

# THE *New* MARKET FRONTIER



**Unlocking Community Capitalism**

**Through Brownfields Redevelopment**



**THE AMERICAN INSTITUTE  
OF ARCHITECTS**

Appears as a chapter in the American Bar Association's book entitled *BROWNFIELDS: A COMPREHENSIVE GUIDE TO REDEVELOPING CONTAMINATED PROPERTY*

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*Brownfields sites are the new market frontier  
bursting with community capitalism.*

Architects do more than design buildings. Through their understanding of the interaction of people and their physical surroundings over time, architects add vision and value to the entire development project. Bricks and mortar are what we see. But architects' most formidable skills lie in their ability to get people to express their abstract goals and visions and then capture them in buildable form. Since informed decisions made early will save considerable time and money, bringing an architect on board from the outset of a development project will pay for itself many times over in both first-cost development and construction and life-cycle operation. The architect's unique abilities—to see a multidisciplinary picture and unite various factions of the community—encourage innovative solutions to brownfields redevelopment.

The architect is a designer, coalition builder, problem solver, mediator, advocate, and planner. He or she is trained to overcome problems and incorporate the needs and resources of the community into a design proposal.

As illustrated in the case studies presented in this chapter, architects relish the design challenges and rewards of revitalizing urban brownfields sites. According to Mayor Harvey Johnson of Jackson, Miss., the “impact of brownfields is not just on that one parcel of land, but on the surrounding neighborhoods as well. These sites need to be cleaned up, redeveloped, and put back into productive use.” Architects across the nation echo this call. By converting these former industrial sites to differing uses, such as parks, shopping areas, learning centers, and housing, we are investing not only in marketable real estate, but in the

most valuable resource of all—our communities.

Brownfields are untapped resources that hold a wealth of opportunity. Often in central urban locations with costly infrastructure already in place, brownfields are diamonds in the rough. Brownfields redevelopment “taps the hidden value of extensive roads, streets, and other utilities that are already in place to serve the next generation of business development.”<sup>1</sup>

In a time when our nation is searching for solutions to suburban sprawl, these urban sites are the new market frontier bursting with community capitalism.<sup>2</sup> When combined with intelligent planning, community involvement, entrepreneurial spirit, and a clear vision, brownfields sites can be transformed from environmentally contaminated landscapes to thriving urban meccas.

## **BROWNFIELDS REDEVELOPMENT PROMOTES LIVABLE COMMUNITIES**

Suburban development is rapidly consuming open space. In fact, a recent national survey indicates that sprawl is now a top concern of many Americans.<sup>3</sup>

In response to what is often viewed as diminished quality of life, there is growing demand for the creation of “Livable Communities,” those that emphasize planning and design. By virtue of their central location, brownfields in urban areas—often along waterfronts—offer significant redevelopment benefits that are vital to the concept of livable communities.

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*The architect is a designer,  
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## SUCCESS STORIES/CASE STUDIES

Brownfields redevelopment is both good social policy and business policy. Redevelopment of these properties is not only an investment in land, but also in the urban fabric. By providing economic opportunities and aesthetic improvement to these areas, we promote sustainable community development.

Many American cities are currently undergoing a renaissance. Young professionals and empty nesters have begun a migration to cities and continue to make them the location of first choice. Brownfields redevelopment capitalizes on this trend and helps keep the urban revitalization momentum going.

To better understand how brownfields redevelopment enhances communities, we examined three case studies: Glen Cove, NY; Charlotte, NC; and Pittsburgh, PA. These success stories show how architects have been enlisted to help lead the development process, forge



*SITE STABILIZATION AT LI TUNGSTEN: This site is currently being cleaned up and is slated to be developed for cultural retail. An esplanade is being developed along this site's waterfront. (Photo courtesy Jambhekar Strauss Architects PC)*

the community vision, and create livable communities and neighborhoods.

### Glen Cove, NY

The city of Glen Cove, NY, has been an industrial center since the mid-1600s. This Long Island city's coastline consists of 214 acres of mostly

contaminated, abandoned, and underused sites within its 1.1-mile waterfront district. Glen Cove had two federal Superfund sites. Sixty-eight percent of this land is comprised of brownfields with histories of heavy industrial and manufacturing use. This entire waterfront area has been cited an "urban blight area" by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Moreover, 13 percent of households within a mile of the site have annual incomes under \$15,000.<sup>4</sup>

Jambhekar Strauss Architects, now merged with Fox & Fowle Architects in New York City, under the lead of Mark E. Strauss, AIA and Uwe Brandes, developed



*CAPTAIN'S COVE ABANDONED STRUCTURES: These buildings have been demolished and the site is being cleaned up. A hotel conference center with associated retail will be built here soon. (Photo courtesy Jambhekar Strauss Architects PC)*



