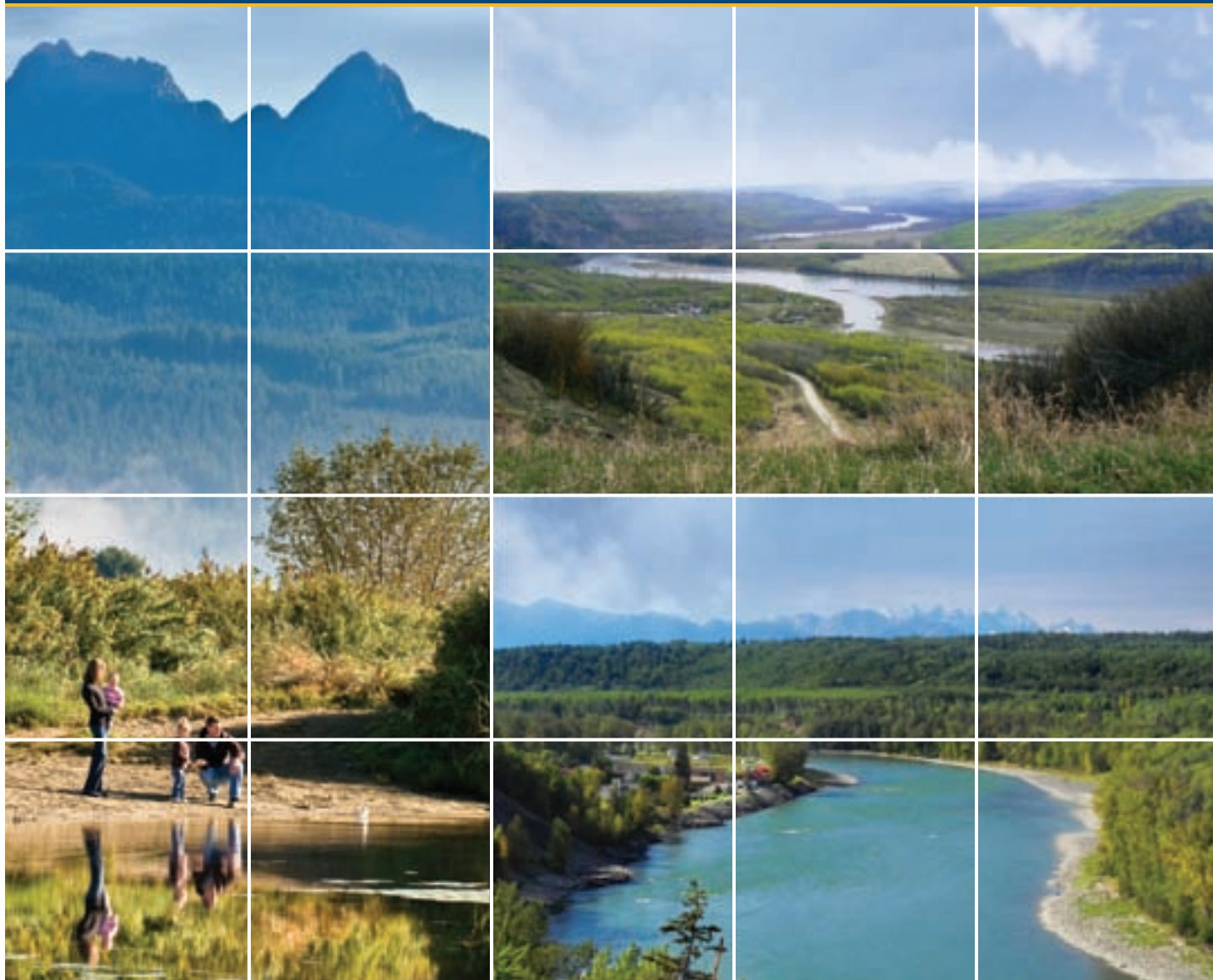


A COMMUNITY RESOURCE GUIDE FOR BROWNFIELDS REDEVELOPMENT: CASE STUDIES

B.C. BROWNFIELD RENEWAL »



BRITISH
COLUMBIA

NOTE TO USERS:

This document is intended as a “living source” of information that will be periodically updated and revised, dependant on revisions in legislation and policies, as well as ongoing changes in the methods, technologies and best practices for Brownfield projects Canada wide. Subsequently, it is recommended that this document should be utilized as a general source and guide for information on brownfield funding, renewal and redevelopment approaches. While every effort has been made to ensure information contained in this guide is as current as possible, all users of this document are encouraged to undertake additional research and exploration of current opportunities and best practices impacting brownfield projects.

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DEFINITION

***BROWNFIELD:** An abandoned, vacant, derelict or underutilized commercial or industrial property where past actions have resulted in actual or perceived contamination and where there is an active potential for redevelopment.*

Source: Defined by the National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy.

INTRODUCTION

Brownfield sites have been defined by the National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy as “abandoned, vacant, derelict or underutilized commercial or industrial properties where past actions have resulted in actual or perceived contamination and where there is an active potential for redevelopment.” These sites can be found across British Columbia, in both urban and rural municipalities.

The impacts of these sites can be considerable within a community, ranging from the health and environmental risks of potential contaminants, to the economic and social impacts of having unused or underused properties in a community. Even one or two of these sites can have significant impacts on an area, and these impacts can increase over time.

Some brownfields present attractive opportunities for redevelopment, especially in circumstances where fair market value is higher than the cost of redeveloping a site. Regardless of how financially viable a brownfield redevelopment project is, some underlying challenges still can persist including:

- » Difficulties with obtaining project funding from traditional sources of capital;
- » Potential civil and regulatory liability for environmental contamination that may remain on the site or migrate off-site;
- » Community concerns and opposition that cause project delays; and
- » Limited information, knowledge, and capacity about brownfield redevelopment.

