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Council targets development in western section of Media

By Susan L. Serbin, Times Correspondent

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MEDIA >> The borough has positioned itself for what may be game-changing revitalization for the western end of town.

Council approved an ordinance which creates two “gateway” overlay districts on Baltimore Avenue that will provide flexibility for development.

Citing Baltimore Avenue as the major thoroughfare through which most traffic enters and exits the borough, the appearance influences how the municipality is perceived.

“The west end and this gateway lag behind other parts of the borough and need attention,” said council President Brian Hall, indicating that perception could use and upgrade.

The ordinance amendment was precipitated by interest from two developers with residential concepts for property on either side of Baltimore Avenue. Gateway 1 on the north side, at the end of State Street, had potential for a cluster of townhouses; Gateway 2 on the south side, east of Brooke Street, drew interest for an apartment building.

The 32-page ordinance (available on the borough website www.mediaborough.com) has the intent of establishing standards in dimensions, design, signage and site improvements among other regulations. All prior uses under the TND (Traditional Neighborhood Development) district are retained.

Perhaps the most striking change is an increase of maximum building height from 55 feet to 65 feet. Baltimore Avenue residents Paul Shelton and Robert Berley expressed concerns about the height. Hall explained the ordinance expands the set back requirement, changing the dynamic of the extra 10 feet.

The planning commission, community development committee and consultant/planner Thomas Comitta have been working on the ordinance for several months. Councilman Paul Robinson called the result a matter of give and take. He felt the borough will get more than it has to concede.

Businessman Loic Barneau is at the ground floor of west end revitalization, creating a new microbrewery/restaurant next to the Gateway 1 parcel.

“This makes sense for the future of Media. State Street is so attractive and popular. Baltimore Pike, not so much. I’d encourage this ordinance and for you to make something beautiful happen,” said Barneau.

While interest has been expressed by developers, and concept discussed with officials, no plans have formally come before the borough. They are likely to be submitted and appear before the planning commission in the near future. Given the size and complexity under the new ordinance, the process will occur over months, giving interested parties ample time for comment.

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