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## **FAYETTE FINALIZES BUSINESS PARK PROPERTY PURCHASE**

**Uniontown, PA** – The next phase of the Fayette County Business Park Expansion Project is under way, after the county finalized its property purchase.

The Redevelopment Authority of the County of Fayette (RDA) closed on the property Sept. 24, acquiring almost 60 acres from Mount Saint Macrina in North Union Township. Sleighter Engineering, which has been instrumental in the project thus far, was subsequently hired to assist with its upcoming stages.

RDA Executive Director Andrew French said officials are still working on finalizing a scope for the \$2.5 million in grant funding received from the Pennsylvania Redevelopment Assistance Capital Program (RACP) over the last few years.

“There are a series of tasks that have been identified that the redevelopment authority and Sleighter Engineering will engage in to advance development of the property, including site and utility master planning and design; environmental review and clearance; various kinds of permitting; rezoning; development; bidding and much more,” French said. “Now that the sale is final, we’re working on all the different tasks that need to happen to get us to the construction of actual infrastructure. Some of them are routine, but some of them are more tailored to fit this project.”

One of the most important parts of the master planning stage, French said, is working hand-in-hand with the Sisters of St. Basil, from whom the property was purchased.

“Because we’re now neighbors, we agreed to include them in the visioning process for what we want this to look like. We also want to determine the market demand for the different types of development that will occur there,” he said. “We just want to take our time, be thoughtful and approach development with our eyes wide open so we don’t rush to construct something that doesn’t fit certain needs.”

French said the county showed its dedication to the project when the commissioners provided the initial \$1 million to purchase the property. That led to receiving the \$2.5 million in RACP funding, French said, and will hopefully “start a chain reaction.”

“Usually these projects gain traction once you get started, because different entities see things happening and come to identify the property as another potential resource. Then, everyone wants to get on board,” French said. “We spent upwards of \$15 million on development along Matthew Drive (South Union Township) and leveraged more than \$100 million in private investment in the project, when it was all said and done. I imagine that as we go along, this project will generate similar interest.”

The RDA worked with Aspire Grant and Development LLC to secure this project’s RACP grants. RACP is administered by the Pennsylvania Office of the Budget for the acquisition and construction of regional, economic, cultural, civic, recreational and historical improvement projects.

French said he hopes potential plans to utilize a portion of the property's adjacent Springer Farm will come to fruition through the Business Park Expansion project. The Fayette County commissioners conveyed the farm to the redevelopment authority in 2003.

"While extensive efforts were made to market and develop the property, there were several access concerns and challenges due to the historic nature of the structures and property," French said. "In April 2015, the home was destroyed by fire and subsequently demolished. Given that this property is immediately adjacent to the Mount Saint Macrina property, it will be incorporated into the overall site development efforts being undertaken with this new phase."

The RDA has also prepared a request for assistance through the U.S. Economic Development Administration, which will be submitted in the next month. The new business park will include office and commercial spaces; and have the capacity to create at least 1,000 new, family-sustaining jobs.

French said the new business park will differ from existing ones, as it won't have a "heavy retail component."

"There will still be some commercial support rendered there. Our goal with everything, always, is to not compete with the private sector. We want to offer a different product than what's in the market currently," he said. "For example, a housing component is something we've definitely considered for this particular property. It's all part of the site master planning process with our major stakeholders; seeing how we can mesh those commercial and residential uses."

In 2004, Fayette County Commissioner Vince Vicites played a key role in securing a similar \$2 million state grant to create the Fayette County Business Park on state Route 40 in South Union Township. Since then, the county has seen nonstop business growth.

Vicites said finalizing the latest property purchase is "great news for Fayette County," as it will continue the development along state Route 40 that began during his first term as county commissioner.

"That development has attracted 47 businesses to date and \$115 million dollars in private investment, and we've created more than 1,000 jobs in our business park. I would like to see the business park develop into a mixed-use site, with commercial, educational, medical and residential facilities," he said. "Working with the redevelopment authority will give us the opportunity to expand our business park by about 75 acres. The commissioners can continue to create jobs, promote economic development and grow our tax base for many years to come with the development of this property."

Commissioner Chairman Dave Lohr said the property is a "prime location for development," because it's centrally located with easy access to major county roadways; in a "scenic setting with panoramic views."

"Taken as a whole, these attributes make Mount Macrina a desirable location for business on every possible front. The possibilities are endless," Lohr said. "Economic development is vital to our future in Fayette County. You can't put social and cultural concerns ahead of economic development, because it just doesn't work. A job with a living wage is the best cure for poverty, and that's why I'm focused on economic development and job creation. I'm always looking for new and different development opportunities - especially opportunities that put Fayette County on the cutting edge."

Lohr said the property is an "outstanding opportunity" to attract new development.

"More business means more jobs and more money flowing into the area, and that benefits everyone who lives and works in Fayette County," he said. "There is so much good that can be done with this

property, in terms of development. Right now, my expectation is that the property will be developed for medical and commercial uses, but that doesn't preclude other types of uses, as well. The possibilities truly are endless, but the outcome is the same - new jobs means new growth; and new growth benefits everyone."

Commissioner Scott Dunn said purchasing the additional acreage came at a great time.

"Menard's will take most of the remaining parcels in the existing business park, so this new park will allow for further expansion of medical, professional and, possibly, educational and training facilities," Dunn said. "I'm very happy with the relationship forged between the county and the redevelopment authority to move this project ahead."

French said the project's timeline is "complicated from here on out," as "every step takes time."

"It might have to be done in a phased approach, and we could start bidding by the end of 2022, but that's contingent on all these different steps we have to take and could change based on demand for the site," French said. "We just got possession of the property, so we're going in order and marketing it appropriately. We're working with developers to gauge levels of interest, and if they want to move quickly, we're going to speed things up to accommodate that and make things happen. This is not something that happens overnight, but we're dedicated to keeping it moving."

For more information, contact the Fayette County Redevelopment Authority at 724-437-1547.

For more information about Fayette County, visit [www.FayetteCountyPA.org](http://www.FayetteCountyPA.org).

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