Best Practices for Differing Neighborhood Types: Vision North Texas Case Study Research

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I. Introduction

In this study, a neighborhood is broadly defined as a geographic area officially designated by a city or recognized by the residents that live there as possessing common features. In general, neighborhoods can be classified in four typologies.

Stable neighborhoods: This type of neighborhood refers to those places with high quality of life indicators, such as clean and walkable streets, easy access to various daily activities, well maintained housing and landscaping, proximity to good schools, and a safe environment with multiple mobility options. Stable neighborhoods have maintained stability over long periods and are likely to maintain their attractiveness to old and new home owners.

Abandoned neighborhoods: This type of neighborhood is often characterized by low quality of life indicators, such as poor building conditions, high crime rate, lack of services and employment, poor schools, and a high concentration of the population below the poverty level. These neighborhoods are often clustered in inner central cities or pockets of first tier suburbs.

Transitional neighborhoods: These are areas with older housing stock, that currently have livable conditions, but with an uncertain future. These neighborhoods are experiencing increases in percentage of rental properties and commercial encroachment. The quality of life in these neighborhoods is declining. They are at the tipping point where the neighborhood can either revitalize to become a stable neighborhood or be neglected and turn into an abandoned neighborhood.

Neighborhood centers: This type of neighborhood usually carries more than one type of identifier such as historic landmarks, activity centers, concentration of services, highly used public space, mixed-use development, and intermodal transfer centers. This type could be a community or regional center for surrounding neighborhoods and more recently it has become more common to incorporate residential or office into these centers.

II.   Best Practices Case Studies

This section focuses on case studies from the four neighborhood typologies mentioned above. The aim of this section is to give insight into the concerns of each neighborhood and to give lessons for the types of programs used and how these programs could be incorporated into the Vision North Texas process. These case studies will be looking at levels of neighborhood involvement or empowerment, concerns with smart growth, the use of neighborhood or non-profit organizations, and how economic and social concerns are addressed.

2.1 Stable Neighborhood: Oak Hill Combined Neighborhood Plan (Austin, TX)

The City of Austin has an extensive list of neighborhood planning areas. Neighborhood planning in Austin is an opportunity for citizens to take a proactive role in the planning process and decide how their neighborhoods will move into the future. The process asks members of the community to address the local issues and concerns that affect them, their families, and their neighbors.

The plan for the Oak Hill Combined Neighborhood contains the plan for the East and West Oak Hill neighborhoods; two stable areas of Austin that have access to shopping, transit, and open space. The concerns of this neighborhood or community seem to focus on environmental impact, urban design, and economic diversity.

What can the Neighborhood do for itself?

The Oak Hill Combined Plan gave community stakeholders the ability organized and form a plan. During the planning process a steering committee developed and guided the plan with the City; and, after the process, the Oak Hill Neighborhood Planning Contact Team (OHNPCT) was formed to uphold the vision and goals of their neighborhood plan. OHNPCT meets once a month to continue monitoring and work with the City on action and implementation. The neighborhood and the city provide planning outreach through the planning area's website and

organizations such as Oak Hill Association of Neighborhoods (OHAN), Oak Hill Business and Professional Association (OHBPA), and the Oak Hill Gazette.

What Smart Growth tools were used?

Smart growth concerns of the plan focused on balancing development with envivronmental concerns, incorporation of mixed use design standards, and landscape design. Environmental concerns included minimizing the impact of new residential development/redevelopment projects on the Edwards Aquifer and the existing natural landscape and the protection of the Barton creek habitat. Mixed used smart growth is concerned with Incorporating pedestrian-friendly site design standards in all commercial and residential development to increase the walkability and accessibility. Smart landscape design includes the use of native plants in landscaping policy and to enhance the Hill Country look of Oak Hill by preserving trees and addressing aesthetic improvements in the planning area.

What neighborhood indices were used?

This site contains the plan for the Oak Hill Neighborhood, and contact information for neighborhood stakeholders and Austin city staff at the following address: *http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/zoning/oak_hill.htm*

Were neighborhood corporations established?

A corporation was not established, but a committee and later the OHNPCT was formed to guide and monitor the plan and ensure action and implementation.

What was done to keep economic and social mix?

