

*LITTLE VILLAGE VACANT
PROPERTY AND BROWNFIELD
REDEVELOPMENT STRATEGY
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY*

MARCH 2016

REVITALIZING LITTLE VILLAGE THROUGH BROWNFIELD REDEVELOPMENT

In 2012 Delta Institute (Delta) and the Little Village Environmental Justice Organization (LVEJO) collaborated with eight multi-sector stakeholder groups as part of the Fisk and Crawford Reuse Task Force. Appointed by Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel, the task force was formed to collect community input on future uses of two large brownfield sites in Chicago: the former Fisk coal plant in Pilsen and the former Crawford coal plant in Little Village. During this six-month process, both Delta and LVEJO recognized that while the former Crawford site was a significant and complicated brownfield site, Little Village was home to many other vacant properties and brownfields that create economic stagnancy and blight. Redevelopment of these sites, including the Crawford site, held significant potential to bring commercial or industrial businesses and local jobs to Little Village, as well as increase the amount of green or recreational space for residents. Consequently, in late 2013 Delta and LVEJO initiated a two-year partnership to create a comprehensive strategy for redevelopment of brownfield sites in Little Village.

The strategy presents a redevelopment roadmap for each of the ten sites, including site-specific redevelopment opportunity sheets (or “lookbook sheets”), accompanying preliminary environmental reviews, reuse strategies, and an appendix. Plans, recommendations, and guidance presented in the strategy were informed by Delta’s cumulative thirty years of economic development experience and guided by:

- Community goals and priorities identified through extensive stakeholder and community engagement;

- Environmental opportunities and challenges;
- Community resources and potential partnerships available to assist in redevelopment;
- Marketing and communication strategies; and
- Potential funding sources for redevelopment.

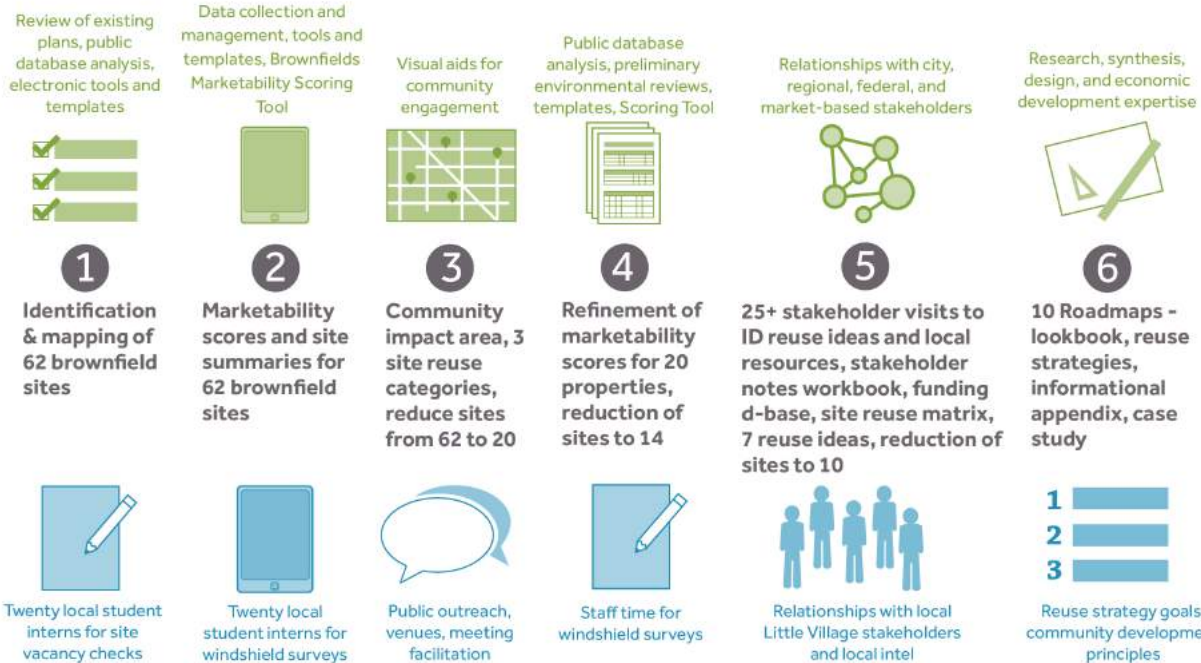
Additionally, the partners reviewed existing local and regional planning documents that apply to Little Village to ensure that project work could be informed by broader planning efforts. Key documents reviewed included: the 2012 Little Village SSA #25 Market Analysis and Economic Development Plan; the 2013 Little Village Quality of Life Plan; the 2013 Fisk and Crawford Task Force Final Report; and the 2015 Pilsen and Little Village Land Use Plan: Existing Conditions Report.

