

State OKs Piscataway Affordable-Home Plan

Thursday, August 13, 2009
Jeff Grant
Courier News

PISCATAWAY - The state has given the township a boost to its efforts to provide low- and moderate-income housing with an endorsement of the township's plans to date.

The granting of "substantive certification" by the state's Council on Affordable Housing reflects a belief by officials in Trenton that the township is pursuing a "realistic" plan, according to an announcement Wednesday by the Department of Community Affairs.

"Each month, we are seeing more and more municipalities receive their certification," acting DCA Commissioner and COAH Board Chairman Charles A. Richman said in a news release. Other municipalities granted certification include: East Brunswick, Delaware Township in Hunterdon County, Montclair and Orange in Essex County, Roxbury in Morris County and South Hackensack in Bergen County.

Receiving certification also protects a municipality from lawsuits by developers who claim a town is blocking their projects by claiming those projects fail to satisfy affordable-housing mandates. But many local officials believe these so-called "builder's remedy suits" are simply a ploy that forces construction of unneeded housing. "Builder's remedy suits" can be filed against municipalities not under COAH's jurisdiction and can result in legal costs for towns as well as housing being built in a manner inconsistent with the town's overall goals, according to DCA spokesman Chris Donnelly.

"Substantive certification from COAH protects a municipality from that for a period of 10 years after submittal of the plan to COAH (which for most municipalities would be 2018)," Donnelly said.

Neither Piscataway Mayor Brian Wahler nor Administrator Lyn Evers could be reached for comment about the COAH announcement, and spokeswoman Anne Gordon said she hadn't seen the decision and could not comment.

###