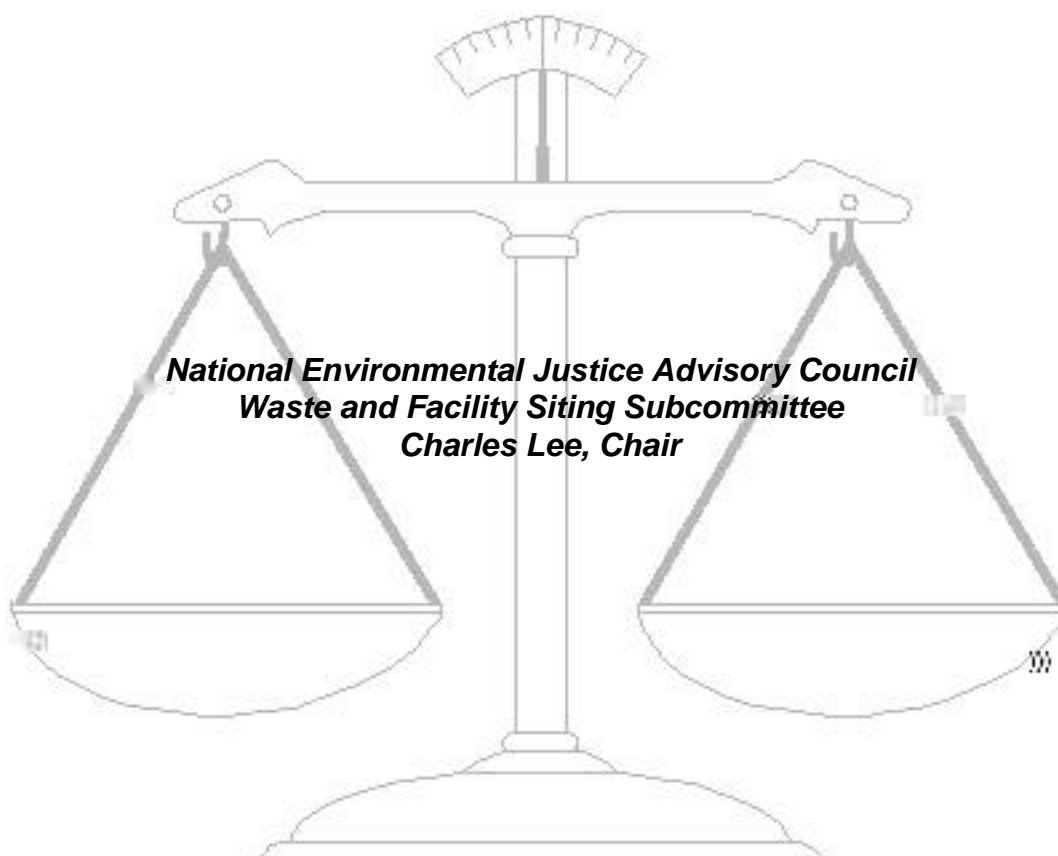


# **ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE, URBAN REVITALIZATION, AND BROWNFIELDS:**

## **THE SEARCH FOR AUTHENTIC SIGNS OF HOPE**

**A Report on the  
"Public Dialogues on Urban Revitalization and Brownfields:  
Envisioning Healthy and Sustainable Communities"**





**NATIONAL  
ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE  
ADVISORY COUNCIL**



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Carol Browner, Administrator  
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency  
401 M Street, SW  
Washington, DC 20460

July 29, 1996

Dear Administrator Browner:

Attached, please find a copy of the final report, *"Environmental Justice, Urban Revitalization, and Brownfields: The Search for Authentic Signs of Hope."* At the May 29-31 meeting of the National Environmental Justice Advisory Council in Detroit, Michigan, the Council discussed the Waste and Facility Siting Subcommittee's report, *"Environmental Justice, Urban Revitalization, and Brownfields: The Search for Authentic Signs of Hope."* The Council has agreed to endorse the report, as reflected in a formal mail vote, and to transmit it to you. The purpose of this letter is to request that you review the report and address the action items identified in the report.

We are transmitting this document to you on behalf of the members of the NEJAC. We do so with sincere gratitude for the many persons who gave tirelessly of their time, energy, and expertise to make the NEJAC Public Dialogues on Urban Revitalization and Brownfields an outstanding success.

The report follows up on, and analyzes the findings from, the public dialogues on urban revitalization and Brownfields which were hwnfclan revita2 -11.76 y SitiJu e Council discussed the WTjhmr05050505yrepo9.96 n iterba838 EnviroPu0

## **DEDICATION**

Dr. Jean Sindab, Director of Environmental and Economic Justice/Hunger Concerns for the National Council of Churches and a member of the National Environmental Justice Advisory Council, passed away on January 8, 1996 after a long and hard battle with cancer. Those of us who knew her well are deeply saddened by our loss. In reflecting upon Jean's life, we realized that this report attempts to speak to some of the issues at the very core of her life's work. For example, she and I worked on developing an Urban Strategies Initiative for the National Council of Churches in the wake of events in South Central Los Angeles. She organized the Black Church Network on Environmental and Economic Justice.

Jean chose to serve on the Waste and Facility Siting Subcommittee because of her interest in the job creation aspects of the Brownfields issue. Her passion was the plight of inner city youth, and she clearly understood the linkages between living in degraded physical environments, mass alienation, and destructive violence. It can be said that her life's work was dedicated to the constant search for authentic signs of hope. Many formative concepts behind this report germinated during our discussions years before the establishment of the National Environmental Justice Advisory Council. Jean struggled mightily to attend all the NEJAC "Public Dialogues on Urban Revitalization and Brownfields." She especially liked the idea of "Envisioning Healthy and Sustainable Communities." Despite her illness, she was able to attend our Public Dialogue in Boston, and we were indeed graced by her presence.

We believe that the vision which this report hopes to articulate is one she embraced and dedicated her life to help realize. She helped me to formulate the question which pervades this report: Can the restoration of the physical environment become an anchoring point for economic, social, cultural, and spiritual renewal? In very real sense, she contributed to this report in ways she may never know. Therefore, we dedicate this report to the "living" memory of the life and work of Dr. Jean Sindab.

**Charles Lee**

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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*The vision of environmental justice is the development of a holistic, bottomup, community-based, multi-issue, cross-cutting, integrative, and unifying paradigm for achieving healthy and sustainable communities--both urban and rural. In the context of ecological peril, economic dysfunctionality, infrastructure decay, racial polarization, social turmoil, cultural disorientation, and spiritual malaise which grips urban America at the end of the 20th century, environmental justice is indeed a much needed breath of fresh air. Tragically, many positive developments have been rendered invisible behind the curtain of a sensationalism-oriented mass media. However, there is no denying that great resilience exists in the economic, cultural, and spiritual life of America's communities. There are many stellar accomplishments, entrepreneurial successes, and significant victories--both big and small. Hence, an abiding goal of the Public Dialogues on Urban Revitalization and Brownfields was the **constant search for authentic signs of hope.***

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### **Background**

In 1995, the National Environmental Justice Advisory Council (NEJAC) Waste and Facility Siting Subcommittee and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency co-sponsored a series of public hearings entitled, "Public Dialogues on Urban Revitalization and Brownfields: Envisioning Healthy and Sustainable Communities." The Public Dialogues were held in five cities: Boston, Massachusetts; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; Detroit, Michigan; Oakland, California; and Atlanta, Georgia. They were intended to provide for the first time an opportunity for environmental justice advocates and residents of impacted communities to systematically provide input regarding issues related to the EPA's Brownfields Economic Redevelopment Initiative.

More than 500 persons from community groups, government agencies, faith groups, labor, philanthropies, universities, banks, businesses, and other institutions participated in a "systematic attempt to stimulate a new and vigorous public discourse about developing strategies, partnerships, models, and projects for ensuring healthy and sustainable communities in America's urban centers and demonstrating their importance to the nation's environmental and economic future." Representatives from 15 federal agencies as well as state and local, and tribal governments participated.

Concerns were raised by members of the public about the Brownfields Initiative, i.e., whether or not the Brownfields issue was a "smoke screen" for gutting cleanup standards, environmental regulations, and liability safeguards. Heretofore, public policy discourse around the Brownfields issue has revolved around removing barriers to real estate and investment transactions at sites where there exists toxic contamination concerns--real or perceived.

There is hope that the Brownfields Initiative will provide an opportunity to (1) stem the ecologically untenable, environmentally damaging, socially costly, and racially divisive phenomenon of urban sprawl and Greenfields development; (2) provide focus to a problem which by its very nature is inextricably linked to environmental justice, for example, the physical deterioration of the nation's urban areas; (3) allow communities to offer their vision of what redevelopment should look like; (4) apply environmental justice principles to the development of a new generation of environmental policy capable of meeting complex challenges such as Brownfields and the existence of a severe crisis in urban America; and (5) bring greater awareness and opportunities for building partnerships between EPA and communities and other stakeholders. As a result, EPA committed itself to supporting a sustained dialogue on Brownfields and environmental justice issues.

EPA already has begun to address concerns raised during the Public Dialogues. For example, EPA revised the criteria for applying for the Brownfields pilots based on comments provided by the NEJAC.







