

1-1-1999


Brownfield Redevelopment Strategies for Gary, IN,

Kirstin Toth

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BROWNFIELD REDEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES FOR GARY, INDIANA

Prepared for:
THE CITY OF GARY, INDIANA

By:
The Great Lakes Environmental Finance Center
Technical Advisory Committee
www.csuohio.edu/glefc

July 13, 1999

The Urban Center
The Maxine Goodman Levin College of Urban Affairs
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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Several people contributed to the success of this project. First, the United States Environmental Protection Agency provided the funding to the Great Lakes Environmental Finance Center to complete this technical advisory project. The city of Gary hosted and assisted in the planning of the June 29, 1999 meeting and organized the local participants. Mary Mulligan, Taghi Arshami and Ben Clement provided local coordination of the workshop.

Paul Christensen, Vice President, Neighborhood Progress, Inc. (Cleveland), and Mark Waterhouse, CED, President of Garnet Consulting Services (Pleasant Valley, CT) served as Technical Advisors to the project.

This report was written by Kirstin Toth, Project Director for the Community Brownfield Professional Advisory Service with editorial assistance from Donald T. Iannone, Executive Director of the GLEFC.

Kirstin Toth

Great Lakes Environmental Finance Center

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Great Lakes Environmental Finance Center conducted a technical assistance workshop for Gary, Indiana officials on June 29, 1999. This workshop represented an important step in the city's efforts to address its brownfields cleanup and redevelopment needs. The city has begun its participation in a regionally-awarded brownfields pilot grant from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The workshop agenda focused discussion on overcoming the barriers to brownfields redevelopment and the financing basics of brownfields redevelopment. These topics were discussed in the context of the redevelopment of the Airport Development Zone and a major area of Gary's waterfront.

An Advisory Team of specialists in economic development and brownfields finance provided advice and responded to issues raised during the workshop. Their expertise, as well as the ideas and insights from other workshop participants, helped form the basis of the recommendations contained in this report.

The City of Gary faces a number of serious social and economic challenges - brownfields being one of them. In addition to the presence of thousands of acres of contaminated and vacant land, the city is beset by unemployment, widespread poverty, real and perceived issues of crime, low educational achievement, and other problems that plague America's urban communities. In order to revitalize Gary, city officials need a comprehensive plan to address each of these shortcomings. Focusing only on brownfields, at the expense of trying to solve other challenges, would be misguided and unproductive. The recommendations that follow should therefore be considered only one part of a more comprehensive redevelopment strategy.

Recommendations

The advisory team has divided their recommendations into two major categories:

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1) Comprehensive and Master Planning, and 2) Sources of Project Financing.

COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING:

1. Develop a comprehensive plan for the City of Gary. This plan should be provided by a professional firm with substantial and demonstrable experience in cities of Gary's size and industrial makeup.

MASTER PLANNING:

1. **Organize key city stakeholders and leaders** into a Brownfield/Redevelopment Working Group that will make commitments of time and resources and be accountable to city leadership. It should be this group that provides guidance and key decision-making on redevelopment priorities for the city, and input into projects that are related to the city's future, but not in the direct control of city planners, such as the airport redevelopment.

2. **Prioritize redevelopment projects.** There is a need for the city planning and economic development staff to have a clear road map of priority projects. Using the working group for this task will help to bolster collaborative communication.

3. **Develop specific Master Plans** for each prioritized site. Once site prioritization has been established, a very specific, site-oriented master plan should be developed for each area of redevelopment.

4. **Link the redevelopment strategy of the Airport to the Waterfront development.** Because the lakefront is actually a part of the designated Airport Development Zone, it would make sense to link the redevelopment strategies of these two interdependent areas. Access to similar roadways and infrastructure require a vision beyond the current Airport expansion and Buffington Harbor road expansion.

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SOURCES OF FINANCING:

Once the site prioritization has revealed which sites are to be redeveloped first and a master plan has been developed for the site(s), sources of financing will be made available to the community as it demonstrates its ability to collaborate with a variety of local and state resources, such as the Federal Empowerment Zone cities, the Northwest Indiana Brownfield Redevelopment Project, and the Gary Urban Enterprise Association. Specific site assessment and cleanup and redevelopment funds are recommended below.

