

Community Involvement in Brownfield Redevelopment

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Overview

Community participation and stakeholder involvement play an essential role in successful brownfield development, as dozens of success stories attest. Yet historically, community participation in federally influenced redevelopment activities has been adversarial. In many quarters, community participation has an obstructionist reputation, viewed as a process that will slow down or derail a project rather than enhance its likelihood of success. In fact, a meaningful, inclusive process of stakeholder involvement has proven to be an important factor in the successful redevelopment and reuse of brownfield sites.

Many brownfield projects have benefitted or even been made possible by a substantive community participation process that has generated neighborhood support. A growing number of projects has brought more than adequate economic benefits to their developers and critical benefits to their surrounding neighborhoods, including jobs, tax revenues, spin-off business opportunities, and community amenities. Early community involvement has been a key to this success. The more community members know, the more they can contribute.

For many reasons, stakeholder participation is more important to brownfield redevelopment projects than to the typical greenfield real estate transaction. In addition to complex legal and financing issues associated with site assessment and cleanup, brownfield sites have complicated histories in their communities. They may represent the loss of economic vitality and the onslaught of blight and decline, while at the same time holding out the potential for numerous competing visions of new development and growth. Brownfield redevelopment can either have a galvanizing effect on a community, or it can drive wedges of division and disharmony right through them. Community involvement in every step of the process can make the difference.

A successful information and outreach strategy increases the likelihood that brownfield reuse will become part of the business of the community. Because the redevelopment process can extend over a long period of time, maintaining support from stakeholders and the community at large is important not only for the specific project at hand, but also for familiarizing people and institutions with brownfield revitalization in general.

This report offers a factual examination of the components of effective and meaningful citizen participation and describes its benefits for both communities and developers. These observations are based on meetings, workshops, and discussions with stakeholders who have been involved at more than 100 brownfield sites in nearly as many cities over the past ten years. Their experience shows that as approaches to brownfield redevelopment evolve, the role of community participation is playing a larger and larger part.

1. Community Vision

A *community vision* is a collective understanding of how a neighborhood, city, or town as a whole should look and function. In the brownfields context, this vision encompasses the challenges of revitalizing contaminated sites. To develop a vision, all of those with a stake in the site's future require an awareness both the potential reuse of the site and the basic path being pursued at the municipal and community level for meeting the site's challenges. Articulating that vision, gathering support for it,

formalizing it, and relating it to the concrete work of brownfield redevelopment are not just “good things to do.” In fact, they are crucial to successful and sustainable brownfield redevelopment.

Brownfield project leaders have found that a common vision gives developers and investors more comfort with the reuse process and makes them more likely to participate in redevelopment partnerships. For managers of the most recent pilot projects sponsored by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), developing a workable community vision was one of the most difficult and important tests of their brownfield leadership.

The visioning process must help all involved and affected parties imagine both the possibilities and the obstacles involved in making a brownfield program successful. It demands a significant commitment of both resources and skilled management, and usually requires local leaders to convene a participatory process. It begins by articulating and then building on and improving a vision statement – working with it until the statement captures the essence of the challenge and the goals that “fit” the community and its problems, resources, and constituencies. If such a vision can be defined, it can serve as the foundation on which to build a base of broad support that fosters commitments of the key parties who are needed to sustain a viable brownfield effort. Thus a vision can be a catalyst for reuse.

Why do communities create a vision?

Achieving a common vision among the full complement of a community’s political leaders and stakeholders provides the cohesion and excitement about a brownfield project that can sustain the effort through short-term changes in organization, tactics, and focus. Experienced brownfield practitioners know a vision is essential to sustaining a brownfield program in the midst of political change, particularly when a key leader is lost. Once the community has endorsed the vision and it has been institutionalized, it becomes difficult to serendipitously change the widely accepted plan.

The source and breadth of brownfield community visions differ from place to place. They generally are catalyzed by energetic or charismatic individuals who bring initiatives to life, or by organized coalitions that embody community interests. Although a vision produces the greatest benefit when it is developed early in the brownfield project, communities may realize the need to develop one at various stages of the process in response to project challenges.

