

FINAL REPORT

Title: Resources for Redevelopment of Brownfields to Greenspace
Project Manager: Megan Dobratz
Organization: Minnesota Environmental Initiative
Address: 219 N 2nd Street, Suite 201 Minneapolis, MN 55401
Web Site Address: www.mn-ei.org
Fund: Natural Resource Trust Fund
Legal Citation: ML 2003, Ch. 128, Art. 1, Sec. 9, Subd. 05(j)
Appropriation amount: \$150,000

Aug 10 2005

Overall Outcome and Results:

The Resources for Redevelopment of Brownfields to Greenspace project aimed to identify environmentally impaired properties to be redeveloped as greenspace, conduct environmental assessments and create/implement natural resources designs. The project exceeded all goals as over 16 sites were identified, environmental assessments were conducted at nine, and four sites received natural resource plans. Projects included wetland and prairie restorations, removal of invasive species, stormwater management through rain gardens and reestablished native communities. When completed, nearly 250 acres of idle land will be restored as greenspace.

The project advanced the redevelopment of nine properties that would have remained idle. These sites demonstrate the environmental, social and economic benefits of brownfields reuse as greenspace through onsite soil correction, cleaner air, improved water quality and enhanced natural resources.

Several communities benefited in both the metro area, and greater Minnesota. Converted from impaired land, these sites are now public parks, rain gardens and preserved farmland. All benefit water quality, enhance access to public space and provide years of educational and recreational space.

Through the project, roughly 375 acres were assessed, with nearly 250 acres restored as greenspace. Ten acres of farmland is preserved, over 85 miles of trails connected and water quality of the Mississippi and Chippewa Rivers and Minnehaha Creek is enhanced. Also, millions of public and private dollars were leveraged for acquisition, cleanup and implementation. MEI also secured nearly \$15,000 of in-kind donations from project partners.

Project Results Use and Dissemination

Information was shared through the Brownfields to Greenspace and Regional Greenways Collaboratives, MEI newsletters and web site, and project partners. Some sites have also had local media coverage.

Presentations include: EPA's Region 5 Nuts and Bolts of Brownfields Redevelopment, DEED Brownfield Workshops, Planners Network Conference tour - Ecological Restoration. Further presentations planned for the fall of 2005.

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Date of Report: August 5, 2005
 Date of Next Status Report: n/a
 Date of Work Program Approval: June 25, 2003
 Project Completion Date: June 30, 2005

I. PROJECT TITLE: 05j - Resources for Redevelopment of Brownfields to Greenspace

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Total Biennial LCMR Project Budget

| | |
|--------------------|-------------------|
| LCMR Appropriation | \$150,000.00 |
| (Amount Spent) | (\$145,500.86) |
| Equal Balance | <u>\$4,431.05</u> |

Legal Citation: ML 2003, Art. 1, chap. 128, Sec. 9, Subd. 05j Resources for Redevelopment of Brownfields to Greenspace

Appropriation language: 5(j) Resources for Redevelopment of Brownfields to Greenspace \$75,000 the first year and \$75,000 the second year are from the trust fund to the commissioner of natural resources for an agreement with the Minnesota Environmental Initiative to identify and assess redevelopment of brownfields for recreation, habitat and natural resource use.

II. and III. FINAL PROJECT SUMMARY

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IV. OUTLINE OF PROJECT RESULTS

Result 1: *Site identification, outreach and project definition*

Locate at least 38 candidate sites: The B2G group already has identified 34 candidate properties in the metropolitan area and in Greater Minnesota that are viable candidates for greenspace redevelopment (the group may identify more before the project begins); project staff will locate at least four more properties during the project period, for a total of at least 38. Candidate properties likely will be owned by the city, county, other municipal or state partner or will be acquired by such an entity as part of or as a result of the project. (No LCMR funding would be used for property acquisition.)

Assess community support: Project staff will discuss the greenspace-redevelopment possibilities presented by Resources for Redevelopment of Brownfields to Greenspace (R4R/B2G) with members of the affected communities to discover their desire to pursue such a project. If substantial community support for a brownfields-to-greenspace redevelopment at the particular site exists and the property meets the criteria, project staff will move ahead to tasks described under Results 2-4 below.

Build on existing effort: The project will capitalize on the work completed to date by the Brownfields to Greenspace partners – representatives of government, business and nonprofits who have been meeting for more than a two years to develop a collaborative approach to encouraging greenspace redevelopment projects. Minnesota Environmental Initiative staff will continue to tap the partners' expertise and extensive contacts through at least bi-monthly meetings and informal communications to identify the most promising prospects and enter into discussions with stakeholder groups to assess the viability of particular projects.