Utilize these sources of funds available for **site assessment**:

- Indiana Development Financing Authority (IDFA) site assessment grants
- Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds
- Specific funding available through the Gary Urban Enterprise Association
- Indiana Department of Environmental Management (IDEM) on-site assessment services

1. Utilize the following sources for **cleanup and redevelopment**:

- Private developer equity, utilizing referrals from the Gary Chamber of Commerce.
- Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Economic Development Initiative and Brownfields Economic Development Initiative funds.
- Casino proceeds can be applied to infrastructure improvements in brownfields redevelopment.
- Partnership with Northern Indiana Public Service Commission (NIPSCO), the gas/electric utility provider, to identify land in a land assembly strategy effort.
- Partnership with the Northwest Indiana Regional Planning Commission and other redevelopment authorities.
- Section 108 loan guarantees.
- Federal Empowerment Zone partnership to secure loans for redevelopment.

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- State and federal remediation tax credits
- Collaborate and plan tax abatement usage with key members of City Council before a vote in order to assist in planning.
- Negotiate with potentially responsible parties (PRPs).
- Make use of general liability insurance recovery as a method of seeking funds from a PRP or former landowner of a brownfield.

CONCLUSION:

Like most cities plagued by the history of industrial degradation, Gary faces many barriers to brownfields redevelopment. Financing the assessment and cleanup is one but not the only barrier nor the greatest roadblock. Its need for a set of overarching development principles and a clear plan of action and can be provided by the creation of a comprehensive plan, and by site-specific master planning. Utilizing the many resources available to Gary will be most enhanced by its ability to work with neighboring development partners such as the Federal Empowerment Zone cities, the Gary Urban Enterprise Association, and the Northwest Indiana Brownfield Redevelopment Project, to name a few. The leadership capacity-building for the City of Gary is a critical element in its ability to take advantage of the many resources already available.

Attention to the actions recommended here will provide a solid foundation on which the City of Gary can move forward in its brownfields redevelopment efforts.

COMPREHENSIVE AND MASTER PLANNING

COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING

Beyond the need for the redevelopment of the areas identified by Gary city officials is the need for greater collaboration and focus on the economic development priorities for the city. One of the best ways to define economic expectations and goals is to devise a comprehensive plan for the community. In this way, both public administrators and elected officials can be guided by a common strategy and work toward common objectives, albeit often using different styles.

Recommendation: The GLEFC advisory team recommends the formation of a comprehensive plan for the City of Gary.

A comprehensive plan is a plan for development of commercial, residential, and recreational use of the land within the city boundaries, guided by existing structures and economic generators and the need for future growth and economic expansion. The purpose of the comprehensive plan is to provide a “unified general physical design for the community and to clarify the relationships between physical development policies and social and economic goals.”¹ The comprehensive plan should be grounded in demographic trends, geographic and geologic information, and economic resources. The City of Gary is currently working without this type of road map. There appears to the advisory team to be no single coalescing force or goal defining the long-term development efforts of the city. Because there are so many brownfields and other parcels of vacant land available, the advisory team believes the time is right to revisit the comprehensive planning process.

A comprehensive plan encompasses the need for economic expansion while maintaining a realistic vision of the resources needed to accomplish economic goals. Many cities face the challenges posed by political standoffs between various elected

¹ The Urban General Plan. T.J. Kent, Chandler Publishing, San Francisco, 1964.

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officials. The comprehensive plan provides a common ground for each stakeholder to have her/his issues addressed and incorporated into an overall guiding strategy for the city's movement into the future. Regardless of the change in political leadership, the comprehensive plan provides a buffer against altering the general development course in favor of short-lived gains.

Hence, the advisory team strongly recommends that the City of Gary engage an outside firm to provide a comprehensive plan. At a minimum, the professional firm hired to provide the plan should have American Planning Association membership or firm associates should be members of the American Institute of Certified Planners. The Council for Urban Economic Development (CUED) is able to provide referrals to firms or organizations that can provide comprehensive planning services. The selected firm should be able to provide quality examples of successful comprehensive planning projects for cities of the same size as Gary. A ballpark estimate of the cost for a comprehensive plan for the City of Gary is \$125,000 to \$200,000 based upon what the city determines are its minimum needs in the plan.

