

Brownfield Renewal Awards 2010:

A Toast to the Winners

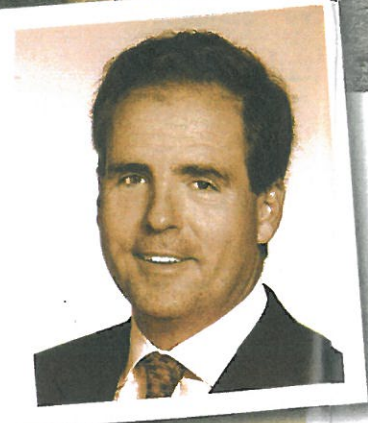
by Elizabeth Brewster

With 32 innovative brownfield projects to choose from in selecting the 2010 Brownfield Renewal Awards, our independent panel of judges had their work cut out for them this year.

The three diverse projects they selected represent the gold standard of brownfield redevelopment across three distinct industry spheres of influence:

- ❖ **Social Impact: Manchester Street Park, Lawrence, Mass.**
- ❖ **Economic Impact: Target Field, Minneapolis, Minn.**
- ❖ **Environmental Impact: Stafford Park, Stafford Township, N.J.**

Although the three winning projects range in size from five to 370 acres, they share a common commitment to better their communities in tangible ways. Read on to find out what makes Manchester Street Park, Target Field and Stafford Park shining examples of successful brownfield redevelopment.



(top) Dan Mehls,
Mortenson
Construction,
Minneapolis

(bottom)
Joseph Del Duca,
The Walters Group



Target Field, Minneapolis, Minn.

Manchester Street Park,
Lawrence, Mass.



Stafford Park, Stafford Township, N.J.



Manchester Street Park, Lawrence, Mass.

Finding their way through the maze of funding sources for Manchester Street Park was as big a challenge for the project's developers as getting the five-acre river-side site cleaned up and ready for recreation.

"Getting the funding to all come together at the same time is always a challenge," says Sue Fink, manager of financial and administrative services for the Lawrence Community Development Department. "But our staff worked aggressively with the funders to get everything tied together, so we could get this project under way and completed."

The site, which sits on the Spicket River at the edge of a 19th century mill complex, started down the path to parkland after a 20-year-old incinerator on the land was dismantled in 2001, thanks to the efforts of the Lawrence Environmental Action Group. The company that owned the land, Covanta Energy, decided it would be too difficult to retrofit the equipment to comply with Environmental Protection Agency regulations, so Covanta sold the property to the city of Lawrence for a nominal fee, says Kate O'Brien, the head of Groundwork Lawrence during much of the project and now director of outreach and resource development for Groundwork USA. Heather McMann, Groundwork Lawrence's current executive director, helped drive the project to its final stages of completion.

"[Local] people always saw their Spicket River as trashed out but full of potential," says O'Brien. "The incinerator site was the gateway to the northwest corner of the community, and it seemed like a great space for an anchor park. It just resonated—[community members] seemed to think it was a fantastic idea.

"We had a very inclusive community process to design the park and talk about the process to get it cleaned up," she adds. "We

wanted to de-mystify the whole brownfield aspect of it. We broke it down into nuts and bolts [at public meetings] that people could understand."

Involving nearby residents, many of whom are Puerto Rican or Dominican, in defining and designing the park was particularly important to Groundwork Lawrence and the city of Lawrence, the park's developers. "We partnered with a couple of organizations in town that did a lot of traditional grassroots organizing—those connected to church groups and other civic organizations," says O'Brien.

Ultimately, the pre-development phase ended up lasting six years, says O'Brien, as the city and Groundwork Lawrence worked to leverage funds, manage all the details, and keep the project going.

"The only opposition to it was the time that [the entire project] took," she adds. "People were skeptical rather than opposed to it."

After \$240,000 of remediation that included targeted excavation and backfill and capping of less significantly contaminated soil, the waterfront park opened in September 2009. Today it is home to children's play equipment, picnic areas and open fields, 30 community garden beds, and bilingual inter-

pretive signage created by local teens. In addition, a cement cooling tower skeleton left over from the incinerator was retrofitted to create a scenic overlook topped with a colorful metal gazebo. The park's "green" touches include permeable paved surfaces, and vegetated swales and selective grading that help address stormwater management.

"The community appreciates it. We've had very positive feedback from residents," says Fink. "It's a hidden gem in the city."

Manchester Street Park was the second brownfield-to-park project completed along the Spicket River, and it helped spur development of the Spicket River Greenway, a multi-use recreational riverfront trail that runs through the city's poorest and most densely populated neighborhoods. Groundwork Lawrence and the city of Lawrence recently were awarded \$2.6 million from the state that will enable them to finalize the greenway design and construct about 2.5 miles of trails along the river.

"This will be a two-year process, using all public dollars from the state," says O'Brien. "We hope that this type of initiative will continue because it is so hard to transform brownfields into parks when there isn't [revenue] guaranteed at the end [of the project]."

Vital stats: Manchester Street Park funding

❖ Massachusetts Urban Self-Help (PARC) grant from Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EOEEA)	\$500,000
❖ City of Lawrence Community Development Block Grants (CDBG)	\$339,291
❖ EPA Brownfields Cleanup grant	\$200,000
❖ Massachusetts Urban River Visions grant from EOEEA	\$75,000
❖ Massachusetts Office for Refugees and Immigrants grant	\$8,000
❖ National Park Service Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program	\$15,000
❖ NiSource Environmental Challenge Fund	\$2,500
Total cost	\$1,139,791