



MEDIA CONTACTS

Kaylie Moore

Journalist

724-317-6924, kmoore@fayettecountypa.info

Kristi Rooker Kassimer

Public Relations, Digital Media Specialist

412-691-0262, kkassimer@fayettecountypa.info

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FAYETTE REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY WINS PAHRA AWARD

Uniontown, PA – The Fayette County Redevelopment Authority is the recipient of the Pennsylvania Association of Housing and Redevelopment Agencies (PAHRA) 2018 Best Practices Award for Redevelopment/Community Development.

Each year, PAHRA recognizes members who have implemented innovative ideas, explored successful entrepreneurial activities, exhibited excellence in design, shown progressive program operations, provided outstanding customer service or supportive services in a unique way or created a lasting impact on their communities.

The Fayette County Redevelopment Authority was one of 14 entries selected to participate in the 2018 Best Practices Showcase, but one of only two agencies that earned awards.

Fayette County Redevelopment Authority Executive Director Andrew French said the award recognized his organization's success with the Snowden Square Project in Brownsville.

"Obviously it feels great to be recognized and awarded by your colleagues across the state as a best practice for redevelopment," French said. "The project has had a tremendous impact on Brownsville."

In 2015, the Brownsville High School Students in Action (SIA) group approached the redevelopment authority with a new and innovative concept to redevelop the main town square.

"The redevelopment authority's primary goal for the Snowden Square Redevelopment Initiative was to eliminate blight, build on the momentum established by SIA and support the development of the Brownsville Senior Housing Development," French said. "A secondary objective of the project was to establish a strong relationship with the greater community in Brownsville, that would allow the authority and its partners to work together to support future redevelopment of the community."

French said, while the redevelopment authority was the Snowden Square Project's owner and developer, SIA provided the "necessary spark to engage the community," raise funds and take the project from idea to reality.



Additionally, SIA's work on the project helped them win a nationally-recognized Jefferson Award.

"The other innovative aspect of this project is the comprehensive approach the redevelopment authority undertook during the complete redevelopment initiative in Brownsville, leveraging local and state funding," French said.

Now that the project is complete, French said area students and community members frequently use the green space and newly-constructed Snowden Square stage for various productions, festivals and other events.

"In Brownsville, the initiative has led to increased economic vitality and community pride," French said.

Fayette County Commissioner Chairman Vince Vicites said the redevelopment authority has always been very proactive with such projects, so he's not surprised by the PAHRA award.

"They are always looking to make efficient and effective changes and look to the future," Vicites said. "Congratulations to them."

Commissioner Dave Lohr said the redevelopment authority did a wonderful job finding funding to accomplish the Snowden Square project.

"The authority deserves the award, as it's one of the best in the commonwealth," Lohr said.

The project was "another piece of the puzzle to help Brownsville," Lohr added.

"All the students and everyone who pitched in to help love their town," he said. "They should all be proud of their success."

"Congratulations goes to the redevelopment authority and much thanks for everyone involved in making this project a success," Commissioner Angela Zimmerlink said.

Snowden Square is one facet of the Brownsville Borough Redevelopment Initiative, which involved acquisition of 26 vacant, dilapidated and condemned properties and demolition of seven properties, thus far.

The overall project has resulted in a total investment of between \$7 and \$9 million, which includes funding for the 24-unit senior apartment complex created by Trek Development.

One- and two-bedroom apartments are still available for rent in the apartment complex known as Iron Bridge Crossings. All utilities are included and Fayette County Housing Authority vouchers are accepted.

Anyone 62 or older should call 724-225-3080 for more information.



“Despite the tremendous challenges facing Brownsville, the Fayette County Redevelopment Authority and Brownsville borough have worked over the years to make strategic investments, securing and committing local, state and federal resources to take on key projects that help improve the community and eliminate blight,” French said.

For more information on the Fayette County Redevelopment Authority’s many ongoing projects, visit www.racfpa.org.

For more information on the Pennsylvania Association of Housing and Redevelopment Agencies, visit www.pahra.org.

To learn more about Fayette County, visit www.fayettecountypa.info.

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