The typical process for creating or updating a community Comprehensive Plan of Development takes 12 to 18 months because there is (or should be) substantial community input. Typical sections include analyses of:

1. Prior plans and the status of implementation.
2. Historical background and development of the community.
3. Important regional factors and their impact on the community.
4. Natural resources.
5. Community demographics.
6. Housing stock, development trends, and pricing.
7. The local economy.
8. Economic development needs.
9. The community's fiscal situation--expenditures, revenues, and taxes.
10. Current land use and development potential.

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11. Open space--available and needed.
12. The community's utility infrastructure.
13. Transportation and circulation.
14. Community facilities and services.
15. Historic preservation.
16. Any special local conditions (e.g., dune area issues and management).
17. Community management issues.
18. Existing development regulations--zoning, subdivision, wetlands, etc.

Out of this comprehensive analysis, the community should:

- a) develop a shared vision of what it wants to look like 20 years from now;
- b) create a land use plan reflecting the realities of current land uses and the planned future land uses;
- c) amend existing regulations and procedures so that they support implementation of the plan; and
- d) create any new regulations, procedures, staff positions, etc. that are also needed to turn the vision and plan into reality.

The key idea behind the development of a comprehensive plan is that it be general in nature: a general guideline that ties together the economic development and social agenda of a city. For Gary, this type of general plan will help to coordinate the many various public and private stakeholders into a unified work effort.

THE MASTER PLAN

Apart from the need for a comprehensive plan is the need for a specific master plan. Ideally, a master plan would evolve out of the findings and discussion from the comprehensive planning process, but this is not necessary. A master plan differs from a comprehensive plan in that the master plan is typically site-specific, or at most, an

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area-wide plan, as opposed to an overall, general plan such as the city's comprehensive plan.

Recommendation: Organize key stakeholders into a Brownfield/ Redevelopment Working Group that will make commitments of time and resources and be accountable to the city leadership.

The Brownfields Working Group should be comprised of senior representatives of the following organizations:

- Banking
- City Council
- Utilities
- Railroad
- State agency coordination, to represent all state agencies (would most likely be a state appointment)
- Regional planning commission (NIPSE and/or NWIBRP)
- Redevelopment Authority
- Legal
- Planning
- Private developer
- Preservation.

Unlike the existing Planning and Development Council's role in convening many of these same parties for a periodic discussion of redevelopment projects, the Brownfield Working Group would be responsible for specific goals and objectives and should report to the mayor. The workshop discussion revealed a lack of accountability in the existing decision-making structure in the city's efforts at brownfields redevelopment project planning. The advisory team believes this new type of working group, convened by the city with specific accountabilities to the mayor could go a long way to provide measurable results in redevelopment efforts. The proposed working group could be established as a replacement for the current Planning and Development Council.

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The working group should also be closely involved with the development of the comprehensive plan and master plan. This same group, if convened with the senior level city staff and community leaders, would include the same participants in the comprehensive plan interviewing stage. The overarching goal is to create an atmosphere of collaboration and coordination to most effectively utilize resources available to the city.

Formation of the working group should become a major priority in order to provide a strong foundation for the city's focus on collaborative planning and brownfields redevelopment.

Recommendation: Prioritize redevelopment projects.

The advisory team recommends a concerted effort at organizing and prioritizing the city's redevelopment projects. Based upon the discussion at the workshop, there appears to be an assortment of redevelopment projects currently underway, ranging from the long-term redevelopment of the lakefront to the more immediate needs of the airport expansion, to the unrelated "J-Pit" redevelopment concepts. These projects, along with others not mentioned in the workshop, require a close examination of their realistic redevelopment potential in light of the investment needed, and in the context of a larger comprehensive plan. Even prior to the completion of a comprehensive plan, an initial prioritization could begin immediately with the completion of the currently-funded vacant land site inventory. This project prioritization process does not have to be overly detailed or involved. The GLEFC has helped the City of Cleveland prioritize more than 20 brownfields sites for redevelopment by utilizing a half-day workshop/meeting with the project committee in attendance. This type of meeting could be accomplished in the same amount of time and be convened by the Brownfields Working Group recommended above.

Recommendation: The advisory team recommends the development of specific master plans for prioritized development areas of the city.

