

Old Mill Corridor, Montgomery

Long before anyone heard of the Marcellus Shale, some forward-thinking people in the small north-central Pennsylvania community of Montgomery recognized that the key to revitalizing their once-thriving borough was to breathe new life into the icons of their past—a 24-acre corridor of mill commons that once employed thousands of people in the bustling textile manufacturing industry, but has since stood idle for the past 30 years.

With support from the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Lycoming County officials in 2002 began the Brownfield Assessment Program to evaluate brownfield opportunities as part of a multi-municipal, comprehensive planning process. They identified the Old Mill Corridor as an area with extremely high redevelopment potential due to its location adjacent to rail and the availability of existing infrastructure.

In 2008, with funding from a grant from the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development, the Corridor Plan was initiated. It was developed as a strategic plan examining the Old Mill and I-180 corridors through a three-pronged approach including a feasibility study, visioning and implementation strategy. The feasibility study examined zoning, land use, subdivision and land development regulations, and landowner interest.

In 2009, a unique visioning process got underway that included numerous opportunities for public input that eventually guided the development of an implementation strategy for the corridor. In addition to input by government officials, businesses and borough residents, planners turned to the youth of Montgomery to help guide their vision for the future. A Youth Ambassador Program was launched with students from the Montgomery Area School District who played a key role in brainstorming and refining development ideas for their community.

At the same time as the visioning process was taking shape, Montgomery found itself in the center of the Marcellus Shale natural gas play. Due to the community's foresight and planning, Montgomery was perfectly positioned to promote the Old Mill Corridor and its brownfields properties as a perfect match for the many supporting industries of the natural gas boom.

