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Borough unveils downtown plans Revitalization work to start this summer

By MARK MOFFA Staff Writer

HIGHTSTOWN—Borough officials this week released details and schematics of the long-anticipated downtown revitalization project, slated to begin this summer.

Water and sewer work might begin downtown next month.

The revitalization project will include devices designed to beautify the downtown area, slow traffic flow and make the region easier to navigate for pedestrians, according to Project Coordination Committee documents released by Council President Mike Vanderbeck, the PCC's liaison to the Borough.

Officials said they hope the changes will spur economic redevelopment.

Prior to the above-ground work, sewer and water mains will be rehabilitated downtown in a project that could cost \$700,000.

Bids have been accepted for the water and sewer work and the Borough Council could finalize the contracts at its next meeting, April 2. Work could begin before the end of April.

More than half of the nearly \$1 million scheduled to be spent on the revitalization project will come from state grants.

The project will include five "impact zones"—areas that will be under construction, according to the plan.

Zone One is scheduled to feature an additional crosswalk for pedestrians to cross Franklin Street

at Broad Street. Also, the brick streetscape will be used across the entrance to the Krauszer's shopping center, with real brick added to the traffic island that separates the entrance and exit, according to the plans.

Plans also call for the width of Franklin Street to be reduced, by more than 2 feet in some areas, to allow for wider sidewalks designed to comply with the federal Americans With Disabilities Act.

Also, three parking spaces may be added in front of the Mercer County Library on Franklin Street.

Decorative lights will be included in all of the zones, according

to the plans, with benches placed in four of the five areas.

Decorative bollards, or posts, will be added in certain locations, such as the traffic island in front of Krauszer's, to allow pedestrians to feel protected from traffic, Mr. Vanderbeck said.

The lights will be connected to a water line, and a drip system in the lamppost will provide water to hanging baskets, Mr. Vanderbeck said, so Public Works crews don't have to climb ladders to water the plants manually. Aspigot at the bottom of the post will allow crews to wash off the sidewalks, Mr. Vanderbeck said, and electrical outlets on the lampposts may provide a source of electricity for holiday decorations.

"This very exciting time for the Borough of Hightstown owes much to those former mayors and councils who have preceded us," he said. He also thanked state Sen. Peter Inverso, R-Hamilton, who was instrumental in securing the borough's legislative grants for the project.

Route 133 also was a key to the revitalization project, he said. The bypass absorbs enough traffic flow to allow the borough to implement traffic-slowing devices in its revitalization plan.

"This partnership brings to the borough resources it normally would not have access to," Mr. Vanderbeck said. "Private business leaders have a far easier time—politically and legally, for instance—than elected officials in asking for donations."

Charles "Cappy" Stults III, a member of the Greater Hightstown/East Windsor Improvement Project, said the group was offered an opportunity to participate in all stages of the revitalization project.

He said the organization paid for consulting and grant applications, and used its contacts to lobby for funds for the project. GHEWIP also contributed

almost \$20,000 to the effort, he said.

Mr. Stults, who owns Allen & Stults insurance company on Main Street, urged residents to be patient this year while the borough undertakes the revitalization.

"Unique to this effort is the public/private partnership between the Greater Hightstown/East Windsor Improvement Project and the borough. This partnership represents the most successful model I know of to generate the supplemental funding and in-kind support that will make this project successful."

Mike Vanderbeck
Council President



Don Smartt and The Community Advocates