

CITY OF WILLIAMSPORT, PA RESOLUTION

RESOLUTION # 8639

DATE 2-16-17

TITLE

**RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING AN APPLICATION TO THE PA DCED
MUNICIPAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM FOR THE PARK AVE.
NEIGHBORHOOD REVITALIZATION PLAN**

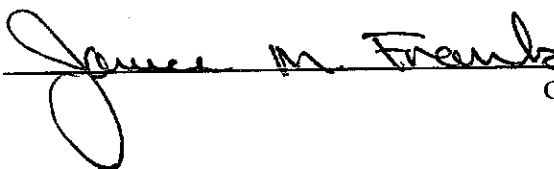
WHEREAS, the City of Williamsport will be undertaking a project to develop a revitalization plan for the area of the City known as the "Park Ave. Neighborhood"; and

WHEREAS, the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development makes available grants-in-aid to such projects through the Municipal Assistance Program.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT HEREBY RESOLVED that the City Council of the City of Williamsport hereby authorizes the submission of a grant application to the Municipal Assistance Program.

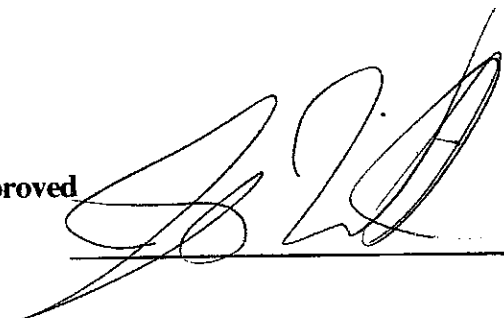
BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the City Council of the City of Williamsport hereby commits municipal resources in the amount of \$35,000.00 as match for said project.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that UPMC Susquehanna hereby commits \$25,000.00 as match for said project.



City Clerk

Approved



President



CITY OF WILLIAMSPORT

DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

MEMORANDUM

TO: Mayor Gabriel J. Campana and Members of City Council

FROM: John J. Grado

RE: **RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING AN APPLICATION TO
THE PA DCED MUNICIPAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM FOR THE
PARK AVE. NEIGHBORHOOD REVITALIZATION PLAN**

DATE: February 10, 2017

Attached is a resolution authorizing the submission of a planning grant request to the PA DCED Municipal Assistance Program for the Park Ave. Neighborhood Revitalization Plan. Also attached is a project description.

We are requesting grant funds in the amount of \$40,000. This planning grant requires a 50% match. Sources of funding for the match include \$25,000 from the 2017 General Operating budget, \$25,000 from UPMC Susquehanna and \$10,000 from RVT for a total project cost of \$100,000.

The Park Ave. Neighborhood generally includes the area bounded by Campbell St. on the west, Brandon Ave to Walnut St. to Park Ct. on the north, Market St on the east, and Little League Blvd. on the south. A map of the area is attached.

An MOU between the City and UPMC Susquehanna, which will include the funding commitment, the establishment of the Planning Advisory team, and the selection process for the project consultant, will be submitted to City Council within the next month.

The deadline for the MAP grant is February 17, 2017. We are requesting City Council action on this resolution on Thursday, February 16, 2017.

Park Avenue Neighborhood Revitalization Plan
City of Williamsport / UPMC Susquehanna Partnership

OBJECTIVE

To develop a Master Plan for Williamsport's Park Avenue Neighborhood that will stimulate engagement from the area's property owners and residents and create a long-term investment plan to strengthen the connection between the city's central business district and UPMC's main campus. This project strives to support all ten of the Commonwealth's Keystone Principles for Growth, Investment and Resource Conservation.

PURPOSE

The Plan will provide a template and strategy for reinvestment and redevelopment in this central City of Williamsport neighborhood that will offer the potential for increased density in strategic locations, rejuvenate a neighborhood that has lost much of its original fabric, and offer UPMC Susquehanna an opportunity to capitalize on the *Pathway to Health* gateway entrance from the highway and downtown. This plan will establish a community vision and development strategy using a comprehensive engagement model that will embody short- and long-term implementation plans. It is expected that this plan will assess a myriad of possibilities through conceptual design drawings, GIS and scenario-building technology, market analysis, and empirical analysis. The City, private sector interests, and others will utilize this plan in marketing properties and attracting investment in this core city neighborhood.

