Reclaiming the Land, Revitalizing Communities – Brownfields Redevelopment

A Compendium of Best Practices, Vol. 4
The United States Conference of Mayors is the official nonpartisan organization of cities with populations of 30,000 or more through their chief elected official, the Mayor.

The United States Conference of Mayors

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# Table of Contents

From Landfill to Parks: City of Austin, TX .................................................................3

A New Chapter in Economic Development: City of Buffalo, NY .................................7

Green Education for the Community: City of Chicago, IL ...........................................13

Reinventing a Neighborhood: City of Denver, CO ......................................................17

A Neighborhood Transformation: City of Indianapolis, IN .......................................21

The Tangled Web of Site Acquisition: City of Mansfield, OH .....................................25

Partnerships and Collaboration Seal the Deal: City of Miami, FL ...............................29

The Return of a Local Gem: City of Oklahoma City, OK ............................................35

Sometimes, Timing is Everything: City of Southfield, MI ........................................41

Major League Brownfield Redevelopment: City of Washington, DC .........................45
Dear Mayor,

This publication, Reclaiming the Land, Revitalizing Communities - Brownfields Redevelopment A Compendium of Best Practices, Vol. 4, is another installment of successful brownfield redevelopment case studies from cities throughout the nation. Each case study, or best practice, is based on information that city staff voluntarily provided through an annual U.S. Conference of Mayors questionnaire.

Cities included information about site history, environmental contamination and remediation, financing strategies, redevelopment, and lessons they learned along the way.

While there is not a single recipe for successful brownfields redevelopment, these case studies exhibit at least two common themes. First, cities are most successful if they are able to utilize a variety of public and private recourses, including private capital and government programs at the local, state and federal levels. Second, through brownfields redevelopment, cities can reap significant environmental and economic benefits through site improvement, job creation, and new residential, commercial and industrial opportunities.

A less visible theme throughout this document is the fact that most of the projects occurred while the nation has struggled through the deepest recession in decades. Each case study is a testament to the ingenuity that mayors, their staff and members of the public and private sectors exercise to improve what can often be distressed local economies. Each case study also speaks to the idea that renewing an existing brownfield, where there is ample infrastructure and a willing job pool, is a better option than building a brand new development at the expense of open space and sustainability.

I would like to thank all the mayors and their staff who contributed to this document. If you are interested in a contribution to future volumes, please contact The U.S. Conference of Mayors.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Kautz
Mayor of Burnsville
President, The U.S. Conference of Mayors
From Landfill to Parks

City of Austin, TX
Mabel Davis Park Site
Lee Leffingwell, Mayor *

Project Summary

Through the cooperation of local, state and federal agencies, the City of Austin was able to successfully redevelop a contaminated site into one of the region’s largest and most active urban parks. The newly remediated Mabel Davis Park, previously used as an old landfill and illegal dumping ground for hazardous materials, now includes large play fields, wildflower meadows, a creek and pond, a skate park, hiking and bike trails, picnic areas and a basketball court.

Previous Use

Before the City of Austin purchased the 50-acre plot of land adjacent to an elementary school and in the middle of a residential neighborhood, it had operated as a gravel quarry for an unknown length of time until 1944. The site was then converted into St. Edward’s Municipal Waste Landfill, operating until 1955. Afterward, the landfill remained abandoned for 19 years and became an illegal dumping ground for lead battery casings and pesticides, which contaminated several parts of the site. In June of 1974, the City of Austin Parks and Recreation Department purchased the site and with few rules and little regulation for developing on top of an inactive landfill, redesigned and improved a small portion of the whole site as the original Mabel Davis Park. The remainder of the site remained undeveloped and included a two-acre spring-fed pond, 35 acres of dense vegetation and volunteer-planted trees that had grown on the thin soil covering the old landfill.

Remediation and Redevelopment

Unaware of the hazardous dumping that had occurred while the park was inactive, the City of Austin found the contamination after performing several environmental site assessments in 1999. In 2000, the city made the decision to conduct an in-depth, comprehensive investigation that included taking almost 1000 soil sediment, groundwater and surface water samples both within and outside the site as well as the installation of dozens of soil borings and groundwater monitoring points. In addition to the lead and pesticide contamination, exposure to leachate from the dormant landfill presented further public health and environmental concerns. Subsequently, the park was closed to the public. Under the direction of the City of Austin, the URS Corporation completed a series of additional environmental and public health assessments until early 2004.

* Submitted under former Austin Mayor Will Wynn
Remediation activities began in November of 2004, simultaneously addressing the leachate from the capped landfill; the environmental contamination from battery casing and pesticides; the inflow of surface and groundwater that further spread contamination; managing public expectations; and planning a park for long-term public use. The remediation process involved removing contaminated soil in some areas; capping contaminated soil in other areas with a thick layer of soil (up to 30”); removing sediments from a private pond adjacent to the property; rebuilding the creek that had caused erosion into the landfill; re-grading and recapping the landfill; and installing a leachate collection system. The existing pond was left alone because removing the sediments would have caused further environmental harm, especially because it was home to a mature and viable ecosystem with fish, turtles, birds and wetland plants. URS Corporation and the City of Austin agreed to mitigate the pond sediment contamination through an Ecological Services Analysis (ESA) and the construction of an off-site storm water pond that the city was in the process of designing. This mitigation approach was the first in the state with an ESA approved by the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality and the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department.

The remediation and redevelopment of the park was overseen by an inter-departmental team, including the Solid Waste Services Department, the Watershed Protection and Development Review Department, the Public Works Department and the Parks and Recreation Department. Although the former park had only used a limited portion of the site, the new redevelopment, finished in December 2005, took advantage of almost the entire 50 acres of the property. Mabel Davis Park has become a truly regional park, with large play fields, meadows, trails and a one-of-a-kind skateboard bowl that has led the way for other innovative outdoor projects. The city now budgets funds annually to restore green spaces for outdoor sports activities.

**Financing and Administrative Process**

Although difficult, the City of Austin made this 5 ½ year, $10 million dollar project possible mostly through city-issued bonds. The bonds are being paid back by the City of Austin Abandoned Landfill Remediation Fund, which is funded annually by three city departments. In addition to the bonds, the US EPA Brownfields Cleanup Revolving Loan Fund provided the City of Austin’s Brownfields program with a $500,000 loan for site cleanup. The city also made an interdepartmental loan and received a 20% governmental discount on the amount to be repaid.

While local, state and federal agencies worked together to fund, remediate and redevelop the site, the surrounding community stayed involved by providing critical support and developing solutions to meet the recreational needs of the area. Public concerns about health and the initial closing of one of Austin’s key parks prompted city officials to go to great lengths to provide information about the real versus perceived risks. The city also involved the public by continually keeping it informed as the project progressed. Numerous presentations, public meetings and notices were made available to the public and the mayor attended many town hall meetings throughout the entire process.

**Lessons Learned**

The complexity of restoring and redeveloping Mabel Davis Park was the greatest challenge for the City of Austin. However, in the end, the city was able to take a park that was inaccessible and a potential threat to public health and the environment and turn it into a valuable public amenity. Citizens now have access to a park with around three times the usable recreation and open space as was once there. For a city always in need of more and better green spaces, redeveloping this site provided more space without the purchase of new land.
The 50-acre remediation addressed different environmental and health concerns while adjacent to a residential neighborhood and school, and has become a large-scale example of a successful integrated waste cleanup and parkland restoration project. The development of this park is likely to influence the residential population surrounding the park, attracting younger families and will further help develop this neighborhood into a dynamic and diverse community.

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*Before redevelopment, above, the Mabel Davis Park site suffered severe environmental degradation. The redeveloped park, below, offers clean, green open space.*
A New Chapter in Economic Development

City of Buffalo, NY
Union Ship Canal
Byron W. Brown, Mayor

The closing of the Hanna steel plant in south Buffalo in 1982 signaled the end of a chapter in the city’s economic history, which for more than a half-century was dominated by steel production. But since 2001, a project at the former Hanna site has been setting the stage for a new economic future for Buffalo. A vast redevelopment is converting 113 acres of land – including the abandoned Hanna plant, an adjacent shipping canal, a former railroad yard, and a 19-acre disposal site – into the Buffalo Lakeside Commerce Park. In the process, the city is cleaning up contaminated soil; recycling available infrastructure; luring developers away from greenfield sites and into the urban community; boosting city commerce, jobs, and the local tax base; and eliminating blight.

Site History and Acquisition

On the Southside of the City of Buffalo in what was a former steel manufacturing corridor, close to NYS Route 5 and minutes from Interstates 190 and 90 lies the Union Ship Canal/former Hanna Furnace Site. The Union Ship Canal is conveniently located adjacent to CSX Rail lines, nearby waterways, sewer and electric lines, along with the close proximity to other redeveloped former industrial sites. Located in an area once renowned as the hub for steel and iron manufacturing in Western New York, this site was once the home of Hanna Furnace, a pig iron production facility. Across the street from this project is the Steel Winds development, with the largest number of wind turbines on the Great Lakes, close to the Port of Buffalo, near the Tifft Farm Nature preserve. The area around the project has always been industrial, but after the steel industry left the region, the area remained abandoned and neglected; now the City of Buffalo and its surrounding communities are ready for its reuse.