Local governments and community groups can take a proactive role in addressing many of these challenges and can help to promote responsible brownfield redevelopment and productive reuse of brownfield sites.

This can help to achieve a number of positive economic, environmental, and social benefits within the community, including:

- » Improvements in environmental quality (soil, air, and ground water);
- » Improvements to human health;
- » Protection of groundwater resources, wetlands, and wildlife habitats;
- » Reduction of urban sprawl;
- » Reuse of existing sewer, water, and road infrastructure;
- » Economic growth, including the retention and creation of local jobs;
- » Increased property tax revenues;
- » Revitalization of neighbourhoods and employment areas; and
- » Increased opportunities for affordable housing.

In fact, community investment in transforming environmentally brownfield sites can provide substantial dividends.

A recent study of brownfield redevelopment in Canada for the National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy found that every \$1 spent in the Canadian economy on brownfield redevelopment generates approximately \$3.80 in total economic output in all industries.

The following seven case studies provide insight into how brownfield owners and community groups in British Columbia are working to reduce the barriers to brownfield redevelopment, and promote site reuses that will help to revitalize the area.

A broad range of examples are given here that highlight the role that different groups are engaging in brownfield redevelopment, and are devising creative solutions to move these sites back into productive use. The sites highlighted are at various stages of redevelopment and tell stories transferable to other brownfield redevelopment projects.

CASE STUDIES – LOCATION MAP



CASE STUDIES – REDEVELOPMENT PROJECTS



A REHABILITATING HISTORICAL FACILITIES

Tranquille on the Lake – Kamloops, B.C.

This health and wellness community is being built on the shore of Lake Kamloops, on the site of an old sanatorium and school. Coordination between the developer and the government has streamlined the permitting and cleanup processes.



B INTERIM GATHERING SPACE AND COMMUNITY ASSET

Greater Terrace Beautification Society Site – Terrace, B.C.

A former gas station site in downtown Terrace has been repurposed as an interim green space by a local community organization, working in partnership with the land owner, the local government, and the wider community. This project shows how pride of place can be important to project success.



C INTERIM DEVELOPMENT FOR LOCAL TOURISM

Chilcotin Tourism Centre – Alexis Creek, B.C.

A local community organization worked with a petroleum company to develop a tourism centre on the site of a former gas station. This is an interim use subject to a renewable agreement, which was funded through stacking of different funding sources.



D REVITALIZING AN OLD DUMP SITE

Peace Valley Lookout – Fort St. John, B.C.

This location is a steep, challenging site known in the community as an illegal dumping site. The community has recognized the potential of this area, and is looking to clean up the area for use as a regional park.



E NEW LIFE FOR AN FORMER INDUSTRIAL USE

Kispiox Sawmill Site – South Hazelton, B.C.

A forestry company is looking at the site of a previous sawmill as the location for a new sawmill, forest products manufacturing operation, and electricity cogeneration facility. This project will provide jobs and economic opportunities that can help to revitalize the area.



F LOCAL GOVERNMENT CHAMPIONING REDEVELOPMENT

Maple Ridge Great Canadian Casino Site – Maple Ridge, B.C.

A vacant property that may have been used for dumping has been identified for development into a local casino. This site presents challenges, but the local government has developed a strong process that provides incentives for local brownfield projects.



G ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT POTENTIAL

Former Alberni Plywood Site – Port Alberni, B.C.

This site was purchased by the city government in 1993, and development has been hampered by potential contamination. New plans look to redevelop the site to improve the economic base of a community going through economic transition.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SUPPORTING BROWNFIELD REDEVELOPMENT

Five primary roles that local governments and other groups can play to support and promote brownfield redevelopment include:

- » **BUILDING CAPACITY.** Build the capacity within the community is an important step to promote brownfield redevelopment. This can include both internal capacity, as well as the capacity of other organizations to manage redevelopment issues. Providing educational material to interested groups, establishing staff committees to advise on brownfield issues, and developing information about brownfields within the community can all help to promote brownfield redevelopment.
- » **PLANNING AND SUPPORT.** Reducing the obstacles faced by interested brownfield developers can be an effective way to promote redevelopment. This can include: making improvements to the municipal planning process itself to be more supportive of brownfield projects, as well as providing financial incentives. In the case of local governments, property tax exemption programs and incentive programs can be ways to provide financial incentives to brownfield development community.
- » **LEADERSHIP ON MUNICIPAL BROWNFIELDS.** Local governments and other groups can also move to take action directly on brownfield sites in the community. Local governments can act as champions and purchase key brownfield sites, and brownfield property owners can move to clean up and redevelop their properties to demonstrate leadership in the area.
- » **MONITORING.** A successful strategy should also involve a review of the progress of programs and of brownfield redevelopment within the community. Measurements of success can include information about increases in municipal tax revenues, reductions in environmental and health threats to the community, improvements to quality of life, and other measures. This can be important to support future policy development regarding brownfield redevelopment within the community.

- » **MARKETING AND PROMOTION.** Strategies to support and promote brownfield redevelopment can be marketed to stakeholders. This can include distributing information through publications, websites, presentations and media releases. These initiatives can provide important information about local brownfield redevelopment opportunities.

