



Brownfields Showcase Community Houston, TX

Outreach and Special Projects Staff (5105)

Quick Reference Fact Sheet

Brownfields are abandoned, idled or underused industrial and commercial properties where expansion or redevelopment is complicated by real or perceived contamination. In May 1997, Vice President Gore announced a Brownfields National Partnership to bring together the resources of more than 15 federal agencies to address local cleanup and reuse issues in a more coordinated manner. In 1998, this multi-agency partnership designated 16 "Brownfields Showcase Communities"—models demonstrating the benefits of collaborative activity on brownfields. In October 2000, the partnership selected 12 additional "Brownfields Showcase Communities" to continue the success of the initiative. The Brownfields Showcase Communities are distributed across the country and vary by size, resources, and community type. A wide range of support will be leveraged, depending on the particular needs of each Showcase Community.

BACKGROUND

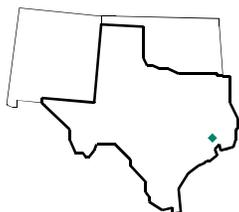
The Brownfields National Partnership has selected Houston, Texas, as a Brownfields Showcase Community. The city's Brownfields Redevelopment Program drives the cleanup and redevelopment of sites that create opportunities for the development of new commercial buildings, multifamily residences, and greenspace and recreational uses within the 932 acres of targeted brownfields sites. The city has a 20-square-mile federally designated Enhanced Enterprise Community (EEC), three state Enterprise Zones, and 22 Tax Increment Reinvestment Zones.

Approximately 19 percent of the city's nearly 4.5 million people live below the poverty line, with more than 42 percent of the population in the EEC (102,000) living in poverty.

Although Houston is known as the "Energy Capital of the World," the bust of the oil industry in the mid-1980s put hundreds of local companies out of business and closed numerous plants, many of

which became brownfields. Real and perceived contamination at these sites, combined with Houston's lack of zoning, provided little incentive for developers to consider brownfields sites as redevelopment options. Improvement in the economy, implementation of the state voluntary cleanup program, establishment of risk-based cleanup regulations, and the work being conducted through the Brownfields Redevelopment Program, however, are helping to alleviate this problem and create successful redevelopment opportunities.

Community Profile



Houston, Texas

Houston's Brownfields Redevelopment Program seeks to refocus development interest and opportunities toward the city's brownfields to deal with its legacy of sprawl. The Showcase Community designation will provide even greater access to the technical and professional resources that can assist with the city's revitalization.

CURRENT ACTIVITIES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

To date, there are 19 sites in Houston's Brownfields Redevelopment Program. Of these sites, four have been redeveloped and redevelopment is underway at another seven. The Brownfields Redevelopment Program addresses brownfields from all angles; since the inception of the program in 1996, community participation remains high, technical and finan-

cial help has been leveraged from state and federal agencies, and many partnerships have been forged. Through the Brownfields Redevelopment Program, Houston has:

- Helped to leverage more than \$520 million of private sector investment and more than \$14.9 million in public sector financing (\$4.4 million from federal sources and \$10.5 from the city), and matched brownfields property owners and developers up with additional sources of funding for cleanup and redevelopment;
- Created 2,700 new full-time jobs at the 557 acres of brownfields where redevelopment is ongoing or completed;
- Maintained strong community relations by working with the mayor to hold annual brownfields workshops for property owners and regular press conferences at project-specific milestones; and
- Created and maintained an interactive Web site that facilitates communication between the Brownfields Redevelopment Program, state, EPA, program applicants, property owners, developers, and community.

Houston has formed partnerships with federal, state, and local entities to address brownfields issues. Partnerships include:

- EPA, which awarded the Houston a Brownfields Assessment Demonstration Pilot and the Houston Community College System with a Job Training Pilot;

- U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, which has designated Houston as an EEC and approved a \$3.8 million construction and permanent financing grant to a brownfields site in the Brownfields Redevelopment Program;
- U.S. Department of Transportation, which has provided the city's Public Works and Engineering Department with a \$30 million grant to develop hiking and biking trails on abandoned railroad right-of-ways;
- U.S. Department of Commerce, which has provided Houston with a \$3.8 million Economic Development Administration grant to stimulate economic development and job creation in the city's Second Ward;
- U.S. Department of Energy staff, who selected Houston to team up with Argonne National Laboratory to develop software that helps developers match up with available brownfields sites; and
- U.S. Department of Defense, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Texas Natural Resource Conservation Commission, EPA Region 6, and a private Web designer to develop an interactive Web site.

SHOWCASE COMMUNITY OBJECTIVES AND PLANNED ACTIVITIES

Houston plans to use the Showcase Community designation to expand the work already being conducted in the Brownfields Redevelopment Program. Designation will allow the city direct access to additional resources in the National

Brownfields Partnership that can provide a broad range of technical and professional expertise. Since Houston's charter prohibits the use of public funds to enhance private property, the city will use this designation to leverage additional resources. The goals of the city's Brownfields Redevelopment Program will be greatly enhanced by being designated a Showcase Community. These goals include leveraging resources from specific federal agencies for the continued development of the hiking and biking trail, identifying brownfields with high reuse potential, educating nonprofit organizations and local developers about available funding and application procedures, facilitating stakeholder communication, sharing technologies, and expediting permitting processes. The Brownfields Redevelopment Program is held up as a model program, and with Showcase Community designation, its success can be replicated on a national scale.

Contacts

City of Houston, City Hall
(713) 437-6552

U.S. EPA – Region 6
(214) 665-6736

For more information on the Brownfields Showcase Communities, visit the EPA Brownfields Web site at:
<http://www.epa.gov/brownfields/showcase.htm>.