Nearly 100 years of industry had left its mark on the Hanna property. From the early twentieth century the site produced pig iron, raw iron forged in a blast furnace, first for the Buffalo Union Steel Corporation. The Hanna Furnace Corporation bought the site in 1915.

When the Saint Lawrence Seaway was complete, Buffalo lost its prominence both as a shipping route and a hub for steel manufacturing. The Hanna site closed in 1982. For the next three years, the site was a scrap yard. In 1986, the scrap dealer filed for bankruptcy, leaving the property unmanaged for more than decade. The deteriorating lot presented an unsightly scene to those traveling into the city from the south.

The sprawling site had tremendous untapped potential for new industry, however. Approximately one mile from the bi-national Peace Bridge linking Buffalo to Fort Erie, Ontario, it had easy access to both rail and highway shipping. It also lay within one of three commercial corridors identified by the city as priorities for economic development, business attraction, and business retention.
The City of Buffalo acquired the initial parcel of property in 1998 and subdivided it into four separate parcels:

- Parcel 1: former rail yard, 43 acres.
- Parcel 2: the manufacturing area, 29 acres.
- Parcel 3: 200 ft-wide strip around the canal, about 22 acres.
- Parcel 4: a 19-acre area where manufacturing wastes were stored.

In 2002, the final parcel of property was acquired by the City of Buffalo through tax foreclosure. The Buffalo Urban Development Corporation (BUDC) acquired the property to develop Buffalo Lakeside Commerce Park the following year. There were tax issues with the City of Buffalo, so the city’s Assessment and Taxation office took the property in foreclosure, which erased the tax liability.

Work on the new 22-acre waterfront park is expected to be underway in 2010, with a completion of July on the schedule. The Union Ship Canal public open space will include the Union Ship Canal and a 200’ buffer around the canal. Known as a signature feature of Buffalo Lakeside Commerce Park, the canal park is located east of Route 5 along the Buffalo/Lackawanna border. Development of the park will be an amenity for the area by providing residents, business park employees and visitors waterfront access and an environmentally friendly reverence to the site’s industrial heritage.

Once completed, the park will provide approximately 22 acres of urban waterfront green space with over a mile of bike and pedestrian trails along the canal front. An additional mile of pedestrian pathways and a parking area for approximately 100 vehicles have also been added to the original plans. Restoration of the 10-acre canal itself will promote the growth of native aquatic flora and fauna; the use of non-motorized watercraft is also planned.

**Administrative Process and Public Involvement**

The City of Buffalo lies less than 25 miles from Niagara Falls, the location of the infamous Love Canal Superfund site, so Buffalo residents are keenly aware of environmental health issues. Consequently, public involvement and education became a crucial component of this project.
The City had already laid much of the groundwork in the late 1990s when it devised the South Buffalo Redevelopment Plan. This planning process launched an intensive public outreach initiative that involved businesses, local residents, the Common Council, and neighborhood leaders in discussions about the future of South Buffalo in general and the former Hanna site in particular.

The process further required that Buffalo produce an Environmental Impact Statement under the State’s Environmental Quality Review Act, including a series of public scoping sessions led by the city and its development agencies. Public process revolved around the voluntary clean up program administered by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYDEC). Various public sessions were held as part of the Voluntary Clean Up agreement. The State’s Department of Environmental Conservation attended these sessions, provided explanations of technical issues, and distributed fact sheets.

The public’s perceptions of the redevelopment process at the onset were mostly positive, and most were pleased to see that the land was going through the process of reclamation. Public support increased further as the park’s open space neared completion. The city initially overcame potential opposition, negative perceptions, and the perception of risk by having Buffalo Urban Development Corporation (BUDC) conduct a comprehensive environmental impact statement that addressed all concerns by the public.

The finished park will be used for recreational purposes including picnicking, fishing, and hiking, and will include a multi-use trail that will provide connections to neighboring Buffalo city trail networks. Construction began in phases, beginning with the environmental remediation of the existing pollutants in March 2010, replanting of native vegetation on the site began in early April and landscaping along with the construction of the multi-use trails is scheduled for completion by late June. The public is not only excited about the park’s completion but has been supportive throughout the long-term project.

Interagency cooperation has also been critical, and many entities have stepped forward to help, including the BUDC, on behalf of the City of Buffalo, the NYDEC, City of Buffalo Office of Strategic Planning, along with other entities. The city’s Department of Environmental Conservation created a generic environmental impact statement and, encouraged public participation within the community as a part of the ongoing DEC programs. The development of an urban renewal plan was also included in DEC’s overall agenda.
In addition to interagency cooperation, Buffalo collaborated with neighboring communities. For instance, the City of Lackawanna, located across the Union Ship Canal, served as a first responder to problems and emergencies at the project site and allowed BUDC to access the property from the southern boundaries in order to construct roads. Long-term professional relationships exist among staff of the cities, state and federal agencies, and local redevelopment boards involved, making it easy for these groups to collaborate as partners, solve problems, and work adeptly to accomplish goals.

Financing

Such cooperation helped generate a financing strategy that has been one of the project’s greatest successes so far. To date, the entire project, including all four subparcels, has required $485,000 for site acquisition, $1 million for environmental assessment, $2.1 million for infrastructure upgrades and redevelopment, and substantial funds for remediation.

An enormous number of partners helped pull together these funds. The city financed environmental assessment and remediation through Community Development Block Grants and a $1 million bond. The state supplied $2.1 million in Industrial Access Program funds for roads and $200,000 for environmental work through the Build Now-NY Program. State Empire Zone benefits allowed developers/property owners to receive property tax reimbursement. Erie County has committed $800,000 to the project, and the Erie County Industrial Development Agency (ECIDA) provided property tax abatements to the developers. Finally, the Army Corps of Engineers contributed in-kind through structural work done on the canal.

Do to recent market volatility and the economic downturn, the project was delayed from its original time frame, making it difficult to complete within the planned schedule. With the park scheduled to open summer of 2010, the project is gaining momentum and is on track for a successful completion.

Remediation and Redevelopment

In August 2003, CertainTeed announced a decision to become Buffalo Lakeside’s first tenant, relocating its headquarters from Cheektowaga, NY. CertainTeed partnered with developer Krog Corporation, which remediated the former railroad yard using a simple strategy of capping—either with a layer of clean soil or pavement—to prevent exposure. In 2005, Krog finished construction of CertainTeed’s new 245,000-square-foot manufacturing facility.
In and around the canal, the use of native plants and environmentally friendly materials will be attractive for new habitats for wildlife and fish. Artificial reefs will be placed on the bottom of the canal to attract more fish species and allow for the spawning of the aquatic life. The installation of a geotextile layer and canal sediment cover, in addition to the land cover system will protect the users of the park from the environmental contaminants that may exist from the historical use of the site as a disposal place for fill materials.

While the park alone will have an interior trail system, the essential part of the trail is the future connection to other local and regional trails including a planned South town Connector trails, The Tifft Farm Nature Preserve, and the Seaway Trails/Outer Harbor trail network. A pedestrian bridge crossing the canal at mid-point will create a connection to the north and south sides of the park and allow pedestrians to shorten their trip by over one-half of a mile.

Long-term improvements include the addition of an entertainment venue, a park building complex, promenade that will include restrooms, concessions, and maintenance equipment storage.

In addition to the environmental amenities, CertainTeed has retained 160 employees from its former Cheektowaga facility and plans to hire another 185 people, infusing new income into the south Buffalo neighborhoods.

Lessons Learned and Future Directions

The CertainTeed development was just the first step in a forward-thinking project that will visibly improve Buffalo’s southern gateway, give developers a competitive alternative to suburban greenfields, and help Buffalo become more vital and economically prosperous in the long-term. In mid-December 2005, Cobey Inc., a manufacturer of industrial pump systems, agreed to build its headquarters on a 12-acre section of the property and has since opened for business. Other business have also located their operations at the site as city and its redevelopment agencies continue to court occupants for the remaining available parcels.

Buffalo has embraced several farsighted measures to provide continued funding for the Buffalo Lakeside Commerce Park. For instance, a portion of the tax payments from the redeveloped properties will be retained in a fund, managed by the Erie County Industrial Development Agency, for infrastructure and other needs within the Commerce Park. In addition, the city and Erie County have partnered to apply for a $4 million grant from New York State to remediate and ecologically restore the 22 acres around the Union Ship Canal to provide a water amenity for the business park and waterfront access and bike trails for neighboring residents. The park build-out, which has sped ahead of schedule, has jumpstarted the new mayoral administration’s involvement in brownfields and created partnerships and strategies that can fuel new successes and future redevelopment opportunities.

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Green Education for the Community

City of Chicago, IL
Center for Green Technology
Richard M. Daley, Mayor

History

Mayor Richard Daley’s top priority is to make Chicago the greenest city in America. One way Mayor Daley has achieved this goal was by recycling land that was once considered or perceived to be contaminated. Mayor Daley invested time and resources into revitalizing the city’s Brownfield properties. Brownfield’s redevelopment has become the forefront of Chicago’s environmental initiatives. In 1993, the Mayor created the Chicago Brownfield’s Initiative (CBI) to help stimulate citywide redevelopments, by acquiring, rehabilitating properties, and returning them to productive use. The CBI targeted redevelopments in some of the city’s most impoverished and underdeveloped neighborhoods, which has uplifted the community and surrounding local economy. The revitalization of citywide brownfield sites has given residents healthy, safe, and environmental friendly communities to live in.