During the planning process Oak hill listed as a goal "to encourage the exploration of appropriate State and City governmental small business grants and/or loans in their plan" to keep and increase the business mix in their community. Additionally, the OHNPCT has committed itself to working toward developing a diversity of businesses convenient to meet local needs of the community and to encourage locally-owned businesses to locate in the Oak Hill area and find ways for local businesses and employers to prosper.

Another concern of Oak Hill is to insure that new residential development does not adversely impact the current social mix of the community. OHNPCT works with the City to require new development to perform a traffic impact analysis where needed to minimize negative externalities on Oak Hill citizens and maintain affordable housing and diversity mix. Oak Hill currently has two sources of affordable housing. One is a City-financed apartment complex designed to create affordability, while the other is a traditional market response to low income levels and land costs. The *Southwest Trails: S.M.A.R.T.*

Housing administered by the Austin Housing Finance Corporation (AHFC), is designed to stimulate the production of affordable housing for low- and moderate-income households in Austin. Also, Oak Hill allows and currently has mobile homes sites within their community. Mobile homes provide affordable housing along the edges of cities, where rents are usually lower. There are several mobile home parks throughout Oak Hill including Country Aire and Trails of Oak Hill.

What were the Tools, Strategies, and Outcomes?

On March 21, 2003, City Council approved an ordinance that required all neighborhood plans to form a contact team (OHNPCT was formed). These contact teams are responsible to for making amendments to the plan and for playing a role in applications for the City's Vertical Mixed-Use overlay discussed within Oak Hill.

2.2 Abandoned Neighborhood: Neighborhood Service Department (Phoenix, AZ)

The Neighborhood Service Department (NSD) in Phoenix, Arizona is focused on improving targeted "Neighborhood Initiative Areas" (NIA). The NSD addresses blighted areas of Phoenix by resolving vacant housing issues, promoting economic development, and rehabilitating historical façades, among many other initiatives. More than 55,000 cases have been resolved out of the 57,898 blight-related cases opened this past fiscal year. The program's success garnered Phoenix a "2009 Best Neighborhood Program Award" nomination given by Neighborhoods, USA for "physical revitalization/beautification."

What the Neighborhood can do for itself?

The majority of the best practices used for abandoned neighborhoods in Phoenix are based on the collaboration between public-private partnerships and neighborhood volunteers. A key strategy for the NSD is to facilitate this collaboration. Several sources of funding are available depending on the type of project and neighborhood. Below is example of the funding resources available for abandoned neighborhoods in Phoenix:

Table 1
City of Phoenix Formula Grant Funding Fiscal Year 2008-09

| Funding Resources	Amount
Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)	$16,845,609
HOME Investment Partnerships (HOME)	$8,390,028
Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS (HOPWA)	$1,541,000
Emergency Shelter Grants (ESG)	$749,013
TOTAL	**$27,526,650**

Source: City of Phoenix, AZ

What were the Tools, Strategies, and Outcomes?

Some of the tools and strategies used by the NSD include public/private partnerships, Community Development Block Grants, training initiatives, and beautification programs. Outcomes include enhanced civic involvement, physical improvements, and new community support organizations (see Appendix A).

