
PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION

VICE PRESIDENT AL GORE

As the President has often stated, we are entering an “Age of Possibility”—with vast new opportunities. And Americans are leading the way in meeting the new global challenges. Over the last three years, our economy has created over 9 million new jobs and the nation has experienced the lowest combined rate of unemployment, inflation, and mortgage rates in twenty-seven years.

But as we embark on this exciting new age, we cannot forget the many people and places left behind; people and places that want to join in the progress we are making. The estimated hundreds of thousands of abandoned and contaminated properties that are littered across our poorest communities—known as “brownfields”—present a significant barrier to economic revitalization in our nation’s cities. By encouraging the cleanup and redevelopment of these brownfields, the Clinton Administration is forging new ways to empower distressed communities and create jobs for their residents.

The Administration has embarked on a sweeping Brownfields Economic Redevelopment Initiative. This effort is an integral part of the President’s Community Empowerment Agenda, a series of initiatives across the federal government—from Empowerment Zones to community policing—designed to work together to provide greater opportunity to our distressed urban and rural communities. The Clinton Administration recognizes that the federal government alone cannot solve the problems of distressed communities. But we also recognize that the government can be a catalyst in empowering communities with the tools to solve their own problems and in encouraging the private sector to join in those efforts.

The Brownfields Initiative, led by Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Administrator Carol Browner with the assistance of other agencies, demonstrates the virtues of community empowerment. It is bringing new development, new jobs, and new hope to communities—while engaging citizens and showing that environmental protection and economic development can go hand-in-hand.

The Initiative includes a nationwide pilot program that challenges communities, with the input of residents and a broad range of stakeholders, to devise their own strategies and approaches to redevelopment. The first of sixty brownfields pilots, based in Cleveland, has resulted in \$3.2 million in new private investment, a \$1 million increase in the local tax base, and more than 170 jobs through the

creation of several business on the former industrial property. Other innovative projects—from Buffalo, New York, to Laredo, Texas—are underway.

The federal government is also enacting common-sense reforms to the Superfund program to remove the obstacles to brownfields redevelopment. The USEPA, for example, has removed 27,000 sites from the Superfund inventory, clearing the way for their redevelopment. And to encourage private-sector cleanup, the President has proposed a tax incentive for brownfields redevelopment that would target distressed communities—including federal Empowerment Zones. The plan provides \$2 billion in tax incentives over seven years and is expected to spur \$10 billion in private investment. The Administration also strongly believes we need a responsible new Superfund law to promote the cleanup and redevelopment of brownfields.

Through our community empowerment efforts—including the Brownfields Initiative—the Administration is encouraging new ways of getting things done on the local level—ensuring that everyone and every place has the opportunity to share in the “Age of Possibility.”

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