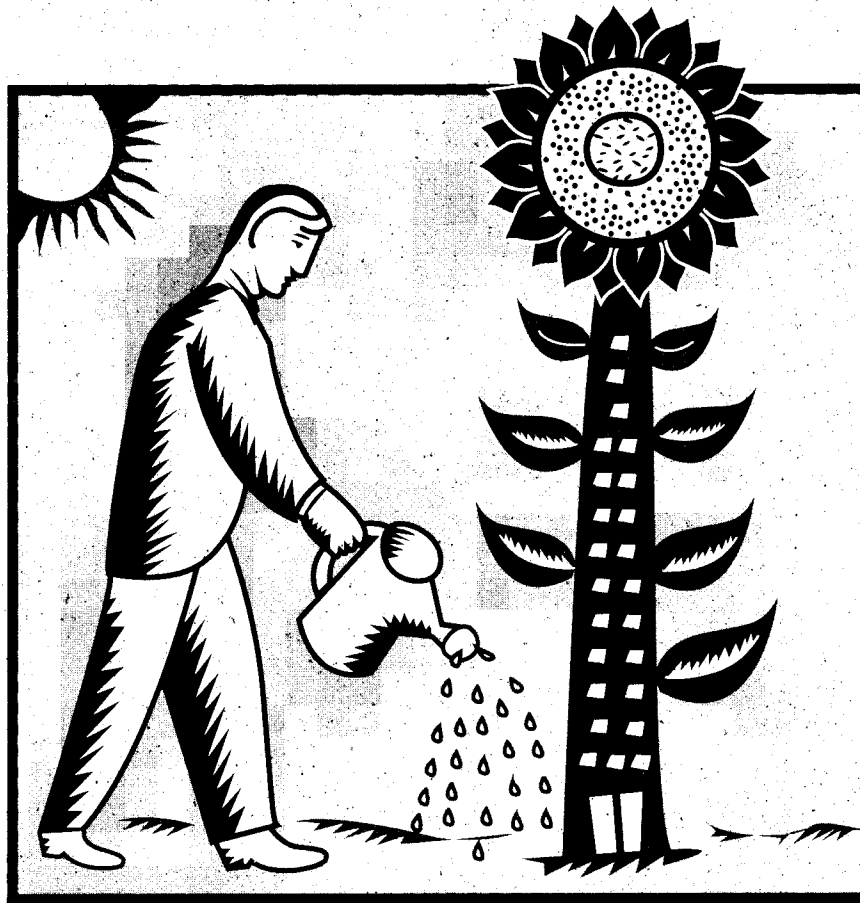


w o r k i n g o n
BROWNFIELDS

by
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*The Employment and
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WORKING ON BROWNFIELDS:

The Employment and Training Connection

One of the most exciting developments on the urban scene in recent years has been the surge of interest and activity in reclaiming and reusing contaminated property, often referred to as brownfields. In communities around the nation, hundreds of projects are underway to redeem unhealthy and unsightly real estate, clean up pollution and left-over contaminants, and return old factory blocks to productive use. Life is reemerging in seemingly dead tracts of land, and properties are returning to city tax rolls.

Just a decade ago, degraded and abandoned industrial sites that were not in sufficiently critical condition to warrant treatment under the federal government's "Superfund" program, but that still had problems severe enough to scare off developers and investors, seemed destined to sit and fester, blighting the neighborhoods around them and breeding despondency and crime. Now, things have changed. Risk-based approaches to regulation and liability on the part of state and local authorities; the impetus of new federal investments by the Environmental Protection Agency, the Department of Housing and Urban Development, the Economic Development Association, and other agencies; and a growing popular disenchantment with paying for infrastructure development in ex-urban greenfields while city capacities are allowed to molder — all these factors have contributed to the current interest in brownfield reclamation. Private-sector companies are beginning to look again at downtown sites as suburban sprawl has pushed available free space further and further out — and further away from the most critical consideration for business expansion: an available workforce.

This monograph explores the workforce dimension of brownfield renewal and offers local practitioners examples of job training programs that may augment their efforts. No brownfield cleanup project exists in a vacuum. All are part of economic development and environmental cleanup undertakings that aim to bring renewed economic activity, improved living conditions, and healthier fiscal situations — in short, JOBS — to their communities. As a consequence, any brownfield project has to be concerned with issues of workforce training and employment — both in the cleanup phase of the project and in the future use of the site. This means thinking about the people in place now whom the project is supposed to benefit, the capacity of the current workforce, the skills that the project will require, the demands of the industries and occupations that will occupy the site in the future, and the ability of community institutions to create a match between present and future skills and job requirements. It also probably means broadening the scope of the brownfield planning effort so that expertise in training and employment issues can be brought to bear at each stage of the project. In short, a brownfield project needs to be thought of in a holistic manner, with jobs as a central focus.