Creating a vision mid-stream

Rochester, New York, embarked on a brownfield project with a focused work plan, seeking only to establish a city-run brownfield revolving loan fund to support site assessment and cleanup. However, local events dictated that the city’s efforts evolve beyond the revolving loan fund, and an astute project leader drew on a supportive stakeholder network to develop a community vision that encompassed the expanded initiative. The broad community vision now plays an important role in the life and vitality of Rochester and its brownfield initiative.

This vision responded to two simultaneous events. First, an emotional intensity and commitment developed among neighborhood residents when they learned of the errant environmental practices of a local landowner. Second, the city’s mayor established a network of neighborhood action centers to identify and respond to local concerns more directly. City department heads were instructed to act quickly on issues that concerned communities, as identified by the neighborhood centers. Thus, the neighborhood concerns over environmental practices and their impacts were promptly directed to the city’s brownfield pilot staff.

Adapting a vision to circumstances

The experience of Buffalo, New York, demonstrates the importance of rooting a community vision in a realistic picture of the constraints as well as the possibilities inherent in successful brownfield development. Buffalo embarked on a major visioning, planning, and public-involvement initiative even before receiving an EPA brownfield pilot grant. That vision evolved as a strong, optimistic, and galvanizing concept in the eyes of a few city officials, who viewed it as a path to recovery from the severe economic downturn of the 1980s. When Buffalo began to implement this brownfield vision, the city initially concentrated on revitalizing part of South Buffalo, with the strong support of both the city administration and extensive public participation.

However, the city's broad vision raised expectations that were challenged by a dearth of resources. The difficulties encountered in trying to replicate the early brownfield successes in South Buffalo forced a reexamination of the vision. The city needed a vision that would be applicable to the entire city and realistic in terms of the pace of economic revitalization in a city with limited economic opportunities. The vision needed wider public support, a continuing flow of new projects and successes, and an administrative structure capable of bringing a city-wide vision to fruition.

Expanding on a community vision

In Camden, New Jersey, the vision of community leaders for a single neighborhood provided the foundation for the city's brownfield vision. The community leaders had identified a future of cleanup and reuse for specific abandoned properties in a single Camden neighborhood. In this case, the vision was driven first by the community, then adopted by the leaders of the EPA pilot project, and finally given strength and resources by a new mayor and his new team of city officials.

It is difficult to produce a vision that is sufficiently concrete to galvanize commitment unless it is exemplified by one or several redevelopment successes. However, site-specific or neighborhood visions may not support a sustainable city-wide or regional vision. The challenge lies in using a local or neighborhood-based vision to inform a broader vision, even when city-wide circumstances differ from neighborhood conditions. In addition, the coalitions needed to sustain a broad, city-wide, or regional vision may not exist.

How do communities create a vision?

With the multiple pressures of launching brownfield offices and programs, communities have different views of the locus and scope of a community vision process. Processes for creating a successful vision that can sustain brownfield redevelopment generally do the following.

Determine the vision scope. Some communities believe a brownfield vision can get lost if it is folded into a broader community vision, but others contend that brownfields should be a component of the overall community vision. Communities need to determine whether the brownfield vision will be stronger in isolation or integrated into broader "quality of life issues" of great concern to their areas.

Identify who can best articulate the vision. In some cases, the city itself can most effectively propose a draft vision for the community to work with. In other cases, the initial drafts come from grassroots sources, with the city helping to keep the vision realistic and achievable.

Questions for Communities to Address

Although every brownfield project has its own specific issues, opportunities, and approaches, they all need to address fundamental questions on process and practice for effective stakeholder involvement to occur. These questions include:

- How much outreach and public relations should be carried out and what is the best way to do it?
- How will the project cover the costs of community participation?
- How will stakeholder involvement affect project costs?
- Do potential site reusers believe community involvement causes delays, and if so what does that mean for the project?
- Which party “owns” or “drives” the public-involvement process, and what are the implications of that “ownership” for the project?
- How should the media be constructively involved?
- Who should carry out the public participation process?
- Who will determine “how clean is clean” for a specific site, and how will this decision be reached?

Solicit outside help. At some point, many communities need outside assistance to create some aspects of their vision. Professional facilitation services can help develop process and consensus and later rally community support around a brownfield vision.

