



CREATING SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES A GUIDE FOR DEVELOPERS AND COMMUNITIES

BROWNFIELDS TO GREENFIELDS

The New York / New Jersey (NY/NJ) Baykeeper position paper of April 2006 entitled “Brownfields to Greenfields” said it best:

“Because most brownfields are found in densely populated urban areas, these properties have significant potential for redevelopment and for greenfields purposes... (p. 7)...The benefits of greenfields are many, particularly in densely populated areas. Greenfields can play a critical role in the human and environmental health of cities. Urban areas traditionally have a dire lack of open space, while shouldering a disproportionate share of industrial pollution. One of the poorest cities in the nation, Newark, New Jersey, suffers from an acute lack of recreational open space; just 5.3% of its land base is open space, which equates to 2.9 acres per 1,000 residents. Balanced Land Use Guidelines suggest that 10 acres per 1,000 people is the minimal amount of developable land that should be set aside as public open space.” (p. 9).

The position paper goes on to list the commonly recognized benefits of greenfields:

- neighborhood revitalization
- community health
- environmental justice
- environmental/ecosystem health (pp. 9-12).

Economic benefits and cost savings are listed as quantifiable benefits from converting brownfields to greenfields as well. The International Economic Development Council is reported to have found that projects that provide greenspace more than double the value of surrounding properties. That increased property value adjacent to greenspace is reported to be more than four times the increase in citywide property values. In addition, a federal study is reported to have found that when quality of life issues, such as increased greenspace, are ignored or are a low priority, a municipality has a more difficult time attracting and retaining business and the rate of economic growth is lowered. (p.12). This data should be shared with all potential developers of brownfield sites!

APPLICABLE NEW JERSEY GOALS AND TARGETS

New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection’s (DEP) Policy Directive 2002-003 acknowledged the importance of brownfield conversion to greenfields when it asked the Office of Brownfield Reuse in the Site Remediation Program to:

- identify brownfield sites that may be used for: a. local and regional parks; b. recreation areas; and c. natural resources restoration;
- In the interest of addressing liability concerns, create prospective purchaser agreements for bona fide conservation groups with an interest in stewardship for newly created greenfield sites; and
- identify several brownfield to greenfield pilots.

New Jersey also set a \$3 million annual set aside in its premiere brownfield grant program, the Hazardous Discharge Site Remediation Fund, for municipalities, counties, and redevelopment agencies to conduct the investigations of brownfield sites that will be designated for open space and recreation within a redevelopment area. (see NJSA 58:10B-1 et seq). These entities are also eligible for actual remediation grants (of up to 75% of remedial costs) when they acquire the property for greenfield recreation and conservation purposes.



New Jersey also acknowledged with a funded pilot program that nonprofit organizations may have an interest in converting brownfields to greenfields. A one time allocation of \$5 million was set aside for nonprofits to use to conduct the initial remedial studies of a brownfield site being considered for greenfield conversion. The funding stops short of grant monies for actual cleanup costs. (See NJSA 28:10B-25.3).

SUGGESTED ACTIONS AND STRATEGIES

- Ask that the state convert the funding available to nonprofits for initial remedial studies from a pilot program to a permanently funded program.
- Ask that the state provide some funding to nonprofits for the next steps in converting brownfields to greenfields: property acquisition and actual remediation.
- Redevelopers of brownfields should work together with nonprofits that have obtained state funds and to use that financing as an incentive for greenspace creation at privately funded redevelopments.
- Determine if Green Acres funding can be used toward these goals.
- Municipalities should encourage developers to see the economic benefits of brownfield to greenfield conversion. They should direct developers to the existing research and ask that greenspace be included as an environmental enhancement for any major project.

STATE TECHNICAL/FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

New Jersey Economic Development Authority - <http://www.njeda.com/brownfields.asp>

NJ Brownfields Redevelopment Resource Kit - <http://www.nj.gov/dca/osg/docs/brownfieldsresourcekit.pdf>.

FURTHER INFORMATION

The NY/NJ Baykeeper for the “Brownfields to Greenfields” 2006 position paper. The paper contains a wealth of references to additional resources. <http://www.nynjbaykeeper.org/>

Go to the DEP brownfield website, section on Success Stories. The Trenton Tunner project and the 507 Elm St, Kearney, NJ playground projects are good examples of brownfield to greenfield conversions. <http://www.nj.gov/dep/srp/brownfields/>

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