*Support sustained and structured public dialogue on Brownfields and environmental justice on all levels.*

*Institute policies and performance measures which encourage program personnel and policy makers to spend substantive time in neighborhoods as a regular part of their work so that there is understanding of real problems, concerns, and aspirations of community residents.*

*Undertake special outreach efforts to overlooked groups.*

## 2. Community Vision/Comprehensive Community Based Planning:

There exists within local communities highly coherent, vibrant, and compelling visions for achieving healthy and sustainable communities. Brownfields and all community revitalization efforts must be based upon such visions. The public dialogues articulated the importance of developing holistic, multi-faceted, interactive, and integrative community-based planning models.

*Acknowledge community-based planning as a critical methodology for environmental protection and promote its use both inside and outside the Agency.*

*Convene a national roundtable on strategies for application and development of geographic information systems and community mapping tools.*

*Develop guidance for incorporation of community-based planning and community visioning into Community-Based Environmental Protection initiatives.*

## 3. Role and Participation of Youth:

Young people provide great energy, creativity, and a sense of fresh vision. Urban revitalization/Brownfields issues are matters of great concern to young people. Issues of healthy and sustainable communities are questions of a viable future. Government and social institutions have a moral obligation to ensure a world fit for all children--present and future.

*Form the requisite partnerships both inside and outside of government to better understand and address urban revitalization/Brownfields issues of concern to youth.*

*Through the Brownfields initiative, integrate environmental activities and career development with targeted environmental justice and urban revitalization strategies.*

*Designate youth as a formal stakeholder category for federal advisory committees and other multi-stakeholder public participation processes.*

## II. Key Issue Areas

### 4. Equal Protection:

The urban revitalization/Brownfields issue focuses attention on yet another important set of equal protection issues, i.e., urban sprawl. Many federal programs have widened racial and socio-economic divisions in society by promoting disinvestment and placing substantial indirect burdens on communities and local economies.

In certain urban areas, urban sprawl is infringing upon nearby Tribal lands and, as such, is creating direct burdens on environmental, social, economic, and cultural values. In other urban areas, Tribal governments have won land claim settlements that provide for Tribal acquisition of urban lands that have included contaminated and potentially contaminated commercial and industrial areas. It is

imperative that local jurisdictions that are located next to Tribal land pay attention to the concerns of the Tribal governments, as well as its Tribal community members. Urban revitalization and Brownfields programs must recognize ceded lands, fee lands, and all lands possessing historical, cultural, and spiritual values.

*Develop analytical models of the distributive impacts of federal programs which promote urban sprawl and incorporate such analyses into National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Environmental Justice Guidance.*

*Examine use of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 with respect to federal support in areas of community reinvestment, fair housing, equal business opportunity, financing, and health protection.*



#### 10. Federal Interagency Cooperation, Programmatic Integration, and Government Reinvention:

The original and most enduring proponents of government reinvention are community residents engaged in overcoming systemic impediments to locally based solutions. The heart and soul of an authentic government reinvention process must be based upon vibrant and coherent community-based visions of healthy and sustainable communities. There already exists many federal policy and program initiatives which lend themselves to viable integrative strategies. In seeking to address a set of placed-based, multi-faceted, and cross-cutting set of issues, urban revitalization/Brownfields efforts provide unique opportunities for programmatic integration and government reinvention.

*Establish an interagency task force on Urban Revitalization/Brownfields, either through the Interagency Working Group on Environmental Justice or some other appropriate mechanism, to ensure programmatic coordination and integration.*

*Provide opportunities for communities to systematically engage EPA and other federal around ways in which federal programs around ways by which they can coordinate programs, pool resources and tap expertise.*

#### **Conclusion**

The urban revitalization/Brownfields debate reveals issues of civilizational dimensions. As we look to the 21st century, what endeavor could possibly be more eminently worthy and necessary; more obviously logical and deserving of our national attention, expertise, and resources; or more meaningful and spiritually nourishing than that of revitalizing America's urban areas and ensuring healthy and sustainable communities, both urban and rural? A challenge so great as this cannot be met with compelling visions of what constitutes healthy and sustainable communities. We have found that such visions already exist in highly coherent and vibrant ways within many communities across the nation.

The Nation is locked within the throes of a set of transitions which are demographic, economic, environmental, technological, social, cultural, linguistic, generational, and indeed spiritual in nature. Urban revitalization and Brownfields offer an opportunity to shape new policy, programs, partnerships, and pilot projects which rise to the challenge of the cross-cutting issues raised in this report. The Subcommittee continues to pose these questions:

Can this process begin to set a direction capable of crystallizing a unifying and cross-cutting vision within the federal government to serve as an anchor for the mobilization of society's  
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We believe that a maturing discussion on the above issues will take place over the next year and provide the catalyst for a unified federal approach towards coalescing a common urban revitalization strategy across all federal agencies. Several other priorities must take place over the next two to four years:

Establish an interagency urban revitalization/Brownfields task force, either through the Federal Interagency Urban Revitalization and Brownfields task force (this should be the way)

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### **INTRODUCTION**

In 1995, the National Environmental Justice Advisory Council (NEJAC) Waste and Facility Siting Subcommittee and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) co-sponsored a series of public hearings entitled "Public Dialogues on Urban Revitalization and Brownfields: Envisioning Healthy and Sustainable Communities." NEJAC is the formal advisory committee convened by EPA to provide advice on issues of environmental justice. It consists of grassroots leaders from impacted communities, environmental justice scholars and advocates, and representatives from a broad range of stakeholder groups.

The NEJAC Waste and Facility Siting Subcommittee (hereafter referred to as the Subcommittee) is sponsored by EPA's Office of Solid Waste and Emergency Response (OSWER). OSWER was the first program office within the federal government to develop a comprehensive environmental justice strategy. Under the leadership of Assistant Administrator Elliot P. Laws, OSWER began the process of developing its environmental justice strategy prior to the 9.96 .7831 -1.14mentaRxsistdop aCa6w 1.1446 TL T\*(E5 T.000 14h3rrstak.5601 /J 1 >> BDC -0.0018 Tc000.0007 08

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groups, labor organizations, philanthropies, universities, banks, businesses, and other institutions participated in a "systematic attempt to stimulate a new and vigorous public discourse about developing strategies, partnerships, models, and projects for ensuring healthy and sustainable communities in America's urban centers and their importance to the nation's environmental and economic future." Representatives from 15 federal agencies, as well as state and local governments, participated in the meetings.

**Members of the  
WASTE AND FACILITY SITING  
SUBCOMMITTEE**

The Public Dialogues sought to provide an opportunity for environmental justice advocates and community-based groups in impacted areas (1) to become a visible and meaningful part of an already existing national discourse on issues related to Brownfields hazardous site cleanup and economic redevelopment, (2) to reshape in substantive ways the development of EPA's Brownfields Initiative, and (3) add a new dimension to public policy discourse on Brownfields and urban redevelopment. At the point that the Brownfields issue came to NEJAC's attention, most issues to be addressed, such as liability issues, seemed to be "developer-driven." Most, if not all, public policy discussion about Brownfields was shaped by a desire to effect changes in legislation, regulatory standards, and liability provisions to meet the concerns of prospective investors and developers. Most people in potentially impacted communities had never heard the term "Brownfields."<sup>2</sup> NEJAC found that given the opportunity to define the issues surrounding Brownfields, these communities would do so in very different ways.

The Public Dialogues sought to be community-driven in terms of planning, preparation, structure, and execution. They proceeded from the premise that a strong sense of collective concerns and aspirations already existed within many communities. These comprise highly coherent and compelling visions of healthy and sustainable communities. Some communities have engaged in highly sophisticated community-based planning and visioning processes.

The Public Dialogues were structured into two tiers. First, communities articulated their concerns about the Brownfields initiative and their visions for achieving healthy and sustainable communities. Second, representatives of government agencies, as well as key social institutions such as labor, faith groups, universities, philanthropies, and business organizations, were asked to address the role they can play in helping to make the community's vision a reality. By structuring the Public Dialogues to model new forms of public participation, the



Subcommittee was intent on putting the discourse about Brownfields issues into a context that the community both defines and articulates.

The Public Dialogues abide by the basic environmental justice tenet that "**people must speak for themselves**"

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**BACKGROUND**

EPA defines Brownfields as "abandoned, idled, or under-used industrial and commercial facilities where expansion or redevelopment is complicated by real or perceived environmental contamination." In January 1995, Administrator Carol Browner announced that EPA will fund 50 pilot projects across the

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### **An Integrative Environmental Justice Model**

Concerns were raised by members of the public about the Brownfields Initiative, i.e., whether or not the Brownfields issue was a "smoke screen" for gutting cleanup standards, environmental regulations, and liability safeguards. Over the past three years, substantial national momentum had been building related to the Brownfields concept. For example, in 1995 the U.S. Conference of Mayors designated Brownfields as its No. 1 environmental priority. To a large extent, public policy related to the Brownfields issue revolved around removing barriers to real estate and investment transactions at sites where there exist toxic contamination concerns--real or perceived.

From the point of view of the Subcommittee and environmental justice advocates, EPA had received virtually no meaningful input from environmental justice advocates or residents from impacted communities about the Brownfields initiative. By 1994, EPA had initiated an environmental justice outreach and minority worker training program at the Cuyahoga County Community College in Cleveland, Ohio, which is linked to the Brownfields Pilot in Cuyahoga County.

