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A new Brownfields partnership in Conn. is formed by DECD, CDA, DEP and DPH

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A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was recently signed between the four state agencies responsible for Brownfield redevelopment projects within Connecticut. The Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD), the Connecticut Development Authority (CDA), the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), and the Department of Public Health (DPH) are partners in the initiative to revitalize environmentally distressed properties. Representatives from each agency will cooperatively facilitate long-term solutions for the remediation and redevelopment of these sites. DECD commissioner, Joan McDonald, believes that there will be "a strong partnership with state agencies, local municipalities and private developers."

DECD

Under the direction of Commissioner McDonald, the Office of Brownfield Remediation and Development (OBRD) has been designated as a separate organizational unit within the DECD. OBRD is now the single point of contact for providing financial and technical assistance to owners and developers of Brownfields sites. The staff of engineers and real estate development professionals provides their expertise with the planning, design and execution of redevelopment. Public outreach is also OBRD's responsibility.

CDA

"The Office of Brownfield Remediation and Development is a smart move for economic development growth for our state," said Marie O'Brien, president of the CDA. "By pooling our Brownfields resources and expertise under OBRD, we've created a simple 'go-to' source that alleviates the complicated issues facing Brownfields redevelopment."

The state of Connecticut's ability to clean up and redevelop Brownfields was expanded upon passage of Public Act 07-233, "An Act Implementing the Recommendations of the Brownfields Task Force". Effective July 1, 2007, the act authorizes the CDA to establish a new program to guarantee bank loans and issue bonds on behalf of towns for Brownfields redevelopment, which is a strong component of Responsible Growth. Municipalities and regional planning entities are best suited to identify where the Brownfields sites in their communities should be redeveloped. This process will promote economic vitality as well as help protect the environment.

DEP

Throughout its history, the Department of Environmental Protection's primary mission has been to protect human health and the environment. Consequently, the economic redevelopment of Brownfields sites is strongly encouraged. "Economic development is one the best catalysts for clean-up of contaminated sites," said Graham Stevens, the first full-time Brownfield coordinator for

the DEP. Stevens said that "the DEP wants to help municipalities and Brownfield redevelopers understand the process and ensure their success by helping them to navigate our regulatory programs quickly and cost-effectively".

DPH

The fourth partner in this agreement is the Department of Public Health which administers the Toxics Hazards Assessment Program, addressing health concerns on hazardous wastes sites, including Brownfield properties. This agency is tasked along with DEP to provide technical assistance to the development of these sites.

The interagency agreement that was signed by the three commissioners and one President demonstrates that the state of Connecticut is committed to meeting one of the top agenda items for governor Jodi Rell: to return Brownfields to productive use and preserve open space for future generations.

Dudley Alleman, LEP is a senior project manager within the geological services division of HRP Associates, Inc., Farmington, Conn.

New England Real Estate Journal - 17 Accord Park Drive #207, Norwell MA 02061 - (781) 878-4540