

## Residents get a glimpse of Warfield's past

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Thursday, March 22, 2007

### Spring walk also provides a look toward its future

Sykesville Mayor Jonathan Herman sees the Warfield Complex as an extension of town, a vision he shared with residents who attended one of the town's annual spring walks on Sunday.

"We don't want this to be a static business center," Herman said of the complex.

The tour was part of the Gate House Museum's annual spring history walk and the first time the Warfield Complex was featured on the museum's history walk.



Bill Ryan/The Gazette

Kari Greenwalt, director of the Gate House Museum, shows a photograph of Susanna Warfield's house, which was later turned into Warfield College for Boys, in front of its ruins, during Sunday's annual spring history walk along the east side of the Patapsco River. The house was built in the early 1800s.

Each spring, historians lead a group of residents on two tours to learn about Sykesville history. This year, residents had their choice of learning about the architecture and features of Warfield's buildings or the Elba Furnace Complex and the ruins of Susanna Warfield's mansion.

In the town's master plan for the redevelopment of the 138-acre property, Herman said he wants to restore Warfield as a place of community and not just commerce.

Herman and Town Councilman Mark Rychwalski led a group of nearly 40 people on a tour Sunday of the Warfield grounds. The complex was once part of Springfield Hospital, and includes nearly a dozen historic, brick buildings that served as dormitories for female patients. The buildings have been empty and abandoned for more than 20 years, after Springfield Hospital downsized from 4,000 patients to 400, Rychwalski said.

The Town of Sykesville is working to renovate the buildings and attract retail and commercial tenants.

According to Herman, the town will begin advertising this summer to attract more businesses. The Carroll County Dance Center and Nexion Health Management so far are the only tenants in the

complex.

Bundled up against the cold wind with gloves, hats and scarves, walkers followed Herman and Rychwalski through the newly constructed pedestrian tunnel under Md. Route 32 to the core of historic buildings at Warfield.

The brick buildings were constructed in the early 1900s in the colonial revival style with slate roofs, copper gutters and cupolas to air condition the buildings and provide fresh air to the patients, Rychwalski said.

Rychwalski stood outside a series of interconnected “service” buildings and explained to the group that a network of pipes lying underneath the canopied breezeways heat the connecting buildings.

Herman, who specializes in renovating historic buildings, noted that the placement of some of the buildings’ bricks is evidence of their sturdy construction.

With a stop outside of each building, Herman and Rychwalski shared details about the intertwined history of Springfield Hospital and Sykesville and the town’s plans for the complex.

On the second floor of the grand auditorium and dining hall building, the Sykesville community was once permitted to use the auditorium for graduations and community functions during the 1950s and 1960s, Rychwalski said. The community was also invited to watch movies in the auditorium, he said.

Inside the second-floor auditorium, residents had the opportunity to view the empty, white stage and peer into the covered, antique movie reels. On the first floor, yellow and pink paint peeled from the walls and an old serving buffet and faded, plastic trash can were all that remained of the building’s former use.

According to Herman, master plans for the development of the Warfield Complex include restoring the dining hall/auditorium building to its original use as a food court and community space.

“We want to see this building remain as a community asset,” Herman said.

For Amy Landry of Eldersburg, the Town of Sykesville’s plans for redeveloping Warfield is a pleasing alternative to the commercial development she sees in Eldersburg.

“It’s nice to see them doing something like this than what they’re doing in Eldersburg,” Landry said.

Landry said she attends Sykesville’s annual spring history walk each year. Dee Moore of Westminster and Eldersburg resident Judi Damask said they joined the spring history walk at Warfield Complex because they were curious about the place. Damask said that she comes to the Warfield Complex every Friday to pick up her daughter, who is a student at the Carroll County Dance Center.

After listening to the history of Warfield and peering into the abandoned and silent dormitories, both women felt the place had an eerie feeling, they said. However, Damask and Moore said they were optimistic about Warfield’s future as a commercial and community center for Sykesville.