

**DOES THE COMMUNITY REALLY MATTER? CIVIC ENVIRONMENTALISM
IN BROWNFIELD REDEVELOPMENT**

by

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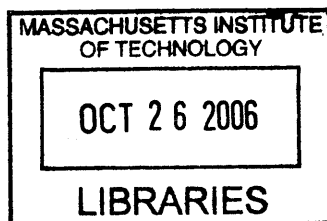
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ABSTRACT

This paper analyzes the process of civic environmentalism in brownfield redevelopment. A single “best case” scenario, the Empire Laundry project in Lynn, Massachusetts, illustrates key features of a citizen-led cleanup and redevelopment effort. The in-depth analysis traces key events and milestones of the community-based process and evaluates the important decisions that led to a successful result: the development of five single-family houses.

This research revealed two main factors that were important in creating a successful outcome: strong civic leaders and neighborhood stability. These two factors were pivotal in fostering community involvement, but raise important questions regarding the balancing of community desires with environmental protection.

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Introduction

The landscape of environmental protection has changed in the past decades. Increasingly, federal regulators in Washington, D.C. have begun to include provisions for community participation in their policies. These provisions are the result of a growing belief that citizen-led or citizen-informed decisions create better, more successful and efficient, outcomes for environmental problems. This bottom-up form of problem-solving is increasingly being accepted for numerous types of environmental protection. This paper evaluates and describes a single community's efforts to influence the environmental cleanup and reuse of a brownfield site in Lynn, Massachusetts. While many community leaders and government officials claim that a community-based approach to brownfield redevelopment creates a better outcome, currently there is limited evidence to support this claim. This specific case—which is a “best case” scenario for civic environmentalism in brownfield redevelopment—illustrates the power and influence that a community can exert over the process of environmental protection. The project's success, defined by the parties involved as the site's cleanup and redevelopment into single-family housing, exemplifies the push-and-pull between community power and civic leadership.

Civic Environmentalism

For decades citizens have used civic action as way of lobbying for changes in public policies. By calling attention to issues important to individual communities and attempting to democratize the representative government structure, civic action can bring about important changes that affect the everyday lives of citizens. Civic action has been used in the civil rights movement, as well as in smaller efforts to bring attention to

isolated location specific health problems. The power of civic action has been proven effective in response to numerous concerns, including environmental problems.¹ Civic action in the environmental arena is commonly referred to as civic environmentalism and represents a distinct process in which citizens take the initiative to solve environmental problems. This type of civic action stands in direct opposition to the less place-based focus of the environmental regulators in the federal government. In recent years this type of community-based environmental protection has garnered increasing attention.

During the 1980s and 1990s urban communities throughout the United States began to organize around environmental problems. Communities reacted to the growing realization that environmental problems do not only affect rural areas, but urban areas as well. In order to address these environmental concerns, individual citizens were the first to mobilize into action. Typically these individual citizens catalyzed the creation of a community. The community was usually defined by location and proximity to the environmental problem; for larger issues, such as water resource access, the affected population was much greater; therefore, the community expanded. Most of these communities were self-selecting and included local citizens, often loosely organized in neighborhood groups. However, some efforts included local businesses. These communities' efforts ranged from well-known cases, such as Love Canal in New York, to smaller-scale examples of neighborhood mobilization for wetland protection. Regardless of the scale, communities began to respond to the bureaucratic command-and-control

¹ Civic action was crucial during the Love Canal crisis in the 1970s.

approach of environmental protection that failed to take local, place-based concerns into account.²

Realizing they needed to take effective control of their communities' environmental problems, citizens began to demand a more significant role in decision-making. They refused to wait for government officials or industry leaders to respond to evidence that the local toxic waste dump, former industrial factory, or even abandoned gas station, might be causing continued environmental harm to the community. While the government or industry may not have been highly motivated to clean up due to expensive remediation and litigation costs, the communities had everything at stake: the health of their families.³

In order to be heard by those with control over the environmental situation, the communities used a variety of protest tactics to ensure their voices were heard: picketing, distributing leaflets, and marching.⁴ These actions are often sufficient to force a dialog between parties, but it is the subsequent inclusion in decision-making that truly defines community-based environmental initiatives, or civic environmentalism.

Civic environmentalism is not a particular event, but a process of constant and consistent participation led by the relevant and affected citizens in the environmental decision-making process. These decisions can range from site selection to the type and amount of grass in a children's park. It is not always the decisions themselves that

²Robert C. Lowry, "All Hazardous Waste Politics is Local: Grassroots Advocacy and Public Participation in Siting and Cleanup Decisions," *Policy Studies Journal* 26, no. 4 (1998): 748-759.

³Lois Gibbs, "Citizen Activism for Environmental Health: The Growth of a Powerful New Grassroots Health Movement," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 584, no. 1 (2002): 97-109.

⁴Id.

matter, but the process by which the community was consulted and whether their opinions were taken into account.

This type of approach typically includes early consultation of citizens or citizen groups, or even community initiation of environmental problem-solving. This allows citizens the opportunity to shape the future development of the project. In most effective instances of civic environmentalism, the community is consulted at all crucial points in the decision-making process through regularly scheduled meetings, newsletters and representation on any relevant boards or decision-making bodies. This type of involvement allows citizen voices to be valued and heard throughout the process, not simply when problems arise, or at the conclusion of the project. However, this process is not foolproof, and careful attention must be paid to whether the communities actually have influence through the consultation and representation efforts. Without the power to influence decision making, the community may only be able to rubber-stamp or oppose any important project decision. When the community is only given the power to react (positively or negatively), the community is not truly involved or engaged in the project.

In the mid-1990s the growth of a community-based approach to environmental protection was heralded by government officials and community activists as a way to elicit community participation and acceptance. Its intention was to gain more streamlined and efficient results and better environmental protection. While the goals were the same, this approach stood in stark contrast to previous protection methods which relied little on community input and focused more on an external notion of an

environmental solution. Often these solutions had little to do with the actual conditions existing in the location or the community's needs.⁵

Without community input, environmental protection was accomplished by a top-down decision, often made by federal environmental officials with little to no understanding of local conditions. Making environmental decisions that had little to do with the people and place alienated the community. Often community members were unsure of, or confused by, the science involved. A continued lack of communication only increased the community's resentment for the outside decision-makers.

However, with a concerted effort by all parties, multiple levels of government, the developers or industry, and the community itself, it is possible to eradicate the feelings of isolation and authoritarian control. Using the principles of civic environmentalism, collaboration, flexibility, and accountability, all relevant parties can be a part of the decision-making process from the beginning.⁶ Understanding of community and governmental dynamics is an important factor in the communication process between the community and government officials. Having this knowledge early in the process allows both the city and the community to gain a greater understanding of each side's motivations and desires. Ideally this understanding facilitates the development of joint respect and a free exchange of ideas. The exchange of ideas will be more likely to create a more efficient, both economically and environmentally, outcome that the community is willing to support and defend. By using civic environmentalism to address local environmental problems the burden is no longer carried by government officials, but

⁵ Stephen M. Nickelsburg, "Mere Volunteers? The Promise and Limits of Community-Based Environmental Protection," *Virginia Law Review* 84, no. 7 (1998): 1371-1409.

