

Brownfields Redevelopment And The Quest For Sustainability



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Implementing Sustainable Development through Efficient Reuse of Brownfields

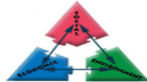
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Abstract
 Environmental, economic and social development on the earth surface has always been anthropogenic; we consume the earth's resources without care. However, this trend began to reverse towards the end of the 20th century with the sustainable development principles enshrined in the Brundtland Commission report of 1987. In order to reduce impact on virgin land, redevelopment of brownfields which are readily available in many urban areas should be explored. However, brownfields apart from being old and underused can be polluted thus may have pernicious effects on human health and environment if used without proper deconstruction and remediation. Deconstruction of brownfields should be done in stages: the preliminary stage involves a Life cycle Assessment; potentially hazardous materials on the site should be appropriately identified; the demolition stage involves taking down derelict structures; the recycling stage involves putting salvagable materials to good use. Before deconstruction can begin, appropriate remediation techniques must be employed to mitigate against contaminated parts of the brownfield which may be harmful to people and the environment. Design and deconstruction on brownfields should integrate sustainable practices which can significantly reduce the carbon footprint of new structures. Environmental considerations centering on pollution control should be made during the entire process. In addition, sustainable urban drainage systems (SUDS) should be integrated in the design process to reduce the impact of excess runoff. The essence of redeveloping brownfields is to significantly reduce environmental impact of land use thereby expounding the principles of sustainable development.

Keywords: sustainable development, brownfield, deconstruction, remediation

Introduction

Sustainable development as defined by the World commission on environment and development (WCED) report (Brundtland Report) of 1987 is quite logical and clear. According to the report, sustainable development looks at the capacity of the present generation of humankind to meet its current needs and at the same time realizing that future generations also have a right to meet their own needs (WCED report, 1987). Sustainability describes how we interact and benefit from environmental resources in order to provide solutions to our economic needs in a way that is socially harmonious as well as beneficial to both humanity and the environment. Figure 1 illustrates how the facets of sustainable development (social, economic and environment) are intertwined. The principles of sustainable development which centers on meeting 'human needs', can only be implemented if these facets are in equilibrium.



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|--|---|--|
| Services Household Needs Industrial Growth Agricultural Growth Efficient Use of Labor Economic | Equity Participation Empowerment Social Mobility Cultural Preservation Social | Biodiversity Natural Resources Carrying Capacity Ecotourism, Resilient Clean Air and Water Environment |
|--|---|--|

Fig 1: Facets of Sustainable development. Source: DEP, World Bank Group; 2001

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