THE STATE OF THE WORKFORCE

While the terms of art have changed from "manpower" in the 1960s to "employment and training" in the 1970s and '80s and "workforce development" in the 1990s, the abiding issue of how best to prepare people for jobs has broken through to the public policy forefront only in the past few years. In the late 1980s, it was New England state leaders who first began to speak about labor shortages as that region's employers found it more and more difficult to fill job openings. The recession of the early 1990s put this kind of talk to rest, but only temporarily. Now it is back as a topic of headlines and policy concern nationwide.

The "labor shortage" problem is not about lack of bodies, but about inadequate skills to meet the new demands of an economy transformed by technology and buffeted by global competition. The restructuring of American industry, particularly manufacturing, in the 1980s brought with it new ways of organizing work and delivering products, with more responsibility placed on front-line employees to troubleshoot and solve problems on their own, to make operational decisions, to work in cooperative teams with their peers, and to interact with outside organizations and customers. These new ways of working demand strong basic skills in oral and written communications and mathematics, analytical ability, and technical preparation. Unfortunately, many of America's current workers, as well as students emerging from secondary schools (not to mention dropouts), do not possess the basic skills and other working attributes that employers require. The mislabeled "labor shortage" thus is really a "skill shortage," and unlike its first faltering emergence on the radar screen in New England ten years ago, it appears now to be a fairly steady and entrenched phenomenon across the nation, which will require extensive effort to overcome.

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At the same time that employers complain of not being able to find workers, plenty of Americans are without work. Dislocation, which received substantial attention as a public policy issue 15 years ago, is still very much with us, although publicity about it has abated. Bureau of Labor Statistics' figures show that, between 1993 and 1994, 2.4 million workers permanently lost jobs that they had held for three years or more, with nearly half of the losses occurring because plants shut down or relocated. While reemployment rates of close to 80 percent indicate that prospects for dislocated workers are better today than a decade ago, more than half the reemployed suffer earnings losses, with the greatest declines occurring among those displaced from manufacturing. Older, blue collar workers still experience great difficulty in becoming reemployed and often end their job search by dropping out of the workforce entirely.

In another segment of the population, millions of economically disadvantaged adults and youth are unemployed and have substantial difficulty finding jobs that will boost their incomes above the poverty line. The unemployment rate for minority youth generally runs at five or six times the rate for the population at large. In central cities, more than half of economically disadvantaged teenagers may be without work. In this situation, what is missing is not just employment and the income it generates, but the growth experiences and learning opportunities that jobs provide and that these youth desperately need.

Still another portion of the out-of-work population is the millions of adults receiving cash payments under the program of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF — formerly, Aid to Families with Dependent Children). Although many,

perhaps a majority, of these persons face severe impediments to employment, they now will be looking for jobs because of the time limits and work requirements that Congress has enacted as a condition for the receipt of welfare. In the past two years, the number of welfare recipients has declined precipitously, largely because of the economy's track record in creating jobs. Employment has removed some persons from the welfare rolls and saved others from the necessity of applying in the first place. The upshot is that those still on welfare will be persons who have the greatest difficulty in becoming employed.

In all three of these population groups, the question of skills looms large. Although many dislocated workers possess good skills and will find new employment quickly, others — especially those who have worked in one company for a long time and have not had to test the labor market in many years

or even decades — may find their skills as obsolete as their closed factories. For many among the economically disadvantaged and welfare populations, the problem is probably even more basic, as limited and ineffective schooling, undiagnosed and untreated learning disabilities, limited proficiency in English, drug- or alcohol-related problems, and other physical and mental impediments have left them with very low attainment levels in the basic skills of reading, writing, and mathematics. Even when these inadequacies are addressed, difficulties in obtaining child care or in accessing transportation may stand in the way of successful, steady employment. These population groups also often need training in how to look for a job and how to hold onto one once obtained. Not only job training but job retention services, such as mentoring and dispute resolution, come into play when dealing with disadvantaged populations.

THE BROWNFIELD/EMPLOYMENT NEXUS

The confluence of brownfields, on the one hand, and employment problems, on the other, is striking. One of the principal reasons why employers have been moving to the suburbs, in addition to the availability of contamination-free and liability-free open space for building, is proximity to a skilled workforce. The job flight to the suburbs is, in fact, so pronounced that one of the approved strategies for helping welfare recipients to meet the new work requirements of their grants is to use TANF monies to organize bus and minivan transportation to suburban employer locations: To lure companies back into town and convince them to locate their businesses on a brownfield site, communities engaged in brownfield recovery will need to assure prospective employers of an adequate supply of skilled workers.

