

Planning for Sustainable Brownfield Redevelopment

NORTHSIDE REDEVELOPMENT PROJECT

GARY, INDIANA, EPA REGION 5

Gary was created to be a steel town, with a large portion of its lakefront land occupied by the United States Steel Corporation. Decline in the steel industry led to over 55% population loss from the city's peak population in the 1960s; more than 20 percent of its population decline occurring between 2000 and 2010 from 102,746 residents to 80,294 residents. The city's rapid loss of jobs and population has led to a large amount of blight and abandonment in large swaths of the city. As the city's population dwindled, so did the budget and capacity of local government, leading to a rise in crime and a sense of disinvestment and disenchantment in the government's ability to rebuild.

In 2012, as part of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) and EPA Partnership for Sustainable for Communities, EPA Region 5's Land Revitalization Team began working with Mayor Karen Freeman-Wilson and her new administration to establish priorities for brownfields redevelopment and sustainability.

The EPA Land Revitalization Team identified a need to establish a process for prioritizing sites and redevelopment projects into which technical resources and funding could be targeted. During the first half of 2013, EPA assisted Gary officials in identifying focus areas for redevelopment.

As a result of this planning effort, the "Gary Northside Redevelopment" area was identified as a priority, with particular focus on four key areas: Horace Mann neighborhood surrounding Methodist Hospital, the Emerson/Downtown district, Aetna/Glen Ryan and Miller neighborhoods. These areas were selected by the city and key stakeholders for the potential to build upon redevelopment opportunities. For each area, technical assistance helped establish a team of city, regional and federal leaders to focus efforts on the four areas.

This technical assistance helped catalyze a coordinated and focused redevelopment effort, into which the city could direct regional, state and federal resources and establish priorities for redevelopment. The teams provided the city with key objectives that were approved by the mayor and, as of summer 2014, the city has targeted funding to the four neighborhoods, including:

- \$1.8 million has been assembled from EPA, HUD, the Northwest Indiana Redevelopment Agency and the city for the demolition of the long-abandoned Sheraton hotel.
- \$155,000 in HUD Community Development Block Grant funds for targeted demolition of homes.
- \$1.5 million for the rehabilitation of the Hudson-Campbell fitness center.
- A \$150,000 transportation oriented development planning grant from the Northwest Indiana Regional Planning Commission for the Emerson/Downtown district.

The momentum created by this project was a key contributing factor for the city's designation as a Strong Cities, Strong Communities Initiative participant in 2014.

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Figure 1: The Northside Redevelopment area includes four neighborhoods with potential for redevelopment. A coordinated effort will help prioritize redevelopment plans and resources.

LESSONS LEARNED

- In depopulated areas, it helps to prioritize key sites or other catalyst redevelopment opportunities.
- Sometimes establishing capacity and rebuilding local systems is necessary to move projects forward.
- Planning for sustainable brownfield redevelopment is a long-term process that can be enhanced at key times with targeted technical assistance.

PLANNED POST-TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE ACTIVITIES

- Establish priorities for redevelopment within the four targeted areas.
- Target city investments to four targeted areas.
- Complete a site inventory and identify investment opportunities.
- Make connections to regional area, including East Chicago, IN and Chicago, IL.