

# Officials break ground on Lafayette extension phase 3, Norristown



Officials from Pennoni Associates, JBC Associates, PennDOT, Montgomery County and Norristown break ground take part in a groundbreaking ceremony for phase 3 of the Lafayette Street extension project Thursday. SUBMITTED PHOTO

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**NORRISTOWN >> Federal, state and local officials broke ground Thursday on the third phase of the Lafayette Street extension project, considered the largest local infrastructure project in the Pennsylvania.**

Phase 3 will reconstruct Lafayette Street between Barbadoes and Ford streets, widen the street and sidewalk, relocate part of the Schuylkill River Trail, and create a new trail hub in Norristown. It will also will beautify the existing Lafayette Street and widen it to make a welcoming boulevard for traffic coming from a new turnpike interchange and make the Schuylkill River Trail more accessible to the public, as well as connecting it to the popular Chester Valley Trail.

The groundbreaking ceremony took place at Lafayette and Ford streets.

“We are very pleased to take another step forward on the Lafayette Street extension project that showcases what is possible with smart, forward-looking investments in our infrastructure,” Val Arkoosh, chairwoman of the Montgomery County commissioners, said in a press release. “This project will create safer and more efficient commutes for those who live or work in Norristown and encourage more people to visit our county seat for shopping and recreation.”

Officials expect the \$90 million project to help revitalize Norristown; relieve traffic congestion along Main Street, Ridge Pike and Conshohocken Road; and improve access to government facilities. The Federal Highway Administration is funding 80 percent of the total project, while Montgomery County will fund the remaining 20 percent, or \$18 million.

“The Lafayette Street extension project has been a collaborative effort between the county, Federal Highway Administration, and PennDOT, with the county investing \$18 million in the total project – not to mention the countless hours of staff time, which will positively affect the surrounding community by directly connecting our county seat to the turnpike network,” Ken Lawrence Jr., vice chairman of the county board of commissioners, said in the release.

Phase 3 construction is expected to last about two and a half years and cost \$19.5 million, with the county’s share being \$3.9 million.

“This third phase of the Lafayette Street extension project will create safer streets in Norristown and give residents and visitors better access to the transportation center and the Schuylkill River Trail,” county Commissioner Joe Gale said. “We are grateful to our federal, state and local partners in making this project a reality.”

Ground was broken on phase 1 of the Lafayette Street extension project in 2013, and construction was completed in 2015. Phase 1 included extending Lafayette Street from Ford Street in Norristown to Conshohocken Road, creating two lanes in each direction with a landscaped median; relocating and rebuilding the Schuylkill River Trail; and building a bridge over Ross Street along with sound walls to protect nearby residents from noise.

Phase 1 also extended Lafayette Street toward the eventual turnpike interchange, part of the larger effort to revitalize downtown Norristown by providing direct access to the highway system.

Phase 2 of the project, which was completed ahead of schedule in November 2016 and came in \$300,000 under budget, widened and made improvements along Ridge Pike, Diamond Avenue, and Fairfield Road.