*STEAMBOAT LANDING RESTAURANT: This site, on Glen Cove Creek, was formerly used as storage for landscaping equipment and materials. It is now one of the most successful restaurants in the area. This development is part of a \$4M dollar private redevelopment project at the Jude Thaddeus Marina. (Photo courtesy Joe Weiser)*



*AFTER: Once abandoned (see below), this building is now the School for Language and Communication Development, which specializes in educating children with communication disorders in a mainstream school setting. This site is adjacent to the waterfront area. (Photo courtesy Glen Cove Community Development Agency)*

the Glen Cove Creek Revitalization Plan seeking to make Glen Cove “a place people are attracted to, rather than a place people avoid.”<sup>5</sup> This master plan broke the 214 acres on both sides of the Creek into seven zones. The zones were targeted for a marina, a high-speed ferry terminal that provides service to Manhattan and Connecticut, a conference center, a hotel, a maritime museum, a waterfront gateway visitors center, an amphitheater, offices, shops, and restaurants.

With funding from EPA’s Brownfields Showcase Community Program, federal and state agencies as well as private-sector investment, Glen Cove leaders expect to rejuvenate their city by generating \$200 million in annual sales and creating 1,700 full time jobs.<sup>6</sup>



*BEFORE: This school building, originally built in the 1930’s as a WP project, had been empty for years. The Glen Cove master plan slated reuse of this vacant school site as a priority. (Photo courtesy Jambhekar Strauss Architects PC)*



*AFTER: The existing facade on Camden Square was removed and replaced with one that was in context with the historic neighborhood. The building now features 200,000 square feet of offices, restaurants, and retail and is home to the Design Center of the Carolinas. (Steve Little Photographer)*

*BEFORE: The intention of the project was to reconnect the fabric of the former industrial district. Shook Design Group created two new facades to complement the 1940s-warehouse look and historic context of the neighborhood. (Photo courtesy Shook)*

## Charlotte, NC

Charlotte is home to more than 800 brownfields sites.<sup>7</sup> A former industrial center, the South End of Charlotte had been plagued with environmental contamination and crime. The area consisted of several abandoned warehouses and railroad tracks with varying levels of soil and groundwater contamination. But the hot real estate market in Charlotte encouraged developers to consider revitalizing these neglected sites.

Kevin E. Kelley, AIA, and Terry Shook, AIA, of Shook Design Group, created a redevelopment vision for South End in their master plan. Their goal was to turn this brownfields area from a “sore spot to a hot spot.”<sup>8</sup>

The centerpiece of the plan became the Charlotte Trolley that runs for about two miles from South End, through the Convention Center, and to the other side of downtown. South End is now known for its characteristic red brick buildings built to the street, pedestrian walkways, and recreational areas. This community is home to both residential and commercial, entertainment, and small-industrial facilities. The motto of the master plan is to create “a hip urban area in which to live, work, and play.”<sup>9</sup> Architects led the effort to craft the vision and transform it into a vibrant urban reality.

## Pittsburgh, PA

Brownfields redevelopment is no stranger to Pittsburgh. In fact, Pittsburgh has been named the number one urban brownfields market in America.<sup>10</sup> The Washington's Landing site (formally known as Herr's Island in Pittsburgh) consists of 42 acres of contaminated land that had been used for industrial operations for the last two centuries. It has been home to heat processing plants, a saw and steel mill, a fertilizer company, a soap company, a garbage plant, a railroad yard, and a slaughterhouse. Over the years, the island became notorious for its stench. Herr's Island became well known for its "Herr's stink."<sup>11</sup> In fact, when excavation for building began, several cattle carcasses were unearthed. The environmental contamination ranged from known groundwater contamination to the later discovery of polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), a known carcinogen. But Pittsburgh developers saw this prime waterfront location as an excellent redevelopment opportunity.

Robert Pfaffmann, AIA, of Pfaffmann and Associates, was the project architect for the Bohlin, Cywinski, and Jackson master plan for Washington's Landing. The vision for the island included a rowing association, both upscale housing as well as moderately priced residential units, office space, and a riverfront trail system. The 1½-mile trail that today circles the island provides a great view of boats traveling along the Allegheny River and serves as a magnet to draw people to the area. The island has been transformed. Many compare the view of the Pittsburgh



*BEFORE: For two centuries, Washington's Landing was an industrial wasteland. Over the years, its 42 acres had been used for a variety of industrial operations ranging from a soap company to a slaughterhouse. (Photo courtesy Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection)*



*AFTER: Washington's Landing has cleaned up its contamination and now its waterfront enjoys bike and pedestrian trails that provide a great view of boats traveling along the Allegheny River. (Photo courtesy The Rubinoff Company)*



*BEFORE (left) and AFTER (right): Washington's Landing demonstrates how brownfields redevelopment unlocks the "Emerald City" vista of Pittsburgh. The island is now home to 88 luxury townhouses and 300,000 square feet of commercial development. (Photo at left courtesy Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection. Photo at right courtesy The Rubinoff Company and Michael Haritan)*

skyline to that of the Emerald City in the Wizard of Oz. Others claim the view is reminiscent of an Eastern European City with a view of the historic cathedrals that tourists flock to see.