⁶ Democratic Leadership Council, "Civic Environmentalism," Democratic Leadership Council, http://www.dlc.org/ndol_ci.cfm?contentid=3589&kaid=139&subid=274 (accessed March 21, 2006).

shared between those officials and the community. While sharing responsibility may open the community up to heightened scrutiny and a greater amount of responsibility, by working with city officials the community is able exercise a greater amount of control over the project.

More recently, the civic environmentalism process has become a way of dealing with specific types of environmental issues, including water resource planning, endangered species protection and contaminated industrial sites. Civic environmentalism is seen as being well-suited for these types of “non-point” sources of pollution because the process can craft a unique solution to a localized problem. Public participation for environmental cleanups can only happen at a local level because of the technical issues distinctive to each site.⁷ Sweeping top-down regulations are unable to address site-specific issues, making civic environmentalism ideal for projects that have myriad unique environmental problems, as well as complicated community interactions. Civic environmentalism draws on a sense of place in order to develop innovative ways of building relationships between citizens, government and businesses. These relationships serve as the foundation for creating dynamic and flexible solutions to environmental problems that can address environmental concerns while serving the needs of all the parties.⁸

Brownfields and Civic Environmentalism

Brownfield sites are “real property, the expansion, redevelopment, or reuse of which may be complicated by the presence or potential presence of a hazardous

⁷ Lowry, 756.

⁸ Marc Landy, Megan Susman and Debra Knopman, “Civic Environmentalism in Action: A Field Guide to Regional and Local Initiatives,” Progressive Policy Institute, 1999.

substance, pollutant, or contaminate.”⁹ In the early- to mid-1990s, brownfield sites came to the forefront of environmental discourse. These sites were typically located in the urban core, which had experienced a prolonged period of disinvestment. However, brownfields can be found throughout the current American landscape, in industrial, residential, and rural areas. Each site is unique and has its own distinctive set of legal and environmental concerns. The manner in which these issues interact with the community may make creating an opportunity for citizens to voice their opinions a crucial aspect to any brownfield redevelopment project. Because the sites are local in nature, it is imperative that those most affected by the redevelopment be intimately involved in the entire process. This helps to ensure an environmentally sound and equitable outcome.

In particular, contaminated site cleanup and reuse offers a unique perspective in the civic environmentalism debate. Brownfields are ubiquitous in the post-industrial landscape of today’s cities. Because they are often close to homes and businesses, two key issues surround the cleanup of these sites. The first issue is the human health risks that can be present. In addition to the obvious health concerns, these blighted properties can have a large impact on the perception of the area, and as a result, influence property values. Property values are important, especially in residential neighborhoods where they often represent the accumulation of a family’s wealth. The result is heightened concern over brownfield sites which have a direct impact on residential neighborhoods.

Brownfield cleanup and reuse can offer an important way of looking at the debate over civic environmentalism. Brownfields are intertwined with both the health and

⁹ Environmental Protection Agency, “Brownfields Definition,” Environmental Protection Agency, <http://www.epa.gov/brownfields/glossary.htm> (accessed on February 27, 2006).

property rights of a community; it is imperative that the relevant community be allowed to bring their experiences and opinions to the table at the beginning when important decisions are made regarding the future and direction of any redevelopment project. Civic environmentalism is an important and increasingly prevalent way of addressing the historically unpopular “announce-defend-build” model of brownfield cleanup and redevelopment.¹⁰

Many developers, as well as government officials, continue to use the announce-defend-build model and believe it is the most efficient way to handle redevelopment. The model, briefly, consists of a project announcement, which is often followed closely by public opposition when the project comes as a surprise to the community. The developers’ next step is to defend their announcement and when they have addressed, or suppressed, the public’s concerns, the project continues. In this model, developers do not solicit early community input. If opposition arises, which it often does, the project management will be forced to publicly address the communities concerns, even while continuing the project. In this type of scenario the community is not seen as a partner in the redevelopment process. Instead the community is viewed as an obstacle to overcome in order to successfully complete the project.¹¹ The process of civic environmentalism stands in direct opposition to this model. By soliciting community input and fostering information sharing early in the redevelopment process, supporters of civic environmentalism argue that all parties have vested rights in the project.

¹⁰ Michael Greenberg and M. Jane Lewis, “Brownfield Redevelopment, Preferences and Public Involvement: A Case Study of an Ethnically Mixed Neighborhood,” *Urban Studies* 37, no. 13 (2000): 2512.

¹¹ *Id.*

Small Brownfields and Civic Environmentalism

Community-based environmental protection is often touted as the solution to finding a unique and more holistic approach to brownfield cleanup and reuse. However, the projects cited as examples of community-led “success stories” are often the largest, most well-known and controversial projects.¹² Citizen involvement in hazardous waste sites began with Love Canal and the efforts of Lois Gibbs to mobilize citizens against the chemical contamination by Hooker Chemicals.¹³ Her organization’s confrontations with government regulators garnered large amounts of press coverage and characterized interactions between regulators and citizen activists for decades.

While important lessons can be learned from the community involvement in Love Canal and other large brownfields, or Superfund sites, like the Industri-plex site in Woburn, Massachusetts, these sites are intrinsically different from small-scale brownfields sites. Smaller brownfields present a different set of problems and issues because they are often located close to neighborhoods and schools, areas that will affect many different citizens in a significant way if developed.¹⁴

Larger brownfields often have extremely complicated histories which are difficult to unravel. As a result, the nature and extent of the contamination can be unclear, as well as the responsible parties. This can introduce extremely complicated legal questions, which often lead to court battles. With legal filings come delays. Furthermore, larger sites can also involve multiple jurisdictions, leading to inter-state or -city conflict. The size of the sites is often daunting and can present difficulties when determining who

¹² Kris Wernstedt and Robert Hersh, “Through the Lens Darkly – Superfund Spectacles on Public Participation at Brownfield Sites,” *Risk: Health, Safety & Environment* 9 (1998): 153-173.

¹³ *Id.*, 153; Lowry, 749.

¹⁴ Robert C. Ellickson, “Property in Land,” *Yale Law Journal* 115 (1993): 1315-1400.

constitutes the relevant stakeholders. For example, the Aberjona River runs through the Industri-plex site and into the Mystic Lakes in Winchester, an adjacent town.¹⁵

Contamination from the site could possibly be seeping into the river and flowing into the Mystic Lakes, affecting the citizens of Winchester. This makes defining an “affected community” very difficult.

