



Northeast Sustainable Communities Workshop

Workshop Summary: Key Findings, Questions, and Issues

New Jersey Institute of Technology Campus, Newark, NJ
Thursday - June 18, 2009

Welcome to Newark and to the Conference:

Stefan Pryor, Deputy Mayor and Director of Economic Development, City of Newark

Introduction to the Conference:

Michael Taylor, President, Vita Nuova, LLC – www.vitanuova.net

Morning Plenary Session 1 - Multi-stakeholder initiatives for sustainable redevelopment of Brownfields

Moderator: Colleen Kokas, Bureau Chief, Office of Brownfield Reuse at NJDEP

Panelists: Dan Walsh, Director, NYC Mayor's Office of Environmental Remediation,
Jill Gaito, Green Center of Central Pennsylvania
Tom Stilley, DuPont Corporation
Sven Erik-Kaiser, USEPA Office of Brownfields and Land Revitalization

Panelists spoke about the development and execution of multi-stakeholder, collaborative initiatives at each of their respective organizations. Dan Walsh discussed efforts at New York City's Office of Environmental Remediation to develop strong intergovernmental partnerships at the federal, state and local levels as the City establishes the first municipal brownfield program in the country. In addition to streamlining the remedial oversight process, the program will engage community organizations and the public as key players in brownfield redevelopment in New York City.

Jill Gaito shared experiences of organizing diverse stakeholder groups around brownfield redevelopment projects and noted the importance of coupling environmental remediation with environmental education and training. Tom Stilley brought a corporate sustainability perspective to the discussion and spoke about the importance of top quality clean-ups and efforts made by the company to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions and generate more products using less resources and energy. Sven Erik-Kaiser discussed EPA's first round of Sustainability Pilot projects which provided technical assistance to brownfield grantees to make their projects greener and more sustainable. The EPA assisted 16 community brownfield pilot projects in five categories: Green Construction & Demolition Materials, Stormwater Management, Green Buildings and Energy Efficiency, Renewable Energy, and Green Job Training. Follow the link below for more information:

http://www.epa.gov/brownfields/sustain_plts/

Follow-up discussions identified community participation and high quality remediation efforts as specific project elements that contribute to a successful collaboration effort. Questions were asked regarding examining brownfield remediation efforts of other municipalities and private entities with successful redevelopment stories as examples or as potential partners for establishing networks.

Morning Plenary Session 2 – Brownfields and Climate Change” A Win-Win! *When Brownfields Redevelopment is Part of the Solution*

Moderator: Beth Barton, Esq., Day Pitney, LLP

Panelists: Daniel Donovan, Plainfield Renewable Energy
Sean McCloskey, Penn Energy Trust
Tom Bourgeois, Pace University Energy & Climate Center
Kenny Esser, New Jersey Office of the Governor
Michael Friemuth City of Stamford, CT.

The second morning plenary session dealt with the topic of brownfields as one potential solution to the issue of climate change. Key ideas from this session were discussion of New Jersey's Energy Master Plan and provisions for putting new energy generation facilities on former brownfield sites. Other main ideas included transit-oriented development coupled with investments in renewable energy technology infrastructure, and decreasing the price of renewable energy sources through capital investments and increasing the prices of non-renewables by ending subsidies.

Morning Workshop 1 – Communities as Brownfield Developers: *Their New Role, Sustainable Practices and the Future Ahead*

Moderators: Lee Ilan, Chief of Planning, NYC Mayor's Office of Environmental Remediation
Tracey Vernon, Brownfield Action Team Director at PADEP

Panelists: Regina Winters, ZARED Enterprises
Tom Clark, City Works
Paul Rabinovitch, Terra Cycle Investments
Nadine Maleh, Common Ground

This workshop focused on the role of communities as brownfield developers, sustainability practices and ideas for the future. The panelists discussed various types of actors in community redevelopment and how different partnerships among these organizations and between the non-profits and neighborhood residents are established. Discussions also focused on the importance of trust, mutual respect, consensus-building and community buy-in for successful sustainability projects. Questions and conversations about financing community-based brownfield redevelopment projects and grant funding arose, and panelists described examples of funding structures from past and current projects. Communities were identified as crucial elements of successful brownfield redevelopment efforts, and projects without community involvement are less likely to yield maximum benefits.

Morning Workshop 2 – Regionalism, Smart Growth, and Brownfields

Moderators: Rob Santy, President, Connecticut Economic Resource Center
Chris Costopoulos, Empire State Development Corporation

Panelists: David Kooris, Regional Plan Association
Larry Newman, Greater Wilkes-Barre Chamber of Business & Industry
Curtis Cravens, New York State Department of State

The overarching theme of this workshop was how to bring together the issues of regionalism, smart growth and brownfields. Conversations addressed how to find synergies between these three ideas and how communities / municipalities can leverage benefits of these synergies to create stronger regional networks, infrastructure and encourage reuse of blighted land. Tension between urban core revitalization and reclamation of environmentally damaged lands arose as a prescient topic, and various solutions were discussed, the most common of which was the necessity of a regional approach to planning. Land use mix, density, transit oriented development, and reduction of vehicle miles traveled were all discussed in the context of brownfield redevelopment. The role of State governments with incentive-based programs for brownfields and smart growth was another important topic.

Questions focused on prioritization of specific geographic areas for development, grant programs, regional connectivity, environmentally sustainable land use strategies and strengthening regional transit networks.