Today on Washington's Landing, homes that initially sold for \$50,000 are now selling for \$650,000. The island has produced over 600 jobs and generates over \$700,000 in annual tax revenue for the city of Pittsburgh.

## KEYS TO THE PROCESS

Transforming brownfields into thriving urban communities doesn't happen overnight. Working through the process is often as important as the results achieved. The process includes crafting a community vision, developing a master plan, and being flexible in one's approach to solving problems. The birth of these redevelopment communities does not begin with the first building, but with a vision.

## VISION AND MASTER PLAN

Master planning is the process of bringing people together, evaluating the texture of the community fabric, and determining what constraints exist.<sup>12</sup> A clear vision is the foundation for building a community. The success of redeveloping a community is not a destination, "it is the evolution of an idea into a dream fulfilled."<sup>13</sup> When redeveloping a brownfields site, you need not start with a blank slate. The vision often is a rediscovery of the spirit of the existing community reflected in its ideals and aspirations. The illustrative translation of this vision is embodied in the master plan.

The vision for the redevelopment of brownfields sites requires innovation, imagination, and a certain level of idealism. Kevin Kelley, a visionary architect involved in redeveloping the South End District, asserts that "brownfields sites take a lot of vision—sometimes you really have to squint."<sup>14</sup> A good example is the South End District's Camden Square project. The site

## Vision

- Vision is the foundation for building communities.
- Public participation is essential in crafting a vision.
- Vision unveils economic opportunities, hidden potentials, and prospective commercial development.
- Vision can alter a negative community image.

initially was a series of dilapidated industrial mill buildings. But Kelley recognized the challenge and the opportunity. Seeing the prime real estate location as tremendous potential, he transformed the mills into a development of technological companies and design-related businesses.

The vision and master plan demonstrate the community's opportunities for renewal. The vision represents the many dimensions of a community. Environmental restoration is addressed not only through remediation, but also visually through parks, landscaping, and the general revival of the ecosystem. New buildings and existing structures are depicted that can both respect the historic spirit of the community as well as demonstrate a modern, updated character. The vision incorporates a community dynamic, interaction, and participation.

### Refine the Plan

Crafting a vision for community redevelopment requires patience and a willingness to build relationships with community leaders. Mark Strauss, the architect who directed the Glen Cove project, believes that "you shouldn't put your architect hat on too early because you will end up spinning a lot of wheels without gaining any ground." The design process won't be successful until there is a carefully conceived plan that responds to community input.

Strauss firmly believes in what he called a "sketch process," a forum where ideas are examined. The loose sketch allows an architect to track ideas as they are developed and changed. This strengthens the responsiveness of the process to each stakeholder's concern.

Allowing for a flexible vision in the early stages prevents financial waste.<sup>15</sup> For instance, if a plan is crafted without considering environmental constraints or community concerns, it is likely that late in the process, costly revisions will occur. The resources and time required to revise the plan could have been saved by assessing and addressing these matters early in the process.

### Enhance the Image of the Area

While the long term objective of the vision is to renew a community, the first hurdle is to gain the support of the people the plan will affect. A brownfields redevelopment vision usually needs to reverse a negative environmental image. The vision should also serve as an image-enhancing tool attracting the support of the community and its stakeholders. It needs to demonstrate how urban and landscape design can transform these derelict industrial sites into fresh, vibrant settings.

The architect uses sketches and other visual presentations to excite the community. Abstract concepts get more attention when presented as 3-dimensional images. A vision can also sell itself by promoting economic opportunities, unveiling hidden potential, and un-leashing commercial expectations. The vision must show how the aesthetic improvements and the market investment will enhance the community's quality of life.

Preservation of a community's historic character also enhances the site's image. Design elements that respect the historic flavor of an area, yet incorporate a modern vision, often appeal to communities. In the case of the South End District, a charming historic house was restored and became an Italian bistro. Several antique stores and rare-book shops give the area a sense of history. In addition, the Southend Brewery & Smokehouse was converted from an old warehouse to a fashionable restaurant where patrons can watch the beer-making process and eat wood-fire-baked pizza. The historic elements of the warehouse add to the brew pub experience. South End architect Kevin Kelley claims the most notable landmark is the Brewery's metal grain silo that bears the district name and functions as both a billboard and an icon for the community. Oddly enough, the silo was not a genuine part of the district's history.<sup>16</sup> In fact, it was relocated from a local farm. But the historic flavor coupled with the modern edge adds significantly to the district's identity.



