



DISCUSSIONS ABOUT SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN PITTSBURGH DIDN'T END AFTER THE p4 CONFERENCE CONCLUDED. CURRENT DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES TO PUT THE TALK INTO ACTION. BY JEFFERY FRASER. PHOTOS BY JOSHUA FRANZOS.



# PUTTING p4 INTO PRACTICE



The last great brownfield in Pittsburgh rests along the Monongahela River, roughly graded and ready to be transformed into a mixed-use community following the standards of sustainable development. The rest of the Hazelwood neighborhood, which has endured its share of hardship over the past few decades, is being prepared to share the benefits of the new development.

A few miles north, the city is poised for a green-centric reinvention of Uptown, another neighborhood that has experienced decline, with plans underway to make it Pittsburgh's first "EcoInnovation" district.

And Downtown, new bike lanes are recent evidence of a public-private partnership vision of sustainable urban design that accommodates people as much as it does cars.

All told, about 500 acres in Pittsburgh's urban core are primed for sustainable land development. Other areas included in the total are the 28-acre former Civic Arena site in the city's Hill District; 55 acres in Pittsburgh's vibrant Strip District, including the five-block Produce Terminal building; and several distressed neighborhoods.

Initiatives in these communities, all significant undertakings, are among the next steps on the city's road to sustainability following April's p4 Pittsburgh summit, a conference that attracted almost 350 invited guests. The event introduced Pittsburgh stakeholders to experts in sustainable cities and innovation economies from the United States and Europe, including a major delegation from the Nordic countries, to help inform the city's transition.

Other less visible challenges wait as well. Among them are keeping development in line with sustainable principles and practices in the coming years, maintaining the enthusiasm and momentum for those principles, and seizing the opportunities that an increasing number of cities are embracing. p4 Pittsburgh participants learned how Nordic cities, such as Copenhagen, Denmark, and Stockholm and Malmö, Sweden, have planned around sustainable principles for decades. Such principles also were shown as being at the heart of the revitalization in U.S. cities such as Chattanooga, Tenn., a former industrial center like Pittsburgh forced to reinvent its economy.

"If there was a time when Pittsburgh was operating in a bubble, those days are over," says Heinz Endowments President Grant Oliphant. "People in this community are becoming aware of that more and more. I don't think it'll be a challenge keeping them

An important aspect of the p4 summit was devoting time to analyzing development efforts in Pittsburgh and offering recommendations for making the projects more sustainable. Breakout groups of conference participants, like the one shown above left, discussed the details of development sites. The groups also took bus trips, left, to the locations to see firsthand their condition and potential.



enthusiastic about Pittsburgh being a leader of that transition. We just have to figure out the mechanisms by which to do it.”

Several steps can be taken by government in the near term to help pave the way to a sustainable future, says Pittsburgh Mayor William Peduto. “We need to restructure the Urban Redevelopment Authority to make sure we give everyone an equal opportunity when it comes to accessing public dollars. We have to work with our planning department to build community plans that meet these [sustainability] principles. We need to be more adaptive in the mayor’s office, not simply have a response team roll out the red carpet to some, but cut red tape for all. Those become the takeaways of what we need to do over the next year to build capacity around making p4 the driving [formula] of Pittsburgh’s growth.”

The planning department is working on a set of sustainable development principles tailored to Pittsburgh. It also is developing an adaptable, three-dimensional computer model of the city, which Planning Director Ray Gastil demonstrated at the p4 summit. “This approach allows us the opportunity to connect information and data to the way we design and understand the city and convert it to three-dimensional form,” he explains.

Urban comprehensive plans are key tools for shaping development to the strategies and standards cities prescribe. For Mr. Peduto and other advocates of engineering a more sustainable city, the timing couldn’t be better. Pittsburgh is in the process of drafting its first such plan.

“It’s extraordinary that this is Pittsburgh’s first comprehensive plan to guide future growth and development in the city,” says Court Gould, executive director of the nonprofit Sustainable Pittsburgh. “Now is the moment to make concrete these values and institutionalize the p4 framework beyond the tenure of this administration.”

Three major development projects that have already started down that path were the subjects of site tours for the local stakeholders and featured experts who attended the p4 conference. In return, they offered observations and recommendations for each.

