

07/28/2008

Lansdowne, Media are Classic Towns

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Lansdowne Mayor Jayne Young has long realized her beloved borough has a lot to offer in terms of culture, diversity, architecture, history, safety and "walkability."

But when Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission officials informed her that Lansdowne's assets qualified the borough to be part of their Classic Towns program, she was quite proud.

"All those things by themselves are very attractive to me and to have someone on the outside identify them in the community and acknowledge them, is flattering," said Young, who has been mayor of the 115-year-old borough since 2001.

Media Mayor Bob McMahon isn't surprised that "Everybody's Hometown" has also been dubbed a Classic Town by the regional planning commission.

"All the towns are older. All of them share something with the past. Look at Media, look at the trolley, look at the Victorian homes. All have a vibrant downtown or the potential to be vibrant," said McMahon, who has been mayor of the 158-year-old borough for 17 years.

Lansdowne and Media are among 11 municipalities in Pennsylvania and New Jersey identified Monday by Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission Executive Director Barry Seymour as part of the commission's Classic Towns of Greater Philadelphia program.

A marketing effort that evolved from the commission's Strategies for Older Suburbs initiative launched in 2004, Classic Towns assists vintage neighborhoods in publicizing themselves with the hope of luring more residents, tourists and businesses.

"It's designed to capitalize on the strength and diversity of our region and to rediscover these great towns," said Seymour.

Seeded by a \$250,000 grant from the William Penn Foundation, the program requires each participating municipality to pay an annual fee of \$2,500, which is matched by the regional planning commission.

"I translate that to about 25 cents a resident. If it's successful, that's not a lot of money to market yourself, cast a wider net, attract new residents and, because you're doing it with other towns, you get an economy of scale," said Young.

On Monday, the first marketing effort of Classic Towns was unveiled in the form of a Web site, www.classictowns.org.

While there is a strong spirit of volunteerism among Lansdowne's approximately 11,000 residents in promoting their town, said Young, she believes having access to professional promoters should serve the borough well.

"You're not likely to want to spend taxpayer dollars on advertising. It is not appropriate when everyone has limited resources. The Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission has developed an advertising strategy for communities like us to use," said Young.

Planning commission spokesman Andrew Gotlieb said the agency plans to market Classic Towns to travel writers, Realtors and anyone else involved in helping home buyers looking for places to live. He noted that towns like Media and Lansdowne are especially attractive because of their sense of community, access to public transportation and local businesses that can be reached by foot.

"We would like Media to become more of a local destination for people to live. We'd like them to



experience Media by doing, going to the theater, going to the stores and our many events," said McMahon.

Other participants in the Classic Towns program are Manayunk and Overbrook Farms in Philadelphia, West Chester in Chester County, Doylestown and Bristol in Bucks County, Ambler in Montgomery County and Collingswood, Haddon Heights and Riverton in New Jersey. Gotlieb said commission officials hope to expand the list in the future.

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