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In the context of the June 29 workshop, the GLEFC Advisory Team recognizes that not all development areas of importance for the city were discussed. However, considering the discussion centered on the waterfront and airport development areas with a need to address the redevelopment of brownfields, the GLEFC Advisory Team recognizes the need for a master plan for the Airport Development Zone and for the waterfront area. The airport is already creating a master plan for the airport expansion area. This planning process could benefit from the active input of Gary city officials, especially in relationship to the northernmost portion of the zone, which includes the waterfront. There was great attention at the workshop given to the need for greater collaboration among key city stakeholders, and it is apparent to the advisory team that the airport master planning process would benefit from several other inputs. Once the prioritized site list is compiled, master plans can be developed in a timeframe consistent with funds available and the priorities of city leadership. A typical master plan can be developed in 60 to 90 days, or as long as six months depending on the extent of projected funding and development potential.

Recommendation: Develop a linked strategy for the Airport Development Zone and the waterfront development area.

The advisory team recommends developing a linked strategy for the entire Airport Development Zone (ADZ), including the lakefront, that would incorporate a development approach focusing on economic priorities, such as phases of development for each identified area in the large zone. This would accommodate the immediacy of the airport's current negotiations with passenger air service providers and still provide a unified plan for road upgrades and site acquisition plans for the lakefront. The key concept is to break down a very large area into identifiable, manageable sites.

This linked strategy should be a key foundation in the development of any master plan for the ADZ.

SOURCES OF FINANCING

The City of Gary has aggressive plans for the redevelopment of some of its major former industrial properties, especially along the waterfront and in the ADZ. Given these expansive spaces, with a myriad of complex redevelopment factors, financing is a major barrier to redevelopment. It is not, however, insurmountable given some of the many resources available in the City of Gary. The federal Empowerment Zone designation, of which Gary is a partner with East Chicago and Hammond; the recipient of a state assessment grant from the Indiana Development Financing Authority (IDFA); and the partnership in the Northwest Indiana Brownfield Redevelopment Project (NIBRP) are three of the resources that bring the city funding as well as the opportunity for collaboration in cleaning up and redeveloping brownfields.

The following sources are provided here as a description of the many that are available to the City of Gary for use in brownfields redevelopment. The GLEFC Advisory Team recommends a focused effort on the part of city officials to research and utilize the most useful and applicable of these funding sources, based upon a prioritized focus of sites, in the context of a comprehensive plan. The following funding sources are grouped into those funds available for site assessment, and for clean-up and redevelopment.

Recommendation: Utilize the following financial resources for site assessment.

- **IDFA site assessment grants** provide funds to conduct site assessments, which is major impediment for the City of Gary, given the vast number of potentially contaminated parcels under consideration. The GLEFC Advisory Team recommends completing the utilization of the existing assessment funds already granted by IDFA and prioritizing those sites assessed.
- **Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)** funds can also be earmarked for assessment and clean up activities on sites in targeted areas of the city.
- **The Gary Urban Enterprise Association** has specific funds available (\$5 million in total funding) for redevelopment and revitalization of brownfields in

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the City of Gary. Collaboration with this organization can be a critical link to advancing redevelopment.

- Request the services of **the Indiana Department of Environmental Management (IDEM)** to conduct site assessment. They have a field team available to come on site to conduct testing and provide needed documentation of land conditions.
- Identify other local nonprofit intermediaries or development organizations that have access to public or private funding sources.

Recommendation: Utilize funding sources for cleanup and redevelopment from the following categories.

SOURCES OF EQUITY:

- Private developers and investors are seeking a 25 to 40 percent return on their investment. If, after assessing the redevelopment potential of a project, there is demonstrated profit potential, pull a developer into the deal early on in the planning process in order to help fund and manage the project. Utilizing the networking available through the **Gary Chamber of Commerce** could prove helpful.
- Investigate and apply for **Housing and Urban Development (HUD)** funds for brownfields projects. HUD's Economic Development Initiative (**EDI**) and Brownfields Economic Development Initiative (**BEDI**) grant programs can be applicable to Gary's redevelopment efforts.
- **Utilize the casino proceeds**, estimated at \$20 million per year, for infrastructure improvements. Creative use of these funds will be well received by the community at large, and can go a long way in site preparation for potential end-users.

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- **Partner with NIPSCO** in identifying land for possible donation where needed for land assembly. The utility can also be a key partner in identifying and securing additional funding from any variety of sources. Utilize their land expertise to solicit end-users. A strong partnership with the utility can provide marketing and financial benefits.
- Utilize the availability of the **Federal Empowerment Zone partnership** to secure loans for redevelopment.
- **Create a partnership with the local redevelopment authority** in order to utilize industrial development bonds.
- Investigate and **consider the use of Section 108 loan guarantees** that have been successful in other communities such as Chicago.

