

**MONTVALE**

**Organizations pitch development concepts for School No. 2**

BY LIANNA ALBRIZIO  
 Staff Writer

Two charitable organizations are seeking to help Montvale fulfill its Council on Affordable Housing (COAH) obligation by developing a low to moderate-income complex on the former School No. 2 property in the borough.

To satisfy its COAH obligation, the borough plans to build a 32-unit structure on Summit Avenue, as part of an agreement with the DePiero family, and another on the grounds of the vacant School No. 2 property, formerly the borough library, on East Grand Avenue. Mayor Roger Fyfe said he and Planning Board Chairman John DePinto had been trying to locate developers since he first took office in 2008, but was unsuccessful given the start of the recession.

Now, however, Fyfe said the county has resources that may fit the borough's needs to get the ball rolling on the project.

At the Oct. 29 council meeting, representatives from Bergen County Housing Authority and Bergen County United Way presented proposed concept plans to the governing body.

Tom Toronto, president of Bergen County United Way, proposed a structure for the site designed by Z+ Architects, which includes a two-floor, 12-unit senior housing structure with six units on each floor. Each one-bedroom unit, he said, would be about 600 square feet. The design also includes a vestibule with an elevator, a contemplation garden, a vehicular pick-up/drop-off area, and a four-unit group home, which would be reserved for individuals who are developmentally disabled, Toronto said. He added the close proximity to the borough's downtown area make the location a "perfect site."

The project will be of no cost to the borough, Toronto said, adding

the organization would also provide a payment in lieu of taxation (PILOT) to cover the municipal portion of the tax bill, which, he said, is "customary" for these types of projects.

DePinto, who was also present that evening, said the proposal "conceptually works for the town." Dick Voorhees, president of the borough's Senior Club, said he was "very pleased" with the concept, while Councilman Tim Lane said he applauded the idea.

However, a few residents present at the meeting, who live in the vicinity of the proposed development site, said they were concerned about child safety. Toronto told residents he has not experienced an incident where an affordable housing project resulted in added police or ambulance calls, adding plans for community integration include outreach to Girl and Boy Scout troops for community service.

Vandervalk, the director of development at Bergen County Housing Authority and a former state assemblywoman and Montvale councilwoman, proposed a concept plan called "The Residences at Grand Village" prepared by DMR Architects of Hasbrouck Heights. Her concept calls for two Victorian-style buildings, both containing seven, one-bedroom units measuring approximately 630 to 750 square feet in size.

According to the proposed floor plan, the east building would have a storage and laundry room. Plans for the outside of the facility - its target tenant a special needs population - include placing a pavilion and Victorian garden, open to the public, on the grounds of what is currently a ball field that is no longer utilized by organized sports teams.

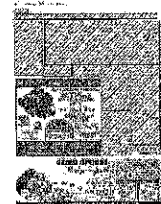
Vandervalk told the council the housing authority, which gets funding for development projects via tax credit funds, has the opportunity to get funding for the project. However, she informed the

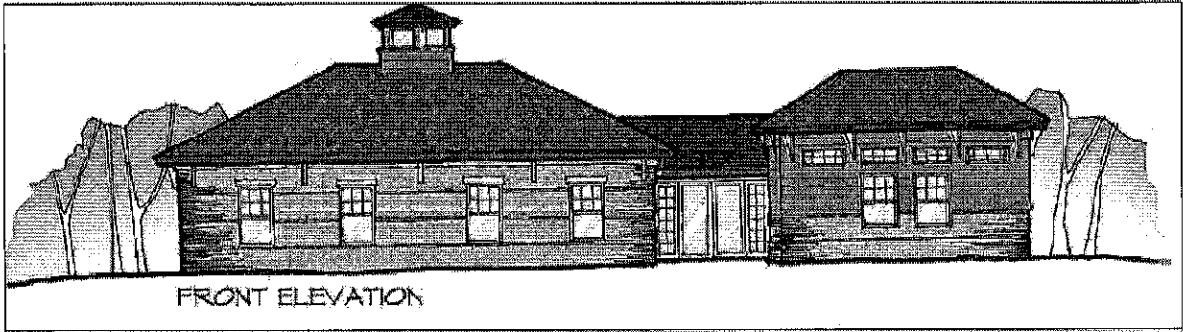
council they need to apply for it by February. The council, she added, would also have to decide on either a long-term lease agreement or to turn the property over to the housing authority. While residents also posed safety concerns on this proposed development idea, Vandervalk said there would be a supervisor on the premises.

In June, the council purchased School No. 2 from the Board of Education for \$834,000. Education officials, who plan, in part, to reconfigure the main office at Fieldstone Middle School with the funds, agreed to reimburse the governing body \$130,000 for demolition costs and asbestos abatement, among other things.

Officials did not say when they would select a developer. The next council meeting is scheduled for Nov. 12 at 7:30 p.m.

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FRONT ELEVATION

PHOTO COURTESY OF TOM TORONTO

Tom Toronto, of Bergen County United Way, presented this concept prepared by Z+ Architects for the School No. 2 property on East Grand Avenue at the Oct. 29 council meeting. The concept calls for a 12, one-bedroom low- to moderate-income housing units for senior citizens and a group home consisting of four units for individuals with developmental disabilities.

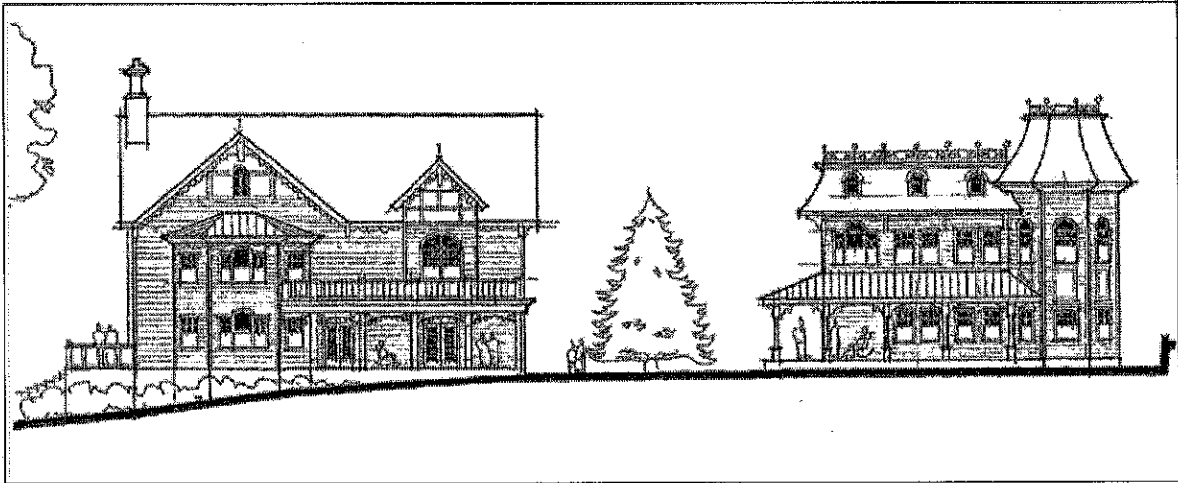


PHOTO COURTESY OF CHARLOTTE VANDERVALK

Charlotte Vandervalk, of the Bergen County Housing Authority, presented a concept prepared by DMR Architects for the School No. 2 property on East Grand Avenue at the Oct. 29 council meeting. The concept calls for two Victorian-style buildings each with seven one-bedroom low- to moderate-income housing units for individuals with special needs.