

Alcohol Referendum

“This referendum is not about BARS, it’s about ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT!”

-Aaron Stubna

***PETITION SIGNING: NOW!!**

****DEADLINE: March 10th**

*****NEEDED: 1019 signatures**

(To place on May 19th ballot)

*****WHERE: Lincoln Barbershop – 514 Lincoln Ave.**

*****MUST BE BELLEVUE RESIDENT & REGISTERED VOTER (THROUGH BELLEVUE)**

FACTS:

- If passed, Bellevue will be issued only **3 LIQUOR LICENSES.**

-THERE MUST BE A STRATEGIC PLAN!

-(Business district) Lets face it the way old council of years past –up to now has not been working-things need to change!

NEEDS:

-Foot traffic past 5pm. (night time activity)

-make Bellevue a destination

-Fill in empty storefronts with boutiques, specialty stores and anchor developments!

(some have been empty for 2 years or more-don’t blame it on the recession)

-Pull outside shoppers into Bellevue. (give people a reason to come into Bellevue and to pull Bellevue people back out onto it’s streets.)

-A productive business district to attract the younger families & young professional to want to **move/buy/invest** in Bellevue!

+ affordable housing

- high taxes

- dwindling business district

-Casino being built – Bellevue is on the way – we need to think about the future before we miss out on certain opportunities.

ALL THIS WILL BRING TAX REVENUE INTO BELLEVUE

People have been quoted as to liking the slow pace of Bellevue-they like it the way it is-although they don't like all the empty storefronts. You can't have it both ways-slow pace and nostalgia don't pay the rent.

WWW.ENJOYBELLEVUE.COM

TO READ MORE ABOUT THE VISION

Friday, November 16, 2001

Dry town gets wet

Slippery Rock law change lures development

Pittsburgh Business Times - by [Tim Schooley](#)

John Bonando leads the way down the three scruffy blocks that comprise all of downtown Slippery Rock. In the span of a short stroll, he weaves a bright and promising future for a college town suffering from 50 years of neglect.

Mr. Bonando points out an empty lot where dilapidated housing was recently demolished. There's the cheap charms of the Camelot restaurant, a joint that serves up a full breakfast for 99 cents. And there's the blackish exhaust staining the marble facade of the First Federal bank caused by passing trucks -- pollution that's also evidence of a local population big enough to leave a mark.

"It's ugly. I love the place, but it's not attractive," said Mr. Bonando, **Slippery Rock University's** assistant vice president for student affairs. "Would you bring your business to a place like that? No."

Yet seven new businesses are setting up shop here, a new hotel is under consideration and two sit-down restaurants are planned.

Why now? In May the township passed a referendum that will allow Slippery Rock bars and restaurants to serve alcohol for the first time since the community was founded by Zebulon Cooper in 1789.

The referendum and revitalization plans brought together the seemingly disparate interests of the university, community groups, business and property owners and residents in an effort to boost the town's fortunes.

The change in liquor standards in Slippery Rock comes at a time when revisions

in the state liquor code are bringing major changes to how licenses are distributed throughout the state.

"This whole thing was not about liquor," said Mr. Bonando. "The whole impetus for this and the genesis for this project was economic development."

Leading the way is a 2-year-old community nonprofit organization known as Slippery Rock Development Inc. Along with the community's bank president, a few council members, and the owner of the local Giant Eagle, the organization includes Herb and Jane Burger. Mr. Burger was a principal of the St. George Group, once an advertising agency based in Pittsburgh, while Ms. Burger was co-director of the Grable Foundation.

Although Mr. Bonando's job includes overseeing the campus lives of college students, which can include monitoring unsafe alcohol consumption, he views the liquor referendum as crucial to his university's ability to recruit and retain students and staff.

SLIPPERY SLOPE?

A town of more than 2,000 people, Slippery Rock is a somewhat isolated community located in the far northwest corner of Butler County.

Like many small Western Pennsylvania towns, Slippery Rock is a conservative community, with several churches, and a population of townspeople who settled there for the jobs in the mills and the mines. Unemployment in the Slippery Rock area is traditionally higher than Butler or Allegheny County averages, coming in at about 4.6 percent.

Dominated by Slippery Rock University, the town is close to Slippery Rock Creek and Moraine State Park. The Prime Outlets, an outlet retail complex that draws nearly four million customers a year, is eight miles away near Grove City.

But Slippery Rock isn't close to much else: Butler and New Castle are each 20 miles away. The Clearview Mall is a 15-mile haul.

Remote as it is, the town may prove an interesting case study of the role alcohol can play in helping to grow a local economy, and whether the potential social harm that alcohol can bring is worth the price.

