

# Project to convert warehouse to housing advances into funding application stage

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The former Brodart warehouse on Memorial Avenue at Oliver Street may be razed next spring and made into a pad-ready site for building a residential complex.

The project could consist of a 40-unit, three-story apartment building near Memorial Avenue and Oliver Street, 32 townhouses and two single-family houses to be built by Greater Lycoming Habitat for Humanity. Hope is the city and Lycoming County officials can obtain the funding in state grants to begin the project by spring, said John Grado, city engineer and director of community and economic development.

Project partners are the Williamsport Redevelopment Authority, Brodart, Greater Lycoming Habitat for Humanity, P&L Investments LLC and the county.

Under terms of the agreement, the authority owns the 3.4-acre site.

Council recently granted permission for the authority to submit a \$975,000 competitive industrial sites reuse program grant application to the state Department of Community and Economic Development.

The money would be used to fund the demolition and cleanup.

Getting the site ready for the housing developments may take up to six months, Grado said. The site also needs clearance from the state Department of Environmental Protection.

Another part of the equation is to get the site rezoned from light manufacturing to residential-urban through zoning and City Council.

To receive the grant, the city must match it by \$325,000, Grado said. It plans to do that through impact fee money from Marcellus Shale gas drilling operations, through private contributions from developers of the site and by use of Community Development Block Grant funds.

A part of the project is revitalizing surrounding blocks along Memorial Avenue between Beeber and Berger streets, with a separate grant application by the county seeking money from Marcellus Shale impact fees.

Councilman Randall J. Allison said he views the proposal, including one at Grove Street for senior housing, to have benefits beyond providing places to live.

"These are people who will shop, eat and pay bills adding to the taxbase," he said.

Officials are excited about the opportunities and will present what they consider a model of industrial reuse and use of Marcellus Shale impact fees at a Brownfields conference at Monroeville, outside Pittsburgh held next week.

During the conference, under the category called "Extreme Makeover," a play on words from the popular television show, Grado and William Kelly, deputy director of the county Department of Planning and Community Development, are expected to present the project benefits.

Brownfields are sites that once were used for industrial purposes that are converted into new uses, such as housing in this case.