One major example of the city’s redevelopment efforts is the Chicago Center for Green Technology (CCGT). The center is located five miles from the Loop in the East Garfield Park community. The site was previously a location for illegal dumping of construction and demolition debris. The City of Chicago and its Department of Environment had the vision to invest in the land and give back the public an energy efficient center that could educate them on new environmental technologies and green design. The Chicago Department of Environment also offers a variety of free educational programs at Chicago Green Tech for professionals and visitors.

The building is currently occupied by WRD Environmental, an urban landscape company, and Chicago Greencorps, which train citizens in community gardening and green job training. The Center for Green Technology building is a venue for visitors to learn the benefits of green buildings. Over 30,000 people who wish to learn more about environmental friendly and energy-saving buildings visit the center each year. Visitors can take for self-guided tours and groups of 15 or more can register for guided tours of the entire Center for Green Technology and its campus. After the campus tour, visitors learn how to implement green ideas into their homes, conserve energy, and help the environment. A resource center is also available, with a small library providing green product samples to visitors.

Site History and Acquisition

Originally constructed in 1952, the 17-acre plot and building has been owned by many different companies, including the Sacramento Crushing Company. The Sacramento Crushing Company ran a business dealing in the collection of construction and demolition debris. Chicago’s Department of Environment first became involved with Sacramento Crushing because the company had exceeded the scope of the permit the city had granted it.
The dumpsite was found by the city to be filled with illegally dumped construction debris. In a three-decade span, over 600,000 cubic yards of waste had been accumulated. The site had collected enough illegal debris to accrue into 70-foot high mounds. The City of Chicago and the American Institute of Architects teamed with local architects to design the building using a strict set of guidelines established by the US Green Building Council. At the time of its completion, the Center for Green Technology was only one of three buildings in the US to receive Platinum Level rating from the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Green Building Rating System. Platinum level is LEED’s highest rating in green building technology standards.

Administrative Process and Public Involvement

In 1996, the Chicago Department of Environment successfully fought Sacramento Crushing in court to close down their operation and shut down the dumpsite. The Department of Environments then had the task of cleaning up the heavily contaminated brownfield. Funding from a variety of sources such as the city budget, legal settlements, and a Housing and Urban Development Section 108 loan was used to clean up the site. In 1999, DOE successfully cleaned the site and vacant building. The city became the official owner of the site at this time.

Members of the community discussed the idea with the city to develop a building that would showcase innovative green building technologies. The remediation and redevelopment of the Center for Green Technology had been successful due to government agencies, community groups and private entities that made health, efficiency, and environmental stewardship their top priorities for the site and building. The city worked particularly with U.S. Department of Energy’s Brightfields program and the American Institute of Architects Committee on the Environment to renovate the building. The city had completed renovation in 2003.

Financing

During site renovations, the City of Chicago’s Department of Environment charged the Commonwealth Edison Company for environmental violations of their franchise agreement. A settlement was reached that was worth $100 million. The city used this unique situation to construct the ideal environmental friendly building to showcase to the nation. A portion of the settlement money was allocated to the remediation of the brownfield site and construction of the Center for Green Technology.
The Department of Environment immediately began to guide the cleanup of the brownfield site. Nearly 18 months were needed to complete the cleanup process. The cost of the cleanup totaled to $9 million, while an additional $5.4 million was used towards the construction and renovation of the site. The total project cost summed to $14.4 million.

**Remediation and Redevelopment**

Over 600,000 cubic yards of concrete was cleared from the site. Nearly 45,000 truckloads were needed to completely remove the waste. The city sold some of concrete and other materials from the site to recycling firms. A portion of the materials were cleaned and reused by other departments for their projects. Erosion and sedimentation controls were implemented in construction to prevent any topsoil from leaving the site. A great deal of asbestos used in the construction of the original building was removed.

The city had the insight to replant the damaged site with native vegetation to restore the local ecosystem. To reduce the amount of runoff at the site, planed swales were used instead of curbs. A green roof system replaced typical gutters to collect rainwater to irrigate the newly constructed landscape. The natural process of a designed wetland on the campus was constructed to remove pollutants from storm water. Low flow toilets were installed in the building. A lighter colored material was installed as pavement around the site to reduce heat island effect. Bike storage is provided to commuters along with showers and changing facilities. Recharging stations are located in the rear parking lot for electric vehicles.

Over 40 percent of the materials used in the construction of the building had been recycle, alleviating the need for additional landfill space or new materials. The Center for Green Technology’s energy conservation capabilities reach very high standards, with solar panel system providing 45 percent of the buildings total electricity consumption. The water system in place retains over half the water that comes on site.

The redevelopment of the CCGT site created 38 new jobs for Chicagoans. The redevelopment of the entire brownfield site has the potential to create an additional 200 jobs, which will fill as the site develops further. At any given time, there are about 70 trainees on hand, too. These successes and innovations have led the Chicago Center for Green Technology to become a US EPA Phoenix Award Winner, which promotes excellence in brownfield redevelopment.

*Much of the Center for Green Technology involves native plant species that harvest rainwater, preventing it from burdening the city’s sewer system.*
Lessons Learned

One critical suggestion by the city when undertaking such an enormous project is choosing the right contractor. The scope of the project was quite ambitious. Chicago officials experienced difficulty finding the right contracting firm to design and construct a building that required a great deal of environmental planning. When well coordinated, brownfields projects are successful but be adaptable to unintended future uses. The city never planned to have public programming but there was such interest that it was easy to create tours, workshops and certification programs. Being able to work closely with the public and communicate is important to redevelopment.

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Introduction

While Denver’s economy has boomed since the 1990s – fueled by tech sector growth, the award of major league baseball contracts, and proactive downtown revitalization strategies spearheaded by Denver’s joint city/county government – not all residents had seen a boost in their quality of life. The number of people living in poverty in Denver increased by nearly a third between 1990 and 2000. Impacts of the foreclosure crisis and ensuing recession beginning in 2008 have exacerbated that trend.

The city and county have sought to bring new economic development and affordable housing to specific neighborhoods that have been left behind by Denver’s economic success. In 2000, Denver was named a Brownfields Showcase Community by the U.S. EPA, and in 2002, the City and County seized this opportunity to bring a mixed-use affordable housing development to Morrison Road in Westwood, a lower and middle income neighborhood on Denver’s west side. The project cleaned up a former junkyard and problem bar and created two three-story apartment buildings for dozens of families, with playgrounds, and at the street level, offices of the City Workforce Development Group, which continues to support economic development and job training in the neighborhood.

Prior Uses

Before the city intervened, the Morrison Road site was a blight on a community in need of new economic opportunity. More than 70% of the neighborhood was low to moderate income. And the site contributed little more than environmental contamination. Years of automobile salvage and wrecking had left hydrocarbons, semi-volatile organic compounds, and heavy metals, especially lead, in the soils and groundwater. A local eyesore, the junkyard troubled the business community around the property. Nearby residents were concerned about the adjacent bar, which held a reputation for noise and disturbance.

Recycling the Land

The City and County of Denver commissioned a geophysical survey in 2001 and purchased both the bar and junkyard from the owners in 2002 for approximately $1.52 million. Nearby properties were considered, but the City could not come to an agreement with the owners and avoided resorting to condemnation.
The Colorado Voluntary Cleanup Program (VSP) approved a remediation plan, and in 2003, Denver’s oversight contractor, SECOR International, excavated and removed contaminated soils. The excavation team discovered new petroleum pollution missed by initial site assessment, but the unexpected problem added little to the project cost, although it required a re-submission to the Colorado VSP. Assessment and remediation, in total, cost the City $80,000.

The city and county held two public meetings with neighborhood organizations and the Morrison Road Business Association, all of which supported the redevelopment. After an RFP process, Black Creek Communities signed on as the developer. The City transferred the land to Black Creek at a reduced cost, and construction began in the summer of 2003.

Financing

The City received funding from:

- The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Community Development Block Grant program for property purchase, cleanup, and building demonstration.
- The U.S. EPA Brownfields Showcase Program for assessment and to staff an EPA coordinator to jumpstart and oversee Denver’s program.

Black Creek Communities received low-income housing tax credits for developing affordable housing.

The Results

Local demand for affordable housing was strong enough to fill the apartments at Morrison Road within two months of opening and generate a waiting list of tenants eager to secure low-cost housing. The redevelopment also created 30 construction jobs that were advertised in the Westwood community.

The commercial development on the site has had more modest success. The Westwood neighborhood supports relatively few retail establishments, and was a challenging location for mixed-used development. Black Creek could not immediately find commercial tenants. As of 2009, the space was full with the addition of a community police office, the Morrison Road Business Association offices, and the city’s Workforce Development Agency.

