

## Coos County Brownfield Taskforce, 2014

### Project Description:

In April of 2014, the Coos County Public Health Department (CCPH) set out to implement the OHA brownfield redevelopment mini-grant. Stakeholders were brought together during three meetings over a four month period to 1) Learn the intricacies of brownfield redevelopment; 2) Build links between stakeholders; 3) Learn why CCPH is involved, and which public health issues are most pressing in Coos County; and 4) Identify and prioritize potential brownfield projects.

Three meetings, May 20<sup>th</sup>, July 9<sup>th</sup>, and September 22<sup>nd</sup>, were held in 2014.

- The first meeting:
  - Introduced the stakeholders to each other (See Table 1).
  - Provided an introduction to brownfield redevelopment.
  - Highlighted the top health needs in the county as enumerated in the Coos County Community Health Assessment (CHA) and Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP)<sup>1</sup>
  - Made the case that by including the CCPH department in redevelopment planning, the county's top health needs would be given consideration in the planning stages of projects.
  - Included a discussion about visioning and community involvement.
  - Touched on Greenfields and how Coquille's former mill site might be marketed.
  - Had multiple quality of life suggestions<sup>2</sup>.
  - Tasked attendees with recruiting other interested parties to participate at subsequent meetings.
- The second meeting
  - Featured a case study from the Tillamook County Salmonberry Rails to Trails project,
  - Covered the Coos Waterfront Boardwalk Project<sup>3</sup> and other project ideas, including emergency family lodging, brownfield site inventory, and remediation of contaminated clamping beds.
- The third meeting:
  - Focused on the Waterfront project and identified several next steps necessary to move forward/
  - Included a discussion concerning the old McAuley Hospital site and whether it would be considered a brownfield site.
  - Also discussed were future communication plans, and which agency/entity might be the contact point for future discussions.
- Additionally, a brownfields orientation meeting was held for employees of the Coos County Public Health Department prior to the first public meetings. Topics included general brownfield vocabulary, examples of brownfield redevelopments, and how public health practitioners can get involved in redevelopment projects.

Successes:

- Awareness building
  - Elevated understanding within CCPH of how brownfield redevelopment can involve public health measures.
  - The realization by community partners that contaminated sites represent an opportunity to draw in funding and expertise, rather than a developmental dead end.
  - A much enhanced understanding of the various funding streams available to assist the redevelopment effort.
  - How legal constructs like Prospective Purchaser Agreements can be used to resolve intractable or reluctant contaminated property owner situations. In other words, what can at first seem like a deal breaker, can often be an opportunity to move a project forward.
- Connections
  - Both the cities of Bandon and Coos Bay have made productive connections with Business Oregon with regards to integrated planning grants for existing projects.
- Identification of progress hindrances
  - At present, no local entity has the staff time to keep the Brownfield Taskforce moving forward. Although it was noted that up to 10% of project funding via the EPA may be used for keeping the local health department involved.
  - The importance of planning and stepwise progress to avoid project stagnation.
- Project ideas
  - Highway 101 beautification.
  - Bike paths linking low income parts of Coos Bay and North Bend with retail and tourist areas, bike paths through the dunes.
  - Community gardens.
  - Clean up of contaminated clamping beds.

Lessons Learned:

- Reactions to the first meeting ranged from excitement on the part of several attendees who caught a glimpse of possible ways to move forward with projects already in mind, to frustration with material that was review to some attendees. With this in mind, meetings might be tailored to the experience level of attendees.
- Although the City of Coos Bay was one of the earliest recipients of EPA brownfield funding, the phase I & II assessments produced are now nearly fifteen years old. Given that the shelf life of phase I & II assessments is six months, there is a palpable sense of déjà vu in the city administration regarding brownfield work. The prospect of having to revisit activities such as visioning drew exasperated reactions. The start—stop nature of the redevelopment work in the city appears to be hindering the progression of projects. The present day process has more clearly defined funding sources, however, so moving from one phase of a project to the next

should be easier than in the past. Planning, funding, and cooperation is key to keeping projects moving and preventing roadblocks like out of date assessments.

- The goal of “integrating health considerations into brownfields planning …” is challenging for a couple of reasons. First, CCPH brings little funding to the process. Projects on the scale of the Coos Waterfront Park and Walkway require significant amounts of money, effort, and resources. Without control of the purse strings, public health considerations can be an afterthought. If the EPA begins to demand data based demonstration of public health benefits, it will be easier to argue for CCPH’s inclusion in the process.
- The portion of the population that would benefit most from integrating public health considerations into projects is hard to reach. While we reached out to many social service organizations, no door to door effort was made due to funding constraints. More effective communication methods should be researched.
- The Waterfront project drew some objections on the grounds that it would benefit primarily tourists and locals who were already engaged in healthy activities such as running or biking. It was also pointed out that the Waterfront project is far removed from the most pronounced pockets of poverty in Coos County, and that getting there would present a problem to those with no private transportation.
- Economic drivers are sorely lacking in Coos County. As one member of the task force put it, “Why bother with redeveloping contaminated properties when so many other properties are available?”
- A preliminary assessment of a community’s readiness to engage in redevelopment discussions would make it easier to develop meeting agendas and speaker lists. Perhaps a well publicized public pre-meeting-meeting to explain brownfield redevelopment and tempt interested citizens into participating?
- Due to the wide scope of public health activities, it can be difficult to succinctly articulate how PH can be integrated into redevelopment projects.

