

Brownfields redevelopment can present a community with a range of opportunities and the potential for meeting local needs. However, not all brownfields redevelopment projects will be equally embraced by a community. Many of the issues involved in redeveloping brownfields—such as addressing contamination, implementing appropriate land use controls, and changing land uses—can be controversial among stakeholders even though the reuse will be an improvement over existing site conditions. This dynamic holds particularly true when a brownfields is planned for redevelopment as a residential use; the idea of having people live where contamination once existed can be controversial. However, the opportunity to redevelop brownfields for residential use can be strategic for a community, particularly when it is coordinated with other local initiatives and among stakeholders who can lend their expertise to the project.

The stakeholders and issues involved in brownfields-to-housing projects vary from community to community and from project to project. However, in most cases, redevelopment is accomplished through the coordination and contributions of the community, the private sector, and state and local government. While each of these stakeholders has a unique set of interests and concerns (depending on their role in the project), common concerns in brownfields-to-housing projects include the high cost of remediating to residential standards, protection of public health through reliability of land use controls, compatibility of surrounding land uses, and gentrification. Local governments need to be aware of these issues whether they are redeveloping brownfields or facilitating brownfields projects led by a developer. In either scenario, developers and citizens alike will have expectations about how a local government will address their concerns and meet their needs. Having an understanding for these issues will enable local governments to successfully engage in the brownfields-to-housing redevelopment process so that it—as its citizenry as well—may realize the many benefits a successful redevelopment is likely to yield.

Local governments should be prepared to respond to criticisms that may surface from the use of brownfields for residential purposes, so that criticisms can be addressed efficiently and effectively, without hindering the redevelopment process. Some types of brownfields-to-housing projects have been scrutinized from a public policy perspective. For example, when brownfields have been redeveloped for low income housing, critics have questioned the social equity of putting low income earners on formerly contaminated properties or properties with legally acceptable levels of residual contamination. However, brownfields-to-housing projects that yield upscale residential development also face criticism. When such projects are the result of a public-private partnership or benefit from a local financial incentive, critics scrutinize the use of public funds for subsidizing the cost of creating a high-profit generator for a private sector entity. In both of these examples, it may be necessary for local governments to justify their role and decisions.

While the challenges in redeveloping brownfields for residential use may seem daunting, they should not discourage local government from participating in such a project. Integrating housing into a brownfields redevelopment project can enable a local government to coordinate and bolster environmental, economic, and social initiatives. Redevelopment that includes housing is likely to spur additional investments on adjacent sites as businesses, such as restaurants and shops, crop up to serve the new residential population. Residential reuses of brownfields can also yield unique developments through the adaptive reuse of existing structures or the implementation of innovative design and planning concepts. In addition, brownfields-to-housing projects in center cities can help curb suburban sprawl and utilize existing infrastructure. And, like other forms of brownfields redevelopment, remediation and reuse of idle or abandoned sites improves the quality of life in a community and mitigates threats to public health.

It is important for local governments to weigh the benefits and challenges, and consider their resources and community priorities to determine if residential reuse is appropriate and worth the time and investment. Sometimes housing may not be the best reuse of a brownfields site. However, local governments, nonprofit organizations, and the private sector have been successful in creating a range of creative and locally desirable housing options on brownfields sites wherein even a challenging project will be worth the work. Brownfields sites all over the country are being creatively redeveloped into innovative projects, such as:

- Residential units for low-income earners;
- Housing that accommodates the needs of the elderly;
- Lofts, apartments, and condominiums from adaptively reused industrial and commercial structures;
- Mixed use developments where business, housing, and entertainment co-exist; and
- Neighborhoods that are designed to maximize access to and use of transit.

What most projects have in common is that the local government has been involved in some respect, and in some cases, local government involvement was critical to the success of the brownfields redevelopment project.

This report describes some of the key issues that local governments should consider when coordinating brownfields redevelopment efforts with housing, and provides local governments with information to aid in decision-making. Research and analysis for this report were gathered through literature reviews, interviews with brownfields practitioners, and discussions with local government officials. In chapter two, the benefits and challenges to coordinating brownfields and housing issues are explored. Considering the challenges of a brownfields-to-housing project will enable a local government to plan and organize resources so that they and the community may reap the many

benefits of a successful redevelopment. Chapter three identifies the likely stakeholders in a brownfields-to-housing project, and describes their roles and expectations of local government. Profiles of five brownfields-to-housing projects are featured in chapter four. Chapter five concludes the report with a summary of research findings. Together, these chapters address the questions:

- How can brownfields redevelopment for residential reuse be coordinated with other local initiatives to compound public benefit?
- What are the challenges specific to coordinating brownfields redevelopment with residential use?
- What is it about a brownfields site that influences the specific type of residential use developed?
- What are the primary roles, issues, and concerns of the different stakeholder groups involved in brownfields-to-housing projects, and how can they be coordinated?
- What are some of the creative and innovative projects being developed at brownfields sites?
- What have been some of the public policy debates about brownfields-to-housing projects?
- What are some case study examples of brownfields-to-housing projects?
- What are the strategies, essential tools, and best practices to implement when fostering new residential development through brownfields redevelopment?

By exploring these issues, local governments can evaluate whether the redevelopment of a brownfields into residential use is appropriate for their community or site, and identify the ways in which such a project can be planned and implemented successfully.□