Morrison Road was also the city’s first pilot project in directly purchasing contaminated property, and the process of negotiating complex risk and liability was an important learning step for the city brownfields program.

Brownfields Present and Future

Since Denver’s designation as a Brownfields Showcase Community, the city has developed an informal but active brownfields program led by the Department of Housing and Neighborhood Development. Four city staff are involved in Denver brownfields, including a full-time brownfields coordinator, whose salary is funded by the U.S. EPA. Funding constraints have limited the extent of the city brownfields programs, although Denver participates in the Colorado Brownfields Revolving Loan Fund and is also collaborating with groups like the Colorado Brownfields Foundation. The city
regularly receives requests for information on brownfields redevelopment from businesses seeking to relocate to Denver. Brownfields also play a significant role in Denver’s expanding light-rail system, which will be seeking new properties for light rail stations.

In August 2006, Denver’s Mayor John Hickenlooper launched Greenprint Denver, a citywide sustainability initiative that integrates strategies like brownfields redevelopment with energy efficiency, recycling, transportation, and pollution prevention.

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The Morrison Road development used to be a junkyard and an unruly bar. Now, affordable housing, a police substation and retail space occupy the site.
A Neighborhood Transformation

City of Indianapolis, IN
Douglass Pointe Lofts
Gregory A. Ballard, Mayor*

Project Summary

Once the site two abandoned gas stations, the Douglass Pointe Lofts now stand out as a thriving mixed use development in downtown Indianapolis. The new live/work development, in a neighborhood with historically high crime rates, houses nine businesses and residential apartments, including Goose the Market, a specialty grocery that has been said to have created Indianapolis’s best sandwich.

Previous Use

Abandoned for over 15 years, the two gas stations were located in a neighborhood filled with vacant lots and boarded up homes previously known as “Dodge City” because of its high crime rate. In 2001, the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) awarded a $4 million Home Ownership Grant to redevelop the entire neighborhood into what is now known as the Fall Creek Place redevelopment. The initial grant has allowed for the redevelopment of 70 existing residential units and the creation of over 300 new residential units on the abandoned infill lots and demolition sites throughout the neighborhood. In 2003, three of the four corners where the Douglass Pointe Lofts are now located were targeted for Brownfield redevelopment initiated by the City of Indianapolis, Mansur Real Estate Services, and a nonprofit Community Development Corporation Partner, King Park Area Development Corporation. The sites were purchased by the City of Indianapolis with HUD acquisition funds allocated for blight removal as part of the greater redevelopment strategy.

Remediation and Redevelopment

After purchasing the site, the City of Indianapolis contracted environmental consultants to conduct Phase I and Phase II Environmental Site Assessments. Remediation activities began in 2003 after the acquisition and the assessments were completed. In addition to source soil removal due to petroleum contamination, the contractors removed the underground storage tanks and pipes left from the gas stations. One of the sites was also noted to have possible contamination from chlorinated solvents from an abandoned dry cleaner across the street. Some extra preventative measures were taken towards any potential off-site migration of the solvents, including the requirement that new residential units include vapor mitigation systems to prevent solvent vapor intrusion. In 2004, the Indiana Department of Environmental Management provided “No Further Action” letter for each site, stating that the cleanup activities met all residential remediation standards and encouraging the redevelopment.

* Submitted under former Indianapolis Mayor Bart Peterson
Working with the Indianapolis Department of Metropolitan Development Division of Community Economic Development, King Park Area Development Corporation and Mansur Real Estate Services began construction on the sites in 2006. Today, the former gas stations are now the Douglass Point Lofts – three stories of nine residential and commercial units. The commercial units have large display windows and two floors above of living space for business owners. The tenants include a Yoga and fitness studio, Salon Orange Moon (an Aveda hair salon), an advertising consulting firm called Trendy Minds and the Indianapolis favorite, Goose the Market, known for a sandwich that has been called one of the best in the country.

The neighborhood formerly known as “Dodge City,” in 2002. The new Douglass Pointe Lofts now occupy the grey lots on either side of 25th Street. New homes, condos and apartments now occupy other vacant lots in this photo.

Financing and Administrative Process

The $4.5 million dollar project was completed in 2007 with help from the initial HUD grant and an EPA Underground Storage Tank pilot grant. The King Park Area Development Corporation received the property from the city once remediation was finished, and worked with a private development corporation called Minkis Homes and the lead developer for the neighborhood, Mansur Real Estate Services, to structure the remainder of the financing. After completion of the site, 23 permanent professional and retail jobs were created, along with 30 temporary construction jobs during the development.

Although Indianapolis often partners with the Indiana State Brownfields Program and the EPA Region 5 Brownfields Program to help tackle brownfield redevelopment projects, the city continually encourages Community Development Corporations (CDCs) and private developers to team up and “take the Brownfield challenge.” As in the case of Douglass Pointe Lofts, the City worked to gain federal (and in other cases, state) grant assistance to remedy the environmental conditions because the Community Corporation and private developer took responsibility for the redevelopment. The City of Indianapolis Department of Metropolitan Development’s Brownfields Program and Division of Community Economic Development lead the remediation funded by federal grants and then allowed the CDC and developer to take over the project in accordance with city and state residential regulations.
Lessons Learned

Providing new life to what used to be an abandoned and avoided area, the Douglass Pointe Lofts have transformed an area of a distressed neighborhood just two miles from the center of Indianapolis. In addition to reintroducing businesses, adding the live/work combination has started to revive sustainable development patterns with accessibility and walkability. As part of the larger award winning Fall Creek Place redevelopment, this project has been particularly successful in completely turning around a lifeless contaminated area in just five years. The Douglass Point Lofts have not only contributed to the creation of Indianapolis’s best sandwich but have also demonstrated successful mixed use and hopefully will drive more smart growth based development throughout the city.

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*The Goose the Market Café, other businesses, and the residences that compose part of the Douglass Pointe Lofts development now sit on the former site of an abandoned gas station.*
The Tangled Web of Site Acquisition

Introduction

The City of Mansfield, Ohio took the opportunity to show the community how a brownfield site – in this case, a former Johnson Controls facility – could be redeveloped into a useful property. The redevelopment of the Johnson Control site created new employment, increased the value of the property, and protected the values of surrounding properties. Prior to the project, the site was a vacant industrial property that would have continued to sit idle due to the uncertainty of the depth of the environmental issues. Idle properties such as the Johnson Controls site tend to have a negative impact on surrounding properties and can deter future investment, thus affecting future employment opportunities.

A well thought-out plan was developed that demonstrated the city could turn the underutilized brownfield into a viable property. Johnson Controls then passed the ownership of the site to the city. The most successful aspect of this project was finding an existing business to acquire the site from the city for the purpose of expanding their local operations and creating additional employment opportunities.

Site History and Acquisition

The Johnson Controls property was first developed for industrial use in 1971, when Mansfield Plastic Products, Inc. started a plastic molding operation in the western building. In 1973, Rogate Industries initiated chrome-plating operations in the eastern building. In October 1976, Hoover Universal, Inc. purchased the plastic molding and plating operations, and two years later, acquired the property. Hoover continued the plating operations until 1980, and the plastic molding operations until November 1981, at which time Calvin Stearns purchased the manufacturing operations. Hoover retained the mortgage on the property. In 1988, Calvin Stearns filed for bankruptcy, and the title was transferred to Walter Bussell and Mansfield Plastics, Inc. In 1994, Johnson Controls, Inc. (JCI), after acquiring Hoover, gained ownership of the property through foreclosure. In the mid 1990s, Johnson Controls, although never a contributor to the contaminants, addressed the aboveground environmental concerns and a portion of the underground issues. Under the ownership of Johnson Controls, the property sat idle for over 10 years due to environmental contamination concerns.

The City of Mansfield experienced the loss of a number of major manufacturing employers during the 1980’s and 1990’s. As the companies either closed their doors or relocated from Mansfield to other areas of the country, a large number of manufacturing buildings were vacated and in some cases, abandoned. Rather than allow these buildings to sit idle, the city pursued redevelopment of the sites by working with the owners or in the case of properties such as the Johnson Controls site, gaining control of the site through a negotiated agreement and pursuing environmental cleanup and redevelopment.
The project site sits within a 900-acre industrial park complex adjacent to Mansfield Lahm Regional Airport. The nearest concentrated residential area is located approximately 1.5 miles southwest of the site and is a low- to moderate-income area. The site was a particular area of interest to the city and had great potential for growth.

Administrative Process and Public Involvement

The City of Mansfield pursued the site for over three years, until it could negotiate ownership of the property in 1999, including securing funding for remediation activities. The city became a participant in the Ohio Voluntary Action Program (VAP) at the beginning stages of the program. Participants in the VAP are generally released from specified liability as long as they remediate properties according to regulatory guidelines. Concurrently, Crane Plumbing, L.L.C. entered into a two-year leasing contract with the city, which would become the property owner at the end of the two-year period, understanding that the city may still be in the VAP process. The city transferred the property to Crane in March 2002.

Much of the public was very skeptical due to the fact that the project involved environmental issues and involved the Ohio EPA’s Voluntary Action Program, which was not very popular at the time. After seeing the success of Johnson Controls site, the public deeply supported the city’s brownfield redevelopment efforts. They realized that this enabled the city to reutilize existing infrastructure and conserve green space.

