



# Recycling America's Land:

*Spotlighting Best Practices in America's Cities, Vol. 1*



THE UNITED STATES CONFERENCE OF MAYORS



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The United States Conference of Mayors is the official nonpartisan organization of cities with populations of 30,000 or more through their chief elected official, the Mayor.

**The United States Conference of Mayors**

1620 I Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20006  
(202) 293-7330  
[www.usmayors.org](http://www.usmayors.org)

This publication was made possible, in part, with funding from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Office of Solid Waste and Emergency Response. The information contained in this document does not necessarily reflect the views of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

Photos provided by contributing cities.



**DO YOUR PART! PLEASE RECYCLE!**

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Dear Mayor,

*This document is a snapshot of many of the great brownfield redevelopment projects occurring in our cities. brownfields, which are underutilized and often abandoned or contaminated properties, represent clear opportunities for communities to revitalize cities, create new, green jobs, and showcase the unique character of the local environment.*

*For more thorough discussions of these and other brownfield redevelopment best practices, please visit our web site, [www.usmayors.org/brownfields](http://www.usmayors.org/brownfields).*

*Brownfields redevelopment is big business and an on-going success story in America's cities. However, there is still a lot of work to do, and a great deal of opportunity. According to the latest U.S. Conference of Mayors Brownfields Survey:*

- 188 cities estimate that they had a total of 24,896 brownfield sites.
- 176 cities estimate that brownfields consume 83,949 acres of land.
- The average size of a brownfield site is approximately 6.5 acres.
- 150 cities estimate that “mothballed” sites occupy 3,282 of their total brownfields sites.

*While thousands of sites await assessment and redevelopment, cities across the country, including those previewed in this document, are making major headway:*

- 150 cities stated that they have successfully redeveloped 1,578 sites, for a total of 16,947 acres.
- Currently, 168 cities report 1,235 sites are undergoing redevelopment, comprising 15,357 acres.
- The average time it takes to redevelop a brownfield site is four and a half to five years, an increase from the previous average of 3 years. This may be an indication that the brownfield sites that are now being developed are more complicated than in years past or a symptom of the weakened economy.
- According to cities survey, the top three financial tools for brownfield redevelopment are private investment, state programs and EPA assessment funding.

*Redeveloping brownfields puts people to work:*

- 80 cities responded that 186,912 (71,288 pre-development / 115,624 post development) jobs were actually created since brownfields redevelopment activity began in their city.
- 105 cities responded that approximately 191,238 new jobs could be created if their brownfield sites were redeveloped.

If you'd like to contribute a project from your city, call Ted Fischer or Brett Rosenberg at The U.S. Conference of Mayors, (202) 293-7330.

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*Buffalo, NY*

*Byron W. Brown, Mayor*

## Lakeside Commerce Park and Union Ship Canal



**This 113-acre former steel plant is now parkland and a major commercial development that takes advantage of existing infrastructure.**

The closing of the Hanna steel plant in south Buffalo in 1982 signaled the end of a chapter in the city's economic history, which for more than a half-century was dominated by steel production. But since 2001, a project at the former Hanna site has been setting the stage for a new economic future for Buffalo. A vast redevelopment is converting 113 acres of land—including the abandoned Hanna plant, an adjacent shipping canal, a former railroad yard, and a 19-acre disposal site—into the Buffalo Lakeside Commerce Park. In the process, the city is cleaning up contaminated soil; “recycling” available infrastructure; luring developers away from undeveloped “greenfield” sites and into the urban community; boosting city commerce, jobs, and the local tax base; and eliminating blight.

In August 2003, CertainTeed, a building products manufacturer, announced a decision to become Buffalo Lakeside's first tenant, relocating its headquarters from Cheektowaga, New York. CertainTeed partnered with developer Krog Corporation, which remediated the former railroad yard using a simple strategy of capping—either with a layer of clean soil or pavement—to prevent exposure. In 2005, Krog finished construction of CertainTeed's new 245,000-square-foot manufacturing facility.

CertainTeed has retained 160 employees from its former Cheektowaga facility and will hire another 185 people over the next three years, infusing new income into the south Buffalo neighborhoods. Other major companies have since built up the site.



**Mayor Byron W. Brown cuts the ribbon for Sonwil Distribution Corp; the newest tenant in Buffalo Lakeside Commerce Park.**

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*Chicago, IL*  
*Richard M. Daley, Mayor*

## Chicago Center for Green Technology



**The rooftop of Chicago's Center for Green Technology supports solar panels that provide 45% of the building's electrical needs while gardens absorb carbon dioxide and keep it cool.**

The City of Chicago and its Department of Environment had the vision to invest in the land and give back to the community an energy efficient center created to educate the public on new building technologies and green design. The city assessed and remediated a brownfield site, then constructed the Center for Green Technology on it (CCGT).

