

Activists pick up where redevelopment study left off

BY SONIA KANIGEL
Of Suburban News

WALDWICK – Not quite one year after popular opinion quashed a borough plan to improve one of Waldwick's historic neighborhoods, a group of residents and business owners have a plan of their own.

The Waldwick Community Alliance, an organization dedicated to restoring and preserving the historic nature of the district surrounding the borough's train station, made its initial presentation to the Borough Council on June 15.

Borough officials cancelled a proposed \$12,000 redevelopment study of the same neighborhood last July following protests from dozens of residents – several of whom said they feared the use of eminent domain and suggested that a residents' group take the initiative in upgrading the neighborhood instead.

"This puts us in the driver's seat," said Waldwick Community Alliance President Chuck Wanmaker, a lifelong borough resident. "The advantage is that the people now can be part of what's really going to go on and have a little control over it."

"It is our intention to upgrade, not redevelop, the area, and maintain the residential, commercial



and light industrial balance that was created as the original intent of this historic downtown community."

The group's plans include adopting and refurbishing the borough's historic train station building and upgrading the area around it with plantings, benches and old-fashioned lighting and streetscap-

ing. Concrete paver sidewalks would be installed along West Prospect Street and Hewson Avenue.

Color renderings by Waldwick artist Andrea Mistretta show ornate, vintage street lamps, flower gardens and banners indicating the historic nature of the district.

"I think generations to come

can derive so much from their own history," said Mistretta, who crafted the renderings from old photographs of the district, embellishing them with color and the various innovations proposed by the Alliance. "It's meant to stimulate ideas; nothing's in stone right now. But first someone needed to have a vision. Sometimes a picture is worth a thousand words."

Other Alliance suggestions include the institution of a walking

tour around the train station area and the construction of a memorial park commemorating Waldwick's military heroes or civic leaders.

"The birth of Waldwick is focused around the train station," Alliance Vice President Douglas Cowie said at last week's council meeting. "Much of Waldwick's history still exists in the downtown

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