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City takes River Town lead

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By WENDY STIVER (wstiver@lockhaven.com) , The Express

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LOCK HAVEN - The city is, and always has been, a river town.

And now, City Council has given its support to a local effort to attain official "River Town" status.

Susquehanna Greenway Partnership offers the River Towns Technical Assistance Program to help communities return to the river and their historic downtowns.

The partnership's goals include helping towns along the Susquehanna create river parks, bike trails, walking trails and water access points; attract and promote sustainable economic development; protect water quality; and lessen flood damage with green infrastructure.

The program's focus on attracting businesses and tourists makes it a natural for Downtown Lock Haven Inc., the nonprofit agency that boosts the city's shopping district. The organization is already on board with the idea, and it fielded a group of supporters at City Council's meeting Monday evening.

Downtown Board members and merchants attended, including Pete Lopes, tourism director for the Clinton County Economic Partnership.

Two county commissioners, Pete Smeltz and Jeff Snyder, also showed their support for the idea.

Lock Haven University has expressed an interest and is hosting a public forum about the River Town program for everyone interested on Thursday, March 27 at 7 p.m. in Durrwachter Alumni Conference Center. The evening begins with an informational open house at 6 p.m.

The benefits of becoming an official River Town include help toward building or sprucing up an attractive riverfront. This in turn can draw tourists, attract businesses and jobs, increase property values and tax revenues, and encourage healthy exercise.

Susquehanna Greenway Partnership has been working since 2001 to connect communities along the 500-mile river, Alice Trowbridge, the partnership's greenway coordinator, told City Council. This giant greenway is being developed community by community, she said.

The partnership can bring the city into this current of connection.

It can offer technical help for planning and project development, money to make things happen, and marketing through its website, newsletter, press releases and social media.

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