Such societal concerns aren't the issue for activist community members such as Mr. Bonando, local bank president Bill Sonntag and residents Jane and Herb Burger. For them, improving the quality of life for townspeople who faced a three-hour excursion for any kind of sit-down dining experience that wasn't fast food was the priority.

They believe they can now accomplish that goal since, after failing three times

before over the course of 16 years, the referendum passed with a clear majority.

"One of the reasons it passed this time was the community clearly felt this was required to bring in a fine-dining establishment," said Mr. Burger, a board member of Slippery Rock Development.

While the community can buy beer by the case at its Beer Barn or make purchases at a state liquor store, Slippery Rock has always been a "dry" town -- meaning that there were not establishments with licenses to sell beer or liquor by the glass.

"We're encouraging the students to go out and get loaded because they can't buy one beer, but they can buy a case," said Mr. Bonando, a native of New York who has lived in Slippery Rock for 15 years now. "It makes no sense. That always blew my mind."

Yet other attempts to make Slippery Rock "wet" -- an effort that required collecting petition signatures (totaling 25 percent of the township's highest election turnout) before putting a referendum on the election ballot -- had failed three times.

"In the past, the wet/dry issue was very divisive in the community," said Connie Smith, a board member for Slippery Rock Development and the wife of university president G. Warren Smith.

The reasons were as obvious as a red-nosed college football fan standing half naked in stadium bleachers during a snowstorm. Slippery Rock may have 2,000 residents, but its university has 7,000 students that help to drive the local economy.

Especially in earlier petition drives that were led by the local student community, townspeople feared liquor licenses would mean the creation of college bars.

SLOW FOOD, WET TOWN

But with each referendum, the voter margin narrowed.

"It would be carefully controlled," said Mr. Burger. "And it would not be inciting too many student-type bars."

Much of the community attended a meeting held in 1999 in which residents were asked about ways to improve the town. Ms. Smith remembers that the opening of a "slow-food" restaurant was a recurring answer.

Yet, due to small-town politics, Slippery Rock Development never publicly endorsed the referendum, instead seeking broad-based support to remake the downtown.

But most of the organization's members individually endorsed the referendum.

The referendum was championed by Progressive Vision, an organization with a handful of members that was created to win its passage. The organization is headed by Frank Monteleone Jr., the son of Slippery Rock's former mayor and an owner of 50 apartment units in the town.

"As I began circulating petitions, that's when I was more and more confident that it had an excellent chance," he said, remembering the encouragement of other residents exhorting him with: "I'm with you. Let's get this town wet!"

A NEW VIEW

As he leads his way through the rest of downtown Slippery Rock, Mr. Bonando can envision a bustling main street lined with trees and Victorian lamp posts, where underground fiber-optic lines replace looming telephone poles. The three-block stretch would feature a gateway park complete with a waterfall, a welcoming sign and gazebo marking the town's entrance, along with a memorial park near the university.

Running through it all will be cobblestone sidewalks, picked out to highlight the community's famously colorful name.

Project plans have been drawn up by E.G. & G. Inc., an Ohio-based architect.

A \$1.8 million state grant will help pay for the sidewalk repairs, park and fiber optics. Groundbreaking is set for next spring.

Community leaders hope such improvements will encourage niche retailers, such as antique and craft shops, to open alongside existing hair salons and fast food spots. But attracting anchor developments such as hotels and restaurants wouldn't be possible if the town remained "dry."

"The fact that a hotel was not going to be able to attach a restaurant to it in which it could serve a glass of wine with dinner was a deterrent to a developer," Mr. Bonando said.

Forty-eight hours after the referendum passed, Creative Development Inc., a Cranberry-based developer, signed a land agreement for property near the Main Street district on intersecting Route 108. Eric Lamm, executive vice president for Creative Development, said the company is working to determine the viability of building a hotel there.

"No doubt, (the referendum) certainly solidified our interest level in pursuing a project up in Slippery Rock," Mr. Lamm said. "I just think in this day and age, you have so much competition, you want to have as many resources to vie for that

customer. If you have alcohol, it's one more resource."

Creative Development, which built a hotel in Cranberry, is considering a limited-service hotel, perhaps a Hampton, that would serve the university, townspeople and visitors to the outlet mall.

Mr. Lamm expects to know whether Creative Development will go through with the plan within a month.

While it's only six months since the referendum passed, the community has yet to experience an influx of bars with cheap drink specials luring in throngs of freshmen and sophomore students.

"The college students expected that if the town went wet that when they came back, the town would have a hotel by now," said Mr. Monteleone.

A bar or restaurant must apply for Slippery Rock's two initial licenses with the Pennsylvania Liquor Control Board. But the community has the right to protest if an establishment doesn't meet its standards. With the new state law, licenses seeking transfer into Slippery Rock would require approval by an existing, elected council.