2.3 Transitional Neighborhood: Town North Neighborhood Action Plan (Arlington, TX)

This neighborhood is used as a case study for a transitional neighborhood because of concerns about vacant and blighted property, safety, infrastructure and aesthetic conditions. Town North was originally identified by the city of Arlington as "a location that could benefit from neighborhood planning efforts through the Building Equitable Communities initiative (BEC)". BEC is a component of the larger "Stimulating Municipal Action to Reduce Poverty Project undertaken by the National League of Cities, supported by the W. K. Kellogg Foundation". The city of Arlington was chosen as one of four cities to participate.
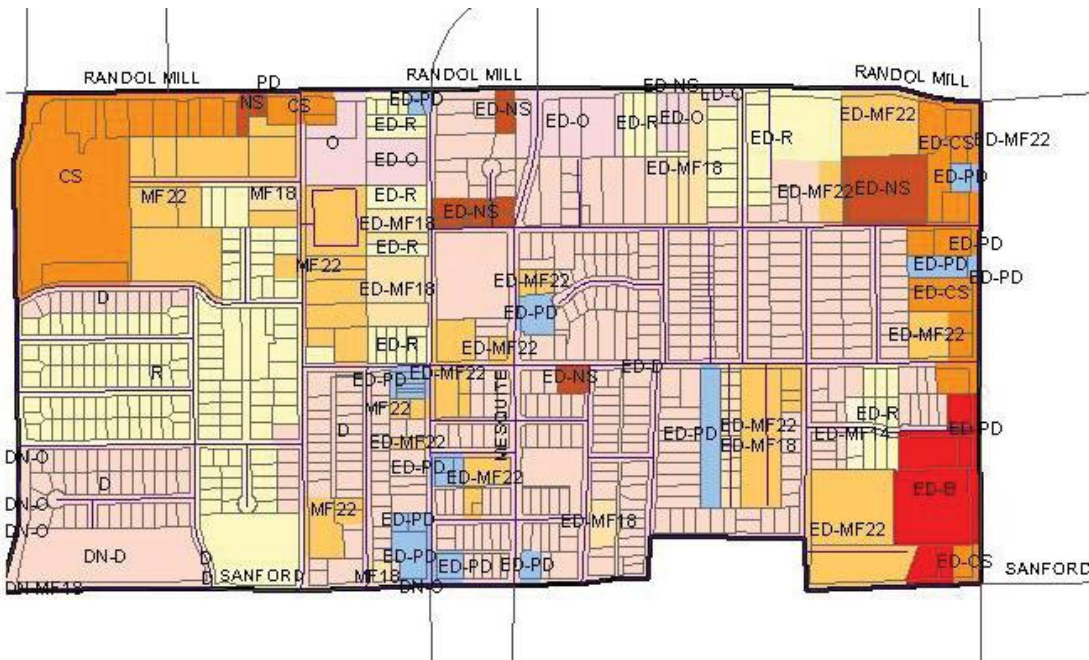
Courtesy of: The City of Arlington Strategic Planning Department

What can the Neighborhood do for itself?

Through the action planning process the neighborhood is able to identify goals and strategies and help guide planners in developing the neighborhood plan. During the process a neighborhood organization and 501 (c) 3 was formed (with City assistance) to apply for grant money and funding to work towards goals.

What Smart Growth tools were used?

The neighborhood worked toward reclaiming areas for neighborhood activities and explored the potential for converting properties to community gardens and pocket parks.

What neighborhood indices were used?

The neighborhood plan is posted on the City website. Additionally, implementation and action that has taken place as a result of the plan are posted on the main page with the plan description: *http://www.ci.arlington.tx.us/planning/asni/neighborhood_plan_TownNorth.html*

Were neighborhood corporations established?

The Town North neighborhood applied for and received a Neighborhood Matching Grant for organizational efforts through their Community Watch Group. This funding helped them establish an official organization, the Town North Neighbors, select interim officers and host two events, National Night Out in October 2008 and a spring picnic in May 2009. Town North Neighbors have gone on to apply for and receive another Matching Grant to pay for 501(c)3 application fees.

What Private-Public partnerships have been formed?

The neighborhood partnered with two classes in the University of Texas at Arlington School of Urban and Public Affairs to conduct face-to-face surveys with more than 190 Town North residents. Additionally, the neighborhood has reached out to local business and land owners sharing neighborhood goals and strategies, inviting them to events and identifying possible partnerships that could be formed. The neighborhood also works with code enforcement, the police department, and animal services to maintain quality of life and safety for the area and with the Library's Literacy Programs and nonprofits like Water From the Rock to ensure adequate ESL and GED classes for area residents.

What was done to keep economic and social mix?

Town North Neighbors (TNN) has worked to connect residents to available public services and programs such as the City Water Department (which can assist with residential cut-offs), the YMCA, Water From The Rock, TXU, City Residential Rehab Program and First Time Homebuyer Programs. They have extended outreach for the Community Watch Program and events such as National Night Out, annual community events, meetings, and created a neighborhood directory with contact information for TNN, the city, and other non-profits, and information on how to get involved.

What were the Tools, Strategies, and Outcomes?

The TNN and the City have used programs such as Capital Improvements Plan, Street Maintenance Sales Tax, Arlington Tomorrow Foundation, and other HUD programs to implement the goals and strategies of their plan. Recently, the neighborhood was awarded $100,000 from the Arlington Tomorrow Fund for the construct sidewalks and to address other infrastructure concerns (see Appendix B).