These case studies suggest some specific strategies that can be considered when working to promote brownfield redevelopment, including:

- » **ESTABLISHING A CLEAR VISION FOR BROWNFIELD REUSE IN THE COMMUNITY.** Developing a clear, viable vision and strategy with stakeholders is a key step. This helps to identify potential future uses of sites, and ensures that key objectives for the project are realized. By having this vision and strategy, local governments can develop partnerships in the community, identify appropriate funding, and reinforce their commitment to redeveloping brownfields sites. Through a community brownfield plan, the City of Port Alberni has worked to identify the former Alberni Plywood Site as a focus for redevelopment, and has provided guidance for potential reuse of the site.
- » **KEEPING THE COMMUNITY INFORMED.** Developing a brownfield can be a very desirable project for the residents of a community, especially regarding key community “eyesores”. Local community can be a key ingredient for success. The redevelopment process may be complex and take time; project managers should be clear about goals and expected timeframes, and provide regular updates to the community about progress on the project. For the Kispiox Sawmill site, engagements with various groups in the area have resulted in continuing support for the project.
- » **PREPARING FOR BOTH THE NEAR- AND LONG-TERM.** The redevelopment of a site is a challenging process, with the potential to be expensive and complex. Developing flexible longer-term strategies with multiple options can be an effective approach when approaching these sites.

- » **UNDERSTANDING/PROVIDING INFORMATION ABOUT THE LIABILITY AND RISK ISSUES.** The risk of site contamination can be a big concern for landowners, causing sites to be held undeveloped indefinitely. Managing liability through insurance or indemnification that transfers risk can be a great incentive to promote redevelopment by providing a level of certainty. For both the Greater Terrace Beautification Society Site and the Chilcotin Tourism Centre, interim uses were allowed through a license of occupation that considered the potential for liability and future remediation requirements.
- » **SEEKING PARTNERSHIPS WITH OTHER GROUPS WHERE POSSIBLE.** Creative partnerships are another important aspect of addressing obstacles surrounding a brownfield site. Partnerships often open doors to unique solutions as well as sharing the risks and rewards of a project. Furthermore, engagement with community groups can demonstrate strong local support to potential funding bodies. Developers that work with local governments often have access to additional resources including broader funding opportunities and volunteer resources from community groups to help create a new public amenities such as community gardens and pocket parks.
- » **CONSIDERING MULTIPLE SOURCES OF FUNDING TO MAKE PROJECTS VIABLE.** Sole funding programs may not meet the financial need for a brownfield project. Other funding organizations can also contribute funds to make up this gap. Applying for multiple sources of funding can provide an opportunity to stack the funding and help to meet the needs of a project. Awards of funding can also show other potential funders that a project has been recognized for its benefits, which can aid the application process. This can be seen with the Chilcotin Tourism Centre, where different sources of funding were used to support multiple stages of the project.
- » **PROMOTING INTERIM USES FOR A SITE BEFORE A PERMANENT USE.** Interim uses can provide a development resolution for challenging sites. A vacant gas station in an area of low property values can be transformed into a temporary use that can benefit the community, like a green space or a local visitor centre.

This is especially important for sites where the landowner may need to do additional investigation or remediation in the future when these sites may become attractive for redevelopment. The Chilcotin Tourism Centre and the Greater Terrace Beautification Site both provide strong examples of interim uses of brownfield sites that provide strong benefits to the community, but do not prevent the site from being redeveloped in the future.

- » **PROVIDING NON-MONETARY INCENTIVES THAT CAN CATALYZE REDEVELOPMENT.** Even for communities without the necessary resources to provide significant financial incentives for development, other incentives may be effective, and in fact, quite desirable to developers. Streamlining the permitting process, developing flexible processes for fulfilling land-use requirements, and promoting the project to the public can provide attractive benefits to developers looking to get involved in brownfield redevelopment. For the Great Canadian Casino project in Maple Ridge, a flexible, responsive local government that worked to expedite permitting and provide other support helped to reduce or eliminate many of the obstacles faced by brownfield projects.
- » **WORKING CLOSELY WITH REGULATORY AGENCIES TO ADDRESS QUESTIONS AND DEVELOP NEW APPROACHES WHEN NEEDED.** Innovative concepts and techniques that could be used in the process may help to reduce costs and provide better results for managing environmental issues on a brownfield sites. Innovation should be explored with regulators. In the case of Tranquille on the Lake, the developer worked with municipal and provincial agencies to ensure that the redevelopment process under new regulations was clearly understood and followed.

Communities throughout B.C. and Canada are beginning to share their successes and approaches to assessing, remediating, and reusing these properties. A broad range of redevelopment options have been successful over the past few decades. Urban and rural brownfields have been reused as parks, retail shops, small businesses, schools, condominiums, community gardens. While redevelopment costs and potential uses vary significantly based on property size and the local real estate market, it is strongly believed that properties can be redeveloped regardless of their location.

REHABILITATING HISTORICAL FACILITIES



TRANQUILLE ON THE LAKE KAMLOOPS, B.C.

- Project Lead:** Tranquille Limited Partnership (TLP)
Former Uses: Ranch, Sanatorium, Boarding/
Training School
Project Status: Site Assessment and Planning

INTRODUCTION

Responsive and cost-effective remediation projects on hundreds of underutilized industrial, agricultural and commercial properties across North America have resulted in beneficial new end-uses for communities.

With the development of a clear vision, strong objectives, partnerships, and innovative planning, many groups are able to address the challenges of remediating these sites to increase local tourism opportunities and enhance community amenities. One example is illustrated by the Tranquille on The Lake Redevelopment Project, located in the northern limits of the City of Kamloops, which is working to convert a former institutional site into a health and wellness community that will accommodate up to 4,000 people.

The 190 hectare (ha) site is bordered to the north by the Lac du Bois Grassland Park, to the west by the Tranquille Ecological Habitat Reserve, to the east by a bird sanctuary, and the south by Kamloops Lake. This site is optimally located to integrate development with these adjacent resources, as well as an urban farm and waterfront amenities planned for the development.

SITE

A tuberculosis sanatorium was built on this site, which operated from 1909 and 1958. In 1959, this facility was converted into a training and residential institute for the mentally challenged, and continued to be supported by farming and agricultural operations on and around the site. The Province began actively marketing the site when the facility ceased to operate in 1985, and the Tranquille Limited Partnership (TLP) purchased a controlling interest in the land in 2005.