BACKGROUND AND OVERVIEW

The City began the planning process for the Park Ave neighborhood in 2006 and developed a plan for revitalization with particular focus on the components necessary for a potential PA DCED Elm Street designation for the neighborhood. This plan, entitled the "Park Avenue Neighborhood Project", included much of the area that this proposed plan addresses. The plan made recommendations in five key areas: *Neighborhood Organization, Neighborhood Housing and Business opportunities, Neighborhood Character, Neighborhood Safety and Appearance, and Community Building*. However, the plan did not include a land use, zoning or market analysis or a look at potential development and investment opportunities based on those findings. That is what this proposed plan intends to focus on. In addition, this plan includes the collaborative and financial partnership with UPMC Susquehanna. It will build on the work that was done before and offer the community and property owners a long-term vision and road map to rebuilding community cohesiveness and reinvestment.

The Park Ave. neighborhood is an urban neighborhood that offers tremendous potential to complement the renaissance of Williamsport's downtown and Millionaire's Row historic district with its distinct sense of diversity and community identity.

This project also pairs well with the ongoing Old City Redevelopment Project on the east side of Market Street. After completing a similar plan in 2015 for that downtown neighborhood, the city continues to partner with Lycoming College, PennDOT and other private property owners to implement the recommendations of the plan, including the creation of a true gateway entrance to Lycoming College from the highway. Efforts are underway to help Lycoming College and this neighborhood achieve a "college town" status in a way that the City has never experienced.

The Park Avenue Neighborhood Revitalization Project aims to capitalize on the hospital's existing *Pathway to Health* gateway to create opportunities for reinvestment to support the hospital's 2005 decision to keep its main campus within the city limits and to encourage spin-off opportunities for mixed-use development that complement the existing institutions and community assets.

PROJECT LOCATION

The Park Ave. Neighborhood generally includes the area bounded by Campbell St. on the west, Brandon Ave to Walnut St. to Park Ct. on the north, Market St on the east, and Little League Blvd. on the south.

(see map).

NEED

With Susquehanna Health System's 2005 decision to keep the City hospital in the City, local government was faced with the need to extend the institutional zone to provide an expanded footprint for the hospital to grow. As a major employer in the City, it was important economically that hospital remain within the City limits; however, the decision affected over one hundred owner and renter owned properties within the Park Ave. neighborhood.

In August 2016, City officials met with stakeholders that are located in the Park Avenue Neighborhood to identify the key issues affecting the neighborhood. Despite the successful and impressive expansion of UPMC Susquehanna, the area remains a mix of aging housing stock, underutilized and/or blighted structures, vacant lots and vacant industrial properties such as the former Trimtex Manufacturing site. Significant entities within the neighborhood, in addition to UPMC Susquehanna, include the following:

- Firetree Place (community center)
- Williamsport YMCA (recreation center)
- American Rescue Worker's (social service agency)
- Family Promise (social service agency)

- Lycoming County Housing Authority (public housing provider).
- Churches including Sojourner Truth Ministry, Antioch Baptist Church, and Ebenezer Baptist Church

Curtailling the tide of disinvestment in housing and commercial properties is a critical step in the process of revitalizing the Park Ave. neighborhood. The planning process will determine where change is needed and what elements of the community can provide a foundation to help stabilize it.

Redevelopment efforts must also complement the surrounding context of the City such as the Central Business District and the Old City/East 3rd Street Gateway area. It is critical that any redevelopment in this neighborhood does not do so at the expense of the surrounding neighborhoods. Therefore, a careful approach to redevelopment is very important.

The fact that Williamsport is the home of Lycoming College, Pennsylvania College of Technology (part of the Penn State system), and the Commonwealth Medical College offers the opportunity to consider an economy that is not only steeped in traditional business and industry sectors, but also one that proactively responds to the arts, education, and entrepreneurial-minded people. This demographic has been emerging in downtown Williamsport over the last decade and, if nurtured, has the potential to redefine the character and nature of business opportunities. Large institutions such as hospital campuses face a set of complex and ongoing questions as they try to keep pace with 21st Century technology and stay relevant to their host community and surrounding region. Understanding how institutions and their adjacent neighborhoods relate to each other presently and for the long-term is an important matter of business today. What is the role of a hospital in the life of its neighborhood and city? How should its “campus” be defined?

