

Chatham-Kent sets stage for brownfield redevelopment

Municipality of Chatham-Kent, Ontario

Chatham-Kent Brownfield Development Strategy (Community Improvement Plan) (GMEF 5678)

Date project completed: April 2005 / Total project value: \$200,000 / GMF grant: \$100,000

- Brownfield and bluefield sites evaluated
- Tools and incentives identified
- Community Improvement Plan adopted
- Aim to stimulate redevelopment of 75 to 100 rural and urban contaminated sites



This warehouse remained empty for 15 years before redevelopment.



The former brownfield site is now a business park.

Overview

The Municipality of Chatham-Kent retained two consulting firms to prepare a brownfield strategy and a community improvement plan to promote brownfield redevelopment. The strategy and plan form a key part of the new Official Plan for the Municipality of Chatham-Kent. The Municipality hopes to stimulate the redevelopment of 75 to 100 rural and urban contaminated sites by identifying site development

opportunities and providing a comprehensive framework to remediate and re-use the sites. The project team reviewed planning regulations and relevant legislation, and evaluated and prioritized potential brownfield sites. They developed a comprehensive mapping index and a list of available redevelopment and remediation tools and incentives. The team also recommended policies and programs for rehabilitation and redevelopment, including a brownfields marketing strategy. Criteria were established to transform brownfield sites into economically viable and environmentally sustainable sites. The project team reviewed Chatham-Kent's new Official Plan and the Brownfield Development Strategy to ensure consistency.

Project team

Municipality of Chatham-Kent
Marshall Macklin Monaghan Limited
RCI Consulting

Context

The Municipality of Chatham-Kent was formed in 1998 from the amalgamation of 22 rural and urban communities. Much of the past industrial development within Chatham-Kent occurred along the rail lines that cross the urban areas. As a result, former industrial and commercial areas are widely spread across the municipality, with concentrations in Chatham, Wallaceburg, and Tilbury, and, to a lesser extent, in Blenheim, Dresden, Ridgeway, Highgate, Bothwell, and Wheatley. The distribution of brownfield sites follows the same pattern. The municipality also contains many "bluefield" sites. Bluefield sites are brownfield properties located on former institutional sites such as abandoned schools, government buildings, churches,

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The Green Municipal Fund (GMF) is a unique national program that provides low-interest loans and grants, builds capacity, and shares knowledge to support municipal governments and their partners in developing communities that are more environmentally, socially and economically sustainable.

hospitals and long-term care facilities. The Municipality has identified brownfield and bluefield revitalization and redevelopment as a planning, economic, and community development priority.

Approach

The team reviewed new provincial brownfields legislation and local planning and economic development documents, and identified previous land uses to determine the environmental concerns associated with the brownfield sites. The team also held a public meeting and produced an interim report.

The team then evaluated brownfield and bluefield sites within the entire area of the municipality in greater detail to identify potential impediments to redevelopment. The team reviewed best practices from other jurisdictions, interviewed landowners and consultants with interests in brownfield or bluefield sites, consulted with the Ontario Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, and reviewed proposed policies related to brownfields and community improvement plans in the draft Chatham-Kent Official Plan. The results of the team's reviews were captured in a draft Chatham-Kent Brownfield and Bluefield Strategy. The team revised the draft strategy to address comments received, and prepared a draft Community Improvement Plan.

Results

The Chatham-Kent Brownfield and Bluefield Strategy outlines the Municipality's objectives, strategic actions and targets for brownfield and bluefield redevelopment. It includes a Municipal Leadership Strategy to help the Municipality provide leadership, support and coordination of brownfield and bluefield redevelopment. The leadership strategy involves acquiring privately owned property, committing to investments, and participating in pilot projects with the private sector to remediate and rehabilitate brownfield and bluefield sites. Pilot projects are planned to showcase innovative tools, such as new environmental remediation technologies, environmental insurance, or energy-efficient building technologies. The Municipality may also issue Requests for Proposals (RFPs) for municipally owned brownfield and bluefield sites or participate in public-private partnerships to remediate, rehabilitate, reuse, and improve publicly owned bluefield sites and privately and publicly owned brownfield sites, including properties for which there has been a failed tax sale.

The Community Improvement Plan, which supplements the Chatham-Kent Brownfield and Bluefield Strategy, includes four incentive programs:

- Environmental Study Grant Program;
- Feasibility Study Grant Program;

- Tax Assistance Program; and
- Rehabilitation Tax-Increment Financing (TIF) Grant Program.

Lessons learned

The project benefited enormously from the direction of a steering committee that represented a broad cross-section of stakeholders, including members of Council, representatives of business and industry, and property owners. Similarly, the project team's collaborations with the Ontario Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing and the Ontario Ministry of Finance facilitated the process.

Marsha Coyne, Development Planner with the Municipality of Chatham-Kent, noted that it was very helpful to have the consultants talk to property owners about brownfields. Property owners who had dealt with the Municipality over property standards in the past were more open with the consultants, who were perceived as more objective than the Municipality.

Next steps

The Community Improvement Plan was adopted by Council in April 2005 and approved by the Ontario Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing in October 2005. There are now two potential bluefields projects under consideration. The Municipality is also studying three other sites for remediation: the Southwest Regional Centre, the Chatham Precinct, and a former industrial area in Wallaceburg.

Contacts

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Additional resources

For other GMF projects of this type or category, or from this municipality, province or territory, please contact FCM's Capacity Building Program, Brownfields Campaign, at 613-241-5221 or at brownfields@fcm.ca. For the complete project report, please visit the FCM Centre for Sustainable Community Development website at www.sustainablecommunities.fcm.ca.

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