PROJECT VISION AND CONCEPT

The vision of this project is to use local ecological and agricultural resources and heritage to support a sustainable, affordable lakeshore community with a minimal environmental footprint.

The concept for the redevelopment is a residential community based on health and wellness, which will accommodate about 2,000 housing units for approximately 5,000 residents. More than 70% of the development is designated as multifamily housing, with a mix of unit pricing and layouts to attract both young families and seniors. The plans also include the development of the waterfront for public access and the reestablishment of the former agricultural areas (120 ha portion) of the site.

The project is estimated to be completed by 2015. Work is currently being completed on site assessments and planning, with some remediation being undertaken, including the demolition of many of the buildings and removal of aged infrastructure.

CHALLENGES

The site includes approximately 60 buildings in various stages of disrepair. The buildings were constructed at a time when asbestos, lead-based paints, and PCBs were standard construction and operational materials. The handling and disposal of these materials is very costly. Other environmental issues at the site include the former sewage lagoon which contains materials with elevated metals concentrations.

The existing utility infrastructure (including power, water, sanitary) was deemed unserviceable. The site had been incorporated into the Agricultural Land Reserve; this initially posed a conflict with residential development on-site, but this matter was resolved.

The 120 ha farm has not been cultivated since 1991; the fields are currently weed covered to such an extent that local farmers would not consider leasing the land.

IMPLEMENTATION

The Tranquille Limited Partnership (TLP) learned to ensure that comprehensive research and review was conducted every issue associated with the site. A clear level of understanding on legislative, environmental, and financial liabilities was necessary to enable the appropriate risk management of the project.

TLP learned to ask questions and to get several opinions on each task during this project. Early in the process, they relied completely on private sector companies for technical advice.

Now, however, the TLP team is trained in the various aspects of remediation, and often hires an independent expert to oversee the work and provide recommendations. They feel that they have saved thousands of dollars in disposal fees by being able to investigate different options more in-depth.

Uncertainty about cleanup requirements and documentation could lead to project delays. In this process, the developer learned to clarify these requirements and to communicate directly and proactively with any regulatory body if there were any questions. For example, the developer noted that the Ministry of Environment's (MOE) new legislation has created greater flexibility in the procedures to obtain a Certificate of Compliance (CoC). The City of Kamloops was uncertain about the application of the new procedures and required clarification on these rules. TLP met with both the MOE and the City of Kamloops to resolve the questions and concerns in a timely manner. This ensured that all requirements were known up front, meaning that additional work would not need to be undertaken.

The developer found that regulators in the province can be willing to explore new concepts and solutions that may address the need for cleanup at a lower cost. This has the potential to reduce costs while providing the expected level of environmental quality.

BUDGET

- » Brownfield project completion is estimated to be in 2015 with build out of the project is estimated to be in 2030.
- » Demolition/Remediation estimates of \$4.5 – \$7 million have been obtained.
- » There's no final figure developed yet for full build out.

SOURCES OF OUTSIDE SUPPORT

Two separate grants of \$93,000 and \$44,000 were received from the Brownfield Renewal Funding Program. These grants were used for environmental investigative work.

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INTERIM GATHERING SPACE AND COMMUNITY ASSET



GREATER TERRACE BEAUTIFICATION SOCIETY SITE TERRACE, B.C.

Project Lead: Greater Terrace Beautification Society
Former Uses: Gas Station
Project Status: Redevelopment

INTRODUCTION

One common challenge for communities is with vacant gas stations, many of which occupy smaller parcels of land distributed along major roadways and intersections in neighbourhoods. These brownfield sites can be transformed into interim neighbourhood amenities, including “pocket” parks (small parks on small parcels) and “brightfields” (a temporary or permanent installation of solar panels). These interim uses of brownfields can provide short-term benefits to communities and manage the transition to more long-term solutions. More permanent solutions such as cafés or galleries are also possible.

In all cases communities have learned that successful interim and permanent redevelopment of these kinds of properties requires:

- » Engagement of the community to explore a property’s reuse potential;
- » A clear understanding and applying available financial and technical assistance resources;
- » Strong partnerships among all stakeholders and regulatory agencies throughout the entire life of a project; and
- » Identification of approaches to reduce costs, increase the value of properties, and be better stewards of the environment.

One example of an interim use on a former gas station site is found in Terrace, B.C. For this project, a local group of volunteers identified an opportunity to rehabilitate a former gas station located in downtown Terrace to beautify the downtown.

SITE

The property is about 0.12 hectares in area (4 city lots). The site was originally developed as a gas station in the 1940s, which continued to operate until 1998. The gas station was then demolished, the gasoline storage tanks removed, and a temporary fence was placed around the site.

The owner managed the site and paid for maintenance several times a year. However, litter routinely became caught in the fence and accumulated on the site, and over time the location became an eyesore to the community.

PROJECT VISION AND CONCEPT

The Greater Terrace Beautification Society is committed to a long-term beautification program for their community. The vision for the former gas station site was the development of an Interim Community Green Space. For this project, the group is working to put the site back into use as an interim urban plaza. This site will have an information kiosk for tourists, rain sculptures, planters with native species, and potential exhibition space for local artists.

CHALLENGES

In 2003, local business owners asked the City of Terrace to lease, clean up, and reuse the property for community uses. The owner was open to this approach, but suggested that the City should forgive the property taxes and undertake all project costs. Given budget limitations, the City was not able to agree to this. However, through negotiations with the Greater Terrace Beautification Society six years later, the owners agreed to interim uses on the site.

With these agreements in place, The Greater Terrace Beautification Society was given permission to develop the site under a license for use with the owner, under the condition that none of the development features be permanent. All materials on the site were required to be easily removed in case further site remediation was required or if the property is sold. This allowed the group to develop an interim use, and the owners were able to hold the property until a more permanent opportunity arose.

