

Montco Officials Hopeful Road Work Unlocks Norristown's Future

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By Margaret Gibbons, Intelligencer staff writer

The Montgomery County commissioners Monday kicked off a major road construction project with a bang.

The bang was caused when an excavator began clawing apart a home that will be demolished to make way for the road improvements, which the commissioners hope leads to the rebirth of the county seat.

“Today we are knocking down a building, but it is the first concrete step in a project that will help build a better Norristown tomorrow,” said Commissioner Chairman Josh Shapiro.

The home is one of 26 properties that the county needs for the widening and reconstruction of Ridge Pike in Plymouth. Fifteen of the properties already have been acquired.

The Ridge Pike improvements are part of the Lafayette Street corridor project, which county and Norristown officials have often referred to as the key to efforts to revitalize downtown Norristown and spark the development of the unused and underused riverfront property.

Improvements on Diamond Avenue, where the first home is located, will link Ridge Pike with an expanded, widened and reconstructed Lafayette Street. The project also includes an electronic interchange on the Pennsylvania Turnpike that will bring traffic exiting the turnpike directly onto Lafayette Street.

County Transportation Planning Chief Leo Bagley, who has overseen the 10-plus years of planning for the Lafayette Street corridor program, estimated that construction work should wrap up on the project by 2016, although, depending on funding, the turnpike interchanges may be later.

The overall cost of the Lafayette Street corridor project is about \$80 million, including \$60 million for construction.

Margaret Gibbons: 610-279-6153; mgibbons@phillyburbs.com; Twitter, @peggibbons

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