

A New Life for The Quaker State Refinery Site?

Declining supplies of Pennsylvania crude oil and other economic factors caused the sale of the Quaker State Refinery to the Honeywell Corporation in 1990. The refinery continued to produce wax based products for another decade until it finally closed.

Emlenton Borough and Allegheny Valley Trails Association have developed a clean-up agreement with Honeywell which allows reuse of the former rail right-of-way as a recreational trail.

During the Trail Town workshop in September, residents and community leaders heard from Monica Brower, President and CEO of the Economic Development Corp. of Erie Co., on their recent efforts in Erie to re-develop former industrial sites for productive uses.

Borough officials are currently negotiating with the Honeywell Corporation over future ownership and uses of the site. There is a desire by local officials and residents to put the refinery site back to productive use. Borough officials are exploring funding options to hire an environmental consultant to help with analyzing data and identifying options for reuse of the site. Although the process of redevelopment will likely take several years, the goal is to find a new life for the former refinery that benefits the community and region.

New Ideas for Improving Local Business Districts

During the Trail Town workshop local residents, business owners, and elected officials identified a number of actions for Main Street improvements in Emlenton. Several committees are working on ideas in a number of areas:

Downtown Beautification

- Clear brush along riverfront
- Create shaded seating areas along river with benches, picnic tables, bike racks
- Add Main Street improvements – flowers, benches, trash cans and street lights
- Pursue funding for improvements

Trailhead Improvements

- Pave and stripe parking lot at refinery site
- Install port-a-johns
- Add information kiosk with maps and info on local businesses and services

Marketing and Promotion

- Develop brochure with info on local services
- Improve website to help visitors plan trail trips
- Put on special events to attract visitors

How You Can Help

Interested residents can volunteer to help with these committees by contacting your Boro office:

<i>Emlenton Borough</i> 513 Hill St. P.O. Box 537 Emlenton, PA 16373 724-867-8611	<i>Foxburg Borough</i> 445 Rt. 58 Parker, PA 16049	<i>City of Parker</i> 420 Washington St. P.O. Box 350 Parker, PA 16049 724-399-2971	<i>St. Petersburg Boro</i> P.O. Box 235 St. Petersburg, PA 16054 724-659-1116
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Allegheny Valley Trails Association (AVTA)

The trail association is looking for volunteers to help with building and maintaining the trail. Visit the AVTA website at www.avta-trails.org for more information on ways you can help.

Allegheny Valley Trail Towns

Linking the Communities of Emlenton, Foxburg, St. Petersburg and Parker

Allegheny Valley Rails-to-Trails Completed to Emlenton

Strong Interest in Trail Use Seen

The newly completed 6-mile addition to the Allegheny River Trail was dedicated on a beautiful sunny day on September 21, 2006.

Local residents and representatives from the Allegheny Valley Trails Association, Emlenton Boro, Oil Region Alliance, PennDOT, and PA DCNR gathered to proclaim the successful trail opening. The trail now runs more than 30 miles from Oil City to Emlenton, ending at the former Honeywell refinery site.

Jim Holden, President of the Allegheny Valley Trails Association (AVTA) said, "The trail will be part of a larger initiative to link Pittsburgh with Erie via bike trails, making the region a multi-day destination for trail enthusiasts."

Holden said more than three million people live within an hour and a half drive of Emlenton on Interstate 80. "The newly completed trail will entice cyclists and visitors to Emlenton and communities farther north," he said.

Riders were lined up at the trailhead, even before the ribbon was cut. Visitors from Florida voted the Allegheny River Trail as one of their top two favorite rails-to-trails in the country.

The AVTA is a non-profit, all volunteer organization focused on the acquisition of abandoned railways in the Allegheny River watershed and their rehabilitation into multipurpose, non-motorized recreational trails. The association has plans to extend the trail from Emlenton through Foxburg and on to Parker Landing over the next few years.



Community leaders gathered to dedicate the newest section of the Allegheny River Trail in September, 2006

Former Oil Boom Town Now Attracting Trail Users Community Leaders Explore Economic Benefits

More than 30 citizens and state and local officials congregated in Emlenton's Crawford Center on Thursday, September 21, 2006 for the **first day** of a community workshop focused on turning Emlenton and Foxburg into "Trail Towns."

The two-day workshop, "*Emlenton and Foxburg, PA - Life after Oil - Toward a Renaissance of Former Oil Boom Towns*" helped officials and citizens explore ways of turning liabilities into community assets.

Speakers included representatives from PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, Oil Region Alliance, The Delta Group, Rails-to-Trails Conservancy and local historians and elected officials.

The workshop focused on three key elements:
*Identify ways to complete the regional rail-trail network (key elements include completion of the trail from the Rockland Tunnel 6 miles north of Emlenton through the old refinery into the downtown, and down the Allegheny River on to Pittsburgh).

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Becoming a “Trail Town” The Successful Experience of Ridgway, Pennsylvania

Richard Viglione, Main Street Manager from Ridgway, PA shared his experiences during the workshop. Ridgway is part of the PA Lumber Heritage Region and a gateway to the PA Wilds and the Allegheny National Forest.

