



Little Lehigh Corridor plan targets Allentown reindustrialization

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ALLENTOWN, Pa. -



Allentown city officials unveiled the second phase of a long term plan to bring industrial and manufacturing companies back to the region at a public meeting Thursday.

The Little Lehigh Creek Industrial Corridor master plan, presented by the city in conjunction with consulting firms Camoin Associates and Bergmann Associates, outlines potential target areas for industrialization and the steps needed to make them appealing to outside manufacturing companies.

Extending from the Lehigh River along the Little Lehigh Creek to the 15th Street Bridge, the corridor includes several multi-acre parcels that have been deemed underutilized or vacant, that officials say could be used instead to create new industrial jobs.

According to Alan Salinger of the Allentown Bureau Planning and Zoning, the market is already trending in that direction.

“You may have read that there’s a slow return of industrial jobs to the United States,” he said. “It is now to Americans’ advantage to produce goods again.”

Bergman Associates’ planner Dan Sundell says Allentown’s transition toward re-industrialization will be facilitated by its “strategic position” due to development districts such as the Keystone Opportunity Zone and Enterprise Zone that lower the tax burdens on incoming corporations.

“You get a lot of tax incentives and assistance by building [in Allentown],” he said. “It’s a big advantage over open land outside of the city.”

Phase one of the program included a city wide plan for industrialization while the second step, presented Thursday, focuses in on the more strategic industrial corridor along Little Lehigh Creek.

The third part of the plan will explore the possibility of turning the Metal Works site, currently owned by the Allentown Economic Development Corporation, into an industrial property

To develop the corridor in particular, officials recommended exploring the possibility of industrializing numerous lots such as the 10 acre former Pennsylvania School of Business and the 19.6 acre Allentown incinerator site.

“When we started this project, we were asked by the city to take a closer look at [the incinerator] site in particular,” said Sundell. “That site --even though it has challenges -- it does have potential for development.”

Alan Salinger says that if sites like this are revitalized and industrialized, it may even pave the way to a return of the region’s Barbers Quarry Branch freight.

Officials though say this may still be five to 10 years away.

“It’s not a project yet, it’s a plan,” said Sundell of the re-industrialization initiative. “We don’t have money in hand.”

The program is funded by the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development Sustainable Communities and managed through the Lehigh Valley Economic Development Corporation.

City representatives though stress that if successful, the project could bring more higher-earning jobs to the Lehigh Valley.

“Industrial jobs offer people family-sustaining wages that are typically higher than most,” said Sundell. “Not everybody should work or will want to work in an office building.”

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