



The Vermont Legislative Research Shop

Rural Downtown Redevelopment

Vacant and abandoned properties present both a problem and an opportunity for many central cities. These properties impose economic and social costs on local areas and neighborhoods by reducing property values, creating blight, and becoming targets for vandalism and criminal activity. Yet they also hold out tremendous opportunities for the development of ne

districts.” The program provides grants for Non-Profit entities that will use the money in a concentrated area that has neglected, substandard, or abandoned buildings. The money allocated

1995), and the Industrial Sites Assessment Act (Act 4 of 1995). Since the establishment of this program 1,350 cleanups have been approved. These initiatives have created or retained 30,000 jobs. Funding for the remediation of these previously abandoned or idle properties has been generated through grants and loans amounting to \$56.5 million provided by the Industrial Sites Reuse Program.⁷

In Philadelphia the Neighborhood Transformation Initiative (NTI), a program begun by Mayor John F. Street in 2002, is a five-year, \$295 million plan to revive distressed communities in the city. When completed, the effort will have demolished 14,000 vacant buildings, rehabilitated 4,500 distressed homes, and constructed 2,000 new housing units. The city will assist community development corporations in acquiring vacant properties and potentially provide development financing as well.⁸

New Jersey: The New Jersey State Planning Commission considers just 12.5 percent of the state's metropolitan areas undeveloped and unprotected. For that reason, the New Jersey State Development and Redevelopment Plan allocates state and local resources either to protect undeveloped and unprotected land as open space or to redevelop vacant lots within urban areas. The state has adopted planning goals and created the New Jersey Redevelopment Authority. "Among other powers, this authority has the ability to offer financing to redevelopment projects at low and no interest rates. Overall, Smart Growth under the New Jersey plan could save New Jersey taxpayers as much as \$2.3 billion on roadway construction and water and sewer upgrades over the next 20 years."⁹

Downtown Renewal Strategies

The Main Street Model is a commercial revitalization strategy developed by the National Trust for Historic Preservation in the 1970s. The model focuses a four-point approach ranging from design improvement, image enhancement, economic development, and organization. Close to 1,600 communities cities have used the model to revitalize business districts. The Main Street Model is an incremental system, meant to bring long-term impacts involving every aspect of a downtown area.¹⁰ Some quotes from supporters follow:

"Support for a revitalized Conway was more than an economic issue, it was about saving the heart of a town and preserving its character."

⁷ Kathleen A. McGinty, Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection, "Pennsylvania's Land Recycling Program" June 25, 2003 <http://www.dep.state.pa.us/dep/mcginty/remarks/McGintyLRTestimony062503.htm>
Web site visited 4/12/05

⁸ Leigh, Nancy Green, "The State Role in Urban Land Redevelopment," Georgia Institute of Technology, April 2003. <http://www.brook.edu/dybdocroot/es/urban/publications/leighvacant.pdf>
Web site visited 4/7/05.

⁹ Leigh, Nancy Green, "The State Role in Urban Land Redevelopment," Georgia Institute of Technology, April 2003. <http://www.brook.edu/dybdocroot/es/urban/publications/leighvacant.pdf>
Web site visited 4/07/05.

¹⁰ Karl F. Seidman, "Revitalizing Commerce for American Cities", Fannie Mae Foundation, <http://content.knowledgeplex.org/kp2/cache/documents/49663.pdf> Web site visited 4/12/05