2.4 Neighborhood Center: West Seventh Corridor (Fort Worth, TX)

The West Seventh Corridor is a location of dramatic and intense redevelopment on Fort Worth's Westside occurring adjacent to lower and higher income neighborhoods, the Cultural District, and is centered around the Six Points Intersection where University Drive, Camp Bowie, and West Seventh meet. The neighborhood centers contain multiple development projects both private and public.

Courtesy of: City of Fort Worth Planning Department

What can the Neighborhood do for itself?

The neighborhood centers are still forming; however, concerns raised by adjacent neighborhoods such as the Monticello Neighborhood Association and business associations such as the Associated Businesses of the Cultural District have been addressed and incorporated into planning for the developments.

What Smart Growth tools were used?

Many of the sites were developed on former industrial brown fields and redevelopment has taken a denser mixed-use pedestrian-oriented urban form with structured parking in accordance with the City's MU standards. Additionally, plans are underway to have a streetcar system to add transit options for the neighborhood centers and to give the area greater transportation flexibility. The development at Museum Place and other areas are including green building and other LEED design elements in the projects.

Were neighborhood corporations established?

New development has consulted with existing organizations and non-profits to garner support for the construction and design of their projects.

What Private-Public partnerships have been formed?

Developers worked with the city for financing on construction, infrastructure and streetscape improvements through the Brownfield programs, tax abatements, and enterprise zones.

What was done to keep the economic and social mix?

To earn city incentives, the developer of the West 7th mixed-use project has agreed that 15 percent of the rental units will fall into the affordable housing classification and that 25 percent of hard construction costs will be contracted to women- and minority-owned businesses. The Museum Place development incorporated local businesses displaced as a result of construction into their development and offered affordable leasing options for space. The Fort Worth Housing Authority purchased the Spring Hill and Spring Glen apartments adjacent to the neighborhood centers and plan renovate the property and offer a mix of affordable housing and public housing with about 7-8% being public housing.

What were the Tools, Strategies, and Outcomes?

Many sites were developed in Brownfield areas and eligible for the city's Brownfield program. According to Fort Worth, "a Brownfield site is "real property", the expansion, redevelopment, or reuse of which may be complicated by the presence or potential presence of a hazardous substance, pollutant, or contaminant." This city-run program offers incentives to companies willing to redevelop these economically distressed areas in Fort Worth. Incentives may include designation as a federal enterprise zone or tax increment financing district, as well as a tax abatement program. Additionally, the Montgomery Plaza project received a one-year tax abatement for 100% of its increased real and personal property taxes for the property

Montgomery Plaza also redeveloped a historic department store into a mixed-use development with condos and ground floor retail (see Appendix C).

III.   Other Tools Used in Neighborhood Centers

This section contains a listing of other tools used that maybe beneficial to neighborhood planning and implementation. These tools include the use of TIFs for economic redevelopment and revitalization and a focus on Smart Growth tools in mixed use development.

3.1 Economic Revitalization Project Using a TIF: Vickery Meadow (Dallas, TX)

Why is this economic plan selected as a case of the plan used TIF?

The accomplishment of the Vickery Meadow TIF District is notable in terms of its use of TIF in the creation of Mixed-Use Development. This economic revitalization project can be used as an example for redeveloping urban corridors along the light rail system, promoting transit oriented development (TOD), and the implementation of context sensitive urban design standards.

How were TIFs used?

The TIF district was established to assist the creation of Mixed-Use Development on Central Expressway and Park Lane and extend redevelopment to the remainder of the District including the areas generally known as "Five Points" at Park Lane, Fair Oaks Avenue, and Ridgecrest Road.

The goals of the Vickery Meadow TIF District can be summarized by four key points. First, facilitate private development which will diversify and shore up the local economy by creating jobs, reducing unemployment, and increasing transportation options and commercial activity. The Second, focus is on traffic improvements and the redevelopment of properties within the Five-Point area. The Third focus is encouraging the redevelopment of the "Park Lane" site and improving pedestrian connections to the existing DART Park Lane light rail station to increase density while providing enhanced urban design for the TIF District. The fourth focus is generating additional taxable value and net present value in the increment year.

3.2 Mixed-Use Development Focused on Smart Growth Tools: Belmar Mixed-Use Development (Lakewood, Colorado)

Why is this mixed-use neighborhood plan selected as focusing on Smart Growth?