Brownfields and employment problems go together. Many brownfields are home to abandoned factories that created their own population of dislocated workers when they closed. If the closure has been recent, many of the dislocated may still reside in the area and be hopeful of employment in whatever new enterprises are envisioned in the redevelop-

ment plan. Many brownfields are located in older, mixed residential-commercial areas where the loss of employment opportunities often has spawned neighborhood decline, the spread of poverty, a growing dependence on welfare, and an increase in criminal behavior, including vandalism of abandoned properties. Again, the population most in need of the jobs that brownfield reclamation aims to create is right at hand. In short, environmental problems and social needs are intimately related to one another and should be addressed in tandem.

The way to start addressing the employment aspect of a brownfield project is to think through the jobs that will be involved and the kinds of skills that will be required in each of three stages of brownfield development: first, in the testing, assessment, and measurement of the pollution problems that exist on the site and in the physical work of decontamination and remediation; second, in the new construction that is planned for the site; and, finally, in the new enterprises that expect to assume permanent occupancy of the renewed site.

1. THE ASSESSMENT AND REMEDIATION STAGE

Hazardous waste cleanup has led to the emergence of new occupations not known a generation ago. Job opportunities exist for environmental tech-

operations in a safe manner, and for compliance reviewers to ensure that rescued brownfields do not become recontaminated when the area is reused.

All of these jobs demand technical education and classroom preparation, either at the level of profes-

sional certification or associate degree. Fortunately, the increasing demand for personnel with the technical skills required by brownfield cleanup projects and other environmental work has fueled the growth of certificate and degree programs in community colleges and technical schools. Even some vocational high schools now are beginning to develop programs of study with environmental concentrations, which, in the best circumstances, link up with community colleges to channel graduates into further specialization. In Texas, for example, the State Board of Education has approved a high school curriculum with a concentration in technical science and environmental health technology; in Amarillo, this curriculum is articulated with the community college's Associate of Applied Science Degree in Environmental Health Technology. Along with meeting rigorous math, English, and science requirements, students study hazardous materials regulation and reclamation, instruments and measurements, industrial processes, and waste site operations.

The movement to establish what are known as "2+2" or "tech-prep" programs like Amarillo's has been underway for several years. The concept, encouraged by federal vocational education legislation, is to link the last two years of high school with two-year community college programs of technical education. Further linkages, beyond

Recruitment and Screening Are Keys to Success in New York

Three years ago a consortium of organizations in New York City applied to the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences for one of its Minority Worker Training Program grants. Headed by the New York City Environmental Justice Alliance and the New York Carpenters Labor Technical College, the training program aims to educate and employ disadvantaged youth in the environmental cleanup field through an intensive 14-week program of instruction in career-related math and English, carpentry, health and safety, and environmental remediation. Graduates of the program are able to meet licensing and certification requirements in all areas of hazardous waste handling, lead paint and asbestos abatement, and construction safety. The program, through its alliance with the Carpenters Union, is recognized as a pre-apprenticeship program, and its completers can move into apprenticeship slots with the union.

The program also prepares its trainees in life skills, job readiness skills, and resume and interviewing skills. Although the program does not guarantee placements, its graduates have been very successful in finding work on their own in the high-demand labor market for environmental cleanup workers that currently exists in New York City. Follow-up evaluations by consortium member Hunter College found all the program's first class of graduates successfully employed.

Program director Mark Holdbrook credits at least part of the program's success to effective recruitment and careful screening of applicants. "We've got a diverse group, with reading skills anywhere from eighth grade to college-level," he remarks. The program relies on a variety of community-based organizations (CBOs) — including one that deals only with young ex-offenders — to recruit youngsters and to mentor their progress. The CBOs introduce their recruits to environmental justice and civil rights issues, prepping them to be considered for admission. Then, recruits go through a three-day try-out period to see if they and the program are well-matched. In the program's just completed fourth round, 65 youth competed for 25 training slots; 21 completed the program.

Holdbrook notes that the youngsters, once introduced to environmental issues, develop a real interest in them. "After all," he says, "they come from the area that's hurting the most."

nicians to sample the areas believed to be contaminated, for lab technicians to test and evaluate samples, for technicians to conduct the actual cleanup

the community college to the four-year college, also are developing. The idea behind 2+2 programs is to engage students who might be turned off by academics and encourage their perseverance in schooling

by wedding practical and theoretical learning in a course of study with a clear occupational outcome in view. The linkages to four-year colleges leave open the possibility that young people can advance their careers once they have gained experience and maturity in the work world and seen the advantages that education provides.

The city planner or redevelopment officer who is spearheading a brownfield project has probably already had dealings with companies in the area that engage in soil sampling and testing work, with the labs that analyze results, and with the outfits that do the physical work of cleaning up contaminants. Although these firms may have adequate staff already in place, as brownfield planning gets underway, it would be useful to talk to the heads of these concerns about their workforce requirements and their experiences in hiring staff with the appropriate training and skills. If their experiences are similar to that of employers in other technical fields who claim to have a difficult time locating trained workers, it might be time to talk to the vocational schools and community colleges in the area. The kinds of jobs involved in the testing and remediation stage of brownfield development clearly require lead time spent in preparation — perhaps six months for a certificate program, two years for an associate degree, and up to four years for 2+2 programs. If not in the current project, then in other brownfield projects down the line, the community's educational institutions may have a critical role to play. If, as one hopes, a community is able to build on one successful brownfield reclamation to tackle additional sites in the future, the demand for technical workers will escalate.