APPROACHES AND IMPLEMENTATION

The Greater Terrace Beautification Society has almost completed the installation of planters, pavers and benches on the site. As of March 2011, the project is about 50% complete completion of the project is anticipated for September 2011. The City, the Greater Terrace Beautification Society, and the owner were able to complete this program through open communication and a flexible attitude. As obstacles arose in the process, alternatives were openly proposed and considered.

The Society worked with the site owner to provide a license for the reuse of the site. This 25-person volunteer organization also completed all the site work, organized fundraisers, and approached local businesses for contributions to the project.

The City of Terrace was motivated to help the local business community manage the issue with the vacant gas station. However, the only legal footing was a Nuisance By-Law, whereby the City could contact the land owner and require litter to be removed. The City has several more sites such as this, but not all landowners are as willing or able to assist in the redevelopment as the owner of this property has done.

Updates on the project status and the site's specific requirements have resulted in community support as local residents and businesses have often chosen to give in-kind contributions to help. The Greater Terrace Beautification Society found that people often want to help, but without providing them with specific tasks or objectives, these opportunities can be missed.

BUDGET

- » Amount spent to date: about \$25,000.
- » Total estimated budget: \$65,000.

SOURCES OF OUTSIDE SUPPORT

- » The Greater Terrace Beautification Society has raised approximately \$20,000 for this project from the community.
- » The site was also awarded a \$10,000 Wal-Mart Evergreen Fund grant.
- » Two significant contributions in the amounts of \$7,000 and \$25,000 have come from individual Terrace residents.
- » In-kind support from the City of Terrace.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

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INTERIM DEVELOPMENT FOR LOCAL TOURISM



CHILCOTIN TOURISM CENTRE ALEXIS CREEK, B.C.

- Project Lead:** Alexis Creek Revitalization Committee (ACRC)
Former Uses: Gas Station
Project Status: Completed

INTRODUCTION

Brownfield projects located in more remote areas can often pose a significant challenge for stakeholders and municipalities who are interested in rehabilitating these sites. Many community redevelopment plans include goals and objectives that are supportive of local and regional Tourism activities. Tourism is a key component to economic growth within municipalities in B.C. and therefore is a key driver in developing rehabilitation strategies for vacant and underutilized sites such as gas stations, and former small manufacturing and processing facilities found throughout parts of B.C. The Chilcotin Tourism Centre in Alexis Creek, B.C., provides an example of how a community group was able to develop an interim use for a former gas station site to promote local tourism.

SITE

This site is the location of a former gas station. The buildings on this site have been demolished, the gasoline storage tanks have been removed, and a temporary fence has been placed around the site. The property management company has cared for the site, paying for maintenance several times a year. Over time, however, weeds accumulated on the site and the location became an eyesore to the local residents.

PROJECT VISION AND CONCEPT

After addressing the challenges faces in the development of the project, the Alexis Creek Revitalization Committee completed the construction of visitor centre, rest area, and washrooms on the former gas station site.

Site work was started in the spring of 2009 with completion in May 2010. The visitor centre promotes local and regional tourist amenities and provides an opportunity for visitors to appreciate the historical importance of the area in the growth of the Chilcotin Region.

CHALLENGES

Petroleum brownfield projects can benefit from an innovative and well-organized administrative process. Combined with a strong vision of the intended reuse, communities can meet the challenges of interim and permanent redevelopment by ensuring that the property reuse is consistent with environmental and cleanup requirements. Communities are encouraged to work with their local, provincial, and federal regulatory partners. Local and regional outreach and collaboration can build support for a project and provide an forum for ideas that can lead to new insights or designs that best suit local conditions and policies.

In the case of the Alexis Creek property, it was understood that the site had some residual contamination, which concerned some of the parties involved in the development project. The owner had environmental consultants present the results of their investigations and health risk assessments, and they reassured stakeholders that the site posed no environmental concern for its intended use.

Another key challenge was the allocation of risk and insurance necessary to indemnify the property owners from future contamination caused by the interim occupant of the site. For the site to be licensed to the Alexis Creek Revitalization Committee, the owners required insurance and indemnification from any contamination caused by the licensor.

The use of this site was through a three-year License of Occupation, which is renewable. A requirement of this license is that all site facilities must be able to be moved within 30 days of notification, in the case that the landowner needs access to the site. This limited the types of improvements that can be constructed on the site.

IMPLEMENTATION

Implementation of the project required a long-term view and continued engagement with the community and stakeholders, as well applying for funding from as many sources as possible. In some cases, funding agencies appreciate that their small grant may allow a community to build up to apply for another grant and leverage their initial investment.

A consistent theme of implementing this project was the importance of education and an understanding of the law and regulations. The success of the project was due in no small part to the members of the ACRC, who educated themselves about the law and the site, and applied that knowledge to solve potential “showstoppers” related to regulatory requirements.

BUDGET

» Overall budget: about \$320,000.

SOURCES OF OUTSIDE SUPPORT

- » A grant of \$40,000 was received from the Northern Development Initiative Trust.
- » A grant from the Regional District for Community Tourism projects in the amount of \$20,000 was also received.
- » A grant of \$257,568 was received from Western Economic Diversification Canada (WED) under the Community Diversification Initiative, which was a component of the federal Mountain Pine Beetle Program.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

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REVITALIZING AN OLD DUMP SITE



PEACE VALLEY LOOKOUT FORT ST. JOHN, B.C.

Project Lead: Peace River Regional District
Former Uses: Unused (Old Dumping Site)
Project Status: Site Assessment and Planning

INTRODUCTION

Official Community Plans often hold provisions for temporary uses and redevelopment of unused land within the boundaries of the community to encourage future development potential and generate additional economic benefits to the community.

