

ECO-Action CARE Promising Practices

MAKING A DIFFERENCE FOR THE ENVIRONMENT IN SOUTH ATLANTA THROUGH CACAPCITY BUILDING, LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT, AND COLLABORATION!

S.A.F.E. Coalition (South Atlanta for the Environment)



Located in the Georgia State Capital, Neighborhood Planning Unit-V are five In-town neighborhoods: Mechanicsville, Summerhill, Peoplestown, Pittsburgh, and Adair Park. In the past 50 years residents of these neighborhoods have been plagued with environmental concerns such as abandoned properties, poor air quality, and excessive waste. These issues coupled with high poverty and unemployment rates suggest a community in need of support to build the capacity to address economic and environmental challenges.

While the infrastructure planning facilitated the movement of vehicle traffic along Interstates 75/85 and 20, very little attention was paid to the adverse impacts on air quality for residents in south Atlanta, which includes NPU-V. The construction of these super highways impacted the use of railroad transportation for commercial and personal uses. This forced many of the local area companies to close or relocate. These economic and environmental issues presented an enormous set of challenges for the already marginalized community to flourish (i.e. loss jobs, county taxes, community continual growth).

Today, with the cities all over the world realizing the importance of in-town living for all stakeholders, green infrastructure is becoming the way of revitalization and development. Using the history of the past to create a better future, ECO-Action looks to capitalize on this trend with the development of the Atlanta Beltline Project. ***ECO-Action believes that by informing, educating, and empowering residents of NPU-V to have a voice in the redevelopment and protection of the environment, risk reduction successes can be achieved.***

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ECO-Action demonstrates this type of hands-on training through the partnership developed with the City of Atlanta's Planning Department "SAFE (South Atlanta for the Environment)." The partnership has been able to achieve the following outcomes:

- **Education - throughout the NPU-V communities** helped to reduce a list of 15 Brownfield properties (65 acres) of original concern in the NPU-V area to 7(26.75 acres, or 41% of the original brownfield acreage.)
- **CBLTI-SAFE** also designed and facilitated the ***Capacity Building and Leadership Training Institute***. This two-day (six total hours) intensive training program was comprised of 13 existing and emerging leaders from the five NPU-V neighborhoods. Graduates went on to identify, organize and facilitate reduction or elimination of an environmental issue in their respective (NPU-V) neighborhood. In the words of Gloria Jean Royster, a CBLTI graduate:

"SAFE via the succinct training and guidance they provided, enabled me to unite with my NPU-V leaders and neighbors and form partnerships with local government and businesses toward a greener community in NPU-V. SAFE taught me to be a Change Agent and showed me that My Community is Mine to Change!"

- **By informing** the residents of NPU-V, the City of Atlanta's Planning Department was able to share the community's vision of redevelopment for several properties acquired by the Atlanta Beltline. An example is the remediation of 1150 Allen, which the Beltline plan to redevelop as greenspace.
- **Empowering** the community to build on these successes, we believe the community can reduce the number of brownfield properties in NPU-V. Success would include an 8.52 acre property at 1246 Allen, the former Exide Battery manufacturing plant.

Furthermore, One Consulting Group, Inc. and 448 RDA, LLC, ***SAFE business partners, transformed an abandoned and contaminated, industrial property into a Rail Yard business center with more than five companies.*** This property was purchased prior to the passage of the Georgia Brownfield Act legislation; however, it was remediated to "no further action" status by 448 RDA, LLC, in effect making it a "pre-brownfield" Brownfield.

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(before)

The Railyard @ Ralph Abernathy & McDaniel St.
(AFTER) Atlanta, GA



(after)

Solid Waste was prioritized as a major environmental concern in NPU-V. SAFE and its partners organized clean ups in two NPU-V neighborhoods, in an effort to reduce the volume of waste and reduce the health risk from potential exposure to contaminated waste.



In 2009, SAFE and EPA staff organized a major clean up event in celebration of Earth Day in the NPV-U Pittsburgh. More than 20 EPA Region IV volunteers along with Pittsburgh residents bonded together while working to reduce the volume of waste and thereby reducing the risk associated with waste. SAFE was successful in creating a network of recycling business

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partners (i.e., Sonoco Recycling, Pirkle Scrap Metal Recycling Inc and Davis Recycling) to work with residents to practice the 4Rs (***Recycle, Reuse, Renew and Recycle***). Sonoco sponsored the practice of the 4Rs in NPU-V with special focus on Adair Park. During Earth Day/Earth Week 2010, young people learned about various toxics, their (potential) adverse effects on human health and the 4Rs and informed about opportunities to practice the 4Rs by SAFE business partner Sonoco Recycling. As a result of these concerted efforts to clean up and prevent/reduce waste in NPU-V, the leadership and residents of NPU-V have strengthened their clean up activities.

