

Redevelopment Authority gets grant for Snowden Square project in Brownsville

By Steve Ferris sferris@heraldstandard.com | Posted: Thursday, February 12, 2015 2:00 am

With a \$50,000 grant awarded on Tuesday, the Fayette County Redevelopment Authority is ready to move ahead with a plan initiated several years ago by a group of Brownsville Area High School students to build a park and stage in Snowden Square in downtown Brownsville.

Authority board members cheered the project on Wednesday after approving an agreement for the Heinz Endowments grant, which raises the sum available for the Brownsville Students in Action (SIA) Snowden Square Stage Design project to \$300,000.

“This is great. This is the best thing we’ve ever done,” board member Philip Michael said.

With the money in place, the authority will issue a request for qualifications for a firm to design the project, Executive Director Andrew French said.

The authority should be able to award a design contract in March, advertise for construction bids in the spring and begin construction in summer, French said. The work should take four to six months to complete, he said.

Plans call for a 99,224-square-foot park where several dilapidated buildings were torn down in a blight elimination project, a 20-by-30-foot concrete stage with a rubberized surface, decorative lighting, a gazebo and seating.

It started out on a much smaller scale. During the 2011-12 school year, students in the SIA and some other students came up a plan to build a stage in an empty lot near Brownsville Free Public Library.

The scope of the project grew with it’s support.

State legislators secured a \$175,000 grant from the Greenways, Trails and Recreation program, which is funded by Act 13 Marcellus shale impact fees. Local businesses and the UPMC Foundation also contributed to the project.

In other business, French updated the board on development in the Fayette County

Business Park in South Union Township.

He said Mike Wood Toyota, Hobby Lobby and the Hilton Garden Inn are under construction and work is expected to start soon on a Dick's Sporting Goods.

The authority also approved an agreement with Fayette County to administer the 2014 Community Development Block Grant.