



SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT GROUP

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TEN PRINCIPLES OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IN BROWNFIELDS AND VACANT PROPERTIES REDEVELOPMENT

Sustainable Community Development Group, Inc. is a not-for-profit corporation working with the public, private, philanthropic and community sectors to advance environmental sustainability, equitable development and global smart growth.

These Ten Principles provide a philosophy or framework that, if carried forward into the redevelopment process, will establish a threshold which prepares community, public and private sector stakeholders to advance collaborative decision making.

A collaborative process will help position communities as full partners in revitalizing abandoned, idled or under used commercial and industrial sites and vacant properties.

Principal #1: Adopt a policy of inclusion.

People living in communities, homeowners, renters and small businesses already located in areas where brownfields and vacant properties are prevalent have been most affected by conditions in their neighborhoods and will be most affected by changes in those conditions. It's democratic; they have the most at stake and their inclusion in decisions should be fundamental.

Principal #2: Recognize that community engagement involves multi-stakeholder readiness. Engagement necessarily means helping communities become prepared to engage in the brownfields and economic development dialogue.

Capacity building that educates, trains, helps create a common language among stakeholders and leaves no one disadvantaged by language, communications or understanding is imperative.

Principal #3: Honor communities and neighborhoods as whole places not solely as environmentally degraded or socially and economically disadvantaged.

Honor communities as places where people want to live, learn, worship, work, play and stay.

Principal #4: Honor diversity and inclusion.

Respect diversity of races and cultures, viewpoints and perspectives. Be responsive to viewpoints that just might challenge the mainstream. A community's contributions can test and improve redevelopment plans and make for a more thorough, informed and inclusive process.

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Principal #5: The foundation of community redevelopment and revitalization is equitable beneficial land use.

Land reuse can either replicate the economic and environmental consequences resulting in brownfields and vacant properties or lead to changes in these circumstances that benefit all stakeholders. Race and concentrated poverty issues are intricately intertwined with the history of land use and under-investments in certain communities. The impacts of this history must be factored into decision-making intended to benefit affected neighborhoods.

Principal #6: There shall be no forced displacement as a result of gentrification.

Anti-displacement is a core value. Neither tax increases, nor elevating property values nor rising rents shall force long-term residents, workers and small businesses to unwillingly flee their neighborhoods.

Principal #7: Environmental and redevelopment investments must benefit the entire community.

Economic and environmental gains resulting from neighborhood revitalization must directly benefit the people in the community who have suffered and survived through the years of blight and degradation.

Principal #8: Recognize the intersection of the 3 E's: Equity, Economics and Environment; it's the pathway to sustainable redevelopment.

Addressing environmental, social and economic impacts and factors – these are the essential building blocks of achieving sustainability in vulnerable and disadvantaged communities.

Principal #9: The Equal Protection Clause of the U.S. Constitution entitles everyone to equal protection under law, including equal environmental protection.

States have passed laws focused on liability releases and tax credits that incentivize property cleanup and redevelopment, which should not obscure a cardinal point: Health and environment must be considered on par with the importance of the real estate development deal.

Principal #10: Invest resources at levels sufficient to accomplish the community engagement objective.

Typically, this is the area where the public and private sectors expend the fewest resources and expect to get the most bang for the buck. Community engagement is not public relations and it's more than statutory public participation. Community engagement is resource intensive relationship building and technical assistance that is sensitive, pursued over the long-term and concentrated on parity in preparing and assisting communities to engage in the redevelopment process.

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