

Trenton Gay & Lesbian Civic Association Development Objectives

The Trenton Gay & Lesbian Civic Association (“TGLCA”) views the most pressing need for the benefit of the LGBT community of this city is the establishment of a visible and accessible community center patterned on the highly successful Gay & Lesbian Community center in New York City, though on an appropriately smaller scale. For several years the TGLCA has been maintaining an office at its own expense on South Broad Street. The organization has successfully managed the cost and operational requirements but has come to the conclusion that the space is wholly inadequate for the community’s needs. A building the size of a typical town house would permit a great range of valuable programs and activities, would serve as an umbrella for related organizations and would be a visible presence showing the vibrancy of the LGBT community in this city. This would benefit the city in many ways beyond its service to our element of the larger community. It would attract and impress favorably the sort of educated, culturally aware potential residents that the city needs so badly – people who will invest in a city that has invested in them and in people they respect.

Such a center will also be of great benefit to the gay and lesbian members of this city’s African American and Hispanic communities. It is, sadly, an inescapable fact that homophobia is extensive in those parts of our population, leaving gays and lesbians who are African American or Hispanic too often isolated, invisible and out of touch with programs, opportunities and information that could enrich their lives – or even, in areas of health information, save those lives.

This city has a substantial and largely invisible gay and lesbian youth population, as any school official will testify. These young people are too often at risk with no one they trust to go to for information or counseling and with little safe outlet for social life. The sort of center we propose could be of immeasurable value to such young people.

Such a center as we propose, being located ideally in the downtown area of the Warren street/ State Street neighborhood, would also be of incalculable value in bringing legitimate evening life back to our downtown. A schedule of meetings and social events typical of such centers would be a great help in reclaiming our night time streets and in bringing people into Trenton from outside the city.

The establishment of such a center is a project not to be lightly or quickly undertaken. A careful assessment of needs and resources would be the first step. It will be necessary to determine what space is available, what renovations will be required and how such space can be effectively managed. To this end, it will be necessary to work closely with the city administration. We will need to review and explore the various practical ways the city can help to foster such a project. The first step then would be the appointment of a specific city employee or official to act as consultant and liaison. With such a person, we would expect to be able to explore available spaces – whether city owned or otherwise, grant and funding possibilities, staffing issues and other relevant matters. The liaison would need to be someone familiar with city space and development matters, community development block grants, resources to be made available by developers for community improvement. We feel such a liaison would be of crucial importance in creating a plan of manageable and viable scope.

Our immediate goal will be the creation of a plan that will include space and renovations, funding sources, center management and organization and proposed services. Our request then is that the city council endorse the exploration of the viability of such a center by requesting the mayor’s office to appoint an appropriate person to be our liaison for all relevant research.