

LUMA put a spotlight on a re-emerging downtown

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(Photo: File photo)

Don't know about you, but we generally avoid crowds. Detest hunting for parking spots. Hate waiting in car lines.

But none of that bothered us on Friday a week ago. In fact, it all was easily tolerated for that night's prize.

We actually were smiling as we stood shoulder-to-shoulder outside the entrance of Social on State in downtown Binghamton — unmoving because of the thousands of others filling the sidewalks and streets.

What we were witnessing was downtown Binghamton at its absolute best. This was LUMA — a light show on steroids capping off the First Friday festivities and transforming several buildings into animated masterpieces.

LUMA was the brainchild of downtown promoter Joshua Ludzki, a transplant to this area (thanks to Binghamton University's MBA program). Ludzki runs BingPop and pulls together several downtown Binghamton events every year.

A few weeks before LUMA, Ludzki sat with us at lunch at Lost Dog Café and talked nearly nonstop — poor guy had to cart his meal away in a box — about what a gem our downtown is and how most people overlook that fact.

Well, Josh, you showed off that gem to thousands of area residents at LUMA. Your energy and love for your adopted community was channeled into pulling together one of the most fabulous events in years.

This crowd was happy. This crowd applauded the light shows. This crowd drank and ate and drank and drank (several drinkers-deep at Social's bar). A two-hour wait to sit down at many restaurants.

Lots of baby boomers. Many families. Young people everywhere. All ages seemed to enjoy LUMA.

This city owes a big “thank you” to Josh; Tice Lerner, co-founder; Nick Rubenstein, co-producer, and to the many others who worked with them, developing and rehearsing the shows for LUMA. Many of them are the best of the best in our local technology/graphics/animation community. The Binghamton University Cinema Department also was deeply involved.

What should be your takeaway message here? What should be the lesson of LUMA?

Go downtown.

Take in a show or a game.

Eat at one of the fabulous restaurants.

Enjoy a late-night drink.

Don't be one of those Broome County residents who boast about not having been downtown in ages.

With the vibrancy of the college students and the leadership of visionaries like Josh Ludzki, our downtown has a chance to be a top destination, not only in Broome County but in the whole region.

Our big question for Josh and his friends: What's next?

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