

Planning for Sustainable Brownfield Redevelopment

LAND BANK STRATEGIC PLANNING

CONNECTICUT, EPA REGION 1

Many municipalities and communities do not have the organizational expertise and capacity needed to successfully assess, clean up, and redevelop brownfield properties. Given the many challenges faced by these communities, a group of state and local brownfields experts, with support from U.S. EPA Region 1, the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP), and the Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD), collaborated to create the state of Connecticut's first brownfields land bank—a one-stop shop to help Connecticut municipalities facilitate the cleanup and reuse of brownfields and promote brownfield redevelopment policies and programs as effective community and economic revitalization strategies.

The Connecticut Brownfield Land Bank, Inc. (Land Bank) is a fee-based, non-profit corporation offering brownfields support to Connecticut municipalities. The Connecticut land bank is a non-profit Land Bank devoted to brownfields transactions. Land banks are becoming an increasingly important part of the brownfields revitalization landscape in New England. The lessons learned and success stories set by the Connecticut Land Bank hopefully will encourage and inform other New England states to follow Connecticut's example. In 2016, EPA's Land Revitalization Team provided support to the Connecticut Land Bank to help it become fully operational and initiate its first cleanup and redevelopment project. The Land Revitalization Team also provided the Land Bank with technical assistance to develop a set of business practices and an outreach strategy.

EPA's technical assistance focused on providing strategic consulting to evaluate and strengthen the Land Bank's business practices through a series of six virtual working meetings. The Land Revitalization Team developed worksheets to assist state officials with establishing and organizing the Land Bank. EPA's technical assistance centered on encouraging land bank officials to organize its services based upon an understanding of the audiences it serves, the services it will provide, and the opportunities it can create for its partners. The strategic planning support focused on identifying and organizing the services the Land Bank could provide to its potential clients, and developing outreach materials that would clearly communicate the land bank's services to municipalities and other brownfield development stakeholders.

The Land Revitalization Team also developed outreach materials to support the Land Bank during its startup and in initial discussions with targeted partners. Outreach materials included a general Land Bank overview fact sheet and a PowerPoint presentation explaining Land Bank services and opportunities.

The Connecticut Land Bank is pursuing state legislation that will allow the land bank to operate as a quasi-governmental organization. As such, it would be able to accept federal funds and it would be eligible for environmental liability under federal and state statutes, similar to municipalities. Such legislation would greatly increase the opportunity to support brownfields redevelopment. In the near term, the Land Bank will focus on direct outreach to municipalities and support its first cleanup and redevelopment project planned for the Town of Southington.

For more information, please contact Frank Gardner, EPA Region 1, gardner.frank@epa.gov.



Figure 1. An example of one of the brownfields in Connecticut that has an opportunity for redevelopment.

LESSONS LEARNED

- Access to national experts and dedicated strategic planning brings fresh ideas and structure to new organizations.
- Investment in outreach tools helps build credibility and business opportunities.
- Land Banks can provide unique brownfield redevelopment services to assist municipalities that may lack the capacity to support the redevelopment of complex sites.

PLANNED POST-TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE ACTIVITIES

- Conduct outreach to Connecticut municipalities and other potential partners using the products developed through this technical assistance.
- Pursue Land Bank Liability Relief legislation.
- Implement project services and identify brownfields projects to support, beginning with a project in the Town of Southington.