

# Canadian Urban Institute Brownie Awards Update

## Brownfields and sustainable city building: 2005 - 2006



The Canadian Urban Institute Brownie Awards recognize projects that have achieved outstanding success and have pushed the boundaries of brownfield redevelopment. Winners are often at the cutting edge of industry, making use of all tools and opportunities available to them. This often makes winning projects examples for other initiatives trying to get off the ground. The purpose of this report is to revisit recent Brownie Award winners to identify some key factors of success and examine the impact these projects are having on the wider urban fabric.

From 2005 to 2006, 19 projects won Brownie Awards, with geographical representation covering the entire country. From this cross-section of best practices, we see examples of brownfield redevelopment taking a lead role in energizing Canadian cities and communities. Positive trends are emerging. Once abandoned and contaminated lands are being transformed into new community assets - places where neighbours congregate, play and build community unity and pride. Municipal government thinking on brownfields has also evolved. Brownfields are no longer just a source of blight and lost tax revenue, but opportunities to stimulate local economic growth and generate employment. Brownfields are the new chic. Their heritage endowment make them popular centres of culture and they are attracting the mass of emerging creative industries. Brownfields have also become the testing ground for cutting edge environmental design and use of green technologies. High profile projects are attracting the at-

tention of the public and the public is in-turn demanding more sustainable design in new developments.

There are valuable lessons to be learned from past Brownie Award winning projects: The complexities of brownfield redevelopment demand multi-stakeholder involvement. In order to be successful, brownfield projects require the creative capacity of the community, all orders of government and the business sector, which includes developers, construction managers, planners, lawyers, architects, and engineers. Also, projects that demonstrate careful preparation and planning tend to avoid potential losses and delays; well planned projects limit exposure to risk. In reality financial institutions have low risk tolerance and this can lead to challenges in securing funding to get a project off the ground.

In the spirit of continuing the learning process, the following pages provide short updates on the 2005 and 2006 Brownie Award winning projects. These short vignettes illustrate the direction of the industry and the contribution brownfields redevelopment is making towards sustainable city building.

For full details on previous winners dating back to 2001, visit [www.canurb.com](http://www.canurb.com).

### Pavillons Lassonde, École Polytechnique de Montréal Montreal, Quebec



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Montreal, Quebec  
**Best Overall 2006**

The award winning Pavillons Lassonde are the new engineering buildings of École Polytechnique. The buildings were designed to minimize their environmental footprint as well as future maintenance costs, while creating a space conducive to creative, productive and healthy learning. The buildings are LEED Gold-certified, a first for a Canadian University.

In addition to the Brownie Award, the buildings have received over 14 Canadian and regional awards. These awards celebrate all aspects of the project from energy use, to architecture, engineering, and project management. Of great value, the buildings are an inspiration for students, other institutions, local companies, and citizens of the City of Montreal and Province of Quebec, demonstrating a made-in-Quebec model of sustainable design. The project has attracted much media interest and has been a subject of many high school, undergraduate, Masters and PhD student research projects.

### Kilmer Brownfield Equity Fund Canada-wide **Special Brownie Award 2006**

The lack of accessibility to financing for site remediation has been a significant impediment to brownfield redevelopment in Canada. To address this, the Kilmer Brownfield Equity Fund - a \$100 million limited partnership private equity fund - was established to attract institutional investment for brownfield redevelopment in Canada. The Fund is the first fund of its type in Canada.

Historically, institutional investors have avoided brownfields for fear of associated environmental liabilities and other risks. Since winning a special Brownie Award last year, the fund has attracted several institutional investors as lead investors. Winning the endorsement of these institutions sends an important positive signal to the market and other institutional grade investors. This breakthrough bodes well for the future of brownfield redevelopment in terms of bringing it into the mainstream.

**Dockside Green**  
Victoria, British Columbia



**Dockside Green**  
Victoria, British Columbia  
**Best Overall 2005**

Dockside Green is a world class, award winning mixed-use development located on a formerly vacant 11.6 acre stretch of waterfront in Victoria. Dockside Green was designed using a Triple Bottom Line philosophy - balancing ecological, social and economic responsibilities - and is planned to be North America's first LEED Platinum-certified community. Currently, four buildings are under construction with an additional five in the development approvals process.

