

Planning for Sustainable Brownfield Redevelopment

SOUTH SIDE/ROXANA NEIGHBORHOOD TRANSIT ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT

EAST CHICAGO, INDIANA, EPA REGION 5



The Vital East Chicago Project in the city of East Chicago is a HUD-DOT-EPA Partnership for Sustainable Communities initiative to plan and execute sustainable development projects that will facilitate community revitalization. A team of key city leaders has been assembled (Vital East Chicago Team) and is responsible for developing a vision for the two pilot projects. The project represents the mayor's vision for redevelopment in East Chicago, and is informed by local, regional, state and federal stakeholder engagement. The project objectives are to improve quality of life and public health for residents by:

- Leveraging existing investment in East Chicago to support redevelopment efforts that yield environmental, economic and social benefits to the community.
- Identifying and securing funding for these projects through public, non-profit and private sources.
- Providing the structure for pilot projects that can be replicated throughout the city.
- Facilitating partnerships that will carry forward this work.

EPA provided technical assistance to support planning for the South Side/ Roxana Neighborhood Transit Oriented Development (TOD) Project (one of the Vital East Chicago pilots). These resources helped the Vital East Chicago Team gather resources, understand opportunities and constraints, then design and conduct a transit-oriented development charrette around the East Chicago commuter rail station, which is the busiest stop on the Northern Indiana Commuter Transportation District South Shore line. TOD planning experts reviewed materials associated with trail development, stream cleanup and revitalization, infrastructure improvements and master planning efforts in the area. The initial conceptual design options helped key stakeholders consider what TOD might include at the East Chicago South Shore station.

On May 8, 2014, more than 30 stakeholders convened in East Chicago to learn about TOD, review conceptual designs and begin identifying steps to take toward achieving a TOD district. Participants were asked to take part in map-based exercises to identify anchors for economic development and job creation; consider complete green street strategies to beautify the station area and improve storm water management; improve signage, connectivity and access to the station and the marsh; consider tools such as design guidelines that will help to create a "sense of place" in the South Side/ Roxana neighborhoods; and consider opportunities to construct a portion of a regional trail network to support community building and healthy and active lifestyles.

EPA is leveraging over \$150 million in existing and proposed investment in East Chicago (EPA Programs, including Superfund, Resource Conservation Recovery Act (RCRA) and the Great Lakes National Program Office, as well as the City and other partner funds) to improve the quality of life for residents. The effort will result in economic, environmental and social benefits for residents, demonstrating the Agency's commitment to sustainability. This plan will help provide expanded housing and mobility choices, reduce transportation costs, improve public safety, support economic development and promote connectivity to other areas of the city for residents, visitors and tourists. It will also contribute to environmental benefits such as a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions and vehicle miles traveled.

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Figure 4: Conceptual design for the Roxana South Shore Station area in East Chicago.

LESSONS LEARNED

- Bringing key leaders to the table early in the planning process helps to create joint strategies and implement solutions to resolve environmental challenges.
- Conceptual planning helps stakeholders leverage additional ideas and see the possibilities for sustainable brownfield redevelopment.

PLANNED POST-TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE ACTIVITIES

- Meet regularly to engage key stakeholders, formalize a community engagement plan and engage in longer-term strategic planning and implementation.
- Work to identify near-term activities and how to implement recommendations from the report immediately in the project area.
- Work to incorporate these sustainable development plans into their comprehensive plan to guide the implementation process and position the city to be competitive for future grant funding.