

Strategies for Restoring Vacant Land

An analysis of Northeast cities with recommendations for New Haven

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OVERVIEW

New Haven has over 700 vacant lots in residential neighborhoods, a legacy of the sweeping economic and social changes of the past 30 years experienced by cities throughout the East Coast and the Midwest. Vacant lots invite socially and environmentally destructive activities, such as drug trafficking and midnight dumping of debris and toxic wastes. The lots fill in with weeds and brush, and combined with the litter and larger dumped materials—construction debris, appliances, furniture—blight their surroundings. In all, these lots impose a terrible social, economic, and environmental cost on neighborhoods.

The City of New Haven, The Community Foundation for Greater New Haven, and local nonprofit organizations have come together to form a unique partnership to help urban neighborhoods restore and improve their environment through community-based programs. This new partnership has helped New Haven residents make significant inroads to solving the problem of vacant, blighted land. Through the New Haven Land Trust's community gardens program, residents have created over 50 community gardens on vacant lots; the Urban Resources Initiative's Greenspace program has assisted community groups in restoring 18 vacant lots, and in designing and managing numerous neighborhood parks and streetscapes; Urban Solutions has restored three lots, and cleans numerous lots each year by contract with the City. Clearly, these programs have been crucial in helping residents take back their neighborhoods.

In 1998, the City and its nonprofit partners created the Abandoned Lot Task Force to focus on the

problems of abandonment and seek better solutions. Building on the successes of the community and City efforts to clean and restore lots, the Task Force is now searching for ways to step-up the restoration process, with the ultimate goal of eliminating the blight on all vacant land in New Haven. The Task Force is in the early stages of information-gathering and brainstorming on the issue, and this report is intended to contribute to the Task Force's current needs by examining the approaches of four cities to eliminate blighted, abandoned land. These four cities—Philadelphia, Providence, Boston, and Hartford—are presented as case studies that summarize the strategies each city has employed. A set of recommendations follows that hopes to help the Task Force apply the knowledge gained from the case studies to New Haven's situation.

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CASE STUDY 1: PHILADELPHIA, PA

Population: 1.5 million

Abandoned lots: 30,900 residential lots (lot size: less than 1 acre)

Introduction

The Pennsylvania Horticulture Society's Philadelphia Green (PG) program is the driving force behind restoration of residential vacant lots in Philadelphia. They have a staff of 50 and an annual operating budget for 1999 of \$3.75 million, \$2.8 million being spent on community greening projects. Philadelphia Green has been in existence since 1974, working with neighborhood residents on local environmental restoration projects. In partnership with residents and local nonprofit organizations, PG has restored over 2,000 vacant lots. While this number is significant, because of the scale of Philadelphia's vacant lot problem, PG concluded that a more concerted approach to restoring vacant land was necessary. They have undertaken two programmatic efforts to work toward a comprehensive solution to Philadelphia's vacant land problem. The first is "The New Kensington Project," a partnership project with the New Kensington Community Development Corporation to restore all the vacant lots in their neighborhood. This project is discussed in detail below.

The second effort is a study entitled "Vacant Land Re-use in Philadelphia: A Study and Action Plan," funded by the William Penn Foundation. As its title suggests, this study will examine the vacant land problem in detail and propose a comprehensive solution. The first completed report to

come from this study, "Vacant Land Management in Philadelphia Neighborhoods: Cost Benefit Analysis," demonstrates that the City of Philadelphia could actually generate revenue (\$1.54 for every \$1 invested) by applying a basic environmental restoration treatment to its vacant lots. The restoration design consists of grading, seeding with grass, and planting trees along the perimeter (to discourage illegal dumping).

The cost-benefit report projects positive net revenue generation based on three direct economic gains from lot treatment: 1) increased tax revenue from transferring title of a small percentage of restored lots to abutting owners; 2) increased tax revenue due to increased assessed value of property immediately around the improved vacant parcels; 3) reduction of city costs for ongoing trash and brush removal efforts. (In this case, treatment will both reduce illegal dumping and reduce the number of lots the city must clean by transferring title of some lots to responsible private parties.) The cost benefit report has important implications for The City of New Haven, since it may be possible to implement a similar program here and gain similar economic returns for the City. (For more information on the cost-benefit report, see Appendix A, "Summary of Findings," pp.1-3 of "Vacant Land Management in Philadelphia Neighborhoods.")