The LCB said it hasn't received any liquor license applications yet.

Redevelopment plan makes Slippery Rock a destination

By Joan Greene

FOR THE TRIBUNE-REVIEW

Sunday, October 7, 2007

A few years ago, Slippery Rock was a sleepy, little college town in northern Butler County that had seen better times.

But with the redevelopment of the borough's downtown area, it is a destination that draws more students to the charming, 600-acre Slippery Rock University campus and visitors from around the state to its new shops and restaurants.

Slippery Rock claimed its 15 minutes of fame in August, when a photograph of the borough was displayed in New York City's Times Square. Butler County Tourism officials submitted a picture of the borough in response to a contest, sponsored by Dell, seeking unique towns with quirky names.

For two days, an image of Slippery Rock was flashed periodically on a huge electronic billboard.

The borough looks and feels like a destination, a place where people go to eat and socialize, as well as take advantage of the university's cultural and sports programs, says John Bonando, the university's assistant vice president for student life.

The \$7.5 million redevelopment effort, which began in 2003, has been led by a group of community, business and university leaders, says Bonando, who is also a member of Slippery Rock Development Inc.

Funded by state and county grants, a "sizeable" donation from the university foundation and private donations, the first phase of the project was completed in 2005.

The first thing visitors see as they drive into the borough off of Route 108 is a water sculpture next to the borough's new sign, "The Village at Slippery Rock."

The new look of the borough of 3,000 residents features a gazebo with benches and a new streetscape along South Main Street, complete with buried utility lines, new sidewalks and storefronts, trees, shrubs and lampposts. Benches with plaques in honor of citizens who made donations to the redevelopment project line South Main Street.

"Everyone has had a phenomenally positive reaction to the borough's new look and services," Bonando says. "It's a win-win situation."

The second phase of the redevelopment, which is slated for completion next year, focuses on sprucing up auxiliary roads off of South Main Street and construction of a 75-room hotel, two new restaurants and a strip mall off of Franklin Street (Route 108).

In conjunction with the changes, the local Giant Eagle gave itself a major facelift and adding a drive-thru pharmacy and Get-Go gas station, says Ron Steele, borough council president.

"This is definitely a step in the right direction," Steele says. "We've had at least six to eight communities contact us, asking how we planned our redevelopment."

To accommodate potential residential growth, a three- to four-acre housing development is being planned.

Slippery Rock's redevelopment serves as a model for boroughs and townships in the county, says Jack Cohen, executive director of Butler County Tourism.

"Everything the borough has done is beneficial to Butler County in the way of tourism," Cohen says. "It gives people the opportunity to visit great restaurants

and shops."

Slippery Rock Mayor Kenneth Harris came to the borough in 1981 as a university faculty member. After retiring in 2000, he decided to stay in the community because of its size, social and cultural opportunities provided by the university, proximity to Pittsburgh and easy access to interstates 79 and 80. He became mayor in 2002.

"The redevelopment has had a huge significance on the borough in terms of physical appearance, new business and a boost in morale and spirit," says Harris, who also acts as the borough's historian.

Growth in stages

According to legend, the name of Slippery Rock was based on a tale of soldiers chasing Indians across a nearby creek and they slipped on a rock, Steele says.

Settled in 1803 by Scottish, Irish and Welsh immigrants, the borough was established initially as Centreville in 1841 and was the center of the agricultural region of Butler County.

Coal was mined in the surrounding countryside.

Slippery Rock State Normal School (now Slippery Rock University) was established in 1889 as a teachers school, and today, the university is well known for its education program.

In 1900, the borough's official name was changed to Slippery Rock, and by the 1920s, Slippery Rock State College was the economic center of the township, Harris says. The growth of the college "really took off" in the 1960s and today 8,400 students are enrolled at the university which has its largest freshman-class enrollment in 10 years.

Although the university remains the major economic hub of the borough, Minteq, a producer of refractory ceramic products for industrial use, also is located in Slippery Rock.

In November 2006, the borough snagged a minor-league baseball team, the Slippery Rock Sliders. Playing in the Frontier League and using the university's Jack Critchfield Park, the Sliders provide "another unique entertainment option" for the borough, says Steve Tahsler, the team's general manager. "Everyone in town, from fans to small businesses has been good about supporting the ball club," Tahsler says. "The redevelopment of downtown has helped the team because the more people who come to the area, the more support and publicity we receive at our ball games."

Steele grew up in the borough and has "fond" memories of roller skating with friends at Etna Springs and swimming and picnicking at Rock Falls (amusement) Park, located a couple miles outside of town, he says. Both facilities closed down in the 1970s.

Another popular hang-out, Steele says, was the Roxy Theater. Located on South Main Street, the movie house burned down in the 1970s.