Small brownfield sites offer a set of issues different from larger sites. These small sites are typically scattered throughout cities, in industrial parks, waterfronts, or even interspersed in residential neighborhoods. The smaller size of the sites allows for easy identification of the community of stakeholders. With this proximity comes a heightened sense of ownership over the environmental problems. The community feels the impact more acutely because they live next to the contaminated site. In addition, any cleanup or redevelopment will have a disproportionate impact on the composition of the neighborhood. As a result, there is a closer and tangible relationship between the community and the subsequent brownfield redevelopment.

According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency there are currently 1,238 active Superfund sites.¹⁶ While this number may appear at first blush to be large, it is estimated that there are over 450,000 smaller-scale brownfields located throughout the country.¹⁷ Each of these thousands of sites has a unique history and contamination profile. Regardless of location, brownfields are increasingly being targeted as key sites for redevelopment and reuse.

¹⁵ Environmental Protection Agency, “Aberjona River,” Environmental Protection Agency, <http://www.epa.gov/ne/superfund/sites/industriplex/32531.pdf> (accessed on February 26, 2006).

¹⁶ Environmental Protection Agency, “National Priorities List,” Environmental Protection Agency, <http://www.epa.gov/superfund/sites/npl/index.htm> (accessed February 26, 2006).

¹⁷ Environmental Protection Agency, “About Brownfields,” Environmental Protection Agency, <http://www.epa.gov/brownfields/about.htm> (accessed February 26, 2006).

The Empire Laundry site in Lynn, Massachusetts is a prime example of a small-scale brownfield site located in a residential section of a highly populated, post-industrial town. This site offers a glimpse into the process of civic environmentalism in its most pure form. While civic environmentalism is often heralded as the answer to addressing the traditionally top-down approach to environmental protection, it is not an absolute solution to creating a better environment. The Empire Laundry redevelopment process illustrates the push-and-pull of such a process. A small group of community members led the quest for a better environment and a better neighborhood, and their process offers the opportunity to evaluate civic environmentalism in light of the means of engagement, the context of the environmental problem, and the circumstances of the community itself.

While there have been numerous reviews and case studies of brownfield redevelopment projects, the majority of these present sweeping generalizations regarding brownfields. These generalizations are an attempt to explain the most common factors that influence the successful, or unsuccessful, project outcome. While most of these studies provide information and background on a number of brownfield sites, they fail to provide an in-depth analysis of the how the key players and their relationships influence the eventual outcome. In addition, there is very little literature examining best case brownfield redevelopment projects. Most discussion centers on the mistakes and missteps that were made along the redevelopment path. This analysis aims to break away from previous literature and provide a detailed and in-depth examination of a single best case brownfield redevelopment project in Lynn, Massachusetts in order to evaluate the process of civic environmentalism and the subsequent successful outcome.

Empire Laundry, Lynn, Massachusetts

Bob and Laura Miglierina have called Perley Street home since the earliest years of their marriage when they purchased their house from Laura's father. The house is a neat two-story traditional with a small backyard. It is similar to every other house in the small residential neighborhood in Lynn, Massachusetts that abuts the former industrial center of the town. The houses were built in the early part of the twentieth century and have undergone numerous facelifts as new families moved in and out through the years. The narrow streets jog past rows of peaked houses, each with a small yard in the back, some are fenced, others left open, but most show evidence of the occupants' care for their home and property.

While Lynn, Massachusetts is not a wealthy Northern suburb of Boston like nearby Marblehead or Beverly, it is a close-knit city. Settled in 1629, Lynn has the distinction of being the third oldest settlement in the United States. From the beginning, Lynn was a manufacturing town. First it was known for its shoes; by the 1920s Lynn was the largest shoe manufacturing area in the world, producing 18 million pairs a year. Lynn was also the original birthplace of General Electric Co. (GE) in 1892. By the mid-twentieth century GE was the major town employer and remained dominant for decades.¹⁸ Lynn remained a thriving manufacturing town into the early 1970s, but when GE downsized, Lynn suffered. Massive layoffs prompted a spike in unemployment that remained consistent through the 1990s. Once, thousands of workers flocked to work in the "Factory of the Future" complex, but now all that remains are acres of fenced asphalt across the street from neighborhoods that once housed GE's thriving workforce. Today Lynn is still experiencing the effects of GE's downsizing. Lynn has a poverty rate of

¹⁸ David Liscio, "Lynn's industrial past creates hurdles for future," *The Daily Evening Item*, May 14, 1997.

almost twice that of Massachusetts, according the U.S. Census Bureau,¹⁹ and the city's unemployment rate stands at 6.5 percent compared to the state's 5.2 percent.²⁰

In the mid-1990s, Lynn's industrial past was still evident throughout the city where abandoned sites, both small and large, served as a constant reminder of the city's history. When the Miglierinas looked out onto their backyard in the summer of 1995, they were not met with the typical sight of a lawn, strewn with children's toys and other lawn detritus. Instead they and their neighbors looked out on a view of a dilapidated and abandoned laundry facility. The one-story structure spanned four residential lots and 25,000 square feet.²¹ For four years the former laundry sat abandoned in the middle of a residential neighborhood where each day neighbors confronted the specter of Lynn's industrial past.²²

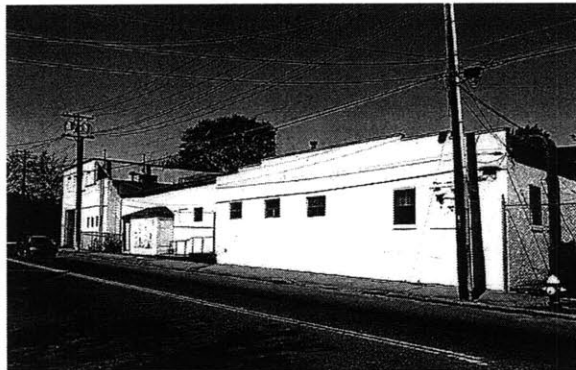


Image 1: Empire Laundry Facility²³

Built in the early 1900s during Lynn's economic prime, an industrial laundry has been located at 33-35 Myrtle Street for almost a century. After the Empire Laundry organization took ownership in 1925, they, or their successor Empire Linen Service,

¹⁹ Census Bureau, "State & County QuickFacts," Census Bureau, <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/25/2537490.html> (accessed March 22, 2006).

²⁰ Bureau of Labor Statistics, Local Area Unemployment Statistics (Series ID LAUPA25075003). Figures are annual 2004 and not seasonally adjusted.

²¹ Letter from Peter M. DeVeau to Laura J. Miglierina, January 5, 1998.

²² Letter from Ann Marie Leonard to Dot Mylin, April 16, 1997.

