

CHAPTER FOUR: ESTABLISHING PARTNERSHIPS

In this chapter, you will work through the following steps:

- [Establishing partnerships](#)
- [Where to find potential partners for redevelopment projects](#)

Establishing partnerships

From the beginning of your project, you have been seeking out stakeholders who can help make your vision a reality. By bringing people together you created a vision that captures the ideas and interests of a broad constituency. In doing this, you identified the key individuals and groups who have a direct stake in the future of the building. Now it is time to develop partnerships with these stakeholders.

A partnership is an agreement between two or more entities to work together for a particular purpose. You need to form partnerships if:

- You are pursuing goals that will affect other people and organizations
- You need more resources, whether financial, political, or human, to accomplish your goals
- You want a strong coalition that shows how diverse interests are in agreement

As you begin to develop partnerships you will need to identify the key issues the project may cause for the community. Make sure that the

stakeholders represent the divergent viewpoints on these issues and can relate to how your building will improve the community. Address challenges your community raises head on - no matter how controversial they may be. If your stakeholder group is diverse and includes the range of opinions and concerns in the community, you will be better able to maintain community support and participation in your project. If a small group of concerned citizens with diverse perspectives can agree on the benefits of your project, then the whole community can agree.

Success in reclaiming abandoned properties for productive reuse requires partnerships with the right blend of stakeholders. These will come together from the private sector, all levels of government, and from the community in a partnership with the common goal of achieving your vision. Important potential partners include:

- representatives of businesses and industries in the surrounding area
- property owners in the surrounding area
- residents in the surrounding area
- community and neighborhood groups
- nonprofit organizations with a stake in the community and your redevelopment
- developers and contractors, especially those with expertise and experience in restoring older buildings

- future users of the building
- county and local government, elected officials, local boards and staff
- State and federal government partners

Remember, partnerships can be formed at any time during the redevelopment process as needs arise and as common interests are identified.

Partnering with these stakeholders can provide technical assistance and bring in more resources to help with site acquisition, infrastructure provision, funding and marketing, and extra publicity. Partnerships will create the framework for development, reducing risk and increasing the attractiveness of a project. Particular attention should be paid to maintaining a strong relationship with neighborhood leaders and community stakeholders. These individuals and groups have a vested interest in the neighborhood, and the investment of their energy and resources into the community has a powerful impact on its overall health. Together, you are partners in the redevelopment process.

The format and formality of a partnership can vary widely. Whether it is simple or complex, everyone benefits if an agreement is reached beforehand about each entity's role and responsibilities.

- Document in writing the purpose of the partnership and the roles and tasks of the various partners, the duration of the partnership, and provisions for making changes to the agreement including

adding or releasing partners or dissolving the partnership.

- Define the responsibilities of each party and its roles in a written document such as a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) or a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA).
- Negotiate any points of contention so that there is consensus.

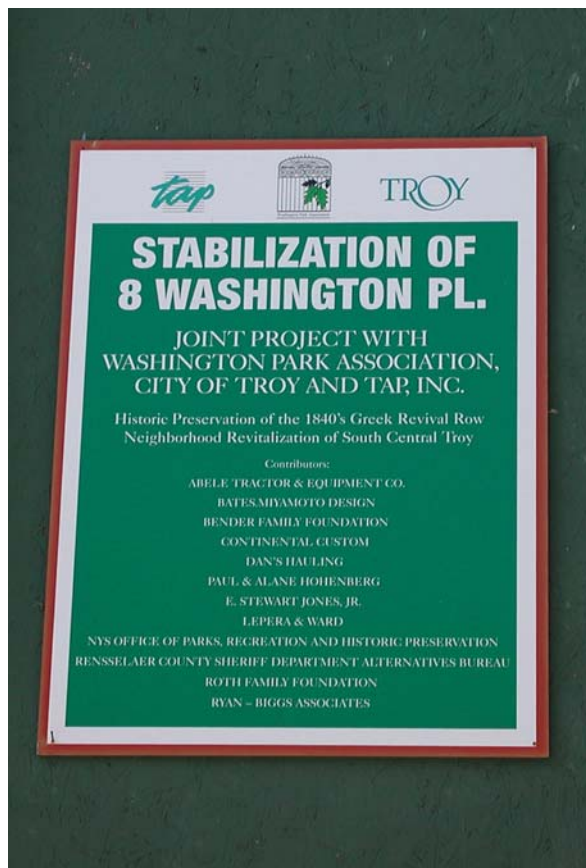
Working in partnerships may seem to be more challenging or time-consuming, but such projects are generally more successful. Having public support and the cooperation of more people and organizations also fuels the momentum of a project. During the vision process, you achieved consensus by bringing people together to support your vision. As you develop partnerships you will continue to build on that support. Make sure you provide regular updates and opportunities to provide input on the details of your development. This can be done through action planning workshops, periodic informational meetings, and your newsletters and other components of your outreach strategy. Remember, your success in restoring an abandoned building or site depends on whether the people who live and work in the community embrace your vision and the details of your plans as they emerge.

Where to find potential partners for redevelopment projects

Many New York State agencies provide an array of technical and financial assistance that can support the redevelopment of abandoned buildings and sites, from planning through implementation. New York State's Smart Growth

initiative demonstrates New York's commitment to working with local government and community organizations to find innovative solutions to strengthen our economy and environment, and improve the quality of the place we call home (www.SmartGrowthNY.com). Smart Growth is sensible, planned, efficient growth that integrates economic development and job creation with community quality-of-life, by preserving and enhancing the built and natural environments. Smart Growth encourages growth in developed areas with existing infrastructure to sustain it, particularly municipal centers, downtowns, urban cores, historic districts and older first-tier suburbs.

