

Lafayette Street Project Crucial to Norristown

Editorial
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We agree with Norristown Mayor Ted LeBlanc's statement that the proposed Lafayette Street project is one of the most important investments in the borough in the past three decades.

We could argue, however, that the project is not "one" of the most important investments in the borough in 30 years, but "the" most important.

The Lafayette Street project is critical to Norristown's future. Without it major development will continue to pass the borough by.

Obviously, funding is a major issue. However, the approval of Plymouth Township council and Norristown Borough council is vital to the project's success.

We believe quick approval of the proposed plans by these governmental bodies is necessary to keep the project moving toward a start date of 2008.

Hopefully, quick approval of the site plans will encourage the Pennsylvania Turnpike Commission to do whatever is necessary to see the project to completion.

With a \$100 million price tag it would take too many years for the commission to recoup its costs from the tolls alone, but we're sure there are other ways the commission, which is expected to fund about \$60 million of the project, can come up the funding for such a vital project.

The Lafayette Street project consists of ramps from the Pennsylvania Turnpike in Plymouth near Conshohocken Road to Lafayette Street in Norristown, a widening of Lafayette Street through the borough, with a connection to the Dannehower Bridge.

Access has been a major stumbling block to the borough's attempts at revitalization. With quick access from the Turnpike, a plethora of opportunities would become available to developers.

Funding for engineering studies already has been secured and plans are moving forward.

State Sen. Arlen Specter has vowed to work toward securing \$30 million to \$40 million of federal money for the project.

Congressman Jim Gerlach has supported the project and has vowed to move on it when Congress returns in January.

We encourage our readers, not just those in Norristown, but in all the surrounding municipalities, to call their local legislators and voice their support for the project. Send them off to Harrisburg with the Lafayette Street project fresh in their minds next year.

This project, which is so crucial for Norristown, will be good for the entire region. A strong and vibrant county seat will be profitable for all of Montgomery County.