Generate broad-based support. A vision can be formalized only if it emerges from a process that assures broad participation among diverse groups and interests, including respected leaders. Such participation can be generated through task forces, panels, and “blue ribbon committees”; community institutions such as churches, community-development corporations, or Chambers of Commerce; reuse charrettes that elicit community input using maps, models, and information on zoning and regulations; and cable access television to disseminate information.

Verify specific support. Local officials should not assume that diverse support exists in all parts of a jurisdiction just because there is broad

interest in brownfield revitalization. It is important to verify that the vision is correctly articulated. Ongoing checks with the community are needed to be sure the vision remains correctly reflected in local processes.

Link the vision to related goals. It can prove essential to tie the brownfield vision to related environmental and development goals and actually build data about those other factors into the vision itself. Many communities find that to sustain a community vision, the brownfield program needs to demonstrate benefits, such as jobs for local residents.

Institutionalize the vision. A vision statement must be officially embraced by public authorities and institutionalized through zoning, land-use, and urban-investment policies. In addition, the city’s larger political establishment must commit to accommodating the local vision when promoting brownfield reuse and marketing sites.

2. Community Involvement

Community involvement takes many varied forms. It evolves in response to a municipality’s culture and regulatory framework, as well as the characteristics of the area’s brownfields – such as project location, site history, and proximity to different types of neighboring land uses. However, generally successful community involvement requires the carefully-planned execution of four components.

Stakeholder Identification. Brownfield managers stress that localities need to push themselves to broaden stakeholder involvement if they hope to overcome old redevelopment patterns that work

against brownfield reuse. Community involvement must include both the stakeholders whose participation is needed to bring about change, and the stakeholders who have a direct interest in the issues at the site. In all cases, stakeholders should be associated with and affected by redevelopment plans. The full range of stakeholders who define the community must be identified, selected because of the roles they play in the community, and invited to participate in an open, inclusive brownfield-revitalization process. In addition to the immediate municipal staff, these stakeholders may include civic, business, and other community leaders; representatives of financial and real-estate development institutions; citizens active in local community-development and betterment organizations; and elected officials.

Typically, local governments can attract the diverse interests needed to come together in a brownfield transaction. Local agencies oversee planning, zoning, and development activities that involve interaction with property owners, developers, and community interests.

To help in stakeholder identification, brownfield players must know their communities and their leadership at all levels. Getting out in the community – even going door-to-door – to find critical stakeholders and nurture those relationships is an essential part of this process. Interaction among local officials and state and federal regulatory agencies are critical in conducting work and enhancing resources. Even in places boasting previous brownfield successes, localities have found they must tend to the stakeholders and involve them as much as possible to benefit from the contacts, references, and collaboration that can facilitate brownfield-related redevelopment.

Process Framework. The framework for community involvement governs how the process will be organized and carried out. It may enlist an in-house brownfield team or “point person” to coordinate and facilitate the outreach effort. Depending on the scope of the project, the point person may be a full-time local government brownfield coordinator or another department or project manager with a partial time commitment to brownfield redevelopment projects. The framework also establishes ground rules for representatives of stakeholder groups to assume responsibility for continuing maintenance and oversight of projects; accepting accountability; and supporting the new land use by using the new facility or promoting whatever land use is established once a brownfield project has been completed.

Communication Mechanisms. The right level of community outreach through communication and involvement mechanisms must be carefully developed as early in the process as possible. Proper planning can generate excitement, commitment, and leadership, which is further enhanced by links to the mayor or other key public officials. Communication takes several forms:

- *High-level communication:* Close communication links with the mayor or other high-ranking municipal officials are needed to keep political involvement, interest, and support for sustainable brownfield initiatives and strategies at a high level. Frequent meetings between the mayor and various stakeholders to share the priorities and action items for each stakeholder group are invaluable.
- *Community meetings:* Standing meetings typically strengthen these links and clearly demonstrate political commitment to community involvement. Other mechanisms include general community meetings; smaller, focused meetings; and walk-throughs of special neighborhood events.

