

Urban Development 101:

University of Dayton Transforms a Riverfront Brownfield

By Todd C. Davis and Teri Rizvi

Facts

- Size: 50-acre urban brownfield
- Land Cost: \$25 million
- Estimated Development Costs: Could exceed \$200 million
- Location: Intersection of Brown Street and Stewart Street, Dayton, Ohio
- Current status: Phase I completed (i.e. all buildings have been demolished and the part of property has been remediated). Phase II: Balance of property is being remediated
- Project Team: Hemisphere Advisors LLC—Brownfield Redevelopment Advisor; Hull and Associates LLC—Environmental Consultant; Burt Hill—Land Planner

Case Study Overview

On the fringe of Dayton, Ohio, sits prime riverfront property. Although it's been called the most developable piece of property in the city, it's largely vacant, a ghost of its heyday as the bustling site where National Cash Register (NCR) manufactured its cash registers.

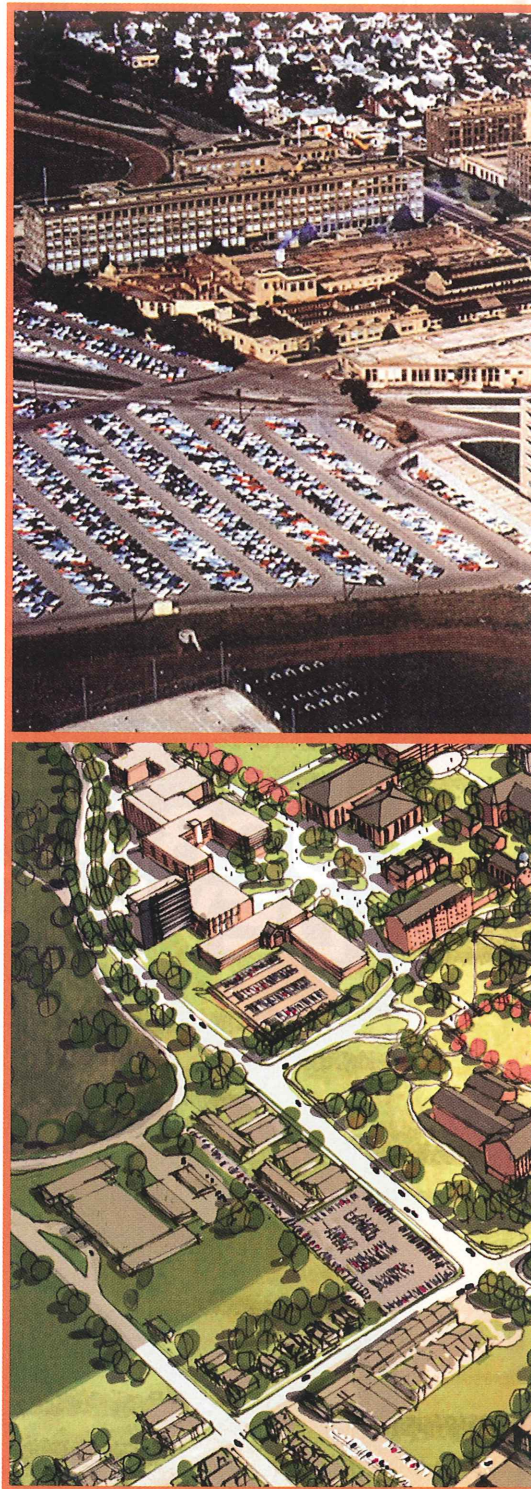
Developed by internationally-renowned planning firm Burt Hill, this is one of the most ambitious projects in the country. This project involves approximately 50 acres of urban brownfield being transformed into a vibrant academic and mixed-use development. The land's cleanup and redevelopment are being driven by what some urban planners might consider an unlikely catalyst—a private, Catholic university.

The land—including 11 choice acres near the waterfront—has largely stood unused since NCR removed its world-renowned factory buildings from the site during the 1970s. Of the two buildings remaining on the property, the University razed one and converted a 477,000-square-foot former multi-story manufacturing facility into a mixture of uses, including new research labs, classrooms and an entire floor housing the Dayton Early College

Academy, a nationally celebrated charter high school.

