

Brownsville study completed, ready for review

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The study of the downtown Brownsville historic district needed for completion of the downtown revitalization project is now ready for public review.

The National Road Heritage Corridor (NRHC) undertook the study in conjunction with the revitalization project being done in the downtown area by the Fayette County Redevelopment Authority. A public meeting has been set for 5:30 p.m. Monday, Nov. 5, at the Sons of Italy Hall on Race Street.

A team, including Landmark Design Associates, Fourth Economy Consulting, Skelly and Loy and T&B Associates, prepared the study, which includes a market analysis and design guidelines for the downtown district.

The project produced a comprehensive study of the Brownsville Commercial Historic District, including: a resurvey of the National Register Historic District; associated cost for stabilization, rehabilitation, preservation of key architectural facades and elements, a marketing analysis and comprehensive developer's package to encourage investment and adaptive reuse in the 26 buildings located in the District and owned by the RACF. It also includes design guidelines for reconstruction and new construction in the entire District.

The project is part of a plan by the redevelopment authority to eliminate blight in downtown Brownsville, according to Andrew French, executive director of the Fayette County Redevelopment Authority.

“With the completed study in hand, the RACF looks forward to working with the borough, the NRHC and other community partners as it continues its efforts to redevelop this section of Brownsville with the goal of returning economic vitality to this community,” French said in a prepared release.

The project was initiated by the NRHC through a \$25,000 grant provided through the Pennsylvania Historic and Museum Commission's (PHMC) Keystone Historic Preservation Program. Bill Callahan, PHMC western region representative, a partner in the project, put the project in prospective.

“Besides the people who live and work in Brownsville, the most important and valuable economic assets the borough possesses are its location and its historic buildings and streetscapes. This study, for the first time, has provided real data on the most appropriate way to market and promote the historic character of Brownsville, as well as information regarding market needs and gaps and profiles of the type of investors and businesspeople on whom a marketing effort should be focused,” Callahan said.

“There have been any number of pie-in-the-sky studies done in Brownsville, but this is the first to take a clear-eyed view of how to approach the very real and challenging existing conditions of both Brownsville’s historic character and investment opportunities inside and outside the community.”