Factors to Consider in Shaping a Communication Strategy

Brownfield pilot field studies have shown that several factors are important in determining the “right” community involvement mechanism for any area. They include:

- relevance and effectiveness of existing community-involvement processes and organizations;
- size of municipality or pilot jurisdiction;
- levels of organization and knowledge in the community;
- specific project needs;
- complexity of the redevelopment process;
- degree of trust between the municipality and other stakeholders, especially in the affected neighborhood;
- municipal commitment to the program;
- demonstrated successes; and
- progress toward integrating brownfield redevelopment into the broader revitalization program of the municipality.

- *Written and broadcast communications:* Newsletters; articles in local, regional and national newspapers; radio and television broadcasts; and informational pamphlets all can keep stakeholders informed of the progress of projects, and remind the mayor and other stakeholders of their respective commitments to brownfield redevelopment. A constant feed of such information can stimulate and maintain interest.

All of these methods can be used to engage different people in different ways, according to their interest, skills, and familiarity with brownfield issues. The key is to both educate stakeholders *and* listen to their concerns and ideas, establishing a dynamic relationship from the first contact and creating a basis for trust. Two-way communication can be especially helpful in communities with contentious issues and a history of conflict. For example:

- *Trenton, New Jersey*, designed an extensive community-involvement strategy through an advisory committee that represented a broad spectrum of stakeholders. The city also contracted with a well-established and well-respected community organization, known as Isles, to conduct a neighborhood-outreach program in areas that had especially troublesome brownfield situations.
- *Newark, New Jersey*, focused on developing communication and outreach efforts in areas with significant brownfield problems. The city engaged nonprofit organizations important to each of the area’s three predominant ethnic groups to devise a community-involvement plan.
- *Rochester, New York*, slowly built its stakeholder involvement, beginning with a group focused on the city’s brownfield revolving loan fund, and gradually expanding it to include representatives from key city departments, businesses, and neighborhood interests. Most recently, Rochester established neighborhood councils to focus on brownfield concerns.

Periodic Review. The composition and framework for community involvement – the role and functions of the brownfield “team” and point person – should be re-examined periodically for effectiveness and inclusiveness. Given the rapidly evolving public- and private-sector dynamics of brownfield redevelopment, both locally and nationally, such re-evaluation may be needed frequently. Changing situations can require different approaches to and levels of community involvement.

At the local level, an evolving brownfield project may at some point elicit stronger stakeholder leadership. As stakeholders become familiar with the potential new uses of brownfield sites, they become both more knowledgeable and less fearful about the uncertainties of redevelopment. In response to increasing stakeholder confidence and capability, the city and the brownfield pilot staff need to know when to get out of the way and let the community lead. The best results may come from the bottom up, not from the top down. Examples of innovations through community leadership include local business

leaders establishing a “business-improvement district self tax” to raise funds for targeted improvements, and residents setting up a network for self-policing their neighborhoods.

Periodic review also facilitates moving from one brownfield project to the next, consistent with the community vision. Extending community involvement from one successful brownfield redevelopment project to another enables the community to accumulate familiarity and experience with brownfield work, strengthens the community’s acceptance of the brownfield revitalization vision, and sustains a municipality’s commitment to revitalizing stigmatized land within its jurisdiction.

How does community involvement change in various project phases?

The components of community involvement take different forms during the three main phases of the redevelopment project: planning, pre-development, and construction and reuse.

Planning Phase. At this stage, developers and landowners determine a project’s basic viability, and the community’s support can strongly influence a “go – no go” decision. Savvy brownfield developers carry out their analysis in cooperation with city and community representatives, making an effort to identify critical stakeholders and their visions for the area to determine the compatibility of their interests. Community interactions during the planning phase are influenced by the local government processes in place for commenting on land use-and development decisions, revising community plans, spending federal Community Development Block Grants, and other purposes.

Because zoning and land use rules and ordinances may limit redevelopment in certain areas to specific uses, such as industrial or residential development, the community’s ability to affect activity at some sites may be limited if the proposed use conforms to approved zoning or use stipulations. In these cases, public participation must go to the core of the zoning and try to effect change at that level. In other cases, the reuse decision is influenced by economic factors – a developer’s determination of development cost; assessment of risk; and evaluation of prospective uses, their markets, and their potential rates of return.