In addition to consulting with the contractors employed on the initial brownfield effort, the project head also can contact the state's office of labor market information (LMI). This office, located in the same agency of state government that operates the unemployment insurance (UI) program, can supply a wealth of data on the supply of and demand for technical workers in environmental fields now and in the future. In addition, this office has information on the kinds of skills required for these jobs, wages, hours and conditions of work, the kinds of classroom study and on-the-job preparation needed, and the location of training programs that fit the bill. If new training programs need to be developed, the LMI office's information on the details of occupa-

tional characteristics can become the basis for curriculum development.

Vocational schools and community colleges in the area do not have to develop courses from scratch, however. Assistance with curriculum development, course planning, professional development of trainers, and program improvement is available through the Advanced Technology Environmental Education Center in Bettendorf, Iowa, a technical assistance effort funded by the National Science Foundation. Staff for the present brownfield project can help local educational institutions get ready to meet the new occupational demands of future projects by referring them to this source of assistance.

2. THE NEW CONSTRUCTION STAGE

Once reclaimed, the brownfield site now is ready for new construction and the beginning of its new life. The jobs involved in this stage of a brownfield project are substantially different from those in the first phase. Fork-lift drivers, crane operators, welders, masons, and carpenters possess skills that are learned partially in the classroom and partially on the job. As a result of collective bargaining agreements, union construction jobs pay well and are much sought after, but difficult to get. The route is most often through unions, and the training for these jobs comes through apprenticeship programs that operate under the aegis of employer-union joint committees.

Apprenticeship, a traditional form of worker preparation, combines classroom with on-the-job experience under the tutelage of a skilled worker. After the prescribed course of preparation, apprentices succeed to journeyman status in their trade. The majority of states have a state agency that keeps track of apprenticeship programs and registers their enrollees; in states without such an agency the Bureau of Apprenticeship and Training in the U.S. Department of Labor performs these functions. However, probably the best, most immediate source of information on the need for skilled construction workers and the availability of apprenticeship training opportunities are the construction companies themselves and their unions.

The long history of apprenticeship as the route into the construction trades has left some occupations in this field dominated by white males. Federal policy in the past several decades has tried to en-

courage the entrance of more women and minorities into the construction trades by establishing pre-apprenticeship programs that acquaint participants with the basics of construction work and attempt to funnel them into available apprenticeship positions. Organizations such as the Washington-based Wider Opportunities for Women provide technical assistance to programs around the country that conduct training for women in non-traditional occupations that generally pay substantially more than the

In Baltimore, Training Is Part of the Deal

"We never used to deal with the workforce aspect of economic development," says the Baltimore Development Corporation's Senior Development Officer Larisa Salamacha. "Now all that's changed. 'Workforce' is a discussion point that's always on the table. It's an important point for business attraction."

The Fairfield project in Baltimore involves 1,300 acres of land with a patchwork of property owners and a scattering of petroleum and chemical facilities. The city itself owns little of the land, but it plans to work with existing owners on voluntary cleanup and to assemble some of the smaller parcels of land into marketable packages in what eventually will become an eco-industrial park — a business site catering to environmentally friendly enterprises. The project has been in development for three years now — so far, attention has concentrated on business recruitment, marketing, waste exchange, brownfield remediation, pollution prevention, and waste minimization. In 1999, the bricks and mortar stage of the site's transformation will begin.

Employers themselves will determine the role of employment and training strategies at Fairfield. The Development Corporation expects to canvass existing businesses and to assess what types of workers newcomers will need and then to customize training programs to meet employers' specifications. Money for customized training is fast becoming an essential element in the financing package for economic development and an important lure for attracting companies.

The Fairfield project team plans to bring a workforce development specialist onboard in the very near future to establish relations with the Private Industry Council and to network among training providers. "We need a specific person to do that. There's not enough hours in the day," says Salamacha.

white-collar clerical and sales jobs that welfare recipients and other economically disadvantaged women traditionally are able to obtain. As welfare reform matures, this issue of pay scales — of being able to move recipients not just into jobs, but into jobs that pay wages high enough to maintain families — will become more critical. The growth of construction work on former brownfields will offer some opportunities for realizing this welfare reform goal.