However, in light of the breadth of the Brownfields issue, the Subcommittee clearly felt the effort did not accomplish environmental justice; as the subcommittee noted, EPA's Brownfields locomotive left the station without a major group of passengers. The Subcommittee's objectives in sponsoring the Public Dialogues were to achieve a meaningful role by environmental justice advocates and residents from potentially-impacted communities, and to initiate dialogue among stakeholder groups on addressing community goals.

At the same time, there was hope that the Brownfields Initiative could provide an opportunity to:

stem the ecologically untenable, environmentally damaging, socially costly, and racially divisive phenomenon of urban sprawl, displacement of residents through gentrification, and Greenfields development

provide focus to a problem which by its very nature is inextricably linked to environmental justice, for example, the physical deterioration of the nation's urban areas

allow communities to offer their vision of what redevelopment should look like

apply environmental justice principles to the development of a new generation of environmental policy capable of meeting complex challenges such as Brownfields and the existence of a severe crisis in urban America

bring greater awareness and opportunities for building partnerships between EPA, communities and other stakeholders.



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The paradox that faces us at the end of the 20th century is that urban areas are ecologically the most efficient forms of human spatial organization, while at the same time they are among the most polluted. Urban areas present pressing challenges on the cutting edge of environmental protection and sustainable development, including such challenges as multiple, cumulative, and synergistic risks; pollution prevention; creation of

environmentally-related jobs; development of "green," non-polluting, and environmentally restorative urban development; and building of mass transit and ecologically-beneficial infrastructures; as well as a host of other issues.

Given the massive scale of human development, these are challenges the Nation cannot afford to ignore. Urban environmental issues must be addressed from the perspective of their natural ecosystems (for example, water sheds, air sheds, etc.) and their social ecosystems (for example, neighborhoods, metropolitan areas, regions, etc). As exemplified by the Brownfields redevelopment versus Greenfields development debate, the course of development in urban areas has enormous impacts for the past, present, and future ecological integrity of rural areas.

The Subcommittee believes that an affirmative commitment to urban revitalization will lead to a necessary evaluation of traditional social policy and value systems. At this point, the nation lacks the tools to measure the true costs--economic, environmental, cultural, social, and spiritual--of the untenable and unsustainable treatment of goods, communities, and population as expendable and disposable commodities. The Subcommittee attests to a critical need for the nation to embrace the concepts of reuse, recycling, renewal, revitalization, and rebirth. The ecological crisis exemplified by the state of the urban environment offers such an opportunity.

### ***III. Reframing the Urban/Rural Dichotomy***

One context for understanding the Brownfields issue is the issue of urbanization. Urbanization refers to the formation, growth, and transformation of human communities as centers of industrial, commercial, social, and cultural activity. From an ecological perspective, this affects both urban and rural areas in an interdependent manner. A multiplicity of development issues such as residential patterns, displacement through gentrification, transportation policy, the flow of capital, and others profoundly affect patterns of growth. Environmental justice empowers the

the Northern "rust-belt" cities but also to the phenomenon that is taking place along the U.S.-Mexico border in the form of a mindless urban sprawl called "colonias."

The Subcommittee argues that only through an affirmative declaration of the importance of the urban environment can the Nation begin to bridge the dichotomy between urban and rural areas. We need to develop models which unify rather than pit urban versus non-urban concerns. The urban sprawl issue forces us to envision new ecological relationships which are metropolitan, regional, national, and global. By its very nature, the Brownfields issue forces us to look at an entire community as we try to balance environmental concerns and economic possibilities. In many cases, it becomes an ideal vehicle for envisioning the future in new ways.

In addition, even though this report focuses primarily on urban revitalization/Brownfields issues, the NEJAC Subcommittee is mindful that Brownfields issues exist in rural areas. Brownfields issues are also matters of great concern on Native American lands and in the U.S. territories, most of which is rural in nature. Nonetheless, development patterns have reached the point where urbanization has direct economic, environmental, social, and ecological consequences for rural lands. All references to Indigenous peoples, Native Americans, and Tribes includes American Indians and Alaskan Natives.

#### **IV. Confronting the Issue of Race and Class**

Embedded into America's industrial legacy are a host of issues related to race and class. The nation cannot ignore the very obvious and central place that issues of race occupy in the daily lives of all its citizens. There exists a "great racial divide" in American society. This divide is manifest through our treatment of issues related to urban America.

Not more than six months after the historic First National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit held in 1991, the largest urban disturbance in American history took place in South Central Los Angeles. Events in Los Angeles raised the question of how long the "quiet riots"<sup>10</sup> (a phrase drawn from the title of a 20-year retrospective to the 1968 Kerner Commission Report) in America's central cities will continue to remain unheard. Issues at the heart of these "quiet riots" are inextricably linked to environmental justice and Brownfields, such as residential segregation, economic disinvestment, environmental pollution, inaccessibility to health care, educational disadvantage, lack of employment opportunity, and the inextricable link between living in degraded physical environments, alienation, and the indignities visited upon these people. This divide is manifest through our treatment of issues related to urban America. It continues to remain unheard.

There must be opportunities for full articulation of the importance of public participation in Brownfields issue. While public participation is cross-cutting in nature, its meaning is shaped within the context of concrete issues. It is not merely a set of mechanical prescriptions but a process of bottom-up engagement that is "living." With regards to Brownfields and the future of urban America, Public Dialogue participants were emphatic that **"without meaningful community involvement, urban revitalization simply becomes urban redevelopment."**

John Kretzmann and John L. McKnight summarized the key steps in applying community planning models in their book, *Building Communities from the Inside Out: A Path Toward Finding and Mobilizing A Community's Assets*:

- ▶ Mapping completely the capacities and assets of individuals, citizens' associations, and local institutions
- ▶ Building relationships among local assets for mutually beneficial problem-solving within the community
- ▶ Mobilizing the community's assets fully for economic development and information sharing purposes
- ▶ Convening as broadly representative a group as possible for the purposes of building a community vision and plan
- ▶ Leveraging activities, investments and resources from outside the community to support asset-based, locally-defined development.

## VI. Community Mapping and Community-Based Environmental Protection

Mapping offers us an entirely new way of looking at and thinking about the world. A principal tenet of community-based planning is the thesis that a community which has a strong sense of itself is capable of being more self-defined, self-directed, and self-controlled, and thus more capable of shaping its own future.<sup>12</sup>

There appears to be an ever-expanding number of community groups who are expressing an interest in mapping one's own community. These include organizations concerned about environmental justice, environmental and public health, community planning and development, and other issues related to achieving healthy and sustainable communities. This "spontaneous" development is a matter of no small consequence. Recent projects to incorporate community mapping as an important element include the Asian Pacific Environmental Network (Laotian girls mapping their Richmond, California neighborhood); Tucsonians for a Clean Environment (development in south Tucson, Arizona); worker training projects such as Southwest Network for Environmental and Economic Justice, Asian Pacific Environmental Network, University of California/Berkeley, and the University of Massachusetts/Lowell;

### LAND VIEW II A Community Mapping Tool

LAND VIEW II--an electronic atlas with the ability to do thematic mapping--is a unique electronic tool which can be the hub of a virtual revolution in community mapping. As described by EPA, LAND VIEW II is an innovative community right-to-know software tool. In the form of an electronic atlas, published on CD-ROM discs, LAND VIEW can be used on standard personal computers. While LAND VIEW lends itself to a myriad of applications, its greatest significance lies in its useability and adaptability by communities.

LAND VIEW II is the product of a collaboration among EPA, the Bureau of the Census, and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). As the product of a multi-agency cooperative effort that was developed with substantial community input, LAND VIEW II bespeaks of what government should be doing in terms of providing tools that can empower the public.

The Subcommittee incorporated demonstrations of LAND VIEW II as a major part of the Public Dialogues. The universally positive reception by the communities underscored the Subcommittee's belief that mapping can be a highly empowering scoping, documenting, and planning tool. Such tools give a community the ability to visualize and "know" itself.



vehicles for coalescing a strategy for linking environmental justice to addressing one of the most intractable problems of our times--the state of the urban environment.

There is no greater challenge than recasting a vision of how government should work. This must start with the original and most enduring proponents of government reinvention, sucmmmost



Environmental justice represents a new vision borne out of a community-driven process whose essential







## I. **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AND COMMUNITY VISION**

### 1. ***Informed and Empowered Community Involvement***

Early, ongoing, and meaningful public participation is a hallmark of sound public policy and decision making. This requires that those most directly impacted are capable of exercising effectively their prerogatives and obligations to provide public input. Hence, the Subcommittee believes that public participation is meaningless if it is not informed and empowered community involvement.

Issues typically worthy of government attention such as Brownfields are highly complex and pose real challenges to policy makers as to how to develop and master the tools, methodologies, frameworks, processes, and protocols necessary for effective and meaningful public participation. Such issues typically involve multiple communities, different cultures and languages, diverse stakeholders, time frames, multiple locations, a broad range of agencies and institutions, and other factors. More often than not, the issues involve conflicting interests, agendas, and value systems. Typically these issues involve four elements: (1) facts are uncertain, (2) values are in dispute, (3) stakes are high, and (4) a decision is g intrs, time fra3 the

Meaningful participation is different in many ways from holding public meetings or getting letters of support. Participants noted that:

Ongoing stakeholder involvement is the only way to ensure that the affected community can influence technical and economic decisions.