Participants in the three meetings convened for the OHA Brownfields mini-grant, Coos County, 2014			
Name	Affiliation	Meetings Attended	In person/conference call
Margaret Barber	CCD Business Development Corp.	5/20	
Jan Delimont	REMAX	5/20	
Linda Hicks	Bay Area Hospital	5/20	
Ben Marchant	City of Coquille	5/20	
Crystal Shoji	City of Coos Bay, Shoji Planning	5/20	
Marie Simonds	Wild Rivers Alliance	5/20	
Carmen Matthews	Surfrider Foundation	5/20	
Jennifer Stephens	Coquille Tribe Health Coordinator / Connect! The boardwalks.	5/20, 7/9, 9/22	
Jeff Stump	Coquille Tribe	5/20	
Fred Jacquot	South Coast Development Council	5/20	
John Hitt	South Coast Development Council	5/20	
Karen Homolac	Business Oregon	5/20, 7/9, 9/22	Phone (last meeting)
Kari Christensen	OHA	5/20, 7/9, 9/22	Phone (last meeting)
Mary Camarata	DEQ	5/20, 7/9,	
Dave Perry	DLCD	5/20, 7/9	
Laura LaGesse	Coos Watershed	7/9	
Cynthia Edwards	CCPH	7/9	
Barbara Bassett	CCPH	7/9	Phone
William Lackner	Oregon Clammers	7/9	Phone
Joseph Monahan	Women's Resource Center/Citizen	7/9, 9/22	
Carrie Rackey	AMEC/Tillamook	7/9	
Chuck Erickson	Oregon Clammers	7/9	Phone
David Koch	Port of Coos Bay	9/22	
Rocky Houston	State Parks	7/9	Phone
James Becroft	Tillamook County Health Dept.	7/9	Phone
Len Far	AMEC/Tillamook	7/9	Phone
Connie Stopher	SCDC	7/9, 9/22	Phone
Bittin Duggan	Citizen	9/22	
Rick Hallmark	CCPH	7/9, 9/22	
Charles Smith	Citizen/developer	9/22	
Ignacio Dayrit	EPA	9/22	Phone
Jennifer Groth	City of Coos Bay	9/22	
Peter Cooley	CCPH	5/20, 7/9, 9/22	
Two unknown	Unknown	5/20	

Issues/concerns/recommendations:

Thirty five people were involved in the meetings, two unidentified. Nineteen showed up for the first, eighteen for the second, and twelve for the third.

One concern we have is in regards to the number of people attending the meetings. It would have been possible to attract many more people to the three meetings by advertising and /or doing public service announcements. Our strategy, in contrast, was to pull in city managers, organization types, and others affiliated with social service agencies, non-profits, and environmental groups, with the assumption that with a wide ranging group we would get fairly well thought out ideas of where the best to concentrate resources. In retrospect, it might have been equally, if not more, productive to conduct at least one meeting based on the dire juror need, i.e., pulling people in off the street to fill seats and get a random sampling of ideas.

While the DEQ and Business Oregon representatives wondered if they had overwhelmed the meetings, we recommend that both attend as many meetings as possible. The knowledge at their fingertips is difficult to find in the first place, and nearly impossible to place into context with a group of brownfield neophytes. DLCD likely had some pertinent information, but perhaps we were too early in the process to make good use of DLCD's presence.

Is there a big difference in the way brownfield redevelopment funding is handled now, versus fifteen years ago? It would be good to hear that discussion to alleviate anxiety on the part of people and organizations that may have had experience with the EPA in the past. There was a suggestion by state representatives that the process had become more streamlined and easier to navigate over the last decade or so.

Notes:

1. The top eight priorities for improving the health of Coos County residents, from the 2013 Coos County Community Health Assessment, are: Access to healthcare; chronic illness management; dental health; fall prevention; maternal and child health; mental health; chronic illness prevention; socioeconomic disparities.
2. Hwy 101 beautification, how brownfield cleanup might improve travel corridors for business and environmental interests, safe biking routes around and between the cities.
3. Coos Waterfront Park and Walkway: A cooperative association of cities, quasi-governmental agencies, individuals, the Coquille Indian Tribe, development agencies, and businesses with the express purpose of developing a waterfront park and walkway from North Bend to Coos Bay.

State, regional, local business, economic and community development contacts:

- Oregon Health Authority, Public Health Division
- Oregon Department of Environmental Quality
- Oregon Regional Solutions Center, Southern Oregon Region
- Coos County
- Business Oregon
- Coos County Parks and Recreation
- Coos Bay Community Development
- Coos Bay Parks and Recreation
- North Bend Parks and Recreation
- Coquille Parks and Recreation
- Barview Area-Charleston Area Parks (BACAPA)
- Millicoma River Park & Recreation District
- Coos Bay City Manager
- North Bend City Manager
- Coquille City Manager
- Myrtle Point City Manager
- Bandon City Manager
- Lakeside City Manager
- Powers City Manager / Representative
- Bay Area Chamber of Commerce
- Bandon Chamber of Commerce
- Lakeside Chamber of Commerce
- Coquille Chamber of Commerce
- CCD Business Development Corporation
- Southwestern Oregon Community College
- South Coast Development Council
- Oregon State University Extension Office
- Area Agency on Aging
- North Bend Aging & People with Disabilities
- Tenmile Lakes Basin Partnership
- Coos Watershed Association
- Coquille Watershed Association