

1:10 – 2:20 **Breakout 1B: Placemaking and Community Development**

Randall Solomon, Commissioner, Highland Park Redevelopment Agency & Co-Executive Director, Sustainable Jersey

Highland Park is a New Jersey town across the Raritan River from New Brunswick. It's 2 square miles with 14,000 residents, about half of whom are renters. While the town has done a lot in terms of sustainability, there has not been much in the way of redevelopment. Redevelopment in Highland Park has been a challenge, in part, because the parking space to mixed-use building ratio is insufficient.

In order to spark redevelopment in Highland Park the Redevelopment Agency has considered the use of density bonuses for developers who can work singly or jointly with others to combine smaller, neighboring parcels for reuse. Other ideas include curb-cut density bonuses, and the use of third party assessments in furthering the sale of desirable redevelopment properties.

Sustainable Jersey is a non-profit certification program, which has a partnership with the State to help municipalities implement sustainability actions. 75% of New Jersey municipalities are current participants.

William K. Ahlert, Ph.D., Vice President, HDR, Inc.

Bethlehem Steel, which was one of the largest steel companies in the nation, went out of business, leaving behind a large steel plant in Bethlehem, PA. Now the largest privately-owned brownfield site in the nation, work has begun to revitalize the Bethlehem Steel site and greater Bethlehem community, which lost revenue and jobs from the plant's closing.

Revitalization began with the Bethlehem Steel Master Development Plan to attract developers. The goal was to incentivize development by assisting with liability determination and site assessment, while still protecting human health, and working toward a community vision. Many community members wanted the buildings to remain and be repurposed; but retrofitting the manufacturing buildings was cost-prohibitive.

Ultimately, Sands Bethworks purchased the site and built a casino. Casino operations provided the revenue necessary to preserve the most iconic portion of the site: the steel stacks. Now home to the non-profit ArtsQuest, SteelStacks is also the location of the Levitt performing arts Pavilion.

Addressing any liability issues associated with the site was critical because developers are sometimes hesitant to get involved with contaminated sites.

Take-Aways from the Question and Answer Session:

- You can learn more about Sustainable Jersey grant opportunities on their website.
- A Master Plan with a lot of public engagement is important. Another thing that's important is to have the proper zoning and land use allowances in place. Communities need to know what they want, and understand how it lines up with the existing land uses, before a developer comes in.
- "Now is the time to get prepared for redevelopment."