

AARDC

A L E R T

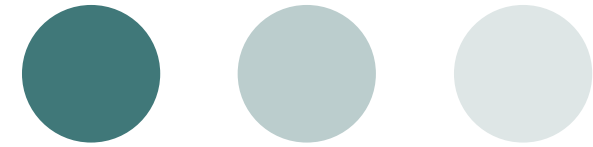
12.11.06

The 'Brownfields Reflections: Proud Past Bright Future' workshop was held in Ambridge on December 3-5, 2006. This workshop brought together state, county, and local stakeholders as well as nationally recognized experts to discuss economic and community growth hinged on brownfield development in Ambridge Borough. Beaver County Commissioners Charles Camp and Joe Spanik and Louis Boykins, Deputy Director of the Governor's Southwest office, all attended the workshop and pledged their support of the Ambridge redevelopment initiatives and Ambridge Area Revitalization Development Corporation's (AARDC) upcoming efforts, which include hosting a community visioning program and working with the Environmental Protection Agency to bring in a federal government employee to stay and work in Ambridge for an extended period.

The town hall meeting, on Sunday December 4, demonstrated to our visitors how dedicated the Ambridge community is to the town's revitalization. The approximately 50 attending community members expressed pride (sometimes emotional) in their town, its history, wealth of ethnic roots, and the kindness of its neighbors. Community members voiced an overwhelming desire for Ambridge to once again become a regional destination place. Facilitators Joe Schilling of Virginia Tech and Terri Smith of Environmental Liabilities Management, Inc took note as community members offered innovative ideas to revitalize Ambridge.

Residents offered creative ideas to make Ambridge a more desirable place to live.

1. Create an international language institute specializing in language and cultural classes related to the ethnic groups in Ambridge.
2. Build recreational places for children,



including a swimming pool, a skating rink, or climbing wall.

3. Develop an arts center downtown.
4. Support and grow Old Economy.
5. Create a small business incubator to develop and grow local businesses and downtown retail.
6. Turn vacant historic houses into bed and breakfasts.
7. Make the river accessible for water recreation—turn the river into a productive asset.

What's your idea for Ambridge's future?

Residents identified some barriers to redevelopment efforts, expressing concern about the regional perception of Ambridge, especially its reputation for crime. Council and community members challenged residents to write letters to the editor, expressing their dissatisfaction with their town's treatment in *The Beaver County Times*. The Council will meet with the editorial staff to encourage coverage of positive happenings in the town. Attendees also noted that the failure of some property owners to keep their land and storefronts clean hurts Ambridge's image. A volunteer neighborhood group informed the meeting that they picked up 59 bags of trash from around Foodland, which attendees overwhelmingly agreed is in distressing condition.



Ambridge residents expressed their pride and concern to visiting experts during the December 3 Town Hall Meeting.

Ambridge's redevelopment is at an exciting

and crucial point. After five years of studying and facilitating development in the area, The Western Pennsylvania Brownfields Center at Carnegie Mellon is passing the baton of brownfields champion to the AARDC, with the Borough's blessing, will leverage the momentum created by the workshops to facilitate more investment in the area.

Held in the banquet room at Javy's Monday, December 4, the workshop identified four key areas--Community Visioning, Organizing For Regional Efficiencies, Communication & Education, and Understanding the Needs of the Workforce—that when cultivated will help to revitalize the Ambridge area. The visiting experts offered the AARDC and the Borough recommendations in each of these areas.



Experts Joe Schilling and Terri Smith discussed their recommendations with The Council and state, county, and local Officials at The Silk House Tuesday, December 5.

The experts recommended that the Borough and the AARDC make a business case for sharing the costs of municipal functions, such as code enforcement with neighboring towns. The Borough's first step will be to collect the regional plans already devised by the multi-municipal pact, the Rivertown Partnership and the now inactive SHALE (South Heights, Harmony, Ambridge, Leetsdale, and Economy) group. Once these plans are compiled, the AARDC will use these documents as a springboard for an inclusive community visioning process, that will consider the redevelopment of the entire Ambridge area and ideas such as those suggested in the Town Hall Meeting.

The Borough will also begin an Ambridge newsletter that will detail development efforts and successes. The quarterly newsletter will be available in local businesses. Residents should also expect to see bulletins and signage on buildings and area land that will communicate redevelopment intentions and progress.

In addition to these communications efforts, the Council will work to put job seekers in touch with employers. Diane Kline, of Career Link, told the workshop attendees that there's an abundance of so-called 'gold-collar' jobs available in the area, contrary to popular belief. Kline is unable to fill the demand for workers. There are currently more than 200 open jobs in the region for skilled laborers. Organizations including The International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, Beaver County Job Training, and Beaver County Vocational-Technical School are eager to train job-seekers for little or no cost. Links to these and other career services will be available on the Borough's website.

The AARDC is motivated to reinvigorate the area and its members look forward to implementing the ideas discussed at this and previous Brownfield Center events. To that end, it is seeking more members for its Industrial, Residential, Historic, and Commercial committees. Please join your community members in their effort to make Ambridge a better place to live. Contact Gene Pash (724.266.4661) if you are interested in serving on the AARDC and contributing to the redevelopment of your town.

For a summary of the expert recommendations, more information about the AARDC and the Borough's redevelopment efforts, upcoming events, as well as information about local groups championing the cause, please visit the Borough website www.ambridgeboro.org.

UPCOMING AARDC EVENT:

Demolition Party

At the H.H. Robertson Site

More details in the coming weeks