Augment existing restorations/preservations: Another important component under Result 1 of the project will be to identify existing restoration or conservation efforts that could be augmented through the project; the goal being to create interconnected natural resources systems and supplement ongoing efforts whenever possible.

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Project support: Another important part of Result 1 will be activities required to successfully manage the project, including ongoing research, project-assessment and planning with new partners and reporting to LCMR.

Summary budget information for result 1

LCMR Budget: \$19,908.29

Balance: \$47.00

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Site identification, outreach and project definition were key to the success of the Resource for Redevelopment of Brownfields to Greenspace project. The Brownfields to Greenspace group had previously identified 34 candidate sites for such work, and the project aimed to add at least four additional sites to that list. Instead, over 16 candidate sites were identified. Site identification activities were concluded well before the end the project. MEI suspects there are still several yet-to-be-identified blighted and underutilized sites within the state that could viably be redeveloped for greenspace if the appropriate and necessary resources were brought to bear.

Several factors were weighed in the selection of project sites. Community support surrounding the sites redevelopment was crucial. The Bruce Vento Nature Sanctuary is the best example of a long existence of community support and effort. For over 10 years, community members have been actively pushing this project forward; it is a true grass roots effort. With a limited amount of money, the project was able to keep the redevelopment of this site moving forward, at a time where it could have stalled because of a lack of funds, as well as a number of different entities having competing interests in redeveloping the surrounding area of the sanctuary. Efforts under Result 1 went beyond site identification and assessing community support; they also included building on existing efforts and augmenting existing restorations/preservations. It was partnership - the heart of all of the Minnesota Environmental Initiative's work - that made these projects successful. R4R's experience with the Brownfields to Greenspace project confirmed that it is essential to have a firm base of stakeholders involved in greenspace redevelopment projects, as they are time-consuming and complicated. With a mass of support pushing the project forward, the more likely it is to succeed. Also, the large number of additional sites identified indicates that these sites are quite prevalent across the state (i.e., there is a significant opportunity to do more such work). In some cases, redevelopment activities were on hold due to acquisition complications, but the desire to transform idle land into a community benefit is held by many community groups and municipalities.

Result 2: *Environmental assessment*

Conduct environmental site assessments of at least two properties: The project will utilize the partnership-based assessment and redevelopment model developed and refined by the Minnesota Environmental Initiative's Resources for Redevelopment (R4R) program. R4R's network of technical experts (which includes environmental consultants, as well as natural resources, water and land-use planning professionals associated with both R4R and the B2G group) will be contracted to design and conduct appropriate and effective environmental investigations of at least two properties that have been identified through the Result 1 process. Costs will be lowered and LCMR dollars stretched through contributions of in-kind services - an established component of the R4R program. Sites will be enrolled in the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency's voluntary cleanup programs as necessary. The results of the assessment work will be shared with Brownfields to Greenspace partners and affected community stakeholders to help determine next steps. Sites for which greenspace redevelopment is deemed feasible and likely will be thoroughly investigated, through phase II environmental assessments, hazardous building materials surveys, wetlands

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delineation's, or other necessary professional investigations. Wherever possible and appropriate, MEI staff will use pre-existing reports and investigation results, supplementing such materials as necessary with work conducted with LCMR funding.

Some sites may, through investigation, prove unfeasible for greenspace redevelopment and will not be further pursued.

Summary budget information for result 2

LCMR Budget: \$63,136.01

Balance: \$1,594.42

Result Status as of June 2005:

Since the last report, and additional three site assessments were completed.

City of Golden Valley: A limited phase II subsurface environmental investigation was completed by Bonestroo, Anderlik and Associates in June on behalf of the City of Golden Valley to support a city-led effort to transform part of its city-campus parking lot into rain gardens to treat storm water. An investigation was necessary as staff at the city recalled the area being filled with unknown soil. The testing identified low-levels of groundwater contamination that are being reported to the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency. It is believed that this contamination will not affect the designs of the rain garden.

Swift County – Former Midwest Cylinder Site: Phase I and II environmental site assessments were conducted by Landmark Environmental on behalf of Swift County, which recently purchased the property. Past use of the site included a creamery and a propane refurbishing plant. Testing result showed small areas with high levels of arsenic, lead and DRO. Staff at Swift County will proceed with the proper measures needed to address these problems. The site is enrolled in the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency's Voluntary Investigation and Cleanup program and staff at the MPCA will continue to review the work conducted at the site. Swift County will be requesting a No Association Determination from the Agency.