More and more developers are finding that community involvement during the planning phase sets the stage for constructive interaction throughout the project, producing several benefits:

- Community residents usually can provide valuable information concerning previous site uses that will be useful in the Phase I site-assessment process.
- Early community input on project design and scope can speed the process and avoid costly project revisions later on.

Community Transforms BART Project

In the Fruitvale neighborhood of Oakland, California, a site owned by Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) was intended for a multi-level parking garage adjoining a transit station. The project faced initial community opposition, raised at a public meeting very early in the planning process. Thanks to a stakeholder-driven effort led by the Unity Council, a neighborhood nonprofit association, the project underwent a significant change in its ultimate use.

The Unity Council led the community in a two-year effort to design an alternative “transit village” with housing, retail services, and a community center for the site. As a result, BART took a more community-based partnership approach to its plans for the area, working with the nonprofit Fruitdale Development Corporation, created by the Unity Council, to develop the site. As part of the revised plan, the development corporation acquired and cleaned up (to parking lot standards) a nearby property, which was used for the parking garage.

SOURCE: *Brownfields Redevelopment: Meeting the Challenges of Community Participation* (Pacific Institute, May 2000).

- Community interest in the end product can save time and effort at the end of the project for marketing to prospective business tenants or residential occupants.

Certain communication mechanisms may be in place or available that are particularly amenable to the planning phase. Ongoing entities such as community advisory boards can provide a forum for stakeholders to work together. Communities such as Cape Charles, Virginia, have created a type of “storefront” brownfield-information clearinghouse to complement community-planning and participation activities already in place. They also use innovative outreach methods tailored to the customs of the community, which build on existing social and cultural institutions such as churches and civic organizations.

Pre-Development Phase. Once a project is determined to be viable, the nature of stakeholder involvement changes. During this pre-development phase, site cleanup, permitting, and preparation activities take place, and community involvement can take many forms. The community may:

- Assist in environmental assessments by helping developers identify historic site uses and potential pathways of exposure associated with them. This information can help the developer build credibility with the community while providing an important check on a project’s technical consultants.
- Review environmental documents to understand which contaminants have been identified at the site and their associated risks. The extent to which the developer works with the community to reassure residents about the effectiveness of the cleanup can go a long way toward resolving any stigma affecting the site.
- Help to define acceptable site end-uses and their required cleanup levels, as well as the institutional controls and long-term monitoring needed to comply with regulatory standards. This too can help the developer build credibility with the community at large and ameliorate stigma issues.
- Work with the developer to finalize design plans to best meet both developer and community needs. This collaboration can save the developer technical and consulting fees, while enhancing the project’s overall market appeal.
- Help the developer secure additional community benefits compatible with the overall project – such as commercial leasing, facility maintenance, or development opportunities, especially for community development corporations or Small Business Administration Section 504 development companies. This can make project marketing easier for the developer at the end.

Savvy, responsible developers work with the community at this stage, seeking their input on design, aesthetic, and other concerns. They also give community groups credible and understandable information that lays out the developers’ risk margins and rate of return requirements, so that the community can understand their bottom line for project viability. A community’s evaluation of the risks of a cleanup will determine their level of interest and involvement with a project, especially if the decision is made to leave some contamination in place and use institutional or engineering controls as part of the cleanup remedy.

Construction and Reuse Phase. Following the brownfield project’s planning and onset of pre-development activities, state and local agencies govern much of the development process with respect to zoning, permitting, construction standards, and the like. Although these formal processes that regulate brownfield redevelopment rest mainly in the hands of state and local governments, community members can participate by doing the following.

- Carry out information/education efforts for the larger community on the meaning of site certifications obtained through state voluntary cleanup programs, covenants or land-use limitations that accompany the certification, and alternatives the community has to reopen the site if those restrictions are violated.
- Conduct outreach and monitoring activities related to construction and help the community respond to issues such as dust, noise, and the amount, routing, and timing of vehicle traffic during demolition, remediation, and construction.
- Participate in the monitoring of site cleanup and construction, and help to oversee implementation of institutional controls – especially long-term controls involving deed restrictions or groundwater monitoring.
- Work with the developer to promote community benefits such as targeted-job training and local “first source” job agreements that require site developers to reserve a percentage of newly-created jobs for local residents.