The community brings a wealth of site-specific knowledge to the table. Ongoing mechanisms such as advisory boards allow participants to get beyond posturing and to work together cooperatively.

Upfront community involvement reduces the likelihood that political or legal action will block projects down the road.

It is not enough to provide access to information or opportunities to provide comment. Decision-makers must make an effort to truly consider the advice offered by the community. It is important that these decision-makers not only provide opportunities for affected communities to provide advice, but demonstrate that they are "hearing" the advice offered. Admittedly, decisions that may be selected may not agree with the recommendations offered; however, the best way to build credibility with the affected community is to show that it is seriously considering its advice.

With respect to public participation and the EPA Brownfields Initiative, there is typically much confusion around the fact that EPA's grants must go to a state, local, or tribal government. Community groups with an interest in a local Brownfields site thus may waste much time and energy because they are unaware that they need to develop strategies and build partnerships to ensure public accountability on the part of local officials and enhance the local Brownfields proposals. Most important, many community residents have both the desire to assist the city and much knowledge to offer, but lack resources and information to participate fully.

#### **SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS:**

##### **1-1. Support sustained and structured public dialogue on Brownfields and environmental justice on all levels.**

The Subcommittee appreciates EPA's realization of the need for and its commitment to a systematic and sustained national dialogue on Brownfields and environmental justice. Such a commitment requires some structured mechanisms (such as community advisory boards) for communities to engage EPA, government and other stakeholders, around their concerns. In this case, NEJAC developed its Public Participation Model upon which the Public Dialogues were modeled. Other mechanisms--on national, regional, and local levels--must be created and supported. In addition to traditional areas of public participation (such as planning and the oversight of cleanup) the public should play a role in the review of research projects, and the development of grant proposals.

##### **1-2. Develop efforts to empower stakeholders through information and education. Conduct the Brownfields program in ways which offer a real sense of hope.**

Public Dialogue participants indicated that many residents of impacted communities do not participate due to despair, apathy, lack of time and resources, or because they have just given up. In addition to specific recommendations to ensure better access, ranging from holding meetings at convenient times and accessible places to use of non-traditional outreach methods, the Subcommittee also emphasizes the need for government to foster encouragement and a sense of hope that is based upon results. In addition to participation in the decision-making process, residents must also participate in any social, environmental, and economic benefits that results from decisions. The education process also must include ways to provide communities with enough tools and information so they understand they can influence the political process beyond existing mechanisms.

**1-3. Undertake special outreach efforts to overlooked groups.**

Even programs that are targeted to communities of color still overlook key sectors of impacted communities. Examples cited during the Public Dialogues include Laotian Americans in Richmond, California; Arab-Americans in Detroit, Michigan; and Native Americans in various urban areas. At the same time, each of these groups has unique historical and cultural circumstances which must be considered.

**1. ACTION ITEMS**

- 1a. Institute policies and performance measures which encourage program personnel and policy makers to spend substantive time in neighborhoods as a regular part of their work so that there is understanding of real problems, concerns, and aspirations of community residents.
- 1b. Define "community" at each site in a way that is inclusive but gives priority to people who live or work closest to a site and/or are most directly impacted by activities at the site.
- 1c. Implement mechanisms and structures through which the community can take part in



vitality, then addressing Brownfields, environmental contamination and liability alone will not be a significant benefit for people in the communities."

**SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS:**

**2-1. Base Brownfields pilots and other efforts upon coherent community visions which emerge from processes that have integrity within a community by ensuring opportunities for communities to articulate their own visions for "redefining, rebuilding, and respiring" their communities.**

Such visions must be comprehensive and address community revitalization, education, environmental cleanup and redevelopment, job creation and training, economic impacts, housing, and development of institutional infrastructures. Several participants at the Public Dialogues pointed to local efforts to build common visions that allow people from various backgrounds to come together and form a common vision that incorporates the needs of different sectors of the population.

**2-2. Acknowledge community-based planning as a critical methodology for environmental protection and promote its use both inside and outside the Agency.**

Several participants spoke about the need to develop tools that can be placed in the hands of community members which can help them to address issues related to environmental justice, community-based planning, and urban revitalization. They noted the importance of using such tools when forming a collective community vision. Participants pointed to numerous examples of community-based planning tools, including:

- ▶ South Bronx/ NYC Ordinance 197A Planning Process (Vernice Miller-Northeast Environmental Justice Network)
- ▶ Southwest Detroit Environmental Vision Project (Ed Miller-Charles Stewart Mott Foundation)
- ▶ San Diego Toxic Free Neighborhoods Community Planning
- ▶ Guide (Diane Takvorian-Environmental Health Coalition)
- ▶ Pocket of Poverty Neighborhood Alliance Strategic Plan (Teresa Cordova-University of New Mexico at Albuquerque).

**2-3. Support community-based efforts to link Brownfields projects to other redevelopment and community enhancement strategies such as "Empowerment Zones/Enterprise Communities, workforce development and job training, transportation infrastructure development, federal facility cleanup, and others.**

Virtually every federal agency has at least one program that addresses urban revitalization. However, these programs are not coordinated and appear, to impacted communities, to be at cross-purposes. This link should be done both at the federal policy level and in the field.

**2-4. Encourage revitalization strategies and redevelopment efforts which serve to support, enhance and protect a community's culture and history.**

Such efforts should take into account both local and regional history. They should seek opportunities to build upon cultural resources and efforts at historical preservation as vehicles for economic development and enhancement of community-based assets.



### **3. *Role and Participation of Youth***

Young people provided great energy, creativity, and a sense of fresh vision to the Public Dialogues. During the meetings, they insisted on participating in all dialogues and decision-making processes. They made some of the most compelling presentations. For example, the Public Dialogues yielded perhaps no more thought provoking testimony than the account of a 5-year old African American boy's unsolicited remark in which he associated being black with living in burnt-out, empty, trash-filled neighborhoods.

Environmental justice seeks to address the functional link between living in degraded physical environments, mass alienation, and destructive violence. Offering a coherent way to impact this relationship will significantly benefit greatly those seeking to address violence, substance abuse, and related issues.

Many issues associated -0.0tu96ssues.





**3-4. Provide support for youth-led projects.**

One proposed method to involve youth is through the YouthBuild program. Because YouthBuild is a national organization with sites in most major cities, it provides an opportunity to solicit ideas from, and the involvement of a core group of youth nationwide. Another noteworthy example is *Commencement 2000*, an environmental education urban forestry project in Oakland, California initiated by the U.S. Forest Service.

**3-5. Establish mechanisms which enhance multi-generational partnerships, particularly supporting the establishment and maintenance of youth mentoring networks--both formal and informal.**

**3. ACTION ITEMS**

- 3a. Designate "youth" as a formal stakeholder category for federal advisory committees and other multi-stakeholder public participation processes.
- 3b. Support efforts to develop youth mapping and planning projects, such as Kids City in Cleveland Ohio.
- 3c. Conduct a conference on youth concerns and needs around urban revitalization/Brownfields.
- 3d. Work with the U.S. Department of Education to develop educational programs around urban revitalization and Brownfields which can be used in public schools.
- 3e. Review current environmental education programs to ensure that they address environmental justice, urban revitalization, and job training, and career development concerns.

## II. **KEY ISSUE AREAS**

### 4. **Equal Protection**

The Brownfields problem--the profusion of abandoned and/or contaminated properties in people of color, low income, indigenous peoples, and marginalized communities--cannot be separated from unequal protection in housing, land use, transportation, educational and economic opportunity, and other issues related to urban deterioration.

The Brownfields issue focuses attention on yet another important set of equal protection issues, i.e., urban sprawl. Historical land use patterns placed people of color and the poor in undesirable residential areas near industrial activity. These areas suffer a double burden as current transportation policies promote disinvestment and place substantial indirect burdens on such communities and local economies. Many federal investments, particularly in areas of transportation, have helped to widen divisions in society by increasing the physical gaps that separate poor and from socioeconomic opportunities in the increasingly distant periphery, and by economically isolating central business districts.

In certain urban areas, urban sprawl is infringing upon nearby Tribal lands and, as such, is creating

**4. ACTION ITEMS**

4a. Intensify efforts for ensur f 72n

## 5. **Public Health, Environmental Standards, and Liability**

Public health and environmental protection are matters of primary concern to communities; they were a recurring theme of testimony presented at the Public Dialogues. Public Dialogue participants pointed out that thousands of abandoned and contaminated sites are located in densely populated urban areas close to where children, teenagers, and homeless people play and congregate. These also are areas for large-scale commercial and illegal dumping of contaminated materials. Any economic redevelopment strategy must be cognizant of pressing public health issues in communities; it must not sacrifice environmental safety for the sake of economic growth or prosperity.

Many Public Dialogue participants expressed uneasiness about the environmental and public health ramifications of present approaches to Brownfields redevelopment. The Subcommittee believes that there are enormous social costs attached to our inability to return appropriate properties to beneficial reuse. In addition to the loss of economic vitality in terms of employment, commerce, and taxes, abandoned properties become a magnet for criminal and drug activity, a source of community demoralization, and a contributor to a downward spiral of community decay.

