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Vision for revitalization takes shape

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By MARK MARONEY mmaroney@sungazette.com , Williamsport Sun-Gazette

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MONTGOMERY - Today's generation is thinking about revitalization in this community that had it's share of industry over the years.

Instead of leaving a permanent legacy of railroad beds and empty buildings and factories, volunteers who met Wednesday relish the plantings of red oaks, honey locusts and other species of shade and ornamental trees.

More than 50 trees are expected to arrive and be planted in April by the group Revitalize Montgomery, said Alice L. Trowbridge, coordinator with the Susquehanna Greenway Partnership, a Lewisburg-based organization that is providing technical assistance to the group and other organizations in municipalities along the West Branch and Susquehanna River basin.

Article Photos



MARK MARONEY/Sun-Gazette

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On Wednesday, Trowbridge discussed continuing to solicit the assistance of staff and students at the Pennsylvania College of Technology, which is considered a partner in the project.

"They are going to be gigantic trees," said Michael Dincher, assistant professor of horticulture and urban forestry at the college, who didn't attend the meeting but said he supports the revitalization efforts.

"If the sites and holes are dug ahead of time, we can plant the 50 trees in one day," Dincher said. "The red oaks can reach up to 90 feet. Each ornamental tree, depending on the species, costs \$90."

Trowbridge said the plantings and other proposed projects will be paid for through a grant from the state Department of Conservation and Natural Resources. The money is passed to the partnership acting as facilitator.

It's a program that is seeing budgetary cutbacks, she said.

"A lot of these funding sources are drying up and they are vital to communities," Trowbridge said. "We've obtained a \$5,000 mini-grant but it requires a local match," she said. Some of the money needed for the completion of the project will come from the unspent funds collected for the borough's recent 125th anniversary celebration.

Besides funding, the trees are not hearty when in the infancy stage, according to Dincher. Timing of the planting is critical as holes must be prepared ahead of time, he said. Once the trees arrive, 10 days is the window allotted to get them into the ground before they perish, he said.

"Frost won't hurt unless they sprout leaves, and the key is getting them planted before they bud," he said.

Meanwhile, members of the revitalize group are anxious to see additional plantings.

Trowbridge is teaming with Tom Grbenick, both of whom serve as regional leads for the partnership, to ensure that happens and more of the plans have workable strategies.

"We'll create a game plan and strategy for moving forward with the revitalization," Trowbridge said.

"The gateway tree plantings will be the first of these projects."

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