*BEFORE: This 1930s South End warehouse was being used for storage before Shook Design Group convinced a Texas-based restaurant group to create a new restaurant concept for the space. Shook also convinced the client to name the restaurant after the historic district in which it is located, South End. (Photo courtesy Shook)*



*AFTER: The new restaurant has an old grain silo that was located on a Mecklenburg County farm and moved to the site. The grain silo acts as a district beacon and a billboard for the restaurant with thousands of people driving by it each day. Not only has the restaurant become Charlotte's highest grossing, it was named one of the best 10 restaurants in the country by Restaurants & Institutions magazine. (Tim Buchman Photographer)*

Kelley notes that restaurants make excellent projects for new developments. Restaurateurs are not risk-averse. Rather they tend to be risk takers. Restaurants in these areas are often trendy, upbeat places willing to try something new. Moreover, they bring a constant flow of people to the area around the clock, unlike an office complex. If successful, they make the community viable and can open the floodgates for a variety of other development opportunities.

Another example of a land use that enhanced the image of a site can be found in the Washington's Landing case study. Robert Pfaffmann noted that the city had a hard time selling his vision. The island's industrial past seemed to be plaguing its future. However, Pfaffmann noted that there was a critical change in attitude when the Three Rivers Rowing Association said they wanted to build a boat club on the island. Soon a marina and tennis courts were added to the vision. Suddenly the image of the island changed. The idea of crew teams, boats, and tennis courts appealed to the community. People quickly expressed an interest in working and living on the island.

The vision and master plan for Washington's Landing began in the early 1980's. Once the Rowing Association opened in 1989, additional projects, such as the marina and tennis complex, followed within a year. The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection even located their regional office on Washington's

Landing. This sent a clear message to the public that there were no longer environmental concerns with the site.

The City of Pittsburgh's Executive Report on Washington's Landing noted, "Thirty-five years ago, [the] island ... was notable for just one thing: the nauseating smells generated by the animal rendering plant housed there. What a difference a few decades—and a vision—can make."<sup>17</sup> The first step in the transformation of public perception was the commitment of the Rowing Association.

Another brownfields site Pfaffmann worked on is the Pittsburgh Technology Center in Hazelwood, Pa.<sup>18</sup> Encouraging people to relocate to this site was also difficult. Pfaffmann recalls that the turning point for this site occurred when the University of Pittsburgh and Carnegie Mellon University decided to establish some research facilities there. The public trusted these local institutions and its perception of this site changed when the universities became involved.

When redeveloping an area, someone has to take the first step and make the investment to relocate there. Strategically, it is best if these initial stakeholders are groups that the community trusts. If these groups step up early in the process and become part of the site's vision, the planning process accelerates.

## MAGNETS, COMMUNITIES, AND STAKEHOLDERS

### Infrastructure Magnets Endure

The opportunities that redevelopment will bring to a community rest in the site's resources. It is essential that the vision be built on the site's existing strengths, which are grounded in its location and existing infrastructure. Mark Strauss, an architect intimately involved in the Glen Cove case study, refers to the inherent strengths of a location as "magnets." He emphasizes that when dealing with the reuse strategies of brownfields sites, it is important to recognize that these sites prospered at one time for strong reasons, such as access to roads, power, and water.

True community magnets are resources that stand the test of time. Even though the economic or industrial base of a location has changed over time, an asset from a century ago—like access to water—will still serve as a magnet today. "As one goes through a transformation process of reconsidering what this place should be about, one needs to understand what the magnets are that are going to attract people to these environments and define an approach that not only responds to a vision, but also reflects the attitude that becomes a celebration of what these future magnets could become."<sup>19</sup> For example, Glen Cove's magnets are its historic relationship to Glen Cove Creek, Hempstead Harbor, and Long Island Sound, which made transportation and a thriving commercial market possible.<sup>20</sup>

### Consider the Context of Surrounding Communities

In addition to addressing the environmental issues of contamination, the vision needs to incorporate the many other dimensions of a community such as ecology, existing land uses, proximity to downtown, topography, and the site's relationship to surrounding

communities. Any one of these elements can shape both the vision and master plan.

For instance, topography can dictate where you locate a building. Existing transportation access can determine where parking will be placed. Washington's Landing was restricted because of its size as an island. The streets all lead to the single bridge to the mainland. In addition, parking areas were hidden behind buildings so as not to detract from the island's character. Glen Cove and Washington's Landing are prime waterfront locations. As a result, both these sites maximized the waterfront opportunities such as providing ferry service and establishing marinas and boat clubs.