The Subcommittee has ascertained that while the prospect of quickly returning abandoned properties to beneficial reuse may be highly attractive, communities are extremely apprehensive that attempts to streamline or speed up the cleanup process may be at the expense of environmental protection and public health. These are extremely complex issues where decisions which may determine the fate of communities for generations to come. The Subcommittee believes that any

*"One of the first times I heard the notion of Brownfields was from the environmental attorney for one of the nation's largest corporations. She told me that she liked the idea of Brownfields because that meant that they could build factories in communities that were already contaminated rather than going out and threate*

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"rush to judgement" or the adoption of a "one size fits all" solution to Brownfields assessment, cleanup, and redevelopment, would be imprudent. More important, the Subcommittee has ascertained that there is as yet an insufficient level of discussion about these complex issues in directly impacted communities. Ultimately, these communities must be part of the process of shaping these policies and practical solutions. Thus, the Subcommittee is not prepared to endorse particular solutions until directly impacted communities have had a chance to provide visible and meaningful input to this discussion.

The Subcommittee's viewpoints on Public Health, Environmental Standards, and Liability issues can be summarized in the following way:

**Public Health:** In most urban/Brownfields areas, there exists a set of characteristics which contribute to overall poor health. For this reason, a new set of priorities is needed. For good reasons, methodologies and technologies for characterizing environmental hazards heretofore have been built around the "worst first model." High priority has been given by responsible parties, regulators, and communities to identify and define the contamination that posed the greatest threat to public health or the environment, given existing exposures and potential pathways.

For Brownfields, that priority is turned on its head. To maximize the reuse of large areas where there exists a multiplicity of smaller sources of contamination with greatly variable degrees of severity, the cleanup process needs to determine early on which areas are safe. Only then is it healthy and economically viable to transfer or reuse a particular property or proceed towards an overall revitalization strategy for the area. In order to ensure public health and a sound environment as part of both short term and long term integrated redevelopment plans, the goal must be to ascertain not only what sites are unsafe but what areas are safe.

The primary and most cost-effective public health strategy is prevention. In the less than perfect world of congested, post-industrial urban/Brownfields communities, the Subcommittee believes that there

### **Brownfields Initiatives and Community Planning**

Brownfields initiatives and community planning should include:

▶



Community representatives generally have taken no position on these tools for addressing liability obstacles. However, they express much skepticism. They want to be sure that a responsible party is held accountable in tangible and meaningful ways. In addition, the existence of a deterrent to irresponsible and inappropriate practices is viewed as a necessity. The liability issue cannot be considered in isolation. Public Dialogue witnesses gave examples of illegal dumping and other improper and/or illegal activities in their neighborhoods. Hence, the liability issue must be considered in relationship to the existence or lack of tangible and meaningful enforcement and compliance activity, as well as mechanisms to ensure that health and related needs are met.

The participants at the Public Dialogues point out that environmental liability is not the only impediment to reinvestment in urban/Brownfields communities. In fact, environmental liability may not rank as the most serious impediment for communities experiencing a long history of disinvestment. These other impediments include redlining and other discriminatory practices of lending and insurance institutions. They also include decisions to relocate industrial facilities to other parts of the country and the world.

Community involvement must be an overarching principle guiding Brownfields Initiatives. The community is uniquely qualified to make choices over environmental health and clean up. Community



**SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS:**

**5-1. *Involve the impacted community in clarifying the environmental risk issues associated with urban revitalization and Brownfields, in developing a framework for understanding and addressing the public health baseline in urban areas as part of any revitalization strategy; support right-to-know, enforcement and compliance activity in impacted communities.***

Presently, there exists a huge gap in understanding the actual environmental health challenges posed by Brownfields-type communities. For example, communities oversaturated with environmental hazards pose environmental risks to residents which is multiple, cumulative and synergistic in nature. This calls into question environmental protection models which presently proceed from a substance-specific, site-specific, and media-specific framework. In addition, EPA must provide opportunities for communities to be involved in inspections, negotiations, and public review.

**5-2. *Support community desires to foster ecological restoration and incorporate sustainable development through "green" businesses, pollution prevention, and other environmentally sound economic development.***

**5-3. *Support the development of, and participate in, a leadership training institute or program for minorities and the poor.***

This institute would not be a course in ecology or environmental epidemiology, but would be a course in leadership skills development for participating in important organizations, such as local planning and zoning boards, environmental community action groups, and environmental health agencies.

**5-4. *Conduct training of staff personnel about public health and use as a starting point, the World Health Organization definitions of health as a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being, not merely the absence of disease or infirmity, and of a healthy community as one which includes a clean, safe, high-quality environment and a sustainable ecosystem; the provision of basic needs; an optimum level of appropriate high quality, accessible health and sick-care services; and a diverse, vital economy.***

## 5. ACTION ITEMS

- 5a. Establish mechanisms which ensure a primary role for impacted communities in the decision-making process regarding public health and environmental protection issues.
- 5b. Support several Brownfields initiatives where the key component is assessment of health and ecological risks on a community-wide basis.
- 5c. Support and develop strategies to address liability and insurance barriers to Brownfields redevelopment. If this requires statutory change, that change should be sought.
- 5d. Focus attention and resources on special issues such as lack of institutional infrastructure along the US-Mexico border and on Native American reservations.
- 5e. Support efforts to identify and clarify all issues related to reinvestment in urban/Brownfields areas, particularly the relationship between redlining, community reinvestment, and environmental liability reform.
- 5f. Take concrete measures to address health and safety in workplaces associated with Brownfields projects.
- 5g. Enlist appropriate federal agencies in developing a plan to ensure that public health be integrated into all urban revitalization/Brownfields initiatives as an overarching principle.
- 5h. Conduct a series of dialogues on integration of public health and planning for purposes of achieving true urban revitalization with healthy and sustainable Brownfields redevelopment.
- 5i. Enlist community-based organizations and national health groups such as the National Association of City and County Health Officials, American Public Health Association, American Lung Association, National Medical Association, Healthy Cities, Association of State and Territorial Health Officials, and others in ensuring that strong public health approaches towards urban revitalization/Brownfields.

## 6. Job Creation, Training, and Career Development

Brownfields redevelopment must be coordinated with broader strategies of job creation, training, and career development which produce demonstrable benefits for the host community. The startup and nurturing of locally-based businesses as a function of true economic development is a critical requirement.

Many participants stated that in order for urban areas to survive, new ways of creating and sustaining employment must be devised. They noted that if poor education, lack of training, and other issues which have led to the deindustrialization of urban areas

continue to prevail, any effort at urban revitalization will not result in significant benefits to urban communities. These witnesses strongly urged coordination between workforce development and training programs with sustainable job opportunities. To integrate job training and employment development, urban revitalization/Brownfields initiatives should involve integrated project planning, in which the workforce needs of the various projects in an area are known soon enough to recruit and train needed workers from the local population.

Two issues were particularly prominent: (1) efforts must be made to ensure workplace health and safety for those jobs developed within the community, particularly those associated with environmental cleanup activities; and (2) jobs must produce livable wages which fit into a career development ladder that is based upon realistic assessment of present and emerging job markets.

The importance to the community of building community-based businesses and providing entrepreneurial startup help and ongoing business training to individuals and companies, with emphasis on people of color and female-owned companies within the community, was a very significant concern at the Public Dialogues.

The need to coordinate resources available for job training and business development from among the many Federal agencies with interests and funding sources was cited as a serious concern. At the present time there appears to be no "one-stop shopping" for worker training assistance, nor business development assistance. This is particularly true of the programs available from DOL, HUD, DOT, DOE, and DoD. There are many cross currents at work with the eligibility requirements that make much of the training assistance illusory to the very people within the community who need it most. The definitional problems of fitting into present "displaced" worker and similar job training programs need to be dealt with if this type of assistance is to be made meaningful to the Brownfields impacted communities.

Coordination and cooperation among government (federal, state, tribal, and local), business/industry, community-based organizations labor unions, faith groups, and the community-at-large is mandatory in order to leverage resources, avoid duplication and develop mechanisms which link workforce development and cleanup to economic redevelopment. Concentration by these parties must be on a **win/win** basis. Everyone benefits if they are unified and taking actions towards a common goal, i.e., a vibrant, safe, healthy, and sustainable community.

*"We started in our community a Water Conservation Program with six employees. Now we have 28 employees, all [working at] \$8.00 an hour and with medical insurance... We give the low-flush toilet to the community. We receive \$25 for each toilet. That's the way we make [our] money. We now have this project for four years. When it started, we planned to have the program for only six months; then it continued for another six months, and another six months... We have help from the Water Department. We don't need to go through other people [to] train the kids. We have people in the organization to train these people. I think all communities can do something like this. Start low and then go up."*

Juana Gutierrez  
Mothers of East Los Angeles  
Oakland, CA, Public Dialogue

**SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS:**

**6-1. Make use of the momentum generated by the Brownfields issue and provide leadership in building partnerships and coalitions which result in locally-based job creation, entrepreneurial development, and sustainable careers.**

This effort must involve all federal agencies, state, local, and tribal governments, local community development organizations, churches, labor unions, philanthropies, universities, and the business community. Specific efforts here could include encouraging new industry to hire locally and encouraging the inclusion of business and industry that is capable of long-term success and growth.