Nationally, more and more universities are becoming drivers of economic development as they realize their futures are tied to the vitality of their cities. Still, experts say it's unusual for a university to tackle such a complex environmental challenge. The University of Dayton's redevelopment basically mirrors a trend of organizations voluntarily redeveloping sites with historical legacies for productive use.

Since purchasing the property, the University of Dayton has attracted more than \$10 million in Clean Ohio Revitalization Fund and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers funding for environmental cleanup and infrastructure improvements on the entire parcel. In December 2007, the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency approved an Urban Setting Designation for the site, a complex but critical process to encourage redevelopment in urban areas. The designation, the first in Dayton, means the site doesn't have to be cleaned up to drinking water standards because of the availability of ample community drinking water systems. The riverfront portion will be cleaned up and prepared for development by fall.



Lessons Learned

No brownfield redevelopment project is alike, but here are some early lessons from the University of Dayton's efforts to revitalize a former manufacturing site:

- **Leadership and risk-taking go hand in hand**

Major brownfield projects require visionary leadership to be successful. The University of Dayton's willingness to pursue projects outside its traditional "comfort zone" inspired the support of stakeholders at all levels of project involvement.

- **Major institutions can be strong forces in brownfield and community redevelopment**

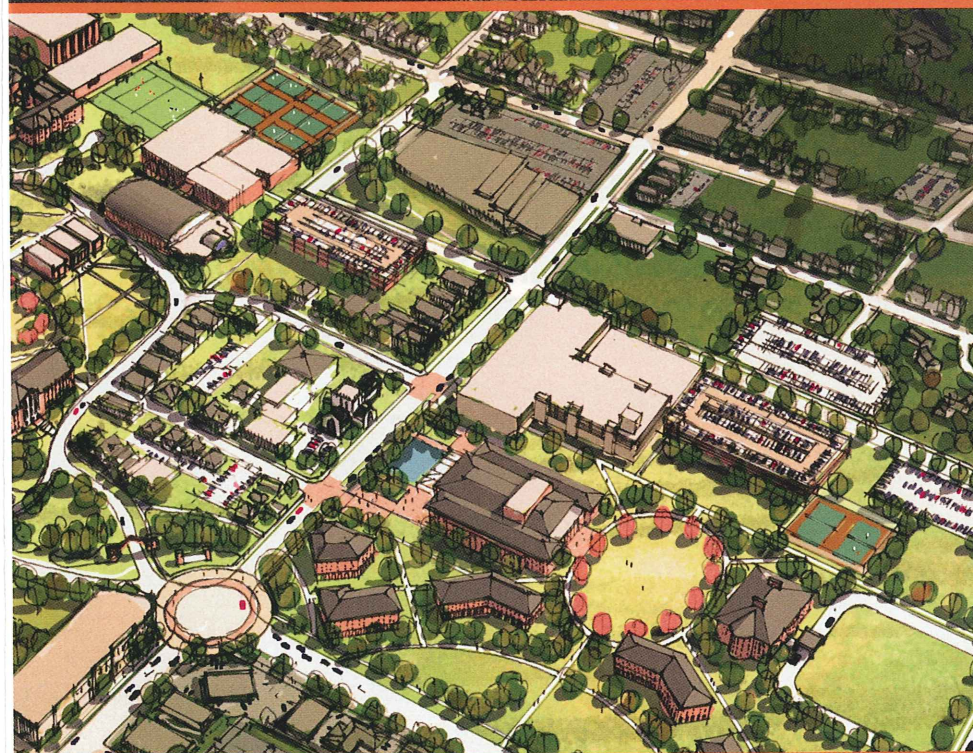
Institutions, like the University of Dayton, are able to undertake catalytic projects that other parties may not be willing to undertake and able to accomplish. The University of Dayton enjoys a number of long-standing, deep-rooted relationships with major community stakeholders. This historic level of trust allowed the University to garner support and momentum for the project at federal, state and local levels. It may have taken years for a private developer to secure this type of support and momentum. This project can serve as a model for other major institutions that undertake transformative brownfield redevelopment projects.

- **Expect the unexpected**

Major brownfield projects undoubtedly will run into unexpected issues and costs. Managing these financial, environmental, development, political and public relations issues by working with an experienced team of outside experts, in close collaboration with a well-defined internal team, is key to a project's success.

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Before and after: (top) An aerial view of the former National Cash Register complex as it appeared in 1950 and (bottom) what the site will look like after it is transformed into a mixed-use development.