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YorkCounts selects site for proposed IB charter school

York, October 5, 2009 – The YorkCounts committee working on establishing a new charter school in York has selected a site on North Street in the heart of the Northwest Triangle. The complex, known as the Smyser-Royer building, was once home to an iron foundry and warehouse. Starting in 2011, if the school districts approve the charter school application, the voices of schoolchildren and teachers will fill the spaces that once echoed with the sound of a heavy machinery and factory workers.

The YorkCounts Educational Opportunities Committee had been exploring locations around York for several months. But it was only in the last two weeks that committee co-chairs Dennis Baughman and Sue Krebs visited the Smyser-Royer site. The visit was suggested by Robert Kinsley, founder, chairman and chief executive officer of Kinsley Construction. The York company is a partner in the Northwest Triangle project, which will redevelop the neighborhood that roughly corresponds to the area bordered by North George Street, West Philadelphia Street and the Codorus Creek.

Kinsley offered to lease the building to the York Academy Regional Charter School after renovations are completed. The lease could be structured so that the charter school will only pay for the space it uses, so the school will be able to grow into the building over time. The school is expected to open in time for the 2011-2012 school year. The school could eventually require up to 40,000 square feet for classes in kindergarten through 12th grade.

“This building absolutely makes sense for us financially,” said Baughman, a former superintendent at two York County districts who has been guiding the charter school effort for two years. “At some of the buildings we looked at, we were going to have to pay for the improvements ourselves, and that could have cost \$1 million or more. We also love the look of the front of the building, and this is a great location.”

The school will be just across the street from about 140 new market-rate townhomes and condominiums that are planned for North Beaver Street. And it’s a short walk away from downtown anchors Central Market, YorkArts, the Strand-Capitol Performing Arts Center and Sovereign Bank Stadium.

“This use is a perfect use for this historic structure, which has been under restoration for the past year,” Kinsley said. “Since the Northwest Triangle Project is to be a mixed-use project encouraging home ownership and commercial uses, this will be an attractive amenity for families wishing to locate in the city.”

The original building dates back to 1860; other areas were added on over time. Most of the complex has been vacant for about three years. Re-Source York occupies some space on the first floor of the complex.

Once approved, the new school will offer an International Baccalaureate curriculum, a world-class academic program that emphasizes foreign languages, understanding of other cultures and collective problem solving, all interwoven into regular core subjects. It would be the only public K-12 IB school in Central Pennsylvania.

The Northwest Triangle is a mixed-use project featuring market-rate residential, commercial office space, retail, and recreational space, including the extension of the York County Rail Trail. For more information, visit www.revyork.com.

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YorkCounts is a community-based coalition working to assess, sustain and enhance York County's quality of life – building alliances, introducing partners, spotlighting issues and facilitating conversations on education, economic development, health and safety and diversity. Partners include Better York, the United Way of York County, WellSpan Health, York College of Pennsylvania, the York County Chamber of Commerce, the York County Commissioners, the York County Community Foundation and the York County Economic Development Corp. Learn more at yorkcounts.org.
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