

For EPA personnel and partners who wish to implement collaborative problem solving projects effectively.

Atlantic Steel Redevelopment

Attention to transportation flow coupled with innovative approaches to environmental improvement make for a successful project in Atlanta

Background

Jacoby Development Corporation proposed mixed use redevelopment (i.e. residential, retail, office and hospitality) of a 138-acre site currently owned by Atlantic Steel near Atlanta's central business district. Jacoby worked intensively with representatives of EPA, the State of Georgia, local authorities and public stakeholders to develop a site-specific Project XL Agreement to enable this redevelopment to proceed.

Prior to redevelopment, the site had suffered poor accessibility. Project plans for a multi-modal (cars, pedestrians, bicycles, transit linkage) bridge across I-75/85 at 17th Street as well as ramps to connect the site to the nearby MARTA (the Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority) Arts Center transit station would serve as a vital linkage between the Atlantic Steel redevelopment and downtown. Completion of the redevelopment proposed by Jacoby was predicated upon improving multi-modal access to the area. In addition, construction of the 17th Street Bridge was one of the City of Atlanta's zoning requirements for the project. Jacoby participated in Project XL because without the regulatory flexibility it offered neither the 17th Street Bridge nor the associated I-75/85 access ramps could have proceeded.

Why the Atlantic Steel Project Succeeded

Innovative environmental protection methods coupled with stakeholder involvement led to success for the Atlantic Steel project. Because Atlanta had not

met Clean Air Act standards between 1998 and 2002, standard interpretation of EPA regulations would have prohibited constructing the proposed bridge (a form of highway construction). However, Atlantic Steel's prime downtown location as well as the proposed site design suggested lower car travel and reduced air quality impacts. The possibility that Atlantic Steel, once redeveloped, represented a type of environmental benefit known as a transportation control measure (TCM) prompted the Agency to conduct research. In the end, an obstacle that would have prevented reuse of the site was removed after EPA's Smart Growth Program (in the Office of Policy, Economics and Innovation) conducted analyses showing that the smart growth aspects of the redevelopment would help reduce air pollution, among other environmental benefits.

The Atlantic Steel Redevelopment Team considered stakeholder involvement essential, so it has been an important part of the concept and rezoning considerations since the project began in early 1997. Stakeholders included the City of Atlanta Planning Department, Georgia Department of Transportation, Atlanta Regional Commission, nine neighbor-

hood organizations and several other groups such as the Midtown Alliance and Georgia Tech University. These groups collaborated on the concept, design, and conditions put in place in the rezoning document. Multiple public meetings, discussion groups, individual contacts, and a full public notice and review process relative to this project were held during the rezoning of this property—all vital to the project.

What made the Atlantic Steel Project Unique?

Projects that are expected to provide the benefit of a TCM can proceed even during a conformity lapse if they are in a federally approved State Implementation Plan. Atlantic Steel represented the first project of its size and complexity that EPA had ever evaluated as a TCM. The analysis, coupled with EPA's use of regulatory flexibility under an innovative program called Project XL (www.epa.gov/)



Atlantic Station is a model to the rest of the nation of how partnerships can deliver enormous environmental and economic successes.

- EPA Administrator Steve Johnson

projectxl/), allowed the development to proceed as a TCM.

Project XL tested innovative ways of achieving better and more cost-effective public health and environmental protection. Project XL encouraged local public sector and community organizations to test new ideas that demonstrate community-designed and directed strategies for achieving greater environmental quality consistent with community economic goals.

Atlantic Steel also tested whether smart growth strategies can be applied to the Brownfield's program (more information on EPA's Brownfields program at <http://www.epa.gov/swerosps/bf/index.html>) and transportation projects, so that air quality and other environmental performance could be improved, as part of an overall community revitalization plan.

Lessons Learned

Sometimes a "business-as-usual" approach can act as a barrier to environmental improvements by inhibiting innovative approaches. Under the Atlantic Steel project, EPA considered the entire development to be a transportation control measure (TCM). At the time, the Clean Air Act identified several types of projects that can be TCMs, but the statute did not limit TCMs to those measures. For Atlantic Steel, EPA viewed the site's location, proposed transit linkages and other transportation characteristics together as a TCM. EPA believed the combination of these elements could have a positive effect on reducing emissions from single occupancy vehicles by encouraging the use of alternative modes of transportation.

A second aspect of this project's flexibility is testing an innovative approach to measuring the air quality benefits of the Atlantic Steel redevelopment. To analyze the regional transportation and air

emissions impacts of the Atlantic Steel site, EPA used modeling analysis to compare the site redevelopment's potential air quality impact to three other likely locations for similar-scale development in the Atlanta region. Using this type of comparison to support a TCM consideration was unique to this project. As more cities struggle with urban development, transportation, and air quality problems similar to Atlanta's, many aspects of the project will have the potential to be transferred.

Results

The environmental and economic benefits of the project are numerous:

- Clean-up of an old industrial property; separation of sanitary and storm sewer systems.
- Reduction of auto emissions.
- Creation of jobs and economic development where infrastructure already exists.

In July 2004, an independent panel of state, regional and federal government leaders, along with environmental, business and academic professionals, named the project winner of the Phoenix Award in EPA's Region 4. In September 2004, the project received the Grand Prize Phoenix Award for excellence in Brownfield redevelopment.

Atlantic Station is expected to generate approximately 20,000 new jobs with a predicted gain of more than \$619 million in total salaries. Additionally, several million dollars in tax revenues will be generated for the City and County. Prior to the redevelopment, property taxes contributed \$300,000 a year to the City's coffers. Once fully constructed, Atlantic Station will contribute \$30 million a year in property taxes. Additionally, the numerous retailers on site will contribute \$10 to \$20 million a year in Special Interest Local Option Sales Taxes, which help

fund local education and transportation initiatives.

Keys to Collaboration Exemplified

Agency experience and academic research suggest there are seven keys to successful collaborative problem-solving (http://www.epa.gov/epainnov/collaboration/seven_keys.htm). Six keys for collaborative problem solving are demonstrated through Atlantic Steel.

For Atlanta, the **shared problem** was the city's conformity lapse and standard interpretation of EPA's regulations. Both were obstacles for implementing a project that offered multiple environmental benefits.

EPA was the **convener of stature**, and it enlisted Atlantic Steel as a pilot for an initiative known as Project XL.

Jacoby Development Corporation was the **committed leader**, and they worked intensively to develop a site specific Project XL Agreement, the **formal charter**.

Atlantic Steel involved the following **representatives of substance**: Jacoby Development Corporation; EPA; the State of Georgia; local authorities; and public stakeholders.

Finally, the **clearly-defined purpose** of this effort was redevelopment of a 138 acre Brownfield site near Atlanta's central business district.

For More Information

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