Since winning dual Brownie Awards, Dockside Green has attracted attention from cities in Canada and the United States. The project has also raised the expectations for new developments in neighbouring communities. Although the City of Victoria has a long history of brownfield redevelopment, recent projects including Dockside Green and awards such as the Brownie have encouraged it to emphasize developments that demonstrate excellence in urban design, environmental sustainability, affordability, and social cohesion. In Victoria all new developments are now reviewed according to Triple Bottom Guidelines and the City has adopted a green building policy for all civic buildings.

**Atlantic PIRI**  
Provinces of Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, and Newfoundland and Labrador

In 1996, a group of regulators, members of the consulting community and the petroleum industry active in Atlantic Provinces organized the Atlantic PIRI, a multi-stakeholder forum to develop harmonized tools and policy to better support the remediation and redevelopment of brownfields in Atlantic Canada.

2006 was a banner year for Atlantic PIRI and 2007 promises to be just as fruitful. In the fall the Province of Nova Scotia aims to introduce contaminated sites regulations and PIRI is looking forward to playing a role in harmonizing this process with the other three provinces. Also, in New Brunswick, PIRI will be piloting workshops at the municipal-level to build local awareness of brownfield opportunities as well as build partnerships between the petroleum industry and municipalities at the local-level.

For the Atlantic PIRI, winning the Brownie Award in 2006 brought welcome national recognition for its efforts. No doubt, the country will continue to monitor the innovations of this important institution connecting people, tools, and place for advancing the redevelopment of brownfields in Atlantic Canada.

**Contaminated Sites Management Program**  
Hamilton, Ontario

Sub-surface contamination is often encountered in municipal works projects and property transactions. To facilitate due diligence, the City of Hamilton developed a Contaminated Sites Management Program (CSMP), which includes step-by-step procedures to assist City staff to incorporate risks of contamination into decision-making processes.

Since winning a Brownie Award for the CSMP, brownfield redevelopment has remained a priority for Council. The City has processed over 21 applications for its ERASE program, which provides financial support and incentives for brownfield remediation and redevelopment. The City has already approved over 14 applications resulting in the remediation of over 80 acres of land. In the coming years, the City of Hamilton will be launching its 'Lands of Opportunities' program as well as undertaking a historical land use study to help prioritize future brownfield redevelopment.

**Thundering Waters Golf Club**  
Niagara Falls, Ontario

The conversion of the 272 acre abandoned railway yard located only 1,500 yards from the falls into an important tourist attraction has helped to build momentum and support action for brownfields redevelopment in the region. The Brownie award, which helped to raise interest in brownfields at the regional level, highlighted the challenges of financing and overcoming the risks of redeveloping contaminated sites. The award also emphasized the opportunity to redevelop abandoned sites as means to stimulating local economic development.

The golf is recognized as one of the top golf courses in the Niagara Region and proposals to add further uses to the site, including condominium development, are proceeding.

**Thundering Waters Golf Club**  
Niagara Falls, Ontario



**St Thomas Community Centre**  
St. Thomas, Ontario

In 2005, the City of St Thomas opened its new St Thomas Community Centre with much excitement. The City chose to site the Community Centre in an abandoned railway corridor as part of its ongoing effort to reinvigorate its downtown commercial core.

At the ribbon cutting ceremony, Mayor Kohler predicted commercial growth around the Centre. Already the City is engaged in a process supporting the sale of adjacent lands. The recognition the Centre received was "icing on the cake" for the hours of work council and staff invested in the project. But moreover, the success of the redevelopment has infused the City, community groups and local developers with knowledge and confidence to take bold steps in revitalizing lost lands in the City. According to the City Clerk, no longer in St Thomas are brownfields "quite the scary monster."

**St Thomas Community Centre**  
St. Thomas, Ontario



**Evergreen at the Brickworks**  
Toronto, Ontario

Don Valley Brick Works was one of Canada's pre-eminent brickyards from 1889 to 1989. Following Toronto's Great Fire in 1905, much of the City was rebuilt from the Brick Works, including many of Toronto's landmark buildings. Today, Evergreen is leading the transformation of the site into a mixed use centre exploring the relationship between Nature, Culture and Community.

The plan is to remediate, restore and animate the site with year-round activities. Evergreen has already increased animal habitat on the site, begun restoration of heritage buildings, launched a series of programs for kids and adults, as well as hosted several large outdoor community festivals. A weekly farmers market is attracting visitors from across the region.