"Belmar Mixed-Use Development" is selected because the purpose of the plan is redevelopment of abandoned 'Brownfield' site through the 'Mixed-Use Development plan'. This plan is highlighted because the development incorporated renewable energy and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency recognized "Belmar Mixed-Use Development" as a successful story that used Renewable energy in contaminated land. (www.epa.gov/renewableenergyland).

What can the Neighborhoods do by themselves?

The City of Lakewood has several programs that encourage residents to maintain and improve their environments such as, the annual "City of Lakewood Sustainability Awards" and organizing neighborhood cleanup projects.

What Smart Growth elements were used?

The Smart Growth Network (www.smartgrowth.org) highlighted "Belmar Mixed-Use Development" as one of the notable Smart Growth Developments. The "Belmar Mixed-Use Development" satisfies Smart Growth Principals: 'Included mixed land uses,' 'exhibit compact building design,' 'provide broad range of housing types,' 'promotes walkable neighborhoods,' 'exhibits a distinct sense of place,' 'preserves open space,' 'utilizes existing development' and 'promotes stakeholder participation.' Mixed-Use Land Uses includes local and franchise businesses: retailers, boutiques,

SMART GROWTH PRINCIPALS BELMAR'S WALKABLE TOWN	
#1 Includes Mixed-Use Land Uses	✶
#2 Exhibits Compact Building Design	✶
#3 Provides Range of Housing Types	☘
#4 Promotes Walkable Neighborhood	☘
#5 Exhibits a Distinct Sense of Place	☘
#6 Preserves Open Space	☘
#7 Utilize Exisiting Development	☘
#8 Provides Transportation Choices	
#9 Practices Fair Decision-making	
#10 Promotes Stakeholder Participatio	☘

source: smart growth online

restaurants, cafes, theatres, offices, residences, artist studios, parks and plazas - all within 22 city blocks. The Economic Development Department provides site search information, access financing and other training programs and has partnerships with U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and private developers. To implement these strategies the Sales Tax of the City of

Lakewood has been increased 6.8 percent from 2006 to 2007. Since then the numbers of retail stores and other tenants has increased each year.

Appendix A. Tools and Strategies Used by NSD, Phoenix, AZ & the Outcomes

Tools and Strategies	Outcome	Organization Involved
CDBG (Community Block Grant Funding)	Assisted in the rehabilitation of more than 700 owner occupied housing units, construction of 100 homes and completion of six street transportation and parks and recreation projects.	Approximately 76 nonprofit agencies qualified for funding through the City's CDBG or Weed and Seed programs that benefited 200,000 low and moderate income residents.
Free Home Maintenance Training (HMT) classes	Approximately 300 residents participated in free Home Maintenance Training classes to stabilize and improve Phoenix neighborhoods.	NSD and Residents
Partnering with nonprofit organizations	Partnering with Nonprofit organizations on successful neighborhood and community improvement.	NSD and Nonprofit Organizations
Graffiti Busters Program (Awarded by Neighborhood, USA)	Removed 95,173 graffiti sites, which was increased of more than 31,000 from the previous year. And created a new Anti-Graffiti Public Service Announcement (PSA) and the Alhambra High School Graffiti Buster Club.	Alhambra High School, Youth and Education Office
"Phoenix Working for You" communicator program	A live all-in show in March 2007 featured interviews with NSD staff about department programs and service.	NSD and City Cable Station
High Efficiency Particle Air (HEPA)-Vacuum lending program	Tool Lending program helped the families in Phoenix properly clean their homes.	Volunteers, HEPA and the Graffiti Busters warehouse, Councilman Michael Johnson's Office, Clean Cut Landscape Management and Arizona Association of Community Management
Neighborhood Revitalization Mobile Data Access	Implementing the use of laptops, docking ports and wireless printers for its housing rehabilitation specialist to streamline in the field.	NSD
Shopping Cart Retrieval Program	9,759 shopping carts were returned to retail stores and more than $126,000 in fees were recovered for cart retrieval services during the Shopping Cart Retrieval program's first year.	NSD
NSD Weatherization Program	NSD Weatherization Program partnered with Arizona Public Service Disconnect Project in 85032 zip code (highest utility disconnect rates)	NSD and Arizona Public Service

Source: City of Phoenix, AZ

Appendix B. Tools and Strategies of the Town North Neighborhood Action Plan and the Outcomes