Targeting inner-city minority youth for work on brownfield sites is an exciting prospect that has captured the imagination of the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS) in Research Triangle Park, North Carolina. The Institute is conducting pilot programs to recruit disadvantaged youth who lack the skills and knowledge required for the career opportunities opening in environmental work. The pilots will provide youth with training in life skills, remedial reading and arithmetic, job skills, and health and safety techniques. The aim in these pilots is to place the youth in environmental remediation jobs at the end of training. Over the years, similar efforts have been undertaken to do the same with construction-related jobs — Youthwork, Inc., based in Somerville, Massachusetts, is a national network of projects where paint-up, fix-up work engages teens in useful work and gives them a feeling of accomplishment. The kinds of skills developed in projects such as Youthwork can easily be translated into the requirements of construction jobs on brownfield sites.

Of course, not all brownfield remediation is followed by new construction. The cleaned-up site may be destined to become a park, for example, with landscape architects and gardeners taking the place of construction workers. However, the point of the above discussion still applies: brownfield project managers should clearly identify the kinds of permanent jobs that will be generated by the future use of the remediated site and take steps early in the project to ensure that community residents — particularly those who have been most affected by brownfields — will be the beneficiaries.

3. THE REUSE STAGE

Probably the most exciting stage of brownfield work is thinking about the new uses that will be made of the site. Even before the first spade of dirt is turned over, the brownfield team has had to create a

proposal for reuse. A good planning process will have incorporated extensive citizen consultation about the kinds of enterprises that the community wants to develop on the site. A key consideration must be the types of jobs that come with different kinds of enterprises — their skill requirements, pay scales, working conditions, career tracks, and future growth prospects.

The state labor market information (LMI) office, mentioned previously, is the main source for information on which occupations are projected to grow, which industries employ these occupations, what the jobs pay, and what educational preparation they require. In the ideal situation, the brownfield project director has taken these statistics into consideration and lined up a new occupant for the site who operates in a growth industry that generates well-paying jobs. Ideally again, the new occupant has a firm handle on how many new jobs will be created and how many people will need training for employment. The brownfield staff has matched the new enterprise with the community's education and training institutions to get preparatory programs underway. Welfare and other community agencies have identified and screened potential trainees. And all of these steps have taken place in time to ensure trained workers coming through the pipeline and ready to begin employment when the ribbon-cutting ceremony takes place. Ideal, but not impossible. Brownfield projects that involve extensive remediation and new construction do provide generous lead time in which to make the employment and training connection. In fact, because in all probability workforce development has not been the first item on the brownfield agenda, this third stage of brownfield development may offer the most practical opportunity for making that connection.

Take, for example, the Fallon/St. Vincent Medical City project in Worcester, Massachusetts. In 1992, the

Fallon Clinic and St. Vincent's Hospital decided to merge and build a major new medical facility; the city of Worcester worked hard to create a 24-acre site for the new structure, composed of 32 separate parcels of land and eight roadways in a blighted neighborhood. By fall of 1996, existing buildings on the site had been demolished, soil had been remediated, and groundwater cleanup was progressing. The project's construction phase is slated to take three years, after which the new facility is projected to create 3,000 new jobs.

Health care is a growing industry, generating good-paying jobs at a variety of different skill levels, so the city has captured a major benefit for its citizens. In addition, the project calls for the construction of new retail space; retail facilities also will create jobs, albeit at lower skill and wage levels. In this example, the city of Worcester has at least eight years lead time to work on ensuring that its disadvantaged residents get the education and training to prepare for the new jobs that will come on line. By working with St. Vincent's and the Fallon Clinic, the city can identify specifically the kinds of skills that will be required; these two institutions, in collaboration with the city's education community, can establish high school classroom programs geared toward health professions, can create work experience positions for youngsters in the existing facilities, and can engage the city's community colleges to offer certificate and associate programs in health fields.

Not all brownfield projects will be as large or have as great a job-generating potential as the Fallon/St. Vincent Medical City, but all of them can be multi-faceted if they take advantage of lead time to exploit the employment connection for the community's residents.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT RESOURCES

Making the connection between brownfields and employment and training means involving other groups of actors in the project. Workforce development professionals have another whole set of resources to bring to the table and expertise to contribute to the effort, and their goals — employment and better lives for the people of their community — are the same as those of the brownfield team.

Before turning to examine the employment and training programs and financial resources that may be available to the brownfield project, it is useful to consider the state of current thinking about workforce development. On the one hand, there is growing recognition of the need for technical skills and for the increased use of certificate and associate programs to develop them. It is not necessary for everyone to go to college, but it is necessary to have good technical skills to get a good job — that is one of the current mantras in the employment and training policy field. At the same time, evaluations of publicly-funded training for the economically disadvantaged show that these programs have not had a very successful track record in improving the wages of their participants (although they do tend to raise earnings through increasing the number of hours worked). This finding leads to questions about the amount of skill acquisition that actually occurs in these programs. Poor basic skills to begin with, inadequate skill training of too short duration, and a failure to make direct connections between training and jobs — all these reasons can be advanced to explain the disappointing results. These findings also suggest the pitfalls to avoid in trying to design a training program to link with a brownfield project.

