

### **Delaware River UWFP**

*Sarah Low, USDA Forest Service*

*Michael Leff, Davey Institute/USDA Forest Service*

The Urban Waters Federal Partnership is a federal initiative to reconnect urban communities with their waterways by breaking down bureaucratic silos between federal agencies and communities, improving access to funds and resources and efficiently allocating them, and sharing best practices across the four partner cities of Philadelphia, Chester, Camden, and Wilmington.

### **UWFP Brownfields Community of Practice**

*Frank McLaughlin, NJDEP*

*Simeon Hahn, NOAA*

The goal of this webinar is to facilitate peer-to-peer mentoring between the four sister cities, and to explore prioritization and valuation of brownfields sites and the technical services available to assist brownfields redevelopment.

### **NJ Institute of Technology**

#### **Technical Assistance to Brownfields (TAB) Communities Program**

*Elizabeth Limbrick, Project Manager, [NJIT TAB](#)*

The TAB Communities Program assists communities and agencies at all levels (state, regional, county, local, non-profit, tribal) with brownfields revitalization projects in EPA Regions 1 and 3. TAB provides its services free of charge with the help of funding from the EPA. It can provide services via Collective Community Workshops, or through Direct Technical Mentoring to tailor its assistance to the needs of individual communities.

The NJIT TAB program is an independent resource that can help with:

- reviewing and explaining technical reports for brownfield site assessment
- providing information on scientific data and environmental policy
- understanding health risks from a brownfield site
- understanding how environmental issues affect brownfield cleanup
- identifying sources for assessment and cleanup funding
- complying with state brownfields and voluntary cleanup program requirements
- advising on remediation methods and tools
- envisioning a future for the site that integrates both economical and ecological benefits and approaches
- supporting community involvement and other stakeholder activities

The TAB program does not provide environmental consulting, collect samples, or draft grant proposal applications, although it can provide guidance for consultant selection committees and developing financing strategies.

Core Team:

- Colette Santasieri, Director
- Sean Vroom, Project Manager
- Elizabeth Limbrick, Project Manager

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**Brownfields Prioritization**

*Sean Vroom, Project Manager, [NJIT TAB](#)*

Brownfields redevelopment has several community benefits, including: elimination of contamination, improved aesthetics, increased property values, and stronger tax bases. The purpose of brownfields prioritization is to assist communities with focusing their efforts on those brownfield sites with the most potential for successful remediation. Prioritization comprises the framework to pursue future funding, and a planning process to support grant applications.

The process for brownfield prioritization:

- 1) Determine prioritization type: economic benefit, living shoreline concept, etc—sets the tone for future data needs and criteria fulfillment
- 2) Gather accurate data on:
  - a. Ownership: publicly owned lands are much easier to work with
  - b. Current tax maps, shape files, google maps images: including site size, block, lot and address, verified site location and perimeter
  - c. Existing conditions and environmental considerations: water features, wetlands, floodplains, historic/cultural resources, open spaces, transportation systems, proximity to community
- 3) Review regional and state planning documents for development, zoning ordinances
- 4) Develop evaluation/prioritization process: depends on ultimate re-use goal, and should use readily available and measurable data  
Rank according to location, physical or environmental characteristics, ownership, existing development plans, natural resources, trail data and recreational possibilities, value to community
- 5) Identify potential funding sources

The deliverable is the prioritization findings report, which documents the ranking process and the criteria used. Based on this information, brownfield developers can make recommendations for the most highly ranked sites.

Each community weights the various criteria differently; for example, certain communities may value access to transportation more highly, whereas others will want to consider the potential to combine a specific site with adjacent sites to make a cumulative impact on stormwater management. If redevelopment plans already exist for a site, the community may wish to stay consistent with those plans when proposing a land use.

This process is useful if a community must value multiple brownfield sites at once. For example, Camden used a preliminary prioritization process to narrow down their inventory of sites to 80, and ultimately chose to focus on 27 sites to develop projects. At this stage of the planning process, the site can undergo more detailed assessment and data collection.

### **Brownfields, Ecosystem Services & Urban Conservation**

*Julie Ulrich, Watershed Restoration Coordinator, [The Nature Conservancy](#)*

The Nature Conservancy is interested in the potential for brownfields revitalization projects to intersect with ecosystem services and urban conservation. It is important to recognize that cities

are an integral part of the ecosystem, particularly in the Delaware River Watershed. If brownfield projects can bring ecology back into the equation, they can engage a broader audience of urban residents by emphasizing the value of ecosystem services. Working in cities provides a great opportunity for valuing those services and helping urban residents to understand their impact on the watershed. The Nature Conservancy is working to develop projects that incorporate a watershed approach and that will allow scaling up across multiple cities.

