

# **Greyfields: The New Horizon for Infill and Higher Density Regeneration**

**Practice Guide #6**

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## **Introduction**

Greyfields are old, obsolete and abandoned retail and commercial sites, namely malls. Drive down any major thoroughfare in your city and you will likely see a formerly productive shopping center that is underutilized. Many of these one time community assets are now suffering from disinvestment. Tenants have followed suburbia to newer commercial corridors that have the “right” market demographics, vendor mix, and design. Left behind are thousands of square feet of retail space surrounded by seas of gray pavement. Commonly referred to as Greyfields, these eyesores are symbols of a deeper-rooted pattern of haphazard development.

Greyfields present unique real estate and community development challenges. They are difficult to define. Some researchers limit the definition of greyfields to enclosed, climate-controlled shopping centers that contain at least 400,000 square feet of retail space. Others consider strip centers, power centers (a center once dominated by a few large anchors like Kmart or Walmart), and even neighborhood centers that serve smaller geographic units and are usually anchored by a grocery store to be greyfields. Depending upon the definition used, the scope of the problem varies.

To the community nearby an abandoned retail center, it makes little difference what definition is used—the site lowers property values, discourages new investment and fails to produce much in terms of tax revenue and jobs. Many abandoned retail strip centers built in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s do not qualify as greyfields if only enclosed malls are considered to be greyfields. However, those parcels that used to house supermarkets, large retailers and restaurants are common in inner-ring suburbs that have been decimated by suburban development. Regardless of the size of the property, each site represents an opportunity to reinvigorate a community, if investors are savvy enough to understand the needs of the market.

### ***Unplanned Obsolescence***

The decline of older malls is attributable to a variety of factors. Population shifts and new suburban development have altered the retail environment in ways reminiscent of central city decline. Cities lost much of their retail activity as the “mollification” of retail occurred in the 1960’s. Now, as development continues further and further from the core, similar patterns of demise are being repeated. Retail sector analysts point to rapidly changing consumer tastes fueling a demand for new shopping experiences as a prime reason for mall decline. The mall is “artificial” and consumers are choosing new formats for shopping that are exciting and varied. As more and more time is spent commuting, consumers are looking for more convenient retail options. Depending upon the definition used, the scope of the problem varies. In some cases, malls themselves have not planned well to compete. They share the blame in their demise by failing to reinvest and remain on the cutting-edge of retail (Kures, 2003).

## **Scope of the Problem**

### ***Current Information***

To date, a limited amount of information exists on the scale of the greyfields problem. The precise number in existence is unknown. According to the Congress for New Urbanism (CNU), about 7 percent of existing regional malls are greyfields and another 12 percent are approaching greyfields status (Congress for New Urbanism, 2). Overall, CNU estimates the number of greyfields sites to be over 2,000. The International Council of Shopping Centers, using a more conservative definition, estimates the number of greyfields to be 1,200. According to a recent article, dead or dying malls account for about 19 percent of all American malls (Mirabella). RetailForward, a private retail research organization, estimates that for each Wal-Mart “SuperCenter” that opens in the future, two nearby grocery stores will close. A total of 30 grocery stores in Oklahoma City have closed since Wal-Mart has saturated the market in that area. The Mall of Memphis in Tennessee closed on Christmas Eve, 2003 after a 21-year life span. The growth in mega-stores and continued suburban sprawl suggest that greyfields will be a long-term problem.

The average greyfield is about 45 acres, a parcel large enough to develop into multiple options that include housing, retail and commercial uses. Forty-five acres, for example, could provide over 400 housing units at a residential density of ten homes per acre. As such, greyfields represent an opportunity to stem the tide of sprawling development.