Mansfield’s most significant role was successfully gaining ownership of the site and then managing the project through completion. Previous Mansfield Mayor, Lydia Reid, led the negotiations with Johnson Controls and was very instrumental in moving the project forward. As part of the US EPA Assessment portion of the project, Mansfield held public meetings to
provide information and solicit public input. The city formed a Brownfield Committee, made up of representatives from throughout the community. The city also formed strong working relationships with both the US EPA and the Ohio EPA.

Interagency partnerships were very important to the project, especially the partnership between the Ohio Department of Development and the Ohio EPA, relative to Voluntary Action Program projects and availability of grant funds for the project. At the local level, the city developed a strong partnership with the local health department and solid waste management authority. Interagency and local partnerships positively impacted the community by expanding local manufacturers to the site and increasing employment as a result of the project. Completion of the project proved that the City of Mansfield could successfully undertake such a difficult project from start to finish.

**Financing**

The city was successful in obtaining a grant from the US EPA to fund Phase I and Phase II environmental site assessments. The city’s plan for the brownfield site also included the identification of available state grant money. State grants enabled the city to complete additional necessary environmental formalities and enabled the known end user to move forward with its redevelopment efforts. Utilizing the information gained from the Phase I and II assessments, Mansfield was successful in obtaining a $300,000 grant from the Ohio Department of Development to complete the project.

**Remediation and Redevelopment**

The Johnson Controls property was an industrial site where plastic molding and plating operations were conducted starting in the early 1970s and continued for approximately 20 years. Unfortunately, this was during a time when policies for the management and use of hazardous materials were relatively non-existent. Therefore, the various chemicals and solvents used in the plastic molding and plating operations were prevalent at the site due to improper management and disposal. High concentrations of chemicals such as chromium, nickel, cyanide and acetone were detected in soils. Trichloroethylene was detected in soils beneath the area of floor trenches. Nickel concentrations were detected in the sediment samples collected from the drainage ditch.

Per Ohio EPA VAP rules, the City of Mansfield performed a property-specific risk assessment on exposure pathways for future construction/industrial workers via dermal contact and inhalation of volatile compounds for the former Johnson Controls property. Sample results obtained from the various media demonstrated no contaminants of concern (COCs) above the commercial/industrial direct contact standards or construction activities direct contact standards promulgated under the VAP.

The city concluded that the ground water exposure pathways for a future construction worker were not a risk. This conclusion was reached since the subject property lied within an approved urban setting designation; having a groundwater and property use deed restriction recorded for the subject property; and having results of a leaching demonstration that indicate that impacted soils will not impact deeper ground water zones.

Limited remediation was required on the site. The City of Mansfield demonstrated that the subject property was in compliance with applicable VAP Standards with the use of the City’s Urban Setting Designation, deed restrictions for the property, and a property specific risk assessment.
Lessons Learned and Future Directions

The greatest challenge the city faced was gaining ownership of the site. It was very difficult to convince Johnson Controls officials that the City of Mansfield could undertake and complete the project under the Ohio Voluntary Action Program. The Johnson Controls representatives had researched the VAP and felt that it was almost impossible to successfully complete a VAP project.

The most unique challenge was negotiating the acquisition of the property under terms and conditions that adequately addressed the concerns of Johnson Controls relative to the potential of future environmental liabilities. Through the efforts of the city law director and project-engineering firm, McCabe Engineering, the city was able to incorporate terms and conditions within the purchase agreement that addressed their concerns.

The main lessons learned: Once a community has committed to a brownfield project, be sure that all of the stakeholders clearly understand that the project will not be completed overnight. The process from assessment to satisfactory cleanup and ultimately redevelopment will most likely take years rather than months. This is especially true in grant-funded projects, due to funding cycles, competition and other requirements of US EPA and state resources.

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Partnerships and Collaboration Seal the Deal

City of Miami, FL
Midtown Miami Rail Yard Redevelopment
(Former Buena Vista Railroad Facility)
Tomas P. Regalado, Mayor*

Overview & Background

Midtown Miami is located within an area that was in need of revitalization and protection against encroaching blight and crime that existed within the immediate vicinity. The project site was considered underutilized by City of Miami planners, local economists and politicians, and was an area to avoid according to Miami residents.

Midtown Miami was once used as a heavy rail yard hub and maintenance facility. The rail hub, commercial establishments, and small industrial activities supplied numerous jobs for Miami residents. By the late 1980's the major commercial and small industrial activities gradually phased out, eliminating the number of jobs available within the 56 acres, and eventually led to the site being nothing more than a storage facility, contributing very little to the tax revenue of the local economy.

The city’s economic advisers, planners, and business groups began to plan for creation of urban livable communities by implementing infrastructure upgrades and attracting everyday amenities such as grocery stores, restaurants and retail outlets to accommodate a planned surge of new urban residents. As significant revitalization occurred surrounding the project site, developers and investors began to take an interest in opportunities for the Wynwood area, which included this project site.

Due to the former industrial operations, there was much uncertainty in terms of the extent of any contamination, and the potential expensive cost in case remediation of the entire 56 acres was needed.

With the recent changes in the community, investors were more willing to take risks and explore options to assist with any remedial environmental action needed for redevelopment. After years of planning, the redevelopment of this site became possible with the help of its location within an Enterprise Zone and a Designated Brownfields Area, both under Florida statutory authority. Additionally, the city created a Community Redevelopment Agency specifically for Midtown Miami.

The redevelopment of the Former Buena Vista Railroad Facility was influenced mainly by the blight present within the immediate vicinity of the Wynwood area. With the revitalization and improvements to infrastructure along the historic Biscayne Blvd to the east, the trendy Design District to the North, and emerging art studios to the west of the former railyard, its continued presence was a major obstacle to complete revitalization and investment.

* Submitted under former Miami Mayor Manuel A. Diaz
Previous Use and Ownership

Florida East Coast Railways owned the site until it was sold in 2002. The site was leased to other small industrial tenants beginning in the late 1980’s. Seaboard Marine was the largest and most recent tenant before the sale of the property.

Developers purchased the property from Florida East Coast Industries in December 2002 for $34.5 million. The purchasers consisted of the Midtown Group and they contracted the services of Biscayne Development Partners (BDP) and Midtown Equities (ME) to develop the retail and residential portions of the site. BDP/ME was responsible for managing the environmental cleanup as well. Once the development of retail buildings began, the 56 acres was re-sold to two groups. Developers Diversified Realtors purchased the retail development for $38.5 million. Midtown Equities purchased all of the residential parcels for $25 million. The current owners of the site consist of three groups; Developers Diversified Realtors (retail buildings), Midtown Equities (residential buildings) and Midtown Miami Community Development District (parking garage south of retail development.)

Public Involvement

The Midtown Miami Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) was set up as a committee during the early planning phases of this project and spearheaded the implementation of the Community Development District (CDD) as a financial entity to secure funding for construction of the surrounding infrastructure. The Midtown Community Redevelopment Agency established goals as a concerned community to push and govern the success of the development. CRA members included city and county commissioners, business owners, community groups, and concerned residents.

The Midtown Miami development project received a lot of public support for redevelopment of this site, which was a major source of blight and was not serving as a productive contributor towards the local economy. However, there were major concerns regarding gentrification from some residents. The concern specifically addressed the rise in property taxes, which could have force existing nearby residents to move. When the development plans, financial plans, and renderings for the project were revealed, the majority of residents were eager to witness the elimination of blight, crime, and a source for halting economic progress.
Overall the Midtown Miami project was a success, with work in a few areas still in progress, the residents are grateful that the site was transformed into what it is today.

The City required the developers and the Community Development District to enter a “First Source Hiring Agreement”. The requirements of the agreement required reasonable efforts to hire City of Miami residents, hold job fairs, and use contractors and subcontractors that are at least 51% low-to moderate income residents. The developers also took initial measures prior to development by signing 85% of labor-related contracts (worth $18 million) to go towards local minority contractors. Developers also hired 30 people specifically out of the Wynwood neighborhood prior to construction and provided them positions with benefits and accrual of vacation days and committed to an affordable housing program by reserving a total of 80 units as affordable housing (total after all condos are completed). The program provides 97% financing for prospective low to moderate-income buyers that qualify.

Assessment and Remediation

The first documented site assessment occurred at the former rail yard in 1988. Throughout the entire 56 acres, numerous areas of the site were identified as being contaminated. Impacts to soil and groundwater were noted mainly due to petroleum contamination. At least six (6) separate Phase II assessments to delineate the soil and groundwater plumes were the responsibility of Florida East Coast (FEC) Railways from 1988 up to 2003. Additional environmental post remediation monitoring beyond 2003 were conducted at the expense of the partnership formed between the BDP/ME.

