



## The Patriot-News

### HARRISBURG

#### 2 economic groups back midtown courthouse

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##### From staff reports

Two groups that work for the betterment of the capital region have joined the growing chorus of voices arguing a planned \$100 million federal courthouse belongs at Sixth and Reily streets in Harrisburg rather than downtown.

The Harrisburg Regional Chamber and Capitol Region Economic Development Corp. have endorsed the site, Mayor Stephen R. Reed said in a news release yesterday.

Their action comes on the heels of a vote this week that put the City Council behind the Sixth and Reily location.

Reed said the full CREDC board voted to endorse the site Aug. 23, paving the way for the chamber's executive committee decision.

As part of their decision, CREDC and the chamber agreed to reach out to the U.S. General Services Administration, which is overseeing the project, and to the federal legislative delegation.

Republican U.S. Sen. Arlen Specter and U.S. Rep. Tim Holden, D-Schuylkill County, along with aides to Democratic U.S. Sen. Bob Casey Jr., met with GSA officials last month in hopes of steering them away from downtown Harrisburg.

The GSA plans to build the courthouse either at the southeast corner of North Second and Locust streets or the southwest corner of North Third and Pine streets.

"CREDC's mission is to be a catalyst for economic growth," said Suzanne Yenchko, CREDC's 2007 chair. "After the board had the opportunity to understand all the sites, as well as the economic development potential along both the Sixth and Seventh street corridors, as well as the positive impact on the city's tax base, it makes sense from multiple perspectives to recommend this site."

Reed has said either of the GSA locations would cost the city and school district \$600,000 in annual tax losses resulting from the loss of tax-paying properties on the sites. Putting the courthouse at Sixth and Reily would provide an economic catalyst for a blighted area, he said.

It also would build upon the changes taking place at Third and Reily streets, where Harrisburg Area Community College's new campus is the first piece in a redevelopment plan expected to bring shops and student housing to the area.

David Black, president and CEO of the Harrisburg Regional Chamber and CREDC, said Sixth and Reily "represents part of the renewal of the midtown area of the city and the site is along the Sixth and Seventh street corridors, which are prime for development and are also home to some initial private sector investment."

Among those trying to force the GSA's hand are the Right Site Harrisburg coalition, a group formed by Capitol Area Neighbors, Midtown Action Council, Friends of Midtown and Historic Harrisburg Association. The organization is collecting signatures on petitions to present to the federal agency. The petition is also sponsored by the Greater Harrisburg Branch of the NAACP and Coalition of Clergy Urban Task Force.

##### ON THE WEB

Right Site Harrisburg has a petition asking the federal government to consider other sites for a courthouse: <http://rightsite.capitolareaneighbors.com>.

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