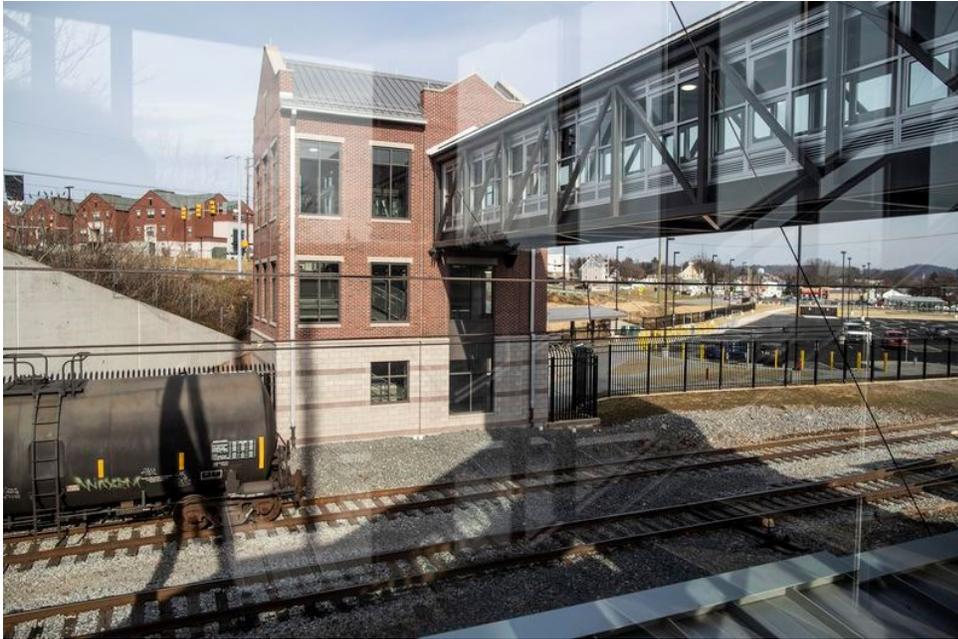


For Middletown, gone is the blighted warehouse, replaced by a new train station

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New train station in Middletown

Anyone who grew up in Middletown remembers the abandoned and dilapidated warehouse that stood like a blight just west of the Westport shopping center.

Now, not only is that eyesore gone, the borough is about to cut the ribbon on a shiny new train station built partly on the grounds of the old rusting behemoth.

For borough residents, the new Middletown Amtrak-service train station is a harbinger of not only improved infrastructure but better things to come.

“It’s right in the center of our downtown,” said borough manager Ken Klinepeter. “It’s going to open up options for people outside the area who need to get to HIA. It’s an ideal location. I’m hoping it will spur development in this area.”

After six years under construction, the new Middletown train station is complete and about to open for business. On Monday, Amtrak-service passengers will begin using the new station as local and state officials prepare to hold a ribbon-cutting ceremony on January 18.

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“Pennsylvanians deserve connected communities supporting their movement and economies,” Gov. Tom Wolf said. “We’re pleased to bring these significant transportation improvements to Middletown.”

The new station on West Emaus Street at West Main Street provides something the old station did not: ADA accessibility. It also provides improved multimodal connections.

“The department is committed to improved transportation options, and accessibility and multimodal connections are critical when we’re making investments,” said PennDOT Secretary Yassmin Gramian. “This collaboration with the community, federal, and transportation partners will serve the surrounding communities well into the future.”

The project — a PennDOT-led collaboration with Middletown Borough, Capital Area Transit, Harrisburg International Airport as well as Penn State Harrisburg — relocates the old station on Mill Street.

The new station features a new platform between the tracks off Ann Street, along with elevators and stairs for access. The platform is covered; it has no restrooms or commercial space.

PennDOT acquired several acres of land at the site of the former warehouse which has been transformed into a new and larger parking lot.

“I’m excited about it,” Klinepeter said. “The new station is not only in a better location than the current station, it is now situated along Main Street for better access and it has a larger parking lot than the old station.”

The station is located directly across from Penn State Harrisburg.

Borough officials say they are excited about the possibility of the new station enhancing exposure to some of the gems the community has to offer, such as the Alfred’s Victorian restaurant and Kuppy’s Diner.

“It’s a huge asset for Middletown,” said borough council president Ian Reddinger. “You have Penn State, HIA and the train station. It’s an up-and-coming community. We definitely have hurdles but it’s definitely up and coming. You are a Middletown resident and you want to walk to the station? Boom. You can. We are excited.”

Reddinger, who grew up in the borough, remembers the eyesore that was the old warehouse at the new location.

“For as long as I can remember I used to pass that old warehouse,” he said. “It was desolate and run down. I can’t remember it ever being used. When it came down a few years ago, it was such a relief. It was a blighted building. It’s gone. It has taken some time but all things take time.”

The new station continues the region’s link along the Keystone Corridor, and officials said, creates an anchor for potential development.

“Amtrak was proud to support this project through an in-kind contribution of track work at the station valued at approximately \$8 million,” said Amtrak spokesman Tom Moritz.

The \$49.5 million in right of way, design, and construction work at the station included \$25.6 million from the Federal Transit Administration, \$15.9 million from PennDOT, and \$8 million in in-kind work by Amtrak to shift track to accommodate the new station alignment.

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Klinepeter said the project was executed without a hitch or any stumbling financial hurdles.

“I am surprised and pleased that everything went so well,” he said. “It’s one of the smoothest projects in my 40 years of working for the borough.”

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