The New Kensington Neighborhood Open Space Management Project

Because of the scale of the vacant lot problem, in 1995 PG had begun seeking a more effective way to eliminate the blight associated with so much derelict land. As a result of discussions with Philadelphia's Office of Housing and Community Development (OHCD), they decided to target one neighborhood in which all vacant lots would be restored. In 1996, Philadelphia Green entered into a partnership with the New Kensington Community Development Corporation (NKCDC) to implement a restoration plan for its 1,100 vacant residential lots. The pilot program is funded by CDBG funds through OHCD and private foundation funds (primarily The William Penn Foundation and The Pew Charitable Trusts), and is in the third year of its five-year funding period. To date, project expenditures are \$1.74 million, or about \$600,000 per year.

The PG–NKCDC partnership has been successful for a number of reasons. First, both organizations were independently examining the vacant land problem and considering ways to address it. The NKCDC had recently completed a participatory planning process for the neighborhood, with residents, local businesses, and institutions attending over 100 planning meetings. Two things happened during the planning process that positioned NKCDC to be an effective partner with PG. In the planning meetings, community members repeatedly identified vacant land as a neighborhood-wide obstacle to improving the quality of life in New Kensington. Their voices demonstrated that the issue was of genuine neighborhood concern and therefore that grassroots support for creating a solution existed. Additionally, because of its participatory approach to planning, the CDC had identified and connected with a base of volunteer residents it could mobilize for the community-based aspects of the vacant lot restoration plan subsequently

developed. The second factor in the success of the partnership was the economic and social conditions that characterize the New Kensington neighborhood. While abandonment and other social ills are sufficiently widespread to be causing serious harm, the neighborhood is still vibrant and relatively well-off economically in comparison to other urban areas in Philadelphia. The community activism that the neighborhood has exhibited is a reflection of its strong social fabric. Finally, there was strong leadership at NKCDC in the person of John Carpenter (its director at that time), and he made neighborhood environmental restoration a top priority.

Community involvement in planning and other decisions continues to be an integral part of the NK Project. Neighborhood residents, business owners, and representatives from local institutions sit on the Open Space Committee, which develops and oversees the New Kensington Project's plans for vacant land. Town meetings provide another way for residents to contribute to shaping the Project.

The New Kensington Project restores vacant lots via one of three programs. Under the Clean and Green program, lots are restored and maintained using a simple design of grass and trees. The purpose of this program is to provide an interim management solution for vacant lots until the community identifies a permanent use for the land. This is the most ambitious of the three programs in the sense that it seeks to eliminate the blight on all lots for which no permanent use has been found, which includes the vast majority of New Kensington's vacant lots. The rationale for the restoration design, then, lies in its economy: to restore and manage as much idle land as possible, the unit cost of restoration must be minimized. The design has worked well, deterring illegal dumping and improving the appearance of the urban environment.

For most lots in the Clean and Green program, neighborhood groups initiate the restoration effort by identifying a site for cleanup and approaching NKCDC for assistance. The CDC then assigns the lot to a private contractor who works with the residents to restore it. Together they clean the lot of debris, grade it and apply topsoil using heavy machinery, then seed and plant it. The neighborhood groups are also responsible for maintenance, which consists primarily of mowing and trash removal. For some lots, especially those located along main arteries or in commercial areas, the CDC's Open Space Committee identifies the need for restoration, and work is done by contractor in cooperation with neighborhood volunteers. The CDC then maintains these lots with their two-person field crew (positions funded under the NK Project budget), again with assistance from resident volunteers whenever possible. The CDC field crew also acts as a back-up for maintenance of lots that are normally the responsibility of the neighborhood groups, since the strength of community groups fluctuates over time. This arrangement allows for maximum community involvement but avoids lapses in maintenance that can degrade the neighborhood's environment and sap morale. To date, 370 lots have been restored under the Clean and Green program.

The Sideyard program facilitates the transfer of abandoned property to abutting owners. Although The City of Philadelphia has had a sideyard program for some time, cumbersome bureaucratic procedures, understaffed offices, and poor outreach to residents resulted in a low rate of conveyance. The New Kensington Project improved the process by bringing in a consultant who informs residents of the program, assists them in the application process, and walks the applications through the City's system. In addition, the City has designated an employee who is responsible for keeping the applications moving through the City offices. Sideyard transfer rates are up substantially, with 158 lots transferred in New Kensington under the new program.