Overview of Process

The Little Village vacant property and brownfield redevelopment project was completed over a two-year period and progressed through several phases of work. The infographic in Figure 1 details the six major project phases and how Delta and LVEJO worked collaboratively at each phase to create a unique planning process for brownfield redevelopment. The green graphics represent areas where Delta contributed its technical and economic development expertise, and blue items are areas where LVEJO leveraged its considerable community knowledge in the reuse planning process.

The Delta-LVEJO brownfields initiative relied heavily on two key components in the site prioritization

DELTA'S ROLE



LVEJO'S ROLE

Figure 1. The collaborative process between Delta and LVEJO

process: 1) a marketability assessment, i.e., to assess the ease of redevelopment for each site, and 2) the community's wants and needs for site redevelopment..

To assess site marketability, Delta created a proprietary scoring tool to analyze the extensive site data collected by Delta, LVEJO, and the Little Village community. The tool was used to score each site in nine influence areas: ownership, site use, land characteristics, community characteristics, community capacity, redevelopment incentives, infrastructure amenities, environmental conditions, and building characteristics. The tool produced a distinct score and short summary for each site, which allowed the project team to understand both the opportunities and challenges of each site and how the sites compared to each other.

To incorporate the community's wants and needs into decision-making, the project team made engagement an integral component of the process throughout the two-year timeline. This integration of community engagement throughout the project differs from the traditional model used in private

sector redevelopment projects where community engagement is limited. The team used multiple styles of community engagement throughout the the project, including two open community meetings, over 25 stakeholder interviews, and a series of informal conversations with community members to solicit feedback on sites, explore reuse ideas for properties, and identify local community resources for future redevelopment. This comprehensive approach ensured that at every phase of the process, the community had opportunities for input and discussion.

To narrow the 62 original brownfield sites down to the ten sites that would be the subject of redevelopment planning, the project team used the marketability scores and site summaries to weigh relative site marketability against the site's potential to meet community goals and needs. The ten Little Village brownfield sites that Delta and LVEJO selected to be included in the comprehensive strategy are displayed in the map on page 7.

Comprehensive Strategy

Delta created redevelopment roadmaps for each of the ten brownfield sites to provide LVEJO and potential partners with guidance for continued planning and to move from site redevelopment into implementation. Each roadmap recognizes and leverages site-specific opportunities, incorporates strategies to mitigate site challenges, and is informed by one or more of the eight reuse ideas identified through community and stakeholder engagement. Together, these roadmaps comprise the Little Village Vacant Property and Brownfield Redevelopment Strategy. The table on page 8 provides a comprehensive snapshot of the ten sites paired with the community-based reuse ideas.

Lookbook

For each of the ten sites, the strategy presents a redevelopment opportunity or “lookbook” sheet. These lookbook sheets provide key existing information about the site, such as site photos and maps, property characteristics, building attributes (if a building is present), and access to the site by public transportation, and the strengths or challenges of the site are identified by color-coded symbols. Each lookbook sheet also provides recommendations on site-specific strategies to address challenges or leverage opportunities, including recommendations on zoning adjustments that may be needed, approaches for gaining site control or addressing environmental contamination, and stakeholders that may need to be engaged in redevelopment efforts. In addition, a recommendation is provided regarding which community reuse ideas are most amenable for the site. The lookbook sheets can be used to facilitate conversation and planning around site redevelopment.

Preliminary Environmental Reviews

For nine¹ of the ten sites, Delta also conducted a preliminary environmental review to identify

¹ A preliminary environmental review was not provided for the former Crawford coal plant at 3501 S. Pulaski Road, because it is believed that the site has had extensive evaluation by other parties.

the potential for the site to be contaminated with environmental pollutants. The presence of environmental contamination can significantly increase the timeline and costs for redevelopment of a site, as the contamination must be thoroughly investigated and possibly removed from the site. Consequently, the potential existence of contamination and the extent of the contamination must be factored into redevelopment planning and decision-making.

Delta used historical information, like Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps and Environmental Data Resources radius maps, as well as interviews and site visits to assess the likelihood of potential contamination on sites. For each site, contamination was classified as either “Unlikely” or “Likely.” If contamination was considered “Likely,” Delta further categorized the potential contamination as “Light,” “Moderate,” or “Substantial.” Both the classification and categorization for potential contamination reflect Delta’s subjective view of risk based on information it reviewed and should not be construed as statements of fact. The materials Delta reviewed for the preliminary environmental reviews were similar to those used for a Phase I Environmental Site Assessment (ESA); however, the reviews were not conducted in accordance with American Society of Testing and Materials standards and should not be considered as a substitute for Phase I ESAs.