Minnehaha Creek Watershed District: A phase I environmental assessment was conducted by Landmark Environmental on behalf of the MCWD on two parcels in Minnetrista. The watershed district plans to acquire the 70-acre property to preserve greenspace, restore wetlands and enhance filtration of stormwater flowing into surrounding water bodies, including Minnehaha Creek, with the possibility of redeveloping some of the land under a conservation easement in the future. The assessment revealed no recognized environmental conditions that would impede the watershed district's plans for the properties. This information allows MCWD to move forward with their purchase.

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The environmental site assessments that took place under the project were completed to identify any impairment that may be present on site. The goal of at least two properties assessed was exceeded, as nine different properties were investigated.

The assessments prepare the partner with the information needed to either proceed or step away from acquisition and redevelopment. Of the nine properties assessed, five proceeded directly into redevelopment/preservation as greenspace; the acquisition process is still under way on three of the properties assessed, and one property could not be preserved due to a shortfall in acquisition funding.

In hindsight, the timing of these projects can be tricky, and can often take several years – the Bruce Vento Nature Sanctuary is in its tenth year of redevelopment activities. One challenge was trying to project expenditures of Result 2 funds, as timing on the sites was very sensitive. A site would be identified and ready to move forward with the environmental assessment, but ownership issues either put the assessment on hold, or stopped all further action towards redevelopment. At the same time, it is unclear at the outset of an environmental assessment process what level of resources will be required: If no recognized environmental conditions are discovered in the phase I process, redevelopment can proceed after that relatively modest expenditure (roughly \$2,000). If recognized environmental conditions are discovered, however, a phase II assessment generally must be commenced, at significantly higher, varying cost. At the outset of a project, it is hard to know how much assessment will be required. Both problems – acquisition timing and uncertainty about gravity

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of the environmental conditions – are inherent to land acquisition/redevelopment projects and makes planning more difficult. Throughout the Brownfields to Greenspace project, R4R worked hard to ensure adequate environmental assessment funding under Result 2 was available to deal with whatever issues came up at projects selected under Result 1.

The balance remaining in Result 2 is due to subcontractor work coming in under budget, it is not a result of incomplete work. With so many unexpected variables working into this budget, it is difficult to draw down to exactly zero. The balance that remains represents only one percent of the Result 2 budget.

Result 3: *Design and begin redevelopment*

Create at least one greenspace site design: The R4R/B2G project will contribute to at least one greenspace restoration/redevelopment project. Working in collaboration with the affected community, MEI staff and contracted site-redevelopment professionals will design a greenspace reuse including a remedial action plan (cleanup of contaminants, if necessary, will be undertaken using funding from sources other than LCMR), with special emphasis on restoration of natural features, habitat and appropriate public access and recreational spaces, as well as the interconnectivity discussed above. Site redesigns will focus on realizing each particular site's greenspace potential with a plan that minimizes cleanup expenses and disturbance while providing maximum protection of the environment, human health and natural systems.

Begin or contribute to redevelopment work on at least one site: The project will initiate site redevelopment, using volunteer labor from stakeholder community as appropriate and necessary, with seed funding for in-the-field redevelopment of selected properties.

Summary budget information for result 3:

LCMR Budget: \$58,845.32

Balance: \$2,636.94

Result status as of June 2005:

The project continued to put time and funding toward the Bruce Vento Nature Sanctuary design and implementation, as well as entryway designs. A formal opening of St. Paul's newest public park was held on May 25 at the site. Also note, on June 9 MEI received a verbal approval from Susan Thornton to go over the \$10,000 subcontractor agreement limit with Emmons and Olivier Resources for work on the Bruce Vento Nature Sanctuary.

Other Result 3 activities since last report include the creation of a Development Response Action Plan, by Braun Intertec, for the Heritage Village Park in Inver Grove Heights. This plan, which is reviewed by staff at the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, guides the redevelopment activities at the site, as they relate to impaired soils. As was the goal, the environmental consultant for the site has worked closely with Friends of the Mississippi River, the natural resource consultant, to investigate options for onsite treatment of impacted soils, as well as possible phytoremediation techniques, whereby plants are used to treat contamination in soils.

In addition, Bonestroo, Anderlik and Associates have created the rain garden site design for the City of Golden Valley. This site has an increased educational component, as the rain garden is located at City Hall, where many of the cities residents frequent. Like the Inver Grove Heights project, the environmental consultant for the Golden Valley site, Bonestroo, worked in conjunction with the landscape architect to explore the impact of environmental conditions at how they would affect site design.

