

# Lessons Learned in Brownfield Redevelopment: Southwest Detroit

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## Introduction

Redeveloping brownfields, abandoned or underused properties that are, or are perceived to be, contaminated, is a complex problem. Redeveloping brownfields requires solutions designed to attract new business, retain jobs, build a stronger tax base, and make communities attractive places to live and work. The challenge facing community members, developers, and government officials in urban and industrial areas is to design a process to facilitate brownfield redevelopment while ensuring that the interests of all key stakeholders, including local residents, are met.

MSU worked with the Southwest Detroit Contaminated Sites Task Force and other stakeholders to document *the Lessons Learned in Brownfield Redevelopment*. The purpose was to capture the experiences and lessons learned from the successful collaborative approach used by the Task Force. This poster highlights both successes and continuing challenges in brownfield redevelopment.

## Methodology

Task Force members provided written information detailing the lessons learned from their perspectives. Members were also interviewed and completed a survey. Site-specific material was also gathered from Michigan Department of Environmental Quality documents including Phase I and Phase II environmental assessments.

## Task Force Background

- formed with representatives from government departments, businesses, developers, financial institutions, and community-based non-profits
- operating since 1995
- created as a part of the Detroit's Empowerment Zone initiative

## Lessons Learned

- 1: Communicate, coordinate, and collaborate.
- 2: Look to Federal and State agencies for remediation assistance.
- 3: Title and ownership issues can impede redevelopment.
- 4: Known contamination should not be a deterrent to redevelopment.
- 5: Long-term oversight and monitoring may be necessary.
- 6: Clean-up levels can impact future end-use.
- 7: Empowered communities can impact property end-use.
- 8: Early community involvement is necessary for a successful redevelopment.
- 9: A long term vision leverages dollars.
- 10: Brownfield Act of 2000 provides new financial incentives and opportunities for redevelopment.
- 11: Perceived costs may inhibit redevelopment.
- 12: Partnerships uncover many in-kind contributions.
- 13: Partnering provides funding beyond brownfield dollars.
- 14: Brownfield properties provide marketing challenges and opportunities.



Before and After of Anaconda Brass highlight Lesson #2-Look for Federal and State Agencies for remediation assistance



Before and After of Revere Copper and Brass highlight Lesson #5-Cleanup levels can impact future end-use



Before of Federal property highlights Lesson #3- Title and ownership issues can impede redevelopment



After of St. Anne's Gate property highlights Lesson #9- A long term vision leverages dollars



After of RGL highlights Lesson #1-Communicate, coordinate and collaborate



After of Beard school highlights Lesson #8- Early community involvement is necessary for a successful redevelopment



During of Anaconda Brass highlights Lesson #12- Partnerships uncover many in-kind contributions



Welcome Center Before highlights Lesson #13- Partnering provides funding beyond brownfield dollars

## Task Force Words of Wisdom

- It will take twice as long as you expect.
- Contractors and subcontractors on the project must be educated on remediation requirements and monitored to assure compliance with air and disposal regulations.
- To market a brownfield advantageously, remember that the surrounding lots must also be cleared of illegal dumping, abandoned homes and other conditions that make the area appear blighted. No matter how clean the location is, if the neighboring properties are unattractive, it won't sell.
- Get to know your lender. Banks and mortgage companies differ in how knowledgeable they are in brownfield redevelopment. A good lender can save a developer time, money, and future headaches.
- Words to Live By: Always get a Baseline Environmental Assessment!

## Task Force Survey Results

The Task Force has been addressing environmentally contaminated properties in southwest Detroit since 1995. Of the original 30 members, 70% continued to participate through Spring 2003. This high retention rate is a strong indicator of successful collaboration. The individual Task Force members were surveyed to identify the factors that contributed to this successful collaboration.

- members are vested in the process
- there is a strong sense of ownership within the group
- members are decision makers
- members identify resources they can contribute to the total project and follow-through
- members focus on a defined and manageable geographic area of diverse brownfield sites
- there is great diversity in the Task Force
- community input is a priority

## Dedication

To the memory of Lillian Randolph, a very active and important member of the Task Force, who devoted her life to community service.

Lillian E. Randolph  
December 8, 1950 - June 16, 2002

## Acknowledgements

Michigan State University and Southwest Detroit Environmental Vision gratefully acknowledge the many contributions from Task Force members for the countless hours spent designing, writing, and reviewing our *lessons learned* and the generous use of their expertise in the formulation of the *case studies*.