The advantages of greyfields are many, and they typically benefit from the following attributes:

- Good location on a high traffic artery
- Large tract of land in well-developed area
- Existing infrastructure
- Lack of contamination given former uses
- Neighboring population density

### ***Location***

The original investment that created the retail center was based upon traditional site feasibility analysis. The site had an intrinsic locational value that made it ripe for development. Unfortunately as cities have grown and expanded outwardly, developers have continued to look for well-positioned sites for development. That is, they find parcels on high-traffic streets, interstate exchanges or intersections. The fact that new development is sprawling does not render the older mall obsolete. On the contrary, older malls and strip centers have great locations. Many are located near transit stops that experience large volumes of automobile traffic. Over the years, the neighborhoods have changed, but the locations remain vital to those communities harboring greyfields.

### ***Size***

A common complaint of developers hesitant to develop in older neighborhoods is lack of space. The acreage of many greyfields represents a tremendous opportunity to a savvy developer. In fact, some greyfields are located near neighborhoods experiencing a rebirth as home buyers seek affordable housing options near the inner-city. Greyfields sites could be a source for affordable housing and a catalyst for widespread reinvestment. In such neighborhoods, the redevelopment potential of greyfields is high. The challenge is to design a center that appeals to the tastes of new residents rather than pandering to a market niche that is no longer viable in the neighborhood.

### ***Infrastructure***

Older sites can be less expensive to develop because they do not need major infrastructure investments. The properties are already connected to existing water, electrical, telecommunications and sewer lines. They tend to be connected to bus services, as well. However, in redevelopments that require significant alterations in the existing layout, infrastructure costs can be high. For instance, turning a site into a mixed use facility will require a vast infrastructure of roads, sidewalks, parks and buildings.

### ***Contamination***

Some investors prefer to avoid older neighborhoods and properties because they are concerned about contamination liability. With greyfields, this is typically not a concern. Greyfields have not had a history of industrial use, and unless the mall housed an automotive garage or dry cleaners, there is little need to worry about contamination. An additional concern might be asbestos. These concerns can be easily mitigated by conducting due diligence prior to redeveloping, including deed checks for prior uses and possible site assessments (see Practice Guide #1 for more information about Brownfield sites).

### ***Population Density***

Greyfields tend to be located in densely populated areas. Often times, part of the decline in the mall is associated with changing demographics. The population has remained stable, but the purchasing power or the consumer tastes of the clientele have changed. The failure of the mall to generate revenue is often times a function of the owner's inability to respond to changing markets.

If greyfields have all of these advantages, why do they remain vacant or underutilized? This is the paradox that mall owners and neighborhood groups face. It is hard to believe that older malls were once cutting-edge shopping outlets. The key to understanding this dilemma is to remember that markets and communities have changed. Those assets that made the mall a good investment may still be valid, only under different conditions. Like the neighborhood that houses the greyfield, the function of the parcel needs to change to

meet today's demand. One of the greatest obstacles to greyfields redevelopment is the continued insistence on using the site for its original purpose—shopping.

Greyfields operators tend to cling to retail as the end-use of a mall site. Consequently, millions of dollars are spent to rehabilitate malls through façade changes and the addition of new vendors. Unfortunately, this practice is usually futile because newer, bigger and better mall experiences can be found a few miles down the road. The old mall usually cannot compete with the newer facilities. Yet, older malls often attempt to fight obsolescence by competing rather than redefining themselves into new community assets.

### ***Mall Trends***

Once considered the ultimate shopping experience, malls have suffered over the last decade. The new trend is for open areas, where customers do not have to walk through an entire mall to reach the stores they would like to visit. Lifestyle centers and shopping-entertainment complexes have sprouted up in response to new demand, as have “open air” malls that have stores surrounding a pavilion or other outdoor amenity.

According to the International Council of Shopping Centers (ICSC), “13 regional/superregional centers totaling 14,364,000 square feet of gross leasable area (GLA) are expected to be built from 2003 to 2005”. In addition, ICSC estimates that another three hybrid malls (enclosed design combined with open air format) and three value-oriented malls (outlet tenants with entertainment themes) will be opened during this time period. In sum, that represents over 21 million square feet of GLA or about 1,234,900 square feet per center. For 2000-2002, 12 regional/superregional centers, 11 hybrid centers and five value-oriented malls opened. Those 28 large centers represent 32,203,000 square feet, or 1,150,100 square feet per center.

