

Brownfields-to-housing projects are a unique form of redevelopment, and thus involve their own unique issues. Similarly, redeveloping brownfields for residential reuse can pose challenges that are not relevant in other types of brownfields redevelopment projects. However, overcoming the challenges is worthwhile in that brownfields-to-housing projects can offer local government and the community significant benefits. Linking brownfields and initiatives can help local government leverage resources, and coordinating brownfields-to-housing efforts with other local initiatives can yield creative and unique projects. The variety of resources, expertise, and innovative ideas that are brought to bear in a project will rely on the stakeholders that are engaged in the brownfields redevelopment process. While stakeholders will vary according to the nature of the specific brownfields-to-housing project, redevelopment is typically accomplished through coordination and contributions of nonprofit organizations, the community and the private sector, as well as federal, state, and local government. Because local governments are often key partners in facilitating or leading brownfields-to-housing redevelopment, they must be educated on the concerns and interest of stakeholders and the issues relevant to building home on former brownfields.

Challenges that pertain to brownfields-to-housing projects that are not relevant to other forms of brownfields redevelopment, or that are more significant when planning a residential reuse, include the financing of the cost of remediating contaminated brownfields to residential standards, protecting public health, ensuring the reliability of land use controls, considering the compatibility of surrounding land uses, and preventing gentrification. It is important that local governments and other stakeholders consider these challenges so that they can be effectively addressed should they arise and, therefore, do not complicate efforts to coordinate a local government's housing and brownfields objectives.

Addressing community concerns and public policy criticisms of redeveloping brownfields for residential use can also be challenging for local governments and other brownfields stakeholders and developers. Community reaction to controversies in the public policy of allowing residential use on a brownfields site—such as the existence of residual contamination, the use of public funds on private sector projects, and targeting low-income housing for development on former brownfields—could challenge the success of a redevelopment project.

However, community outreach and education can engage citizens in the brownfields redevelopment process and offer an opportunity for local government to answer questions and allay concerns. And, as with any public policy issue, there are counter arguments that can provide brownfields stakeholders and local decision makers with more balanced information for making educated and well-informed decisions. For example, residual contamination concerns can be mitigated with the use of land use controls; the use of public funds in private sector developments can revitalize a site so that it generates tax revenues for the local government; and it is quite common for high-end residential units to be built on the site of former brownfields. Therefore, it is important for local governments to be educated on the issue of brownfields-to-housing public policy criticisms and common community concerns so that they can consider those issues in their decision-making and, if necessary, justify their decisions.

While the challenges may seem daunting, redeveloping brownfields for residential reuse can offer a local government a number of benefits that make coordination of brownfields and housing initiatives worthwhile. Using brownfields for housing developments can save local government money in that existing infrastructure is being utilized, which is typically cheaper than new construction. Cost savings are particularly significant when the new construction is in an outlying area that requires new roads and sewer lines for access and service delivery. New land uses and activities on brownfields will generate tax revenues for local government and could act as a catalyst

Challenges

Some challenges specific to coordinating brownfields redevelopment and residential use include:

- Cost of remediation
- Protecting public health
- Compatibility of surrounding land uses
- Preventing gentrification
- Preserving traditional neighborhood character
- Addressing public policy criticisms and community concerns

for additional brownfields and other tax generating developments. Brownfields redevelopment can also yield a number of indirect benefits to the community, such as neighborhood revitalization, blight reduction, and improved community morale.

Often a variety of resources must come to bear for a brownfields redevelopment project to be successfully planned and implemented. Linking brownfields and housing with other local initiatives can help to overcome challenges through leveraging of resources. Common local issues that can be coordinated with brownfields and housing efforts include meeting housing needs, preserving historic structures, protecting public health, encouraging economic development, revitalizing neighborhoods, implementing new and innovative neighborhood design, and curbing sprawl.

Coordination of brownfields-to-housing efforts with other local initiatives can also yield creative and unique projects. While traditional apartment buildings and single-family houses have been built on former brownfields sites, creative and innovative projects are developed as a way to meet some unique characteristic or challenging conditions of a brownfields site. Factories, warehouses, and historic structures are being adaptively reused; low-income and senior housing are being built by nonprofit or-

ganizations; New Urbanist and transit-oriented neighborhoods are being designed.

In almost all brownfields-to-housing projects, the local government has an essential role in facilitating redevelopment. Local governments must be educated on the issues and concerns of stakeholders so that they may be an active facilitator or leader in a brownfields-to-housing project, meet the expectations of stakeholders, and justify decision making should they face criticism over public policies. Furthermore, local government should be engaged in brownfields projects, as it is their responsibility to protect the health of the community and its environment. Not only do residents have expectations of their local government, but it is the local government's responsibility to protect their constituents from the effects of contamination. By being engaged in the brownfields redevelopment process, local governments will be better able to serve their citizenry in a protective and steward capacity while promoting environmental remediation and economic development. □

Benefits

Some benefits of redeveloping brownfields for residential reuse include:

- Saving money through the use of existing infrastructure
- Increasing tax revenues
- Promoting economic development
- Cleaning the environment
- Improving community morale
- Removing blight and eyesores
- Reducing crime
- Preserving historic structures
- Protecting public health
- Revitalizing neighborhoods
- Curbing sprawl
- Inspiring unique design

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