



\$12M Amtrak station project breaks ground in Lancaster, PA

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Officials celebrate the project's groundbreaking in Lancaster. Photo courtesy of Amtrak

Taggart Associates facilitated the groundbreaking activities for the renovation of the Amtrak station in Lancaster after successfully completing the management of the Final Design phase up to the preparation of the letting package. Representatives from the Lancaster County Transportation Authority, the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT), Amtrak, James Street, and community members celebrated the start of the 18-month, \$12

million renovation project.

Representatives from Lancaster County, the City of Lancaster, PennDOT, and Amtrak, as well as regional media and community members were on hand for the ceremony at the Lancaster Amtrak Station on June 29. The project is now under construction, and Taggart Associates will continue to provide public information services, as well as on-site and administrative coordination.

What's New?

Our new place:

***We have moved,
right across the street
from our previous office!
Please note: Our new address is
26 East Third Street,
Bethlehem, PA 18015***

Our new web site:

www.taggartassociates.com

Our new web site features case studies, a request for services, and information about our background and expertise.



From the President

“Failing to plan is planning to fail.” – Alan Lakein

While municipalities may not be seeing the flurry of development that they were in past years, the economy will pick up. By using this economic slowdown as an opportunity to plan for the future, municipalities can position themselves to take advantage of new economic opportunities that arise as the recession eases.

In normal economic times, planning departments are busy assisting active development within their communities. Now that some of the development-related tasks have abated, it may be an excellent time for municipalities to reassess their community's needs and conduct new or update old planning studies. Planning monies are available through various organizations and agencies and many do not require a community to match the funds. By taking the time to fully evaluate and plan community projects, a municipality will be in a position to attract developers and implement community goals once project funding is restored.

Here are some simple steps to get ready for that inevitable economic upswing:

1. *Plan.* Complete the studies you need to be ready to move a project forward. Identify “catalytic” projects that will ultimately spur more private investment. These can include traffic studies, environmental research, business retention recruitment strategies, streetscape improvements, and signage. If research is completed prior to grant applications or developer inquiries, your project is more likely to be selected and rewarded. For example, the **Easton Main Street Initiative** had a goal of improving its downtown retail mix. The funding package and process that Taggart Associates helped to put together led the organization to hire a consultant who is currently developing a retail recruitment strategy building upon Easton's existing retail base. Once investors are ready to open new locations or start businesses, Easton will be able to identify and communicate to these investors the types of establishments the Community will support.

2. *Partner.* Concentrate on forming public/private partnerships that will be mutually beneficial. Projects need community support to be

successful. Many communities form Steering Committees comprised of community stakeholders to help guide the projects from start to finish. Taggart Associates is currently assisting the **Borough of Coopersburg** with the update of its Comprehensive Plan, using a Steering Committee to guide this process. By using a Steering Committee, the ideas, feedback and opinions of the people who will ultimately live with the project's outcomes are all heard during the process.

3. *Prioritize.* There will be dozens of projects in your community and good reasons to complete all of them; however, in most cases, some initiatives should be completed first, before others can succeed. We recommend that you carefully prioritize the projects on your wish list. The **D&L Heritage Corridor** hired Taggart Associates to help with this prioritization. D&L, along with the Landmark Towns of Bucks County (the boroughs of Bristol, Yardley, Morrisville and New Hope) sought to attract additional private investment. Taggart Associates prepared a prioritized list of “catalytic projects” in each of these towns with associated funding sources for each project and critical “next steps” for each.

4. *Put into action.* Too often, a firm develops a plan, but implementation isn't covered. If an organization or municipality invests the time and money in the creation of a project plan, the consulting team should advise the client how to implement the various ideas and strategies – otherwise, the plan sits on a shelf and nothing is accomplished. In the spring of 2009, the **Lehigh Valley Economic Development Corporation (LVEDC)** hired Taggart Associates to assist in updating its Five-Year Strategic Plan. We helped the Steering Committee to create goals and objectives, and determine how to best achieve these goals and measure progress.

We encourage municipalities to consider using this slower economic climate to prioritize projects, define community goals and prepare for successful community development in the years to come.

If you have any questions about funding sources, forming partnerships, and prioritizing projects, please contact me at (610) 882-1571 or donna@taggartassociates.com. We would be happy to help you get started.

Route 309 enhancements completed

Officials in North Whitehall Township were pleased to announce the completion of a major transportation improvement project on June 12.

The project added capacity and widened Route 309 from Shankweiler Road to Realigned Old Packhouse Road and also north to the original Old Packhouse Road. The enhancements will help improve safety-by adding traffic signals, and turning lanes. An emergency vehicle signal pre-emption system has also been added for the safety of drivers and emergency personnel when needed.

In 2001, PennDOT approved the preliminary design, relocating Old Packhouse Road from its original location to the intersection of Pennsylvania Avenue and Route 309. The final alignment minimized environmental impact and provided engineers with a cleaner (and ultimately, less expensive) design, by removing some tight curves and eliminating the need for excavating rock on Old Packhouse Road.

The project's efforts ease traffic entering and exiting on Old Packhouse Road, including Lehigh County's recycling facility, planned retail, residential and KidsPeace Orchard Hills Campus.