The purpose of these figures is to demonstrate the trend in mall development. Older, declining malls face major competitive disadvantages when compared to the growing number of lifestyle centers. As a result, operators of greyfields sites need to analyze site potential in terms of these market trends. The options are to continue to compete for mobile capital—consumer dollars—or to redefine themselves as community assets in a new and different way.

## **Challenges and Incentives**

### ***The Role of Planning***

The City of Charlotte has undertaken an extensive survey of its greyfields problem. Deborah Currier, a real estate professional for the city of Charlotte who conducts inventories about big box retailers, estimates that Charlotte—a city of about 550,000 residents—has over two million square feet of vacant big box real estate. Currier identified the following barriers to greyfields reuse:

- changing shopping demographics

- altering an old structure may trigger expensive new site requirements
- changing road configurations and traffic patterns
- sites that are too tight
- inability of the market to support so many types of the same store
- retailers who demand their own prototype and no other
- voluntary vacancy to protect a trade area

Many of these challenges can be overcome by creative planning. This requires private and public sector coordination in terms of transportation planning, zoning, targeted development and new regulatory devices to promote infill development.

Potential incentives needed to promote greyfields redevelopment must balance market forces with community planning. For instance, cities could implement rehabilitation codes that would not burden developers with expensive requirements. Simply put, local governments need to make it easy for developers to rehabilitate these sites by using grandfather clauses. A grandfather clause is a provision of zoning law that exempts pre-existing conditions from the current regulations: for greyfields, that means allowing the use to continue based on the previous use of the site. This would allow redevelopment without conforming to today's zoning requirements for setbacks, open space requirements or other restrictions that might make the site less competitive in today's market. Cities could create a facilitator whose function it is to cut bureaucratic red tape encountered during a redevelopment project. Thus, reuse projects could be expedited through the planning and zoning process with minimal time delay.

Planners need to be creative and realize that many zoning ordinances can impede redevelopment of older facilities. Thus, greyfields redevelopment might benefit from reduced parking requirements. Similarly, regulatory relief from tree ordinances and mandatory setbacks would enable developers to maximize the acreage for development purposes. Density bonuses could be granted to developers interested in reusing greyfields sites for residential purposes. In addition, financial incentives like tax abatement or beautification grants could be used to promote greyfields investment.

As the example of Charlotte makes clear, incentives alone are only one part of the equation. Careful planning for future growth can lessen the negative consequences of suburban development, and make use of existing resources within developed areas. Greater attention to comprehensive plans is needed to ensure sustainable development. Transportation planners must work with economic development officials, community groups, environmental agencies and the real estate community. Otherwise, the current greyfields dilemma may be perpetuated further and further from the urban core.

Many communities across the country are limiting the sizes of big box development—large scale, stand alone retail stores like Home Depot and Wal-Mart— by utilizing smart growth development codes. In addition, some communities require the posting of demolition bonds when large retail centers are built. If, in the future, the buildings are vacated the bonds are used to demolish the structures. Another tactic used by some communities is enforcing minimum building standards. This strategy would require retail



and commercial developers to use real brick or mandated architectural styles, for instance, when developing new centers.

As communities continue to struggle with the dual forces of growth in new areas and decline in older, developed areas, new partnerships are being forged with parties traditionally ignored in the development process. Schools are becoming more and more important players in the development game, and are potential beneficiaries in greyfields reuse. School districts from Maine to Wisconsin are spending hundreds of millions of dollars in new school construction while simultaneously experiencing little population growth. Both schools and government agencies could commit to greyfields reuse prior to breaking ground on new sites.

New approaches to development are needed if greyfields redevelopment is to occur on a large scale. This will require new partnerships, innovative thinking and strategic incentives designed to integrate market forces with planning techniques.