**6-2. Support efforts to ensure worker health and safety.**

Any increase in economic redevelopment activity must have a commensurate increase in support to protect worker health and safety for efforts to ensure worker health and safety, which means including support for pre-training, training and apprenticeship programs focusing on workplace safety and health. Many of these programs are now supported at local community colleges and union/management training and apprentice programs.

**6-3. Partner with other federal agencies to link clean up of federal facilities and base-conversion activities with the needs of urban revitalization and Brownfields.**

In many places, DOD and DOE facility cleanup and conversion constitute a major, if not the major, source of economic redevelopment funding potential.

**6-4. Encourage EPA and other Federal, State, local, and tribal governments to maximize the use of recycled and reused materials; local businesses should be encouraged to set similar procurement policies.**



## 7. Land Use

Past land use decisions, many of which are socially inequitable and racially discriminatory, are a major contributor to the inequitable distribution of the burdens and benefits of modern industrial society.

Public Dialogue participants cited numerous accounts of the placement of polluting industries that produce toxic chemicals in area where people live, work, play, and go to school.

Participants insisted that Brownfields initiatives must examine the relationship between past, current, and future land use. In particular, they were clear that decisions about future land use must be rooted in community-led processes. They contrasted the community-driven approach with corporate liability-driven proposals which, under the guise of a future industrial land use designation, clean up sites to levels inadequate to protect public health. Such decisions, without the participation or leadership of community residents who have already suffered from the prior pollution of their neighborhood, merely turns these communities into sacrifice areas. The recommendations on enhanced community participation cited in earlier sections of this report must also be applied to land use policies and decision-making.

Most citizens working on urban revitalization issues from a community-based perspective take it as a given that decisions about land use, and increased community participation in land use decisions, are an integral part of urban revitalization and appropriate Brownfields redevelopment. Few would deny that zoning practices and lending practices, such as redlining, have a strong historical role in racial discrimination and have led to lower land values in many economically distressed areas. It is only logical that reversing these past abuses must be a critical part of revitalizing these areas. Further, any multi-stakeholder attempts to improve the conditions of distressed and under-utilized areas (particularly involving state and federal policies) must not be countered by future local land use policies that are not coordinated with the overarching urban revitalization strategy. As noted earlier, Brownfields redevelopment must be linked to help address the broader set of community goals and needs, including residential retention and other efforts to ensure the long-term survivability of current communities.

Participants also expressed concerned that Brownfields proposals may become a means for justifying levels of clean-up based upon planned future land use that are not fully protective of public health. They were clear that the voices of residents in a polluted area should be the primary determinant of

*"One baseline issue is community control over land use. The whole process of land use, and control over zoning and development, is really at the core of how many of our communities got to the place that they are in now. Perhaps it is a way by which they can work their way out of the situation... Many of our communities--it's across the board in most low income communities of color--are often zoned for mixed-use. So we have industrial, commercial and residential development in the places where we live.*

*AWe have a situation in New York where two incredibly different communities exist in one local zoning area, i.e., West Harlem, where I live, and Morningside Heights, where Columbia University is located. West Harlem is zoned mixed-use. We have sewage treatment plants, bus depots, chemical waste storage centers, transportation routes (including one for hazardous wastes). All of that criss-crosses each other every day right through our community, and we're surrounded by highways on three sides. But in the Morningside Heights community, which is the southern neighbor of our community, you cannot so much as zone a newsstand without going through incredible land use regulations to get any kind of land use that is not residentially zoned.*

acceptable levels of clean-up. Those who claim that the community will always require the maximum level of clean-up, ignore the fact that, far better than anyone else, the community recognizes the dangers of losing any cleanup by demanding a full cleanup. Urban revitalization may demand compromises, but these compromises must be supported by those who bear the burdens of incomplete cleanup. Those who bear the burdens of incomplete clean-up must also receive direct benefits from revitalization as opposed to only the indirect benefits of an improved tax base and jobs often filled by non-residents who leave only their car exhaust when commuting to the newly created jobs.

take the form of government built infrastructure such as roads, water and sewerage. It can come in the form of direct subsidies through tax abatements.

Finding common interests between urban, suburban, and exurban residents will be a key to addressing these issues. Rural interest in retaining their small town character, suburban interest in holding back the congestion that drove them away from the urban center, and the inner city's desire for redevelopment can form the basis of a common interest. Though the issues of urban economic plight, suburban congestion, and the loss of farm and wilderness lands are different problems, they each share a common solution as an alternative to Greenfields development. Forums which explore the common concerns and common solutions to these problems will build a broader constituency for Brownfields initiatives.

### **SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS:**

#### **7-1. Examine land use patterns of an entire metropolitan area or region surrounding Brownfields sites.**

Brownfields do not exist in a vacuum. Activities formerly in these areas often have not simply ceased to exist, but moved to other areas. New development must choose between locating in Brownfields communities and Greenfields areas. If the perception exists that Greenfields are the place to invest due to various amenities there and the disamenities in urban areas, it will be difficult to attract development regardless of what is done to enhance a Brownfields area. If government is in fact subsidizing Greenfields development, it may become impossible to attract outside capital.

#### **7-2. Identify natural advantages of Brownfields areas.**

Industry originally was built in urban centers and Brownfields areas because of natural advantages such as access to water, transportation, or natural features. Additional infrastructure such as sewerage, universities, and transportation links were built around these industrial centers and often remain. In addition, these areas often are less susceptible to natural disasters. These natural advantages must be identified, chronicled and disseminated to improve perceptions of these areas.

If the real costs of new roads, new sewage systems, increased automobile traffic, and other financial burdens of Greenfields development were incorporated into developer costs or not subsidized by the government, Brownfields areas would be more competitive. The playing field between Brownfields sites and Greenfields sites actually may be level when natural advantages of the urban core are taken into account. The playing field may actually be fair if Greenfields development is not subsidized.

#### **7-3. Encourage and support the involvement of non-traditional stakeholders (such as community-based organizations) in government processes, such as zoning issues.**

Government officials should be accountable for not only providing "opportunities" for public input but, in making a good faith effort to succeed in securing public input, it is not enough to simply hold a meeting or provide opportunities for access. Government officials must make an effort to achieve meaningful public participation through long-term consistent interaction with community-based organizations and institutions. Equally important is the need for government officials to be transparent and accessible to the public, such as through public hearings and open houses.





### III. PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECTOR PARTNERSHIPS

#### 8. Community/Private Sector Partnerships

At the root of the problems confronting urban/Brownfields communities are massive economic shifts that have marked the past two decades.

Hundreds of thousands of industrial jobs have either disappeared or moved away from the central city and its neighborhoods. While some downtown areas have experienced revival, the jobs created are very different than those which once sustained neighborhoods. For many people in older city neighborhoods, new approaches to rebuilding their lives and communities, new openings to opportunities, are a vital necessity.

In looking at barriers to reinvestment and revitalization, the Brownfields Initiative must look at non-environmental barriers such as high taxes, depressed property values, crime, congestion, redlining, level of community services, and racial discrimination in lending and insurance practices. Among these is environmental contamination--both past and present.

The Public Dialogues sought to engage all institutions about their roles in ensuring healthy and sustainable communities. The Subcommittee took the position that all social institutions--including faith groups, labor unions, universities, philanthropies, business, and others--have a responsibility to participate in a meaningful way in achieving urban revitalization and building healthy and sustainable communities. Their participation should be consistent with community

*"Our vision is of an urban village working cooperatively to improve the quality of life and conditions of our neighborhoods with an emphasis on sustainable development that is economically and ecologically sound. We seek to empower and inspire members of our neighborhoods, especially our children and youth, to develop effective responses to the needs of our communities and to promote cooperation, collaboration, and partnership with social service agencies, governments, and the private sector to create liveable communities. We seek to positively impact the social, economic, and spiritual development of our neighborhood and cities. A priority of our Zone is providing safe, decent, and affordable housing. Our vision can become a reality when our community becomes a cooperative village, an extended family that is self-reliant, self-sufficient, and self determined...I think that's one of the most beautiful vision [statements] I have had the opportunity to hear and take part in developing. It is the vision of the Atlanta Empowerment Zone Community."*

Sulaiman Madhi  
Atlanta Summit Against Poverty  
Atlanta, GA, Public Dialogue

*"I heard a lot of discussion about involvement and partnership. That's certainly the direction we have to take. But I would suggest taking it one step farther. The community actually has to take charge. It seems to me that if you look at the environmental justice movement, it started with an awakening--a realization that there was a lot of pollution that was victimizing the people living there. The second stage was kind of a reaction stage where people said 'don't put it here; if you want to put a new incinerator up, don't put it here--we have had enough pollution.' Based on what I heard this morning, I suggest that it's time now for communities to actually take charge to create a vision of what they want for their communities, to work with their local government, to make it competitive for somebody to invest that kind of business in that location."*

Richard Morrison  
Bank of America  
Oakland, CA, Public Dialogue

*"My father came from the south, [where he worked] as a sharecropper."*

empowerment principles. This involves a commitment of real resources--human and financial--for accomplishing the task.