Susquehanna Health Systems has historically not engaged its surrounding neighborhoods. Under the new UPMC management, however, the hospital has signaled its interest in being a partner in the redevelopment of its neighborhood. The hospital is intrigued by the possibility of developing facilities that blend with the surrounding environment and working with the city administration and private developers to create a mixed-use gateway to its campus.

In order to move forward in realizing such a future, there must be adequate planning and preparation that defines a vision and course of action for all involved parties. At a minimum, the City of Williamsport, UPMC Susquehanna, property owners of the area, and other developer stakeholders must engage in a process to explore the needs of each stakeholder, the potential for redevelopment, what the collective vision is, and how to get there.

The following outlines the recommended steps to accomplish this task. Most of this scope of work will require the hiring of a consultant team to manage the project and provide technical assistance in the areas of: public engagement, planning and architectural services, and public-private partnership development.

SCOPE OF WORK

The planning process will be guided by an Advisory Committee that represents governmental, educational and private sector interests. Public and stakeholder involvement is deemed critical to ensuring that the plan is successful.

Background Studies

- History of area: Compile historical data on the Park Avenue City neighborhood. Identify and document historic patterns, styles and other special features that still exist from the original urban fabric.
- Review Pathway to Health project plans.
- Community Development Plans: Review of all previous community /economic development studies in area as well as zoning and subdivision regulations. This includes the Park Avenue Neighborhood Project, The Heart and Soul of Williamsport by SEDACouncil of Governments, November 2007; the Old City/. East 3rd Street Gateway Redevelopment Strategy, July 2015; and the Heart of Williamsport Community Engagement Project by the Susquehanna Greenway Partnership and Orton Foundation

Assessment of Existing Conditions

This assessment will be completed by a combination of GIS analysis, reconnaissance and field studies, interviewing residents and property owners and public outreach. This task will include at least one public meeting. The assessment will include an evaluation of the following aspects:

- Property ownership (rental vs owner, concentrations of land holders, etc)
- Existing traffic patterns, parking, and transportation amenities
- Streetscape and other infrastructure conditions
- Density and land use analysis: Population demographics / land data (% underdeveloped, vacant, current land use mix including civic/institutional vs private)
- Taxable vs non-taxable properties and tax revenues generated from neighborhood
- Building mass/void, building footprints
- Open space / greenspace/ park and recreation areas

Market Analysis

A market analysis was recently completed for the Old City Redevelopment Plan, however the market draw and opportunities for redevelopment are not identical. It would be helpful to complete a supplemental market analysis to better understand the potential for future development in this area. The consultant will examine economic development trends and opportunities in the study area and surrounding region. The Old City Market Study should be collected and examined to determine compatibility. Key person interviews and research will be the primary forms of collecting data for this section.

- What types of development are desired by residents, workers, business owners, etc?

- How best can new development in Park Ave Neighborhood complement downtown?
- What can we learn from previous successes and/or failures to continue successful development for residential, commercial, or mixed uses, including upper story redevelopment?
- What opportunities are there for wayfinding signage? To what, from what?
- How can the visibility of this neighborhood be enhanced?
- What brand or brands could this neighborhood support?
- How can the history of this neighborhood be honored and interpreted to the public?

Visioning and Scenario-Building

The process for developing a master redevelopment plan involves working with all stakeholders to understand the possibilities that exist. This becomes a balancing act between the desires of many different parties and their often conflicting needs combined with the reality of what the market will support. This process will be led by a consultant and will utilize digital tools that graphically represent the potentials and implications of various plans and choices. The intention is that it will produce 3-D visualization to model multiple development scenarios. This task will require at least two public outreach meetings. These meetings will take the form of a workshop or charrette-style engagement.

- Physical and financial analysis of redevelopment scenarios
- What is the potential build-out of this area?
- What are the potential tax implications of build-out scenarios?
- Where and how could underdeveloped parts of the neighborhood be revitalized?
- How will redevelopment projects be compatible with and integrated into the fabric of the existing neighborhood?
- What could it look like?
- What bicycle, pedestrian, and transit improvements are needed in the study area?
- What design standards do people want to see imposed?