### ***Retail or Mixed Use?***

Greyfields are a topic of interest to urban analysts because they fit well with other redevelopment trends. Namely, greyfields are ideally situated to promote both urban *infill* and *sustainable* development. Infill development is simply that—filling in urban areas overlooked or abandoned in earlier development stages. Urban infill retrofits the city to new market and community opportunities. Sustainable development is an attempt to grow in a more environmentally conscious way, promoting reuse of land over development of suburban tracts, forests and farm land. Current trends that support huge regional centers, often located on key interstate exchanges, promote less sustainable, automobile-dependent development on the urban fringe. Redeveloping greyfields is a valuable tool in the efforts to slow urban sprawl.

One of the most exciting types of greyfields redevelopment is to rehabilitate older malls into mixed-use sites. The cornerstone of these type projects is converting the retail center into transit-oriented projects that contain a mix of retail, commercial and residential uses. Mixed use is a popular term among planning professionals, but has not been widely accepted within the real estate industry—especially in terms of redeveloping a dead or deteriorating mall. However, the fact that a mall is decaying can be an indication that it has outlived its original purpose. The solution requires reconfiguring the mall to meet community, business and political needs. That is, to redevelop a site in a way that generates revenue for the operator, fulfills community goals and contributes to the local tax base.

### ***Greyfields to Town Squares?***

Sometimes a mall goes out of business because it has lost its economic reasons for being. But almost every community needs something. Stop thinking about these as failed shopping center properties and start thinking

about them as potential mixed-use properties. *Victor Dover, Architect* (Greyfields to Goldfields 4).

How can malls be reused to promote stronger communities? One of the biggest obstacles to mixed use development is current zoning laws. Traditional zoning tends to separate land uses rather than mixing them. Most developers and community planning models operate under traditional zoning assumptions. As a result, we have inadvertently created automobile dependent regions where residential uses are separated from retail and commercial activity. Planners in cities like Nashville are trying to develop new zoning districts that would make it easier for developers to create traditional neighborhoods. As Nashville Planning Director Rick Bernhardt points out, “It’s common to think of each community having an urban core in the center with each of the subsequent zones around it.” Many suburban communities lack a traditional core, and greyfields are large enough and central enough to perform this function if configured properly.

Greyfields are a tremendous opportunity for communities to redefine themselves with a traditional town center. Streetscapes can be designed that connect the mall with surrounding neighborhoods. Transit stops can be incorporated that provide transportation to employment opportunities both on- and off-site. Public spaces like libraries, government offices, college campuses, or service agencies can contribute to the appeal of the redevelopment. As mentioned earlier, the size of most greyfields make them suitable for residential development, as well. The variety of land uses reinforces one another in a way that promotes activity around the site throughout the entire day and week.

Not all greyfields are good candidates for mixed use projects. Developers want a reasonable return-on-investment, and are hesitant to invest in risky projects. Nevertheless, the public sector can also play a vital role in redeveloping greyfields. The size and location of greyfields make many suitable locations for schools, college campuses, parks, government offices, and non-profits. Finding the right use for a greyfields site requires vision and going beyond “repackaging the shopping experience.” Throughout the remainder of this manual, recommendations for greyfields redevelopment are made. Particular attention is put on understanding community dynamics, neighborhood goals and market needs.

## **Best Practices**

*Demalling* is defined as rehabilitating a former mall into a new land use. As mentioned earlier in the report, options include mixed-, civic or further retail uses. While it makes perfect sense to redevelop greyfields, the practical reality is much more complex. Projects involve numerous stakeholders, millions of dollars, complicated partnerships and community consensus. The following factors, in no particular order, are essential to facilitating a greyfields project from vision to fruition.

### ***Community Involvement and Public Participation***

For this guide, a variety of real estate professionals, architects and government officials were interviewed to derive a list of specific steps necessary to redefine aging malls. One

of the main themes echoed by those involved in greyfields development is that it is essential to know the relationship of the mall to the community. What role has the center played in the development of the community? How deep is local sentiment for the facility? How can the redevelopment plan balance community needs with business interests? To answer these questions, local residents and merchants must be included in the plan.

