CITY OF DALLAS

Testimony
of
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City of Dallas, Texas

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Chairman Johnson, Ranking Member Baker and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for this opportunity to testify on reauthorization of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Small Business Liability Relief and Brownfields Revitalization Act. I am Councilwoman Vonciel Jones Hill, City Council Member from Dallas, TX, and I am here to discuss why the Brownfields Program is important for community revitalization nation-wide.

The City of Dallas is pleased that the Subcommittee is looking to reauthorize this fantastically successful and important program. The Brownfields Program has leveraged a relatively small federal investment into great returns, bringing life and economic vitality back to urban neighborhoods long left for dead and helping to reverse the relentless, decades-long migration of jobs and economic activity away from central cities to "greenfields" at the far flung edges of our nation's metropolitan areas.

Brownfields are real property, the expansion, redevelopment, or reuse of which may be complicated by the presence of a hazardous substance, pollutant, or contaminant. Their derelict state often affects neighboring properties, making it difficult to revitalize central city neighborhoods and driving commercial and residential development to the exurban fringes of metropolitan areas. These trends have a spiral affect, leading to development that requires expensive new infrastructure, which in turn leads to more vehicle miles traveled and exacerbates congestion and air pollution.

The EPA Brownfields Program provides grants to state and local governments to assess brownfield sites and to clean up contamination found as a result of those assessments. It also provides limited liability relief for prospective property purchasers of sites that have been assessed and cleaned up under the program, removing the biggest obstacle to their revitalization.

The City of Dallas illustrates the success of the Brownfields Program well. In 1998, EPA designated Dallas a ***Brownfields Showcase Community***. EPA recognized Dallas for good reason. Since the inception of the Dallas Brownfields Program in 1995, $1.125 million in federal Brownfields Assessment Grants has resulted in more than $3.4 billion in public and private investment which has contributed to the revitalization of 47 Brownfield sites. With our assessment dollars, the City of Dallas has conducted 32 Phase I environmental site assessments and 9 Phase II assessments. This infusion of federal brownfields funding has created over 6,800 jobs, generated $13.5 million in private sector clean up funding and has transformed derelict and moribund central Dallas properties into thriving urban neighborhoods.

Combined with the opening of Dallas Area Rapid Transit (DART) Light Rail and City of Dallas initiatives, the redevelopment of these Brownfield sites has sparked an urban renaissance in Dallas. Downtown Dallas has reclaimed its position as one of the metropolitan area's top office markets. More importantly, neighborhoods throughout the City have seen a remarkable amount of commercial and residential development. The redevelopment of brownfields has shown the potential of urban, central city projects and sparked countless nearby development projects that are transforming Dallas neighborhoods long left in decline. Reauthorization of the Small Business Liability Relief and Brownfields Revitalization Act will provide an important boost to these efforts.

In the year 2008, Brownfields redevelopment is not just an evolving issue for developers. It has become another option to help eliminate urban sprawl, create jobs, enhance the local tax base, and reduce crime.

The successes in Dallas include: 16 mixed use, (including business, residential, retail, commercial and hospitality), two educational, three public safety, one business assistance/job training center, three municipal, and one transportation, one industrial, and two recreational and green space projects.

I have descriptions of all of Dallas's brownfield projects and a map that illustrates how this program has positively impacted the entire City of Dallas. With your permission, Chairman Johnson, I would like to enter the descriptions and the map into the record. Two City of Dallas projects have been recognized on the national level and have received EPA Phoenix Awards.

American Airlines Center and Victory Park

Located on the site of an abandoned power plant and related industrial uses near Downtown Dallas, Victory Park is a $3 billion mixed-use development that offers retail shops, restaurants, office space, residential units, hotels and entertainment venues, including the American Airlines Center, home of the professional sports teams, the Dallas Mavericks and the Dallas Stars. Victory Park is a national model for the importance and success of a public/private partnership which changed the face of 73-plus acres of underused land adjoining the central business district; created a major destination location. Victory Park is expected to generate $1 billion annually and has already created 1,200 jobs with many more expected in 2009. In 2001, EPA recognized the American Airlines Center and Victory Park with the Phoenix Award for the highest excellence in brownfields redevelopment and the People's Choice Award that same year.

Jack Evans Police Headquarters

The Jack Evans Police Headquarters, a $59 million City project, was constructed just south of the Central Business District. The site, which had previously housed gasoline stations, automotive shops and a dry cleaner, had been vacant for more than a decade. It was donated by the owner/developer to provide security and reduce crime in a neighborhood coming out of decades of decline. An estimated 300 clean-up and construction jobs were created during the construction phase of the facility. The building was the beta test for the Dallas Green Building Program and received a

Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) silver certification in November 2005. Jack Evans Police Headquarters is also part of a neighborhood transit-oriented development, within one block from the DART Cedars Light Rail Station. This project has been a catalyst for new construction in the immediate area. The first phase of a private sector, four-building residential development is under construction across the street. In 2003, EPA recognized the Jack Evans Police Headquarters as one of the nation's largest and most successful brownfields projects through presentation of the EPA Phoenix Award for the highest excellence in brownfields redevelopment.

Jefferson North End - 1996

Jefferson North End was the City's first Brownfields success story and the venue for the signing ceremony for the Memorandum of Understanding involving environmental cleanup standards between the state regulatory agency and EPA. Buildings on this site were razed in the 1970s leaving the property vacant for more than 20 years. The site once housed a gas station, metal finishing operation, battery manufacturing, automotive repair, and paint and varnish manufacturing. Two developers purchased the site from FDIC and employed soil excavation to clean up the property. The 11 acres were sold to JPI which built a 540-unit multifamily residential complex on the site. The complex included an affordable housing component.

South Side on Lamar - 1997

The one million square-foot former Sears, Roebuck Catalog Merchandise Center main building now houses 457 residential lofts, 120,000 square feet of commercial and retail space, and 25 artists' studios. Matthews Southwest purchased the property and converted the main building to 455 lofts and 120,000 square feet of commercial and retail space.

Thanks to the EPA Brownfields Program, in 2008 the redevelopment of idle urban land is no longer the specialized niche of pioneer developers and committed local officials. In response to this innovative federal program, state and local governments have developed capacity, incentives and regulations that complement the federal program and developers of all sizes have undergone a paradigm shift so that investment in central city, urban projects occupies a core part of their investment strategy.

The City of Dallas's partnership with the EPA exemplifies an unqualified success. I commend the Subcommittee for its interest in reauthorizing this critically important and successful program. The Brownfields Program has led to an urban renaissance in our nation and I urge Congress to reauthorize and fully fund the Small Business Liability Relief and Brownfields Revitalization Act.