

Planning Commission Begins 'Classic Towns' Campaign

By BRADLEY VASOLI
THE BULLETIN

PHILADELPHIA — The Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission began a marketing campaign yesterday advertising several historic communities around Philadelphia to businesses and potential residents.

DVRPC representatives and those of the participating towns, unveiled the campaign at Philadelphia's Independence Visitors Center yesterday morning. Benefiting communities in the "Classic Towns of Greater Philadelphia" initiative include:

- Ambler borough in Montgomery County
- Doylestown borough in Bucks County
- Lansdowne and Media boroughs in Delaware County
- West Chester borough in Chester County
- The Philadelphia neighborhoods of Manayunk and Overbrook Farms
- Collingswood, Haddon Heights and Riverton boroughs in New Jersey.

The DVRPC reached out to the first round of communities partic-

ipating in the program, but future beneficiaries will be determined through competitive selection. The localities were chosen based on their multifaceted transportation infrastructure, their cultural institutions or their position as a county seat.

"If we can get more people looking in these communities and try to drive both residential investment and business investment, it will also help the larger reason," said DVRPC Executive Director Barry Seymour. He said bringing more residents into communities with SEPTA access will take drivers off the highways and reduce congestion.

The planning commission will match contributions of \$2,500 from each community, and the William Penn Foundation has donated \$250,000 for the program's startup.

Under the program, the DVRPC has created the Web site classictowns.org to provide information about the region and each of the 10 listed communities. The commission will also run newspaper, and magazine ads and will assist the localities in their own outreach efforts.

"It gives us the ability to have another form of media to communicate externally," Lansdowne borough Manager Craig Totaro said.

"They were looking at downtowns that had some vitality already and were doing programming to make themselves attractive to residents," said Kay Sykora, a project manager for the Manayunk Development Corporation. "We've done a lot here."

Ms. Sykora mentioned the corporation's Main Street improvement project and its waterfront project. She said a groundbreaking for a new park on lower Venice Island this fall.

Nathan Benefield, director of policy research at the Harrisburg-based Commonwealth Foundation, doubted however that government advertising would bolster local economies.

"I've never seen any evidence that government-financed advertising has been useful for economic development," he said. "It typically has to be left to the private sector to take the initiative."

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