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The greenspace design and implementation aspects associated with Result 3 were the newest scope of work for MEI, but proved to be a very important part of the project. In the example of the El Colegio Charter School, design alterations, with input from the environmental consultant and the landscape architect, were essential in order to both treat the contamination onsite while maintaining the integrity and spirit of the project as much as possible.

A lesson learned from this result is that there is a lack of planning and design funding available for greenspace redevelopment sites. The partners that were municipalities did have internal planning funds, as the project was part of the park system master plan. But for community driven efforts, this has proven to be very difficult. The assistance the project was able to provide was invaluable to all of the sites.

The significance of these results is the most compelling since they are very tangible, and actual physical transformation occurs. This phase of the project connects closely to Result 4, as the public opening of parks and green spaces draws a crowd and excitement.

The balance seen in this Result is due to subcontractor bids that were higher than really needed. This was unexpected and only discovered when invoices were received after the end of the grant term. Funds in Result 3 were to be fully expended as budgeted, however, due to subcontractors coming in under budget, roughly 10 percent of the balance remains.

Result 4: *Promotion and publicity*

Share results: The R4R/B2G project will include a strategic effort to publicize the results of the project through public celebrations and media coverage. Case-study presentations will be developed and delivered to such entities as community groups, local government, private funders, state agency land-use staff, MEI program attendants, regional planners and professional brownfields redevelopment organizations such as the Minnesota Environmental Assessment Roundtable. During the course of the project, a web page will be maintained on MEI's web site at <http://www.mn-ei.org/R4RB2G.html> with updates on progress of the project. Education and communications efforts will set a precedent for additional efforts aimed at improving recreation and natural systems by restoring greenspace around the state.

Summary budget information for result 4:

LCMR Budget: \$8,110.38
Balance: \$152.69

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Throughout the course of the project, information was shared through the Brownfields to Greenspace and Regional Greenways Collaboratives quarterly meetings. In addition, some articles in the MEI quarterly newsletters and on the MEI website were in reference to Brownfields to Greenspace sites. Project partners also contributed to the outreach effort, through telling other clients of available resources as well as talking about the success of the specific sites. Some sites, including the Bruce Vento Nature Sanctuary, El Colegio Charter School and Inver Grove Heights' future Heritage Village Park have also had local media coverage.

Promotion of Brownfield to Greenspace practices and publicity of completed B2G sites under the work program were also shared through speaking at events. Presentations included the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's annual Region 5 Nuts and Bolts of Brownfields Redevelopment conference in Chicago, IL, the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development/Metropolitan Council's bi-annual Brownfield funding workshop, and the Planners

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Network Conference tour - Ecological Restoration in the Central City. Other presentations are also planned for the fall of 2005.

Through these public speaking engagements, news articles and website postings, the strategy and lessons learned of reclaiming contaminated land and transforming it into an environmentally beneficial community asset has been communicated.

V. TOTAL LCMR PROJECT BUDGET:

All results – personnel: \$53,000

All results – equipment: \$0

All results – development: \$0

All results – acquisitions: \$0

All results – other: \$97,000 (contracted professional services –\$79,525 (*balance of \$3,018.01*); regulatory oversight –\$5,375 (*balance of \$1,062.50*); printing – \$600 (balance of \$0); communications - \$35 (balance of \$0); office supplies –\$0; travel expenses – \$800 (*balance of \$233.00*); land improvement - \$10,665 (*balance of \$0.64*).

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Dollars remain in the regulatory oversight line item due timing of environmental assessments and reports. The Inver Grove Heights – Heritage Village Park, Swift Falls and Golden Valley sites are all enrolled into the Minnesota Pollution Control Agencies (MPCA) Voluntary programs. Some project work continued into June, which limited the time the MPCA had to review the environmental assessment documents. Some sites did not get reviewed prior to June 30th, and because of this, a balance remains in the regulatory oversight category.

TOTAL LCMR PROJECT BUDGET: \$150,000

Explanation of capital expenditures greater than \$3,500: Any hard goods or materials purchased for the project will be installed as permanent components of a greenspace redevelopment to which the project is contributing.

VI. PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE SPENDING:

A. Past spending: In the two years prior to the commencement of the project, the B2G coalition and the Minnesota Environmental Initiative have incurred costs exclusively in the form of staff costs and travel expenses related to the development of the project. MEI staff estimates this expenditure at \$21,600 (10 people for two hours a month for 24 months at \$45/hour). Please note that this is necessarily an extremely rough estimate because of the variety of individuals involved, the variations in kinds and amounts of contributions to the development of the project and the somewhat informal manner in which the project developed early on.