The residents of surrounding communities also need to play a critical role in development. One of the strategic goals and objectives of the South End District was to "improve and enhance working relationships with surrounding neighborhoods."<sup>21</sup>

Public participation is essential to developing a vision and master plan. Often it is beneficial if the architect lives in the community. That personal link provides a better understanding of the history of the area and the community's unique needs. To be inclusive, several constituencies need to be part of the visioning process, such as local community leaders, city hall, business leaders, developers, environmental engineers, bankers, and lawyers. The job of the architect as the individual who crafts the vision is to evaluate, facilitate discussion, and reconcile conflicting issues. The architect needs to create a master plan that responds to the stakeholders' concerns and aspirations. Appreciating the value in all perspectives provides a solid foundation for a community to grow together and the momentum for visions to soar.

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*The inherent strength of brownfields sites lies in their existing infrastructure and resources such as access to roads, power, and water. These magnets stand the test of time and will spur the next generation of community and business development.*

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## STRATEGY AND BRANDING

### Design Approach

After assessing the input of all the stakeholders, the architect must develop a design strategy. This involves rethinking the environment to determine land reuse methods. Land use is often complicated by the level of environmental contamination. The key to redevelopment is to maintain design excellence and change the public's negative perception of the area.

Robert Rubinstein, development manager for the Urban Redevelopment Authority (URA) in Pittsburgh believes that the design approach for brownfields sites should address several issues.<sup>22</sup> First, close attention must be paid to landscaping and public places. For instance, Washington's Landing has strict design guidelines. Trees, shrubbery, and brick and stone accents on public pathways are required as aesthetic enhancements to the island. In addition, all utility lines must be hidden underground and outdoor dumpsters must be camouflaged from public view.<sup>23</sup> Hiding these unsightly elements is part of the aesthetic identity of the community. Remediation of this "visual pollution"<sup>24</sup> is as important as cleaning up the environmental pollution.

Second, land uses should build property values and change public perception. For instance, the Glen Cove plan developed a high-speed ferry terminal that provides service to Manhattan and Connecticut. This clearly enhances property value and adds to commuter convenience.

Rubinstein also suggests putting office space on the

site because such space builds critical mass and daily traffic, which make residential units possible. The success of Washington's Landing is due to its early decision to develop both residential and office space.

### When Developing a Vision—Aim High

Overcoming the negative perception of brownfields sites is sometimes the most difficult task. Often, it is tempting to attract a new industrial project to replace the one lost. Doing so can be a mistake. A strong ethic of creativity—and of design excellence—is essential to achieve a site's best use. The reuse vision must reach high and maximize the site's potential. If an opportunity exists to transform a community into a dynamic place, the design must strive to achieve this goal, whether it be a research facility, an office building, or a park.

Communities mature over time. What may have been an appropriate land use 50 years ago may no longer be adequate today. For instance, when a vision was discussed for Washington's Landing, there were proposals to build light industrial and warehouse space on the island. Many people joked that these would be "beer warehouses." Parking lots were another frequent suggestion for the site. Warehouses and parking lots would be a poor use of the tremendous potential of these sites. Vision needs to aim high to fulfill people's aspirations.

The community is an excellent barometer for determining land-use strategies. Uwe Brandes, an architect involved in the Glen Cove case study, noted that even before this area was redeveloped, there were residents informally using the waterfront sites to dock their boats. Existing community uses are a clear indication of vision strategies. By taking the subtle cues of the community, the success of the vision is strengthened.

### Community Identity Creates a Brand

Once land uses and possible tenants have been established for an area, it is important to start crafting an identity or character to symbolize the community. Kevin Kelley established a personality for the South End District and refers to it as a "brand identity." He maintains that all communities have an inherent personality, underlying attitude, belief system, and a set of values that subconsciously guides them. This unique spirit and energy contribute to the "brand soul" of a community.<sup>25</sup>

### Design Strategy

- **Maintain design excellence**
- **Focus on landscaping and public places**
- **Establish public access to link the site to the larger community**
- **Develop a community brand by crafting an identity or character that symbolizes the community**



*BEFORE: Washington's Landing waterfront before environmental cleanup. Remediation of the "visual pollution" was as important as cleaning up the environmental pollution. (Photo courtesy Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection)*



*AFTER: Washington's Landing now has a heavily used trail system that runs along the perimeter of the island. The trails of the Allegheny Trail Alliance connect Pittsburgh with Washington, D.C. (Photo courtesy The Rubinoff Company)*

A community brand or identity cannot survive on its own, however. It needs leaders and stewards to spread its message and allow the identity to take root. Grassroots participation includes creating alliances with surrounding neighborhoods and the city at large.

