

Case Study: Redevelopment in Downingtown Borough, Pennsylvania

Downingtown Borough provides a positive example of an active public-private partnership to clean a Brownfield site and redevelop centrally located land for residential use. The community of 8,000 located in Chester County, west of Philadelphia, identified a 3D-acre former industrial site to redevelop into 160 upscale town homes.

The State of Pennsylvania actively supported the redevelopment effort with financial assistance for the initiative. The borough received a \$50,000 grant through Pennsylvania Community Economic Revitalization Program and \$1 million in funds to clean the site through the state's Industrial Site Reuse Program. In addition, the borough was able to get \$650,000 in back taxes waived and helped to remove the property from bankruptcy. Downingtown used these funds to attract a pre-developer for the property- P&L Investments (Washington, DC). "People knew that we would be able to complete the project," says Barry Cassidy, executive director of Downingtown Main Street Inc., the borough's non-profit economic development corporation.

P&L Investments President Gary Silversmith advises engineering and environmental consulting firms seeking opportunities on brown field projects to target geographic areas where the community is supportive- that is where developers and investors will be interested. "If they target cities that have supportive communities and local governments, they will find a lot of opportunities for that kind of work. They should stay in contact with environmental lawyers and local government authorities. Often the developer gets involved with other consultants through the lawyer."

The borough's involvement was critical, according to Silversmith. "We did adequate planning, so we know what we want," says Cassidy. "If enough local governments did the correct planning and knew what they wanted rather than having development come to them, initiatives like this would go a lot faster." The initiative is expected to complete its first residence in the spring of 1999.