On the other hand, while recognizing the need for skill training, there also are forces at work in the employment and training field pushing programs to try a "jobs first" strategy, i.e., to get people employed as quickly as possible and let employers take over from there. Given that, as the Department of Labor notes, 70 percent of job skills are acquired informally on the job and that American employers spend perhaps as much as \$60 billion annually on the skill training of their employees, there might be some justification for devoting the bulk of public monies not to train-

ing but to getting people into jobs and the privately-financed training queue. Programs to help dislocated workers often proceed on a strategy of getting people back to work fast, even if it means working at reduced wages. In addition, the major impetus in welfare reform is to get people into jobs and off the rolls; although there is money for training, the program's incentives tend to favor rapid employment.

Naturally, the answer is not all one or the other, but a carefully targeted approach that strategically matches people's needs and job requirements. With that in mind, the following resources can be brought to bear for developing the brownfield workforce.

DISLOCATED WORKER PROGRAMS

The federal government funds several programs for dislocated workers. The best place to start looking into the possibilities is the local Private Industry Council (PIC). This business-led planning group — most likely organized as an incorporated, quasi-governmental body — was created by the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) in 1982 and may have adopted a different, community-specific name, such as the workforce investment council or the regional employment board. The office of the city or county chief elected official can put the brownfield director in touch with this group.

PICs administer the bulk, but not all, of dislocated worker funds under the Economic Dislocation and Worker Adjustment Assistance (EDWAA) statute, a part of JTPA. Funds are available for assessment, testing, counseling, job-finding workshops, job referrals, and training. Because many dislocated workers receive unemployment insurance (UI) benefits for up to six months, they have a window of opportunity for training if the program can be arranged quickly. On-the-job training contracts, which subsidize wages while private-sector employers provide training, offer another possibility for skills development. Dislocated workers also are eligible for Pell grants to be used in community colleges and higher education institutions. In fact, many of the community college training programs that may be applicable to a brownfield project may have been started in re-

use of the needs of dislocated workers and may already be funded by the PIC.

PICs do not operate training programs themselves, but contract with providers of training through a request-for-proposal process. Community colleges, proprietary schools, and community-based organizations are popular venues for PIC contracts. A brownfield project that wants to tap PIC funds for training will need to hook up with one of these provider institutions to make an application. Additionally, if the training is to be undertaken in a unionized field, the appropriate union must be consulted; the local AFL-CIO labor council can help.

States also receive EDWAA monies for rapid response to the needs of dislocated workers affected by plant closings. If a particular brownfield project has come about because of a plant closing, this source of funding for training may be appropriate, although the emphasis here is on sudden and unexpected events that may not fit with a brownfield project's timetable. Each state has a rapid response unit, which goes by different names in different places. The governor's office can point interested parties to the proper office.

All states are now involved in screening unemployment insurance recipients to determine which ones have the highest probability of remaining unemployed and exhausting their UI benefits. Extra effort is made to encourage persons laid off from declining occupations in declining industries to get into training while their UI benefits can still support them, although no money is provided for training per se. The local UI office thus can be a source of candidates for training if the brownfield project already has located the training program it wants to use.

Finally, the federal government funds programs for workers who have been displaced because of the impacts of foreign trade. Both the Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) program and the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) contain money for training and for income maintenance while workers acquire new skills. Like the state's EDWAA rapid response money, TAA and NAFTA funds tend to be plant-specific. The process of being declared eligible for these programs is time-consuming, however, so it is not impossible for workers from a not-so-recent plant closing to be declared TAA- or NAFTA-eligible. In cases where a local union is the applicant in this process, it can be a good source of information on these monies. In

general, the State Employment Service is the best contact point for identifying possibilities for accessing TAA and NAFTA funds.

PROGRAMS FOR ECONOMICALLY DISADVANTAGED ADULTS AND YOUTH

The PICs' main activity is the development of programs for economically disadvantaged adults and youth. As with programs for dislocated workers, these programs are contracted out to community colleges, secondary schools, community-based organizations, and other service providers. Most training tends to be short-term, with little or no income provided, and the emphasis is on job placement with evidence of gains in earnings compared to the pre-training period. PICs support assessment, testing, counseling, job-seeking workshops, support services such as transportation and day care, short-term work experience, on-the-job-training, and classroom training. Youth programs usually are run in conjunction with schools and combine education and work components. The summer youth program provides stipends for work (usually ten or so weeks of work at minimum wage) and includes educational (usually remedial) instruction.

In evaluations of JTPA training, on-the-job training (OJT) seems to be the most successful of all the strategies for getting people into jobs with livable wages. Contractors who are employed in doing remediation work on a brownfield site, construction companies building new structures on the site after cleanup, and future users of the site would all make good placements for on-the-job training participants, if the companies are willing to accept the responsibility of hiring and providing substantive instruction to disadvantaged persons.