²³ Environmental Protection Agency, "Myrtle Street Brownfields Redevelopment." Environmental Protection Agency, www.epa.gov/region01/brownfields/success/lynn.htm (accessed on May 17, 2006).

retained control until the city of Lynn foreclosed on the property in the mid-1990s. The laundry was fully operational from the early 1900s through 1991. However, in the early part of the 1990s, Empire shut down their operations in Lynn and moved to Lowell, Massachusetts, another former industrial and manufacturing center.²⁴ When the city exercised its power to foreclose on the property, Empire Laundry owed approximately \$113,000 in back taxes.²⁵

Years before the foreclosure on the Empire Laundry property, the city of Lynn began to confront its industrial past. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, the city was littered with small former industrial sites, in addition to huge swaths of paved and fenced-off land formerly home to GE's vast facilities. During this time the concept of brownfields first came to the forefront of environmental and hazardous waste policy. Taking advantage of the growing interest in brownfields on a national and state level, Lynn began to contemplate addressing its own contaminated past. Their effort began with a partnership between the Economic Development and Industrial Corporation of Lynn (EDIC/Lynn), a quasi-governmental agency, and the Conservation Law Foundation (CLF), a regional non-profit environmental advocacy organization. This partnership was formed in order to evaluate the possibility of applying for, and implementing, EPA's newly created brownfield pilot grants. In conjunction with this partnership, the mayor appointed a brownfields task force. This task force was a mix of community members, local business owners and public officials. From the beginning, Lynn made an effort to include the community in its decisions around brownfield redevelopment.²⁶

²⁴ David Liscio, "Ford pushes for funds to demolish Empire," *The Daily Evening Item*, January 11, 2000.

²⁵ Letter from Robert P. McManus to Robert W. Wofford, December 17, 1996.

²⁶ Interview with Peter DeVeau, January 18, 2006.

In 1995 EPA developed its Brownfields Program that aimed to provide guidance and funding to municipalities and other stakeholders trying to redevelop contaminated sites. EPA has a four-part mission in the brownfields arena: protecting the environment, promoting partnerships, strengthening the marketplace, and sustaining reuse.²⁷ They recognize that developing and sustaining partnerships among developers, municipal officials and the community is crucial to creating a feasible redevelopment project. As a result, one of their main funding mechanisms, \$200,000 assessment grants, support and encourage community involvement efforts. EPA knows that by providing funds to encourage and promote involvement efforts they can help address some of the most daunting aspects of the redevelopment process: informing, engaging and building initial relationships with the affected community. The newly created partnership between CLF and EDIC/Lynn realized that they could take advantage of EPA's new programs and address Lynn's contaminated history.

When the innovative partnership between the city of Lynn, CLF and the brownfields task force began, the focus immediately centered on the GE properties. Because of their large size and proximity to numerous residential neighborhoods, the former GE factory sites were an automatic choice for redevelopment consideration. These sites were an everyday reminder of the city's current dire economic condition and the lack of environmental assessment left nagging questions about possible hazardous contamination. However, any possibility of working with GE to redevelop the sites was quickly rejected. Due to the stringent owner liability laws in place in the mid-1990s, GE would remain liable for any and all contamination on the sites, even if they sold the

²⁷ Environmental Protection Agency, "Brownfields Mission," Environmental Protection Agency, <http://www.epa.gov/brownfields/mission.htm> (accessed April 25, 2006).

property to the city. In order to avoid the risk associated with possible contamination GE concluded it would be in the company's best interest to simply leave the land fenced off, claiming "[i]t could come back to bite us if we sold."²⁸ With an unwilling seller, the city was unable to negotiate further and had to turn elsewhere for redevelopment opportunities.²⁹

While the city's efforts to address the larger brownfields in Lynn were stalled, a group of residents in Lynn's Wards 6 and 7, headed by the Thompson School Crime Watch group, were collecting signatures for the redevelopment of the Empire Laundry site.³⁰ The Thompson School Crime Watch group was led by Laura Miglierina. Together the Miglierinas worked to stimulate interest in the Empire Laundry site throughout the neighborhood. Eventually the community collected hundreds of signatures on a petition asking for the redevelopment of the laundry into single-family homes and specifically opposing any type of commercial use.³¹ This petition reached the city in January 1997, a time when officials were looking for additional brownfield projects in order to proceed with the redevelopment initiative.³² Lynn had foreclosed on the Empire Laundry property in the previous months, making the site a prime candidate for city-led redevelopment.³³

The convergence of these factors pushed the Empire Laundry site to the forefront of Lynn's brownfield initiative. In early 1997, the city decided to push the redevelopment effort forward and apply for an EPA brownfield assessment grant. The

²⁸ *The Daily Evening Item*, "Lynn Summit sought task force on brownfields," May 14, 1997.

²⁹ Personal interview with Peter DeVeau, January 18, 2006.

³⁰ Personal interview with Robert Miglierina, February 10, 2006.

³¹ Citizen petition, Wards 6 and 7, Lynn, MA.

³² Empire Laundry site redevelopment timeline.

³³ Letter from Robert P. McManus to Robert W. Wofford, December 17, 1996.

EPA grant aimed to spur action on the Empire Laundry site, as well as two other sites, and send a message to the city that brownfield redevelopment was a priority. The application repeatedly cited Lynn's partnership with CLF, known as the Brownfields Partnership, as a key component in fostering and developing community support and guidance, as well as bringing together all interested parties (e.g., community groups, investors, lenders and developers).³⁴

After receiving the EPA assessment grant of \$200,000 in April 1997, Lynn and CLF began to solicit community input by contacting community members through newsletters and meetings. These efforts were aimed at gauging the community's opinions regarding the project's stated goals.³⁵ These goals included completing a site assessment and reuse plan, developing a community-wide outreach process and creating an inventory of the city's brownfield sites.³⁶ Due to Empire Laundry's location within a compact, urban neighborhood, the community outreach process was a manageable task. The majority of the residents owned their own homes, creating a relatively stable population. Furthermore, the residents had been the impetus behind the redevelopment of the Empire Laundry site. In fact, citizen input and consultation in the project had begun before the pilot.

On January 21, 1998 the community participation on the Empire Laundry site officially began with the EPA Brownfields Economic Redevelopment Pilot kickoff meeting. This was the first of countless meetings held throughout the redevelopment

³⁴ Environmental Protection Agency, "Regional Brownfields Assessment Pilot, Lynn, MA," April 1997; The Department of Community Development, Lynn, MA, "Lynn/EDIC Submits Brownfields Grant Proposal," *Community Developments* 7, no. 3 (1997): 4.

³⁵ Environmental Protection Agency, "Brownfields Assessment Pilot Fact Sheet," Environmental Protection Agency, <http://www.epa.gov/brownfields/html-doc/lynn.htm> (accessed on March 4, 2006).

