



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 7, 2022

FAYETTE COUNTY RECEIVES GRANT FOR BANK BUILDING PROJECT

Uniontown, PA – Fayette County was recently awarded a \$500,000 grant for continued renovations of the Gallatin Bank Building in downtown Uniontown.

The grant was part of more than \$54.5 million in funding from the Pennsylvania Redevelopment Assistance Capital Program (RACP) awarded to community, economic development and revitalization projects statewide.

"I am pleased to announce these projects will receive the state funding they need to improve or create new community projects and facilities that add to the quality of life for residents in these communities," Pennsylvania Gov. Tom Wolf said in a December statement.

Fayette County Redevelopment Authority (RDA) Executive Director Andrew French said his office used a "two-pronged approach" to secure the funding; submitting a competitive grant proposal and bolstering their efforts with direct support from state Sen. Pat Stefano and state Rep. Matthew Dowling.

"The first phases of work at the bank building are under construction now using a combination of other local and state funding," French said. "Our plan is to utilize this new funding for roof improvements on the main bank building and annex, which we bid out last year and will complete in the next few months."

Fayette County acquired the eight-story Gallatin Bank Building, located along Main Street, from the repository after it was placed for a final, free-and-clear tax sale, using land bank powers to take possession. French said the RDA and county officials recently completed renovation of a portion of the first floor that is being used by the Fayette County Election Bureau.

"We also have contracts under way for some of the major systems in the building that had to be completely redone, like the heating and air conditioning," French said. "Phase II renovations are also under way and will involve the basement and remaining first floor areas, which are slated to house additional county departments and storage."

French said Phase III of the project, which involves the build-out of the second floor, is currently out to bid and should be under contract within the next 30 to 60 days. The property became vacant by attrition in 2018. While other entities bid on the parking lot portions of the property, no bids were submitted for the building itself.

Funding should be available this summer, he added, following state review and approval of the RDA's formal application.

"Clearly everyone here recognizes the Gallatin Bank has always been an anchor building; always served as a very significant structure; and always been a central part of the community. The county has

invested a significant amount of resources and pledged more moving forward to support this project,” French said. “Rather than let it potentially fall into extensive disrepair and become a blighted eyesore, we were lucky to be able to intervene and save this important structure in the hopes of once again making it a thriving property in the downtown area.”

Fayette County Commissioner Vince Vicites said the bank building has made “steady progress” since the redevelopment authority acquired it for \$0 through the land bank.

“We intend to move our county offices that are on the fourth floor of the courthouse into the bank building to provide them more space to offer vital county services to the residents of Fayette County,” Vicites said. “The building is geographically located in the center of the City of Uniontown; will have at least 40 county employees located there; and will ultimately help create more activity and economic development in the downtown area. In future years, we will have six additional floors of space for use by government and private entities, leading to additional growth and prosperity.”

Commissioner Chairman Dave Lohr said his goal has always been to “put Fayette County out in front, on the cutting edge; to make Fayette the positive example of how county government should work.”

“Relocating offices to the bank building is just another piece in that puzzle. It’s going to become the hub of county government. Aside from the courts and court-related offices, which will remain in the courthouse, most of the offices that the public needs to do business with will soon be centrally located in the bank building,” Lohr said. “From our election bureau and veterans affairs, to planning and zoning, the tax claim bureau and tax assessment office - citizens will benefit from these offices being more accessible and in updated spaces designed to increase efficiency.”

Lohr said he’s excited to see the bank building plans finally coming to fruition and, although it’s taken some time, it was “necessary in order to design spaces that work well for both current and future needs.”

“It’s all about better serving the people who live and work in Fayette County,” he said. “Updating the building to improve efficiency in county offices, allowing us to better serve the people of Fayette County, is a win for everyone. The bank building has been sitting idle for far too long, and I’m thrilled to see it once again being a vital part of downtown Uniontown.”

For more information about the Gallatin Bank Building project, call the Fayette County Redevelopment Authority at 724-437-1547.

For more information about Fayette County, visit www.FayetteCountyPA.org.

###

This communication is part of the Fayette County PR Initiative, which is funded through the Fayette County Local Share Account (LSA) and Hotel Tax Grants in cooperation with the Fayette County Board of Commissioners, Fayette Chamber of Commerce, The Redevelopment Authority of the County of Fayette, The Redstone Foundation and other partners. This funding has been designated for the continued promotion and marketing of Fayette County, PA.

For more information, contact Kristi Rooker Kassimer, Public Relations Specialist, at 412-691-0262, kkassimer@fayettecountypa.info or Kaylie Moore, Community Relations Coordinator, at 724-430-1200 Ext. 1611, kmoore@fayettepa.org.