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## **Gov. Wolf Highlights Economic Development Projects Revitalizing Easton**

**Easton, PA** – Governor Tom Wolf today visited the City of Easton to highlight millions of dollars in state investments in several economic development projects that are revitalizing formerly vacant and blighted properties.

“Like many communities across Pennsylvania, the City of Easton is working hard to transform unused spaces into thriving developments. Thanks to significant state investments, these projects create jobs, clean up environmental hazards and, once completed, will make the city an even better place to live, work, shop and enjoy,” Gov. Wolf said. “I’m pleased to visit the city to highlight some of the important economic development projects that are underway.”

The governor was joined by Easton Mayor Sal Panto and other public officials at the Mill at Easton, a former industrial site that has undergone significant redevelopment.

“Easton is honored to host our governor,” Panto said. “He has been an excellent partner providing grants for the revitalization of our city.”

The City of Easton was awarded a \$1 million Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED) Industrial Sites Reuse Program (ISRP) remediation grant and \$153,382 DCED ISRP assessment grant for remediation work at the 3.9-acre Black Diamond Silk Mill industrial site.

Remediation efforts included removal of an underground storage cistern, disposal of contaminated material, sampling, analysis, and reporting, asbestos contaminated material and lead-based paint surveys, demolition of nine buildings and removal and disposal of asbestos material.

The city is working with PIRHL Developers, LLC and their partners, Stewart Silk Mill Redevelopment Partners and Easton Area Neighborhood Center, on the nearly completed project, which includes a 55-unit affordable housing complex, complementary community center, and a playground. A second phase, which is being developed by Stewart Silk Mill

Redevelopment Partners Tim Harrison and the Robinson Family is being marketed for mixed-uses, including retail and medical offices/urgent care clinic. This second phased was awarded a \$2 million Redevelopment Assistance Capital Program (RACP) grant.

This project was also awarded \$13 million in Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency (PHFA) grants, including \$1 million in Pennsylvania Housing Affordability and Rehabilitation Enhancement Fund (PHARE) funding and federal low-income housing tax credits (LIHTCs) generating approximately \$12 million in equity, as well as \$25,000 from the Northampton County Affordable Housing Program. The site is within a DCED Keystone Opportunity Zone and the Local Economic Revitalization Tax Assistance program.

“PHFA provided funding for the Mill at Easton, which is taking a former industrial site and transforming it to provide much-needed workforce housing for the region,” said PHFA Executive Director and CEO Robin Wiessmann. “Projects like this one not only create quality, affordable housing for local residents, but the whole community benefits from the economic activity that started on the first day of construction and will continue throughout the life of this new development.”

“The Mill at Easton is the epitome of what can be done, when all stakeholders, state, city and the community come together to create meaningful change to a neighborhood and the residents who live here,” said Lara Schwager, senior vice president of development for PIRHL, who serves as the developer and general contractor. “What was once a blighted area with rundown industrial buildings and an older school now is transformed into a mixed income community and a brand-new school for the community to celebrate. PIRHL is proud to be a part of the revitalization of the South Side of Easton.”

“The redevelopment of the Black Diamond Silk Mill is critical for Southside Easton,” said state Senator Lisa Boscola. “Turning the old silk mill into a mixed-use development with the use of housing tax credits and RACP grant dollars helped make the challenging project possible. I was proud to support it.”

“The Mill at Easton is a significant economic development project for the Easton community that addresses the important need to provide affordable housing opportunities for residents at a time when the housing market has seen a significant increase in prices that make attainable housing extremely difficult to secure,” said state Representative Bob Freeman. “I am glad that I was able to assist the city of Easton in securing state funding for this worthwhile project and I appreciate Governor Wolf’s ongoing commitment to both the economic revitalization of our older communities and the need to foster affordable housing opportunities in our region.”

Several other economic development projects in the city are currently underway that have been awarded state funding:

**Former Eastern Iron & Metal Site, 1100 Bushkill Drive.** The city was awarded a \$981,000 ISRP grant and a \$100,000 Blight Remediation Program grant for demolition and environmental remediation of the former limestone quarry and scrapyards/metal recycling facility. Plans for the site include the creation of a link between the property and the main branch of the Karl Stirner Arts Trail via the rehabilitation or reconstruction of an existing railroad trestle bridge over the Bushkill Creek. In addition, the reuse includes the development of 150 residential units, 25,000 square feet of commercial space, a proposed environmental center and an outdoor facility to

host performances, classes, educational opportunities and enhanced accessibility to Bushkill Creek.

**Parking Garage, 185 S. Third St.** The city was awarded a \$2.25 million RACP grant for this project. The former vacant lot is being rehabilitated into a mixed-use development with 256 residential units, 20,000 square feet of retail and commercial space, a two-screen cinema and a 180-space podium parking garage to address a lack of parking in the city for visitors and residents. In addition, a pedestrian bridge will connect the residents and visitors with the Easton Transportation Center garage.

**Parking Garage, North Fourth St.** The city was awarded two \$1 million RACP grants. The site is being rehabilitated into a 505-space parking garage and a pedestrian plaza to address a lack of parking in the city.

**Commodore of Easton, Northampton Street and Larry Holmes Drive.** The city was awarded a \$3 million RACP grant and a \$500,000 Neighborhood Assistance Program Enterprise Zone Tax Credit. The former blighted building is being rehabilitated into a mixed-use facility, including apartments, office space, retail spaces and a restaurant.

**Heritage Riverview, 136-142 S. Third St.** The city was awarded a \$750,000 RACP grant for this now completed space that includes 61,000 square feet of office space at the gateway to the city's downtown area. The project included modernizing a building that was vacant for decades and is the largest bloc of Class A office space in the city. It was the first new office construction in decades.

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