Finally, as it does across Philadelphia, the New Kensington Project enlists PG to assist neighborhood groups in creating community gardens on vacant lots. The main difference from PG's citywide gardening program is that in the New Kensington Project, PG works closely with NKCDC to incorporate the gardening program as part of the overall strategy for neighborhood restoration. Whether and where more gardens are started, then, is no longer driven solely by local community group demand, but also by the larger, ongoing planning processes of the NK Project. Currently there are 62 community gardens in the neighborhood. The designation community garden covers a wide range of designs, from traditional vegetable gardens to densely vegetated lots with ornamental trees and shrubs, meandering pathways, arbors, etc. A large brownfield lot is now the site of a for-profit hydroponic vegetable farm, which sells its produce to restaurants.

The three programs, then, have together restored about 590 of the 1,100 vacant lots since the project's inception. In addition to lot restoration, there is a streetscape improvement program that has completed 48 projects. Finally, the Project created a Community Garden Center, built in the central neighborhood area on vacant land. The Center provides plants at low cost, free compost and topsoil, and hosts seasonal events, fundraisers, and celebrations. The CDC's 2-person field crew staffs the Center.

City Involvement with the New Kensington Project

To date, the City of Philadelphia has been involved with the project only on a very limited basis. Specifically, the City has agreed to remove jersey barriers from lots scheduled for restoration and to allow trash and debris collected at green restoration projects to be dumped at the City's waste disposal transfer station without charge. Philadelphia Green and New Kensington CDC would like the city to be more involved, but City cooperation gained so far has been hard won. Based on the City's unresponsiveness to past overtures, PG believes greater City involvement is unlikely at present. It is hoped, however, that the vacant land study's findings will provide the kind of

information that will motivate City and State government to become players in the process of vacant land improvement.

CASE STUDY 2: BOSTON, MA

Population: 575,000

Abandoned lots: no data

Introduction

Boston has benefited significantly from the economic growth of the '90's; consequently, development interests have made land a valuable commodity. Boston is therefore under a different set of conditions with regard to the question of improving and utilizing vacant land in comparison with New Haven, as well as the other cities in this study. However, Boston has been struggling with the problem of vacant land since the '70's, and municipal and neighborhood institutions developed over time in response to it.

The model of vacant land restoration that developed in Boston grew out of a grassroots movement to use open space for gardening. Residents began gardening on vacant lots in the '70's, a use that reflected in part the farming tradition in the cultures of many of the more recent immigrants to the Boston area, including African Americans moving up from the South, Cape Verdeans, Puerto Ricans, Dominicans, Haitians, Jamaicans, and a number of Asian cultures. In response to the interest in gardening, the City provided assistance in the creation of more gardens, and protected sites on City land from development. The cost of maintaining the gardens proved beyond the City's means, however, and in the late '70's the City asked the Trust for Public Land to assist in creating local land trusts to assume title to these lands, as well as the responsibility for management of the gardens.

Boston's Grassroots Program

With continued citizen interest in gardens in the '80's, and on the heels of a political disaster in which a community garden in Chinatown on City property was sold to developers, the City renewed its commitment to the garden movement by establishing the Grassroots Program under the Department of Neighborhood Development. The program funds the capital costs of creating about ten new gardens per year, funded largely by federal CDBG grants, but also using City monies, private grants, and donations. Community groups who show sufficient organization and commitment are awarded a grant for the construction of a permanent garden. The grants are substantial, usually between \$50,000 and \$100,000, and are used to design and construct a garden that conveys a sense of permanency, beauty, and community vitality. In some cases, costs have run in the \$200,000 range when low level environmental contamination has required site remediation.

Grassroots program gardens require that a landscape architect be hired, who works with the community gardeners to create a formal design, complete with blueprints. Contractors, often in concert with gardeners, then build the garden. Raised beds, usually built from formal landscape-grade stones, pathways of stone, brick, or cement, gazebos, sitting areas, and wood or steel picket fences atop a raised perimeter foundation of granite or cement typify the design elements of most of these gardens. Where required by law, handicap access is part of the design. Some gardens are more modest, using wood edging for beds and stone dust for paths, but all are formal and pleasing in appearance, adding a great deal of the beauty to their surroundings. The City sees the construction costs as a prudent investment considering the benefits provided by an infrastructure that is beautiful and built to last, thus encouraging the full use and proper maintenance of the garden for many years.