The 17-acre brownfield plot, previously used as an illegal construction debris dump, had accumulated over 600,000 cubic yards of waste. The dumpsite was shut down and officially closed in 1996. The city became the official owner in 1999 and completed the redevelopment 2003. Nearly 18 months were needed to complete the cleanup process.

Partial funding for the project came from the City of Chicago's Department of Environment unrelated settlement with the Commonwealth Edison Company for environmental violations of its franchise agreement. The cost of the cleanup totaled to \$9 million, while an additional \$5.4 million was used towards the renovation and construction of the site.

Nearly 40% of the materials used in the construction of the building had come from recycled materials. The Center's solar panel system provides 45% of the buildings total electricity consumption. The City of Chicago's GreenCorps program resides within the facility. Over 30,000 visitors each year come to CCGT to learn more about environmentally friendly and energy saving building techniques.

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*Denver, CO*

*John W. Hickenlooper, Mayor*

## Morrison Road Development



**Before: an artist's rendition of Morrison Road prior to redevelopment, includes bar and scrap yard.**

The City and County of Denver have sought to bring new economic development and affordable housing to specific neighborhoods that have been left behind by Denver's economic success over the last decade. In 2000, Denver was named a Brownfields Showcase Community by the U.S. EPA, and in 2002, the city and county seized this opportunity to bring a mixed-use affordable housing development to Morrison Road in Westwood, a lower and middle income neighborhood on Denver's west side. The project cleaned up a former junkyard and problem tavern and created two three-storey apartment buildings for dozens of families, with playgrounds, and at the street level, offices of the city Workforce Development Group, which continues to support economic development and job training in the neighborhood.

the owners in 2002 for approximately \$1.52 million. Nearby properties were considered, but the city could not come to an agreement with the owners and avoided resorting to condemnation. The Colorado Voluntary Cleanup Program approved a remediation plan, and in 2003, Denver's oversight contractor excavated and removed contaminated soils. Assessment and remediation, in total, cost the city \$80,000.

Local demand for affordable housing was strong enough to fill the apartments at Morrison Road within two months of opening and generate a waiting list of tenants eager to secure low-cost housing. The redevelopment also created 30 construction jobs that were advertised in the Westwood community.

The commercial development on the site has had more modest success. The Westwood neighborhood supports relatively few retail establishments, and was a challenging location for mixed-used development. Black Creek could not immediately find commercial tenants. As of 2007, the space is full with the addition of a community police office, the Morrison Road Business Association offices, and the city's Workforce Development Agency.

The City and County of Denver commissioned a geophysical survey in 2001 and purchased both the bar and junkyard from



**After: the new affordable Morrison Road apartments are completely leased; other leased space includes a community police office and Workforce Development Agency office.**

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*Miami, FL*

*Manuel A. Diaz, Mayor*

## Villa Patricia



**Miami converted a once dilapidated warehouse into Villa Patricia, composed of two stylish, affordable apartment complexes and other mixed uses.**

In the 1980s and 1990s, Little Haiti was one of the poorest areas in Miami, known for its crime and drug trade. Some of the area's violent past still exists today; however, the area is experiencing a cultural renaissance and the city is investing in its future. Villa Patricia, previously a vacant and dilapidated warehouse property on a main corridor of the City of Miami, significantly contributed to the area's blight and general slum-like atmosphere.

The Villa Patricia project was prime for redevelopment as the location had ready access to public transportation, and is located close to downtown. Moreover, the site redevelopment has been a catalyst for additional redevelopment for the area and has served to upgrade the business corridor. The site is located close to the New

Little Haiti Cultural Campus and Soccer Park, which added to the project's redevelopment value.

This mixed-use project, which includes affordable housing for senior citizens, fully utilizes all available space at the location due to the high cost of land in the area and the difficulty to develop affordable housing as a result. Both buildings reflect the Miami Beach influenced art deco style completed in white and blue gray pastels with most apartments having their own balconies, which on the east side of the building provide views of Biscayne Bay and Miami Beach.

## Neptune and Son/Piman Bouk Restaurant and Beauty Shop

Through the years, the community has changed from agricultural to residential, from middle class to lower class and middle class again. Haitian immigrants drove part of this change; the significant unrest on the island in the early 80's that found its way to Miami along with a unique cultural identity, and soon the area was called Little Haiti. The area's renaissance continues due in large part to the development of the Little Haiti Cultural Center and Soccer Park, and proposed redevelopment of the Caribbean Marketplace. The City of Miami and original property purchaser, Mr. Neptune, worked on the property after Mr. Neptune purchased the property in 1999 for \$30,000 cash with no financing, and unknowingly he acquired the site with existing contamination from an adjacent dry cleaner. Across the street from what became the Piman Bouk restaurant on the redeveloped site is the recently renovated Caribbean Market Place, and the recently completed Little Haiti Cultural campus and soccer park with an investment of over \$40 Million from the City of Miami.