The current clean-up approach is geared towards larger properties with high economic potential, but that often involve extensive investments in time and money. Funds are often awarded to these sites because economic factors are easier to quantify when preparing applications.

A new approach that combines green stormwater infrastructure with small scale brownfield sites will expand ecosystem services in communities along the Delaware River, while simultaneously addressing two critical urban issues: extensive flooding due to impervious cover and climate change, and legacy issues from widespread brownfield sites. This new approach will also facilitate the valuation of ecosystem services such as flood reduction, stormwater management, water quality, and erosion, as well as neighborhood improvements, community revitalization, and recreation opportunities.

Redevelopment plans that include green infrastructure depend on building support at multiple levels, from the neighborhood to the regional. Residents often only recognize the aesthetic value of clean-up efforts, and don't understand the hydrological value of green infrastructure and the regional benefits to the watershed. Ecosystem service valuation can help bridge the gap between appealing to the community through neighborhood benefits, and appealing to large funding entities through commercial values.

New strategies should aim to better engage existing and new constituents, as well as inspire and influence decision-making that balances costs with value and builds incentive to work on small sites. Developers and planners need to harness resources and create new financial streams.

Next steps for combining ecosystem services and urban conservation with brownfield re-use include:

- Exploring this new ecological, small scale approach, and developing and sharing effective tools
- Creating a model for replication in UWFP partner cities and collecting more data for comparison
- Creating a methodology for ecosystem service valuation, particularly for less tangible benefits, to enhance brownfield site assessment and help with funding more projects
- Additional phases of concept designs and green infrastructure redevelopment that can be exported to other cities

The initial research from the pilot projects in Camden has shown that the watershed approach can help with working across the rural-urban gradient and challenging the misconception that cities are self-contained entities. Upstream projects are having a huge effect on stormwater management in downstream areas in the Cooper River watershed. Assembling smaller brownfield sites that may lack economic development potential can result in a cumulative positive impact on the hydrologic flow through a city.

Successful adoption of a watershed approach will benefit from wide collaboration and partnership, and can develop into a multi-phase initiative that will incorporate the needs of UWFP partner cities. The UWFP can in turn help with engaging broader audiences in a conversation about brownfields and their importance in urban settings.

Existing partnerships:

- NJ Department of Environmental Protection
- Camden County Municipal Utilities Authority (CCMUA)
- Camden Redevelopment Agency (CRA)
- Cooper's Ferry Partnership
- Camden SMART Initiative
- NJ Conservation Foundation
- NJIT
- National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

### **Opportunities for Brownfield Sites in Camden**

*Frank McLaughlin, [NJDEP Office of Brownfield Reuse](#)*

There is a large inventory of brownfield sites in Camden, and strategic locations are chosen based on the potential for multiple scales and multi-use solutions. Groups such as the Camden Redevelopment Agency, Camden SMART Initiative, and Camden Collaborative Initiative have incorporated nontraditional priorities, including stormwater management, community reconnection, and habitat restoration, into its brownfield solutions.

The challenge in designing brownfield projects is recognizing local issues and priorities and using opportunities to meet the shared interests of local partners. Thinking beyond single-use programs can capitalize on local interest to share responsibilities and resources.

The Camden SMART (Stormwater Management and Resource Training) Initiative is dedicated to building a comprehensive network of green infrastructure programs and projects throughout the city. The Initiative is a collaboration between the City of Camden, CCMUA, Cooper's Ferry Partnership, Rutgers Cooperative Extension Water Resources Program, NJ Tree Foundation, NJDEP, and other public-private partners and community organizations. Its accomplishments in 2013 include 1000 trees planted, 27 green infrastructure projects installed, and 3.1 million gallons of stormwater captured annually.

The Camden Collaborative Initiative is a solutions oriented partnership between governmental, non-profit, private, and community-based agencies formed to plan and implement innovative strategies to improve the environment and the quality of life of Camden's residents. The collaboration between the City of Camden, Cooper's Ferry Partnership, CCMUA, NJDEP, and US EPA, has been able to holistically seize opportunities for brownfields reuse.

Examples of successful projects that incorporated green infrastructure and community revitalization include:

- Waterfront South Rain Gardens Park
- Von Nieda Park & Baldwin's Run
- Phoenix Park
- Salvation Army Kroc Community Center on Harrison Avenue Landfill

The success of these projects depended on strong local partnerships and multiple funding sources.