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## Valley CDC comes back to Easthampton

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**EASTHAMPTON** - The Valley Community Development Corporation has returned to the city with a new office in the Eastworks building, setting its sights on getting local artists to be more businesslike.

The city recently was awarded a \$135,000 grant from the state's Ready Resource Grant program, which will cover a full-time and a part-time position and pay for the office in the Eastworks building, allowing the agency to offer support services for small and startup businesses with five or fewer employees.

"We're like a manager in a boxer's corner," said Valley CDC director of small-business development Gene R. Talsky, who works out of the Eastworks office. "We'll do what needs to be done to help the entrepreneur. Documentation, planning, marketing - whatever they need."

The new office is on the third floor of the Eastworks building, a haven for artist studios as well as small and new businesses at 116 Pleasant St.

The move marks the Northampton-based CDC's third time opening an office in Easthampton. It closed its Cottage Street office in the summer of 2004 after operating for two years until a grant expired. Previously it had run a satellite office in Easthampton from 1998 to 1999.

Valley CDC, founded in 1988, is a regional nonprofit organization that works with low- to moderate-income people, minorities and small businesses by providing technical business support and assistance in gaining affordable housing to people in Northampton, Easthampton, Hadley and Amherst.

Talsky also has an office in the Northampton Valley CDC offices on Market Street and will divide his time between the offices. Small businesses in Northampton are being helped with another \$25,000 grant secured by that city.

Among the services it will offer are technical assistance in creating business or marketing plans, advice on how to secure business loans and where to find affordable office space. The grant calls for the CDC to offer the help to 50 small Easthampton businesses in 15 months.

"There are a lot of creative, artistic people here, and I want to enable them to take their talent and translate that into a living," said Talsky. "We want to combine the artists' creativity with the nuts and bolts of business."

From 2002 to 2004, the last time Valley CDC had an office in the city, the organization provided technical assistance to more than 70 businesses, including 19 new businesses on Union and Cottage Street, helping to create 50 new jobs in the city, according to CDC officials.

Mayor Michael A. Tautznik hailed the return of the Valley CDC to Easthampton. "We certainly hope that their and our success continues," he said.

Talsky said he will begin holding seminars in the spring for artists trying to break into the business community.

Valley CDC executive director Joanne Campbell said she is optimistic that her organization will not have to close down another Easthampton office.

Valley CDC officials are hopeful a \$2 million economic stimulus package being debated on Beacon Hill will provide funding for the corporation by facilitating programs already in place as well as maintaining the Easthampton office.

"Certainly our plan is to stay in Easthampton," Campbell said, "but we'll have to find new sources of funding and work with the city, which has been very supportive."

Easthampton small-business owners can contact Talsky for assistance at 529-0420 or via email at [grt@valleycdc.com](mailto:grt@valleycdc.com).

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