The federal government offers a range of economic development programs to communities for economic renewal. Many of these programs support the redevelopment of abandoned buildings and sites from planning through implementation. The online Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (www.cfd.gov) gives you access to a database of all federal programs available to State and local governments, domestic public, quasi-public, and private profit and nonprofit organizations and institutions; specialized groups; and individuals. You can search this database to find information on programs meeting the requirements for your abandoned building. You can then contact the office that administers the program and find out how they may be able to help you.



Partners in Action

Local governments may have planning, design, engineering and economic development staff, and local committees who can help you develop your abandoned building. They can provide technical assistance at all stages of the project, as well as information in the form of local plans and consultant studies such as appraisals, cost estimates, feasibility studies, market studies, reuse analysis, engineering reports, land use studies, and marketability studies. They can aid a development project by directing capital and public works expenditures to coincide with the needs of the development. Building an adjacent parking lot, clearing the site of structures, providing water and sewer to the site, and providing new sidewalks and lighting are examples of this type of assistance. Sometimes they may be able to provide direct funding assistance and even become joint venture partners. Municipalities can sometimes help with acquisition. A project that would otherwise be impossible may be facilitated if a municipality acquires private land under its power of eminent domain. A municipality could, for example, acquire a series of parcels and resell them to a chosen developer.

Other techniques can be used to improve the basic investment climate in a municipality. For example, increased building code enforcement and pressure on owners to maintain or improve their property can make an investment seem less risky, since there is more assurance that the adjacent properties will be maintained. Also, changing parking restrictions to make parking

more available to potential customers can be important in a retail environment. While zoning is usually considered a constraint on development, zoning codes can be written to encourage a particular type of development in a particular location. Finally, “incentive zoning” can facilitate a development project when additional building density, such as greater height, is allowed in exchange for a public benefit from the developer, such as open spaces, parking, or other amenities.

Nonprofit organizations can also be an important partner as you develop your abandoned building. They can provide technical assistance and advocacy in planning and design and sometimes small grants to help with your project. Universities can also provide technical assistance.

The Appendix to this guidebook outlines where to find partners to help with your redevelopment project and where you might turn to for help.



Hudson





Case Study: Albany Grand Street

Community Builders is a nonprofit organization focused on building and sustaining strong communities (www.communitybuilders.org). They develop, finance, and operate high quality affordable, mixed-income housing by coordinating access to support services, and by planning and implementing other community and economic initiatives critical to the communities served. Community Builders works in collaboration with neighborhood groups, residents, public and private agencies, and philanthropic interests. Becoming a long-term stakeholder in the neighborhood, Community Builders can help create effective local implementation teams that combine neighborhood understanding, technical skills, and managerial ability.



Community Builders is restoring 11 dilapidated historic homes on Grand Street in Albany for low income rental housing, their first venture in New York State. With a \$3.3 million construction budget, including \$1.1 million in financing from the State's Housing Trust Fund and \$335,000 in tax credits, the project is attracting a lot of local interest.



Case Study: Troy

The public, private, and nonprofit sectors are working together to stimulate economic growth by rehabilitating the City of Troy's historic architecture. Among many examples is the innovative partnership between a local bank, a nonprofit architecture firm, an educational institution, and New York State that resulted in the reuse of the Rice Building.

Constructed in 1871 and located in a National Register historic district, the Rice Building is one of the finest surviving examples of High Victorian Gothic style architecture in the City of Troy. This important downtown landmark, originally used as an office building, had been long-vacant and was rapidly deteriorating and seemed headed for demolition until Troy Savings Bank acquired it through foreclosure proceedings.

Troy Savings Bank, the Troy Architectural Program, and the Rensselaer Technology Park created a unique partnership for the rehabilitation of the Rice Building. With assistance from New York State and the City of Troy, the three organizations created Rice Building Incorporated, a nonprofit organization, to redevelop the 20,000 square foot building into incubator space for growing businesses, including businesses locating out of the Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute's Rensselaer Technology Park.

Rice Building Incorporated acquired the building from Troy Savings Bank, and with economic development and historic preservation funds secured from New York State, began the rehabilitation of the building. This included replacement of the deteriorating roof; reattaching the brick facade to the rest of the building; cleaning, restoration and replacement of decorative tiles; masonry cleaning; reconfiguration of interior space to accommodate tenants; and installation of the electronics and telecommunications infrastructure needed by high tech incubator tenants. Much of the building's original historic building materials were retained or in some way reflected in the new spaces.

The rehabilitation of the Rice Building saved a landmark, brought new high technology jobs into Troy's downtown, and once again contributes to the tax base.



Case Study: Syracuse

Leading Syracuse's effort to redevelop abandoned buildings and sites is the Lakefront Development Corporation. This nonprofit group, made up of local business leaders and community stakeholders, was formed in 1996 to facilitate the \$2 billion reclamation and redevelopment of 800 blighted acres.

An early focus of improvements was the historic Franklin Square district, once the manufacturing center of Syracuse. Changing technologies led to businesses leaving the area. Abandonment followed, and with abandonment came blight, and with blight came opportunity.

By working with development and real estate companies, and facilitating private sector interaction with government agencies and the community, the development corporation has reinvigorated this historic neighborhood, converting abandoned factories and other buildings into a mix of apartments and condominiums, office space, and small neighborhood shops and restaurants. With an emphasis on lifestyle and a respect for its past, Franklin Square has become a model of successful urban revitalization.

This model is now being applied to other development districts, including Armory Square, a thriving historic district now home to a dynamic mix of retail shops, office space, and entertainment venues, combining both revitalized and new buildings.

The focal points here are the Museum of Science and Technology, complete with an IMAX theater and planetarium, created from an abandoned armory, and the restored Landmark Theater, the region's premiere performing arts center.