Most people are familiar with the NIMBY concept (Not In My BackYard). For many communities, a known greyfield is better than an unknown redevelopment. Residents often fear change, and instinctively resist plans that might alter their local environment. As such, public participation is a cornerstone of greyfields redevelopment.

Without community buy-in, efforts to redevelop greyfields are likely to fail. The Continuum Group in Denver was the developer behind the successful redevelopment of Villa Italia in Lakewood, CO ([www.villa-lakewood.com](http://www.villa-lakewood.com)). The site had served as a retail hub since the 1960s but had suffered from lack of investment over the years. Following New Urbanist principles, the redevelopment transitioned the 104 acre site from pure retail to a mixed-use facility that includes 1,300 homes, 900,000 square feet of retail space, a 250 room hotel, four acres of parks, plazas and green spaces, a major grocery store, and 9,000 parking spaces. The project is lauded as a model in greyfields redevelopment, but it was anything but easy to achieve. It required an extensive amount of community participation.

As one of the project architects explained:

The site had history of proposed ideas but the local community shot them down. To overcome this mistrust, we had to build support and consensus. We didn't rush in with ideas and plans. We worked with the community to understand what has happened, the potential for the mall, the character of place desired, the appropriate use for the future ... and spent a lot of time with people so they understood what we were doing and what we were trying to achieve.

This approach built understanding, credibility and trust. The city also engaged citizens by creating an advisory group that represented a cross-section of the community. Thanks to this process, the redevelopment avoided potential pitfalls from concerned citizens.

### ***Consolidation of Real Estate Interests***

Like many real estate deals, redevelopment can be complicated by the conflicting goals of multiple property owners. In many cases, tenants, owners of mall properties and owners of adjacent properties can sabotage redevelopment plans. Some tenants, for instance, have veto powers over site redevelopment plans. Unless an entity has control of the property or can gain effective control, a project can be paralyzed. Lease terms can contain rights that tenants and owners use as bargaining chips. Negotiation is the key to overcoming this obstacle, but the threat of public sector condemnation might be needed to fight stubborn interest-holders. Tom Dujan, architect on the Villa Italia project explains that “willingness and a good idea is not enough because sub-interests can keep

things from happening. In our case, the city was willing to use its condemnation power to make sure consolidation of interests occurred.” This requires considerable expenditures of both time and money.

Local government was also willing to use the power of eminent domain at the Bayshore Mall near Milwaukee, WI. In this case, the old mall was too small to meet market demand and needed to expand from 500,000 square feet to 1 million square feet. When completed, the project will have 400,000 square feet of retail, 100,000 square feet of office, and 20-40 town homes adjoining a walkable community. Eventually the development will include restaurants, a health club, health clinic, theater, and a specialty grocer.

### ***Public-Private Commitment***

As mentioned earlier, mixed use greyfields projects can be expensive. Increasing density and promoting connectivity requires substantial infrastructure investments. The amount of pavement needed for streets, parks, plazas and sidewalks is costly. Additionally, most of these sites are not able to charge for parking given the suburban location of most malls. In order to fund radical site improvements, the public sector must be willing to invest in the project. The developer, community and local government must work together to create a public financing structure to make a walkable community a reality. Project advocates have to convince potential partners of the economic payoffs of such an investment. Thus, a high level of sophistication is needed in order to coordinate funding mechanisms that are in the long-term interests of all deal partners.

### ***Knowledge***

Most of those interviewed were adamant about the need to start greyfields developments from scratch, and to avoid a cookie-cutter approach to these sites. First, redevelopers need to know if the product or service is going to do well in its location. This is dependent upon local market conditions and development practices. Getting the right physical environment will vary from site-to-site according to parcel size, surrounding architectural styles, and accepted community standards.

A danger exists in pursuing a formulaic approach to greyfields redevelopment. For instance, creating the right site plan requires an in-depth knowledge of public spaces, proper street widths and sidewalk dimensions that are not standard in any redevelopment. Developers need to know what works and what doesn't in terms of architecture and public space. Hundreds of subtle choices about the project scale, the relationship of buildings to the street, how to animate sidewalks, promoting connectivity and others will ultimately determine whether the project works. In some contexts, this means the project must not cut corners on buildings, design, and public art. Of course, all of these factors have an impact on the project cost.

