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Warren Street offers possibilities for development

MAURY THOMPSON thompson@poststar.com Jan 25, 2017



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The former Native Textiles building is seen Tuesday on Warren Street in Glens Falls. Much of the more than century-old factory building has been vacant since Native Textiles shut down its local operation in 2005.

GLENS FALLS — South Street is a priority for the committee planning how to spend the city's \$10 million Downtown Revitalization Initiative grant.

But the committee also wants to revitalize Warren Street, said Edward Bartholomew, president of EDC Warren County and administrator of the grant.

The committee has recommended seeking funding for a real estate analysis of how to reuse the former Native Textiles clothing factory and the historic Glens Falls armory building, how to redevelop Fredella Avenue, and how to redevelop two vacant parcels along Warren Street.

Warren Street

Move your mouse pointer over the areas shaded in orange to view descriptions.

The street is sometimes called "Museum Row," because of The Hyde Collection art museum (161 Warren St.) and World Awareness Children's Museum (89 Warren St.).

Local officials and cultural leaders have long said redevelopment along the street would encourage more pedestrian traffic between The Hyde Collection, a major tourist attraction, and Glen Street, in the heart of downtown.

The study is not expected to be funded directly from the Downtown Revitalization Initiative grant, which is earmarked for projects that are ready to get started, Bartholomew said.

He said local officials have been speaking with the state Department of State about separate funding through the city's state-funded Brownfield Opportunity Area program, which focuses on redeveloping neighborhoods that at one time had environmental contamination.

"That concept has been discussed with the Department of State a couple of weeks ago," Bartholomew said.

Native Textiles

The Native Textiles building at 211 Warren St., which developer Geard Nudi owns, has been largely vacant since the company shut down its local operation in 2005.

The main 140,000-square-foot factory building is a little larger than the Target store at Aviation Mall. The property also includes a separate 50,000-square foot warehouse and parking lots with spaces for 80 vehicles.

"There, obviously, you're going to be thinking more of a future manufacturing use," Bartholomew said.

Herbert and Francis Bench founded a lace mill at the building in 1916.

Leon Birnbaum, owner of Native Laces, bought the building in 1942 and moved much of his operation from New Jersey to Glens Falls.

Armory

The Glens Falls armory building, constructed in 1895, has been vacant since the local National Guard unit moved to a new site in Queensbury in 2008.

The building has architectural character, but officials have said it is difficult to reuse because of limited parking and the building's unusual interior layout.

Finch Paper bought the building through a state auction in 2010.

Over the years, there has been discussion of reusing the building for commercial offices, nonprofit organizations, new museums or, at one point, an extension of The Hyde Collection campus.

The Hyde Collection has ruled out using the building, Bartholomew said.

"We want to look at the cost of rehabilitating that building. It has not been used in a number of years, and certain things in there are going to need upgrades," Bartholomew said. "And then also look at potential concepts and what is the operating cost going to be for that building."

Fredella Avenue

Joseph "JJ" Fredella, a highway and bridge contractor, built the concrete block houses along Fredella Avenue, between Warren Street and Oakland Avenue, in 1912 to provide affordable housing for families that immigrated from Italy.

The houses were built with wide-open porches and grape arbors in the back to resemble architecture in Italy.

The city's Downtown Vision and Development Strategy in 2013 recommended redeveloping the street with new housing and perhaps a multistory apartment building in the city-owned parking lot at the bottom of the hill.

Vacant parcels

The study would also evaluate redevelopment opportunities for a vacant parcel, west of Oakland Avenue, where a former car dealership was demolished last year, and evaluate the feasibility of in-fill development at the pocket park between the Civic Center Plaza office buildings on Warren Street and the Burger King restaurant on Glen Street.

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