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HARRISBURG

Mayor wants housing in college hub

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BY JOHN LUCIEW
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Harrisburg is looking for a private company to build as many as 350 units of student housing in the city's midtown neighborhood.

Envisioning the area as a home to hundreds of college students, Mayor Stephen R. Reed announced Monday that the city has requested proposals for developing the project on city-controlled land.

The city is seeking investors to plan, build, own and manage the off-campus housing for students enrolled in area colleges, including Harrisburg University of Science and Technology downtown and Harrisburg Area Community College, which just opened a midtown branch at Third and Reily streets.

Proposals are due March 24.

Reed said the city's redevelopment authority has assembled three acres to lease or sell to the selected developer.

The land consists of most of the northern side of the 400 block of Reily Street and most of North Sixth Street between Reily and Harris streets, city officials said.

The proposed site is within walking distance of downtown, Riverfront Park, a movie theater, restaurants, a farmers market, City Island, sports and health facilities, museums, art galleries, bookstores, thrift shops and a performing arts center.

"The city of Harrisburg is interested in creating a housing environment for students by offering quality living accommodations that are clean, attractive and student-oriented," Reed said.

He said the student housing would help complete the city's evolution as a regional center for higher education.

Among the highlights of that evolution, Harrisburg University is building a 16-story academic center for up to 1,600 students downtown, HACC opened its midtown center for up to 2,500 students this fall and Messiah College operates its Harrisburg Institute at Dewberry and Chestnut streets.

In keeping with midtown's turn-of-the-century row houses, Reed said the new structures would be no more than five stories and would include a masonry finish, either brick or stone.

To lure developers, Reed noted the city offers a 10-year graduated scale of tax abatement on property improvements. He also said the Harrisburg Redevelopment Authority could form a partnership with a developer to facilitate tax-exempt bond financing for the housing.

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TO LEARN MORE

Contact Harrisburg's Department of Building and Housing Development at 255-6480.

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