

Affordable Housing and Transit-Oriented Development, National City, California

The Westside Affordable Housing transit-oriented development in National City, California, is the direct result of five years of community involvement by residents of the Westside neighborhood. The project, partially funded by EPA's Land Revitalization program, is intended to be the catalyst for overall neighborhood change through the city's Westside Specific Plan. In a series of community workshops in 2004, residents and business owners identified priorities for reinventing the neighborhood. Of top importance was the elimination of toxic hazards believed to be the cause of high asthma rates. The community also wants to reclaim the neighborhood for residential uses, especially affordable housing for families.

The project is one of five brownfields pilots under the interagency Partnership for Sustainable Communities. Through the Partnership, EPA is working with HUD and DOT to ensure that federal investments, policies, and actions support development in more efficient and sustainable locations. Pilot communities receive technical assistance and support from all three agencies, and identify opportunities to link housing, transit, and brownfields.

National City's pilot focuses on a 14-acre, city-owned public works property that is the proposed site of the \$69 million transit-oriented development project. The project will consist of 201 affordable housing units located immediately adjacent to the existing 24th Street Trolley Station for the light rail that serves metropolitan San Diego. The site is contaminated with hazardous materials, including metals, benzene, and hydraulic fluid, identified during an ongoing EPA Brownfields assessment grant and two targeted site investigations performed by the California Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC). DTSC will oversee required remediation of the site for redevelopment.

The pilot project will help National City redevelop the site in a sustainable manner by incorporating green remediation components into a site design that promotes energy efficiency, stormwater and flood control management, walking and park trails, and reduced dependence on fossil fuels. The pilot's recommendations will feed into an analysis to identify green infrastructure, green building, and open-space usage options based on the existing project conceptual plan. The city also is addressing the toxic hazards believed to be the cause of high asthma rates in the neighborhood by preparing an amortization plan to relocate or close highly polluting industrial uses that are not compatible with the Westside Specific Plan.

The development team hosts community meetings and attends the Westside Neighborhood Council to facilitate open communication about the project. By combining results from stormwater modeling with community input, the technical assistance team will develop a site plan and rendering that incorporates open space, green infrastructure, and habitat restoration recommendations. The technical assistance team also will provide recommendations for developing a formula to rank sites to be addressed, beginning with the most polluting and underutilized uses.