Prior to 1962, the high school was located on the grounds of the college in what is now the McKay Education building, Steele says. The current high school is located across the street from the university.

Special events

Similar to many small towns and boroughs, Slippery Rock hosts several special events throughout the year.

The Third Annual Village Fest, held Sept. 15, celebrated the beautification of the borough, Steele says. During the event, South Main Street was closed to traffic and filled with crafters, food vendors and an array of special activities.

At the Village Fest, the borough's fire department celebrated its 100th anniversary with a parade down South Main Street, says Steele, who is an assistant fire chief.

The borough's biggest annual event is the Slippery Rock University Homecoming. Set for Oct. 13 this year, it features a parade followed by the football game against Clarion University. "Almost everyone comes out for this. It involves the entire community," Steele says.

Ghouls, goblins and other dubious characters converge on South Main Street for the annual Halloween parade on Oct. 31, sponsored by the fire department. Adults, children and pets dress up as their favorite characters and are judged at the fire hall, where they receive treats.

Today, South Main Street is beginning to flourish with a mixture of old and new businesses. A staple is the Camelot Restaurant. Known for its 99-cent breakfasts and homemade cinnamon rolls, the restaurant is especially popular with the college crowd living on a tight budget.

Taking a break from football practice, university sophomores Brian Henion, 19, of East Philadelphia, and A.J. Saunders, 20, of New Kensington, devoured the Camelot breakfast special. "I enjoy how the campus is spread out and the town is a typical, clean, old-fashion small town," says Saunders.

For the past three years, several former female employees of First National

Bank in Slippery Rock have met every Monday morning for breakfast at the Camelot.

"I worked at the bank for 38 years and came here for lunch almost every day," says Ruth Wigton, of Plain Grove, Lawrence County. Wigton noted that changes to Slippery Rock are "nice additions" that should help the borough grow.

In 1998, when Bob McCafferty, of Butler, purchased the building that now houses his restaurant the North Country Brewing Company, Slippery Rock was still a dry town. Although the redevelopment project wouldn't begin for a few years and the borough didn't become "wet" until 2001, McCafferty strongly believed in the "potential" of the borough.

The microbrewery, opened in February 2005, is located in the former Butler County morgue. Having the restaurant located in the former morgue building, where there may be more spirits than just beer brewing in the basement, adds to the ambiance of the restaurant. The cool temperature of the basement is ideal for brewing beer, McCafferty says.

'Polishing the Rock'

"The changes and improvements along Main Street have really brought the town around," says McCafferty, a member of the redevelopment committee. Once a month, local residents volunteer their time "polishing the rock," by picking up litter, pulling weeds and doing other general maintenance of the borough, he says.

Gregg Kristopher, of Harmony, did all of the intricate woodwork at the brewery, including the construction of the bar where he recently celebrated his 54th birthday.

"The redevelopment has improved the looks of Slippery Rock 100 percent," Kristopher says. "Hopefully, this will bring more business to town."

The microbrewery draws visitors to Slippery Rock from throughout Pennsylvania, says North Country general manager Keith Kolarosky, of Slippery Rock. "Microbreweries are popular and the restaurant helps bring people into town. The redevelopment has made the town look much nicer and now offers more to do," he says.

Former storefronts, empty for several years, now feature new facades and businesses. Across the street from the North Country Brewing Company is Rumors Coffee House, and hair, nail and tanning salons.

Ginger Hill Tavern Restaurant & Pub was one of the first new businesses to open during the redevelopment of the borough and has become a popular

hang-out with the college crowd, as well as a busy lunch and dinner spot for local business people, residents and university faculty and employees.

"The changes and opening of new businesses have made Slippery Rock essentially a nice college town -- clean and safe," says Slippery Rock senior Peter Parker, 22.

A beautiful, blue sky and comfortably warm weather welcomed university students to campus the first day of classes, Aug. 27. The ringing of the bell in the Old Clock Tower located in the Old Main building in the historic quad of the tree-lined campus, added to the quaint and historical ambiance of the campus.

Seeming in no hurry to get to class, David Gornick, a junior who transferred from Kent State, strolled along the walkway near the new Advance Technology and Science Hall with his Boston terrier puppy, Tyson.

"I like the campus; it's small. I've already met a lot of people," says Gornick, 20. "With the town within walking distance, (the university) is like its own little city. A lot of things revolve around the university." Gornick notes that one of his favorite spots for pizza is Luigi's on South Main Street, an Italian restaurant that was in business for several years before the redevelopment.

Harris' wish list for future development includes affordable housing, rehabilitation of older homes, business expansion and enhancement of infrastructure.

"I hope we can find ways to fund a Phase III to expand the enhancement of the borough and achieve a number of these things in the next five to 10 years," he says.