



THE MOLTONI AND NARDELLI DEVELOPMENT IN AMBRIDGE AREA

LOCATION: Ambridge, PA

SIZE: 39 acres

FEATURES: Flat Land, Location - Proximity to Airport, River, Rail, and Interstates

OWNER: Rob Moltoni and Pat Nardelli

CURRENT USE: Light Industry, Vacant - Underutilized

PROPOSED USE: Mixed Use (Industrial, Commercial, Institutional, and Residential Uses)

PAST USE: Steel Manufacturing

CONTAMINANTS: Oil, Asbestos, Debris, PCBs

TOTAL ACTUAL COST: \$65 million (proposed)

TIMELINE

- 1900 The American Bridge Company is formed.
- 1905 Ambridge is incorporated.
- 1905 The Ambridge Industrial Center manufactures electrical components.
- 1909 Alex Laughlin buys the Pittsburgh Steel Construction Company and renames it Central Tube Company.
- 1940 H.H. Robertson buys out the Central Tube Company.
- 1971 Ambridge passes a historic preservation ordinance.
- 1983 The American Bridge Company ceases operation in Ambridge.
- 1985 Ambridge Historic District is placed on the National Register of Historic Places.
- 2005 Moltoni purchases the properties in July.
- 2006 The H.H. Robertson plant is demolished.

HISTORY

The Borough of Ambridge may not have existed without the formation of the American Bridge Company in 1900. The American Bridge Company was the result of a merger between twenty-eight small bridge and structural steel companies. It was stationed in a town that the company built for its workers, later named Ambridge.

The oil embargo of the 1970s and the importation of foreign steel gradually eroded the profitability of the Ambridge plant. In 1983, the economic relationship between Ambridge and American Bridge ended when American Bridge moved out of the area.

Many of the brownfields that are in Ambridge and Harmony Township were formerly used by the steel industry in steelmaking, fabrication, transportation (rail lines), and disposal (slag) processes associated with the American Bridge Company. The major industries in this development area included H.K. Porter Inc. (c. 1905), H.H. Robertson Company (1916), National Electric Division (1920), and Central Tube Company (1904).

TOPOGRAPHY

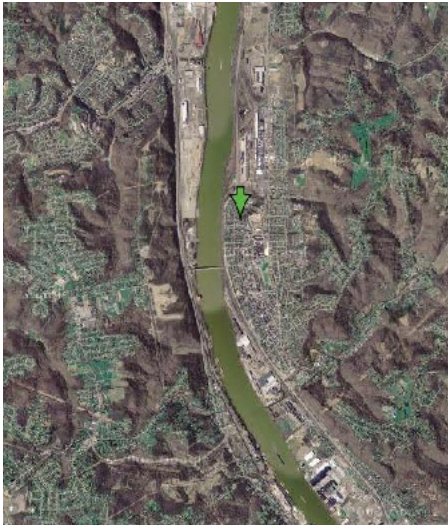
Moltoni's properties is about half an hour or twelve miles downstream from Pittsburgh and span from 11th Street to 19th Street between Route 65, a four-lane highway, and Duss Avenue. The corridor is flat and extends through the center of town. Route 65/Ohio River Boulevard and rail lines separate the site on the western side from the Ohio River.

MARKET CONDITIONS

The Ambridge/Harmony area has many positive assets, including housing stock, human capital—community pride and cultural diversity, the school



Picture courtesy of Gene Pash, Value Ambridge Properties, Inc.



Picture courtesy of Google Maps

system, churches, proximity to the Pittsburgh International Airport and interstate highways, an existing central business district, and history present in Old Economy state museum. Additionally, Old Economy Village was designated a National Historic Landmark and Preserve America community, and the Ambridge Area just opened a new high school in 2008.

An Australian developer Rob Moltoni has initiated a project in 2005 to take advantage of Ambridge's pedestrian scale and the local historic Old Economy Village. This development may include retail space and housing options on 10 acres of the site, but plans are not finalized.

SITE ASSEMBLY AND CONTROL

The Moltoni site is comprised of three main areas:

- **New Economy Business Park (NEBP)** (former Central Tube Company and H.H. Robertson property) occupying approx. the northern third of the site from 19th Street to 16th Street.

- **The Toth and Centria Properties** (former H.H. Robertson property) occupying approx. the center third of the site, extending south from 16th Street to 14th Street

- **Ambridge Industrial Center** (former H.K. Porter Company, Inc. and National Electric Division property) occupying approx. the southern third of the site between 14th and 11th Streets



The three main areas of the site.

Map courtesy of "Demolition, Remediation, and Renovations Northern Ambridge Redevelopment Project Beaver County, Pennsylvania." (M. Bort and F. Mancini, Jr.)