Reuse Strategies

During the stakeholder visits that Delta and LVEJO conducted during Phase 4, stakeholders identified more than fifteen possible reuse ideas² for brownfield sites. LVEJO ground-truthed these ideas with the community and settled upon eight reuse ideas to incorporate for site redevelopment.

Five of the ideas include the development of local ventures that could be beneficial to and, in some cases, developed by the community. Two ideas focus on increasing green or recreational space in Little Village,

² Other reuse ideas suggested by stakeholders that received less support from the community include developing: a mak-er-space, a shared mechanics workshop (or DIY garage), a wheel-chair repair operation, pocket parks, a solar water hoop house, or a field house for La Villita Park. The suggestion of a photovoltaic solar panel farm was considered by the project team as a separate reuse idea for a portion of the project, but upon discussions with various stakeholders, the team determined that photovoltaic solar installations would be best if coupled with another reuse strategy.

and one idea focuses on influencing private industrial development in the community. The eight reuse ideas are:

- Community Composting
- Public Green Space and Multimodal Center
- Community-based Biodiesel
- Shared Commercial Kitchen
- Multipurpose ADA Field
- Urban Indoor Farms
- Private Market Redevelopment
- Vendor Cart Sanitizing and Storage Space

Some reuse ideas - most notably community composting and community-based biodiesel - are subject to changing regulations at the city and state level. As these reuse ideas move forward, it is recommended that the changing regulatory environment be monitored to ensure that any operation complies with code and regulations.

Each reuse strategy includes:

- A short summary of the reuse idea
- Potential community benefits and users of the strategy
- Guidance on creating a feasibility study and business plan for the idea and who should lead these efforts
- Descriptions of existing local models or efforts that could be leveraged
- Suggestions for local partners for redevelopment efforts
- Recommended brownfield sites that are well-suited to the strategy
- Resources to inform planning
- Desired timelines for redevelopment
- Guidance on zoning and licensing that may be needed and
- Identification of possible funding sources for redevelopment efforts

Appendix - Attachments

Nine informational attachments have also been included in this comprehensive strategy to cover a range of topics that are applicable to the reuse strategies and the ten sites. Some attachments provide an introduction or primer to issues that will be encountered when redeveloping the sites, such as addressing environmental issues or determining an appropriate business structure for a reuse strategy. Other attachments provide guidance for different steps of the redevelopment process, such as roles in leading the redevelopment process or navigating zoning issues, and other attachments provide resources for redevelopment, such as contact information for potential partners or collaborators. Of particular importance are the Funding Sources & Resources attachment and the LVEJO Principles of Development attachment. The Funding Sources & Resource attachment includes a funding matrix that is filterable by each of the eight reuse ideas, providing for easy navigation to relevant, potential funding opportunities. The LVEJO Principles of Development attachment presents LVEJO's community priority areas related to development impacts. LVEJO hopes to work together with potential redevelopers to determine how best to implement strategies to lead to successful redevelopment from both the developer and community perspectives.

Conclusion

Delta intends for LVEJO and the Little Village community to apply the guidance and recommendations in this comprehensive strategy to transform their brownfields from blighted, unproductive, and potentially unhealthy properties into businesses and other uses that create local jobs, generate property taxes for the community, increase green and recreational space, and promote economic development and environmental justice in Little Village.