The South End District's brand is that of an urban village as defined by its restored red brick buildings located close to the street. It includes pedestrian-friendly streetscapes with banners hung from poles, attractive landscaping, and the Charlotte Trolley. Kelley stresses that it was important for South End to recruit "risk oblivious" groups such as restaurants, bars, and nightclubs. These groups are often willing to take a chance in these redevelopment areas and attract a young, upscale audience of critical patrons to the area. Without pedestrian activity, the brand identity would not have succeeded. Restaurants and clubs helped to establish South End as an upbeat area.

Washington's Landing also has a unique identity. Since it is an island, it is close to downtown Pittsburgh, but removed from its traffic and congestion. So the community is part of the city without being suffocated by it. The design guidelines also called for buildings to be located close to the street. This provides residents with a feeling of unity and connection, rather than distance and isolation. The island location also allows for scenic views of the skyline. Washington's Landing's identity embraces all of these assets.

### **Public Access Links the Site to the Larger Community**

Communities thrive when they connect and interact with other communities. If they do not have access to their neighboring communities, they will become isolated. Therefore, transportation is an essential element for a community vision to flourish.

For example, one of the key components of the South End vision was the Charlotte Trolley. The trolley played a central role in the community vision. It connects South End to downtown Charlotte. The trolley has about 10 stops and costs only \$1 to ride. It serves as a galvanizing element to the district vision. The community has developed around the trolley tracks because it provides interaction with the rest of the city.

The Washington's Landing site also benefits from public access. Rivers do not need to be boundaries. They can be viewed as passageways that link populations. In the Pittsburgh case, the area benefited from a waterfront trail system. Washington's Landing became an integral part of the trails linking the island to the waterfront and downtown. Public trails integrate communities by guiding users from one location to the next. Bustling with activity, these trails get heavy biking, jogging, and hiking traffic from residents and tourists alike. In addition, trail use also promotes economic development. Trails can provide an economic boost to the communities through which they pass. Trail users patronize restaurants, stores, equipment rental shops, bed and breakfasts, and campgrounds.<sup>26</sup>

Pittsburgh is currently developing a Riverfront Development Plan designed to increase pedestrian access to all parts of the city while encouraging recreational activities. It hopes to establish a riverfront greenway around the perimeter of the city that will connect to interior city parks. "The guidelines are designed to ensure a sense of continuity and a balance of development and open space."<sup>27</sup>

## ROLE OF AN ARCHITECT

### Problem Solver

By virtue of their extensive education and training, architects are able to examine problems from many different perspectives and design multiple solutions. They view problems as opportunities to achieve a broad consensus. Architects' unique perspective on urban settlement patterns and their understanding of the civics of communities allows him or her to view the design process as a puzzle. All the pieces must be positioned and in place before you can see the whole picture.

The issue of environmental remediation often presents

## Role of the Architect

- Communicator
- Educator
- Advocate
- Listener
- Facilitator
- Problem Solver
- Coalition Builder
- Designer

the architect with design dilemmas. The architect can reassess land use to address environmental concerns. For instance, on Washington's Landing, outdoor tennis courts cover the site of an underground encapsulation cell,<sup>28</sup> while housing is reserved for the least contaminated areas. Housing and residential units require the most stringent remediation standards. If a site does not meet housing remediation standards, the architect must determine what alternative use is suitable. If minor contaminants still exist, perhaps a sports complex with tennis and basketball courts might be more appropriate.

The Pittsburgh Technology Center presented several environmental roadblocks. Initially, environmental engineers thought that the contamination on this site was due to an old steel mill but they soon learned that the pollutants in fact were coming from the former coal plant's underground tanks. After studying maps at the City Planning Department, architect Robert Pfaffmann was able to pinpoint the exact location of the tanks. The master plan was then altered in response to the contaminated area and the configuration of the new buildings was moved 25 feet.<sup>29</sup> A simple location change overcame a complex environmental problem without undermining the architectural potential of the site.

### Communicator

Architects need to communicate their vision to all stakeholders. This entails being both an advocate and a public relations representative. What makes an architect's job particularly challenging is that he is selling an intangible image and vision. Kevin Kelley, the master planner for South End, likens the architect to

an executive in a start-up company. With no track record or assets, there is simply a vision of what the company may become. “If you invest in our stock, it will mature, and 10 years from now you will be able to send your kids to college and retire early.”

The analogy fits well to community revitalization. If you invest and buy into the vision of a community, it will mature into a dynamic, vibrant place to live. In community development, the architect needs to sell the big picture and his assets are the images he creates in people’s minds.

The role of communicator takes on added importance in brownfields redevelopment. Many people are afraid of brownfields sites because of the contamination issues. Architects must educate the community and other stakeholders about how the cleanup process will renew the area.

### **Listener and Facilitator**

The support of City Hall is critical to brownfields revitalization success. An architect can advocate an ideal community vision, but without the support and leverage of the city’s mayor, nothing will happen. Once the vision is established, it serves as a vehicle for the mayor to go out into the business community and promote. A mayor’s support of the vision serves as a crucial public endorsement.