Morning Workshop 3- Sustainable Approaches to Assessment and Remediation of Brownfield Sites

Moderators: Gary Rozmus, Vice President of Gannett-Fleming
Anna Willett, Director of ITRC

Panelists: Kristeen Gaffney, USEPA Region 3
John Simon, Remediation Journal
Gerry Kirkpartrick, Environmental Standards Inc.

This workshop focused on sustainable approaches to assessment and remediation of brownfield sites. Key ideas related to how to define “green” or sustainable remediation processes and the types of metrics that would be used to quantify the level of sustainability of a remediation project. Questions were raised regarding the possibility of “sustainability” being the 10th CERCLA factor, as well as the drivers of green remediation (public sentiment, cost, climate change, cross media impacts, and more experienced practitioners). The six core elements of EPA green cleanup strategies were listed as energy, air, water, ecosystem health, land use, materials and waste and stewardship. Question and answer discussions centered on risk assessment and community involvement in the process.

Lunch Speaker – Brownfields and Sustainability: A 21st Century Perspective

Speaker: Mark N. Mauriello, Acting Commissioner, New Jersey DEP

Commissioner Mauriello spoke about improving sustainability efforts at NJDEP by encouraging more interagency communication and partnerships with mayors, as well as new investments in IT & operations. He noted that NJDEP is a shrinking agency and needs to be able to manage an increasing number of sites with fewer resources. Redevelopment of brownfields can act as a catalyst for future growth, and sustainability can be incorporated into this type of land re-use via: energy efficiency, land use planning, and planning for natural disasters. Partnerships and communication with stakeholders is essential to a productive redevelopment project.

Afternoon Workshop 1- Green Development in the 21st Century: *Implementing the Dream on Brownfields Sites. What works, What doesn't, and What is Needed.*

Moderators: Barry Hersh, Associate Clinical Professor, NYC Schack Institute of Real Estate
Larry Schnapf, Esq. of Schulte, Roth & Zabel, LLP

Panelists: Charles Gallub of Developcom, LLC
Alexander Durst, The Durst Organization
George Vallone, Hoboken Brownstone
Tracey Vernon of the PADEP

This workshop addressed how brownfields can be part of a green development strategy. The presentations in this workshop covered green building / construction principles and the increasing prevalence of the green building culture among developers and construction firms. Discussions also focused on how to develop truly sustainable sites by connecting brownfield remediation and green buildings construction, and the costs, benefits and strategies associated with redevelopment of brownfields and green building construction work.

Charles Gallup described redeveloping a former New Jersey landfill into a major retail and business complex, including the regulatory obstacles. Alexander Durst discussed the development One Bryant Park, a 1.2 million square foot building that is New York's first LEED platinum major office building. Tracy Vernon outlined several brownfield to renewable energy projects in Pennsylvania. The discussion focused on the physical as well as financial factors in these projects.

Afternoon Workshop 2 – Brownfields and Water: Sustainable Approaches to Restoration of Water Systems

Moderator: Sue Boyle, Senior Environmental Practice Leader, GEI Consultants, Inc.

Panelists: Eric Rothstein, eDesign Dynamics
Meredith Harris, Roux Associates
Kimberly Barber, GEI Consultants, Inc. Ecological Division
Mitchell Bormack, TRC Companies, Inc.

Key ideas from this workshop related to quantifying the ecological benefits of available land; waterfront brownfields in urban areas as particularly strategic sites, which tend to capture the most value; and the use of engineered natural systems (phytoremediation systems, constructed wetlands technologies etc), to remediate brownfields. Reconciling the goals of various team members working on brownfield redevelopment projects can help streamline the entire process.

Afternoon Workshop 3 – Thinking out of the Box: Using Brownfields to Create Self-Sufficient Neighborhoods: A Discussion about Food, Shelter, Energy and Health.

Moderator: Michael Taylor, President, Vita Nuova, LLC
Chelsea Albucher, Sustainability Director, City of Newark, NJ

Panelists: Marty Johnson, Isles, Inc.
Michael Freimuth, City of Stamford, CT
Jerry Naples, GreensGrow
Fred Ellerbusch, Novartis, Inc.

Key ideas from this workshop stemmed from the question of how to create self-sustaining communities. Discussions related to the reliability of power grids and how to develop new types of back up systems, energy self-sufficiency and developing new sources of power. Further conversation focused on how to create green affordable housing to help end homelessness and how to promote urban agriculture and locally sourced food as part of a self-sustaining community strategy. Discussions focused on whether the creation of self-sufficient communities was a Federal, state or local issue. The predominant theme was that local governments are “first-responders” to this mission and can play an important role in re-building the sense of community that is essential to achieving the goals of self-sufficiency and sustainability.

Afternoon Plenary – Where is the Money? *Public / Private Partnerships for Sustainability*

Moderators: Rick Gimello, Vice President and Senior Consultant, WCD Capital Partners
Anthony Slimowicz, Director, WCD Capital Partners

Panelists: Charlie Bartsch, ICF International
Robert Albus, Goodrich Capital
Benjamin Delisle, Jersey City Redevelopment Agency
Major Paul Cain, The Salvation Army

Key ideas from this session related to use of stimulus funds for grant and loan monies to be used for redevelopment of brownfields. Charlie Bartsch discussed expected Congressional appropriations and various types of Federal financial tools, including loan programs, industrial development bonds, tax credits, and conservation block grants. Other primary discussion topics were techniques for assessing the risks and rewards associated with brownfield properties and when / where earmarked funds and stimulus money come into play. Partnerships between government agencies and community groups were highlighted as ways of keeping funding streams open and capital flowing into brownfields projects.