Each project should be unique and have its own integrity. Whether it's a mixed use plan or a retail conversion, lack of knowledge about design, local market trends and community needs could doom a project. Starting with a clean slate and approaching each greyfields site in the proper context is a way to avoid failure.

### ***Tenant Mix***

A major challenge is to get the right mix of tenants that has the right mix. The physical environment has to be structured in a way that is appealing to the desired tenants (the design cannot be an “after thought”). For a mixed-use facility, the challenge is to attract a significant retail base coupled with an employment function that has people living in it, not just near it. Does the tenant mix create the right energy? Often times, this requires a balance between local and chain businesses. Local businesses can contribute to the uniqueness and integrity of a project, but local boutiques, restaurants and galleries have to be economically viable. Likewise, over-reliance on chain businesses creates another shopping experience that can be replicated at other regional shopping alternatives.

Residential adds vitality and energy to a project. Onsite residents make the community active 24 hours per day. Residents are seeking a unique experience which means rents could be high. The challenge is to create a living environment that is not easily duplicated in the traditional suburb. In turn, this means that certain income groups might not be able to afford residential rents. If the project is successful, the community must remain attuned of local community sentiment for the project as newcomers move to the neighborhood.

### ***Management***

Many of the suggestions found herein sound great, but whatever plan is decided upon has to be a sound economic model that works. The project must create land value and generate rents from tenants. Mixed-use projects are inherently management-intensive environments. Twenty-four hour activity mandates more security, maintenance and oversight. From acquisition to consolidation to leasing, the economic construct must be sustainable. To achieve this, a strong management team must be created.

The role of management is equally important in non mixed-use projects. Building neighborhood coalitions, public-private sector partnerships and attracting capital requires trust in the plan’s business model. Without strong leadership, most projects will have difficulty going beyond the planning stages.

### ***Traffic***

Greyfields were designed to handle large volumes of traffic. One consideration that can promote even traffic flows is to spread uses to avoid traffic peaks. A movie theater, for instance, attracts evening traffic. Retail peaks generally occur on weekends. Residential traffic peaks occur in the morning and evening rush hours. By having a healthy mix of tenants, the development can limit its impact on the internal and external transit system.

### ***Realism***

Site operators and developers need to be flexible. Not every site can be a mixed-use development that attracts upscale tenants. Acquisition, demolition and redevelopment are expensive. In reality, many greyfields will have to settle for less than the ideal. Greyfields are opportunities to reuse a community asset in a way that meets the needs of current residents. After a realistic assessment of development options, reuse might have to be

geared towards strict residential, public parks, educational facilities, back office business operations or some other use.

The end-use is largely driven by the goals of the project. If the goal is to generate sales taxes, then retail is the preferred use. If the goal is to provide needed community services, then some type of civic facility might be the preferred option. The lesson is that greyfields can be more than just department stores.

### ***Retail Options***

Not all struggling malls are abandoning retail in favor of mixed use concepts. Wal-Mart, Target, Kohls and other large retailers are starting to view greyfields as attractive locations. In the last three years, Wal-Mart has opened multiple stores in San Diego, Los Angeles, Dallas, Houston, and Milwaukee and within 20 miles of New York City. Wal-Mart recently opened a store in a former Macy's that is part of an 820,000 square foot mall in Baldwin Hills Crenshaw (National Real Estate Investor, 6/25/03). One of the key factors in the decision to open the store was the population density—over 360,000 people live within three miles of the center. As suburban opposition to big boxes rises, retailers might look to inner-city or inner-suburb greyfields for new business opportunities. A retail consulting firm estimates that discount retailers will fill 300 anchor spots in malls over the next decade (Business Week, 8/14/03).

