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Watsonstown enhancements planned

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WATSONSTOWN — A conceptual design is now in place which could serve as a blueprint for future enhancements in Watsonstown.

Watsonstown Mayor Dave Hontz said over 30 people attended a design workshop, held recently at the borough building to unveil conceptual plans for the Riverfront Gateway Park and West Brimmer Avenue streetscape designs.

Hontz said designs were completed by Tom Grebenick, a consultant, who was hired after the borough applied for, and received, a grant from the

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Design

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Susquehanna Greenways Partnership.

"They have offered the availability of a \$5,000 matching grant for towns to do planning for future greenway streetscape, landscape, parkway projects," Hontz said.

He noted that the borough, along with several community groups, matched the \$5,000 to pay for the design work.

"What we are looking at, the main focus of the grant, was to do some conceptual planning for the entrance to Watsonstown from the historic Nurse Helen Fairchild Memorial Bridge," Hontz said.

The bridge was built in 1928 and refurbished several years ago, he said.

"The bridge type that we have in Watsonstown is very unique," Hontz said. "Most old bridges are being replaced, rather than being restored."

In addition, he said it's rare for a bridge to carry those who pass over it right into the heart of the downtown business district, like Watsonstown's bridge does.

Because of that, Hontz noted the importance of the area surrounding the bridge being visually appealing.

"The main focus for the proposal originally was to take a look at the entrance into Watsonstown, that would be coming off the bridge and addressing the streetscape right up to the red light at Main Street," Hontz said. "Part of the concept adds some greenery, trying to add to the visual impact. Right now, you face a lot of gray area, which is a lot of macadam."

Grebenick's proposal shows several options for different approaches to parking, entrances and exits to parking lot, landscaping and greenery as buffer zones, according to Hontz.

"We discussed lighting, the possible changing of utility lines and things that visually impact the entrance to Watsonstown from Union County," Hontz said.

In addition, Grebenick also did design work for the area south of the bridge on Canal Street.

"He addressed some possible design changes to Canal Street to increase attractiveness, decrease traffic problems," Hontz said.

Part of the reason behind Tuesday's meeting, Hontz said, was to gather feedback from the community to determine which area of the proposals community members would like to see Watsonstown focus on first for enhancing the attractiveness of the community.

"Those who offered suggestions said they thought the visual impact off of the bridge, into the middle of town, should be the priority," Hontz said. "As time goes by, and improvements are evident there, we would look at the addition of traditional lighting and greenery. The second phase, down the road, should include enhancing Canal Street."

He does not expect the work to begin any time soon and stressed that all designs are simply conceptual.

"This may take 10 years," Hontz said. "Budgeting will have to be considered. Money will have to be put in a fund so that it would become available when grants come available for this type of thing... The fact that we have a plan sitting on the shelf makes it much easier to apply for those grants."

He expects the designs will be presented to borough council in late September.

