

Cost of Orchard Commons dwelling may be defrayed

by John Koster

The housing to be constructed on the Orchard Commons property in Allendale may be paid for partially, or almost entirely, by the New Jersey Housing and Finance Authority through the cooperation of Bergen County United Way and the work of Mayor Vince Barra and Councilman Robert Schoepflin.

Mayor Barra said that they had arranged to have Bergen County United Way handle the application for funding that could tentatively cover the costs of some of the land purchase and all of the engineering work and construction of the special needs housing – for senior citizens or those with disabilities -- that is a stipulated part of the Orchard Commons project.

Mayor Barra indicated that the state agency appeared favorably inclined to subsidize the project, and that having Bergen County United Way handle the paperwork with Allendale's advice and input was an important accomplishment.

"The process is a rather involved one," Mayor Barra said. "It's a long process and a very detailed one."

The special needs housing at the site, approved by the Council On Affordable Housing, would probably consist of eight to 10 bedrooms, in two-bedroom units, and most likely in a single dwelling on one quadrant of the property near the A&P mall. The remainder of the 3.4-acre property would be a landscaped passive park, with shrubbery, trees, walks, and benches, and possibly a fountain or pond. The park will be located beside Franklin Turnpike.

The site had been targeted for 24 condominiums in eight units until a last-minute deal was worked out between landowner Ramon Alvarez and the Allendale Borough Council to purchase the land at a reasonable price in installments.

Councilman Jim Strauch launched a fundraising campaign and the Passaic River Valley Coalition donated funds to save the land from cluster housing.

Pledges from New Jersey Green Acres, Bergen County Open Space, and voluntary contributions stimulated by Strauch and maintained by Barra, Schoepflin, and Councilwoman Elizabeth White with the support of the council as a whole have so far enabled Allendale to stay on Barra's schedule. The mayor said he believed that the land could be purchase and the park developed with no impact on local taxpayers.

