

HIGHTSTOWN: This short walk has a long view

Project to look at pedestrian-friendliness

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By Sean Ruppert, Staff Writer

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HIGHTSTOWN — Just how pedestrian-friendly is the borough?

The Downtown Hightstown Organization hopes to find an answer to that question later this month. The group, in conjunction with the West Windsor Bicycle and Pedestrian Alliance, will be performing a "walkability assessment" on almost all of Hightstown's intersections and crosswalks May 28.

The goal is to grade each one on how friendly it is to walkers and use that information to create an interactive map on the Internet that will assist pedestrians in finding safe routes around town.

Suggestions also will be made to the local government on how to improve the town for walkers, according to Downtown Hightstown Director Ryan Rosenberg.

"It's a small town, only about a square mile, and just about everyone should be able to walk to the downtown area and back," Mr. Rosenberg said Tuesday. "However, right now, there are definitely some trouble spots that could impede some people."

Mr. Rosenberg said the group is seeking volunteers to conduct the assessments. The project is being funded with a \$1,200 grant from The McGraw-Hill Companies as part of its annual Global Volunteer Day. He added some employees at the company's East Windsor facility will be among those performing the assessments.

Mr. Rosenberg said each intersection will be evaluated by standards set by the Americans with Disabilities Act. The volunteers will check for the presence of things such as crosswalks, signals, curb cuts and proper grading, he said.

"For most young people, Hightstown is pretty easy to walk around in. But you always have to think about mothers with baby carriages, handicapped people or the elderly," said Mr. Rosenberg, a former borough councilman. "There are definitely some tripping hazards, missing sidewalks out there. We just want to make sure that with the size of Hightstown, that it is walkable."

Mr. Rosenberg said the WWBPA approached Downtown Hightstown with the idea. The group has helped perform similar assessments in other area towns, including Plainsboro.

Those who wish to volunteer can do so by e-mailing the WWBPA at wwbikeped@gmail.com. Those who participate must go through one of two training sessions to be held May 8 and May 23.

For more information, visit www.downtownhightstown.org.

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