For instance, Mayor Thomas Suozzi of Glen Cove really pushed the master plan after it was complete. He used the vision created by Mark Strauss as a tool to get the business community to invest in Glen Cove’s future. He lobbied for federal and state funds, as well as private capital by using the master plan as a symbol of what Glen Cove could become.

Mayor Thomas Murphy of Pittsburgh also played a pivotal role in making Washington’s Landing a reality. During the early development of the master plan, Tom Murphy was a member of the state senate. He advocated the development of Washington’s Landing while in the state senate and pushed the deal through when he became mayor. The mayor overcame obstacles by using the vision as a vehicle.

Community participation and acceptance is a crucial step in the road to brownfields revitalization. The vision for a district must be based on community input.

Frequently, community task forces are assembled to solicit the input of these stakeholders. Town meetings and public hearings at various stages of development serve as an excellent forum for the community to express support or raise concerns. Community Development Corporations (CDCs) often represent the interests of the community.

The Glen Cove planning process is a good example of community involvement. A series of public hearings were held with the purpose of “informing the public about the plan’s progress, soliciting public comments, and building support and consensus. . . . This early and consistent public participation, including that of business owners directly affected by the plan, was a hallmark of the effort.”<sup>30</sup> In addition, a Waterfront Steering Committee was formed consisting of community residents, waterfront businesses, and other interested entities.

The South End District, which has developed into a thriving community, survives on its community leadership. Kevin Kelley, the architect for South End, had the dual role of architect and community facilitator. As president of the South End Development Corporation (SEDC), Kelley and its board members have an agenda “designed to influence development patterns that will positively impact [South End’s] investments and quality of life . . . the board guided the district through its infancy, contributed to its rapid growth, and set a responsible example during trying times.”<sup>31</sup> Essential to the SEDC’s successful leadership were meetings with stakeholders and interested parties, town-hall meetings, and an open mind as to what direction the community wanted to take.

Shook Design Group, the architecture firm that developed the South End vision also played an active role in soliciting the community’s input. They rented out a building and dubbed it the “powerhouse.” There, they conducted “envision lecture series” where members of the public, developers, private sector groups, environmental engineers, attorneys, and other interested parties were invited to participate. There were workshops, panel discussions, presentations, and question and answer sessions. Then they held a “drafting party” where all the interested parties developed a one-page unified ideal vision. This process enabled all parties to work out their differences early in the process. The end result was a vision and master plan that everyone supported.

## CONCLUSION

Tremendous benefits accrue from brownfields redevelopment. Cleaning up these sites, many in prime locations, brings life to communities that have fallen on hard times. Thus, brownfields redevelopment promotes community reinvestment and rejuvenation. Through careful planning and design, architects add value to communities, making them attractive, economically viable, and environmentally sustainable. The key to this transformation lies in developing a community vision and a brand identity.

Using a design approach that emphasizes collaboration among residents, government officials, community leaders, and developers, architects promote economic growth by preserving and accentuating historic structures and the natural environment.

The essence of a community amounts to more than clusters of houses and commercial structures interspersed with ribbons of asphalt and concrete. A community impacts how people live, move, and perceive their world. Brownfields redevelopment is not simply an investment in the urban landscape, it represents a community wide value judgment.



*The Village at Washington's Landing (Photo courtesy The Rubinoff Company and Michael Haritan)*

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*Through careful planning and design, architects add value to communities, making them attractive, economically viable, and environmentally sustainable.*

