AMD&ART

ALLEGHENY HERITAGE DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

PRAA! Pennsylvania Rural Arts Alliance

Creating Community Assets ***Volume I, No. IV - December 1997***

AMD&ART PROJECT: NEW OFFICE, NEW STAFF

Greetings! The AMD&ART Project is back in action after our autumn vacation, although quite a few changes have taken place since the last newsletter.

First, our office has yet another new address:

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Second, there have been a few changes in the personnel department:

- The position of Project Coordinator has been taken over by Shelbie Knox, who is an AmeriCorps member working through the Pennsylvania Mountain Service Corps. Shelbie interned with the project for the past two summers working as a site historian, and is very excited to continue her work with the Project.

- We would also like to welcome back Krista Patterson, a Penn State pre-law senior who compiled a comprehensive watershed plan and worked on ownership issues for us this summer Murtha. As a Team Civic member of AmeriCorps, she will be hunting down and pursuing grants and funding opportunities for us this year.

- John H. Turner is now working on rail-trails and tourism issues out of the Allegheny Ridge Heritage Park, but will continue to be heavily involved with AMD&ART. Glad you're back, John!

PROJECT NOTES

1997 was very eventful for the AMD&ART Project, and were looking forward to a very "constructive" year in 1998. On behalf of the Team, best wishes for the holidays and a happy new year.

T Allan Comp, Project Director

We would like to thank Bob Grenoble and the National Road Heritage Park for sharing their office with us this year.

The AMD&ART Project will be brought to the people of Appalachia in the next issue of *Now and Then*, the publication of the Center for Appalachian Studies and Services at Eastern Tennessee State University.

Our appreciation is extended to the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts for a $3,000 Interdisciplinary Arts grant which is helping to keep this office running.

This month we are eagerly awaiting word about several funding opportunities, including the Sustainable Development Challenge Grant from the Environmental Protection Agency and a Special Initiative Proposal for the Center for Rural Pennsylvania, both of which we applied for over the summer. This funding will allow us to begin construction in Vintondale and begin the community design process in Portage/Jamestown and the Dark Shade communities.

VINTONDALE MOVES CLOSER TO SUCCESS

Busy Summer for Vintondale Team

This summer, tremendous progress was made with the Vintondale design. Team members met several times and made repeated visits to the site in order to put finishing touches on the site plan, including design work, engineering, and taking oral histories.

Borough Studies Park Grant

Allegheny Heritage Development Corporation Natural Resources Coordinator Dave Sewak met with the Vintondale Borough Council in November through the beginning of the system. This will reduce damage to discuss plans to submit a grant application to the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources. This grant will help to finance the community park and sports field that will overlook the treatment site.

Second Vintondale Meeting a Success

On August 19th more than fifty residents gathered at the Vintondale fire hall to view the revised site plan, where they participated in a lively and supportive discussion about the Project. Once again, Team members stationed themselves next to maps of the site, where folks voiced suggestions, concerns, and enthusiasm—all of which helps to ensure that the Vintondale environmental art park is a true partnership between the AMD&ART team and town residents.

Built upon the design presented at the February public meeting, the site plan features several components that weave together science, history, and art. The treatment system itself will not only clean the discharge, but will be used as an environmental learning center by local schools and universities. On land where now only the heartiest of plants can root in the boney-covered soil, a healthy new ecosystem will be created. Vintondale's past will reawaken in the wetlands, where the buildings and coke ovens that once dwarfed the town will be symbolically recreated in their original locations. The design of the Community Uplands is in the hands of town residents, and has been mapped out according to the needs of townspeople, including students and senior citizens, who added their input at the community meetings.

Issues Raised at the Public Meeting:

- *What access will there be to the site?* Because the Ghost Town Trail is a county rail trail, vehicular access to the site will be limited to emergency vehicles only. Footbridges which will be built with support from the Timber Truss Bridge grant will allow pedestrians to cross from town to the community park.

