

November 27, 2009

Downtown West Newton, Inc. News Release

“Bridge to Tomorrow” Project – Delayed, But Not Dead

Downtown West Newton, Inc. (DWNI) planned to begin construction of Simeral Square and the Main Street Bridge enhancements this year; but because of unexpected engineering and funding issues, that will not be the case. These components are part of a riverfront development plan to connect the Great Allegheny Passage – West Newton Trail Access to the downtown known as the “Bridge to Tomorrow” Project.

Although construction is delayed, Downtown West Newton, Inc. is working diligently with our engineers and funding partners through complex grant requirements, construction specifications and a multitude of hurdles to make this happen.

We thank the community and campaign donors for your continued patience and support. The items you have helped to fund such as bricks, benches, bike racks and trash receptacle are delivered and in storage. DWNI is committed to doing everything we can to make this project a success. Here is where we stand with our efforts:

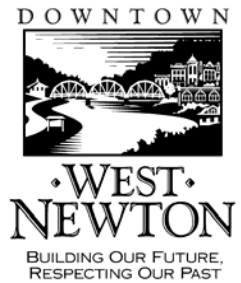
Simeral Square Construction

In 2008, an environmental remediation was completed and the site at the corner of the bridge and North Water Street received an Act II Restricted Covenant designation from the Pa. Dept. of Environmental Protection (DEP) allowing for the proposed square. Phase I engineering was well underway with Gannett-Fleming, Inc. at a cost of \$195,000 funded by the Pa. Dept. of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR).

Grants were secured for Phase II of the project in the amount of \$588,000 that included construction of the parklet, concert stage, overlook, and streetscape amenities. (The proposed pavilion, kiosk and fountain are part of Phase III.) Federal funds from the Appalachian Regional Commission, State funds from the DCNR and Pa. Dept. of Community and Economic Development (DCED), and local funds from the Progress Fund and our brick and amenities campaigns fulfilled the budget.

DWNI expected to meet the timeline of Phase II construction for Simeral Square in 2008 until the revised projected cost estimate revealed an increase of over \$400,000 in one year due in part to rising fuel and raw materials costs as well as the economic crisis. This prompted DWNI to seek additional funds from our state and federal partners. DWNI received a tentative commitment at the end of last year for the increase when bids are to be received and the actual cost is known.

This year, another snag has held up the project – **the project engineer and the borough engineer determined that it was prudent to encase the adjacent sewer line while constructing the plaza** - stalling the process and increasing the budget once again. Although the designs have been completed and construction documents are being certified for bids, the funding terms either have expired or are about to expire and must be renegotiated. With state and federal funding cuts, DWNI will need to work hard to assure full funding for this “shovel-ready” project. On a positive note, however, construction costs have come down.



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DWNI is disheartened by these events, but remains hopeful that the project will be constructed by 2011. We are talking with our state officials to help guide us through these complications.

Main Street Bridge Enhancements

As part of the “Bridge to Tomorrow” plan, the pedestrian deck on the bridge will undergo a transformation to make the visitor experience of crossing the river to explore the downtown and enjoy activities at Simeral Square more enticing. PennDOT expects to begin the bidding process within the next two months and the project should be awarded in early 2010. Fabrication of the decorative railing along the walkway will begin and installation of the railing along with east and west approaches should follow. The railing installation may be delayed because of a planned PennDOT maintenance project expected to take priority in 2010. The enhancements were to include a new gateway sign above the west-side vehicle entrance, but due to rising costs needed to be removed from the specifications to afford the budget of \$290,600. The gateway sign and history ribbon will be part of Phase III.

DWNI is a grassroots, all volunteer, non-profit organization compliant with state and federal regulations and operating within the Main Street Program guidelines by providing downtown events like Miracle on Main Street & Light-up Night, business/property owner support, vacant property marketing, cleanups and plantings, storefront rehabilitations, riverfront development, tourism, etc.

If you are interested in helping us out or have questions about any of our projects, you can call our office at (724) 872-0100, email to dwni@winbeam.com or come to a 6:30 pm meeting any Wednesday at the DWNI office, 123 South Second Street. DWNI will hold our Annual Public Meeting on Wednesday, January 20 at 6:30 pm in the Lutheran Church Social Room on Vine Street.

(Photo recommendation: There will be a booth set up at Light-up Night with the Craft Show for this project displaying bricks, benches, etc.)

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Downtown West Newton, Inc. (DWNI) is a 501(c)(3), non-profit, community development corporation (CDC) established to improve West Newton's downtown.

Our mission is to reverse decline in West Newton's downtown target area by stabilizing our economy; maintaining and protecting our resources; encouraging community development; preserving community history, and promoting our unique qualities.