Many participants commented that the Brownfields Initiative must build partnerships not only between community and government agencies, but with other groups and institutions who can assist with urban revitalization. These partnerships are essential to solving problems which are difficult for one entity to address alone. The importance of forging partnerships with youth through schools and other communities was reiterated; young people within a community who possess leadership capabilities can be the solution to many problems. Partnerships must bring all stakeholders to the table as equal partners.

Much distrust of corporations and the business sector exists in communities, especially in places like South Central Los Angeles and Detroit where residents have witnessed a history of corporate disinvestment. However, members of the business community affirmed the importance of an empowered community and the need for forthright dialogue. This could go a long way toward bridging the current gap between community-based planning models and a commitment from developers, industry, and business to better understand and support use of such approaches. Matching worthy community-driven projects with adequate financial resources is a challenge of paramount importance.

Realistically, all parties to community-based planning need to recognize that finding willing developers and investors are key components to redeveloping Brownfields. In many cases, developers have a particular project or proposal in mind as their reason for acquiring property and initiating the redevelopment process. In these situations, the authors of this report urge that developers (and regulators involved in the process) involve communities early in the planning process. Early community

**8-4. Strengthen partnerships between communities and academic institutions as part of efforts to help communities achieve the skills necessary for self-advocacy, increase access to information, and provide a forum for the exchange and testing of innovative ideas.**

8-5.

## 9. Local, State, Tribal, and Territorial Governments

The role of local, state, tribal, and territorial Governments in urban revitalization/ Brownfields issues is an area of great importance. This is particularly true since the Brownfields issue ultimately revolves around voluntary cleanup. Local, state, tribal, and territorial governments each play unique roles and have specific needs. The Subcommittee urges that much attention be given to this area.

Local governments increasingly recognize the importance of addressing contaminated properties and Brownfields issues. Mature urbanized areas are now faced with a second or third generation of development. Properties must be reclaimed and reused if these cities are to remain prosperous. Municipalities are beset with the effects of economic disinvestment job loss, and tax base depletion as well as the negative impacts of urban sprawl and resultant vehicular traffic, congestion, air pollution, and energy waste.

There is no doubt that all municipalities critically need to find tangible solutions to the problems represented by urban decay and the presence of Brownfields sites. These are enormous challenges because:

- Municipalities often lack the technical expertise on the regulatory and legal details of the Brownfields problems and require assistance in building capacity.
- Municipalities often lack the means to capitalize upon and promote new opportunities for local job creation and business development, particularly in inner city neighborhoods, through training, technical, and financial assistance.
- Municipalities often lack the capacity to identify and develop new and innovative financing strategies.
- Municipalities often lack adequate mechanisms for ensuring full participation of the community and other stakeholders
- Municipalities are themselves often beset with difficult to resolve liability problems.

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9-5. **Work with local governments to promote community-based environmental protection.**

**9. ACTION ITEMS**

9a. Support pilot projects to local, state, tribal, and territorial governments that foster and integrate community involvement in Brownfields redevelopment and target sustainable jobs for the local community.

9b. Assist communities in applying for Brownfields assistance programs to achieve early coordination with state and local cleanup agencies who will oversee the actual cleanup at non-NPL sites.

9c. Work with local, state, tribal, and territorial governments to build capacity to address Brownfields issues, through enhanced technical assistance, staff exchanges through the Intergovernmental Personnel Act (IPA), training, and pilot projects.

9d. Specify a requirement in federal grants and other assistance to parties engaged in arranging site cleanups under the federal Brownfields assistance to comply with all applicable state and local statutes and regulations in conducting that cleanup.

9e. Provide training environmental justice issues are considered in federally-supported programs and grants, such as the Empowerment and Enterprise Zone programs, block grants, and restoration of federal facilities.

9f. Ensure that environmental justice issues are considered in federally-supported programs and grants, such as the Empowerment and Enterprise Zone programs, block grants, and restoration of federal facilities.

9g. Develop a Brownfields grants program specifically designed to meet the special needs of Native American Tribes and U.S. Territories.

## **10. *Federal Interagency Cooperation, Programmatic Integration, and Government Reinvention***

The original and most enduring proponents of government reinvention are community residents engaged in overcoming systemic impediments to locally-based solutions. A resounding theme of the Public Dialogues was the need for federal interagency cooperation and coordination. Different federal programs must be integrated in the context of problems defined by the community. By definition, genuine government reinvention cannot take place unless it is a community-driven process.

The heart and soul of an authentic government reinvention process is the many vibrant and coherent community-based visions of healthy and sustainable communities. The Public Dialogues illustrated this fact must be applied to issues of the role of different federal agencies. Communities begin with a holistic understanding of their history,



Executive Order 12898 on environmental justice presents a logical opportunity to begin that process. For this reason, the NEJAC adopted a resolution calling upon EPA to:

*request that the development of one unified, integrated, and cross-cutting strategy to address issues of urban revitalization and the development of healthy and sustainable communities be made a priority agenda item for the implementation of Executive Order 12898 and the Interagency Working Group on Environmental Justice.<sup>22</sup>"*

In addition, the Subcommittee sees great value in interfacing with the Federal Facility Environmental

10-6. ***Establish a Working Group that specifically consists of federal agencies that have Indian Programs and Indian mandates. This working group could be part of the Interagency Working Group on Environmental Justice.***

10-7. ***Recognize in all key issues and recommendations the requirements outlined in Presidential Executive Order No. 12897, issued May 24, 1996, which promotes accommodation of access to Native American sacred sites by Indian religious practitioners and provides additional protection for the physical integrity of such sites.***

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>10. ACTION ITEMS</b></p>
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<p>10a. Compile an inventory of all federal policy and program initiatives which are relevant to</p>
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## CONCLUSION

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*The future of its cities may well decide America's survival not merely as a society but as a civilization. As we look to the 21st century, what endeavor could possibly be more eminently worthy and necessary; more obviously logical and deserving of our national attention, expertise, and resources; or more meaningful and spiritually nourishing than that of revitalizing America's urban areas and ensuring healthy and sustainable communities--both urban and rural. A challenge so great as this cannot be met without compelling visions of what constitutes healthy and sustainable communities. We have found that such visions already exist in highly coherent and vibrant ways within many communities across the nation.*

and private sector resources, and the capacity to engage in meaningful public discourse. As many Public Dialogue participants reiterated, "These are indeed issues of civilizational dimensions."

In order to translate the momentum, enthusiasm, and hard work already committed to this issue into tangible and lasting benefits, EPA and other federal agencies must begin to think about a new framework which will address the issues raised through the Public Dialogues. The hallmark of that process must be informed and empowered community involvement. At the same time, the Subcommittee recommends that all agencies in the federal government consider the cross-cutting issues raised in the report and begin to shape coordinated and integrative strategies. We sincerely thank EPA for its support of the NEJAC Public Dialogues on Urban Revitalization and Brownfields. We hope that it has provided a context as well as a "road map" for moving in such a direction.

### ***Envisioning the Next Phase of Urban Revitalization***

As we look to the 21st century, what endeavor could possibly be more eminently worthy and necessary; more obviously logical and deserving of our national attention, expertise, and resources; or more meaningful and spiritually nourishing than that of revitalizing America's urban areas and ensuring healthy and sustainable communities, both urban and rural? A challenge so great as this cannot be met with compelling visions of what constitutes healthy and sustainable communities. We have found that such visions already exist in highly coherent and vibrant ways within many communities across the nation.

The questions outlined above form the guiding elements for envisioning the next phase of urban



## **ENDNOTES**

1. See *OSWER Environmental Justice Action Agenda, May 1995*, and *OSWER Environmental Justice Accomplishments Report*.
2. Having no context within which to understand it, the term "Brownfields" was sometimes interpreted to mean "fields where 'brown' people live." The intent of the term, as it evolved, was to articulate a visual impact of pollution versus "Greenfields," such as forests and pastures. Such cognitive dissonance illuminates some obvious cultural sensitivities surrounding issues of race, urban development, and gentrification.
3. Alston, Dana (Ed.).





