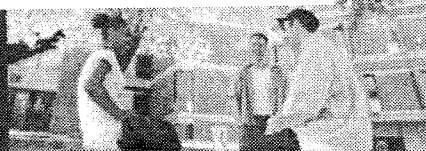


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Ideas flow to buoy Route 8 businesses

By Tony LaRussa
TRIBUNE-REVIEW
Saturday, May 5, 2007

Flood-control measures, traffic improvements and government cooperation are needed to help restore the section of Shaler's Route 8 business corridor still smarting from the remnants of Hurricane Ivan in 2004, a team of specialists has suggested.

"The team looked at a very small section of this community, but it's a small section that was dramatically impacted by the flooding," Shaler Manager Tim Rogers said. "We've lost 700 jobs in this small corridor. Some companies were literally wiped off the map."

The team -- made up of specialists from around the country who were assembled by the Western Pennsylvania Brownfields Center at Carnegie Mellon University -- outlined some of its findings during a public forum Friday at Fall Run Park in Shaler.

The forum yesterday was the culmination of a three-day study session.

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Although some of the findings are being implemented, Rogers

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said, having outside specialists provide a "stamp of approval," as well as some new ideas, are useful.

One major initiative under way is an agreement among 20 communities upstream along Pine Creek. The initiative requires new commercial and residential developments to reduce storm water run-off into the creek.

"Clearly, a cooperative effort among communities is needed to address the flooding problem," said Jan Rosholt, an engineer from Bellevue, Wash. "Getting the folks upstream to realize that what happens there affects things here is a huge step."

The team also suggested improvements such as constructing "frontage" roads, which run along or around businesses, as well as better synchronization of traffic signals.

"We had an interesting time trying to get on and off Route 8 to visit businesses, let alone trying to walk along it," Rosholt said. "As far as through traffic, it's great. But unless you make it more accessible, it's an accident waiting to happen."

Creating a "single point of contact" for developers to obtain permits, apply for financial assistance and other government help also was among the team's suggestions, Rosholt said.

Rogers said municipal officials will create a "flow chart" to make it easier for developers to understand the steps needed to get their projects off the ground.

Allegheny County Chief Executive Dan Onorato, who attended the forum yesterday, said the county wants to be a player in the effort to help boost Shaler's commercial district.

"The county is committed to continuing to provide resources, personnel and support," he said. "We're here to help. We're part of the team."

Tony LaRussa can be reached at tlarussa@tribweb.com or (412) 320-7987.

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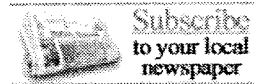
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