The summer youth program, with its emphasis on paid work experience, offers the brownfield project itself the opportunity to become an educator. Although young, untrained persons could not be used in any hazardous work, there may well be other pick-up and clean-up tasks at the site to employ youthful energies. Linking the outdoor work with classroom curricula in health and safety would make for a worthwhile summer experience for disadvantaged teenagers.

These programs under JTPA are income-conditioned, with eligibility for services set generally at 133

percent of the poverty level. This means that there is substantial overlap between the JTPA and the welfare population, and the impediments to employment in both groups are quite severe. One refrain heard from the employer community is "just give us people who can read and write and compute, and we'll do the training." Unfortunately, large segments of the JTPA population do not meet this requirement, and part of the program's resources each year must be devoted to remediation. It must be recognized that a major part of a brownfield project's mission to improve the life of the community will not be met if inhabitants are still left jobless and poor.

At Cape Charles, What's Basic and What's Do-able

At the tip of the Delmarva peninsula, an new eco-industrial park is taking shape at the disused and abused industrial harbor. One of the Environmental Protection Agency's brownfield pilots, the Cape Charles project in Virginia sees the reclamation of contaminated land as only a small first step toward the larger goal of establishing a "sustainable technology park." Covenants on the land and agreements built into leases not only will protect the site in the future, but also will attract new business users who specialize in environmentally-friendly products and processes.

One such business is a Norwegian manufacturer of pressure exchangers that moved into its new premises in October 1997. As part of the development deal, the company made commitments to train and hire local people as it creates 50 new jobs over the next five years in a rural area that desperately needs new employment opportunities. The Norwegian company's new neighbor is a Swiss firm that manufactures photovoltaic panels to be used in the construction of buildings that satisfy their own energy needs. The manufacture of these panels involves soldering silicone chips. No one in Cape Charles has ever done this kind of work before, but the area's dislocated crab pickers are good with their hands, pay attention to details, and are willing to work. Eight people have already been hired, with the workforce expected to double in two years.

The Cape Charles project manager, Tim Hayes, draws two lessons from his experience with the crab-picker hires: "Basic skills are important, yes. But, what do we mean by 'basic'? We really mean the willingness to work and the ability to learn. These people had those attributes." He is turning his attention now to welfare recipients and hopes to beef up some of the existing companies on the site so they can do more hiring — which leads to the second lesson: "Keep the scale 'do-able'." More important than lead time, according to Hayes, is keeping the size of one's employment and training goals manageable. It's not always an easy admonition to follow, he admits: "We see that we're only scratching the surface of need."

SCHOOL-TO-WORK

A major initiative of the federal Departments of Education and Labor in the past few years has been the establishment of school-to-work programs in local communities. Funded by three-year grants, school-to-work programs now engage a large number of the nation's employers in some form; some provide mentoring, offer opportunities for job shadowing, advise and counsel students on their career aims, or make available paid after-school or summer work experience slots in the company. As federal funds dwindle, the hope is that states and school districts will continue this initiative.

School-to-work programs will not provide a brownfield site with funds for training needed workers, but they will offer opportunities for the project to expose young people to the variety of employers and occupations that are involved in the different phases of brownfield work. Of obvious relevance to a brownfield project would be getting the enterprises that eventually will occupy the site involved in school-to-work programs now, so that students can learn about the kinds of occupations that will come on line at the site in the future. In this way, the project can help itself by strengthening the pipeline for future workers. Local high schools or superintendents' offices are the place to start if one wants to put together a school-to-work program.

WELFARE-TO-WORK

Of all the federally-funded employment and training efforts, the one receiving the most publicity in the past several years has been welfare reform. The new program of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) requires welfare recipients to work in order to maintain their eligibility for cash grants; the program does pro-

vide funds for training and other services to facilitate work and training. In most cases, these funds will be run through the PICs, described above, although the policies regarding their use will be set largely by the states.

There is a real tension in the training segment of welfare reform surrounding the duration, and thus the intensity, of training. On the one hand, welfare provides the income to allow persons lacking in job skills to take courses aimed at getting employment; on the other hand, the time spent in training counts against lifetime limits on a person's receipt of welfare benefits. Thus, the new law sets up a dilemma: should persons take longer training programs in order to improve their prospects of getting better jobs, or should they get into jobs right away in order to preserve their rights to welfare assistance if the jobs don't work out. This dilemma will play out differently as different states design their own policies about welfare, work, and training. From the perspective of a brownfield project, the key to teaming up with the welfare employment effort will be whether the project can be very specific about exactly how many and what kinds

of jobs will be available to employ welfare recipients once their training is complete. Future users of the brownfield site may well be the best source of possible jobs, so obtaining their active cooperation in the welfare link will be essential.