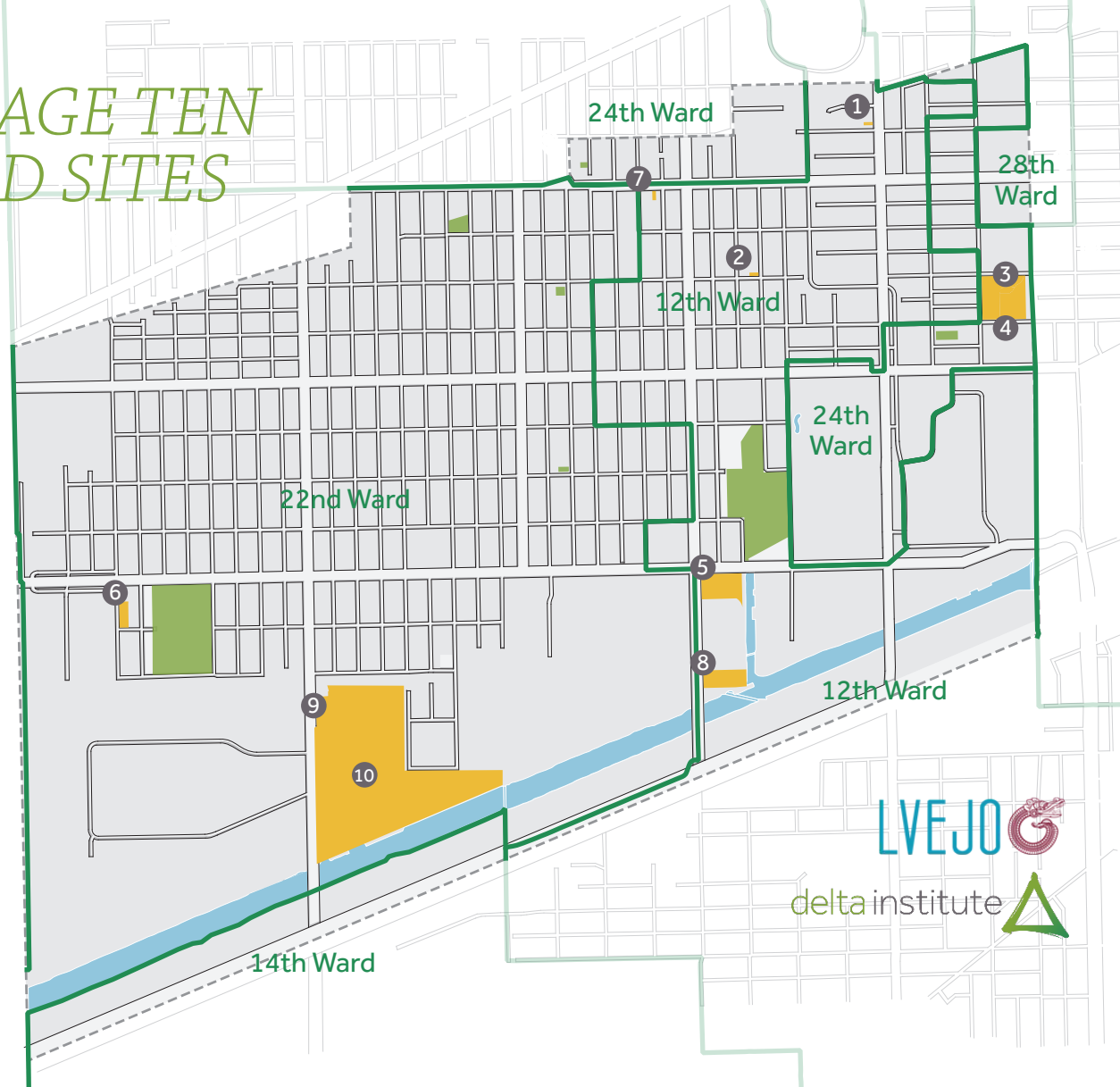
LITTLE VILLAGE TEN BROWNFIELD SITES

KEY

- Ward Boundaries
- Parks
- Water
- Potential
Redevelopment Sites

SITES

- 1 2014 California Ave.
- 2 2358 S Whipple St.
- 3 2505 W 24th St.
- 4 2514-2520 W 25th St.
- 5 3101 S Kedzie Ave.
- 6 3157 S Kostner Ave.
- 7 3241 W Cermak Rd.
- 8 3301 S Kedzie Ave.
- 9 3321 S Pulaski Rd.
- 10 3501 S Pulaski Rd.



LVEJO 

delta institute 

LITTLE VILLAGE REUSE STRATEGIES BY SITE

Reuse Strategy		Community Based Biodiesel	Commercial Composting	Public Green Space and Multimodal Center	Multi-purpose ADA Field	Shared Commercial Kitchen	Vendor Cart Sanitizing and Storage Space	Urban Indoor Farm	Private Market Redevelopment
LVEJO Role		BROKER	CHAMPION	CHAMPION	BROKER	BROKER	BROKER	CHAMPION	BROKER
Redevelopment Timeframe		Higher Priority-Short Term	Higher Priority-Short Term	Lower Priority-Long Term	Lower Priority-Long Term	Higher Priority-Short Term	Higher Priority-Short Term	Higher Priority-Short Term	Variable
Brownfield Property Address	2014 S. California Ave.	X	X			X	X		X
	2358 S. Whipple St.	X	X			X	X	X	X
	2505 W. 24th St.								X
	2514-2520 W. 25th St.								X
	3101 S. Kedzie Ave.	X	X			X	X	X	X
	3157 S. Kostner Ave.				X				X
	3241 W. Cermak Rd.	X	X			X	X	X	X
	3301 S. Kedzie Ave.			X	X				X
	3321 S. Pulaski Rd.			X					X
	3501 S. Pulaski Rd.			X				X	X

* Grey "x" indicates a possible alternate site for a strategy