

Growing Cleaner in Wilkes-Barre

Last year, the city participated in the Great Pennsylvania Cleanup, in which volunteers cleaned up properties, neighborhoods, local parks and the downtown area. More than 500 volunteers, including Wilkes-Barre residents, students, union members, and business and civic groups, collected 1,000+ bags of trash. This effort, developed and funded by the Commonwealth, was a huge local success. Not only did it bring people together, but it also helped to restore community pride and the City's image.

We need to see more of this type of initiative, whereby people are working together for the common good. The aesthetics of a community are important for a number of reasons. The first is obviously image. Whether you're a resident or a visitor, your perception of a place is based on how it looks.

Pride is another factor. Having pride in your community makes a difference on how you approach many different aspects of life and work in your community

Economic development is yet another factor. New businesses evaluate the aesthetics or appeal of a community. The community in which they locate can enhance or detract from those businesses' image and reputation. Studies have shown that retail businesses that have flower planters in front of their stores generally have higher retail sales than those that do not.

Housing is another factor, because properties sell faster and hold value better if they are located in visually appealing neighborhoods.

There is more than enough evidence here to support wide community participation in the Great Pennsylvania Cleanup. This year, the event takes place on Saturday, April 23rd. We urge everyone to get involved. Let's take action and make a difference in our own community!

JUSC is a research-based think tank founded by Wilkes University, in partnership with College Misericordia, King's College, Luzerne County Community College, Penn State/Wilkes-Barre, and the University of Scranton. JUSC was formed to educate, strategize, and convene on urban renewal, community, and economic development.

Teri Ooms is the Executive Director of the Joint Urban Studies Center. A native of Scranton, Ooms has returned to northeastern Pennsylvania after serving as President & CEO of a regional economic development corporation in southern California.