He noted many similarities between Ridgway and the Emlenton/Foxburg area. Ridgway has become a successful “Trail Town” and was recently featured by local television stations as a prime example of a high quality destination in Western Pennsylvania.

However, in the early 1990’s, the town was in need of revitalization, suffering from business closings and loss of residents. In 1994, officials and citizens started working together on community revitalization efforts.

Today, many buildings have new facades; a new walking tour features many newly restored homes. The guest book at a new welcome center lists visitors from 47 states. The community boasts of many locally owned businesses, a growing population and many people returning to the area.

Citizens and businesses buy locally and attend community, school and church events. Residents regularly eat in downtown restaurants and enjoy the Clarion River Trail.

Richard Viglione’s final message was “Ridgway is starting to boom once again and the same can happen to the Allegheny Valley Trails Towns!”

I-80 Bridge—The bike trail will probably continue from Emlenton to Foxburg under the bridge.



The Allegheny River Trail A Section of the Erie to Pittsburgh Trail

The discovery of oil in Titusville in 1859 affected Emlenton dramatically. The first well was drilled in the area in 1867, about the same time the Allegheny Valley Railroad (AVRR) was extended north from Kittanning and Pittsburgh to Buffalo.

In later years, after becoming the Pennsylvania Railroad, it carried both people and goods between Pittsburgh and Buffalo and small towns in between. The railroad ceased operation in 1986, with salvage of rails and ties completed by 1990.

Through the efforts of the Allegheny Valley Trails Association, this former railroad right-of-way is being converted to a rail-trail. As of September, 2006, 30 miles of trail have been completed between Oil City and the former Quaker State / Honeywell refinery site in Emlenton.



2005 Sojourn—Bikers on sections of the Erie to Pittsburgh Trail

Developing a Trails System Between Erie and Pittsburgh

During the past year, the Northeast Office of the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy has been studying the feasibility of completing trail connections between Erie and Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania using many of these former railroad rights-of-way.

This long distance trail would fill the gaps between many existing trails, including Oil Creek State Park Trail, the Justus Trail, the Allegheny River Trail between Franklin and Emlenton, and the Armstrong Trail.



Allegheny Valley Trails Towns and the Main Street Program

The Main Street program is a comprehensive, community-based revitalization approach, developed by the National Trust for Historic Preservation. Communities across the U.S. have applied its four key components with great success:

Design means getting Main Street into top physical shape, capitalizing on assets such as historic buildings. An inviting atmosphere is created through window displays, parking areas, signs, sidewalks, street lights, and landscaping.

Promotion means selling the image and promise of Main Street to shoppers, investors, and new businesses. Effective strategies market the district's unique characteristics through advertising, retail promotions, and special events.

Organization means getting everyone working towards common goals. The program uses a common-sense formula of a volunteer-driven program and an organizational structure of board and committees assisting a Main Street manager.

Economic Restructuring means existing businesses get help to expand and new businesses are recruited. A five-year program encourages investment by leveraging private dollars with state dollars.

A Regional Approach

The towns of Emlenton, Foxburg, Parker and St. Petersburg are banding together to form a regional Main Street Program. Each community has formed a volunteer committee; a regional Board will be formed. The goal is to develop a five-year plan of action and hire a Regional Main Street coordinator to implement each community’s plan.

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*Define next steps for identifying beneficial re-uses of the now vacant 40 acre site of the former Honeywell refinery.

*Create a plan for a downtown revitalization using the Main Street model, building on the “Trail Towns” concept now being used in similar communities in southwestern and northeast Pennsylvania.

The workshop was organized by Emlenton and Foxburg Boroughs, the Allegheny Valley Trails Association, Venango County Regional Planning Commission and the National Park Service Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program.

Friday's sessions, held in the beautifully restored Foxburg Theater, shared information on the Main Street Program and possible ways to clean up and redevelop the former Honeywell wax plant in Emlenton. Monica Brower, Executive Director of Erie Economic Development Corp. described successful efforts to turn abandoned industrial “brownfield” sites into places for new businesses.

Suzanne Gagliardo of the PA Downtown Center noted that recreational use of rivers and trails can be a powerful way to bring visitors to nearby communities. She described how the “Trail Town” concept is designed to help leaders and citizens in these communities take advantage of the economic opportunities that come from trail and river users.

Residents in Ridgway, Jim Thorpe, Meyersdale and other communities in Pennsylvania have helped transform their towns into more inviting and memorable tourist destinations, and in the process, made their towns a better place for residents to live, work and play.

Attendees were charged with taking the "next step" to start those programs and move forward. The speakers and other experts in attendance will be available to assist participants implement the vision and strategies developed over the two-day event.

