

Coatesville Oks study on blight

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COATESVILLE -- The Redevelopment Authority on Monday night approved a blight certification study for the properties near the proposed new train station development.

The study is required by state law to allow the authority to utilize eminent domain to acquire properties for redevelopment. The properties must also be certified as blighted by the study. For properties to be legally considered blighted, they must meet one of a number of criteria that basically determine that the property has become a public nuisance or safety hazard.

A majority of the properties in an area must be considered legally blighted in order for the entire area to be considered blighted. The study determined that 22 of the 30 total properties studied were blighted.

The properties studied for the proposed train station development were between Third and Fourth avenues and between Dewey Alley and the train tracks. A few properties also run along Lumber Street near Fourth Avenue. In total, there are 30 parcels that were studied.

One commercial property was studied as well as 19 homes and 10 vacant lots. Six properties along Fleetwood Street were determined to not be blighted along with two properties along Fourth Avenue.

Only six of the properties in the study area are home-owner occupied and three of them were considered blighted. The city owns a number of the properties since it bought many of the homes along Fleetwood Street after they were destroyed by the arson crisis in the city.

Of the blighted properties, 12 were determined to be unsafe in some way. Eleven properties are considered a public nuisance either by common law or city code. Ten of the properties are blighted because they are vacant lots. Many of the vacant lots are empty, because they were fire-gutted homes.

Four of the blighted properties have an attractive nuisance for children such as an abandoned shaft or basement. The following blight conditions also impacted one property: unfit for human habitation, fire hazard, unoccupied and tax delinquent for at least two years, unoccupied and has not been rehabilitated within a year of notice from an enforcement agency requiring rehabilitation, pollution or contamination on the property.

City council and the planning commission have to approve the study as well as at a Nov. 10 meeting.

Authority Chairman Joseph "Zeke" Disciullo said the blight study is the "first of many steps" needed to lead to development of the new train station.

According to Pennsylvania Department of Transportation officials, the station is expected to be constructed by 2015. The plan is for the authority to obtain the properties in the blighted area and then sell them for possible redevelopment. The plan for potential redevelopment has yet to be finalized.

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