TAX INCENTIVES:

- Package **state and federal remediation tax credits** in a redevelopment “tool kit” designed for developers and others representing business site location interests. These types of tools, along **with Empowerment Zone tax credits**, such as for local hiring, equipment purchases, etc, are effective incentives for businesses.
- Consider working with key members of City Council to identify opportunities for tax abatement and acceptable development areas for using this incentive. Many times political representatives are reluctant to use tax abatement unless they can be shown the long-term benefits. Working with representatives and their constituents can garner community education and acceptance *before* taking the tax abatement project to a vote of council.

OTHER FUNDING SOURCES:

- **Negotiating with potentially responsible parties (PRPs)** is often an avenue that cities are reluctant to take because many times the PRPs may be perceived as very sophisticated or otherwise overwhelming to deal with. However, the advisory team

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believes seeking help from the PRP should be one of the first courses of action to take when identifying and planning a site redevelopment.

- **General liability insurance recovery** is a relatively recent concept of making claims from old general liability insurance policies held by PRPs prior to the days of writing environmental exclusions into insurance policies. There are firms that will do the research for the city to determine the viability of this method of insurance recovery. These services are often at no cost to the client city until monies are recovered.

CONCLUSION

The City of Gary has the potential to create a new city of viable industrial concerns and to revitalize its crumbling interior. However, Gary has some serious barriers to brownfields redevelopment: its lack of capacity to collaborate and coordinate with other organizations in the city is a major roadblock to its successful use of many resources available. Working with the Gary Chamber of Commerce, the Gary Urban Enterprise Association, NWIBRP, The Airport Development Authority, and other local and state organizations would go a long way toward delivering the management and resources needed to take on the type of large-scale redevelopment envisioned by city leaders. The key to re-creating a vital Gary is collaboration and sharing management of resources and projects. As long as the city does not take advantage of the various partnerships available to it, it will not be able to redevelop its brownfields and other vacant and decaying properties.

Gary officials should seek out the advice of and learn from the models of collaboration provided by such neighbors as the City of Chicago, Cleveland's Neighborhood Progress, Inc. (NPI), and the City of Baltimore. While their brownfields redevelopment efforts have been widely touted, it has been their ability to overcome political constraints and to compromise with other competing political and development organizations, as well as their steadfast focus on attaining measurable development goals, that has led

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their successful redevelopment. Visits to these cities and other models of success to observe and inquire will help to develop the City of Gary's leadership capacity.

The advisory team hopes that the city leaders will examine and act upon the recommendations provided in this report. The actions provided in the recommendations will go a long way to helping Gary achieve brownfields redevelopment success.

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APPENDIX

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Brownfield Redevelopment Strategies for Gary, Indiana

***Great Lakes Environmental Finance Center
Community Brownfield Financing Strategy Service***

***City of Gary, Indiana Workshop
June 29, 1999
The Genesis Center
Genesis Convention Center
1 Genesis Center Plaza
(Located between Fourth and Fifth Avenues, on Broadway)***

WORKSHOP AGENDA

7:30 - 8:45 a.m.	Site Visit by Car: Waterfront and Airport Development Zone (City Hall)	
8:45 - 9:00	Coffee & Sign-In	
9:00 - 9:30	Welcome-Mayor Scott King Introductions, workshop objectives, & agenda	Kirstin Toth
9:30 -10:00	Site Overview, brownfields redevelopment, background, city's overall development focus.	Ben Clement, Taghi Arshami, Mary Mulligan
10:00 – 10:10	Break	
10:10-11:45	I. Overcoming the Barriers to Brownfield Redevelopment: A Step-By-Step Approach <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Identify barriers to developing the site2. Identify recommended options to overcome each barrier3. Strategy Formation:<ol style="list-style-type: none">a. Highest & Best Useb. Cleaning Up the Sitec. Financing (to be considered in detail in the afternoon)d. Redevelopment Factors	Mark Waterhouse
11:45- 1:00 pm	Lunch provided for participants	

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1:00 – 2:45 pm
(with a break)

II. Financing Brownfield Redevelopment

Paul Christensen

1. Assessment
2. Liability
3. State sources of funding
4. Federal sources of funding
5. Private funding sources

2:45- 3:00 pm

Wrap-up and next steps

Kirstin Toth