- *What happens when the Blacklick floods?* The system is designed so that flood waters will "back up" into the wetlands from the creek, rather than washing to the system and help keep the untreated AMD from washing into the creek.

What's Next?

We are excited to announce that next on the agenda is the completion of exact construction plans. We would like to thank the AmeriCorps Survey Team from Somerset for their help in making this possible.

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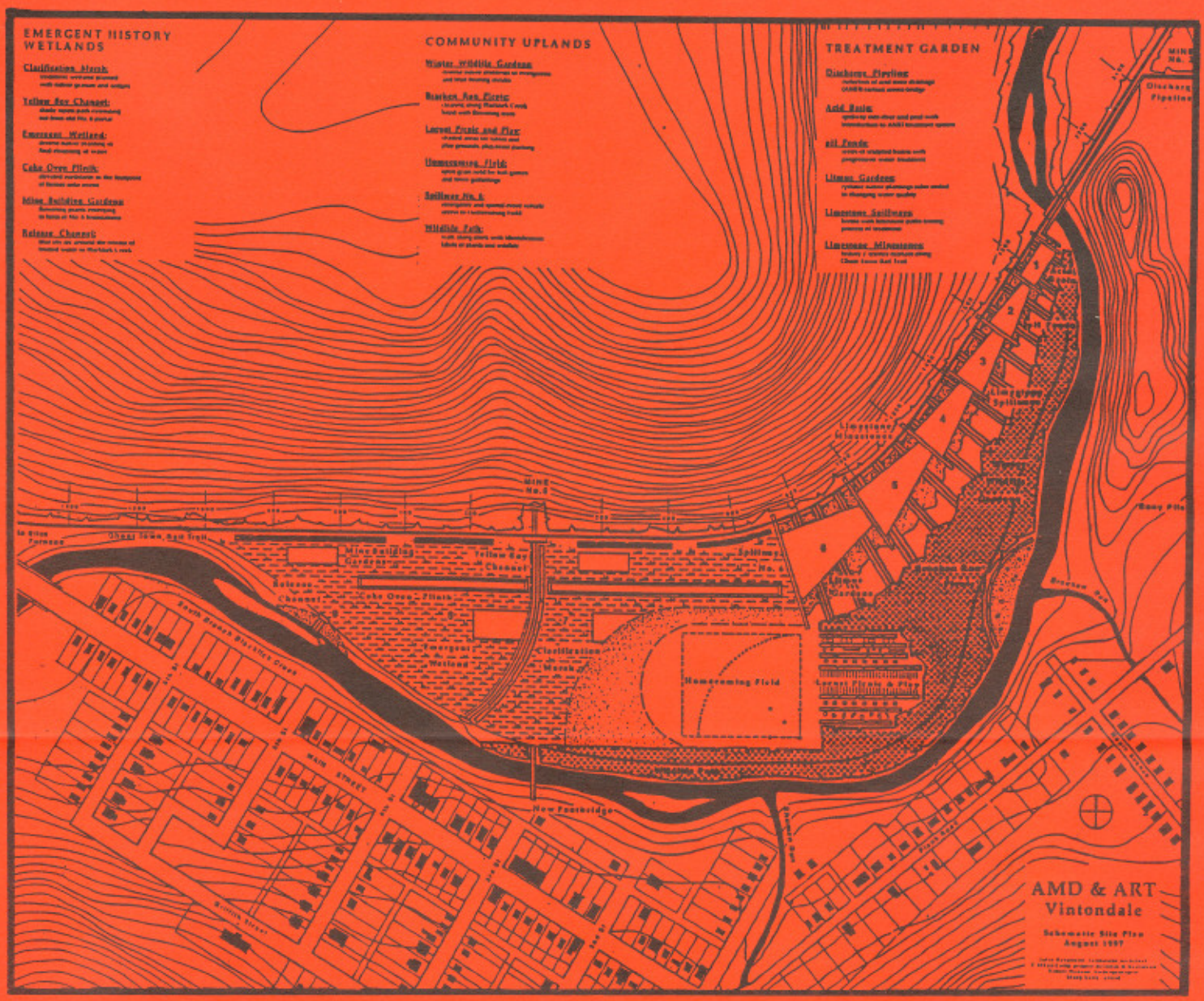
From Rust To Renewal Tours Region

