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## State Supports Housing Development at Former IUP Kittanning Site



Perkins Eastman Associate Mark O'Matz explained the design goals that are hoped to be incorporated into the architecture of the "Kittanning Cottages" to a group of Kittanning Citizens during a community meeting held February 2 at Kittanning's First Church of God.

The Pennsylvania Housing Financing Agency awarded \$1.3 million in PennHOMES funding and \$505,000 in annual tax credits and incentives, yesterday, for a project to convert the former Indiana University of Pennsylvania (IUP) campus in downtown Kittanning into independent living senior citizens housing units, according to Senator Don White (R-41) and Representative Jeff Pyle (R-60).

Trek Development Group is proposing to build Kittanning Cottages, a 19-building facility containing 24 units of senior citizen housing and a community building at the site vacated when IUP moved its

Armstrong County Campus to Northpointe.

In October 2007, Senator White presented a \$1.5 million grant to Armstrong County for downtown revitalization projects in Kittanning Borough with the intended focus being the former IUP campus property on North McKean Street.

“This award by the PHFA is great news for Kittanning Borough and the greater Armstrong County community,” said Senator White, a strong proponent of the project. “This is a fantastic use of the former IUP site. The Kittanning Cottages project takes advantage of the great location of the site while fulfilling a growing need in the community for safe and accessible housing units for senior citizens.”

“The senior citizen population of Armstrong County is continuing to grow,” said Representative Pyle. “This project will help address our older citizens housing needs, especially those who can no longer afford to maintain a home or rent in the private market. Senior citizens are currently on waiting lists for vacancies of designated units similar to Kittanning Cottages.”

William J. Gatti, Jr., Trek Development Group president, said his company’s experience with an existing facility in Armstrong County led to the decision to redevelop the IUP site.

“We have had such great demand at Valley View we decided to venture down the hill into downtown Kittanning and try to do something special on this very prominent site,” Gatti said.

The project has the backing of the Armstrong County Board of Commissioners and Kittanning Borough Council, both of which sent letters urging Senator White to support the proposal.

“Public workshops were conducted in an attempt to solicit re-use ideas from the local residents. Senior housing was most often cited because it would blend in with the neighborhood and fill the need of a growing demographic,” The Armstrong County Commissioners said in their letter to Senator White. “The Armstrong County Housing Needs Analysis, completed in 2008, specifically identifies Kittanning as one of two areas of Armstrong County with the greatest need for privately-owned subsidized elderly rental housing.”

Dr. Gerald R. Shuster, Kittanning Borough Council president, said the Kittanning Cottages project is critical to the community’s overall development plan.

“Since the county/borough has received substantial funding through your assistance to embark on a much needed economic development program, the Kittanning Cottages project is more than just the first step in the plan, it is the catalyst for the rest of the planned program,” Shuster wrote. “Moreover, the Borough’s ability to take advantage of the funding is based on an overall economic plan beginning with Kittanning Cottages.”

Senator White agreed that the remaining funding from the \$1.5 Million grant (approximately \$1 million) awarded in late 2007 will help the borough move forward on additional revitalization efforts.

“We all recognize the importance of revitalizing the former IUP property as it is truly at the heart of Kittanning Borough’s residential neighborhood. It is essential we return this property to an active site as soon as possible,” Senator White said. “Now it is up to the community leaders of Armstrong County and Kittanning Borough to quickly achieve consensus on what should be the next redevelopment opportunity. Time is of the essence, and we must move aggressively to continue the effort throughout the borough.”