Tools and Strategies	Outcome	Organization Involved
Capital Improvements Plan	Several of the strategies and issues identified by the action plan may be candidates for future capital improvement projects	City / TNN (Town North Neighbors)
Street Maintenance Sales Tax	Randol Mill Road, between Fielder Road and Collins Street, is scheduled for micro-seal during 2009	City / TNN
Neighborhood Matching Grants	The Town North Neighbors were awarded a $1,000 grant from the Neighborhood Matching Grant fund in the fall 2008 cycle in order to help them organize. The group applied for a $1,000 grant in the spring 2009 cycle to pay for application fees, so that they could become a 501(c) 3 nonprofit organization	City / TNN
Arlington Tomorrow Foundation	The Community Development & Planning Department, in partnership with Town North Neighbors, applied for two ATF grants in the spring 2009 cycle to fund sidewalk improvements in the area	C & D Planning Dept. / TNN / City Council
US Department of Housing & Urban Development (HUD) Grant Funds		
Brownfield Program	Programs that TNN can apply for with 501 c (3) status	Federal govt. / C & D Planning Dept. / TNN
Gutter Ponding and Storm Water Programs		

Source: City of Arlington, TX

Appendix C. Tools, Strategies and Outcomes of the West Seventh Corridor (Fort Worth, TX)

Tools, Strategies, and Outcomes of the West Seventh Corridor (Fort Worth, TX)		
Tools and Strategies	**Outcome**	**Organization Involved**
Brownfield Program	Developers used these incentivities offered by the City to finance projects on former brownfield sites	**City / Developers**
Enterprise Zones	The City of Fort Worth offers special incentives to businesses that locate within an eligible enterprise zone in the city and make a minimum investment of $75,000 and create at least 10 new full-time jobs. The State offers a one-time state sales and use tax refund, a one-time franchise tax refund and preference for all programs administered by the State of Texas.	**City / Developers**
Tax Abatement	Kimco Montgomery Plaza, LP received a one-year tax abatement (2005 tax year) for up to 100% of its increased real and personal property taxes attributable to the property. In return for the environmental remediation of the property and adaptive reuse of the historic catalog store, Kimco is eligible to receive up to 21 annual economic development program grants. The total value of the grant package, including the one-year tax abatement, is capped at $22,705,027. Target received one-year tax abatement (2005 tax year) for up to 100% of Target's increased real and personal property taxes attributable to the property. In return for the development of a SuperTarget with a full-service grocery store component, Target will be eligible to receive up to 21 annual economic development program grants. The total value of the grant package, including the one-year tax abatement, is capped at $13,000,000.	**City / Developers**
For Worth Housing Authority	Purchasing apartment housing in the area and plan to redevelop as affordable and public housing	**City / Monticello Neighborhood Assn.**
	source: City of Fort Worth, TX	

Appendix D. Vickery Meadow TIF district's Project Plan Budget (2007-2008)

Project Plan	TIF Budget (NPV)*	Organization Involved
"Park Lane" Project: Environmental remediation, interior/exterior demolition, street/utility improvements and relocation, streetscape improvements, land acquisition, enhanced pedestrian area design and acquisition, engineering and design, non project costs	$20,000,000	
FIVE-POINTs Area Improvements: Environmental remediation, interior/exterior demolition, street/utility improvements, park/plaza design and acquisition, DART related improvements, engineering and design, non project cost	$10,000,000	TIF Board**
Administration and Implementation	$2,195,100	
Total	**$32,195,100**	

Source: City of Dallas, TX

* As approved in the project Plan and Reinvestment Zone Financing Plan in 2006 dollars

** TIF Boards include: Ten members of five City of Dallas appointees including two Dallas Independent School district (DISD) appointees, one Dallas County appointee, one Dallas Community College District appointee and one Dallas County Hospital District appointee

Appendix E. Belmar Mixed-Use Development, City of Lakewood, Colorado

Area Name	Tools and Strategies	Funding source/ Organizations	Outcomes
Belmar Downtown, City of Lakewood, Colorado	**Low-interest loans for local brownfields cleanup activities**	**$5.1million in a Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) grant from Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)'s Brownfields Program**	**Cleanup and Redevelopment of site**
		$1.95 million loan to Continuum Partners, a private developer, for the cleanup and redevelopment of the mall site	**In 2005, redevelopment of property gave Lakewood its first walkable downtown area, concentrated around Lakewood's municipal buildings.**

source: US EPA OSWER, 2009

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