Lands that have been used for illegal dumping offer a particular challenge to communities due to the unknown contamination and materials left on the site, and the cost and logistics of clean up and removal.

An example of this is a project implemented by the Peace River Regional District, where the Peace Valley Lookout is a well-known vantage point providing stunning views of the Peace River Valley.

Upon completion of the environmental and geotechnical investigations the Peace River Regional District's Board of Directors will make a final determination on the feasibility of moving forward to remediate the site and start construction to transform it into a regional park.

SITE

The site, located 3 km south of Fort St. John overlooking the Peace River Valley, is generally flat, but drops sharply to the base of the Peace River Channel. The site has historically posed a safety hazard due to its sharp vertical drop. Illegal dumping has been ongoing, which has degraded the natural beauty and aesthetics of this area. Household garbage as well as several cars and large household appliances are often tipped over the edge of the valley.

PROJECT VISION AND CONCEPT

The redevelopment of the site as a Regional Park include plans for public washrooms, interpretive signs, a viewing deck, and paved parking areas, designed to take advantage of the natural beauty of the area.

CHALLENGES

This project posed several challenges for the District. The steep slope required a geotechnical evaluation to determine bank stability and ultimately the accessibility of the proposed lookout. Site cleanup and removal costs are also a concern due to the inaccessibility of the site. The costs to remove debris and remediate the site-potentially by helicopter due the vertical drop- may be extensive. The capital costs for constructing the viewing area would also be considerable given the stability requirements. The District is working to address all of the challenges through careful phasing and management of the project process and informed decision-making.

IMPLEMENTATION

Work so far has included a planning feasibility study completed in November 2009 (Peace River Regional District) and an environmental site assessment while geotechnical and geophysical assessments of the bank and dumping grounds are ongoing. Further phases will include the refinement of cost estimates for remedial actions and site stabilization based on this data.

The approach of the District in implementing this project was to address the project in manageable and logical phases. This allowed logistical issues associated with the project to be informed with good technical information to allow for effective decision-making.

Decisions on the future of the program will be made as realistic cost estimates are provided and risk assessments are conducted. This allows the entire team to reevaluate the program and make informed decisions at key phases.

As part of this process, the Peace River Regional District ensured that they understood opinions in the entire community about the proposed program, and held public consultation meetings presenting the various concepts. As a result, the local residents, including the elders of the Treaty 8 Tribal Association, have been highly supportive of the concept and the phased approach.

BUDGET

- » Total project estimate: \$1 million.
- » \$18,000 spent to date.

SOURCES OF OUTSIDE SUPPORT

- » The project has received \$12,602 from the Brownfield Renewal Funding Program.

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NEW LIFE FOR AN FORMER INDUSTRIAL USE



KISPIOX SAWMILL SITE HAZELTON, B.C.

Project Lead: Gitksan Forest Enterprises
Former Uses: Sawmill
Project Status: Community Planning

INTRODUCTION

In the rural communities of British Columbia, many buildings and properties formerly used for the forest products industry have been left idle. These sites are typically quite large, and in addition to the usual environmental and social impacts from having brownfields located within a community, unused sites such as this can also have considerable economic impacts in proportion to the community. A former sawmill, wood products manufacturing plant, or other facility no longer in operation can represent a significant number of lost jobs. However, these sites can also represent an significant redevelopment opportunity. Reuse of these facilities for new functions, or in some cases, a return to previous uses, can be effective in stimulating the local economy and bringing new jobs to the area.

Given that demand and prices for land are both quite low in these regions, restoring these sites can require additional attention and support.

The Kispiox Sawmill Site represents a case where a community and a local forest products company are looking to restore a former sawmill and bring it back into operation to benefit a rural area that has been impacted by its closure.

PROJECT VISION AND CONCEPT

Continuing activities on this site are directed towards returning this former sawmill to productive use. The primary objective is to restart the mill and return it to operation.

Additional uses are also imagined for this site, however. This could include electricity cogeneration facilities from wood waste, wood pellet manufacturing, prefabricated building materials, or other wood products manufacturing facilities. These uses are being envisioned as a means to boost to the forestry-based rural economy, providing jobs and increasing economic activity in the area.

In addition to jobs, other benefits are also imagined for the community from new activities on the site. For example, local electricity cogeneration could help to reduce the need for external sources of power. Prefabricated building materials produced can also help to support efforts to build housing in the area.

SITE

This facility was used as a sawmill beginning around 1950. For well over a half a century, the mill was in operation, but due to poor market conditions for lumber products, high stumpage rates, and the closure of pulp mills that purchased residue fibre, it closed in February 2005. Operations on the site ceased at that point, and the facilities are currently gated and unused.

CHALLENGES

This site is suspected to have been impacted by over 50 years of operation as a sawmill. In particular, the handling and storage of fuels and used oil in both above and below ground storage tanks have had impacts on soil and groundwater. Similarly, older buildings such as those on the site contain asbestos, PCBs, and lead-based paints, which must be properly disposed during renovations.

An additional complication on this land is that the Province has held the property while much of the planning and site investigation was carried forward.

Many of the funding sources meant for local governments may not be applicable for property owned directly by the provincial government. This has complicated some efforts to apply for funding to support redevelopment.

IMPLEMENTATION

At this stage, the proponents of the project are looking to develop an approach for redeveloping this site and returning it to active use.

The Province has held the property after a tax sale on the site transferred ownership from the previous owner, and a new forest products company is looking to take control of the land, redevelop the property, and restart operations. To date, a Preliminary Site Investigation and a feasibility study have been completed, and funding to support a Detailed Site Investigation and remedial plan is being coordinated.