³⁶ Environmental Protection Agency, "Regional Brownfields Assessment Pilot, Lynn, MA," April 1997.

process. Each meeting would typically involve Peter DeVeau, the Executive Director of EDIC/Lynn, and a representative from CLF. In addition, EDIC/Lynn and CLF made every effort to bring in relevant members of the redevelopment team during each phase of the process. These community meetings became an important way to communicate progress and next steps to residents. From the beginning, the neighborhood residents made it clear that they supported redevelopment of the hazardous site, but that they would only support redevelopment into single-family houses. The community's clear vision for redevelopment and the city's need and desire for neighborhood support, provided the community with power to negotiate. This power allowed the community to lobby effectively for their end goal of single-family housing. City officials were forced to listen and respect this goal in order to ensure the community's continued support.

In addition, EDIC/Lynn's Peter DeVeau recognized the community's power early on. Mr. DeVeau's previous experiences in the community, and with the community leaders, gave him an understanding of the neighborhood dynamics and the relationships that may not have been readily apparent to a less experienced city official. This greater community knowledge enabled Mr. DeVeau to quickly identify important community leaders and effectively build a working relationship with them. Community knowledge was crucial in facilitating Mr. DeVeau's leadership role in the process. By acknowledging and respecting the community's desires he was able to act as a broker between the city and community. The broker role was pivotal in ensuring that efforts were made to make the vision a reality and not simply disregarded as too difficult or expensive.

In the spring of 1998 the Brownfield Partnership announced that a local New England company, the Johnson Company, was selected to complete a site assessment through a competitive request for proposals (RFP) process. The site assessment was then slated to begin in March or April. However, in March, above-ground hazardous materials were discovered when a group of residents, city officials and representatives of the Johnson Company went on a site walkthrough.³⁷ The discovery of these materials and their potential threat to human health and the environment precipitated immediate action by EPA. In June 1998 EPA's investigations revealed 15 55-gallon barrels of hazardous waste, a large pit containing an unknown liquid solution, as well as hazardous substances such as asbestos, potassium hydroxide, and methyl alcohol.³⁸ Through an Emergency Removal Action championed by Representative John Tierney, (D) Salem, EPA removed the contamination.³⁹ This type of action was entirely funded by EPA and did not require any funds from the city.⁴⁰

After completion of the Emergency Removal Action, site assessment resumed and in October 1999 the Johnson Company presented their remedial evaluation and cost estimates.⁴¹ Lynn secured further assistance from EPA in 2000 with the award of a \$500,000 Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) for environmental cleanup.⁴² Through the numerous community meetings and solicited community input, a consensus emerged for the future of the Empire Laundry site. The neighborhood overwhelmingly supported

³⁷ Id.; Environmental Protection Agency, "Myrtle Street Brownfields Redevelopment."

³⁸ Environmental Protection Agency, "EPA begins removing hazardous substances/materials from the Empire Laundry facility – Community Update #1," December 1998; Environmental Protection Agency, "Myrtle Street Brownfields Redevelopment."

³⁹ Office of Economic & Community Development – Lynn, MA, "Former Brownfields Become Housing: Lynn marks big day for two projects," Office of Economic & Community Development – Lynn, MA, http://www.lynndevelopment.com/draft_03_edic_brownfields.htm (accessed on March 4, 2006).

⁴⁰ Brownfields Partnership, "Lynn Brownfield Pilot Project News," October 1998.

⁴¹ The Johnson Company, Inc., "Remedial Alternatives: Evaluation and Cost Estimates," October 19, 1999.

⁴² Environmental Protection Agency, "Myrtle Street Brownfields Redevelopment."

redevelopment into single-family housing.⁴³ Peter DeVeau, in his role as a broker, approached other city agencies in an effort to find an economically and socially feasible way of meeting the community's vision. Using his political capital Mr. DeVeau forged a partnership with the Lynn Community Development Housing Corporation (LCDHC) and Lynn Housing Authority and Neighborhood Development (LHAND).⁴⁴

EDIC/Lynn's partnerships with LCDHC and LHAND were unique and offered a way to combine Lynn's already well-developed affordable housing program with brownfield redevelopment. In March 2000 EDIC/Lynn and LCDHC entered into an agreement regarding the future of the Empire Laundry site. While the official start of the redevelopment activities began in September 2000, for the next 18 months engineering evaluations, cost analyses and demolition continued on site. During this time EDIC/Lynn won an additional EPA pilot grant for \$150,000 to address additional site assessment issues.⁴⁵

While remediation proceeded, negotiations continued between EDIC/Lynn, LCDHC and LHAND. In October 2001, the Lynn city council voted to convey the property to LCDHC. This important step solidified the future use of the site as single-family housing, proving that the community's persistent voice was heard and recognized. After the property was transferred to the housing authority, LHAND assumed responsibility for further remediation and redevelopment. While this was done at the lowest cost possible, it was still necessary to take out loans to complete the project. One loan agreement came from the newly created Revolving Loan Fund grant from EPA.

⁴³ John Laidler, "Lynn 'brownfield' to be reborn," *Boston Globe*, June 18, 2000.

⁴⁴ Office of Economic & Community Development – Lynn, MA, "Former Brownfields Become Housing: Lynn marks big day for two projects."

⁴⁵ Environmental Protection Agency, "Myrtle Street Brownfields Redevelopment."

Lynn's Revolving Loan Fund grant was a turning point in the project, and brought the city, and the Empire Laundry project, national attention. Then EPA administrator Carol Browner had visited Lynn recently and declared the project a success story.⁴⁶ Administrator Browner's visit was important in signaling the importance of the Empire Laundry site, as well as the entire Lynn brownfields initiative, in influencing national brownfields policy. Visits by the EPA administrator are rare, especially to small-scale projects like those in Lynn. The announcement of the RLF grant shortly after Browner's visit was an affirmation of Lynn's successful and innovative brownfields initiative. While small, the project had an appreciable impact on its neighborhood and the partnerships forged during the process were important and non-trivial in difficulty.

Using the RLF, LHAND was able to borrow \$69,000 to pay for the cleanup and remediation work required.⁴⁷ Additional construction financing for \$750,000 was secured from the local North Shore Bank. Slightly less than four years after the first neighborhood meeting, construction began and in March 2003 construction was completed.⁴⁸

In order to build the homes, the former laundry buildings were demolished and the entire site was leveled. Remediation activities took over a year after the initial kickoff meeting in September 2000. At the completion of cleanup the site yielded 2,423 pounds of solid waste, 324 gallons of liquid and 163 bags of asbestos-tainted materials. Upon completion, the approximately 38,000 square feet site was the location of five

⁴⁶ David Liscio, "EPA rep tours Lynn industrial site," *Daily Item*, October 29, 1998.

⁴⁷ Environmental Protection Agency, "Myrtle Street Brownfields Redevelopment."

