Shirt factory project underway

On Tuesday, we noted the Hanover Square gateway project across from the Hanover Street bridge is completed, including 117 townhouses and two mixed-use buildings.

Now $2 million in renovations have begun at the 19th century Meyerhoff shirt factory at Charlotte and Cherry streets, which was last used in the 1990s as a Mrs. Smith’s Pie Co. laboratory.

Rockwell Development Group, which built Hanover Square, also owns the former shirt factory.

It took Rockwell nearly two years to win approval to convert the factory into 27 condominiums and market rate apartments. The developer is also building two townhouses on Cherry Street next to the shirt factory.

According to its website, Media-based Rockwell has numerous high end residential developments in a three-state area, including Wayne, Ardmore, Bryn Mawr, and Drexel Hill.

The factory should be a showcase project. With big windows, high ceilings, and spectacular views of the Schuylkill River, the condominiums and apartments should attract discerning residents.

But the borough forced Rockwell to jump through lots of hoops before project approval. Because of Pottstown’s inflexible parking requirements, Rockwell had to go before the Pottstown Zoning Hearing Board twice — it was turned down the first time — to scrounge up enough parking to meet muster. The developer had to go through the subdivision process to acquire land from an adjacent homeowners’ association for additional parking.

The shirt factory is listed on the National Register of Historic Places, and Rockwell will receive federal tax credits for preserving the historical integrity of the building.

Rockwell has also applied for the borough’s LERTA program, which provides a temporary tax break for developers who improve the value of their properties.

Rockwell president Greg Lingo said the work will be complete this winter.

We are fortunate Rockwell is making good use of this superb asset.

Commentary by Thomas Hylton

RESTORATION PROJECT UNDERWAY — The owner of the Hanover Square townhouse project is converting the long-vacant Meyerhoff shirt factory at Charlotte and Cherry streets into 27 market rate condominiums/apartments. Two townhouses are also being constructed on Cherry Street next to the shirt factory building.