**The Piman Bouk Restaurant sits on land that had been contaminated by leaks at an adjacent dry cleaner; remediation has paved the way for additional redevelopment in Miami's Little Haiti.**

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*Oklahoma City, OK*  
*Mick Cornett, Mayor*

## Skirvin Hotel



**The \$56 million renovation of the historic Skirvin Hotel was both extensive...**

construction jobs. After completion, 255 new positions were created to run the hotel. The newly renovated and renamed Skirvin Hilton hotel reopened for business in 2007, bringing back its prestige to the City and re-energized the downtown area.

The Skirvin Hotel opened in 1911 and easily became one of Oklahoma City's biggest attractions. The hotel graced the city skyline with its grandeur for the next 70 years before closing down in the late 1980's for environmental concerns, including asbestos and high lead levels. It remained dormant and abandoned for the next 20 years, until 1999, when the City of Oklahoma City and the surrounding community decided it was time to revive the once remarkable hotel to its former glory.

Oklahoma City and its former Mayor, Kirk Humpfreys created the Skirvin Solutions Committee at the time in order to address the process needed to remediate and renovate the Skirvin Hotel. Public funding resources had provided \$20 million of redevelopment costs while private sector had contributed to 60% of the remaining cost. A brownfields loan totaling \$719,000 from the Oklahoma Department of Environmental Quality and the US Environmental Protection Agency provided additional funds for environmental cleanup costs. Since the Skirvin was listed on the National Register of Historic Places, it was eligible for a 20% federal historic tax credit and a 20% state historic tax credit. The total project cost was an estimated \$56,413,586. The renovation of the hotel was able to generate over 400



**...and exquisitely detailed.**

## Former Southfield Downs Trailer Park



**A multi-family residential and mixed-use commercial development replaced a trailer park on the site of a former landfill and swamp.**

The former Southfield Downs Trailer Park site was a blighted and often crime-ridden burden on the community. Prior to its life as a trailer park, the site was a landfill and an old swamp. In early 2006, Centex Homes, Inc. purchased the trailer park compound and turned the long blemished area into a lively mixed-use commercial development.

The City of Southfield facilitated the entire rezoning, site plan and special use process of the site. Engineers and consultants designed a plan that thoughtfully integrated environmental, geotechnical, and construction aspects during pre-construction. The city had removed

over 100 abandoned trailers, 45,000 tons of buried trash, and 60,000 tons of structurally unsuitable soil. Centex submitted a brownfield plan requesting Tax Increment Revenues in the amount of \$5.2 million. The city used \$4.1 million in local and state taxes to redevelop the site. Total cost of redevelopment for the Southfield Downs Trailer Park amounted to \$60 million. This site is now known as Spring Haven, where multi-family apartments, residences, commercial enterprises, and a regional shopping center are located. The city and surrounding community are proud of this accomplishment and continue to support redevelopment of other brownfields. The city's efforts with redeveloping brownfields led to its victory in the 23rd Annual Michigan Municipal League Achievement Awards.

## Washington Nationals Park



**Composed on a brownfield site, largely composed of recycled materials, the new Nationals Park is the first LEED-certified baseball stadium.**

utilizes high-efficiency bulbs in the field lights, 95 percent of the stadium's steel is recycled, and low-flow toilets save millions of gallons of water each season.

In 2004, the D.C. City Council agreed to build Nationals Park, a new Major League Baseball stadium, to entice the Montreal Expos to move to the District. The City Council insisted that it be the first major sports stadium to get the US Green Building Council's LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) rating. The points-based system is designed to limit the environmental impact of commercial office buildings, not outdoor ballparks, but Washington's mayor at the time, Anthony Williams, was willing to put forth the effort. By recycling 5,500 tons of construction waste, installing a state-of-the-art water filtration system and placing the stadium close to public transportation, on what used to be the site of a contaminated brownfield, the city was able to get the certification with less than a two percent increase in construction costs. The ballpark

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*Tom Cochran*

Tom Cochran, CEO and Executive Director

1620 Eye Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20006  
Tel: 202.293.7330  
Fax: 202.293.2352

Email: [tcochran@usmayors.org](mailto:tcochran@usmayors.org)  
[usmayors.org](http://usmayors.org)