The entire 56 acres was designated eleven different areas that were identified by alphabet between 1988 up to 2003 with environmental contamination occurring at different stages. Identifying the plumes and determining which area is the source of contamination proved to be challenging. However, the ownership of the property remained the same throughout the majority of the remediation work. Plume delineations indicated one offsite release in groundwater, however did not have any impact to a residential population. The conventional methods of environmental assessment procedures was used, however concentrations form each area had to be carefully examined to determine where one plume begins and another plume ends for simultaneous investigations. Throughout the entire 56 acres; BTEX (Benzene, Toluene, Ethylene, Xylene), arsenic, metals (Lead, Chromium, Mercury, Zinc, Barium, Cadmium) and naphthalenes were discovered during remediation. Underground Storage Tanks, rail yard activity associated with maintenance and upkeep of the railroad tracks were the probable origins of the contaminants.

After the results of the site assessment were submitted to the Miami Dade Department of Environmental Resource Management (DERM), it was determined that the soil contamination could be addressed via engineering controls associated with capping via concrete during construction activities. For groundwater, DERM concurred that the contamination levels were within levels for natural attenuation monitoring. By late 2005, the monitoring at the site was fulfilled “No Further Action” status for groundwater. Remediation activities prior to 2003 occurred by FEC with the intentions that investors would be interested in purchasing the property due to construction in downtown Miami and other sections of the Midtown Miami area. Although the contamination was not remediated in its entirety, the majority was eliminated, thus facilitating future redevelopment efforts. The previous remediation also placed less pressure on the developers to be responsible for expensive remediation costs.
Redevelopment

Construction began in 2004; however, it was not completed according to the original proposed plans for the 660,000 square feet of retail space and 300,000 square feet of commercial/real estate space. The retail construction is now complete but construction of the additional residential buildings, office space, and hotel are still pending. Additional land is also available within the 56 acres of the development that was not included within the original plans.

The building architecture and materials chosen include a modern Art Deco layout for the retail portion, and Miami style modern designs for the three residential communities. Layout for the site includes 660,000 square feet of retail space; over 1,200 residential units constructed via three residential towers. Green space and landscaping on the site is planned to include open green space in-between the retail and residential towers, and unique site attributes, include innovative green design, artwork, public spaces, and walking trails. The site also features U.S. Green Building Council Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certified attributes, and an open space air mall that requires patrons to walk outside to enter multiple stores.

Financing

The overall project costs were $34.5 million for site acquisition, an estimated $1.2 million for the environmental assessment and remediation (the actual remediation cost is still pending), and up to $1.2 billion on redevelopment costs, including infrastructure upgrades for the surrounding community.

The City of Miami and Miami-Dade County created a special tax district to generate up to $170 million in revenues to help construct the estimated $1.2 billion Midtown Miami Project. The taxes collected via the special district’s tax increment financing arrangement will generate a real property tax value of $702.5 million over 30 years. The amount will be split between the City of Miami and Miami-Dade County, per an inter-local agreement.

The investment dollars of the city and county were combined via the Midtown Miami Community Development District; the issuance of $76,705,000 in bonds (principal costs, improvements, bond issuance, capitalized interest and reserves); debt service costs by city and county - $170,200,000; and a U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Brownfield Economic Development Initiative grant of $400,000. Also the Economic Development Administration (a U.S. Department of Commerce agency) granted $2 million, the Florida Department of Transportation granted $2.5 million, and additional federal funds were issued via county grants for the development. Funds provided by private sector (BDP/ME) included $796,300,000 as of 2009 to develop site (does not include environmental costs or initial purchase cost of $34.5 million). No city general fund dollars were involved, though the city appropriated $1.2 million for Brownfield Redevelopment via grants from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

Partnerships

Both the city and the county proved to be the most significant partners to Biscayne Development Partners and Midtown Equities. The same support continued with Developers Diversified Realtors once the ownership was transferred for the retail portion. The formation of the Midtown Miami Community Development District also played a significant role. Although the property is located within the City of Miami, it was imperative for Miami-Dade to be a partner in the project via an inter-local
agreement. The cooperation process worked well as commissions from both jurisdictions and public hearings displayed support for the project.

Administrative Process

The complete redevelopment is still ongoing. To date, five years have passed to reach 75% completion. The Mayor of the City of Miami; Mayor Tomas P. Regalado and former Mayor Manual A Diaz, are strong supporters of Brownfield Redevelopment within the City of Miami. Brownfield Redevelopment has and will continue to eliminate blight, create jobs, and increase the tax base for unused or underused properties. The Midtown Miami Project is a prime example of the transformation from blight to a prime destination that has employed over 2,000 permanent and part time employees to date, and where 700 construction jobs were created for the first phases of development.

Mayor Regalado continues to voice his support for Brownfield Redevelopment, promotion of green and sustainable practices and creation of jobs.

Successes, Challenges, and Lessons Learned

The Wynwood Area is now a safer and trendier location to visit for shopping, socializing, dining, and recreation due to the Midtown Miami project. The local residents are extremely grateful for the opportunity to shop within the City of Miami at the same stores that formerly required miles of commuting. Many of the new residents of Midtown Miami are also grateful for the ability to live closer to their places of employment within the City of Miami.

Establishing the partnerships and the financial security to make the Midtown project succeed was a competitive challenge. However, the current state of the economy was the greatest challenge as the housing industry across the nation created a slowdown for new construction of planned housing developments. The slowdown in the market has set the complete construction of the Midtown Miami development off schedule slightly. However the location and amenities that Midtown Miami offers, will guarantee its success.
Many metropolitan areas throughout the State of Florida and across the nation are seeking to redevelop in neglected areas with smart projects that will last. One way to make this successful is by the creation of mixed use residential and retail projects. With these types of Brownfield Redevelopment projects that provide new housing, beautify landscapes, increase pedestrian foot traffic, and boost the local economy; it creates an instant model for Brownfield success.

Additional resources:

http://www.midtownmiami.com/#/home

www.miamigov.com/economicdevelopment/pages

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The Return of a Local Gem

City of Oklahoma City, OK
Skirvin Hotel Site
Mick Cornett, Mayor

Introduction

One of the younger cities in the Midwest, Oklahoma City, was developed literally overnight. Countless numbers of homesteads were claimed in the land run of 1889 after the unassigned lands in the Oklahoma Territory were set out. Over the next two decades, the population doubled every five years. By 1909, there were over 40,000 people settling in and ready to work. In 1928, oil was discovered in Oklahoma City. With increased oil revenues, this once sleepy city in the Midwest boomed into a thriving, large metropolis.

The Skirvin Hotel opened in 1911 and easily became one of Oklahoma City’s finest attractions. It entertained such guests as former President Harry Truman, actor John Wayne, the international “Hostess with the Mostess,” Perle Mesta, along with a number of other celebrities and socialites. The hotel graced the city skyline with its grandeur for the next 70 years before closing in the late 1980’s. There was periodic interest in reopening the facility, but it remained dormant and abandoned for the next 20 years. In 1999, however, Oklahoma City officials and members of the surrounding community decided it was time to revive the once remarkable hotel to its former glory. The newly renovated and renamed Skirvin Hilton Hotel reopened for business in 2007, bringing back its prestige to the city and re-energizing the downtown area.

Site History and Acquisition

William Balser Skirvin made a fortune in oil and land development in Texas. In 1906, Skirvin and his family moved to Oklahoma City to begin their new lives. Oklahoma was experiencing a rapid expansion during the early 1900’s and Skirvin took the opportunity to invest further in new lands and oil. In 1909, an investor from New York City approached Skirvin with a request to purchase some of his land with the idea of building the biggest, most luxurious hotel in Oklahoma. The possibility of a new luxurious hotel struck Skirvin as a valuable investment in the city; he refused to sell his land and instead announced he would build his own showcase hotel.

The newly constructed Skirvin Hotel opened to the public on September 26, 1911. The magnificent 10-story building with its red brick laid in Flemish bond pattern separated itself from other nearby buildings. The lower level was laid out in limestone and offered two different street entryways. Within the hotel, two wings were detailed with unique décor embellished with gothic carvings and renaissance style. The hotel encompassed 250,600 square feet on a 1.45-acre property. The hotel would become the jewel of the city that attracted many celebrities, politicians, and the wealthy. Skirvin further renovated and enhanced the ‘grand dame’ in the late 1920’s and ‘30’s adding an additional four floors, and making extensive
and expensive renovations to the lobby, including the addition of hand carved English fumed oak to the walls and doors and imported Austrian chandeliers costing more than $100,000 each. A new coffee shop and a 14th floor Venetian room and restaurant were also added.

The death of William Skirvin in 1944 was the onset of the hotel’s downfall. His children decided to sell the property even though the hotel continued to thrive during the uneasy times of World War II. Over the years until the hotel’s closing in 1988, the Skirvin was bought and sold countless times by numerous investors. The decline of the oil industry and the waning downtown area ultimately led to the closure of the hotel. However, the Skirvin hotel officially received recognition in the late 1980’s when Governor George Nigh designated the hotel on the National Register of Historic Places. Accompanying that honor was a plaque given by the Oklahoma City Historic Preservation and Landmark Commission to the hotel. Both were given in tribute to the hotel’s landmark history within Oklahoma City.

The Skirvin’s second chance came after two decades of dormancy. On September 28, 1999, the Mayor and City Council authorized the creation of the Skirvin Solutions Committee. Oklahoma City, with its many public-private partnerships was able to raise money and interest needed to restore the hotel. The hotel reopened as the Skirvin Hilton on February 26th, 2007 to stimulate the local economy and bring back to life a landmark in the city’s history.