SAFE has also worked with the City of Atlanta's Commissioner of Housing and Code Enforcement to reduce illegal dumping of construction and residential waste and tires. Work is in progress to enforce existing regulations regarding illegal dumping of waste including tires.

Air Pollution

SAFE organized a series of Quality of Air forums with the goal to increase public awareness and develop strategies for monitoring and reducing exposure to air pollutants. One goal of SAFE is to help improve the air quality in NPU-V.

SAFE partnership with Georgia State University's Institute of Public Health and the Department of Geoscience, and Hatch Mott McDonald Inc. is invaluable for conducting air quality monitoring and modeling in NPU-V. Georgia State University purchased our monitoring equipment to help SAFE conduct air quality monitoring in NPU environs.

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CARE through SAFE has changed the community by:

- a) Increasing public awareness of toxics and serving as a catalyst and support system for action***
- b) Leveraging SAFE's partnership for others to share their time, talent and money***
- c) Producing community success stories.***

Here are some of our community success stories because of CARE through SAFE.

Our training and support of residents led to successful removal of a noxious 'oil pit' located in the Pittsburgh neighborhood. The pit is a repository for discarded rail car oil located on the property of Norfolk-Southern Rail Company. The pit for years has been an eyesore which emitted a strong irritating odor and was located directly across the street from a large residential development. CBLTI graduates supported by SAFE and the Pittsburgh Community Improvement Association (also a SAFE Coalition partner) established a relationship with representatives from Norfolk-Southern. This relationship helped us develop an outline of the issues surrounding the pit, and listed clear and specific expectations when completed that would guarantee a positive outcome.

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The pit was removed, eliminating a long-time eyesore and odor which commonly exacerbated chronic respiratory problems.

McDaniel Street Oil Pit, Atlanta GA



Before



After

The Glenn Street Bridge safety and security concerns were addressed. Residents of Mechanicsville worked together to research the various entities responsible to security, maintenance and ownership of a long-neglected railway overpass. The residents, Gloria Jean Royster and Doristine Samuel, convened the *Glenn Street Bridge Roundtable* to address the need for repair and enhanced security for pedestrians who regularly travel the route. Many of the necessary corrective measures (i.e. street lights erected on bridge, removal of waste) have been completed. These residents continue to maintain contact with the various departments until all issues have been addressed.

Glenn Street Bridge, Atlanta GA



Before



After

Another one of our other success is Stanton Park located in Peoples Town. The park previously was a dumping site and became an environmental scar in South Atlanta. A young girl was critically wounded when the build of methane gas exploded. The SAFE coalition played a leadership role in the remediation process to address this life threatening community environmental issue. People's town is now a blazing star in the City of Atlanta because it has been fully remediated and rebuilt into state of art "Green Park," operating on solar energy.

ECO-Action/SAFE will apply for CARE level II and seek other funding sources to sustain the SAFE coalition. We intend to convene a Town Hall meeting to share the Risk Reduction Strategy with SAFE Coalition partners and NPU-V residents. The ongoing focus-air quality-will be further examined. Recommendations from the coalition and community will be incorporated into the strategic plan. ***MASK-Motivation, Attitude, Skills and Knowledge will continue to underscore the need for resident-led solutions to this and other environmental concerns affecting the NPU-V community.***

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Key Actions Taken

- Partners shared their vision and mission and signed on to a formal Memorandum of Understanding that informed and guided our work to get results.
- Developed and implemented *Capacity Building and Leadership Training Institute* that impacted participants' consciousness for environmental action.
- Conducted a series of air quality forums in the community.
- Conducted a multimedia environmental assessment of NPU-V.

Significant Results

- Elimination of the noxious "oil pit" on McDaniel Street in Pittsburgh, a long-time eyesore and odor which commonly exacerbated chronic respiratory problems.
- Implemented the Capacity Building training model in two neighboring Atlanta NPUs'.
- Capacity Building and leadership development by increasing NPU-V residents motivation, attitude, skills, and knowledge (MASK) for environmental health protection.
- Building a network of businesses to reduce waste and promote the 4R (Reduce, Reuse, Recycle, and Rethink).
- Making SAFE coalition a learning organization.

FINAL NOTE:

Although NPU-V has been dismissed for many years, the residents are fighters! They are passionate and committed to work for a better environment. You don't spend a lifetime in one area of one city that has undergone drastic economic collapse without voicing disapproval. ***Strategy, capacity-building tools and support provided by SAFE through CARE are supplemental components of work already in motion. SAFE and its partners will continue to be an important resource for residents of NPU-V.***