



BROWNFIELD PROGRAM

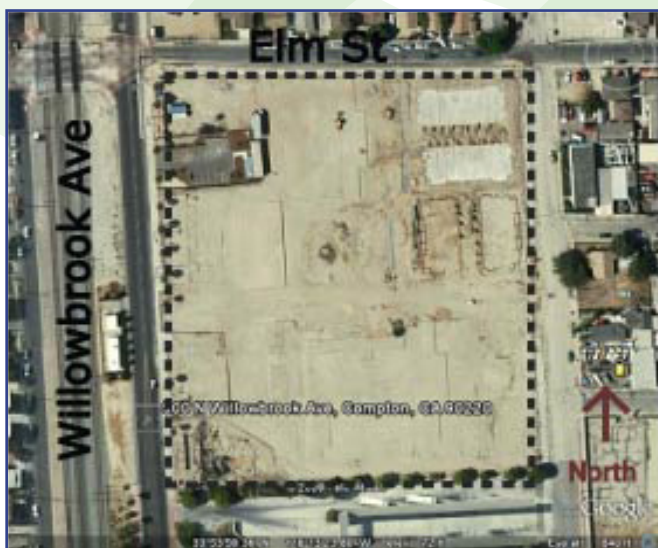
Newsletter

Community Redevelopment Agency Initiates “Clean Compton Brownfield Initiative”

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1

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Photos: On the left is the former brownfield site where the Willow Walk Housing Development now stands (on the right).

The City of Compton Community Redevelopment Agency (Agency) launched the Clean Compton Brownfield Initiative. The mission of the Clean Compton Brownfield Initiative is to identify and assess potentially contaminated, vacant, or underutilized properties throughout the City to create a more vibrant and cleaner Compton. Our goal is to attract and coordinate resources to address real or perceived presence of contamination that may prevent private investment and facilitate development that will remove blight, create quality jobs, encourage economic growth, enhance green space and improve the quality of life for Compton’s residents.

Currently, the Agency is in the first phase of compiling a citywide brownfield inventory. The citywide inventory will allow the Agency to gather critical data relating to existing brownfield sites to enable effective coordination of resources, which is critical to establishing an efficient and effective Brownfield Program. Creating a brownfield inventory will assist the Agency in the prioritization of brownfield sites for redevelopment and create a marketing tool for interested redevelopment partners.

The brownfield inventory’s objective is to gather information about each site (such as historical uses) and identify each site’s assets and liabilities necessary to assess for immediate and future redevelopment potential. The Agency is working to ensure that the data collected will help meet the goals of all potential users of this brownfields inventory, including the community, city staff and potential redevelopment partners. To create an inventory, data must be gathered from several sources including, but not limited to: the Los Angeles County Assessor’s Office, local records of past use, and neighborhood surveys and interviews. Specific information about the (continued on page 2)

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Brownfields 101: What are Brownfields?



Photos: On the left is the former brownfield site located on N. Alameda St. the new home of the Alameda Court Housing Development (on the right).

The United States Environmental Protection Agency defines a brownfield site as “real property, the expansion, redevelopment, or reuse, of which may be complicated by the presence or potential presence of a hazardous substance, pollutant, or contaminant.” Brownfield sites often times are a barrier to economic growth, improved environmental and public health, and quality of urban life. Determining the exact number of contaminated land sites is a difficult, costly, and time-consuming task. However, addressing environmental contamination is imperative for the reuse of brownfield sites to aid communities in revitalizing distressed neighborhoods and aggressively attracting private investment.

The Environmental Protection Agency was established in the 1970s to protect human health and to safeguard the natural environment such as air, water, and land. The EPA’s Brownfields Program empowers States, communities, and other stakeholders to work together to prevent, assess, safely clean up and sustainably reuse brownfields. In 1980, United States Congress passed the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act or CERCLA. CERCLA is more commonly known as the “Superfund” law, that was originally intended to serve as a cleanup program for abandoned hazardous waste sites.

By the late 1980s, a pattern to avoid cleanup liability was emerging in cities across the United States. As older industrial sites and districts deteriorated, industry often relocated to suburban or rural farmlands, or in many cases, to new regions of the country or abroad. The resulting job loss weakened the tax bases and dampened economic growth. The deterioration of brownfield sites exacerbated existing environmental problems and further weakened the local economy. In spite of the complexity of brownfield projects, it is

important that communities promote the reuse of brownfields to catalyze citywide revitalization and economic growth.

Brownfield projects are challenging efforts that require coordination of a myriad of stakeholders due to the limited financial resources required and environmental regulatory oversight. The economic development opportunities that brownfield reuse can bring to the City of Compton are enormous and we look forward to working with the community to build a successful Brownfield Program. To find out additional information about the Clean Compton Brownfield Initiative contact the Community Redevelopment Agency at (310) 605-5511 or visit us on the web www.comptoncity.org.