To assist the welfare employment effort, the federal government also is providing funds to states to create public jobs for welfare recipients who have not been able to find employment in the private sector. This resource is analogous to public service employment under the old Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA), and welfare agencies or, more likely, PICs, will be looking for other public agencies that will be willing to host welfare clients in job slots. If welfare reform follows the same path as CETA, there may well be a push to bundle these job slots into time-limited "projects" in order to avoid replacing regular agency hiring. Then, a brownfield project itself might be an excellent place for employing welfare recipients, provided that a proper match exists between skills and job requirements and that real possibilities exist for transitioning people into private-sector employment at project's end.

CONCLUSION

For a brownfield project, employment and training is a natural connection. But it is not an easy one to make. Federally-funded training programs operate under strict performance standards that pay close attention to job placements and to gains in earnings after training. Programs are sanctioned or rewarded depending on the numbers, so operators have incentives to stick with the tried and true. In addition, those attempting to link federal employment and training programs into a brownfield projects may find that these programs are operating on a different time schedule, that their clientele have skill deficiencies that are difficult to overcome, that funds are already spoken for, or that the red tape is too onerous given the already complex political and policy environment of brownfield remediation. However, the goals of the two programs are so congruent that the effort may well be worth it.

If the prospects for obtaining federally-funded training assistance appear too elusive, the brown-

field project still may want to embark on training activities of its own. It may link into the workforce preparation efforts of high schools, community colleges, and community-based organizations without regard to the source of their funds. Or, it may want to work with the new employers who will be using the remediated brownfield site for their future operations, obtaining hiring commitments for local residents as part of the whole redevelopment package. In any case, it will be useful to check with the local Private Industry Council (PIC) to find out what kinds of training programs are in the works, so as not to duplicate or compete with an organization that shares the same goals.

Finally, the brownfield project needs to think not only about its own need for skilled workers, but about itself as a learning and training provider. Especially for disadvantaged youth, full-time in the summer and part-time during the school year, a

brownfield cleanup project would be an excellent source of hard work and career inspiration.

The following recommendations summarize the main points of the foregoing discussion:

Recommendations

- conduct an inventory of the kinds of jobs that will be involved in each of the three stages of the brownfield project and the skill requirements of these jobs. Work with the employment and training community to assess the potential workforce — its size and skills — and existing training resources. Find out if the community's residents, particularly the disadvantaged, possess the necessary skills to do the new jobs or if they will need training to make the most of the employment being created:
- in attempting to realize a brownfield project's employment potential for the affected neighboring community of dislocated workers, the disadvantaged, and welfare recipients, make sure that residents have the skills to perform the work; guarantee that they will have full health and safety protections in their brownfield work; and do not displace currently employed workers:
- in planning the future use of the site, consult with the state labor market information (LMI) office to find out about growing occupations that pay a livable wage. Target the brownfield project to future users who will provide good jobs at good pay.
- talk to environmental contractors, construction firms, and future users about their projected job openings and skill requirements. Link them up with training programs, if needed. In particular, use the lead time of the brownfield remediation work to establish training programs that will funnel community residents into the new jobs that future users will generate.
- find out if local secondary and vocational schools and community colleges are offering programs now that will meet future brownfield skill demands. If not, work with them to establish the needed classroom programs and to provide work-site learning opportunities. Link them up with na-

tional providers of curriculum and technical assistance geared toward environmental careers.

- consult with the Private Industry Council (PIC) to learn about current skill development programs and the financial resources that are available for training dislocated workers, the disadvantaged, and welfare recipients. Find out about the PIC's application procedures, training timetables, and training/employment philosophy.
- consider how brownfield work might be structured to provide summer job opportunities for disadvantaged youth or projects for the employment of welfare recipients. Think of the brownfield project itself as a source of learning and training.

In matters of workforce development, the role of the brownfield program must be one of integrating the many forces that affect job creation and retention. Brownfield coordinators can provide a point of confluence for the efforts of economic development offices, welfare reform initiatives, educational and vocational training programs, unions, and corporate development concerns. This point is underlined by the Environmental Protection Agency's own foray into the workforce development field — a summer 1998 initiative of ten pilot projects, funded at up to \$200,000 over two years, to run in conjunction with the agency's pre-1998 brownfield assessment pilot communities. Listing the kinds of interests that should be involved in the pilots, EPA cites "...community groups, job training organizations, educators, investors, lenders, developers, and other affected parties..." and its eligible applicant list includes colleges, universities, non-profit training centers, and community organizations, as well as units of general government — in short, a veritable symphony for a brownfield conductor.

The goal of the EPA effort is to provide training for residents in communities impacted by brownfields and prepare them for future employment in the environmental field: a growth industry, providing jobs at good wages — just what employment and training practitioners look for. Make the connection.