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# A new hope: Development at old Owens-Illinois site begins

by John Mark Shaver  
STAFF WRITER

After 30 years of inactivity, the site of the old Owens-Illinois Glass Factory is finally seeing new development, as a Morgantown developer has committed to reinvigorating what's now being called the Speedway Business Park.

In 2015, Merit Development, LLC purchased the land in east Fairmont with hopes to capitalize on the growing economic status of North Central West Virginia, according to Merit Development President Tom Laurita.

"With the growth of Morgantown and the Bridgeport/Clarksburg area, we felt that Fairmont has become sort of a sweet spot and is in a position to experience growth in the near future," Laurita said.

In the years since the purchase of the property, Laurita and Merit Development Asset Manager Russell Bolyard said that plenty of behind-the-scenes work has been underway, despite development itself not starting until June 1 of this year.

"We're really still in the ear-

ly preliminary stages of development," Bolyard said. "We're moving the earth. There was a lot of prep work since 2015 that went into the permitting and the cleanup of the site to prepare it for construction ... All of that work had to be done in order to start the earth work..."

"It was a good bit of work. There was testing and the studying of the area, and then the development of the cleanup plan and the cleanup. It took about two years. We got our final completion report in late January of this year," he said.

In addition to that, Fairmont City Planner Sandra Scaffidi said that Merit has been doing some heavy work to make sure that, once completed, the park won't be affected by heavy rainfall or flooding.

"They've been working with FEMA to change the floodway there to create more developable land," Scaffidi said. "There's a channel that runs right through the property. Originally, it was wide and shallow, so now they're making it narrower and deeper. It'll retain the same amount of water, but create more devel-



Staff photo by John Mark Shaver

**Fairmont City Manager Sandra Scaffidi stated that precautions have been taken to ensure the property is not affected by heavy rainfall or flooding.**

opable land."

Bolyard said that now, Merit is about 25 or 30 percent completed with the earth-moving, with hopes to be fully completed with this phase of development by the end of autumn.

The development, Bolyard said, would be a huge boon to the area, bringing in businesses, jobs and hope to Fairmont.

"The area is zoned industri-

al right now, and so it a commercial aspect to that and light industrial work could be done there," Bolyard said. "We hope to attract business that will improve that area. We're hoping to provide more jobs and be an asset to Fairmont."

Scaffidi agreed, and said that the park, once completed, could change the face of the east side for the better.

**See Hope, 5**

# Wound Healing

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