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Residents' Memories Serve as Muse For New Mural

By Moriah Balingit

When Dorothy Lee was growing up in Braddock, the town had three theaters and the slogan for the local newspaper of the bustling industrial center was, "What Braddock makes, the world takes."

Councilwoman Tina Doose remembers the dress shops, children's clothing stores and grocers that used to dot Braddock Avenue, a street that is now a skeleton of its former business district, lined with empty lots, vacant structures and only a handful of stores.

The two women shared their memories Tuesday evening as a part of brainstorming process for a 10-panel art installation that will go on the façade of the new senior citizen housing development under construction on Braddock Avenue.

The mural is meant to both honor Braddock's past and provide hope for its future by "portraying positive life experiences of Braddock," said Daniel Rothschild, the project's architect.

"We don't have the funding to rebuild those three theaters," he said. "But we can do an artist rendering of it ... so that memory lives on forever."

Mr. Rothschild drew on architectural elements from buildings all over Braddock when designing the apartment complex. He drew inspiration from the corner tower and sidewalk mosaic of the Behr Building across the street from the complex. Various



panels on the apartment building's exterior will match the color of the neighboring hospital and the dimensions of local houses.

It is all part of his effort to make the building "fit in" to Braddock.

The art installation that will go on the side of the building facing Braddock Avenue represents another effort to reach out to the community for inspiration.

Those attending the Tuesday meeting ranged from middle-aged to octogenarians, and they smiled as they shared their memories of the Braddock of the past.

Jim Kidd remembered the diversity of the community where he grew up. Because of the steel mill, the tiny town was home to a number of ethnic enclaves and had Polish and Italian social clubs.

Mary Krug recalled Braddock's night life.

"Braddock was really hoppin',"

she said. "All the stores were open, so were the bars. If you didn't like one bar, you moved onto the next."

Machita Hakim, who grew up in Braddock and now lives in Swissvale, said she thought the meeting went well and hoped that the project would help unite the community on other issues.

"Communication is so important in any community," she said. "Maybe [the process] will help pull the community together to work towards other goals."



Panel Artist, Bob Qualters