Gardens developed under the Grassroots program are usually built on land held by the City, but once they are constructed they are transferred to one of the local land trusts. These trusts, for example the Boston Natural Areas Fund, and the South End/Lower Roxbury Open Space Land Trust, then assume management responsibilities, such as assisting the gardeners with the ongoing operation and maintenance of the garden, community outreach, celebrations, etc. In addition to the gardens under the management of either the Grassroots program or the land trusts, there are gardens on city and state park lands. In all there are around 80 gardens owned by the land trusts and 70 on state or city lands.

The Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative

Among the most innovative nonprofit community organizations in the entire U.S. is the Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative (DSNI). The DSNI mission is "to empower Dudley residents to organize, plan for, create and control a vibrant, high quality and diverse neighborhood in collaboration with community partners." Created in 1984, the organization is an experiment in community-based planning and redevelopment, bringing residents together to create a shared vision for the neighborhood to guide development decisions and projects directed by DSNI. Regularly held town hall meetings give residents the opportunity to contribute to discussions about various projects and proposals. The Board of Directors is the formal decisionmaking body, and its members are elected biennially by dues-paying residents of the Dudley Street Neighborhood. The Board is composed of residents of the neighborhood and representatives from neighborhood businesses and institutions.

Beyond its planning and development efforts, DSNI has introduced other kinds of community programs. It created a campaign to encourage residents to buy from local businesses, an educational outreach campaign to inform residents of the new federal Earned Income Tax Credit

for 1998, and a youth program to help develop young people into future community leaders. DSNI has built community centers, and helps organize classes and multi-cultural events and celebrations that take place there.

Success in implementing development plans depends on the ability to take control of the land. In a novel move, DSNI secured the legal right of eminent domain over its neighborhood. In 1984 there were 1,300 vacant lots in the Dudley Street area, many under private ownership. Eminent domain has allowed DSNI to realize many projects for the benefit of the community, such as a town common, community gardens, and new homes. About 500 of the vacant lots have been reclaimed for productive uses, each an integral part of the overall community plan for revitalizing the area. DSNI has worked with other nonprofits to develop uses for vacant land, such as the Food Project, which has reclaimed two acres for cultivation. The Food Project brings together youth from the suburbs and the inner city to work in the gardens and to distribute the food to soup kitchens and shelters.

CASE STUDY 3: PROVIDENCE, RI

Population: 170,000

Abandoned lots: 4,000

Introduction

In the mid 90's, citizen groups pressured the City of Providence into taking its first steps toward solving the problem of vacant land. In 1996, the Mayor convened the Vacant Land Task Force, composed of City officials and citizen group representatives, to examine the problem and to make recommendations. The vast majority of the property is still held privately, and because the problem is largely one of blighted and neglected land, the City has pursued legal and enforcement reforms aimed at inducing owners to clean up and to maintain their property. In addition, city agency reforms are in place to improve maintenance on city-owned vacant land.

Many of the vacant lots are contaminated with pollutants. During the 60's and 70's urban property values plummeted, and hundreds of houses were abandoned and subsequently burned down by arson or demolished. Pollutants from older houses, such as asbestos, lead, cadmium, and oil from underground storage tanks, contaminated the ground as a result. Later, illegal dumping, primarily of petroleum wastes, added to the contamination at these sites. Recently, the Department of Public Works and Brown University's Center for Environmental Studies undertook a vacant lot survey,

ranking Providence's vacant lots according to environmental hazards. The survey identified 595 lots as posing an "imminent danger," with another 1,500 earning a rating of "significant danger." The City has used this information to prioritize cleanup efforts.

Municipal Reforms: Changes in Laws and Agency Practices

Providence has attacked the problem of blight on privately owned lots through its new Clean and Lien program, created by an integrated set of legal and agency reforms. The City can now order property owners to clean up lots or let the City clean it and pay a \$500 fine. Should the owner fail to pay the fine, a new "Environmental Super Lien" law allows the City to enter the fine as a lien against the property. The new law allows the lien to be recorded in first position, which means that it is to be paid out before any other liens against the property. This greatly increases the likelihood that the City will recover its costs for cleanup, and has made possible a concerted effort to clean up the worst lots identified in the vacant lot survey. Monies collected from fines and liens are put into a special Public Works account dedicated solely to covering future environmental cleanup costs. The City has also cleaned its own vacant lots, and is providing for regular maintenance through department budgets. Finally, to reduce illegal dumping, Providence created the Neighborhood Drop and Dump Center, where residents can dump at no charge material that is normally difficult to get rid of legally.