The first of the three was owned by the Pittsburgh Steel Construction Company, later named Central Tube Company by owner Alex Laughlin in 1909. The Central Tube Company was later bought out by H.H. Robertson in 1940. Moltoni bought this area as well as the Toth and Centria properties in July 2005 and dubbed the site "New Economy Business Park." NEBP is a 17.4-acre site with 325,000 square feet under roof. Recently he bought eight to ten acres of property on 11th Street from Thomas Allen. The last property rights have been secured in 2007.

The Ambridge Industrial Center itself consists of four main areas: Straight Steel, the Rosenberger Land Company, the Economy Industrial Properties/Bollinger Steel, and the remainder southern portion of the site (consisting of twelve buildings).

There are limited controls present on these properties preventing unauthorized personal from entering. Local officials were able to change the site's zoning from manufacturing & industrial to commercial to make way for the development.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEMS

The first area, the H.H. Robertson property, was a metal building materials manufacturer and galvanizing operation. They produced steel building products that used galbestos coating process and asphalt operation.

Similarly, the Toth Property housed these operations:

- Galbestos sheet manufacturing
- Floor deck, ventilator, and skylight manufacturing
- Asphalt product manufacturing
- Office buildings
- Storage buildings and areas
- Boiler, furnaces, and electrical
- Bulk storage area including coal piles and lumber storage

The Centria Property was the Research and Development Center for the former H.H. Robertson Corporation.

Finally, the Ambridge Industrial Center included metal casting, metal cleaning operations (alkaline and acid pickling), galvanizing (and sherardizing-zinc diffusion coating), painting/electro-plating, machining, metal presses, copper wire drawing, rolling mills, painting/enameling, cotton fabric manufacture, vulcanizing rubber, and weatherproofing.

Phase I environmental assessments have been performed on all properties through the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development's Industrial Sites Reuse Program (ISRP).

The Toth Property and the Ambridge Industrial Center hosted tar pits, painting facilities, oil drums, underground and aboveground storage tanks, electrical and mechanical equipment, and other potentially polluting chemical agents in the past. Phase I noted the presence of two 430,000 gallon oil tanks to the east of the area, miscellaneous debris, PCBs, possible asbestos-containing materials, an oil container, miscellaneous fill materials across the site, former rail sidings, and railroad ties. Site soils contained only limited areas of potential contamination. Most of the preliminary groundwater data are within acceptable levels.

After demolishing about 10 acres of buildings and debris on the former Toth property and H.H. Robertson sites, 26 underground storage tanks were removed, and land was graded to rebuild.

SOCIAL/COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE

In 2001, the manager of Ambridge Borough approached the Brownfields Center of Western Pennsylvania at Carnegie Mellon University (WPBC) to facilitate a series of workshops focused on 60-acres of the brownfields existent in the community. The WPBC was able to spotlight the area by bringing in national redevelopment experts to survey the land and provide their unbiased opinions and comments regarding the community and possible development. A few years after the first workshop, the area garnered international fame when an Australian developer, Rob Moltoni, became interested in the site.

In September 2003, at a Redevelopment Authority of Beaver County (RABC) meeting, representatives of the Borough of Ambridge and Moltoni introduced and presented the proposed development project. Because of this presentation and the Borough's support, the RABC unanimously approved a motion to support the project, as well. The Beaver County Board of Commissioners approved the use of Community Development Block Grant Funds to pay for the services of a consultant to begin this redevelopment project.

In 2006, the WPBC reviewed the progress of the community and the Moltoni development in a second workshop with many of the same experts. To aid the WPBC in orchestrating the workshops, a community-based team, the Ambridge Area Brownfield Partnership, formed. Its main goal was to continue interest in the development of the corridor.

During the workshop, the Brownfields Center and the Ambridge Area Brownfield Partnership set up community meetings and distributed two surveys—one in 2001 and the other five years later—to the attendees. These surveys gauged the public awareness of the developer's intent of construction and public awareness of the concept of brownfields. The survey process revealed that the community and the development might benefit from greater avenues of communication and increased education about brownfields and a brownfield's inherent opportunities.

Later in 2006, several Ambridge residents formed the Committee to Clean and Beautify Ambridge. It is a volunteer group that has picked up trash from Merchant Street to Route 65. In 2008 they applied for and won a \$5,000 grant from the Sprout Fund, a nonprofit organization supporting community projects, to construct a water element in P.J. Caul Park. New Economy Business Park works in cooperation with the Committee to Clean and Beautify Ambridge to landscape their property.

PHYSICAL INFRASTRUCTURE

Two state roads run through Ambridge, Route 65/Ohio River Boulevard and State Route 989. Route 65/Ohio River Boulevard is a multi-lane road that traces the north shore of the Ohio River to the Pittsburgh city limits.