Questions for the Construction and Reuse Phase

- When will the job start, and how will the neighborhood be notified?
- How long will cleanup take?
- Will there be a lot of noise during the cleanup?
- Will any of the waste be treated on site? What process will be used, and will any chemicals be released during the brownfield cleanup?
- Will waste be trucked through the neighborhood? What happens if some of it spills or falls off the truck?
- Where is the waste being taken?
- Will the brownfield site be dusty during cleanup? How will the dust be controlled? Is it dangerous?
- What kind of signs will be posted while work is going on? Will they have pictures? Will children be able to understand them? Will they be posted in languages that reflect the ethnic composition of the area?
- Will there be guards at the street crossings to help with truck traffic?
- Will there be a night watch man at the brownfield site to control access during off hours?
- Will the site be fenced off?
- Who should be informed if neighborhood residents see something that they think is wrong?

Adapted from: Brownfields: Turning Bad Spaces into Good Ones – How Communities Can Get Involved

What tools and resources does community involvement require?

Municipal size often determines the breadth and abundance of resources that are available for brownfield redevelopment. Smaller jurisdictions may lack the staff and/or skills to define and sustain a brownfield reuse strategy, or even to implement a single brownfield project. They must rely on strong, broad-based support and the volunteer efforts of local residents or people from outside of the area who have an important stake in brownfield redevelopment there. By contrast, larger municipalities can draw on more resources and are likely to have the time and expertise to manage the redevelopment project. Yet any community-involvement strategy demands a variety of resources for every step of brownfield redevelopment, from visioning to monitoring. Generally they fall into the following categories.

Staff. Community involvement demands staff support to formulate a vision and a plan for carrying it out. Designating and supporting a full-time brownfield “point person” or “ombudsman” is a way to coordinate, facilitate, implement, and maintain a jurisdiction’s community-involvement strategy.

However, the amount of effort required to initiate and maintain proactive and effective stakeholder involvement is substantial and typically under-estimated. Inadequate staffing can be a significant barrier to brownfield redevelopment. Brownfield “veterans” have found that staff resources generally run far short of project needs, even with funds and in-kind commitments from local governments or private developers.

Information. To understand and comment on brownfield projects, communities require reliable and usable information on the site itself, cleanup technologies, public- health concerns, economic and market conditions, and other issues. The content and credibility of this information enhances a community’s ability to maintain interest in an ongoing brownfield-revitalization process. Particularly in the area of innovative remediation technologies, which can save hundreds of thousands of dollars and be the deciding factor in making the project numbers work, stakeholders need solid, objective, and clear information. Brownfield managers need to keep in touch with state and federal environmental agencies and experts that can link communities with information on new technologies that would be safe and sufficient for specific sites.

Criteria and Milestones. Developing criteria or indicators for measuring success can help all stakeholders recognize how the process is working and what progress is being made. These measures also can help keep tasks focused and assist in determining when to publicize information about the project.

Closely related to identifying indicators of success is documenting milestones – guideposts along the revitalization path where the indicators of success are attained. As the milestones are recorded, brownfield managers can note the commitments made by people and institutions that made them possible, pinpointing in particular those who fostered the collaboration that resulted in the brownfield success. This recognition can be very important for sustaining interest and support for an ongoing brownfield redevelopment process.

3. Results

Countless brownfield projects and their surrounding communities have benefitted from successful community-involvement efforts. Some of these results were planned or anticipated, but others emanated from community involvement in unexpected ways.

Overcoming Barriers. Community involvement is one of the best ways to identify workable strategies to overcome common barriers to brownfield redevelopment. These barriers include:

- Disagreements among the involved or affected stakeholders over land-use decisions and development outcomes.
- Fears among current and potential landowners and developers about uncertainties that can affect future land use.
- Reluctance among lenders to assume the increased risk associated with contaminated land.
- Lack of interest in mustering the resources needed for revitalization.

- Distrust, hopelessness, and outrage felt by those who live and work in brownfield areas.