The second set of reforms center around the newly created Environmental Law Court, a municipal court dedicated to hearing cases involving violations of environmental laws. Cases are heard in a timely manner, and the court's conviction rate is high—over 90%. The court issues arrest warrants for illegal dumping when evidence can be found at the site, and the City has been successful in prosecuting these cases. When parties fail to appear in court, a newly created default law allows the judge to find against the defendant and issue a fine which is turned over to a collection agency. The court also issues arrest warrants for so-called scofflaws, i.e., repeat violators who fail to appear in court. Part of the money collected from penalties is put into the Public Works environmental cleanup account.

Non-Governmental Organizations

There are a few nonprofits utilizing vacant land in Providence, but their contribution to solving the problem is limited in comparison to the quantity of land. The only nonprofit in Providence engaged in greenspace projects is the Southside Community Land Trust, which manages fifteen community gardens. The other primary use of vacant land is for in-fill housing, done through neighborhood nonprofits. The number of in-fill houses being built is low, however, and such projects are limited to larger vacant lots that can support a house with a driveway or yard.

CASE STUDY 4: HARTFORD, CT

Population: 120,000

Abandoned lots: 800

Introduction

By 1996 the number of abandoned properties in Hartford had risen to over 800, and the City decided to take action by implementing a plan to foreclose on all such properties over a period of eight years. The goal of the City's foreclosure plan is to bring all properties back into productive use and onto the tax rolls by stabilizing and maintaining them sufficiently to attract buyers in the future. The foreclosure policy, then, is an interim vacant land management plan (i.e., land banking), with ultimate disposition of properties returning to private ownership. By law the City can foreclose on any property that is tax delinquent, is valued under \$50,000, and has liens in excess of its value. To date, the City has foreclosed on 306 properties, and is reselling about 50 stabilized lots per year.

Stabilizing the Lots

Most of the abandoned lots have buildings on them, so after taking possession the City determines which buildings are the highest priority for demolition. The City considers a number of factors when deciding to take down a building, such as the cost of environmental cleanup, the environmental and social risks the building poses to the community in its current state (for example, illegal use by drug dealers and users), or whether the State forbids demolition because the building is historically significant.

For sites where the building is to be removed, an environmental assessment is performed by licensed contractor, and appropriate environmental cleanups (such as removal of asbestos and underground storage tanks) are undertaken. After demolition, building foundations are taken out instead of buried. Removing the foundations is one of a number of added steps the City is taking to try to reduce the costs of redevelopment, again with the goal of returning properties to productive use as quickly as possible. In the case of buildings that are not demolished, additional steps taken to facilitate resale include abatement of environmental hazards (e.g., asbestos removal) and basic housecleaning, such as the removal of furniture and other materials.

After demolition and removal of building materials, the site is graded, covered with wood chips, and the street perimeter ringed with three-foot high bollards cut from telephone poles. The lot design was chosen because it minimizes the cost of stabilizing and maintaining the lots. The wood chips inhibit the growth of vegetation, and the lots are sprayed with Roundup herbicide as needed.

The bollards discourage illegal dumping. For some of the larger, more visible lots, arborvitae have been planted around the perimeter in place of the wood bollards. In addition to the savings in purchase price and maintenance, the wood bollards are used because they are easier to remove than trees, again encouraging resale by reducing the cost of redevelopment.

Turning Vacant land into Greenspace

Although the City is land-banking the vast majority of abandoned property for future resale, it has established some lots as greenspaces. Through the Knox Parks Foundation, a local non-profit organization, about 25 community gardens have been established where residents can grow vegetables or flowers. There were also two efforts to produce pocket parks through the Department of Environmental Protection, but these remain unfinished and their future completion is uncertain.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Below are a number of recommendations based on the information presented in the case studies. Most are probably already familiar themes to Task Force members, but should at least serve to boost their confidence that New Haven is on the right track and help solidify agreement on the elements of a comprehensive vacant land strategy. The case studies also reaffirm that New Haven is at the forefront of vacant land management in the urban environment.

CLARIFY RESTORATION GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The case studies show not only a variety of approaches, but different levels of effort and the resources needed for them. The Abandoned Lot Task Force should be engaged in clarifying at the outset the ultimate goals for restoration of abandoned land. Such goals for lot restoration should address issues such as delineating a range of restoration approaches and where they would be appropriate, the number of lots to be treated per year, the overall time frame for any envisioned city-wide restoration effort, the degree and type of community involvement in restoration programs, and so on. The studies demonstrated contrasting restoration strategies, ranging from interim management with minimum treatment to elaborate designs for community gardens at substantial cost, built to last a long time and to contribute significantly to the beautify of the neighborhood. What restoration goals should New Haven pursue? What are suitable uses for a vacant lot given the needs of the area as expressed by residents? Initial clarification of these sorts of issues must precede program design, with continual refinement and re-examination during planning and implementation.

