

VALLEY

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FRANKLIN COUNTY, PA.

Senior housing discussed

By JENNIFER FITCH

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While housing and lifestyle needs vary greatly by generation, a Penn State University associate professor says younger and older people not only can coexist peacefully, but can benefit from their differ-



Kaplan

ences.

That should be taken into consideration when building and adapting "active adult" communities, senior centers and long-term care facilities, Matthew Kaplan said.

"It's not just the environment. It's program design and policies," said Kaplan, who explores intergenerational studies.

Kaplan was part of a panel that addressed land planners in Adams County, Pa., last week regarding issues that affect senior citizens. Experts

believe communities in south-central Pennsylvania attract Maryland retirees because pensions and Social Security are not taxed in the commonwealth.



Niebler

tor Phil Tarquino said.

On Tuesday, the Chambersburg Planning and Zoning Commission will discuss the pending development of a 32-unit senior apartment building on West Washington Street. The project, planned for a portion of the Southgate Shopping Center, would be developed by Chambersburg Senior Housing LP and Interfaith Housing Alliance in partnership with Paran Management and Pirhl Developers of Ohio.

"There's a lot to suggest that we have people moving to this area for that very reason," Franklin County (Pa.) Planning Direc-

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A market study completed for that project found a need for senior housing with easy access to downtown amenities, Planning and Zoning Administrator Phil Wolgemuth said. A transportation plan was submitted for the project, he said.

Other options for active senior citizens in Chambersburg include Cottage Green, an eight-story building formerly known as United Towers, and apartments at Orchard Run. Wolgemuth said.

Steve Niebler, director of the Adams County Office for Aging, criticized Chambersburg and other south-central Pennsylvania communities for traditionally creating high-rise nursing homes and apartment complexes on the edge of town, amidst historic two-story houses and buildings. He guessed any visitor to town could identify those buildings.

"They're going to go, 'Oh, that's where the old

people live. There's the tower," Niebler said.

"I would object to that characterization," Wolgemuth said. "I think Chambersburg has a nice assortment for seniors. We have a little bit of everything."

In Washington Township in southern Franklin County, an "active adult" community is planned in what will be known as the Layman Ridge Condominiums. Those 18 duplexes and 43 town houses would be built near Wal-Mart in Rouzerville.

Niebler said he sees benefits and disadvantages to designated communities for people ages 55 and older.

"Is it good to wall off seniors? What happens when they're 75, 80?" Niebler asked, saying the communities often are planned in "the middle of nowhere" in townships that don't have access to amenities.

On the plus side, the communities provide social opportunities for people with similar interests, Niebler said.

The Washington Township project would be within walking distance

of restaurants, banks and retailers, but Franklin County does not have a commuter bus or taxi system.

"You find out really fast who your friends are when you need a ride somewhere every day," Niebler said.

One of Niebler's favorite options for seniors are what once were called "granny flats." Now known as accessory dwellings, the mobile homes or other temporary structures allow older family members to live somewhat independently and civilly, he said.

Those can be difficult to establish in dense boroughs, but many allow accessory dwellings if they meet property line setback requirements.

Kaplan praised the practices of other cultures, specifically highlighting an established program in Spain that matches students who need housing with seniors who need care assistance. He's a proponent of bringing generations together in a way that gives everyone a purpose in mutually beneficial activities.