



Only The Beginning

One industrial real estate professional's experience of an energy revolution as it happened.

by BRYCE CUSTER

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Oil and natural gas is part of the history of Ohio, Pennsylvania and West Virginia. In West Virginia, gas was first struck while drilling for salt in Charleston in 1826. Pennsylvania lays claim to the first oil rush in Titusville in 1859. One of the country's largest oil fields was discovered in 1884 in northwest Ohio.

With the advent of technology that allows for recovery of natural gas, natural gas liquids and oil (horizontal drilling and fracking shale) the Point Pleasant, Utica/Marcellus Shale formations have created a new oil & gas boom in the tri-state area.

At NAI Spring Commercial Realty, I was called on to locate offices for a consulting and

engineering client that I had worked with in a previous career. The client explained the enormity of sampling wells for drinking water analysis and said that something big was about to happen in the area. It was at that time the focus on oil & gas began.

To learn more about the oil & gas opportunity, I invited myself to the State of Ohio's Governors Conference in Columbus. It was 2012 and the late Aubrey McClendon, at the time with Chesapeake Energy, made the bold statement that shale gas would be "the biggest thing to hit the state of Ohio economically since maybe the plow."

At the same time, I was working with a client who was scouting sites for a potential natural

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gas-fired power generation facility in either Carroll or Columbiana County, Ohio. A site was selected on the outskirts of Carrollton. A \$900-million, 700-megawatt electrical generation facility from Carroll County Energy was to become a reality for Carroll County. This facility resulted in 500 construction jobs and, most importantly, a new high school for Carrollton.

As land leases were being executed and drilling was beginning, the epicenter of

Panhandle of West Virginia. With the Shell petrochemical cracker in Monaca, Pennsylvania, this area of the Ohio River Corridor is seeing an extreme amount of activity both nationally and globally.

We are currently working with companies from Germany, Israel and other Middle East countries that require an abundant supply of low-cost natural gas or natural gas liquids. I have had the opportunity to take many out-of-country and out-of-state guests on tours of the area.

Starting on Interstate 379, the Shell Chemical facility is being constructed on the former Horsehead zinc smelter site in Beaver County, Pennsylvania, on the banks of the Ohio River. Traveling south along the river, there are multiple brownfield sites and facilities that could potentially house companies to support the Shell facility. We are also anticipating the possibility of plastics and derivative companies locating along the river.

In East Liverpool, Columbiana County, Ohio we are working with the Columbiana County Port Authority on the redevelopment of industrial facilities in and around the Ohio River. We have large industrial facilities that could be revived and used for the new industries locating in the area. The World Trade Park in Leetonia, Ohio, is a 126-acre greenfield designated foreign trade zone industrial park that will see industry expanding or locating to the area.

Weirton, West Virginia, across the river from Steubenville, Ohio, is now the eastern US location for Bidell Gas Compression, a subsidiary of Canadian based total Energy Services, Inc. Bidell has leased the former ArcelorMittal central machine shop for their operations. Pietro Fiorentini, an Italian manufacturer of pressure regulators and valves will be building on a 26-acre parcel in the Weirton Three Springs Business Park.

We are beginning to see the landscape of the Ohio River Corridor change. Many people I speak with say that oil & gas has come and gone. But drilling gas wells in the Utica/Marcellus region was just the beginning. The real opportunity for the Ohio River Corridor is yet to come. ▲

Between June 2012 and the end of 2016, the American Chemistry Council tracked 560 US plastics processor facility investments, noting the competitive advantage from shale gas development.

Chesapeake Energy drilling activity was in Carroll County, population 27,669. Canton, Ohio, in Stark County trademarked the phrase "Canton: The Utica Capital." Stark County continues to be the home of Chesapeake Energy and many other E&P, midstream and downstream organizations. At NAI Spring, we had the opportunity to work with countless companies supporting the oil & gas industry.

Many new pipelines continue to be built while other pipelines are reversing flow from being importers of natural gas and natural gas liquids to being exporters of product to the Gulf Coast and East Coast.

