

Aiming to Be “New England’s Greenest City”

Located on the coast between New York City and Providence, Bridgeport was once a bustling industrial and shipping center. Over the past 50 years, the city has been in decline; today, residents suffer from higher-than-average rates of asthma due to air pollution, and many lack easy access to fresh food, jobs, and public transportation.

Each Partnership agency had provided Bridgeport with assistance before 2009. DOT funded major transit upgrades, including Bridgeport’s Intermodal Transportation Center. EPA awarded grants and technical assistance, including brownfields¹ assessment and cleanup grants, job training grants, and career training assistance. HUD provided funding to promote affordable housing and community development. However, this support was not well-coordinated and did not always consider the city’s needs as a whole. That approach changed in 2009 with the participation of the Partnership for Sustainable Communities.

The Power of Partnership

“In 2009, our regional teams began meeting monthly to talk about how we could better coordinate our assistance across New England,” says EPA Regional Administrator Curt Spalding. “Could a clean brownfield site in one location serve



Steel Point will have pedestrian- and bike-friendly streets that connect neighborhoods to public transit, open the waterfront to the public, and support commercial and residential development. Image courtesy of Bridgeport Landing Development LLC.



“The Partnership for Sustainable Communities in Bridgeport is an example of collaborative problem-solving and unified government at its best. This collaboration has encouraged HUD, DOT, and EPA to work together to focus resources not just on transportation, housing, or the environment, but on how to coordinate all three.”

—Bridgeport Mayor Bill Finch

as a catalyst for a new transit center, for example? Could nearby affordable housing make it easier for lower-income people to get to work, a health clinic, or a full-service grocery store? Could a section of a city designed to promote walkability reduce pollution and improve public health in an area suffering from high rates of asthma? The Partnership makes it possible for us to look not just at one project at a time, but at the cumulative impact of our federal support.”

By combining funding and technical expertise, the three agencies are working together to help Bridgeport achieve its goals for sustainability. In 2009, Bridgeport received an [EPA Environmental Justice Showcase Community Grant](#), which led to many improvements in the distressed East End and East Side neighborhoods, including a new fishing pier and renewed access for residents who had been unable to get to the waterfront. In 2010, Bridgeport received \$11 million in TIGER multimodal transportation funding from DOT to build and upgrade roads around the East Side’s Steel Point Peninsula to prepare for redevelopment.

Bridgeport is also a partner in the New York-Connecticut Sustainable Communities Consortium, a large stakeholder group comprised of city, county, and regional representatives that received a 2010 HUD Regional Planning Grant through the Regional

¹ A brownfield is a property, the expansion, redevelopment, or reuse of which might be complicated by the presence or potential presence of a hazardous substance, pollutant, or contaminant.

Plan Association (RPA). RPA is an independent urban research and advocacy group that provides leadership and guidance on sustainability, infrastructure, and economic competitiveness issues in the New York-New Jersey-Connecticut metropolitan region.

As part of this grant, the consortium is studying the feasibility of opening Barnum Station, a proposed rail station in Bridgeport's East End, on a cleaned-up Fbrownfield. The city hopes the station will anchor its East Side redevelopment plan, leading to new business investment; mixed-use, transit-oriented development; and affordable homes. As part of its extensive public outreach strategy for implementing the HUD planning grant, the consortium has held seven forums and "town halls," where an estimated 420 residents and stakeholders heard about the progress of the

planning work and provided input. In January 2012, residents and stakeholders attended a town hall meeting in Bridgeport to learn about the Barnum Station feasibility study and share ideas to enhance the project.

"The Partnership's efforts have helped further a vision of the future of Bridgeport to become New England's greenest city," said [Bridgeport Mayor Bill Finch](#). "By the federal government coordinating resources and technical expertise, we have a chance of realizing a vision such as the Barnum Station project."

This case study appears in *Three Years of Helping Communities Achieve Their Visions for Growth and Prosperity*, a report of the Partnership for Sustainable Communities, June 2012. Learn more about the Partnership at www.sustainablecommunities.gov.

