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RIDC Shows Off New Almono Plan

By Tim Schooley

The development team for the 178-acre former J&L steel mill site in Hazelwood debuted their new master plan for the brownfield redevelopment to the real estate community Thursday, billing it as perhaps the region's first true riverfront project.

"It's going to be a front door on the riverfront," said Ken Doyno, a principal for Rothschild Doyno Collaborative, the planning firm for the project. "We don't actually have riverfront development that accomplishes that."

Doyno was joined by Don Smith, president of the Regional Industrial Development Corporation of Southwestern Pennsylvania, and Rob Stephany, the former executive director of the city's Urban Redevelopment Authority now with the Heinz Endowments, to present the plan at a breakfast meeting of the National Association of Industrial and Office Properties at the Omni William Penn Hotel. RIDC is the manager of the property on behalf of its owner, Almono Partners, a collection of four local foundations -- Heinz, Benedum, McCune and R.K. Mellon -- who bought the former mill site in 2001 for \$10 million in order to ensure a quality redevelopment, a plan which has taken more than 12 years to achieve.

Doyno and Smith detailed a master plan comprised of four separate phases:

Riverview, a high-density mixed use district on the narrowest part of the site closest



to Oakland and Downtown;
 a central green area designed around a restored wheel house;
 an eco-tech park, focusing on light industrial around a repurposed mill structure;

Hazelwood Flats, a new residential neighborhood that would seek to connect with both the established Hazelwood neighborhood as well as the riverfront.

Smith noted the master plan was the third one for the site, which became necessary because the plans for the Mon-Fayette Expressway which was expected to use the site, have fallen through while the rail line once slated to stop running through the Almono site continues to use its established line there.

While the site has established Act II environmental clearance, Smith said the site is expected to see more infrastructure work

later this year, including building new roads to run through the site.

"We have a program in place to make the land developable," he said. "Right now, it's not."

In total, the new plan proposes 691,645 square feet of industrial space, more than 2.1 million of mixed-use space and 1,320 new homes.

After meeting with various organizations in Hazelwood and beyond more than eight times over the new master plan, Smith suggested the project is beginning to move into marketing mode.

Noting that land is available to acquire at the site for between \$150,000 and \$250,000 per acre, Smith put out the invitation for inquiries from interested developers.

"There's no presumption that RIDC is going to develop this," he said.