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## **APPENDICES**

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Addresses for the members of the community are provided below:

Sha King Alston  
Program Manager  
Center for Family Work & Community  
1 University Avenue  
Lowell, MA 01854  
Phone: 508-934-4677  
Fax: 508-934-3026

Romel Pascal  
The Urban Habitat Program  
P.O. Box 29908  
Presidio Station  
San Francisco, CA 94129-9908  
Phone: 415-561-3336  
Fax: 415-561-3334

Grace Boggs  
Detroit Summer  
3061 Field St.  
Detroit, MI 48214  
Phone: 313-921-1236  
Fax: 313-769-1449

Maurice Sampson  
Philadelphia Self-Reliant  
129 West Gorgas Lane  
Philadelphia, PA 19119  
Phone: 215-686-9242  
Fax: 215-686-9034

DeLane Garner  
Environmental Justice Resource Center  
Clark Atlanta University  
223 James P. Brawley Drive, SW  
Atlanta, GA 30314  
Phone: 404-880-6920  
Fax: 404-880-6909

Lenny Siegel  
Pacific Studies Center  
222-B View Street  
Mountain View, CA 94041  
Phone: 415-968-8918  
Fax: 415-968-1126

Lillian Kawasaki  
Los Angeles Department of the Environment  
City Hall-Mail Stop 177  
200 North Spring Street  
Los Angeles, CA 90012  
Phone: 213-580-1046  
Fax: 213-580-1084

Sam Spofforth  
Clean Water Action  
1128 Walnut Street  
Philadelphia, PA 19107  
Phone: 215-629-4022  
Fax: 215-629-3973

Sulaiman Madhi  
African American Environmental Services  
Project  
233 Mitchell Street, Suite 410  
Atlanta, GA 30303  
Phone: 404-524-0357  
Fax: 404-524-5851

Connie Tucker  
Southern Organizing committee for  
Economic & Social Justice  
P.O. Box 10518  
Atlanta, GA 30310  
Phone: 404-755-2855  
Fax: 404-755-0575

Martha Matsuoka  
The Urban Habitat Program  
P.O. Box 29908  
Presidio Station  
Presidio Station of San Francisco  
San Francisco, CA 94129-9908  
Phone: 415-561-3335  
Fax: 415-561-3334

Donele Wilkins  
WARM Training Program  
4835 Michigan Avenue  
Detroit, MI 48210  
Phone: 313-894-1030  
Fax: 313-894-1063

Guy Williams  
Environmental Defense Fund  
1616 P Street, NW  
Suite 150  
Washington, D.C. 20036

**MEMBERS OF THE  
NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE ADVISORY COUNCIL**

**1995-96 List (25 Members)**

**Designated Federal Official (DFO)**

Dr. Clarice Gaylord  
Director  
Office of Environmental Justice (3103)  
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency  
401 M Street, SW  
Washington, DC 20460  
(202) 260-6357

Dr. Robert Bullard  
Environmental Justice Resource Center  
Clark Atlanta University  
223 Brawley Drive, SW  
Atlanta, GA 30314

Dr. Mary R. English  
Associate Director  
Waste Management Research and Education  
Institute  
327 South Stadium Hall  
University of Tennessee  
Knoxville, TN 37996

Dr. Richard Lazarus  
Visiting Professor  
Georgetown University Law Center  
600 New Jersey Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20001

Dr. Beverly Wright  
Deep South Center for Environmental Justice  
Xavier University  
8131 Aberdeen Road  
New Orleans, LA 70126

Mr. John C. Borum  
Vice President, Environment and Safety  
Engineering  
AT&T  
131 Morristown Road  
Basking Ridge, NJ 07920

Mr. Charles McDermott  
Director of Governmental Affairs

**Chair**

Mr. Richard Moore  
Southwest Network for Environmental and  
Economic Justice  
211 10th Street, SW  
Albuquerque, NM 87102  
(505) 242-0416

Mr. John O'Leary, Esq.  
Pierce Atwood  
1 Monument Square  
Portland, ME 04101

Ms. Peggy Saika  
Asian Pacific Environment Network  
3126 California Street  
Oakland, CA 94602

Mr. Baldemar Velasquez  
Director  
Farm Labor Organizing Committee  
507 South St. Clair Street  
Toledo, OH 43602

Ms. Nathalie Walker  
Sierra Club Legal Defense Fund  
400 Magazine Street, Suite 401  
New Orleans, LA 70130

Mr. Haywood Turrentine  
Laborers-AGC Education and Training Fund  
P.O. Box 37  
37 Deerfield Road  
Pomfret Center, CT 06259

Ms. Deeehn Ferris  
Washington Office for Environmental  
Justice  
1511 K Street, NW, Suite 1026  
Washington, DC 20005

Honorable Salom\u00e3n Rond\u00e3n-Toll\u00f1ns  
President, Natural Resources and  
Environmental Quality Commission  
Capitolio San Juan, PR 00901

Ms. Velma Veloria  
House of Representatives  
Washington State Legislature  
403 John L. O'Brien Building  
P.O. Box 40622  
Olympia, WA 98504-0622  
OR 1511 South Ferdinand Street  
Seattle, WA 98108

Mr. Arthur Ray, Esq.  
Deputy Director  
Maryland Department of the Environment  
2500 Broening Highway  
Baltimore, MD 21224

Ms. Gail Small  
Executive Director  
Native Action  
Box 316  
Lame Deer, MT 59043

Ms. Jean Gamache, Esq.  
Tlignit and Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska  
125 Christensen Drive  
P.O. Box 104432  
Anchorage, AK 99510

Mr. Walter Bresette  
Lake Superior Chippewa  
Route 1, Box 117  
Bayfield, WI 54814

**MEMBERS OF THE  
WASTE AND FACILITY SITING SUBCOMMITTEE  
NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE ADVISORY COUNCIL**

**1995-96 List (15 Members)**

**Designated Federal Official (DFO)**

Mr. Kent Benjamin  
Office of Solid Waste and Emergency  
Response  
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency  
401 M Street, SW (MC 5101)  
Washington, DC 20460  
(202) 260-1692  
*e-mail:* benjamin.kent@epamail.epa.gov

**Chair**

Charles Lee  
Director of Research  
United Church of Christ Commission for Racial  
Justice  
475 Riverside Drive, 16th Floor  
New York, NY 10015  
(212) 870-2077  
*e-mail:* 103001.2273@compuserve.com

Ms. Sue Briggum  
WMX Technologies, Inc.  
1155 Connecticut Avenue, NW, Suite 800  
Washington, DC 20036

Mr. Tom Kennedy  
Association of State and Territorial Solid  
Waste Management Officials  
444 North Capitol Street, Suite 388  
Washington, DC 20001

Ms. Teresa Cordova, PhD  
University of New Mexico  
Community and Regional Planning Program  
School of Architecture and Planning  
2414 Central Avenue, SE  
Albuquerque, NM 87131

Mr. Scott Kayla Morrison  
President  
Choctaws for Democracy  
P. O. Box 11  
Talinia, OK 74571

Mr. Donald Elisburg  
Donald Elisburg Law Offices  
11713 Rosalinda Drive  
Potomac, MD 20854-3531

Mr. Jon Sesso  
Planning Director  
Silverbow Mt. Planning Committee  
155 West Granite Street  
New Yo 91-B Viico

Mr. Tom Goldtooth  
Red Band of Chippewa Indians  
P.O. Box 485  
Albuquerque, NM 87102

Mr. Michael Guerrero  
SW Organizing Project  
211 10th Street, SW  
Bemjidi, MN 56601

Mr. David Hahn-Baker  
Inside Out, Inc.  
440 Lincoln Parkway  
Buffalo, NY 14216

Ms. Lillian Kawasaki  
Los Angeles Department of the Environment  
City Hall-Mail Stop 177  
200 North Spring Street  
Los Angeles, CA 90012



**LIST OF EPA BROWNFIELDS PILOT SITES  
Through November 1996  
*Economic development and environmental  
protection must go hand-in-hand***

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3/96 Awarded a cooperative agreement to HMTRI to continue providing workshops, curriculum and technical assistance to community colleges located near brownfields communities.

7/96 HMTRI workshop to be held in St. Louis, MO. Twenty brownfields community colleges are scheduled to attend, along with representatives from the St. Louis Brownfields pilots, the St. Louis Private Industry Council, and organized labor.

NIEHS EPA is working with the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS) to ensure the minority worker training grants - established to facilitate the development of urban minority youth worker training programs - overlap with Brownfields pilot communities (e.g., Cleveland, New Orleans).

#### CUYAHOGA COMMUNITY COLLEGE

EPA continues to sponsor job training, education and outreach activities related to Brownfields at Cuyahoga Community College (TRI-C) in Cleveland, Ohio. In addition, TRI-C was awarded a NIEHS Minority Worker Training Program grant, through Laborers AGC, which should enhance job training activity in the Cleveland area.

#### SUPERFUND STEP-UP

The Superfund Step-Up Program is designed as a partnership between EPA, HUD, and DOL to collaborate in facilitating training and employment opportunities for community residents in the environmental cleanup field. The program is designed to encourage contractors, labor organizations, where applicable, and other sponsors to involve community residents in the benefits of environmental cleanup and related activities.

#### DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

EPA and DOL's Employment and Training Administration (ETA) are working together to link EPA local brownfields contacts with local Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) funded organizations, such as Private Industry Councils. The partnership between the two agencies focuses on creating mechanisms to promote local hiring at brownfields sites.

### **Community/Private Sector Partnerships**

#### *EPA Intergovernmental Personnel Assignments*

EPA has assigned eight staff members, through IPAs, to help develop State and local Brownfields programs. Currently, two staff members are assigned with the States of Illinois and Colorado, and one each to Dallas, TX; Detroit, MI; East Chicago, IN; East Palo Alto, CA; and Los Angeles, CA.

### **State, Local, Tribal, and Territorial Governments**

#### *Partnerships with Local Government Partners*

#### International City/County Management Association (ICMA)

ICMA is an international professional and education organization for appointed administrators and assistant administrators who serve cities, counties, district, and regions. ICMA recently or2A is an vatecicalcommunmmunityoopeds pilot commd related actit of urban m.

#### Northeast-Midwest Institute

The Northeast-Midwest Institute is a non-profit research and public education organization dedicated to the long-term economic vitality of the Northeastern and Midwestern States. They do research, develop public policies to address the economic barriers to Brownfields, write case studies, sponsor regional conferences and distribute publications. They wrote the first comprehensive analysis of the Brownfields issue in 1991 and are working with EPA on a cooperative agreement to develop case studies on current Brownfields pilots and previous