Our traveling exhibit *From Rust to Renewal*, which debuted in July at the Southern Alleghenies Museum of Art in Altoona, went on the road after several weeks there. A collection of contemporary and historical photographs, artists' rendering of site plans, folk art and three-dimensional models, *From Rust to Renewal* brought a visual incarnation of AMD&ART's mission to the Portage Area Historical Society Museum during Summerfest and was displayed for more than a month in the Pasquerilla Gallery at SAMA Johnstown. We look forward to bringing the exhibit to more sites this year, especially in Somerset County, and are always looking for display opportunities!

REVISED VINTONDALE DESIGN UNVEILED



In the near future, people traveling west along the Ghost Town Trail into Vintondale will round the bend past the boney pile to see SAPS (acid-reducing ponds) and settlement ponds stained with iron oxide from AMD. Each pond will become increasingly lighter in orange as the water is neutralized; surrounding the ponds will be trees and shrubs whose colors will symbolize the cleaning of the water. A winter wildlife garden will be situated beyond the pools and limestone spillways while nestled next to the Blacklick will be a picnic clearing overlooking Bracken Run.

After passing the final spillway, visitors will gaze upon acres of restored wetlands, where vegetation will naturally remove minerals from the water. But this new habitat does more than restore the water: amidst the cattails and the grasses, a raised earthen mound representing 152 coke ovens and stands of flowering plants outlining the foundations of former buildings will evoke the massive scale of the structures—the washery, the power plant, the tipple, the machine shop—to which the town was once dedicated. Trail users will be able to read plaques about the historical mining and coking operations while imagining the giant buildings that stood where they see peaceful healing wetlands.

If they look back over the marsh, they will most likely see kids playing ball on the field in the community uplands. This park reflects the dialogue of the first Vintondale public meeting, where residents expressed their vision--a baseball field, a playground, and a picnic area. A nature trail will run along the Blacklick Creek past the wildlife garden to the treatment ponds, while a new timber footbridge could span the creek to connect the park directly with the town.

This is the pilot project of AMD&ART—the first installation of our vision of AMD remediation as more than simple water treatment. Where the people of Vintondale once gathered to work, they can now gather as a community. And visitors won't see a barren piece of land bordered by an orange creek, but a beautiful park, a history—and a solution.

This project is sponsored by the and the **Pennsylvania Rural Arts Alliance** (PRAA) and the **Allegheny Heritage Development Corporation** (AHDC). PRAA is an eight-year-old non-profit service organization answering the needs of rural artists and arts organizations in this Commonwealth, with a primary service area in the Allegheny Highlands. It is a member organization with representation from twenty-one counties. AHDC is the private non-profit organization which emerged from the Southwestern Pennsylvania Heritage preservation Commission, which works to enhance historic, recreational, and cultural resources within the region as focal points for cultural tourism, economic development, and community improvement.

AMD&ART has benefited from the generous support of the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts; the Office of Surface Mining, Department of the Interior; STUDIO for Creative Inquiry, Carnegie Mellon University; the Pennsylvania Mountain Service Corps of the National AmeriCorps Program; the Heinz Endowments; the Southern Alleghenies Museum of Art (SAMA); the Cambria County Conservation District; the Stonycreek-Conemaugh River Improvement Project (SCRIP); the Blacklick Creek Watershed Association; the Kiski-Conemaugh River Basin Alliance; and EarthTech, Inc.

The AMD&ART Team also wishes to thank the communities of Vintondale and the Blacklick Valley, Central City and the surrounding townships, and the Portage area for their strong support.

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