunteer power, and will grow the cadre of civic, business and neighborhood leaders committed to city beautification.



### 2. **Collaboration between Main Street York & Downtown BID** ★ ✓

At the time of the 2005 Summit, there were two separate marketing and downtown improvement groups — the Downtown Business Improvement District and Main Street York — with considerable overlap or sharing of roles, responsibilities, funding, and staff. Participants in the summit endorsed the suggestion that leaders of these groups explore cooperative ventures and perhaps even a merger. Since the Summit, the two groups have negotiated and completed a merger, and they are operating under the “Downtown Inc” marketing name

*1st Action:* Completed. Merger has resulted in Downtown Inc

### 3. **Friends of the Parks / Endowment Fund** ★

Expand the “Angels of the Parks” program into a full-fledged “Friends” organization that supports park improvements, programs and maintenance. They promote a Parks endowment fund within the YorkScope endowment. *First Action and Project Driver:* Neighborhood Alliance for investigation with City Parks/ Recreation & Angels of the Parks

### 4. **Collaboration between City of York & Downtown Inc** ★

York is lucky to have not only the newly reorganized “Downtown Inc” representing downtown merchants and property owners, but to have a marketing specialist hired by the City’s Economic Development Department. Success in selling York and downtown depends upon a clear, positive, and consistent marketing message from these key players: it can be achieved only by formal and informal communication and cooperation. *First Action and Project Drivers:* City Administration and Downtown Inc explore and develop shared goals, agree upon roles and responsibilities and develop joint venture opportunities.

## X. BUILD FOR EXCELLENCE: YORK DESERVES THE BEST

Given the choice of a smaller scale project at top quality versus a larger scale project where quality corners are cut to save or stretch money, always choose the former. Where a tone of excellence is set, the project itself will be the best “sales pitch” for future expansion, support, and funding. A good example is the Heritage Rail Trail, now over 20 miles long and growing. It started with a double row of trees on a creekside bikeway less than a mile long.

Many factors combine to produce excellence, and as groups debate which of many desirable beautification projects deserves their support, money, time, and effort, they may find that the BeautifulYORK “PEPPERS” test is a useful tool to help winnow the possibilities and pick the best projects.

### *‘PEPPERS’ TEST MEASURES PROJECT EXCELLENCE AND LIKELIHOOD OF SUCCESS*

<b>P</b> <b>PLACE / IDENTITY</b>	Projects that reinforce, draw upon, highlight and enhance the qualities and characteristics that give York its distinct identity, or create a sense of place and community connection where that sense is not now evident.
<b>E</b> <b>EQUITY</b>	Projects that create a public realm where positive interactions among people are encouraged, where pluralism flourishes, and where the goal is to have all persons feel comfortable, safe and welcomed.
<b>P</b> <b>PERCEPTION/IMAGE</b>	Projects having characteristics that will make a significant positive difference in their impact areas and will nurture the perception that York is a hospitable, safe and cared-for community.
<b>P</b> <b>PARTNERSHIPS</b>	Projects in which an inclusive and collaborative approach is taken that builds social capital by strengthening existing partnerships and building new ones.
<b>E</b> <b>ECONOMICS</b>	Projects likely to stabilize and support property values in their districts or neighborhoods; projects that exhibit wise stewardship of public funds and that can serve as catalysts for private investment.
<b>R</b> <b>REALISM</b>	Projects that have been influenced by qualified professionals, thoughtful and intentional design, and that are fundamentally do-able: funding achievable, costs appropriate, project goals and expectations grounded.
<b>S</b> <b>SUSTAINABILITY</b>	Projects whose design and funding addresses the ease and costs of short- and long-term maintenance as well as initial construction, and that are unlikely to become “money pits” in the future.

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Connecting People Who Care

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With Causes That Matter

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**YORK**   
 A BEAUTIFUL CITY. FOR GOOD. FOREVER.

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