Continuing work with this project has involved engaging the community and potential partners. Plans for the site have been discussed with various groups across the province, and this has received official support from the regional district. This support has been very important in efforts to attract support through funding programs.

This work is a long-term goal given many of the challenges on the site, however. This process was initiated in 2007, but proponents of the project have worked to prepare the community for the long process from feasibility to completion involved with site redevelopment. This has been important in managing the expectations of the community, and maintaining the commitment of local partners.

BUDGET

- » Amount spent to date: about \$150,000.
- » A budget to complete the program will be established once the DSI and remedial plans are complete.

SOURCES OF OUTSIDE SUPPORT

- » The project has received \$72,650 from the Brownfield Renewal Funding Program.
- » A grant of a third of the costs of the feasibility study (approximately \$8,000) was received from the Northern Development Initiative Trust.

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MAPLE RIDGE GREAT CANADIAN CASINO SITE MAPLE RIDGE, B.C.

- Project Lead:** Great Canadian Casinos
Former Uses: Vacant site with possible dumping
Project Status: Site Assessment and Planning

INTRODUCTION

In many BC communities, municipalities are providing the development community with tools to jump-start brownfield redevelopment, recognizing that a key part of the success of any development is timing and efficiency in moving to project implementation.

The future use of brownfield sites in the community is determined by the land use designation in the Official Community Plan. In addition, the Development Permit Guidelines housed in the Official Community Plan provide guidance on the form and character of a project, landscaping, green building technology and pedestrian connectivity. For stakeholders involved in the process the challenges and rewards are shared with local government.

The proposed Community Gaming Centre and Conference Centre for the Town Centre Area in Maple Ridge, B.C., is an example of proactive local government committed to encouraging redevelopment of brownfield sites in their community. In this project, a 43,000 square foot community gaming facility is planned for a vacant site with potential contamination. This will be followed by a conference centre as a second phase to the project.

SITE

The site, approximately 3 ha in size, is located in the District of Maple Ridge's Town Centre Area at the intersection of the Lougheed Highway and 227th Street. The site is a low-lying grassed field with a ravine. It is suspected that part of the site may have been previously used for dumping.

CHALLENGES

It was determined that the existing site soil conditions were not ideal for construction. Test holes and site works are currently underway to assess the type of construction which may be most appropriate for the conditions and the amount of fill that will be required to bring the site to the required grade.

Since past dumping was suspected on part of the site, the status of contamination is currently unknown. The costs for remedial efforts, primarily expected to be excavation and disposal in an approved landfill, will be more defined following the soil and groundwater testing programs.

APPROACH AND IMPLEMENTATION

The District of Maple Ridge wants to enable and encourage investors to develop and revitalize their Town Centre through their Town Centre Investment Incentive Program. They have developed a three-year program that includes reduced development fees and municipal tax exemptions for qualifying projects. The entire municipal project team, including the Mayor, is willing to meet with investors and discuss options for development. As part of this process, Maple Ridge developed a plan of “priority processing” for qualified investors.

The District’s goal is to increase development density and to enhance the quality of new developments. Early in the discussion phase, the District assesses whether a development plan meets their requirements. Qualified projects then receive priority processing and significantly reduced permitting fees. These incentives streamline the redevelopment process in the District. The community gaming centre qualified for the program by meeting these requirements.

The Great Canadian Casino application is the first application to Town Centre Investment Incentive Program. One condition of the program is that the building permit must be issued by 2013.

BUDGET

- » Amount spent to date: approximately \$500,000.
- » Total estimated project costs: \$24 million.

SOURCES OF OUTSIDE SUPPORT

- » Active support from the local municipal government. For commercial projects, this can include:
 - priority processing of applications, permits, and approvals;
 - permit fee discounts of greater than 50%;
 - property tax exemptions;
 - flexibility with development regulations;
 - reduced parking standards;
 - assistance with grant applications;
- » Active support and advice from key provincial government staff have also assisted the project.

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ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT POTENTIAL



FORMER ALBERNI PLYWOOD SITE PORT ALBERNI, B.C.

Project Lead: City of Port Alberni
Former Uses: Plywood Manufacturing
Project Status: Community Planning

INTRODUCTION

For communities with waterfront properties that are vacant or underutilized, the impact of these brownfields is far-reaching. Waterfronts are often valuable local resources and have historically been the first part of a city to be built. While waterfront redevelopment projects often take decades to complete, they can provide significant returns on an economic, environmental and social level. Access to the water's edge and the reuse of industrial structures along the shore are key elements and drivers for broader revitalization.

A former plywood manufacturing site located in the Port Alberni Marine Industrial Park was purchased by the city in 1993, and has been recognized as having the highest priority for reuse.

The community is currently in the process of assessing potential redevelopment scenarios, including a city park with water access, development or sale of portions of the site for revenue, improvements to develop tourism base, and the expansion of the neighbouring sawmill.

SITE

The site is located approximately 1.6 km southwest of the Port Alberni downtown. Located on Plywood Drive, it is bordered to the west by in filled foreshore owned by the Province of B.C., to the south by the Tseshaht First Nation 2 Reserve, to the east by residential properties, and to the north by the Alberni Pacific Division Sawmill.

The previous owner developed the site as part of their plywood manufacturing operations in the early 1940s. The plant was shut down and the buildings demolished in 1991. The land was purchased by the City of Port Alberni in 1993 for a nominal fee, with the understanding that they were receiving a clean site. Presently, the majority of the site is vacant and derelict, although portions of one lot are used under a non-exclusive lease for sand blasting and heavy machinery storage. A kite-boarding operation also operates on the site.

CHALLENGES

A key challenge for the stakeholders was a “no overnight enjoyment” covenant placed on the land to protect the operations at the neighbouring sawmill. This requirement means that residential and tourism uses that allow for overnight stays are prohibited until the covenant is lifted, which could restrict the potential reuse of the site. In addition, uncertainty about contamination on the site has meant that developers are hesitant. The City is looking to provide motivation and assurances to promote redevelopment.

