



Advancing Urban Redevelopment in New Jersey: Sharing Success, Aligning Resources

PSE&G Conference Center, 80 Park Place, Newark, NJ

Friday June 17, 9:00 am-2:00 pm

Meeting Summary

Background Context

This meeting was co-sponsored by the Fundations' Network for Smart Growth and Livable Communities, the Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation, Garfield Foundation and the William Penn Foundation. The purpose of the day's discussion was to:

- Bring together private and public sector funders and practitioners to exchange information, build relationships, and explore opportunities to leverage assets/align funding streams
- Understand what resources/programs private and public funders bring to the table and how to eliminate barriers created by some public sector funding restrictions/requirements
- Examine two successful urban redevelopment models to catalyze discussion of how public and private sector interests can join forces to advance healthy, prosperous communities.

Vaughn McKoy, President of the PSEG Foundation, welcomed the group of approximately 50 stakeholders. Chris Daggett, CEO of the Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation, set the context for the meeting by describing the role of foundations in supporting urban redevelopment. Beyond grantmaking, foundations can act as conveners of non-traditional alliances to find solutions and to help start the dialogue towards collaborative change. Eric Belsky, Managing Director of Harvard University's Joint Center for Housing Studies, served as facilitator for the day's discussion

Presentations

The first case study focused on waterfront and neighborhood redevelopment plans for Camden's Cramer Hill district. Panelists included Andrew Johnson of the William Penn Foundation, Manuel Delgado of the Cramer Hill Community Development Corporation, and Meishka Mitchell from the Coopers Ferry Development Association. Andrew set the stage for the discussion by describing the Foundation's role in supporting projects in urban core areas along the Delaware River waterfront. He introduced Manny and Meishka, who highlighted several key ingredients for successful community-based redevelopment planning in Camden, among them:

- Early foundation investment spurred the citizen-based planning effort—grants from Ford and Annie E. Casey supported a Community Benefits strategy, which led to Wells Fargo Regional Foundation support for a resident-led neighborhood plan. William Penn Foundation supported waterfront planning and design.
- Community engagement and resident-led plans are an essential precursor for redevelopment, leveraging significant public and private investment (more than \$90 million) in Cramer Hill and adjacent neighborhoods.
- Successful plans can be visionary and ambitious, but they must also be scalable.
- Partnerships—with State agencies (DCA, DOT, DEP), universities and other CDCs—bring additional resources to planning and implementation.
- Planning can be done in phases—in order to build community trust, take small steps, implementing improvements that demonstrate immediate impact.

The second presentation focused on waterfront redevelopment and commercial corridor expansion in Newark's Ironbound neighborhood. Michelle Knapik of the Dodge Foundation introduced the presenters calling out several key factors in the Newark riverfront revitalization story, starting with the fact that the Ironbound community planted a flag on the Newark waterfront early on, and the critical difference that innovative municipal planning and leadership has meant. Another ingredient for success has been Ironbound's partnership with other nonprofits, including the Trust for Public Land, and the city to work towards a common goal. Presenters included Joseph Della Fave of the Ironbound Community Corporation; Stefan Pryor, Deputy Mayor, City of Newark; and Damon Rich, Urban Designer, City of Newark.

Key factors contributing to success of the East Ferry Neighborhood Plan included:

- Harnessing public sector funding and other economic incentives for urban redevelopment such as the Neighborhood Revitalization Tax Credit, New Market Tax Credits, EPA Area-wide Brownfields Planning grant, the NJ Abandoned Properties Act and DEP's Hazardous Discharge Site Remediation Fund.
- Leveraging foundation and bank funding, among them Wells Fargo Regional Foundation and the Dodge Foundation.
- Working collaboratively with other nonprofits to share technical resources and knowledge; e.g. assistance from the Trust for Public Land, the network of community development corporations, and others.

Stefan Pryor described the context for the City's waterfront planning, which builds upon the work of the Ironbound Community Corporation. Newark's industrial waterfront is in disarray compared to other major cities, and it needs to rediscover and reclaim its riverfront, maximizing benefits as both an economic and community asset. This is the first time the city has developed a plan for recreational use of the waterfront. Damon Rich presented the context for planning for a 10-mile revitalized Passaic River waterfront. He said that past waterfront plans were bold, ambitious and focused on the downtown, but supported by too narrow a constituency and coming with a high price tag. City planning is rethinking its approach to identify a set of modest, but achievable goals, initially targeting recreational and waterfront access benefits to neighborhood residents. The city approach is Organize, Build, Plan.

Key aspects of the Passaic Riverfront Project that contributed to success included:

- Taking an organic, community-based approach to constituency-building—having a reachable goal for community involvement and investment and involving diverse stakeholders in the planning process through multiple venues (tours, workshops, charrettes, art projects, blog).
- Leveraging public and private investments through State (DEP) and Federal (Army Corps of Engineers) environmental cleanup funds, private sector industrial remediation requirements, National Endowment for the Arts funds (for public river tours), County funds and State Green Acres funds.
- Creating excitement around the plan in order to attract publicity, community engagement, funding. While it seems counterintuitive, it's important to start implementing small projects to get community engagement and buy-in for the longer term planning process.
- Engaging city officials at the table.

Discussion: Attracting Private Resources, Building Capacity within CDCs

Chris Daggett and Eric Belsky summarized key points made during the afternoon discussion of how to attract private resources into urban areas and support resident led community redevelopment.

- Don't underestimate the power of the individual to effect change. Invest in leadership training and build in-house expertise in CDCs.
- Facilitate communication across all sectors—break down “silos” by finding common ground to get a project completed.
- Collaborate with other CDCs, divide up responsibilities and work towards a common goal.
- While redevelopment costs can seem daunting, another way of thinking about these projects is that it took 3-4 dedicated people to unleash opportunities, engage residents and other key stakeholders, and leverage diverse funding streams.
- Philanthropy needs to educate people as to what it does, and CDCs, in turn, need to understand how philanthropy works.
- This work is long-term and requires multi-year commitments from foundations.
- Attracting private capital to cities is difficult. Greater incentives are needed to attract private capital for market-rate housing plus housing finance programs need to be more flexible.
- Government subsidies are essential to offset the costs of developing in urban areas with older infrastructure.
- Funders should look for opportunities to align funding around common goals, as Wells Fargo and the Neighborhood Revitalization Tax Credit program have done.
- Market assessments can help give priority to funding urban redevelopment projects; however it should also be a priority to support community-based plans.

Topics for Examination at a Future Meeting

Ann Wallace indicated that the Funders' Network for Smart Growth and Livable Communities will look for opportunities to share the lessons from Camden and Newark with funders supporting urban redevelopment in other states. Further, the Network stands ready to coordinate further learning on issues flagged at today's meeting. Some topics might include:

- Training for nonprofits and municipalities on how to structure deals in public-private partnerships involving more complex financial transactions to ensure that all parties receive an equitable share in the success and profits of urban redevelopment projects;
- How to attract public and private financing for market-rate housing in urban areas as well as examples from other cities as to how to offset the added environmental and infrastructure costs of construction;
- Best practices for urban redevelopment funding and community-based redevelopment planning, and training as to how nonprofit administrators and government officials can take advantage of available resources (e.g., Wells Fargo's technical assistance to nonprofits regarding how to use Neighborhood Revitalization Tax Credits and how to do a market analysis).
- Opportunities to blend mission related investments and private capital to advance community-led urban redevelopment.