**Administrative Process and Public Improvement**

The Skirvin Solutions Committee (SSC) was created at the time by Oklahoma City and its Mayor, Kirk Humphreys, to address the remediation and renovation of the Skirvin Hotel. The SSC reviewed all options for the redevelopment of the site and also considered who should be included in redevelopment of the site. Recommendations would be made to the city council for how best to revitalize the Skirvin.
The city worked with the community to plan the redevelopment. Affected residents, downtown workers, and local organizations were consulted throughout the decision-making process, which also addressed the environmental cleanup that would be necessary to reopen the building. The committee held open meetings in the South Oklahoma City Chamber of Commerce, where residents and local organizations gave input to city council on the acquisition of the property, and the specific proposals for Skirvin Hotel redevelopment.

Local residents pushed for years for preserving the historic landmark and discussed their hopes with the city of establishing the hotel to its former extravagance. The countless number of people who wanted to be involved in the redevelopment process demonstrated the importance of the hotel. Many ideas were brought up for potential uses for the site, but the overwhelming majority wanted the Skirvin to remain a hotel. Throughout the public process, only one person ever proposed the idea of demolishing the building.

The project was started under the leadership of Oklahoma City Mayor Humphreys and was continued during the tenure of Mayor Mick Cornett. City leadership enjoyed numerous redevelopment partners during the process. Skirvin Partners LLC and Hilton Hotels were just two of many entities involved in the process. Various federal, state, and private institutions were included in the process as well.

**Financing**

Oklahoma City officials had the insight to buy and invest in the lingering hotel. On July 9th, 2002, the city bought the hotel for $2,726,000, as it was in negotiations with Hilton Hotels to renovate the structure. The environmental cleanup portion of the site was being managed by the city using money from the Oklahoma Department of Environmental Quality’s Brownfields Cleanup Revolving Loan Fund.

A combination of Tax Increment Financing, an Economic Development Initiative grant, the brownfields Cleanup Revolving Loan fund, tax credits, and private equity were used to finance the project. The total cost for asbestos abatement was roughly $1,600,000, and additional environmental costs for the project cleanup were about $719,000. The City received a Brownfields Loan from Oklahoma Department of Environmental Quality and the US Environmental protection Agency to help with these costs. Since the Skirvin was listed on the National Register of Historic Places, the project was eligible for 20% federal historic tax credits and 20% state historic tax credits. The total project cost an estimated $56,413,586. The private sector contributed nearly 60% of that cost, or about $36.4 million and public funding resources provided the remaining $20 million. The Oklahoma County Assessor’s records show the current market and taxable value of the Skirvin property to be $30,000,000.
The funding plan effectively utilized federal, state, and local funds to maximize the benefit to the community while meeting two important goals: 1) To distribute the project’s risks to all participants; and 2) To provide the city with a return on its investment through loan and lease payments from the Skirvin Partners. The Skirvin Redevelopment Agreement parties include the City of Oklahoma City, the Oklahoma City Urban renewal Authority and Skirvin partners, LLC, a development partnership between Marcus Hotels and Resorts and Partners in Development.

Remediation and Redevelopment

The years of abandonment caused the Skirvin Hotel to go through a rough deterioration. The lack of maintenance caused much of the asbestos to crumble and become exposed throughout the hotel. The paint that was used throughout the hotel contained lead. Each of the rooms in the hotel contained mercury thermostats as well; over the 20 years of neglect, many of the thermostats had been broken. The lead paint and asbestos had to be removed before the renovation process was allowed to proceed to eliminate the pathways for exposures and health threats to workers and public. There was also evidence that trespassers had frequented the dilapidated hotel.

The roof of the hotel, windowpanes, and casings had been broken throughout the hotel. This allowed colonies of pigeons to nest in and occupy the building for years. The concentration of pigeon droppings posed a risk for the spread of histoplasmosis and other diseases to workers in the building. The pigeons also posed a potential risk to the public via asbestos fibers and paint dust that could be carried on their feathers when they took flight. The air quality in the hotel was poor, containing carcinogens, biological vectors, and toxic substances.

The renovation of the hotel generated over 400 construction jobs. After completion, 255 new positions were created to run the hotel. The renovation of the historic hotel brought a renewed energy to the city and serves as a catalyst for other redevelopment efforts. As a result of area efforts, business at the Convention Center located two blocks away, and tourism in the business district have increased. New hotels have begun to spring up in the surrounding downtown area, and area property values have dramatically increased.

As important as the economic considerations, the renovations of the hotel brought a renewed sense of public pride. This was a major step city leaders took in the 1990s to rejuvenate the downtown area of Oklahoma City, which spurred numerous other downtown projects. Since that time, in downtown a canal has been built, derelict sites cleaned up, and arenas and ballparks were constructed supporting the Bricktown Entertainment District and enabling the area to thrive.

Lessons Learned

The greatest challenge posed to Oklahoma City was overcoming the initial funding gap for the project. The Skirvin Solutions committee created by the city determined that revitalization of the hotel would not be possible without significant public
assistance. At the time, the costs seemed to outweigh the economic returns. A key to the project success was public involvement in the process. Many partnerships with private entities in the community allowed much of the funding to be compensated. Another key was Mayor Cornett’s continued commitment and understanding of the importance to revitalizing the hotel as an essential part of the downtown area’s success. The Mayor nurtured the partnerships that made the Skirvin project possible. This project was an important milestone in redeveloping the downtown area, resulting in increased economic prosperity for the city; projected sales and tax revenues over the next 15 years soared to $15.5 million for the city and $9.1 million for the state.

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Brownfield Redevelopment: Sometimes, Timing is Everything

City of Southfield, MI
Southfield Downs
Brenda Lawrence, Mayor

Introduction

The City of Southfield has continually redeveloped brownfields for many years. The former Southfield Downs Trailer Park site was a burden on the community. The city decided to turn this impoverished, unsafe site into a mixed-use residential community now known as Spring Haven. The residential neighborhood is now teaming with 50 single-family homes, 170 condominiums and dozens of townhouses. Spring Haven was designed with a sustainable layout, so that family apartments, residences, commercial enterprises, and a regional shopping center were located within walking distance of each other. After its redevelopment, businesses and organizations poured into the area, including Starbucks, T-Mobile, Jets Pizza and Target. The city and surrounding community proudly promote their accomplishment and continue to support redevelopment of other brownfields.

The newly developed townhouses, condos, and commercial space have created a new tax base for the city. The trailer park, on the other hand, had paid virtually no taxes to the city. The project has shown other developers the tools and knowledge needed to successfully revitalize brownfield sites in communities that are underutilized because of environmental contamination or neglect. All the work and effort to redevelop the Southfield Downs Trailer Park has led the city to win the 23rd Annual Michigan Municipal League Achievement Awards.

Site History and Acquisition

During the 1950’s, the site had been known as the Gaddis Landfill. Over 40 acres of the landfill site was used to collect trash from Detroit. The Downs Family purchased the landfill and decided to turn it into the Southfield Downs Trailer Park. For decades, the former Southfield Downs Trailer Park brought blight on the city. The park was falling apart and an eye sore for surrounding residents. The area had been known for abundant public safety issues. Fire safety issues were of big concern along with substantial social and policing matters. Criminal activity in that area was among the highest in the city.

In addition to being built over a former landfill, to make matters worse, parts of the park had been built on an old swamp and a small cemetery. The old swamp had watered down the waste in the landfill and the remnants of the cemetery head stones were scattered about. Residents living in the surrounding area of the Southfield Downs Trailer Park expressed great urgency to rid the site of the mobile home park.
In early 2006, Centex Homes, Inc. purchased the trailer park with the vision of turning the blemished area into a lively mixed-use commercial development. The great investment of time and effort by Centex, with total cooperation from the city allowed the redevelopment process to be completed quickly and allowed construction to begin in August 2006.

**Administrative Process and Public Involvement**

The City of Southfield had facilitated the entire rezoning, site plan and special use process of the site. The brownfield redevelopment began with total support from the mayor. There was vast public involvement in the case of the Southfield Downs Trailer Park. A number of public hearings were held by the city to discuss what to do with the ailing park. There was great incentive for the city and residents to support the redevelopment of the site since it would significantly increase the city’s tax base. Surrounding neighborhoods were elated over the city’s plan to redevelopment the Trailer Park site. After the site was redeveloped, there was a huge drop in police and fire runs. Residential areas adjacent to the brownfieds site saw a tremendous increase in value. A new middle class population relocated to the new mixed-use redevelopment gave a new student base for local schools. The city worked out a development agreement with the county on road improvements.

Southfield also worked with its fire department on using the brownfield site for a training video exercise. Centex had delayed demolition of the trailer park to allow the Southfield Fire Department to conduct scenario-based deployment and training exercises. The city partnered with Michigan Urban Search and Rescue and Union of Operating Engineers to teach a course for emergency responders how to search for and rescue victims trapped in a collapsed building.

