

OPINION

AS I SEE IT

Ellwood City revitalization: 'Dress for Success'



**Bill
Garland**

Ellwood City presents a challenge for the enthusiastic and inspired entrepreneur. This community has an excellent location just off the beaten path of several superhighways, Pennsylvania Turnpike and the future Interstate 376, and at the confluence of picturesque routes 351, 65, 488 and 288.

Its residents are close-knit and friendly, with extended families — helping and supporting each other — being the norm.

While it's true that big steel has left the Pittsburgh area, as well as nearby communities like Ellwood City, the location of the historic first seamless tube mill, the citizens here love their town.

They reflect fondly on past "glory times" and look forward patiently (and impatiently) for future restoration and repopulation of their downtown business

district. Even while "waiting," there are a number of downtown businesses that attract patrons both locally and from nearby communities.

These include, Condition Mint Gallery, Market on Main, Heart's Desire, T-Time, Outlet on Main, MVP Team Shop, Gene's Jewelers, Perpetual Childhood, Kimpel's Jewelers, Ellwood Photoposter, Cattitude, Sportswear Graphics, City Paint and Glass, VRS, Posies by Patti and others.

For personal care, Ellwood City residents have their choice of many barbers and beauticians. And people can dine and drink at a number of local establishments. Ellwood City also has many professional service providers, such as insurance agents, doctors and attorneys.

The number of growing businesses is impressive, when you

stop and think about it, and is sure to grow as we "dress for success," and actively seek more needed local businesses, such as shops for shoes, women's dresses and accessories, men's casual and work wear, downtown eat-in deli, craft supplies, toy and game stores, etc.

Selling a town is like selling a house in that the chance for a sale is enhanced by attractive appearance. Ellwood City's empty storefronts represent opportunities for growth, beginnings for those who accept those opportunities and future revenue for building owners who encourage that growth.

Judging by the emptying malls, travel distances, shoppers' tired feet, and the lack of variety of goods in mall shops, the day of the return of town-based businesses is a very real possibility. Let's work to tip the scales in the direction of local completeness and conve-

nience.

Community involvement and support for revitalization are steps in that direction. Community pride, resolute spirit and a "dress for success" battle cry can bring great accomplishments, achieved by cooperative action by involved citizens, town fathers, building owners and invited entrepreneurs.

Let's give a loud and resounding cheer for those who spearhead this movement, particularly Lenore Bazzichi and the Ellwood City Revitalization Committee. Let's support, advertise and encourage these efforts wherever and however we can.

Positive thinking coupled with positive action will achieve success.

Ellwood City authorities can help by encouraging occupancy — perhaps with incentive programs for building owners. Perhaps

appearance can be improved by putting drapes in the windows to screen the view of cluttered, dirty and dark interiors, eliminating the "missing tooth" appearance.

Among the incentives might be property tax reductions for a limited number of years with the proviso that storefronts be occupied by a business — and that a portion of the reduction be passed on with rent reductions for the same time period.

Lower rents and a cooperative city, merchant, building owner and chamber of commerce advertising of Ellwood City as a place to bring, start or expand your business is the type of action needed now.

The glass is half full — let's pour ourselves the other half — let's fill it up!

Bill Garland, of Brighton Township, is co-owner of Perpetual Childhood on Lawrence Avenue.

Have an opinion or story you want to share in that "As I See It" column? Call the Ledger newsroom at (724) 758-5740 between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. and ask for Mark Crepp or Eric Poole.