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At the groundbreaking ceremony for new development at the former Fort Ritchie. (Credit: Kevin G. Gilbert / Staff Photographer)



The basketball court is part of the athletic and community building at the former Fort Ritchie. (Credit: Kevin G. Gilbert / Staff Photographer)



Randall M. Griffin, left, president and CEO of Corporate Office Properties Trust, U.S. Rep. Bill Shuster, R-Pa., 9th District, center, and U.S. Rep. Roscoe Bartlett, R-Md. 6th District, chat Monday before a ceremony for new development at the former Fort (Credit: Kevin G. Gilbert / Staff Photographer)

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Community center part of Fort Ritchie redevelopment

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CASCADE - Plans to refurbish the Fort Ritchie community center as part of the transformation of the former U.S. Army base were celebrated Monday.

Randall M. Griffin, president and CEO of the company redeveloping the base, promised that the revitalized community center will open by July 4, 2008.

The cost of the community center project, estimated at \$4.4 million, will be split by Griffin's company - Corporate Office Properties Trust of Columbia, Md. - and PenMar Development Corp., said Richard Rook, PenMar's executive director.

PenMar Development Corp. is the nonprofit organization the state created in 1997 to oversee the conversion of the base to other uses. The Army closed the base in 1998.

Corporate Office Properties Trust (COPT), plans to spend \$250 million turning the former base in Cascade into a mix of offices, homes and commercial properties, Griffin said.

COPT has obtained 500 acres at the base and is awaiting approval of the transfer of 91 more acres.

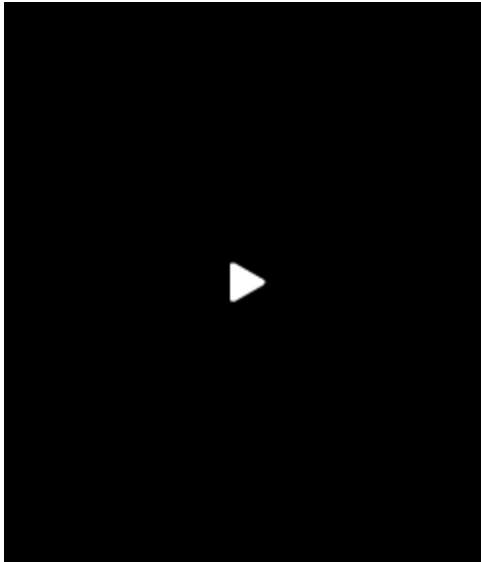
U.S. Rep. Roscoe Bartlett, from Maryland's 6th District, and U.S. Rep. Bill Shuster, from Pennsylvania's 9th District, touted the remaking of the base as an economic boost for both states.

COPT has projected that 4,500 jobs will come to Cascade through the redevelopment project, which, by Griffin's estimate, will take 10 to 15 years.

"Thank you for your confidence," Bartlett told Griffin.

In an interview after Monday's ceremony honoring the start of work on the community center, Griffin said plans for the base also include:

- 673 residential units, including apartments, condominiums, town houses and single-family houses
- 1.7 million square feet of offices, most of which would be built new
- 20 acres for community use



- a history museum

- athletic fields

The 21,000-square-foot community center would have a basketball and volleyball court, a weight room, a snack bar, an aerobic exercise area, a computer room and meeting space, Griffin said during the ceremony.

"It's intended to be used for the four-county area," he said, referring to Washington and Frederick counties in Maryland and Franklin and Adams counties in Pennsylvania.

Residents would pay "a minimal charge" to use the center, he said.

As Washington County's first "green," or environmental, building, it would be made from recycled materials and use water and energy efficiently, Griffin said.

Randall M. Griffin, the president and CEO of Corporate Office Properties Trust, which is redeveloping the former Fort Ritchie Army base in Cascade, talks about plans for a new community center there. **(Credit: / Dustin Lawyer - Editing)**

He said Washington County firms are working on the project: BMGM Architects; Frederick, Seibert & Associates, a civil engineering firm; and Callas Contractors.

Bartlett repeated his long-standing belief that the base could be a home for federal government departments, such as the National Security Agency.

Although federal agencies often are based in Washington, D.C., electronic communication and access makes location less important, he said.

Shuster said the former base could appeal to private companies that realize how cramped the D.C. metro area is.

"We can have the best of both worlds in a place like Fort Ritchie," he said.

COPT has signed its first commercial tenant - Indus Corp., a software development firm in Vienna, Va.

Hagerstown Community College has said it will open a branch at the former base by March 2008.

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