

North Neighborhoods

Panel recommends revitalizing Route 8 corridor in Shaler

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By Milan Simonich, Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

Glenshaw Glass Co., with 98 employees who make 350,000 wine bottles a day, has risen from the dead.

The plant is part of a 1.5-mile section of Route 8 in Shaler, where flooding from Hurricane Ivan wiped out 700 jobs.

National redevelopment experts who have been focusing on this business corridor unveiled a three-point plan yesterday to help invigorate and protect it.

The experts ranked flood control of Pine Creek as one priority for the corridor, which extends from the glass company to Spencer Lane.

Creating safer traffic flow from Route 8 to businesses was the panel's second recommendation. Thirdly, it encouraged Pennsylvania governments to create a streamlined process for companies to obtain permits and licenses.

The recommendations, announced before a crowd of about 70 in Fall Run Park, came after panel members spent two days in Shaler, studying traffic flow and talking to residents and business owners.

Group members concluded that flood control is the biggest obstacle to the corridor's health and the most daunting of the three goals.

Jan Rosholt, an engineer from Seattle, said Shaler will need the cooperation and financial investment of its North Hills neighbors to devise and implement an effective system along Pine Creek.

Shaler Manager Tim Rogers said he was optimistic that it can be done. He said 20 municipalities in the North Hills agreed yesterday to join in a study of how best to manage the creek's runoff so flooding can be curtailed.

"We can't stop an Ivan from happening, but we can reduce the incidence and severity of flooding," Mr. Rogers said.

Shaler is using \$4.4 million in federal grants to buy properties in its flood plains and turn them into green space. Relocating people probably is less expensive and more effective than trying to build retaining walls, said Allegheny County Chief Executive Dan Onorato, who attended yesterday's briefing.

The visiting experts were brought to town by the Western Pennsylvania Brownfields Center at Carnegie Mellon University. They received no pay, and Carnegie Mellon covered their expenses.

All business operators along the corridor invited the experts to tour their plants. The visitors said they found much to like, especially the rebirth of Glenshaw Glass Co.

Founded in the late 1800s, the company was in steep decline by 2004. Hurricane Ivan killed it.

Glenshaw Glass reopened in January under new owner William Kelman, who fired up one of the plant's four furnaces for his bottle-making operation. At its peak, Glenshaw Glass employed more than 300, or triple the number of the revived company.

Still, its comeback was one reason the visiting panel focused on traffic.

Commuters zip through Route 8 without many delays or difficulties, Mr. Rosholt said. But traveling to the corridor's factories is not so easy, he said.

Panelists said they found that trucks hauling bottles from the glass plant faced tough going in exiting Route 8.

In addition to Mr. Rosholt, the panel making the recommendations included: Greg Hurst, an authority on water management from Fort Collins, Colo.; Sue McNeil, of the University of Delaware, whose specialty is traffic and transportation; and Kenneth Tamminga, of Penn State University, whose expertise is in creating a vision for communities.

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