Site investigations and increased project timeline have clearly demonstrated that the process towards redevelopment is demanding and time consuming. Subsequently, the City has learned that changing regulations and conditions must be explained to the various stakeholders.

Several interested developers have discussed development scenarios for the site, but they are not able to fund the assessment and remedial programs themselves. The City has considered various tax incentive options and other methods to encourage developers to participate in the site redevelopment.

While these challenges will take time to address, the objectives of creating a viable property for development is in keeping with the Official Community Plan and therefore is part of a larger vision for the City. As with other developments of this type, stakeholders must enable open lines of communication and clear planning goals for the near- and long-term.

APPROACH AND IMPLEMENTATION

As this project progresses, the City is working to fulfill objectives in its Official Community Plan and waterfront redevelopment strategy. Final land uses for the site are flexible, and the City is striving to promote economic development in an area affected by the declining forest industry.

The City of Port Alberni hired a consultant with a proven track record in Brownfield redevelopment to manage the process to date. This consultant educated the City on the various stages and steps, and provided excellent guidance throughout the process. They also assisted on the exploration of funding opportunities and applications.

BUDGET

- » Amount spent to date: approximately \$400,000.
- » Full remedial costs have not yet been determined.

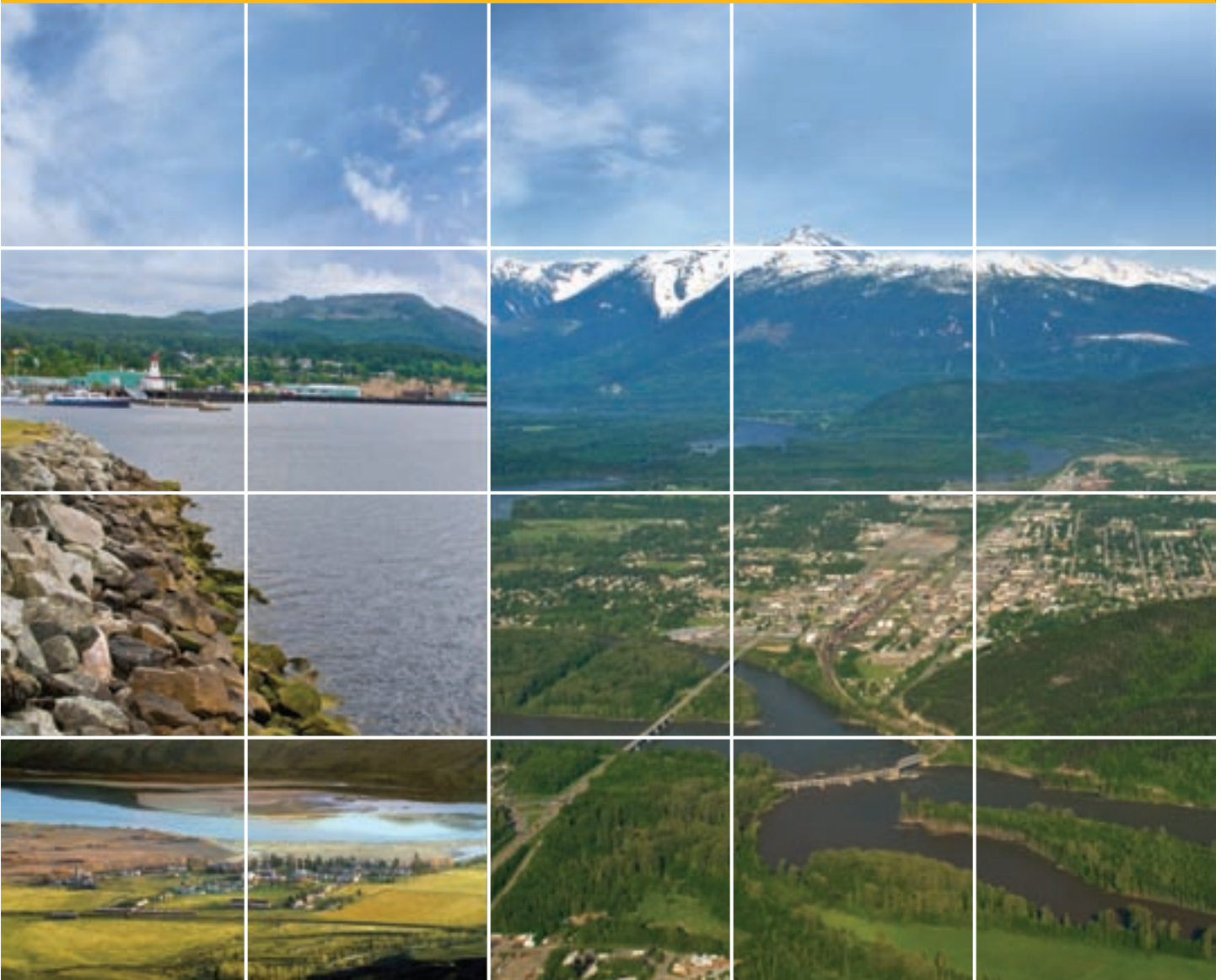
SOURCES OF OUTSIDE SUPPORT

- » A Federation of Canadian Municipalities Green Municipal Fund grant of \$95,000 to complete preliminary site investigations.
- » Two separate grants of \$151,190 and \$63,700 were received from the Brownfield Renewal Funding Program. These grants were used for environmental investigative work.
- » The Port Alberni Port Authority contributed \$55,000 towards the cost of the site investigations and risk assessments. During this time, the Port Authority was assessing the feasibility of using the site for a travel lift to augment the proposed marine park development on the adjacent property.

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