⁴⁸ Office of Economic & Community Development – Lynn, MA, "Former Brownfields Become Housing: Lynn marks big day for two projects."

single-family houses. Each of the five homes was sold to low- and moderate-income first-time homeowners.⁴⁹



Image 2: Single-Family Homes on Former Empire Laundry Site

Due to the large number of parties involved in the entire remediation and redevelopment process, the funding for the project was piecemeal. The environmental assessments were completed using EPA assessment grant money. Because an immediate removal action was needed for the hazardous material found on the site, some of the remediation was also directly paid for by EPA. However, once the city transferred the property to LHAND, the housing authority assumed responsibility for further cleanup and remediation. Using funds from the newly created RLF, the site cleanup was completed. Construction was completed using construction financing from a commercial bank.

The disparate nature of the funding sources made the project more complicated. However, this was necessary in order to complete the project at the lowest cost possible. The entire Empire Laundry project was accomplished without any involvement by private sector development entities. As a result, profit-making was not an important aspect of the project and all development activities were done at-cost. Peter DeVeau, executive director of EDIC/Lynn, believes that the EPA assessment grants were crucial in

⁴⁹ Lynn Community Development Housing Corporation, “Lynn, Massachusetts Brownfields Project – Myrtle Street.”

making the redevelopment project successful. By changing the economics of the situation, Lynn was able to complete a project that was not necessary economically feasible at first glance, but extremely important to both the neighborhood and city officials looking to spur redevelopment and build goodwill.⁵⁰

While financing was important, as it is in any development project, the civic involvement of the community was the motivation and driving force that brought and sustained attention at the Empire Laundry site. Starting in the early 1990s when the site was abandoned, neighbors recognized that the derelict site was a hazard. Situated in the middle of a completely residential neighborhood, the site became a gathering spot for the local drug trade. In addition, community members were concerned about possible environmental contamination, but they had no way to know what was truly on, or under, the site. Sparked by this ambiguity and a concern that their neighborhood would become a gathering spot for drug dealers, the neighborhood organized and began the process of civic involvement. There are three crucial instances of civic environmentalism in the redevelopment process of the Empire Laundry site: 1) Petitioning for the redevelopment of the Empire Laundry site and bringing the site to the attention of city officials; 2) Vigorously advocating for single-family housing to fit in with the existing urban fabric; and, 3) Requesting and attending community meetings in order to ensure that the community's desire for single-family housing was acknowledged and implemented.

Led by the Miglierinas, the neighborhood's first step was to petition for the site's redevelopment. This initial act was central in setting the tone for the rest of the project. Community participation was, and continues to be, a stated objective in all EPA funded projects. However, this case was unique because the community brought the project to

⁵⁰ Personal interview with Peter DeVeau, January 18, 2006.

the attention of the city. By pushing for redevelopment neighbors demonstrated the importance of the site. The Empire Laundry redevelopment project was defined by the community's consistent consultation and input.

The second instance of community activism was the neighborhood's forceful endorsement of contextual redevelopment. The petition contained a statement strongly opposing any future commercial use on the site. This was the community's first of many requests for single-family housing. Community members pushed for redevelopment into single-family houses consistently and at every possible opportunity. This advocacy was crucial and city officials listened. Officials, like Peter DeVeau of EDIC/Lynn, recognized the power the community held by either supporting or opposing the project. Mr. DeVeau and CLF's efforts to foster community involvement revealed the power of the community. As a result, Mr. DeVeau, through his leadership both in the community and in the city as a whole, worked to create an outcome that would satisfy all interests.

City officials admit that if the community was not motivated and did not intensely advocate for housing, the city would have simply paved over the site.⁵¹ This would have added one more asphalt covered lot to the countless that dot the city's landscape. However, this option was not seriously considered after the initial evaluation. The voice of the community was overwhelmingly in favor of single-family housing and savvy citizens took advantage of every opportunity to remind Lynn of their preference. As a result, officials, particularly Mr. DeVeau, recognized that in order to win the community's support he would need to acknowledge their preferences. While creating an asphalt parking lot would have been the easiest outcome time-, energy- and money-wise, it was not politically feasible.

⁵¹ Id.

From the beginning of the entire redevelopment process, the community showed that they were dedicated to the improvement of their neighborhood. They sparked the process and refused to relinquish it to the site developers, in this case the city itself. Throughout the redevelopment Lynn, EPA, CLF, and other project consultants held and attended community meetings. These meetings, as well as site visits, were well-attended by the community.⁵² While many of the meetings were simply informational in nature, the community's attendance illustrated a dedication to the project and a commitment to finding a productive use for the former laundry. From the original petition to the opening festivities, the community was ever-present. Early in the process the community realized that they held a great deal of power over the future of the Empire Laundry project. As a result, they were able to use this power to gain some control over the project outcome and process. The community's power facilitated the creation of a partnership between the city and the community; both sides now had something at stake in process. If the project was successful the city gained increased credibility, especially in regards to their brownfields initiative. At the same time, the community would benefit greatly from the cleanup of the site and the creation of new single-family housing. Conversely, if the project did not succeed the community would most likely be left with the same neighborhood eyesore it began with. However, the city would suffer public opposition from the community, and perhaps the greater city. This type of public outcry could be harmful to both elected and unelected city officials; therefore, the city listened to the community. This power transaction allowed the community and the city to work together to create a project that fit both of their needs.

⁵² Personal interview with James Hamilton, March 2, 2006.

Analysis

Throughout the multi-year process of advocacy, cleanup and redevelopment, one factor remained constant: the voice of the neighborhood. From the beginning, the community sentiment overwhelmingly favored single-family housing to replace the neighborhood eyesore. The impetus for the redevelopment of Empire Laundry came from the immediate neighbors, not from a private developer or from the city. This gave the community immense credibility and allowed them to take ownership of the project from the outset.

Lynn is an extremely tight-knit and stable city. The neighborhood surrounding the Empire Laundry site is predominantly owner-occupied, single-family houses and non-conforming uses stand out. Because the neighborhood was stable, and relationships were both well-established and predictable, all of the parties were able to quickly find their role within the project. Without the constant influx of new residents, as in more transient neighborhoods, both city officials and the community were held accountable at every step in the process. Residents know the political figures, from the ward councilmen to the mayor, and appointed officials from the housing and economic development authorities. Because of this familiarity, residents know how to approach political officials and city authorities, thus creating a sense of accountability. This was a crucial factor in the Empire Laundry redevelopment because the project was completed by city agencies, without the help of the private sector. While this approach made it difficult to put together capital, it also ensured that the neighborhood did not feel that “outsiders” were controlling the project. In the end the developers and key personnel were accountable to the residents, either directly or indirectly through the political system. Furthermore,

because the city did not rely on private sector resources, demolition and construction were completed at cost. Although this approach may have been difficult to orchestrate, in terms of bringing the diverse parties together, it proved to be an effective and efficient way of ensuring community support throughout the process.