Impact on Villages, Cities and Counties

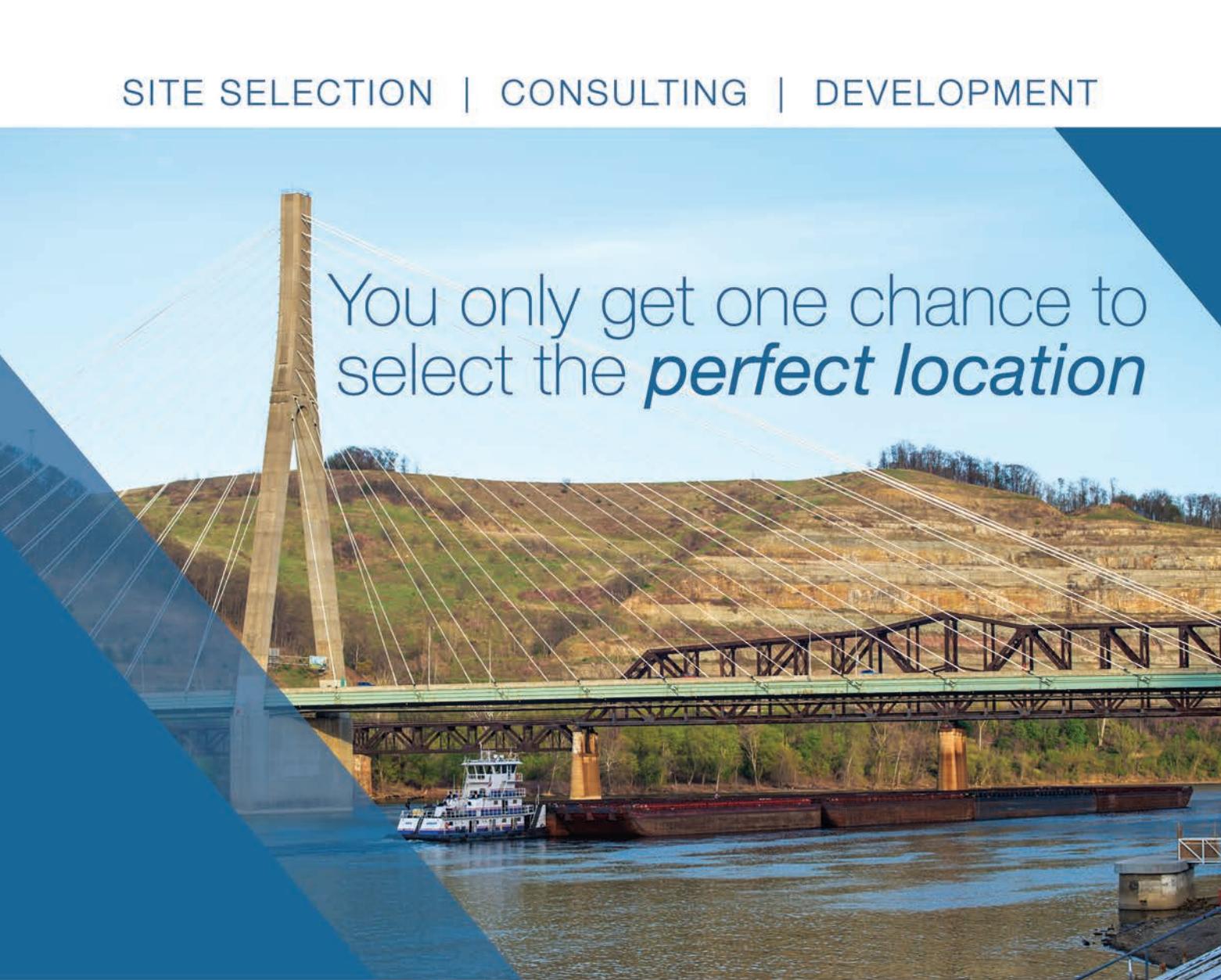
Carroll County Energy's investment is by far the largest investment that this community has ever seen. A similar story is repeated in cities and towns throughout the tri-state area.

Canonsburg, Pennsylvania, is a direct beneficiary of oil & gas companies locating to the Marcellus Shale area. Canonsburg is home to Southpointe, a 589-acre suburban business park along I-79 that is home to numerous oil & gas companies, including CONSOL Energy. We are working with many companies in the Northern



Bryce Custer, SIOR, CCIM, leads commercial and industrial real estate firm NAI Spring Commercial Realty in Canton, Ohio, and in 2016 founded Ohio River Corridor Inc. to focus on energy and petrochemical property and investment opportunities throughout the tri-state region. A former environmental chemist, he has been active in industrial real estate investment and advising for more than 20 years.

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