

Engaging Crime Prevention Organizations in Your Brownfields Project

This fact sheet provides information about partnering with law enforcement and community crime prevention organizations to prevent and reduce crime as part of brownfields revitalization efforts. The fact sheet identifies the advantages of partnering with these organizations, provides examples of potential types of organizations with whom to partner, and presents a case study that demonstrates how these types of partnerships have benefitted brownfields sites and nearby residents and businesses.

Advantages of Partnering with Crime Prevention Organizations

Forming partnerships with and soliciting input from law enforcement and community crime prevention groups early in the Brownfields redevelopment process can yield numerous benefits, including:

- Ensuring a safer site both during and after redevelopment.
- Gaining valuable insights based on these organizations' in-depth knowledge of community issues and concerns that inform decision making.
- Facilitating communication, awareness and trust between members of the public and other brownfields redevelopment stakeholders.
- Educating community members and assisting communities in addressing issues of interest.

Forming and leveraging partnerships with law enforcement and community crime prevention organizations can help sites attract and absorb more capital and enhance economic opportunities.

Types of Law Enforcement Partnerships

Partnerships with law enforcement organizations can take the form of a formal agreement with the local police department, but can also include informal associations with police activity leagues and first responders. For example:

- A partnership with the local police department could include increased police patrol and attention around a site.
- Police participation in brownfield project advisory boards, public outreach efforts, community meetings and site tours can provide a valuable perspective to help inform redevelopment and reuse planning.
- [Policy Activity Leagues](#) often have close contact with community members and can encourage behavioral change at neglected spaces that are crime attractors.
- First responders are important community stakeholders and can engage neighborhood residents and encourage them to take an interest in the redeveloped space, thereby enhancing site safety.

About the Brownfields Program

Since its inception in 1995, EPA's Brownfields Program has grown into a proven, results-oriented program that has changed the way contaminated property is perceived, addressed and managed. Brownfields are properties whose expansion, redevelopment or reuse is complicated by real or perceived environmental contamination. EPA's Brownfields Program empowers states, communities and other stakeholders in economic redevelopment to work together in a timely manner to prevent, assess, safely clean up and sustainably reuse brownfields. Revitalizing brownfields reinvigorates communities, increases employment, reduces pollution, and increases neighboring property values and tax revenue.

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Community Crime Prevention Organizations

Various community crime prevention organizations and resource groups can serve as valuable partners during the redevelopment process. These types of organizations include:

- [Neighborhood Watch](#)
- [Local Initiative Support Corporation \(LISC\)](#) safety programs, which support partnerships between community developers and law enforcement -- they report that communities supported have seen up to a 70% decrease in crime compared to locations with no law enforcement partnership.
- [Community development corporations](#)
- Community advisory committees and other community foundations
- Other trusted neighborhood organizations that work directly with the community, such as schools and churches



Neighborhood Watch Sign

Gaining the support of established community crime prevention organizations can add buy-in to a redevelopment project and increase the number of people committed to its success. Engaging with groups that have already established a community's trust can help build networks and connections that foster an interest in a brownfields project among residents.

Challenges of Partnering with Law Enforcement Organizations

Partnering with law enforcement organizations can be challenging in some communities, particularly if a community has a troubled relationship with those organizations. In communities with unique dynamics or where trust of law enforcement is low, building relationships may take time and extensive effort. In these cases, it is critical to identify and work with trusted community leaders, because they can help establish and reinforce the primary objectives of the law enforcement presence and involvement at a site, including ensuring site safety. Challenges can also be associated with site location (such as rural versus urban), size, and usage, as well as the culture of a community, each of which can introduce different considerations. Ultimately, it is important to identify and tailor partnerships with law enforcement and other community crime prevention organizations so that they address a community's unique concerns.

Potential Consequences of not Partnering with Law Enforcement Organizations

Sites that do not engage and involve law enforcement organizations during and after redevelopment can become crime attractors or crime generators during the redevelopment process. In some cases, land revitalization and redevelopment can create a 'target rich environment,' meaning a space where criminals can take advantage of the redeveloped site and layout to commit crimes. It is especially important in these cases to plan ahead to engage and promote a law enforcement and community presence to help ensure site and public safety. During the planning stages of site redevelopment, planners should also consider the crime prevention through environmental design (CPTED) concept, which helps site developers, architects and designers create a redeveloped space that is not conducive to criminal activities.

Case Study:

How East Tampa, Florida Leveraged Brownfields Funds and Law Enforcement Partnerships to Reduce Crime

East Tampa, Florida has a disproportionate number of young families, underserved residents, and few businesses. In 2003, East Tampa was designated a 'Community Redevelopment Area,' which enabled it to receive city-wide brownfield assessment grants. East Tampa used the brownfields funds to assess small sites around the community and to consider a wholistic approach to redevelopment.

In the past, the East Tampa community experienced a violent crime epidemic and lacked trust in the police department. In 2003, in an effort to improve community trust and engagement, local brownfields officials and the police department invited the East Tampa community to participate in community meetings to provide input on brownfields projects.

"Private sector investors tell me all the time, that what gets them excited about making investments in underserved communities, is seeing the community members and the local police departments working together on programs and projects that make residents feel safe in their own neighborhoods."

- Ed Johnson, East Tampa's Brownfields Coordinator



Affordable Housing Built on Formerly Vacant Land



Community Meeting in the Roll Call Room at the Police District Office

In 2004, East Tampa conducted a brownfields project to eradicate contamination and build affordable housing consisting of 40 single-family units to be managed by a housing and community development program. In 2007, East Tampa's brownfields program used grant funds to purchase a former public housing property that contained uninhabitable, vacant buildings that were built over a landfill. On this site, the police department built a new district headquarters and Brownfields Redevelopment Office.



East Tampa Police Department, District 3 Office

Acting on the community's concerns, East Tampa also hired a police detective to address environmental crimes, such as illegal dumping and issues with abandoned cars. The environmental detective meets with the citizen council monthly and is in frequent communication with community residents. He also meets with residential committees, such as the economic development subcommittee, and works with other city government agencies to address neighborhood problems as needed.

The new police department building contains meeting rooms and safe gathering spaces for community use. East Tampa also runs the Rich House (two locations) that is staffed by a police officer, which provides a safe and constructive place for students to go after school and in the summer. The Rich House sponsors sports leagues, teaches parenting and other community skills, and helps residents find employment.

East Tampa's approach to redevelopment serves as a model for other communities that are looking to take advantage of the brownfields program. Since 2003, crime in the East Tampa neighborhood has decreased by 68%. Developing partnerships with law enforcement has helped East Tampa enhance community trust and involvement, increase safety at the city's brownfields sites, and leverage private investment and reduce crime.



East Tampa Environmental Detective Examining a Pile of Dumped Tires and Trash