

# Creating An East Shore Buzz

By: Kristen Keleschenyi

There is strength in numbers and that is the idea behind the East Shore. Like other local geographic destinations including the North Shore and the South Side, the East Shore is hoping to be the next sought after destination. The four communities of Braddock, North Braddock, Swissvale and Rankin are working together under the new moniker to redefine what they are and move toward an exciting future.

An event was held last Thursday at the Grandview Golf Club to bring representatives from these communities together for a pep talk. Former Pittsburgh Mayor Tom Murphy, now a senior resident fellow with the Urban Land Institute in Washington D.C., a nonprofit organization with a mission to provide leadership in the responsible use of land, spoke to the group about the challenges that lie ahead and spoke from a familiar perspective.

When Murphy took office as mayor in January of 1994, the city of Pittsburgh had lost 60% of its population due to the decline of the steel industry. Young people did not see a future here and Allegheny County had the second oldest population in the country.

But during three terms as mayor, Murphy secured \$1 billion in funding to help develop two new sports facilities, Heinz Field and PNC Park,



Former Pittsburgh Mayor Tom Murphy was the keynote speaker at an East Shore gathering at the Grand View Golf Club in North Braddock last Thursday.

and a new convention center that is the largest green building in the United States. He says it is not about having money because the city was broke when he took office, had a pension fund that was only 12% funded and was in junk bond status.

Murphy explained, "What are the choices you are going to make with the choices you have and how creative are you going to be

in identifying other sources of funding."

During his years in office, the city transformed more than 1,000 acres of blighted, abandoned industrial properties into public use areas such as entertainment venues, retail outlets and residential space.

One suggestion Murphy made was having the four municipalities form a rivers authority, similar to Pittsburgh's Urban Redevelopment

Authority, and work together with the county to seek funding and make thoughtful decisions about the assets available.

"How do you think about land control that you have so you can control your own destiny? Right now you're not doing that but you're not going to do that individually."

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SERVING THE STEEL VALLEY, WEST MIFFLIN, LINCOLN PLACE, AND WOODLAND HILLS COMMUNITIES OF BRADDOCK, BRADDOCK HILLS, CHALFANT, CHURCHILL, EAST PITTSBURGH, FOREST HILLS, NORTH BRADDOCK, RANKIN, SWISSVALE, TURTLE CREEK AND WILKINS TOWNSHIP, AND DRAVOSBURG, GLASSPORT

The Valley Mirror  
10/11/18



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Murphy gave examples of cities in the United States and in Europe that are trying to reinvent themselves and it can be done. He said right now the millennials want many of the same things the baby boomers want - walkable communities with easy access to housing, their jobs, restaurants, green space and entertainment.

Blue collar neighborhoods are changing and local examples include Lawrenceville and East Liberty but the moment to take advantage of opportunities is now because Murphy says Pittsburgh has gotten too expensive. "You have the ability in Swissvale and in Braddock and a lot of other communities, like Rankin to reposition yourself to take advantage of the changes that are happening."

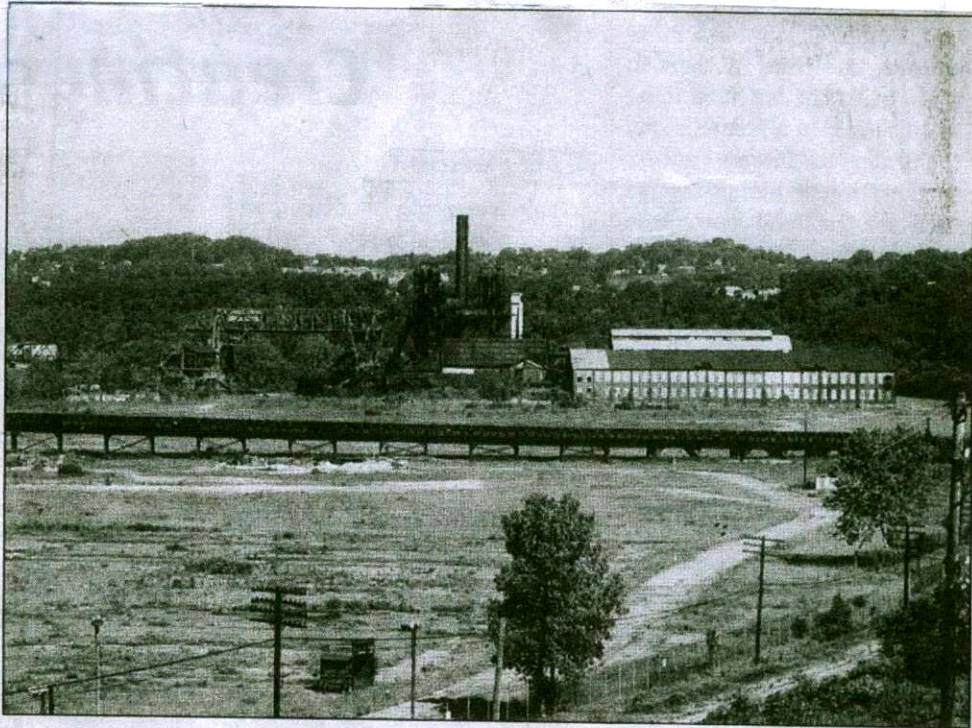
But some who attended the event expressed their frustration during a question and answer session with obstacles being faced in their communities: resi-

dents who do not want higher taxes and land that is controlled by the county. Development is happening but Munhall funeral director Michael Aldrich says it's happening too slow.

"As former mayor can you tell us how we can make them (the county) move that we can do things. These guys (Enterprise Zone Corp.) do have a lot of good ideas."

Murphy says it is all about working together and making sure developers' great ideas are great for everyone.

"It's about you guys organizing and being clear about what you want."



*The Carrie Furnace site is one of the potential locations for development in the East Shore zone, which is comprised of the municipalities of Braddock, North Braddock, Rankin and Swissvale.*