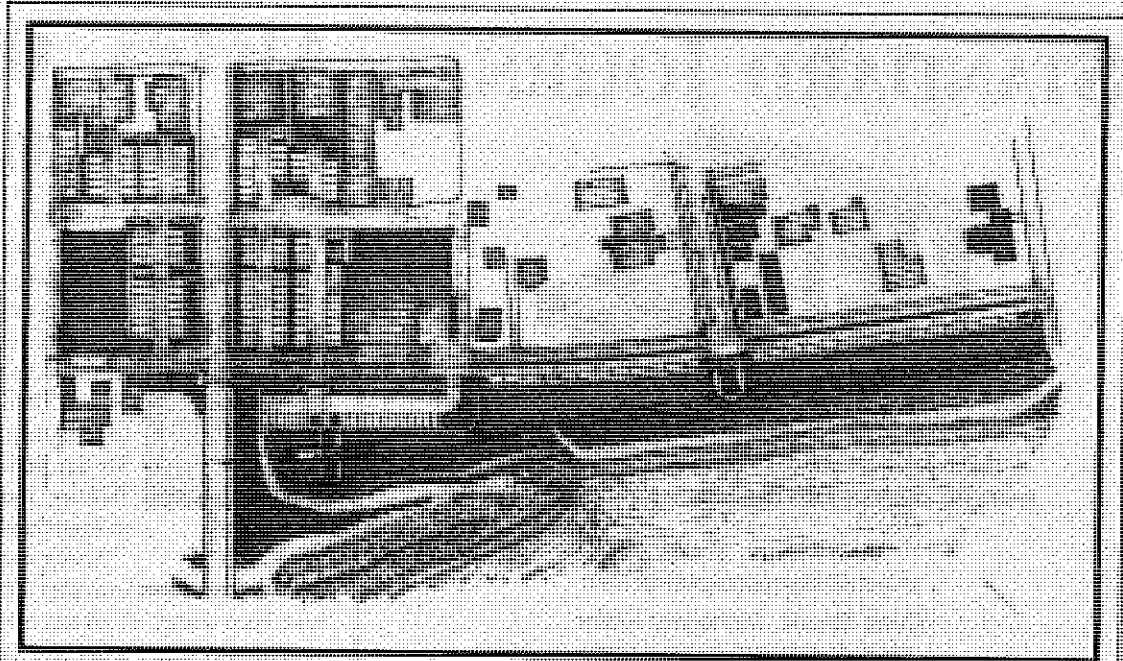
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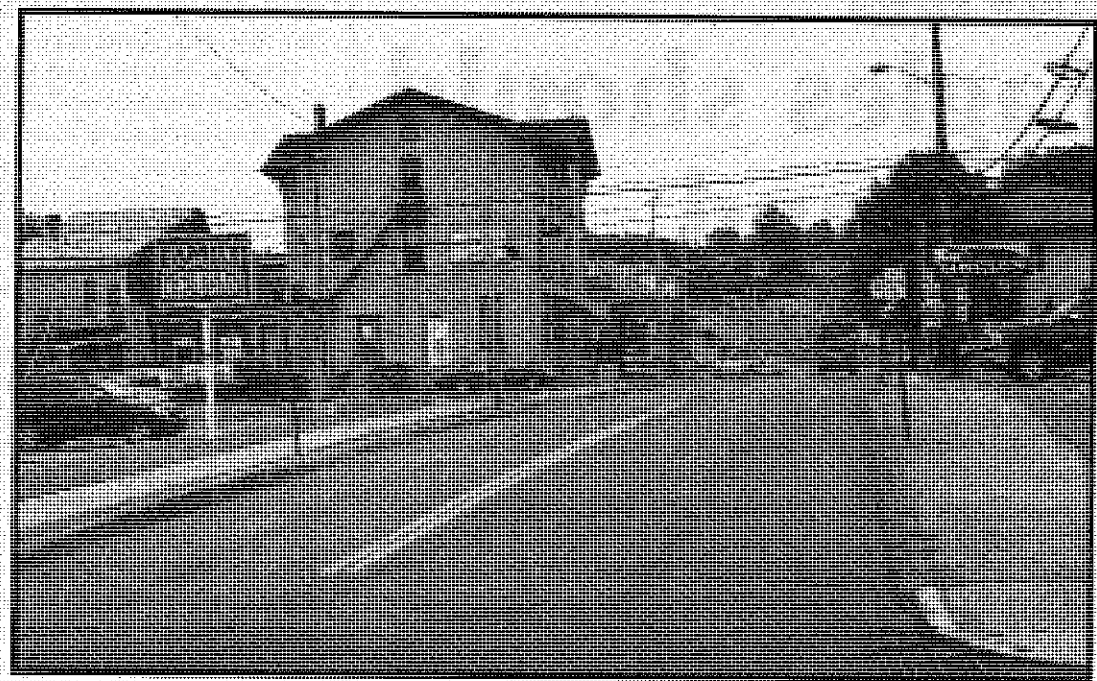
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This conceptual highlights a potential plan to enhance the entrance to Westportown from the Nurse Helen Fairchild Memorial Bridge to Main Street. A proposal to spruce up Canal Street is also included. Image provided



Westportown is studying a proposal that could see the community's entrance, from the Nurse Helen Fairchild Memorial Bridge, enhanced over the next 10 years. Kevin Minto/Standard Journal