For example, in Minneapolis, Minnesota, community participation was central to the redevelopment of the Johnson Street Quarry into a neighborhood shopping center. Originally the community wanted a supermarket, but was skeptical about the additional commercial space that the developer insisted he needed. To resolve their differences, a neighborhood task force met monthly in a televised public forum to discuss project plans with the city and developers, track progress, and address community concerns. This approach enabled those who could not attend the meetings to follow the process on TV, affording the developer more comfort that there would be no surprises as the project unfolded. It also allowed city officials to document the process and show latecomers to the process what issues had already been addressed.

Through this process, neighborhood ideas for access to the center and site configuration were incorporated into the design. The neighbors also allowed the buildings to be placed closer to the lot line in exchange for having their walls faced with attractive brick.

Linking to Other Projects. In communities all over the country, brownfield projects have been creatively coordinated with public-works initiatives, including transportation projects, waterfront developments, and historic-preservation efforts. In many cases, these linkages emanate from outreach and public-participation efforts for specific activities that helped promote a vision beyond the individual project. For example,

- In Frankfort, Michigan, brownfield initiatives are being linked to a larger community vision for the town, which plans to facilitate a transition from an agricultural economic base to a waterfront resort and tourist community. The town is using municipal and county public-works spending, as well as economic-development resources available through state and federal programs, to complement this shift in community-development strategy and vision.
- In Lawrence, Massachusetts, cleanup and redevelopment of the old Oxford Paper plant seemed financially unfeasible until the city thought to “piggyback” the project with a nearby highway expansion.
- In Bridgeport, Connecticut, plans for a minor-league ball park on a site where no other feasible uses had been identified were incorporated into a number of transportation improvements already in the planning stages.
- In Trenton, New Jersey, the Circle F housing development created at a brownfield site reflected the city’s desire to encourage more residential activity downtown.

Creating a New Decision-Making Process. As brownfield pilot projects mature, they are demonstrating a new kind of interaction between municipalities (or other grantee jurisdictions such as counties) and other brownfield stakeholders. Brownfield project leaders suggest that this new interaction brings communities a “higher level of understanding.” City government representatives no longer simply inform their constituents of developments underway, but rather engage a broad range of stakeholders in identifying concerns and designing strategies for resolving them. Stakeholders are being asked to give their voice in the development process – often for the first time.

In several of the most active communities, this new decision-making process takes the form of shared support of and accountability for brownfield activities, empowering communities and their

residents. Stakeholders join the municipal representatives in following up on projects and instigating change themselves. With this new decision-making process in place, they sense that better long-term results can be achieved for the community, and that the projects will provide benefits for everyone, including the developer.

4. Lessons from Successful Community Involvement Efforts

Broaden stakeholder involvement. Old patterns of behavior — dealing with people and organizations that are familiar, giving in to political circumstances, desiring control of the situation, fearing that old animosities will undermine new projects — all work against the notion of opening up involvement and broadening decision making. Community involvement must include both the stakeholders whose participation is needed to bring about change, and the stakeholders who have a direct interest in the issues at the site.

Know the community and its leadership at all levels. This means getting out, going door-to-door, searching for the critical stakeholders, and building a network of stakeholder constituencies. It means actively recruiting representatives, nurturing those relationships, and creating a collaborative environment that enhances respect for each perspective brought to the table.

Make sure key interactions take place. Interaction among local stakeholders and city officials with state and federal environmental agencies is critical in conducting brownfield-reuse efforts, leveraging resources, and shaping policies and practices affecting brownfield redevelopment. Moreover, these interactions can bring a higher level of community understanding of the brownfield-reuse process and redevelopment opportunities.

Recognize staffing and resource requirements. The amount of effort needed to initiate and maintain effective stakeholder involvement is substantial and usually underestimated. Community leaders in many cities have suggested that a full-time brownfield point person or ombudsman is needed to coordinate and facilitate the community involvement strategy associated with a project work plan.

Document milestones. Defining indicators of success is a tool for keeping tasks focused, and can help in determining when to publicize information about the project. This documentation also should note the commitments made — and kept — by people and institutions, and who was responsible for various collaborations and achievements. Because the redevelopment process can extend over a long period of time, it is important to maintain excitement and support from stakeholders and the community at large.

Promote successes. Applauding successes, even small ones, helps build the image of trust and comfort in working together that can pay important dividends for future brownfield activity.