

Making tracks for Mount Joy

Borough officials hope upcoming train station improvements will help bring even more people to the already thriving town

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Mount Joy

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Every working day, the equivalent of several busloads of people can be seen in the heart of downtown Mount Joy.

They're not tourists with cameras and "Gee, look at that!" stares on their faces.

They're commuters — workers who have come into town then leave via Mount Joy's train stop for places such as Harrisburg, Lancaster or even Philadelphia.

"The value of having the train station in the heart of our downtown is just tremendous," Mount Joy official Terry Kauffman said this week.

"It is really such an asset, and it's something we can use to better our downtown. ... Not every downtown is so fortunate," added Stacy Rutherford, Mount Joy's Main Street manager.

And plans are now going full speed ahead to make Mount Joy's train station shine even brighter, with an improvement project set for completion by early 2013.

Work will begin this month on the first of two phases in the multimillion-dollar improvement effort.

This year's work will include upgrading things such as the lighting and parking in two lots near the station and enhancing a pedestrian crosswalk along Main Street (Route 230) to help people make their way to the train station.

The train stop is below street level at East Henry and North Market streets, just a block off Main Street.

The first phase is to be completed by year's end.

Next year will come two new elevators, one on each side of the tracks; new station platforms; and track-level shelters and other steps.



Checking out the site where a new covered train platform will be constructed for the Mount Joy train station are, from left, Terry Kauffman, Mount Joy's special projects manager; Scott Hershey, the town's borough manager; and Stacy Rutherford, its Main Street manager. (Richard Hertzler /Staff)

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The long-awaited project has town leaders including Kauffman, Rutherford and Scott Hershey, the interim borough manager, fired-up.

Kauffman said that some of the estimated 60,000 riders a year in Mount Joy will simply come and go.

"But there's also another group that will shop downtown, dine here ... and some of them are going to be residents of the community, so (the station) makes it an attractive place to live."

And there are other pluses to the new project, said Kauffman, a former Lancaster County commissioner and Mount Joy borough manager who's now the town's special projects manager: "No buildings (are) being torn down, no businesses being ruined, and having a great community partnership to make it all happen."

The borough has signed leases with two churches near the station — St. Mark's United Methodist Church on the north side of Route 230 and Mount Joy Church of God immediately next to the station — for use of the church parking lots during the week.

Mount Joy Borough Council earlier this month awarded two bids for the first phase of the project.

The first was for \$1,240,307 to Flyway Excavating Inc. of Lititz for general construction, and the second was a \$232,600 contract with S.B. Construction of Leola for the electrical work.

In the last five years, downtown Mount Joy has had a net gain of 24 businesses, so the borough hopes the train riders are able to stop in a shop or restaurant ... or at least "are aware of what we have to offer," Rutherford said.

The station could even attract residents or businesses to town.

Kauffman cited new plans by a York developer to convert the former Gerberich-Payne Shoe Co. factory into retail space, offices and 30 upscale apartments.

The former factory is at 240 W. Main St., just west of the train station — a big selling point for the developer, borough officials said.

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