

US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT

Partnership for Sustainable Communities Brownfields Pilots – Indianapolis, Indiana



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

In 2008, the City of Indianapolis and local stakeholders delineated a ¾-mile Smart Growth Redevelopment District (SGRD), centered at East 22nd Street and the Monon Greenway Trail. The SGRD encompasses neighborhoods within Indianapolis that are challenged by crime, illegal dumping, a nearly 70 percent household poverty rate, abandoned houses and vacant lots, a concentration of brownfields with potential residential exposures to human health from soil and ground water contamination, and limited access to retail, jobs centers, transportation options, fresh food, and community services.

Though historically underserved, the SGRD area has the potential to add residents and attract economic growth by leveraging multiple, independent economic development initiatives already underway including Indy Connect—a regional transportation improvement plan that proposes to expand transit availability within the SGRD. By recognizing a need to stimulate redevelopment through property environmental assessment, cleanup and place-based, mixed-use approaches, the city developed a SGRD Plan to help guide the sustainable revitalization of this area. Implementation of this plan could result in:

- Property environmental assessments and cleanup for housing, economic development, transportation, and recreational uses
- Using incentives to encourage site-specific sustainable development practices
- Development of improved zoning codes and integration of quality design standards for buildings and infrastructure

Pilot Technical Assistance Activities

- Develop a revitalization strategy to identify opportunities for investments in underutilized properties and underserved corridors in the SGRD
- Identify geographic target areas in which revitalization may be prioritized in the near term
- Develop a site-specific implementation plan to catalyze development within one of the geographic target areas

- Higher density, mixed-use development
- Greater social equity, improved public health and access to services, and improved quality of life

Several additional community planning efforts are underway in the SGRD, including the American Institute of Architects (AIA) 2009 Sustainable Design Assessment Team (SDAT) project and the work associated with the EPA Community Action for Revitalized Environment (CARE) grant to the Martindale-Brightwood Environmental Justice Collaborative. The AIA grant funded a three-day, community design charrette to develop targeted, comprehensive planning and design approaches to help shape future transit oriented development within the SGRD. The SDAT Steering Committee remains active in identifying opportunities for revitalization, infrastructure improvements and design enhancements throughout the SGRD. The EPA CARE grant is assisting residents with understanding and prioritizing the multiple environmental issues and health concerns in the SGRD. Several other projects that are being funded by EPA, HUD and/or DOT exist in the SGRD.

Pilot Activities

Building on the multiple planning efforts that have taken place in and around the SGRD in recent years, the technical assistance provided through this Pilot was used to develop a revitalization strategy for the SGRD. Based on guidance provided by the SGRD Advisory Committee—convened to inform the technical assistance being provided—the strategy was developed to prioritize actions to support a transit oriented future.

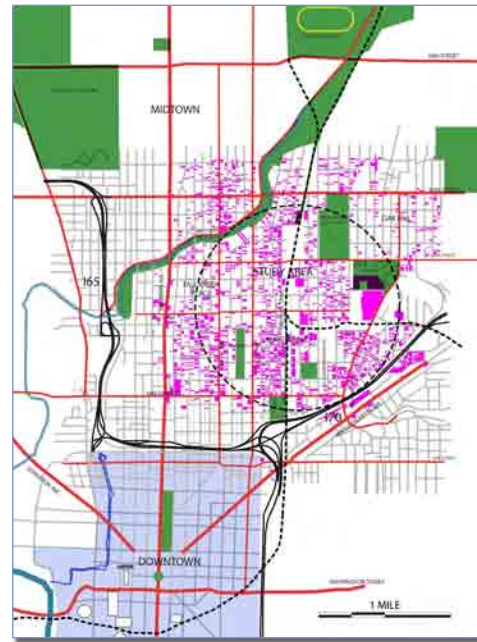
The strategy identifies five actions that can help local, state and federal partners work together to strategically build walkable neighborhoods to support a transit oriented future. The five actions include:

- Identify locations for walkable neighborhood development sites adjacent to transit routes
- Develop design criteria for higher-density development within walkable neighborhoods
- Promote infill development on selected blocks to create walkable neighborhoods
- Increase usage of the Monon Trail within the SGRD
- Develop a communications and outreach strategy

Based on feedback and input from local residents and stakeholders, the technical assistance team is helping to implement the first action. This support includes developing criteria to guide the selection of geographic priority areas in which future investments may be strategically coordinated and concentrated; identifying potential geographic priority areas; working with local stakeholders to select one priority area; identifying one or more parcels that are key to sparking revitalization in that area; and developing a site-specific implementation plan for the selected parcel(s).

Outcomes

- The expected outcomes from this Pilot include:
- Demonstrating how effective partnerships can yield on-the-ground results while responding to the specific needs of the neighborhood.
 - Creating a revitalization strategy that prioritizes key actions that local stakeholders can take to spur revitalization in the SGRD.
 - Producing a site-specific implementation plan to guide redevelopment of one or more key parcels located in a geographic priority area.



Map of vacant property in Indianapolis' Smart Growth Redevelopment District

Major Technical Assistance Partners

- Environmental Protection Agency
- Department of Housing and Urban Development
- Federal Transit Administration
- Federal Highway Administration
- Indianapolis Mayor's Office of Economic Development
- Indianapolis Department of Metropolitan Development
- Martindale-Brightwood Community Development Corporation
- King Park Area Development Corporation

- Improving coordination among Pilot stakeholders, resulting in more coordinated and targeted public investments in the SGRD, with the goal of spurring additional private investment.

The revitalization strategy was completed in December 2010. The expected completion date for the remaining implementation support for the Indianapolis Smart Growth Redevelopment District Pilot is May 2011. For more information on this Pilot, please contact Stephanie Cwik at (312) 886-0913 or cwik.stephanie@epa.gov.