



Regional Brownfields Assessment Pilot

Clearwater, FL

Outreach and Special Projects Staff (5101)

Quick Reference Fact Sheet

EPA's Brownfields Economic Redevelopment Initiative is designed to empower States, communities, and other stakeholders in economic redevelopment to work together in a timely manner to prevent, assess, safely clean up, and sustainably reuse brownfields. A brownfield is a site, or portion thereof, that has actual or perceived contamination and an active potential for redevelopment or reuse. Between 1995 and 1996, EPA funded 76 National and Regional Brownfields Assessment Pilots, at up to \$200,000 each, to support creative two-year explorations and demonstrations of brownfields solutions. EPA is funding more than 27 Pilots in 1997. The Pilots are intended to provide EPA, States, Tribes, municipalities, and communities with useful information and strategies as they continue to seek new methods to promote a unified approach to site assessment, environmental cleanup, and redevelopment.

BACKGROUND

EPA Region 4 selected the City of Clearwater for a Regional Brownfields Pilot. Clearwater's brownfields activities focus on a conglomeration of small industrial, commercial, and residential entities that were built on the fill of a former lake as part of urban redevelopment activities 40 years ago. Large scale business exodus from the area now described as the "collective brownfields area" (CBA) is contributing to urban decline and is believed to have stemmed from difficulties businesses have had in meeting environmental regulations mandating property set-asides for stormwater attenuation.

The CBA is a State-designated Enterprise Zone. Minority populations comprise dominant segments of the population in many of the neighborhoods surrounding the CBA, and 33 percent of all residents live below the poverty level. The area accounts for more than 50 percent of the City's crime.

OBJECTIVES

Clearwater's Brownfields Program is working to reverse the trend of seven years of property value decline, eliminate the functional obsolescence of buildings and land, and clean up the low level

PILOT SNAPSHOT



Clearwater, Florida

Date of Award:
September 1996

Amount: \$100,000

Site Profile: The Pilot targets a former lake, filled in for urban development, that now hosts an industrial, commercial, and mixed use area that has suffered from business exodus due to storm water attenuation regulations.

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contamination. By conducting site characterizations, offering economic redevelopment initiatives, and solving water quality problems, the City of Clearwater hopes to address the lingering environmental justice issues in the area. Local community groups and the City will work together to invite a diversity of prospective investors, plan for business expansion and create solid job opportunities for unemployed and low-to-moderate income residents.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND ACTIVITIES

The Pilot has:

- Coordinated discussions between St. Petersburg Junior College and the grocery store company which has agreed to recruit minorities from the local North Greenwood neighborhood; and
- Appointed a municipal Community Task Team which meets with members of the North Greenwood Neighborhood to exchange information and represent the economic and environmental interests of that neighborhood.

The Pilot is:

- Conducting the first site assessment at a former car dealership and automobile repair shop. Clearwater Neighborhood Housing Services (CNHS) will purchase the site and develop it into a 48,000 square foot grocery store with 8,000 square feet of retail space. It is expected that the supermarket will add 200 jobs;
- Working to develop a Risk Assessment Working Group made up of experts (Florida Departments of Environmental Protection and Health, the University of Florida, and Florida State University, the Governor's Council on Risk Assessment) to ensure that public health and safety issues are adequately represented in brownfields redevelopment projects;

- Establishing a revolving loan fund for site assessment at properties targeted for redevelopment; and
- Managing investor liability by employing the University of Southern Florida to prepare a flow-of-ownership plan for the CBA that will include an innovative approach to encourage businesses to move into the CBA, property transfer/liability protection, and residential support.

LEVERAGING OTHER ACTIVITIES

Experience with the Clearwater Pilot has been a catalyst for related activities including the following.

- The Clearwater City Commission will allocate \$5 million from a county-wide capital improvements sales tax to enhance brownfields efforts. Funding from the sales tax will be available for environmental assessment and remediation work in October 1997.
- Building cooperative agreements with organizations such as the Private Industry Council, to involve local businesses and community residents in decision-making.