

Dinniman proposes training center in Coatesville

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POSTED: 12/11/14, 8:06 PM EST UPDATED: 2 DAYS AGO



State Sen.
Andrew E.
Dinniman

Coatesville— A Career Training and Education Center might be attached to the Coatesville Train Station project, according to representatives of State Sen. Andrew Dinniman's office.

Officials said the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation is committed to building the center as a part of the train station and surrounding area redevelopment in the 300 block of Fleetwood Street.

"We are moving forward on a concept that will put a job skills, career training and education center right alongside Coatesville Train Station," Dinniman said in a prepared statement released Thursday. "This will be a major boost not only for the city's redevelopment, but also and more importantly, for the people of Coatesville who are patiently awaiting the restoration of rail service to their city and deserve direct access to the many opportunities associated with its redevelopment."

Dinniman, D-19th of West Whiteland, said the center will have two purposes. First, it will act as a waiting area for travelers; second, it will be a center for education and job training, including workspace for new entrepreneurs.

PennDOT officials say they are committed to the train station project.

Toby L. Fauver, PennDOT's deputy secretary for multimodal transportation, sent a letter addressed to Dinniman on Dec. 8 stating the department has a "continued commitment to pursuing the development and construction of the updated station" and has "committed monies on the Transportation Improvement Program for this project," according to a spokesperson in Dinniman's office,

Fauver also confirmed in the letter that the proposal for the education center was introduced and PennDOT "encourages the development of this project."

The project has been discussed for four years, since arsons on Fleetwood Street in 2008 destroyed a block of row homes.

In 2010, PennDOT met with the Chester County Planning Commission to study alternatives to develop the area and get the train station up and running again in the city.

They unveiled the plan publicly in November 2011 as an idea for the site with an expected construction start date as 2015.

PennDOT has committed about \$20 million to the development of the train station. They said they would fund the project as long the surrounding area is revitalized.

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According to Adam Cirucci, a spokesperson for Dinniman, the center's planned development might entice private investors and educational institutions, and move the process along without waiting for an interested developer to step forward.

He said Dinniman will continue to work with the Coatesville Redevelopment Authority, which is responsible for commercial, industrial and residential development in the city, to retrieve grants and additional funding "to move the project along."

The RDA has taken steps to prepare the site around the proposed train station location by purchasing property on the Fleetwood Street.

"There is still plenty of track to lay before we get rolling, but this is a tremendous opportunity for Coatesville," Cirucci said. "The new train station will be the front door to Coatesville and right alongside it, we are committed to putting a job and education training center – a pathway for the community to access all the opportunities the city's revitalization has to offer."

Coatesville City Manager Kirby Hudson was unavailable for comment Thursday.

The Coatesville Train Station was identified as a location in the Keystone Corridor in need for revitalization. All train stations in Chester County on PennDOT's radar fall in Dinniman's district.

source: www.dailylocal.com