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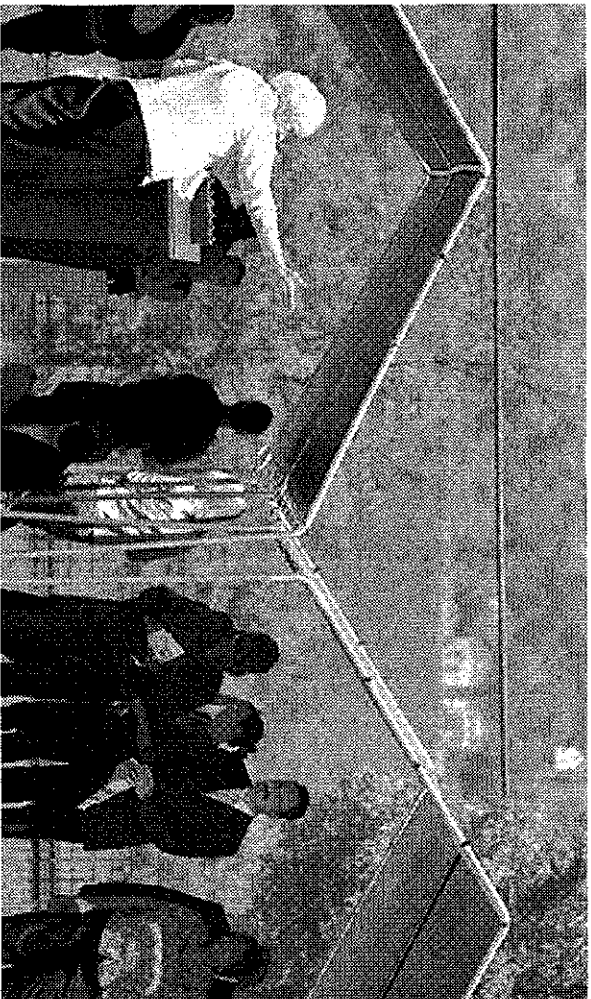
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# Neighborhoods

## Panel examines ways to spread wealth of The Waterfront in Homestead

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By Karamagi Rujumba, Pittsburgh Post-Gazette



Steve Mellon/Post-Gazette

Mayor Betty Espar yesterday addresses a crowd in Homestead to hear about redevelopment issues and challenges facing Homestead and West Homestead.

The Waterfront, a hugely successful shopping and entertainment complex, is often cited as the prime model of economic redevelopment in the Mon Valley because it sits on 430 acres that

were once the grounds of the Homestead Works of U.S. Steel.

But over the railroad tracks into a corridor of Homestead blocks known as the Avenues, residents, business owners and community leaders say that while the mega shopping complex was a shot in the arm for the area, they were mostly left behind when the development happened next door.

"People tell us the disparity between what happened at The Waterfront and what didn't happen in the neighboring communities [of Homestead, West Homestead and Munhall] is still big and very noticeable," said Meredith Meyer Grelli, program coordinator for the Western Pennsylvania Brownfields Center at Carnegie Mellon University.

Yesterday, a panel of experts commissioned by the brownfields center for a workshop titled "The Avenues: Beyond the Waterfront" released its recommendations on how the three boroughs can redevelop their business districts while using The Waterfront as a resource.

"Development on this side of the tracks needs to be balanced to the kind of development that happened across the tracks," said Susan Hannegan, standing in the parking lot of a building at Army Street and Seventh Avenue in Homestead.

A city planner from Centre County, Ms. Hannegan is an expert in historic designation of sites and was one of six national experts, including academicians, architects and community planners, who spent three days examining the business districts in the three boroughs, which have a swath of about 40 acres to redevelop.

The panel's key recommendations for the Mon Valley communities include forming an intergovernmental agreement among the boroughs, hiring a facilitator to steer the redevelopment efforts, and asking the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to provide an official to help the communities seek funding for development efforts.

Ms. Grelli said the boroughs qualify for funding from the EPA because many of the former light industrial and manufacturing properties in Homestead and West Homestead can be classified as brownfields.

Dennis Davin, director of Allegheny County's Department of Economic Development, said the county so far has invested about \$10 million for infrastructure upgrades in the three boroughs.

Redevelopment of brownfields, Mr. Davin said, is one of county Chief Executive Dan

Onorato's policy priorities.

"What we learned from The Waterfront is that when we work on development on brownfields like the former Carrie Furnace site, we will have to start with revitalizing the surrounding neighborhoods," Mr. Davin said.

The county is currently funding revitalization projects in Braddock, North Braddock and Rankin, in conjunction with ongoing work on the Carrie Furnace site, "because we don't want to see the same thing that happened here when The Waterfront was done," he said.

Citing the recent renovation of the Homestead Grays Bridge and the county's plans to rehabilitate the Rankin Bridge, Allegheny County Council President Rich Fitzgerald said the success of revitalization projects in the three boroughs hinges on public partnerships between the communities, the county and the state.

"We have to continue this record of partnership, which has shown that we can change how some of these communities will look in the next few years," he said.

Pointing at The Waterfront over the railroad tracks yesterday, Homestead Mayor Betty Esper said she could "see the development coming."

"We're moving on up. I hope this economic development crosses the train tracks and moves into the Avenues and up on the hill in Homestead," she said.

Ms. Grelli said residents from the three boroughs will have a chance to discuss the recommendations made by the panel at a public meeting at 7 p.m. Wednesday at the Moose Building on Eighth Avenue in Homestead.

Karamagi Rujumba can be reached at [krujumba@post-gazette.com](mailto:krujumba@post-gazette.com) or 412-263-1719.

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