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## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Mayor Anthony Masiello, Buffalo, New York, United States Conference of Mayors, *Recycling America's Land: A National Report on Brownfields Redevelopment*, Vol. II, April, 1999.
- <sup>2</sup> Telephone Interview with Kevin Kelley, AIA, Shook Design Group, (May, 2000).
- <sup>3</sup> A National Survey for the Pew Center for Civic Journalism conducted by Princeton Survey Research Associates, *Research-Straight Talk From Americans-2000*, February 15, 2000.
- <sup>4</sup> *Brownfields Showcase Community – Glen Cove, New York, Quick Reference Fact Sheet, November, 1998*, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) web-site document, [www.epa.gov/swerosps/bf/html-doc/sc\\_glenc.htm](http://www.epa.gov/swerosps/bf/html-doc/sc_glenc.htm) (accessed June 29, 2000).
- <sup>5</sup> *The Glen Cove Creek Revitalization Plan: Area Analysis, Master Plan, and Site Design Studies*, December, 1996, Pg. 4.
- <sup>6</sup> *Brownfields Showcase Community – Glen Cove, New York, Quick Reference Fact Sheet, November, 1998*, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) web-site document, [www.epa.gov/swerosps/bf/html-doc/sc\\_glenc.htm](http://www.epa.gov/swerosps/bf/html-doc/sc_glenc.htm) (accessed June 29, 2000).
- <sup>7</sup> GreenOnline.com Center for Environmental Commerce web-site document, Charlotte Page, [www.greenonline.com/Brownfields/Charlotte.asp](http://www.greenonline.com/Brownfields/Charlotte.asp), (accessed June 29, 2000).
- <sup>8</sup> Kevin Kelley, "Branding a District," *Downtown Charlotte's Urban Culture*, Spring 2000, Vol I, Pg 42-47.
- <sup>9</sup> Kevin Kelley, "Branding a District," *Downtown Charlotte's Urban Culture*, Spring 2000, Vol I, Pg 42-47.
- <sup>10</sup> GreenOnline.com Center for Environmental Commerce web-site document, Brownfields Overview, [www.greenonline.com/Brownfields/overview.asp](http://www.greenonline.com/Brownfields/overview.asp) (accessed June 29, 2000). The following selection criteria were used: number of brownfields identified/ listed; positive local history of brownfields redevelopment; favorable regulatory/financial/political environment including financing/tax incentive, cleanup reassurances, risk-based corrective action, and special mayoral-level brownfields groups/ initiatives; economic potential; and local real estate market conditions.
- <sup>11</sup> Department of City Planning, *Herr's Island Study*. Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, January, 1969.
- <sup>12</sup> Telephone Interview with Ann Swager, Executive Director of The American Institute of Architects (AIA) Pittsburgh, (May 2000).
- <sup>13</sup> Kevin Kelley, "The Evolution of a Revolution," *South End Times*, Vol. I, Issue 2, Winter 2000.
- <sup>14</sup> Telephone Interview with Kevin Kelley, Shook Design Group, (May, 2000).
- <sup>15</sup> Telephone Interview with Mark Strauss, AIA, Jambhekar Strauss Architects, (May 2000).
- <sup>16</sup> Kevin Kelley, "Branding a District" *Downtown, Charlotte's Urban Culture*, Spring 2000, Vol I.
- <sup>17</sup> McKay, Gretch. "Just Like Home." *Executive Report – Pittsburgh*. Pg. 22, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. December 1996.
- <sup>18</sup> Pfaffmann worked on the Pittsburgh Technology Center while a member of the design team at Bohlin, Cywinski, and Jackson.
- <sup>19</sup> Telephone Interview with Mark Strauss, Jambhekar Strauss Architects, (May 2000).
- <sup>20</sup> *The Glen Cove Creek Revitalization Plan: Area Analysis, Master Plan, and Site Design Studies*, December, 1996, Pg. 5.
- <sup>21</sup> South End Development Corporation (SEDC) 1998 Proposed Mission.

- <sup>22</sup> Telephone Interview with Robert Rubinstein, Development Manager, Urban Redevelopment Authority (URA), Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.
- <sup>23</sup> The Brownfields Center, Carnegie Mellon University and The University of Pittsburgh web-site document, Washington 's Landing Case Study, [www.ce.cmu.edu/Brownfields/NSF/sites/Washland/INFO.HTM](http://www.ce.cmu.edu/Brownfields/NSF/sites/Washland/INFO.HTM) (accessed June 29, 2000).
- <sup>24</sup> Telephone Interview with Kevin Kelley, (June 2000).
- <sup>25</sup> Kevin Kelley, "Branding a District" *Downtown*, Charlotte's Urban Culture, Spring 2000, Vol I.
- <sup>26</sup> Secrets of Successful Rail-Trails: An Acquisition and Organizing Manual for Converting Rails into Trailshttp web-site document, Rails-to-Trails Conservancy, [www.railtrails.org](http://www.railtrails.org), (accessed June 29, 2000).
- <sup>27</sup> Cityscape Institute, Intercity Exchange: Reclaiming Riverfronts web-site document, Fall 1999, [www.cityscapeinstitute.org/fall1999ie.html](http://www.cityscapeinstitute.org/fall1999ie.html), (accessed June 29, 2000).
- <sup>28</sup> The Brownfields Center, Carnegie Mellon University and The University of Pittsburgh web-site document, Washington 's Landing Case Study, [www.ce.cmu.edu/Brownfields/NSF/sites/Washland/INFO.HTM](http://www.ce.cmu.edu/Brownfields/NSF/sites/Washland/INFO.HTM), (accessed June 29, 2000).
- <sup>29</sup> Telephone Interview with Robert Pfaffmann, AIA, Pfaffmann and Associates, (June 2000).
- <sup>30</sup> *The Glen Cove Creek Revitalization Plan: Area Analysis, Master Plan, and Site Design Studies*, December, 1996, Pg. 24.
- <sup>31</sup> Kevin Kelley, "The Evolution of a Revolution," *South End Times*, Vol. I, Issue 2, Winter 2000.





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