In addition, it is possible that sites the project will focus on will have been purchased, by municipal entities most likely, prior to the start of the project. Prior to the identification of the particular properties that will be the focus of the R4R/B2G LCMR project, it is impossible to estimate acquisition costs that have been incurred before the commencement of the project by the project's potential partners.

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B. Current spending: Concurrent spending will include in-kind contributions of staff time by member organizations of the Brownfields to Greenspace coalition; it is expected that significant staff hours dedicated to the project from the Metropolitan Council, the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, staff from the Trust for Public Land, the Department of Trade and Economic Development, the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board, Hennepin County, the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, Friends of the Mississippi, Mississippi Natural Resources Recreation Area (National Park Service), Dakota County Environmental Services and environmental professionals who work in the private sector are also expected to contribute to the project. MEI staff estimates this expenditure at \$32,400 (10 people for three hours a month for 24 months at \$45/hour). Please note that this is necessarily an extremely rough estimate because of the variety of individuals involved and the variation in the kinds and amounts of expected contributions to the project.

More significant concurrent spending on the project will consist of site acquisition (as discussed above under past spending), as well as natural resources, habitat and parkland development and associated professional services; spending for rehabilitation/restoration at project sites likely will continue well beyond the two-year term of the project. Such costs are estimated at \$1 million for the two target properties.

In addition, the Minnesota Environmental Initiative will incur \$37,500 in indirect administrative and overhead expenses to maintain the project.

C. Required match: N/A.

D. Future spending: It is anticipated that future expenditures will be incurred at sites associated with the R4R/B2G LCMR project in the form of additional design implementation, maintenance and other costs. Given the fact that specific projects sites have yet to be identified, it would be pure speculation for MEI staff to estimate such costs at this time.

VII. PROJECT PARTNERS

A. Partners receiving LCMR funds:

Environmental engineering/consulting firms will be contracted to perform environmental assessments (possibly including wetlands delineation's, hazardous building materials surveys or other professional assessments), for the R4R/B2G LCMR project; consultants to perform such services will be identified as part of the project. Such consultants will be chosen through either a competitive bid process that will include consideration of donation of in-kind or discounted services to the project or continuation of existing work by a service provider whose past experience with a particular project makes it uniquely valuable to the project or provides cost savings through efficient continuation of established relationships and work. Expenditures for environmental assessments at two sites are expected to total \$49,000, or approximately \$24,500 per site.

When appropriate and necessary, environmental engineering/consulting firms will be contracted to create remedial action plans and submit such plans for approval to the appropriate state voluntary cleanup program. The environmental consultants who perform the investigations will mostly likely continue on to create such plans. It is expected that two such processes will be completed for a total cost of \$7,000, or approximately \$3,500 per site.

It is anticipated that the project will pay \$9,200 in regulatory oversight fees to state fee-for-service voluntary cleanup programs for the acquisition of necessary letters of liability assurance for the project partners that will be the ultimate owners of the project sites.

Under Result 3, the project will include contracted work by landscape design professionals on greenspace restoration plans for at least one property. Contracted expenses will be entirely for

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professional landscape-design personnel and related services to create a site-specific design in keeping with community expectations and desires. Such a plan is expected to cost a total of \$20,000.

Finally, the project will contribute to the acquisition of plants, trees, shrubs, boardwalks and other components of a greenspace redesign of a specific site. The project has earmarked \$10,000 for such expenses, which will be identified in detail as the project is pursued and the needs of a specific site are identified by the associated landscape design professionals.

(See Attachment A for further detail.)

B. Project cooperators: As described above, the R4R/B2G LCMR project will benefit from the contributions of the Brownfields to Greenspace Coalition members. The project will also rely on contributions from state agencies and municipal entities associated with the particular sites (yet to be identified).

VIII. DISSEMINATION

Dissemination of progress and results is a key component of the R4R/B2G project, as is evidenced by the detailed description of such activities above under Result 4. As indicated, the website for the project will be <http://www.mn-ei.org/R4RB2G.html>. In addition, project updates will be included in established MEI communications including a newsletter, email trees, annual reports and at MEI-sponsored forums. MEI staff also will make presentations related to the project at national and regional brownfields redevelopment conferences, such as the Environmental Protection Agency's annual event. MEI has shared the success of the program to date so as to broaden its reach and build its capacity. Program staff will continue to do so, recognizing that bringing successful redevelopment models to the public's attention allows for replication.

IX. LOCATION:

Statewide; as indicated under Result 1 above, the identification of promising project sites will be the foundational activity under the R4R/B2G project.

X. REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

Periodic work program progress reports will be submitted not later than January 2004, July 2004 and January 2005. A final work program report and associated products will be submitted in June 2005.