(continued from page 1) property, such as its structural integrity, proximity to public water and sewer service, access to major transportation routes, lien statutes, existing infrastructure, available parking, neighboring land use and zoning will be collected. Once this information is collected and analyzed for redevelopment potential, a prioritization schedule will be assigned to each property.

A significant part of the process of establishing a Brownfield Program is community engagement. In order to successfully establish a Brownfield Program it is important that key stakeholders are engaged in the process. This includes community members such as residents and individuals who work or study in the area, and stakeholders such as business owners and developers.

The Agency will be actively collaborating with property owners and regulatory bureaus, and residents will also play a key role. It is critical to have a body that is representative and reflective of the community’s interests and characteristics to take part in citywide projects, and this community-based planning approach will be the driving factor behind Compton’s Brownfield Initiative.

Please stay tuned for details in our next issue about how you can get involved!

Pursuing Smart Growth Strategy in Compton

REVITALIZATION EDUCATION

Currently the City of Compton does not have an attractive, lively city center; a place for entertaining friends when they visit or to enjoy for shopping or eating on the weekends. At the intersection of Compton Blvd and Willowbrook Ave, construction for a new North Downtown Compton is underway called the Compton redevelopment project. The overarching goal of this project is to revitalize Downtown Compton. Revitalizing this centrally-located, transit-accessible location increases the possibilities for City of Compton to attract development and create places where people can work, live, and study or engage in entertainment. Moreover, this is significant because this area is located in the center of the city and has high potential for growth. By following smart growth principles, the City can direct development toward existing communities and restore underutilized or abandoned land parcels. Restoring these underutilized parcels of land can help increase connectivity and walkability in Compton.

Part of the Smart Growth Strategic Implementation Plan calls for the revitalization of Downtown Compton. Revitalization is defined as reactivating or reviving once vibrant, developed areas. "Like many traditional ideas of 'good planning' smart growth seeks to concentrate development into

centers—both to protect open space in fringe areas and to provide transportation alternatives and more vibrant neighborhoods in areas that are developed" (Fulton 2005, 294).

There is no one recipe for a smart growth strategy, a community must be studied and analyzed to develop an approach or strategy that is unique to that particular community. Moreover, no matter what a person's role in the community may be, everyone involved in the transformation and shaping of how and where a community grows, benefits from the improved quality of life that smart growth can provide.

In 1996, numerous national organizations came together to form the Smart Growth Network, which is a coalition of 32 organizations that support smart growth. These organizations recognized the problems facing communities. The network developed ten principles for smart growth (see box titled, Smart Growth Principles). However, change cannot happen simply by adopting a smart growth plan. Smart growth principles have to be implemented and communities have to be willing to take action, adapt and change how they function in order to realize smart growth development.

References:

Fulton, William. *Guide to California Planning*. Point Area: Solano Press Books, 2005.

Smart Growth Principles

- 1
Mixed land uses
- 2
Take advantage of compact building design
- 3
Create a range of housing opportunities and choices
- 4
Create walkable neighborhoods
- 5
Foster distinctive, attractive communities with strong sense of place
- 6
Preserve open space, farm land, natural beauty and critical environmental areas
- 7
Strengthen and direct development towards existing communities
- 8
Provide a variety of transportation choices
- 9
Make development decisions predictable, fair and cost-effective
- 10
Encourage community and stakeholder collaboration in development decisions

Source: www.smartgrowth.org



As the City of Compton moves forward with its revitalization efforts toward Birthing a New Compton, the Compton Community Redevelopment Agency (Agency) strongly encourages community participation in the project implementation process. In order for Compton to achieve sustainable development the community's input on brownfield redevelopment projects are vital. Historically, low income and predominantly minority communities have been directly affected by environmental contamination that contributes to blight. Redevelopment provides communities with a tool to address consequences of urban decay such as brownfields. Communities now have the resources to participate effectively during all phases of brownfield projects.

There are many ways to become involved in the Clean Compton Brownfield Program. Actively participating in public meetings and advisory boards provide an opportunity to contribute to the planning process, voice concerns, and become a part of the solution. While these forms of communication require a commitment, it is important for the City to receive feedback from community members to assess the needs and interests of the people we serve.

Advisory boards and community meetings play a crucial role in creating project concepts for land reuse strategies. The Agency believes in providing the public with timely and relevant information to empower the community and opportunities to shape brownfield activity in our community.



As Compton seeks to implement its Smart Growth Strategy, collaboration is vital in implementing community initiatives that address the needs of residents and business owners and plan for the future. It is important for the City to collaborate with community members. Stay tuned for upcoming opportunities for input in the Compton Community Redevelopment Agency's Smart Growth Initiatives.