Another retail option in communities undergoing demographic changes is the ethnic mall. Most 1960s and 1970s malls were designed for middle-class white customers. In some cases, the migration of African-Americans, Asian Americans and Latinos has altered the composition of greyfields communities. Some retailers, unable to understand new market niches, have simply walked away over the years. Yet, in many neighborhoods, malls have evolved into ethnic retail centers that cater to the needs of local residents in a way that builds customer loyalty and strong demand. To those unfamiliar with the local culture, some of these centers can be labeled unattractive or rundown. However, to the local residents, these centers provide a mix of products and services lacking in the typical mall. The public sector can potentially lease space to provide needed social services and to reach out to new community members.

### ***Community Reinvestment Options***

An excellent example of a genuine community development asset is the Jackson Medical Mall in Jackson, MS. As the process of suburbanization accelerated in Jackson, the mall started dying in 1987 and remained mostly vacant for 10 years. The mall (850,000 square feet) is surrounded by a low-income, African-American community largely dependent upon public transportation. Today, the facility is an excellent example of marshalling the community reinvestment potential of greyfields.

The Medical Mall delivers much needed health services to an underserved population. In addition to healthcare providers, the tenant mix includes grocers, community development organizations, restaurants, beauty salons, shoe stores, social service agencies, a credit union and education providers. In fact, Jackson State University, The University of Mississippi (through its medical school) and Tougaloo College conduct

research and hold classes in the Medical Mall. The Hinds County Health Department, local utilities and multiple social service agencies operate at the mall.

The Medical Mall is an example of how greyfields redevelopment can succeed in even low-income environments. The process of transition from a regional shopping mall to obsolescence to community asset took over a decade. The success of the project was attributable to a strong vision, a realistic assessment of community needs and the ability to build a team of actors dedicated to community reinvestment. The coalition of health care providers, universities, community development organizations, local businesses and local/state government was held together by a common goal to serve the community. Information on the Jackson Medical Mall can be found at the following website: <http://www.jacksonmedicalmall.org>.

### ***Mining Greyfields Opportunities***

Projects like Villa Italia show that greyfields can be profitable investments. However, for each Villa Italia there is a Cloverleaf Mall in Richmond, VA. Cloverleaf sits on 200 acres and its assessed value has fallen from \$65 million in 1995 to \$12 million in 2003. Property taxes generated by the mall have dropped from \$700,000 to \$130,000 during the same time period. Over the years, affluent residents have left the neighborhood, anchor tenants have abandoned the site and the surrounding community is perceived as dangerous. The site might not generate the financial return needed to attract trendy retailers, but it might better serve the community by serving the educational, social service and residential needs of local residents.

### **Conclusion**

The best practices found in this manual are a starting point. They are derived from case studies of projects in multiple environments. Hopefully, they demonstrate how greyfields can be mined in a way that contributes to the quality of local communities. Depending upon local market conditions and circumstances, greyfields redevelopment must be flexible and respond to neighborhood needs. The Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC) has actively engaged community members on the issue of greyfields redevelopment ([www.arc.org/greyfields.html](http://www.arc.org/greyfields.html)). The ARC focused on the role of the public sector in spurring greyfields redevelopment, and is geared toward public sector agencies attempting to develop a greyfields plan. ARC identifies several key variables associated with successful greyfields programs, including:

- Identifying Potential Greyfields Sites Ripe for Redevelopment
- Involving Stakeholders
- Building Public-Private Partnerships
- Creating Multi-Disciplinary Teams
- Committing Funding for Implementation

Many cities have gained valuable experience following these steps while developing Brownfields programs. Many of the lessons from brownfields are transferable to greyfields (See Practice Guide #1). Creating greyfields inventories, for instance, is crucial

to identifying those sites that need public sector financial support. The process of building partnerships with community stakeholders and cultivating multi-disciplinary teams is essential to greyfields, and many cities have model programs that can be used to spur greyfields redevelopment.

The information in this report provides a framework. By starting with fresh perspectives, business and residential communities can begin the exciting task of converting greyfields back into community assets.



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