Available and potential funding must be considered in connection with program scale. Philadelphia Green, for example, has created impressive programs, but they were only possible because of PG's success in securing substantial, long-term funding. Resources, then, are a constraint on program scale; however, goals for a larger scale program can also influence program design by building in grant research and writing activities at the front end of program creation to increase funding.

CONSIDER A TARGETED NEIGHBORHOOD STRATEGY

Both the New Kensington CDC and the Dudley Street Initiative examples suggest that there would be significant advantages to concentrating efforts on a discrete geographical area, such as one of New Haven's neighborhoods. A targeted strategy for lot restoration, especially if it were part of a larger neighborhood-level revitalization program (i.e., Empowerment Zone), is more likely to elevate the quality of urban life enough to dampen the social conditions that cause the blight and neglect of the urban environment. In other words, multiple revitalization efforts may produce synergistic effects. Selection of an appropriate neighborhood, then, should take into consideration existing and future plans for redevelopment already in place across New Haven, especially the Empowerment Zone (EZ) plans.

A targeted strategy would also simplify program design by reducing the range of suitable program components and approaches, and improve program quality by allowing it to be tailored to the strengths, characteristics, and needs of the neighborhood. Finally, this strategy creates the opportunity to learn from a prototype, allowing for adaptive management that can improve the effectiveness of programs in other neighborhoods in the future.

MAXIMIZE COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Community meetings to discuss neighborhood needs and visions has been a critical part of the Philadelphia and Dudley Street (Boston) models, the two cases where comprehensive programs to improve neighborhoods have been tried. There are strong moral and practical reasons for integrated community involvement in *both* planning and implementation. This is not a new concept for New Haven agency officials or their nonprofit partners, but merits repeating. Specific ways to increase involvement include utilizing existing EZ community-based working structures for outreach, decisionmaking, and reporting, and expanding the membership of the Abandoned Lot Task force to include representation for residents and/or members of EZ structures (e.g., from the Strengthening Neighborhoods Committee).

DEVELOP OTHER RESTORATION APPROACHES IN ADDITION TO THE DOMINANT COMMUNITY-BASED MODEL

If the City wishes to treat and maintain all or most lots in a relatively short time frame (five to ten years), it is likely that a multi-pronged strategy for treatment will have to be developed. Philadelphia

Green's experience both before and after the implementation of the PG—NKCDC partnership suggests that community-based efforts cannot provide sufficient energies to undertake restoration and long-term management for large numbers of sites. New Haven's own experience suggests that it is doubtful whether its resident-led programs could be expanded to the point where all abandoned lots would be restored and managed by community groups. Group membership, organizational ability, activity level and motivation all fluctuate over time, limiting the effectiveness of a program based solely on grassroots activism. This is not to say that community-led projects in New Haven are already at maximum capacity, or that new programs shouldn't work with the community to the greatest extent possible.

PERFORM ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENTS PRIOR TO RESTORATION

Environmental contamination, for example from illegal dumping, old building materials, and underground storage tanks, should be assumed to be present on many vacant lots. The cases of Providence and Boston bear this out. Making adequate assessments can be expensive, so available resources to assist with this work must be sought. The EPA provides some free laboratory testing services, as does CT DEP and CT Agricultural Station. Yale's School of Forestry and Environmental Studies should also be approached to explore the possibility of designing and implementing a standardized environmental assessment program. The School would benefit by undertaking the project, since it would provide valuable skills for students wishing to apply their knowledge in areas like statistical sampling theory, field sampling techniques, and laboratory testing methods and procedures. Brown University's Center for Environmental Studies should be contacted to learn about the environmental assessment method they used in Providence.

CONCLUSION

Although most of the restoration of its urban environment is still ahead, New Haven has taken important steps and, more importantly, has approached these challenges creatively. A novel relationship between the City and its nongovernmental partners has proved itself more than capable. In the course of the research for this report, it has become clear to the author that New Haven is at the forefront of successful new approaches to some of the most difficult environmental problems we face. Future success will depend in part on careful and honest evaluation of these new processes in conjunction with an open mind toward new ideas. It is well to take all of these new methods for what they are: experiments.