



Economic Development and Sustainability

A City Practice Brief

Fall 2008

Sustainability and economic development are often viewed as incompatible goals. Yet, both of these desired outcomes can be achieved through the same local investments, and in fact, can support one another. Cities and towns across the country have been addressing these issues, creating innovative projects that find ways to save money, promote new jobs, conserve energy, and support new technology.

This City Practice Brief presents examples of city programs working towards these goals.

For more information on For more examples, visit the City Practice database, online at www.nlc.org → ABOUT CITIES → CITY PRACTICE RESOURCES.

Balanced Growth Through Downtown Revitalization

City: **Barnstable, Massachusetts**

Population: 47,380

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Hyannis, one of the Town of Barnstable's seven villages, saw growth at its edges characterized by low-density residential subdivisions and strip retail, while its downtown was plagued with vacant storefronts and disinvestment. This strained the local infrastructure and impacted the town's fragile natural resources and historic character. The community and local decision-makers created a development strategy that encouraged growth and development in Hyannis' urban center while reducing growth in the environmentally sensitive areas along town edges and the coast. Specifically, the town adopted an expedited permitting process for downtown development, made extensive infrastructure investments in streetscapes and wastewater treatment, created development offsets that move development from outlying areas to downtown, and improved connections and public access to the waterfront. The result has been a renaissance for downtown. In the first three years of the smart growth initiative, the downtown area has seen 93 new residential units built, 22,000 square feet of commercial space created, 342 new jobs, and \$25 million in private investment.

Adams Avenue Redevelopment

City: **Camden, Arizona**

Population: 13,154

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The Adams Avenue Redevelopment is a brownfield initiative that revitalized a dilapidated crime-ridden area in Camden back into productive reuse for economic and business growth and recreation. One of the first cities to participate in EPA's Brownfield Demonstration Pilot

Assessment Program, the city through partnerships with several federal and state agencies, received over \$2 million in grant funds to purchase, clean-up and rebuild the area, turning it into a thriving business and technology center. In addition, the Ouachita Riverfront was developed into a recreational area with a riverwalk, marina and waterfall. The latest component to Camden's brownfield program is the addition of a Brownfield Remediation Technician training program funded through EPA's Brownfield Job Training grant program and in partnership with SAU Tech University.

Brownfields Redevelopment Program

City: **Cleveland, Ohio**

Population: 478,403

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Cleveland's Department of Economic Development trains residents to be Environmental Technicians. The training program focuses on brownfield remediation techniques, which is then put to use to clean up areas of the city. Funding for the training comes from US Environmental Protection Agency, Workforce Investment Act, City of Cleveland Empowerment Zone, and Youth Opportunity Grant monies. The Environmental Technician training is offered at no cost to participants, many of whom represent hard-to-place populations, including ex-offenders, and those with limited educations.

Detroit/Wayne County Roundtable on Sustainable Development

City: **Detroit, Michigan**

Population: 951,270

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The Detroit/Wayne County Roundtable on Sustainable Development focuses on integrating environmental and economic growth concerns. Forty representatives from neighborhood organizations, environmental groups, lending institutions, businesses, governments, and charitable and religious groups comprise the Roundtable. Its ten-member board is co-chaired by designees of the mayor and county executive. The six operating principles of the Roundtable are: diversify membership, promote the concept of sustainability, build consensus, support existing efforts, combine the resources of the group's diverse stakeholders, and set up regional cooperation and communication. Much of the Roundtable's efforts address the redevelopment and marketing of brownfield sites, and the condemnation of such sites. The group reviews state environmental regulations pertaining to hazardous site mitigation as well. Several major redevelopment projects have been launched, including a stadium, airport, and casino.

Jersey Gardens Mall

City: **Elizabeth, New Jersey**

Population: 120,568

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Jersey Gardens Mall successfully transformed "trash into cash" for the City of Elizabeth. The 170-acre former brownfield, which lay dormant for nearly two decades, was redeveloped with 200 stores and restaurants - replacing an eyesore, preserving open space, providing jobs, and attracting other development nearby. To begin the redevelopment process, the city performed a

needs assessment, addressing environmental issues and how the project would directly benefit the community. The city then helped the site's original developer with the costs of remediation by making available a low-interest loan of \$250,000 and helping to secure another \$500,000 loan from the state. The city expedited the permitting process so that the 20 permits needed for the project were delivered in approximately twelve months. The mall's Retail Skills Center provides free industry training and assistance with job placement. Potential employees can train in customer service or inventory, and area and mall employers have access to a ready pool of talent.

Trinity River Vision

City: **Forth Worth, Texas**

Population: 534,694

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Fort Worth's Trinity River Vision (TRV) program brings together public and private community partners to plan and facilitate recreational and environmental improvement projects that develop, preserve and enhance the 90 miles of the Trinity River Corridor. TRV partners, including the City of Fort Worth, the Tarrant Regional Water District, Tarrant County, The United States Army Corps of Engineers and the private non-profit Streams and Valleys, Inc. formed the Trinity River Vision Authority as the main point of communication for all the partners. Projects include the TRV- Trinity Uptown Project, the TRV- Neighborhood and Recreational Enhancement program and implementation plan, and the TRV- Central City Project, which delivered 16,000 new jobs and 600 construction jobs a year during the course of construction. The \$435 million in partner funds lead to an increase in the tax revenue to local taxing entities from \$129 million to \$1.3 billion as of 2007.

Handmade in America Cities in North Carolina

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HandMade in America is a partnership of local and regional organizations which promote the handmade craft production industry of Western North Carolina. The handmade craft industry generates \$122 million annually for the local economy, according to the Center for Business Research at Appalachian State University. HandMade's projects include establishing a Craft Heritage Corridor along the Blue Ridge Parkway, developing a registry of all regional crafts people and suppliers, creating studio incubators at landfill sites that utilize methane as a power source, and incorporating craft into architecture, interior design, and housing construction. HandMade in America lists over 3,000 volunteers and 21 partnerships that enhance economic opportunities while constructing sustainable communities unique to the region.

Brownfield Environmental Training Initiative

City: **Toledo, Ohio**

Population: 651,154

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The City of Toledo Environmental Services Division runs the Brownfield Environmental Training Initiative which trains unemployed residents, specifically those located in the Brownfield Impact

Area characterized by a large percentage of minorities and impoverished citizens, to work in environmental jobs. The program is funded through a grant from the United States Environmental Protection Agency as well as through various public and private partnerships with the local community college, industrial cleaning companies, and others. Program participants are taken on a bus tour of brownfield sites, given lessons in Empowerment Skills (such as resume-building, interviewing and computing) and mentored by prospective employers. At the end of the program, there is a graduation ceremony and a job fair. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency rated BETI the #1 job-training program out of six states in the region.

Mixed Use Destination

City: **Webster, Texas**

Population: 9,083

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Webster's develops the city's brownfields into mixed-use locations. Collaborating with a local developer, the project demolished an old power plant to construct 375,000 square feet of retail space, 31 acres of park land, and apartments for 2,600 new residents. In addition, the project calls for wetland protection and marina infrastructure while dealing with contaminated soil during this capital improvement. The fund for the project is \$55 million and comes from a creative financial collaboration between the city and an investment group whereby each invest in each other.

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City Practice Briefs contain examples from NLC's City Practice database, available at www.nlc.org. Series editors: Bruce Calvin and Larry Foxman. For more information contact the NLC Municipal Reference Service at (202) 626-3130 or email mrs@nlc.org.