Master Plan

The Master Plan is the physical representation of a consensus vision. It will involve weighing the priorities of all stakeholders and developing a short and long-term strategy that has the best potential for success. This task will involve one public outreach meeting.

- Is there a theme to this neighborhood? Create a unified, distinctive identity for the area based on history and character of the project area, as well as on present goals for redevelopment of the area.

- The plan should include provisions for sufficient, appropriately placed parking spaces to accommodate the needs of businesses, residents, and visitors as needed to meet demands. Recommendations should include controls and enforcement strategies.
- Make recommendations for successful renovation/reuse strategies for existing buildings and for improving the appearance of rundown properties.
- Does traffic circulation change? Make recommendations for improvements to vehicular flow and for increased utilization of public transportation.
- Are there primary/secondary travel routes (car, bike, foot)? Encourage increased foot and bike traffic in the project area. Improve pedestrian crossings and recommend improvements. Ensure proper linkages exist between the hospital and downtown as well as other amenities and attractions.
- What are the priorities of the neighborhood property owners/residents?
- What are the priorities of the City?
- What are the priorities of UPMC Susquehanna?
- What kind of public-private and other partnerships could be developed to implement the vision?

Zoning Code Amendment

To ensure that the Master Plan and its recommendations can be implemented, the City will likely need to update its zoning to accommodate the new vision for the Park Avenue Neighborhood. This could take the form of Map and/or Text Amendments, an Overlay Zone, or possibly a Form-Based Code. Ensuring that the policies for development are in place at the end of the planning process will provide for a more successful transition to the implementation of the plan. Design Guidelines may also be a possible outcome of this planning process. The consultant team will provide the needed assistance and recommendations to the City on this task.

TIMELINE FOR COMPLETION

The Park Avenue Neighborhood Revitalization Plan is expected to take up to eighteen (18) months to complete.

PROJECT COST

This project proposal has not yet been put out for RFP, however, after conducting the Old City Redevelopment Plan and reviewing other similar plans in the Commonwealth, we are anticipating a cost of approximately \$100,000.00. We are requesting **\$40,000** from the DCED MAP program to fill the gap of local funding that is available for this project. This project would not be possible without the assistance of public funds. See accompanying budget narrative.

Park Avenue Neighborhood Revitalization Plan

City of Williamsport / UPMC Susquehanna Partnership

BUDGET NARRATIVE

The total cost of the Old City Redevelopment Plan is **\$100,000**. The City is requesting \$40,000 from the PA DCED Municipal Assistance Program. The City of Williamsport and UPMC Susquehanna are contributing \$25,000 each as a cash match. River Valley Transit is contributing \$10,000 to this project as a cash match.

	MAP	UPMC	City	RVT	TOTAL
Cash	\$40,000	\$25,000	\$25,000	\$10,000	\$100,000
TOTAL	\$40,000	\$25,000	\$25,000	\$10,000	\$100,000

The City of Williamsport intends to hire a consultant team for **\$100,000.00** to complete the work articulated in the attached scope of services. The consultant team will be needed for each of the work tasks except for the completion of background study research.

The *Assessment of Existing Conditions* will be led by the consultant team with assistance from County Planning and GIS staff as well as Lycoming College interns. The *Market Analysis* piece will be completed in two formats: quantitative and qualitative. The quantitative piece will be performed by a consultant and the qualitative piece will be performed by Lycoming College’s Center for the Study of Community and the Economy (CSCE). The *Visioning and Scenario-Building, Master Plan, and Zoning Code Amendment* will all be the major responsibility of the consultant with assistance from the City and County staff. The primary role of the City and County staff will be handling meeting logistics, coordination, communication and facilitation.

	CASH	IN-KIND	TOTAL
Background Studies	\$8,000		\$8,000
Assessment of Existing Conditions	\$10,000		\$10,000
Market Analysis	\$15,000		\$15,000
Visioning and Scenario-Building	\$25,000		\$25,000
Master Plan	\$30,000		\$30,000
Zoning Code Amendment	\$12,000		\$12,000
TOTAL	\$100,000		\$100,000



Park Avenue Project Area