Ambridge is within 30 minutes of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh International Airport and the booming North Hills/Cranberry Township area. Allegheny County's Port Authority and the Beaver County Transit Authority provide mass transit service to and from Pittsburgh. Route 65/Ohio River Boulevard provides three main access points into Ambridge; however, transportation access may be limiting the area's development. Within the borough, the roads were designed for a time when short haul railroads were common,



July 2008



Demolition of factory along 11th Street, across from Ambridge Municipal building. Before & After photos courtesy of <http://www.ambridgeboro.org>

and the primary means of local transportation was muscle-powered. This means that the streets are fairly narrow with short blocks. Route 989/Duss Street is wide enough to accommodate turns by large trucks. There are a number of one-ways streets, too. While this is advantageous from pedestrian design perspectives, these qualities hinder easy truck access to the Toth site and other properties within the industrial district.



Water element installed in PJ Caul Park

In terms of site utilities, new water connections and valves may be preferable to using the existing infrastructure in order to prevent leakage.

The development made great progress with the demolition of the H.H. Robertson plant in late 2006, and in 2007 the surrounding area underwent a \$1.2 million main street initiative in order to update the façade of its buildings.

COSTS & ECONOMIC INFRASTRUCTURE

New Economy Business Park was identified by the Pennsylvania Department for Environmental Protection as a Brownfield Action Team site and a priority project by Governor Rendell's Community Action Team. RABC obtained a Business in Our Sites planning grant and is providing other services to assist this development. The site also received a \$30,000 grant for a Phase I Assessment on 19 properties. The RABC has also secured a \$3.5 million grant for demolition, renovation, and remediation at the site. Moltoni received a \$175,000 state planning grant through the County Redevelopment Authority for the preparation of the site. The project was awarded \$3 million in Capital Budget funding in 2006. He also received a \$500,000 grant from the Commonwealth for improvements including exterior renovation, landscaping, and construction of new access roads. The Beaver County Corporation for Economic Development sponsored a \$1.2 million PIDA loan through the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development. The State Redevelopment Assistance Capital Program grant makes this development economically viable. A new access road and exterior and interior renovations at NEBP were completed at a cost of \$600,000. The estimated cost of demotion/renovation of 19 buildings, remediation, asbestos abatement, and disposal of drums, tires, and debris on the former Toth and Centria Properties is \$1,400,000. The same work on the NEBP's Economy Industrial Properties, known as the Eleventh Street Property, is estimated to cost \$1,500,000.

CURRENT STATUS AND LESSONS LEARNED

Ambridge engaged in smart growth practices by opening a Park and Ride in 2002, and the historic district opened a visitor's center in 2003, increasing employment and promoting tourism. Also, Merchant Street has undertaken

the Main Street Program to renovate the facade of buildings. It also started in 2003.

Moltoni kept NEBP as an industrial park where he can lease space to companies for light to heavy industrial use. Demolition of the buildings on the properties began in July 2007, and the existing buildings are mainly vacant or underutilized.

This development is the largest in the region since Value Properties purchased the former Armco seamless pipe plant in 1988.

The successful private/public partnership of local and state investments in this development makes this project possible.

Pat Nardelli of Castlebrook Development joined the project to support the Australian developer. Since then, he has been working with Dentis, owners of Kuhn's Market, to possibly create a location on the site. Kuhn's is a Pittsburgh-area grocery chain; Ambridge had been without one since Foodland closed in April 2007.

The Beaver County Commissioners announced in late December 2007 that the site will be home to the Beaver County 911 Emergency Services Center. Ambridge was selected from 15 locations around the county because of the area's access to adequate telephone communications lines, its location is outside the 10-mile evacuation zone for the Beaver Valley Nuclear Power Station and the area's easy access to Route 65, one of the county's major highways. The

Before



After



The north end of the old H.H. Robertson property across from the old Foodland. 'Before' picture courtesy of Silk House Cafe.



Before



18,000 square-foot, \$12-\$15 million one-story facility will be built along 14th Street on the site of the former H.H. Robertson office buildings. Castlebrook plans to break ground on the 911 Center in Fall 2008. The new center should be ready for use in the near future.

After



Demolition north of 14th Street, former H.H. Robertson plant. "Before" photo courtesy of <http://ambridgeboro.org>. "After" photos courtesy of <http://merchantstreet.org/> (merge of two photos)

ECONOMIC/COMMUNITY IMPACT

Keeping NEBP as an industrial leasing space is expected to cost \$3.4 million, retain 90 existing jobs, and create 54 new jobs. The Moltoni/Nardelli development's success thus far has driven the expansion of H.H. Robertson Floor Systems, an offshoot of Centria, and other businesses in the area. Also the market value of housing is expected to increase after the development is completed.

Before



After



Case Study Updated in Summer 2008 by Melinda Angeles

Example of streetscape work in the area. Before & After photos courtesy of <http://merchantstreet.org/>

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