In Hazelwood, the Endowments and three other local foundations bought the 178-acre site of a former coke works for the purpose of developing a mixed-use community designed to sustainable standards that is seamlessly linked to the neighborhood. Tax-increment financing is in place, and utilities, roads and other infrastructure are planned for this year. The Endowments also is working with residents and community organizations to revitalize the existing neighborhood. Recent grants, for example, have led to the opening of a charter school and the green renovation of a former church as a new community center housing a library and a family services facility.

Stakeholders and experts who toured the site agreed that the new development and existing neighborhood should be designed to be one place. Their suggestions included developing the former mill site as a net-zero energy section of the city and considering multi-modal transit to link Hazelwood to the economic centers of Oakland and Downtown.

Among the observations of those who toured the Uptown neighborhood where an urban EcoInnovation district is envisioned was the need to better connect it to Oakland, where two major research universities reside. And they

THREE MAJOR DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS IN PITTSBURGH ARE PRIME CANDIDATES FOR IMPLEMENTING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IDEAS FROM THE P4 SUMMIT. SEPARATE GROUPS VISITED THE SITES DURING THE CONFERENCE TO GAIN A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF THE CHALLENGES AND POTENTIAL FOR INNOVATIVE URBAN DESIGN IN THE CITY.

Rob Pfaffman, far right, founder of the architecture and urban design firm Pfaffman & Associates, took advantage of an opportunity to talk about sustainable development with leaders in the field from Europe's Nordic countries. This discussion included, facing forward from left to right, Linda Schuur, Stefan Sjöberg, and Ola Kjellander, all from Kjellander & Sjöberg, an architecture and urban development firm in Stockholm, Sweden.



ENVISION DOWNTOWN AND SMITHFIELD STREET CORRIDOR

Downtown Pittsburgh has already undergone a series of metamorphoses that include the transition from smoky industrial center to the region's scenic hub for business, government and the arts. Mayor William Peduto formed the independent, public-private partnership Envision Downtown to develop a strategy for further transforming the heart of the city into a sustainable urban core. Capturing this vision is a 3-D model of Pittsburgh being used for more effective planning, which would include improvements to streets like Smithfield, one of the primary Downtown corridors.

UPTOWN/WEST OAKLAND AND ECOINNOVATION DISTRICT

Once a busy commercial district, Pittsburgh's Uptown neighborhood experienced decline for much of the past 50 years. It is slowly reviving as some of its many row houses are renovated and other buildings receive creatively fresh additions like the colorful mural on the building that is home to Miryam's transitional housing for women. City planners hope to make Uptown Pittsburgh's first EcoInnovation District, a "green-centric" community with upgraded infrastructure and improved connections to the adjacent communities of West Oakland and the Lower Hill.

suggested considering bike lanes, bus rapid transit and improved walkability as the means to do so. Planning for bus rapid transit along the corridor is already underway. An EcoInnovation consultant team is soon expected to begin work.

"Envision Downtown," a public-private initiative announced in March, calls for investing as much as \$35 million to overhaul transportation, streets, sidewalks and other infrastructure. The redesign is intended to keep bicyclists and pedestrians in mind as well as motorists, ease traffic congestion and invite greater public interaction. The effort builds on the revitalization in recent years to make Downtown safer, more aesthetically pleasing and more livable. Planning has started, and pilot projects focused on public transit and public spaces are being introduced this year.

"I've worked down here for 20 years," Mr. Peduto says. "There were times when I thought the best that we could do was manage decline better than anyone else in the world. Now, it's about how we are going to manage growth, because it's coming." *h*



HAZELWOOD AND ALMONO

When four Pittsburgh foundations, including The Heinz Endowments, purchased the site of a former steel mill in Hazelwood in 2002, they set in motion efforts to transform both the property, renamed Almono, and the surrounding neighborhood that had been devastated by the decline of the steel industry. A community-based process is underway to create a vibrant, mixed-use development that is seamlessly linked to an energetic and revitalized Hazelwood. Mill 19, a massive building from the bygone industrial era, remains on the Almono site and will be part of the new development as it takes shape.

