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Overlook Is Ready for New Tenants 24 apartments open on site of UPMC Braddock

By Len Barcousky



Nellie Short was happy to show a visitor her new two-bedroom apartment in The Overlook development in Braddock.

“The doctor told me not to be walking up so many steps,” she said. Unlike the layout at her old apartment in East Pittsburgh, her front door now is level with the street. She has a first-floor powder room, which reduces the number of trips upstairs.

“My church is just down the street,” she said, pointing in the direction of Unity Baptist Church. The view from her balcony looks out over the Monongahela River and downtown Braddock.

Mrs. Short, 77, and her grandson, Asheed Page-Jones, 15, were among the first tenants to occupy

24 rental units built on the site of UPMC Braddock. The hospital closed in January 2010 and was demolished later that year.

The apartments were dedicated Friday in an outdoor ceremony that drew local, state and federal officials and project supporters from business and social service organizations. More than 60 people attended the event and then toured several of the units.

Braddock council members praised the intergovernmental cooperation that made the project possible.

“This is a very good beginning,” Councilman George Gilmore said.

“And the commercial building will be icing on the cake,” Councilwoman Deborah Brown

said, referring to plans for office and retail space that will include an urgent-care center. That facility will offer some of the medical services that had been available at UPMC Braddock.

UPMC’s decision to close Braddock’s hospital angered many residents, who accused the giant medical-service provider of losing sight of its charitable mission.

Filmmaker Tony Buba was among those who has been critical of UPMC, but he had some kind words for the apartment project.

“It’s good to have new housing here, although it can’t compensate for the loss of the hospital,” he said.

TREK Development Group partnered with architects at Rothschild Doyno Collaborative

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and Mistick Construction to build the project. The Redevelopment Authority of Allegheny County, working with the borough and Braddock Hospital Working Group, selected TREK.

Architect Mike Gwin said the Rothschild Doyno team worked with local residents and municipal officials on a design that links the apartments to the rest of the neighborhood and provides easy access to nearby businesses on Braddock Avenue.

Plans call for an adjoining community park in addition to the apartments, commercial building

and single-family homes.

Braddock resident Pat Morgan said she was pleased with the results so far.

"I am glad to see the green space," she said.

The new park also will add to the appeal of the neighborhood, she predicted.

"Creating beauty helps with community morale," she said.

About 300 individuals and families applied to live in the 24-unit subsidized apartment complex, Laura Zinski said. She is CEO of the Mon Valley Initiative, a not-for-profit community and economic

development group.

Michael Pindell, senior vice president of Huntington Bank, called The Overlook an example of the very best in community revitalization.

"It will draw people back to the neighborhood," he predicted.

The apartment project was funded primarily through the sale of low-income-housing tax credits to Huntington and Fifth Third banks. Buyers of tax credits make upfront payments that provide multi-year federal income tax breaks.