

Saving Greystone's storied past

Group campaigns to rescue Kirkbride Building from the wrecker's ball

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PARSIPPANY — A new group interested in preserving the main building at the former Greystone Park Psychiatric Hospital said that state funds from the \$400 million open space referendum passed in November should be used to save the historic structure.

Preserve Greystone, based in Morris Plains, is dedicated to protecting the open space and historic buildings on the former Greystone property, which are owned by the state.

The group is particularly interested in the preservation of the main building, the 670,000-square-foot Kirkbride Building, and the surrounding unused land.

"The recent passing of

this ballot question reinforces New Jersey's commitment to preserving the state's historic sites, open space and farmland," said Denville Mayor Ted Husa, a member of the group. "Preserve Greystone is intent on protecting the Kirkbride Building and working with public officials and professional experts to promote sustainable uses. The group is focused on developing new uses for the building instead of demolition of a storied piece of the state's history."

The state opened a new 450-bed hospital on the western portion of the 671-acre site last year.

In 2002, Morris County purchased 306 acres of the site, which it has renamed Central Park of Morris County. The county has developed several athletic and recreation facilities on the land and is assembling a complex for nonprofit agencies in existing buildings. By law, the land must be used for recreation or human services uses.

The Kirkbride building is included in the remain-

ing state-owned 130 acres of the old hospital site. The state Treasury Department has declared the land surplus and has posted it. Morris County has expressed interest in gaining control of some of the smaller parcels at the Morris Plains side of the complex, but has shown no interest in the Kirkbride building.

Estimates to renovate the old hospital building have ranged from \$25 to \$40 million.

Preserve Greystone is made up of preservationists, historians, environmentalists and concerned citizens. To ensure the survival of the Kirkbride Building, the organization has applied for 501(c)3 status and is seeking members and funding to continue this growing effort.

This year members have blanketed local communities to generate awareness and to gain public support. A petition campaign has netted an estimated 800 signatures from local citizens.

In addition, in December 2008, the nonprofit organiz-

ation sent members and private citizens to Trenton to testify and present the New Jersey State House Commission with an estimated 385 signatures.

"We canvassed neighborhoods to inform residents of the situation, specifically the possibility of residential or commercial development of what is now protected land," said Maureen Murray, a group member and a resident of Morris Plains. "They were outraged by the thought of the negative impact development would have on their quality of life."

As part of its community outreach and public awareness campaign, Preserve Greystone is displaying promotional materials including historical images at local venues including the Morris County Library.

For information on Preserve Greystone, e-mail info@preservegreystone.org, or visit www.preservegreystone.org.

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