

US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT

# Partnership for Sustainable Communities Brownfields Pilots – Denver, Colorado



*The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), and Department of Transportation (DOT) are working together under the Partnership for Sustainable Communities to ensure that federal investments, policies and actions support development that is more efficient and sustainable. This partnership is based on “livability principles” that guide inter-agency collaboration and support the integration of: safe, reliable and economical transportation; affordable, energy-efficient housing; and sustainable reuse of idle or underutilized land. Pilot communities were selected by EPA’s Brownfields Program with input from HUD and DOT. Pilots receive technical assistance and support from EPA, HUD and DOT. The three agencies are working with the Pilot communities to build on past investments, as well as identify opportunities to link housing, transit and brownfields, and coordinate sustainability resources.*

## Project History

The La Alma/South Lincoln Park community (including the 10th and Osage Light Rail Station) in Denver, Colorado, was identified as a potential Pilot by the Mayor of Denver, the Governor of Colorado and the Federal Secretaries/Administrator during the Denver portion of the White House Domestic Policy Council Sustainable Communities Tour in September 2009; it was subsequently selected by EPA with input from HUD and DOT as a Partnership for Sustainable Communities Pilot in 2010. A strong collaboration exists between state, local and community leaders in the planning and development of a livable community for the La Alma/South Lincoln Park neighborhood, including the Denver Housing Authority’s (DHA) redevelopment effort on its South Lincoln Homes site. Although all three federal agencies (EPA, HUD and DOT) are engaged in independent activities in the La Alma/South Lincoln Park community, cross-coordination or leveraging of federal resources was lacking. The federal agencies entered into a collaborative effort as an action under the Partnership.

The Pilot focuses on a 15.1-acre, 270-unit public housing site, South Lincoln Homes, that is owned and managed by DHA in the La Alma/South Lincoln Park neighborhood. South Lincoln Homes is distressed due to high concentrated poverty and crime, functional obsolescence, and economic and physical isolation. Other challenges this community faces include older housing stock, underutilized parcels, changing demographics, and limited transportation connections. Given the range of issues the community faces, community stakeholders and the City and County of Denver recognized that a common vision needed

## Pilot Technical Assistance Activities

- Convene three charrettes on 1) stormwater management, water and green infrastructure, 2) green building and energy, and 3) transportation
- Develop action plans to guide the implementation of sustainable elements into the multi-phased development
- Increase efforts that build on extensive stakeholder-guided community planning in the neighborhood

to be created for the La Alma/South Lincoln Park neighborhood. As a result, the City and County of Denver and DHA worked together on a Station Area Plan that was incorporated into the La Alma Neighborhood Plan and adopted by the City Council in September 2010. DHA worked with the neighborhood and other stakeholders, including the City and County of Denver, on the South Lincoln Redevelopment Master Plan in 2009. The Master Plan focused on land use, energy, public health and transportation issues. The South Lincoln Redevelopment Master Plan was finalized in September 2009.

Prior to the development of the Neighborhood and Master Plans, EPA provided \$200,000 in Brownfield Cleanup grant funding to Denver for cleanup of 10th and Osage, a three-acre site adjacent to the light rail station. Contaminants included polyaromatic hydrocarbons and arsenic from railroad operations and equipment storage. The site was cleaned to unrestricted residential use cleanup standards in the fall of 2008 under Colorado’s Voluntary Cleanup Program. Community groups were consulted in the application process and community meetings were conducted to obtain public input. The site is part of Phase I in the Master Plan.

**Pilot Activities**

Using the Master Plan as a guide, DHA is seeking to revitalize the community through transit oriented development and “greener” mixed uses. These will support healthier lifestyles, reduce reliance on automobiles, improve integration of resource conservation and management systems, and create a diverse mix of new and existing residents. The Pilot is helping DHA achieve these goals by using direct technical assistance to conduct three design charrettes on stormwater management and green infrastructure, green building and energy, and transportation. These charrettes, which were conducted in August, October and December 2010, were used to build on the South Lincoln Redevelopment Master Plan and to brainstorm and problem solve some of the larger, more complex issues pertaining to stormwater management, green building and energy, and transportation. The charrettes provided direction to the future build out and planning of the site.

A lessons learned report will also be developed to highlight barriers and best practices as guidance for other communities considering similar development concepts, or that are integrating EPA, HUD or DOT resources into their redevelopment projects. The action plan may include information on costs, potential funding sources, and guidelines for implementing sustainable elements into a multi-phased development.

To keep the community informed, the technical assistance team will debrief the South Lincoln Steering Committee—a group of South Lincoln residents that has been actively engaged in the South Lincoln Redevelopment Master Plan and project activities—on the charrettes and next steps.

**Outcomes**

The expected outcomes from this Pilot include:

- Supporting transformation of DHA’s existing public housing complex into a mixed-income, walkable, transit oriented neighborhood asset.



*Aerial view of the South Lincoln Redevelopment Master Plan’s preferred plan*

**Major Technical Assistance Partners**

- Environmental Protection Agency
- Department of Housing and Urban Development
- Department of Transportation
- Denver Housing Authority
- National Renewable Energy Laboratory

- Using the charrette process to brainstorm and solve problems pertaining to green building and energy, transportation, and stormwater management identified in the Master Plan, to provide direction to the future build out and planning of the site, and to provide a model for community wide sustainability.
- Integrating green infrastructure, green building concepts, and community input into the existing La Alma/South Lincoln Park neighborhood and street design.
- Sharing lessons learned from the charrette process with other communities considering similar development concepts.

The expected completion date for the La Alma/South Lincoln Park Pilot is March 2011. For more information on this Pilot, please contact Stacey Eriksen at (303) 312-6692 or [eriksen.stacey@epa.gov](mailto:eriksen.stacey@epa.gov).