The success of the Empire Laundry project did not depend on one particular factor, but the confluence of a number of different factors. These factors were: politically savvy government officials willing to forge new partnerships with other public entities (e.g., LHAND, LCDHC and EDIC/Lynn), the newly created brownfield partnership between EDIC/Lynn and CLF, and a vocal and demanding public who wanted to see a community eyesore revitalized.

One of most important aspects of the Empire Laundry project was the support it found within the other city agencies. While the project was initially spearheaded through EDIC/Lynn, other city agencies quickly became involved. These crucial partnerships were in large part due to the leadership of EDIC/Lynn's Peter DeVeau. His experience in Lynn and the respect given to him within the city government were instrumental in developing the necessary partnerships. Mr. DeVeau listened to the concerns of the community and heard their demands for single-family housing. His knowledge of community dynamics and leadership role allowed him to act on the neighborhood's desires and broker a solution within the city government.

Often communities are angered when their input is solicited during projects but in the end is not acted upon by the city government. In some cases this may be blatant disregard of community input, but in many cases it is simply the result of public officials who do not know how to effectively lobby for the community and cultivate relevant

partnerships. It took extremely talented political officials to pull together the various parties and recognize that the project could be undertaken. Mr. DeVeau was able act as a leader and use his political capital to bring the appropriate people to the table.⁵³

By involving Lynn's housing authority, as well as the community development housing corporation, Mr. DeVeau and EDIC/Lynn put together a financially feasible project that satisfied the needs of the community and the city. By working within the public sector it was possible to forgo the typical profits required for private sector development and, more importantly, ensure a level of accountability to the public they served.⁵⁴ Furthermore, public officials, like Peter DeVeau and Charles Gaeta of the Lynn Housing and Neighborhood Development organization, are charged with working for the public and aim to serve the public interest. If the community was unhappy with the project they could go to the mayor to voice their complaints in a direct manner. In addition, the project was completely funded and developed through the public sector, assuring the community that the developers were not going to disappear after completion. These actors are repeat players in Lynn's redevelopment landscape and work with and alongside the community on almost a daily basis. Therefore, there was more respect between city officials and the community than there might have otherwise been with a private sector developer.⁵⁵

Integral in the project's success was the brownfield partnership formed between EDIC/Lynn and CLF. This partnership was instrumental in making the redevelopment process as seamless as possible. CLF acted as additional staff for EDIC/Lynn and helped to build the city's capacity in brownfield redevelopment. The partnership developed in

⁵³ Personal interview with Peter DeVeau, January 18, 2006.

⁵⁴ Id.

⁵⁵ Personal interview with James Hamilton, March 2, 2006.

response to Lynn's initiative aimed at addressing their large number of brownfields. CLF helped with the creation and development of the initiative and provided much needed guidance.⁵⁶

The Empire Laundry project was one of Lynn's first forays into brownfield redevelopment. CLF provided crucial advice on next steps, as well as grant writing and other more administrative tasks. These seemingly mundane tasks are critically important to small cities, like Lynn, who are trying to implement innovative initiatives when constantly under-staffed.⁵⁷ The project did not experience long delays or confusion due to lack of knowledge. By partnering with CLF the city was able to hit the ground running and implement a successful project from the beginning. As a result, the city gained momentum and expertise while not having to put off important projects.

In addition, Lynn city officials, such as Peter DeVeau, recognized early on that the city itself did not possess the capacity to immediately administer and coordinate a brownfields program. As a result, the partnership with CLF became instrumental in building the city's capacity and acting as *de facto* city staff. CLF, as a non-profit consulting firm, did not come into the project with a side agenda. Their work on this project was solely supportive in nature and not tied to a set timeframe. As a result, CLF did not have a vested interest in seeing a specific outcome in a set amount of time. They were only concerned with producing the best outcome that took into account and valued the community's input.

The third factor in the Empire Laundry project's success was the community. The community did not simply serve an advisory role in the redevelopment process. Instead

⁵⁶ Id.

⁵⁷ Id.

they were active participants. Led by a number of vocal neighbors, the community organized around the redevelopment and demanded that the potentially environmentally contaminated site be cleaned and returned to productive use. It is unlikely that the neighbors were aware that they were engaging in a local-level civic environmentalism process, but their actions are indicative of the central tenants of civic environmentalism. Not only did the community participate in the redevelopment process through meetings and newsletters, but they were also the driving force behind the project. It is often common for community meetings to be sparsely attended for many redevelopment projects, but during the Empire Laundry redevelopment many members of the community endorsed and attended the meetings, recognizing that their input and support was both valued and needed.

The community's persistent call for redevelopment into single-family housing was not only heard by the city officials, but recognized and eventually implemented. This type of consistent community involvement is crucial in the civic environmentalism process. While civic environmentalism can occur on large Superfund sites, or smaller sites, like the Empire Laundry, the key factor is continued interaction between regulators, city officials and the community. This interaction builds respect and credibility; projects become easier to complete and more efficient once all parties understand the process.⁵⁸ This is especially important when dealing with private sector developers who may not have as extensive an understanding of the community's desires upfront. Taking the time early in the process to learn each side's motivations and interests is crucial groundwork that will help define and achieve a successful outcome.

⁵⁸ Nickelsburg, 1393.

Lessons Learned

In every brownfield project, each site has a unique set of problems and solutions. Many scholars and practitioners have touted community involvement and neighborhood participation as the most important tool for solving the distinct issues that arise in each brownfield project. In the Empire Laundry project the community was involved in three ways: residents filed the original petition for cleanup and redevelopment; they continued to advocate for single-family housing; and they consistently attended a series of community meetings that were held to solicit community opinions and advice. These three instances of involvement were crucial to the success of the redevelopment project. However, while these instances of community participation are often important in many brownfield redevelopment projects, their presence does not guarantee a successful outcome. Instead, it is important to look more deeply into the underlying motivation of each event of community participation and the corresponding reasons behind each.

Lynn has a history of public participation: the town is heavily unionized and many of the most vocal of the community leaders are union organizers. By having strong and experienced leaders in the neighborhood, like Robert Miglierina and his wife Laura, the community quickly and easily found its voice. Adding to the strength of the community's voice was the fact that the ward councilor, Richard Ford, lived less than a block away from the site and worked only a block in the other direction.⁵⁹ The neighborhood was extremely close, and because of its history of civic involvement, not just in environmental issues, the neighbors felt justified in creating a petition for cleanup and redevelopment. By being vocal and not shying away from voicing their demands to local officials, the community responded almost immediately.

⁵⁹ Personal interview with Robert Miglierina, February 10, 2006.

In addition, the community had developed a vision for the redevelopment of the site from the beginning. By defining the desired outcome early, community members were able to effectively advocate for this type of redevelopment at an early stage. Not every community can come to agreement at such an early stage, nor is every community's redevelopment vision feasible, but beginning a dialog can be useful; it makes the redevelopment more tangible to all those involved.

