

Brownsville park lands funding

By Christine Haines chains@heraldstandard.com | Posted: Monday, October 27, 2014 2:15 am

It started with a simple idea by some students at Brownsville Area High School — build a stage on an empty lot near the library to make the area more appealing.

“When we looked at the project in 2011-12, it was a small project we thought we could do in a few months,” said Christian Sese, who is the youngest of the original members of Students in Action group that proposed the stage.

Sese was a sophomore in high school when the SIA group made its first presentation to Brownsville Borough Council. He is now a freshman at Duquesne University

“The project has grown exponentially,” said Andrew French, executive director of the Redevelopment Authority of Fayette County.

The stand-alone stage rapidly moved to a stage in a park adjacent to the Market Street parking lot in Snowden Square, complete with benches, a gazebo, decorative lighting and walking trails. The redevelopment authority owns the land where the new park is to be built, and French said notification was received that needed state funding has been approved.

State Rep. Pam Snyder, D-Jefferson and Sen. Richard Kasunic, D-Dunbar, announced this week that the project is getting \$175,000 from the Greenways, Trails and Recreation program.

“It’s nice that there’s a funding source available. This is Act 13 money from Marcellus shale that’s available to communities,” French said.

The state funding is being matched with private grants from local businesses as well as



102414Project Plan.jpg

This artist’s rendering provided by McMillen Engineering shows the proposed landscaping and development for Snowden Park in downtown Brownsville.

from regional foundations including the Heinz Foundation and the UPMC Foundation. French said there is not enough money available for the project to start thinking about putting it out for bids.

“I’m hoping we can put it out for bids in the first quarter of next year, then I would hope that construction could take place in the second and third quarters,” French said.

Another member of the inaugural student group was Kourtney Polvinale, now a junior at Thiel College.

“I’m totally excited because finally we are seeing a finishing product for this project that has gone through so much,” Polvinale said. “It felt like it was never going to happen.

“There was progress while I was there, but we didn’t have enough money at all, so it’s great to see people showing confidence in this,” Polvinale said.

Kelli Dellarose, the sponsor of the SIA group, said this is the first year the organization includes students who were not involved in the project from the very start.

“Every year we’re moving closer and closer to what we want the park to be,” Dellarose said. “This is our fourth year. The kids wanted to promote community service within the school and within the community. They wanted to focus on the image of the town. They were tired of students from other schools traveling through our town and giving it bad reviews.”

While there are only six students involved in SIA, the project has already included many other students, including shop classes which have constructed benches and trash can holders that will be used in the park.

The 99,224-square-foot park will take the place of several dilapidated buildings that have been torn down as part of a blight elimination project. It will include a 20-by-30-foot concrete stage with rubberized surface that will meet accessibility requirements, according to the grant proposal.

“The community and regional park will dovetail perfectly with the borough’s historic district and nearby Riverside Wharf Park. The park will energize the borough and be a showplace that all can be proud of,” Kasunic said in a prepared release.

Dellarose said the students have worked closely with the borough’s engineer, Terry McMillen of McMillen Engineering, who has helped them turn their concepts into

plans. French and Dellarose said the students will be involved in planning the programming for the park in the future.

We wanted to have some sort of kick-off event that showcased our talents in one way or another,” Seseck said. “I’m at Duquesne, but I’ll be back for whatever kick-off event is held.”

“I feel good to still be a part of it,” Polvinale said. “It has my heart for sure.”

“Ultimately, you look at Brownsville and the people have been down for so long. It’s good to see something come to fruition,” Seseck said.



102414Project Plan.jpg

This artist's rendering provided by McMillen Engineering shows the proposed landscaping and development for Snowden Park in downtown Brownsville.





102414Project Boundry.jpg

Image courtesy of McMillen Engineering

Top photo: The proposed Snowden Park is envisioned as the centerpiece of downtown Brownsville (Artist rendering provided by McMillen Engineering). Bottom photo: The boundaries of the proposed Snowden Park, in downtown Brownsville, are shown.





102414Project Rendering.jpg

Artist rendering provided by McMillen Engineering

The proposed Snowden Park is envisioned as the centerpiece of downtown Brownsville.