Colorful Local History Attracts Visitors



The Mill in Emlenton

The town of Emlenton was first settled in 1810 and was a growing village by the 1830s. The economy was initially based on a number of iron furnaces in the region, using the Allegheny River for transportation. Timber and agriculture became an important basis of commerce in the mid-19th century for the small town. The discovery of oil in Titusville in 1859 soon affected Emlenton - dramatically. The first well was drilled in the area in 1867, about the same time the Allegheny Valley Railroad (AVRR) was extended north from Kittanning and Pittsburgh to Buffalo. "Black Gold Fever" soon extended to Emlenton. Early industry utilized the iron production and transportation routes to become a major supplier of oil well supplies. Oil prospectors soon drilled successful wells in the area and also found large supplies of natural gas.

The Emlenton Gas Light and Fuel Company, the first natural gas company chartered in the state and only the third in the United States, was formed in 1882 to deliver natural gas for lighting and fuel. The Emlenton Refining Company was formed in 1891 by a group of local driller/producers to refine their product locally, soon becoming a profitable company and important employer. A special oil to lubricate the hot-running Franklin air-cooled automobile was named Quaker State in 1915. By the 1930s, the Quaker State Oil Refining Corporation was formed from 19 independent companies and became the economic base of the community, claiming the largest number of millionaires per-capita of any town in the country. The bustling community had theaters, two large hardware stores, automobile and farm equipment dealers, a planing mill, numerous churches, four hotels, an outstanding (donated) school building, and truly impressive houses constructed by the wealth derived primarily from oil and gas.

Declining supplies of Pennsylvania crude oil, the establishment of the Interstate Highway System, and other economic factors caused the sale of the refinery in 1990. It continued to produce wax based products for another decade until it finally closed. Another blow to the local economy came from the loss of the local railroad connection. The Pennsylvania Railroad, which for many years carried both people and goods between Pittsburgh and Buffalo and the many small towns in between, ceased operation in about 1986, with salvage of rails and ties completed by 1990. The refinery and the railroad, which together were the life blood of the community for over 100 years are both gone. Refinery facilities have been demolished and the site is now a "brownfield" in the process of remediation. Through the efforts of a highly effective private non-profit organization, the Allegheny Valley Trails Association, the former railroad right-of-way is being converted to a rail-trail. The demise of the refinery and railroad coincided with the loss of most of the businesses, stores, theaters, the school, and the economy to support the large homes. Emlenton is a proud but sad reminder of its former glory – still a lovely location on the Allegheny River surrounded by beautiful hills and forest.

Nearby, as the legend goes, a physician by the name of Fox was owed a dept by William Penn. The two ultimately agreed that the payment would be a parcel of land in the great wild west "...as much as could be walked from sun-up to sundown." An ingenious man, the Doctor hired the fastest local Indian to walk for him on June 21st – the longest day of the year. As a result he became the owner of 118,000 acres along the Allegheny and Clarion Rivers. Time passed, the Fox family continued to prosper, and a large stone mansion was built in 1845. The home, stables and barn are still standing today. The Fox family also built the banks, roads, bridges and railroads. The railroads were ultimately purchased by the B&O and Penn Central linking the tiny hamlet with far away communities. Foxburg also boasts of the oldest golf course in continuous use in the United States. Today the area also has a beautiful restaurant, winery, theater, hotel and more.

Both communities and the nearby Parker and St. Petersburg are being rediscovered by individuals wanting to relax and get back to the important timeless truths of life. From fishing and hunting, to canoeing and boating, to hiking and biking, this area also has an abundance of nature-inspired entertainment.



Foxburg Inn today

Trail Town Assessment Form

During the workshop, a Trail Town assessment form was completed by each of the participants. The following are two of the questions from the form and a summary of the responses. Do you have a different response?

What specific assets does the town have that you would want to promote or enhance?

Mineral Springs needs worked on and then promoted.

Bike trail

Mill

Historic houses

Oil heritage/Lumber heritage

River – canoeing

Antiques

Well preserved historic buildings, walking tour,

published community history

Friendly, casual people who greet you

Good volunteer corps

Timber industry

Fishing, Canoeing

Sense of community

River for boating, etc.

Mineral Springs Park

River – entrance to bike trail

Trail, canoeing, history,

Farmers' produce available

Bike trail

River front

Mineral Springs

Artists – inviting artists here to live & work – art gallery

Beauty

Many resident artists

Mineral Springs

Natural beauty

Wild and Scenic river

Walking tour, history, elegant homes

Interpret oil and gas on refinery site

Trail connection

River, scenery, historic district

The public parks

The river frontage

Fire company that could expand to cover other

communities such as Foxburg, St. Petersburg

Museum

Bike trail

Any/all downtown business

River recreation

I have questions about:

Has Q.S. Site been approved by DEP for development?

Business investment opportunities?

Very limited convenient food service

Lack of bike rental

What will Emlenton do specifically to help other local communities to gain their support?

How to improve looks as economical as possible?

How to get funds to help?

Starting a coffee house, artist community, art gallery?

How to get trail through town?

Signs?

How to make enhancements possible (grants, etc.)

What does Emlenton want to become?

Contact one of the municipalities listed on the back or:

Venango County Regional Planning Commission

1168 Liberty St.

P.O. Box 831

Franklin, PA 16323

814-432-9682