KidsPeace jump-started the project by having \$8.4M of the \$14M needed monies set aside for the project.

The intersection of Route 309 and Sand Spring Road is scheduled for construction in 2010.



At a recent open house meeting, engineers from KCI discuss the plans for improving Route 412 between I-78 and SR-378 in Bethlehem.

Photo by Allyson Filippis

Open House meeting style encourages public dialogue

More than 50 residents and public officials came to the Cathedral Church of the Nativity in South Side Bethlehem to learn the status of two transportation projects in the City of Bethlehem. The Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT), in cooperation with the City of Bethlehem, has worked for more than two years on the final designs of the Route 412 widening project and the construction of a new ramp from Route 378 to Third Street. At the request of the two partners, Taggart Associates planned for, advertised and arranged an opportunity for members of the public to learn about the project details and schedules.

Taggart Associates worked out the meeting site details, prepared announcements in both English and Spanish that were distributed to nearby stores and businesses, coordinated the media release with the PennDOT District office, and translated the engineering materials to a "public-friendly" format.

PennDOT's public information meetings are often arranged in a lecture hall format in a large auditorium. A PennDOT representative presents and explains engineering charts and tables explaining why and how they had identified and resolved issues, then open the floor for questions. Taggart

Associates has found that this format sometimes does not meet a client's objectives of helping create understanding and an opportunity for dialogue. A speaker on a stage can be unapproachable, and people not comfortable with speaking in public may shy away from the opportunity to ask a question.

Taggart Associates encourages clients to consider using the "Open House" format instead. This format provides for a series of displays or stations. The subject boards might include current traffic conditions and problems, environmental resources, design alternatives and impacts of various solutions under investigation. Each station is manned by experts on the related subjects. The station experts answer questions and, as appropriate, ask for more detailed explanation of the person's concern or issue. In this way, the citizen is given the opportunity to share concerns, and the experts walk away with insights that they would not have otherwise. The results of these dialogs has often resulted in a better understanding of the "real, on the street" issues faced by property owners, drivers and pedestrians and leads to a better product.

If you are truly interested in getting honest input and giving understandable information, consider the Open House technique.

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Tagline

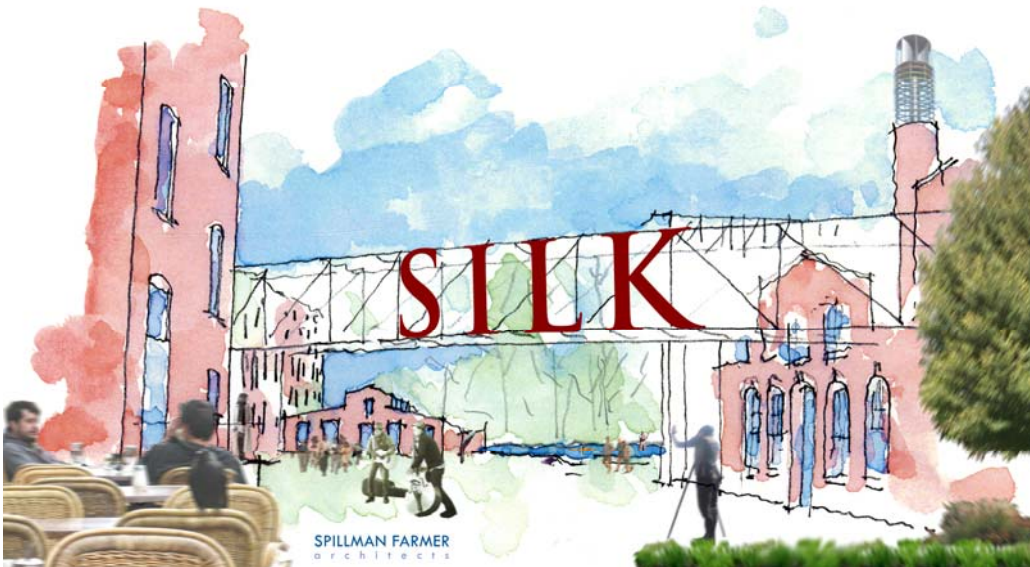
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Movies at the Mill provided sneak peek of upcoming redevelopment in Easton

In what the City of Easton hopes is the first of many events to be held at the former Simon Silk Mill complex, "Movies at the Mill" on October 9 showcased some of the best Easton has to offer. More than 700 guests enjoyed the films of several regional film makers, which were screened on the side of one of the buildings on the brownfield site. Attendees also got a preview of what the future holds for the redevelopment of the Simon Silk Mill.

The redevelopment of the mill is one of the cornerstones of the larger Bushkill Creek Corridor project in Easton, for which Taggart Associates has served as Project Manager since 2005.

A team led by Spillman Farmer Architects (SFA) is finalizing a series of reports documenting the structural integrity of the buildings, location and condition of existing utilities, and transportation access needs. The SFA team will also be providing preliminary site plans and renderings for the redevelopment of the property. Some of these plans and images were presented at the Movies at the Mill event on October 9.



*Rendering by
Spillman Farmer
Architects; aerial
photo by Alvin H.
Butz; event
photograph by
Sandra Levisay*