**Financing**

Centex submitted a Brownfield Plan requesting Tax Increment Revenues in the amount of $5.2 million to cover any clean-up activities preceding construction of the brownfields site. Costs that would be incurred prior to construction included environmental assessment, site preparation, demolition, public infrastructure, and contingency (15%). In July 2005, the request by Centex was approved by Southfield’s City Council. The result was significant public benefit to the residents of the City of Southfield. The city had used more than $4.1 million in local and state tax to redevelop the site.

The use of private funding was implemented into the Brownfield Plan for payback on the project. The original request fell short only $1 million of actual costs, Centex had supplemented the rest of costs. Total cost of redevelopment for the Spring Haven site amounted to $60 million.

**Remediation and Redevelopment**

Centex used Testing Engineers and Consultants, Inc. (TEC) to lead the remediation and redevelopment of the brownfield site. TEC discovered many challenges to the remediation. The company cited complications of the trailer park being built over a landfill. Routine environmental and geotechnical engineering tests were conducted on the site to ascertain the site’s potential. The first task was to indentify and quantify the contaminants of buried trash, fill soil, and hazardous materials located on site.

Testing Engineers and Consultants designed a plan that thoughtfully integrated environmental, geotechnical, and construction aspects during pre-construction. Over 100 abandoned trailers were removed. Some of the trailers removed
were recycled depending on their condition. Underground fuel tanks installed by the trailer park had leaked and various hazardous materials were located on-site. The clean-up time length was longer than expected due to 45,000 tons of buried trash, 528,700 gallons of water in trash, and 60,000 tons of structurally unsuitable soil. Approximately 50,000 cubic yards of reused soil was initially removed and put back later.

The redevelopers decided to redesign the brownfield site with basement sump discharges to alleviate groundwater contaminates to on-site filtration systems instead of storm sewers. The city had also solved many water challenges in the area. The Southfield Downs site had a combined sewer and stormwater system that led a raw sewage stream into the city’s water reservoirs. During heavy rainstorms, sewage treatment plants were overfilling and some sewage may have gone untreated. Centex had installed separate sewer and storm water systems to mitigate the problem.

As stated, an old, abandoned cemetery was located on the border of the site. Centex had rebuilt and landscaped the old cemetery site. The removal and upgrade of the trailer park site allowed for the construction of 10,500 square feet of commercial space.

**Lessons Learned and Future Directions**

The greatest challenge to the Spring Haven project was the timing and scale of clean-up. The amount of trash and contaminants on site was unexpected. This prolonged the length of time to complete the cleanup process. The redevelopment took a lot of energy and time for the City of Southfield and Centex to finish. Program coordinators suggested to starting on a project as soon as possible to compensate for unexpected changes and delays. One unique task the City of Southfield had to endure was relocating residents still living at the trailer park at the time. The city needed to make sure that residents were relocated properly and compensated fairly. Brownfields redevelopment is time-consuming and complicated, which can be very draining for workers. A city must be creative, persistent, and able to work together with developers to finish brownfields redevelopment succesfully.
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Major League Brownfield Redevelopment

City of Washington, DC
Washington Nationals Park
Adrian Fenty, Mayor*

Overview And Background

Nationals Park was intended to be used a catalyst for the surrounding community for urban revitalization. The project is located on a former brownfield site that housed warehouses, light industry and a waste transfer station. Before initial construction began the site housed more then 160 jobs. The ballpark alone created 4,400 temporary construction jobs during the initial build out and more the 360 full time positions upon project completion. “It’s far and away the most ambitious project we’ve ever certified,” says US Green Building Council, vice president, Brendan Owens.

Site History And Acquisition

In 2004, the Washington, DC city council agreed to build a new Major League Baseball stadium in the city to entice the Expos from Montreal. The city council insisted that it be the first major sports stadium to receive the US Green Building Council’s LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) rating. The points-based system was designed to limit the environmental impact of commercial office buildings, not outdoor ballparks, but DC’s Mayor at the time, Anthony Williams, was willing to put in the extra effort. By recycling 5,500 tons of construction waste, installing a state-of-the-art water-filtration system and placing the stadium close to public transportation on what used to be the site of a contaminated brownfield, the city was able to get a green building certification with less than a two percent increase in construction costs. On opening day, it’s unlikely anyone noted the high-efficiency bulbs in the field lights, or realized that 95 percent of the stadium’s steel was recycled, or even that the low-flow toilets would save millions of gallons of water each season. Most of what makes Nationals Park the country’s first green professional-sports stadium doesn’t look any different from what you’d find at other ballparks, which is one reason its recent certification by the US Green Building Council is so impressive.

Joe Spear, formerly with HOK Sport (Hellmuth, Obata and Kassabaun), now known as Populous, the architecture firm that designed the stadium, said, “This proves it’s doable, Nationals Park set the bar.” Beginning with Camden Yards in Baltimore, Spear has had a hand in designing 10 of the last 11 major-league baseball stadiums, and says that other cities are looking to duplicate DC’s success.

* This project began during the tenure of Anthony Williams, Washington, DC Mayor from Dec. 2004 – 2007 and was completed during the first year of current Washington, DC Mayor Adrian Fenty’s term in 2008.
Nationals Park is located near the Anacostia River, just upstream from its confluence with the Potomac, on a former brownfield site in southeast Washington, DC. It is anticipated that the ballpark will serve as an anchor for urban revitalization of the area, including a new mixed-use entertainment zone. The ballpark site was enrolled in the US EPA’s voluntary brownfield clean-up program, which provided an opportunity to leave the roughly 25-acre site a much better environment than its prior condition.

Because the site is within close proximity to the Anacostia River, much care was taken to treat storm and ground water runoff. The result is a unique, intricate water filtration system that separates water used for cleaning the ballpark from rainwater falling on the ballpark. It treats both sources of water before it is released to the sanitary and storm water systems. Special care was also given to screening organic debris such as peanut shells that are unique to this building type from the storm water system.

Some of the other green redevelopment attributes include:

- Water conserving plumbing fixtures are used throughout the project, saving an estimated 3.6 million gallons of water per year and reducing overall water consumption by 30 percent.

- Energy conserving light fixtures help reduce light pollution and realize a projected 21 percent energy savings over typical field lighting.

- Content of building materials used on the project contain a minimum of 10 percent recycled content, and other interior materials including adhesives, carpet glues and paints were specified with low volatile organic compound (VOC) content.

- Many of the building materials used on the project were produced regionally, which cut down on transportation costs while promoting the local economy.

- Landscape plant materials are drought resistant, conserving water by eliminating the need for regular watering.

- Roof materials offer a high degree of reflectivity, minimizing the amount of heat released to the environment. A 6,300 square foot green roof above a concession/toilet area beyond left field minimizes roof heat gain.
■ 5,500 tons of construction waste was recycled.

■ The ballpark’s location is easily accessible to public transportation, including access to nearby Metro stations and local bus routes.

Financing

The City of Washington, DC sold up to $610.8 million in bonds to help finance the stadium. Revenue was calculated to pay the debt on those bonds by factoring $11 million to $14 million per year from in-stadium taxes on tickets, concessions and merchandise, $21 million to $24 million per year from a new tax on businesses with gross receipts of $3 million or more and $5.5 million per year in rent payments from the baseball team’s owner, the Lerner Corporation.

Mayor Anthony Williams, after a year-and-a-half of negotiations, unveiled plans for a 41,888-seat state-of-the-art baseball stadium for the Washington Nationals on March 14, 2006. Williams and the D.C. Council agreed to spend as much as $611 million to get the stadium built.

The team is responsible for any cost overruns. Naming rights belong to the team and were not earmarked for stadium construction costs. The Nationals will lease National’s Park for 30 years from the DC Sports Commission. The value is estimated at $5.5 million per year.

Lessons Learned And Future Directions

Every year, more than 80 million people attend a major-league baseball game. They often drive long distances to get there and produce mountains of trash by the time they leave, nearly all of which ends up in landfills. Sports stadiums consume vast amounts of resources, from the electricity to power the lights to millions of gallons of water to flush the toilets and irrigate the playing fields. Last year the Seattle Mariners started a composting project at Safeco Field. The team expects to recycle 25 percent of its waste this year, or about 350 tons of glass, plastic and organic trash. The San Francisco Giants, Colorado Rockies and Cleveland Indians have all installed solar panels in their ballparks. Since 2005, the Oakland A’s have used biodegradable corn-based cups at McAfee Coliseum.

Recently, the National Resource Defense Council rolled out a team-specific greening-advisory system for the NBA, MLB and NHL, designed to help clubs implement eco-friendly practices by putting them in touch with local companies familiar with things like composting and energy audits. It was unlikely that Nationals Park will be baseball’s only green stadium for long. The New York Mets’ new $800 million Citi-field ballpark in Queens, which opened in 2009, and just received recognition.
from EPA for its sustainable initiatives. The U.S. Green Building Council recently awarded the Minnesota Twins LEED Silver Certification for Target Field, making it the second Major League ballpark, next to National’s Park, in the United States to achieve that status. Having collected the most certification points ever awarded to a ballpark, Target Field is the greenest ballpark in America as of May 2010.

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Washington, DC's new baseball stadium sits near the Anacostia River, in a part of town developers have tended to ignore; its presence promises an economic renaissance for the area.