An important aspect of the Empire Laundry redevelopment was the community's unity in their vision for future redevelopment. They were not swayed by the city's initial intention of paving over the lots. In this situation the community's commitment to single-family housing was feasible. However, this is not always the case. It may be possible that a community's demand for a park or open space is not practical because the contamination is too extensive and may pose a risk to human health, or the costs are prohibitively expensive. Therefore, it is necessary for the community to listen and respond to the information that the remediation experts provide.

In order for a community to effectively participate and respond to the relevant experts, it is imperative that the community be educated about the impact of key decisions relating to the site. This was crucial at the Empire Laundry site. Community members felt that they were constantly kept abreast of site progress and any upcoming decisions. Meetings were held to inform the neighborhood about remediation efforts, site plans and other important milestones. By holding these meetings the community felt that they understood the process of cleanup and redevelopment as it was happening, thus avoiding surprises that could have slowed the project.

Although the community was not privy to every decision during the redevelopment process, they were consulted and kept informed along the way. This was important in holding those making the decisions accountable for their actions.

Accountability is crucial in every redevelopment process. By making people accountable for their actions they will be more likely to make decisions in a fully-informed manner.

Replicability

It is difficult to learn from success stories that are “one-offs” and impossible to duplicate in the future. While there were a number of unique characteristics in the Empire Laundry redevelopment, there are still important lessons that can be learned from the project. First, it is necessary for the community to feel respected and have their opinion valued, not only during certain key events (e.g., kickoff and grand opening), but throughout the entire project. Constant contact, even during delays and long stretches without important milestones, is necessary and allows the community to feel that they are contributing to the redevelopment process.

Second, public officials must be willing to listen to the community. While it may not always be possible to make the community’s vision a reality, it is imperative to appreciate their input and recognize that they have a unique and valuable perspective on redevelopment. Peter DeVeau was able to build mutual respect with the community leaders, and the project benefited from his investment of time and energy. Politically savvy city officials are crucial in brokering deals, both with the city government and with the community.

Finally, Empire Laundry was successful because it was a public sector project. People were more willing to trust the developers because they were city agencies. These

agencies were well-known throughout the city and could point to similar projects in the city that were successful. There was little concern that the developer did not know or care about the neighborhood. While Lynn had the ability to build and finance affordable housing, this is not true for all cities and many may prefer not to develop the capacity. It is still possible to implement successful projects with private sector developers. However, in these situations cities should pay heightened attention to community “buy-in” and spend time building relationships and respect among the developers and community.

Site Specific Issues

There were a number of very specific concerns that were unique to the Empire Laundry project that may not be found in other similar projects. Because the site was located in a very well-connected and politically savvy neighborhood, the community was able to find a receptive audience in the city government. The mayor had chosen brownfields as a key initiative and when City Hall received the petition from the community, the Empire Laundry site appeared to be the perfect first project. While this series of events was precipitated by the dedicated efforts of a small group of concerned neighbors, the selection of Empire Laundry was due in large part to serendipity. Not every site can have such luck to be lobbying for environmental cleanup and redevelopment at the exact time the city is looking for projects.

Moreover, the neighborhood surrounding the Empire Laundry site is an extremely stable one. Most residents have lived in the neighborhood for decades and feel a sense of ownership over their homes and community. As a result, it was relatively easy to solicit community input. In addition, the community came together as cohesive whole,

illustrated by the hundreds of signatures on the initial petition, and did not separate into different factions which may have held up the redevelopment process. The neighborhood conditions made it an ideal location for building community support.

Small Site vs. Large Site Issues

In addition to the particular advantages that the Empire Laundry site offered, there was some benefit to the site's size. The entire site was less than an acre and had limited contamination. Because of the relatively small area, the affected community was easily identifiable. This facilitated community participation and there was no concern over any watershed impact, as there was in the Industri-plex site.

Furthermore, because there are fewer key players, small sites can often be redeveloped more quickly than large brownfields or Superfund sites. Smaller sites often have less extensive contamination and thus a lower cost for remediation. While the timeline is not rapid, it is faster than it might otherwise be. This allows for more sites to be redeveloped and the community can see an appreciable impact in neighborhoods sooner.

Every brownfield redevelopment project has its own unique set of problems to overcome: these range from a lack of support, either from the community or government officials, to the end-use being incompatible with the community's vision. In every case it is necessary to address these issues in a responsible and fully informed way. Brownfield redevelopment is, by definition, filled with unexpected problems. While the precise problem can not always be anticipated, developers should expect surprises. The Empire Laundry redevelopment was not by any means immune to these problems, but what set this project apart from other projects was the flexibility and responsiveness by both the

community and city officials. These attributes are not ones that come automatically, but were developed through a process that emphasized respect and information-sharing.

Conclusion

Many of today's environmental protection initiatives differ from their predecessors, as all levels of government turn to a more community-based approach to environmental problem-solving. Proponents assert that this form of environmental protection can do a better job of protecting human health and the environment. But, in the end, does community input really create the optimal outcome for a brownfield site?

In Lynn, Massachusetts the Empire Laundry site redevelopment showed that community involvement could substantially improve redevelopment of a small-scale brownfield. Drawing on principles from the civic environmentalism process the neighborhood mobilized around the abandoned laundry site. Through persistent lobbying and continued pressure on public officials, the site was redeveloped into single-family homes. The Lynn best case scenario illustrates the benefits that can come from community-based environmental problem-solving. Almost a decade later, there is no trace of the former industrial laundry. The neighborhood, city officials, and federal environmental regulators point to Empire Laundry as a shining example of bottom-up environmental protection. This case shows that with a motivated community and politically savvy public officials, civic environmentalism can work.

With this successful outcome comes a number of important questions that are often ignored in the push for greater community involvement. It is unclear in this particular case, and brownfield redevelopment projects in general, whether the community's desired outcome is the best one. The Empire Laundry redevelopment

project illustrates that with early and consistent community participation, the community's desires can be recognized and, in fact, drive the final project outcome. However, the question remains whether the community's definition for success is the most environmentally sound outcome.

While five families moved into the new homes on Myrtle Street, ending a redevelopment process that lasted over five years, this question remains. Most of the civic and community leaders feel that the Empire Laundry redevelopment process was completed correctly and carefully weighed community concerns against environmental concerns. In this instance, the environmental contamination was not extensive and, as a result, the community's vision for single-family homes was realized. However, other redevelopment efforts may not have such a nexus between community vision and reality. In these cases it is imperative to have civic leaders in place who can understand and evaluate the project within a broader perspective. It is necessary to view the redevelopment project within a larger context that can weigh very local concerns and desires against the larger environmental impacts. Furthermore, it is imperative to have municipal leaders who are trusted by the community and can negotiate the often difficult process of informing the community of the environmental concerns and planning for the future. These steps are crucial in ensuring the redevelopment outcome is both environmentally responsible and community-driven.