**Selkirk Waterfront Community**  
Victoria, British Columbia

The Selkirk Waterfront project is a 24 acre New Urbanism brownfield redevelopment of an old Victoria sawmill and plywood plant. Nearing final stages of build out, the site emphasizes the interconnection of work-place, home, recreation and natural amenities. A network of public open spaces extends throughout the site. Also, a conscious effort was made to use materials originating from or near the site. Public spaces incorporate uncovered concrete structures and found steel objects in sculptural collage.

Since winning a Brownie Award, the project has continued to influence planning and development in Victoria. The project was the first to be covered by a comprehensive development zoning by-law and urban design guidelines. Also, the project was the first to "take the pedestrian environment seriously". The redevelopment's Transportation Demand Strategy, a legacy of the project, successfully convinced City Engineering that proposed reduced street widths, traffic circles, and reduced parking - all New Urbanism features - can still meet its priorities.

**Wabash Community Centre**  
Toronto, Ontario



**Wabash Community Centre**  
Toronto, Ontario

The neighbourhood of Parkdale-High Park will soon have the community centre it has long sought for. Led by the Wabash Building Society, a non-profit, community-based corporation, its volunteers in partnership with the City of Toronto are redeveloping a central brownfield site into a new community hub.

Construction begins next month and the neighbourhood is stirring with possibilities. The once contaminated and derelict site, and its heritage buildings will be transformed into a community centre and field house, serving the neighbourhood's central park, itself a former brownfield. The community centre is envisioned as the new "social centre for recreation, leisure, and the arts" in the neighbourhood.

Winning the Brownie Award has been a tremendous boost to the project's visibility in the community and among potential partners. Already, in addition to the significant funds raised among local citizens, the project has received a \$10,000 grant from the Wal-mart/ Evergreen Green Grant program for landscaping.

**Selkirk Waterfront Community**  
Victoria, British Columbia



**King Liberty**  
Toronto, Ontario  
**Best Medium Scale Project 2005**

The King Liberty redevelopment is a 45 acre private land assembly of industrial manufacturing plants, railway transportation yards and railway lines. To convince financial institutions to finance the purchase and the remediation of the site, the developer sought performance bonds and used vendor take-back mortgages. Remediation was phased across the property providing opportunities to recycle materials on-site.

Since winning a Brownie Award, the project continues to build out, receiving national attention for its industrial character, prime location, and mass of creative industries it has attracted. The site truly has a village feel. A network of greenways connect the different parts of the redevelopment together. Eventually the village will be home to 3,500 residents. Already, King Liberty boasts some of Toronto's trendiest eateries and cafes.

**Chatham-Kent Brownfield / Bluefield Community Improvement Plan**  
Chatham-Kent, Ontario

In 2005, the Municipality of Chatham-Kent introduced its Brownfield and Bluefield Community Improvement Plan. As Chatham-Kent is an amalgamation of both former urban and rural municipalities, it produced a comprehensive plan that covers not only typical urban brownfields but also brownfields that are a legacy of agriculture and agri-businesses. A unique twist tailored to the needs of the municipality, the plan also provides incentives to redevelop bluefield sites -institutional or community facilities that are no longer in use.

Since winning a Brownie Award, Chatham-Kent has been sharing the experience of its Brownfield and Bluefield Community Improvement Plan with other rural-urban municipalities around Ontario. Thus far the plan has attracted significant interest from the development community. Already the municipality is supporting efforts to convert several vacant institutional buildings for new uses.

**Three Sisters Mountain Village**  
Canmore, Alberta

Three Sisters Mountain Village is a 2000 acre redevelopment on an abandoned coal mine. Located at the gateway to Banff and Lake Louise, the site is surrounded by a regionally rare ecosystem. The planning process sought to balance ecological and social objectives while overcoming the undermining legacy. The project used risk-modelling and creative technologies to stabilize the site.

Since winning the Brownie Award, the project has been recognized for green design. The site includes wildlife corridors to facilitate the safe passage of elk, deer, black and grizzly bears. The project also uses mainly rainwater run-off for irrigation. Even features from the old mine were integrated into the urban design of the project.

**Halifax Seawall Redevelopment Master Plan**  
Halifax, Nova Scotia  
**Best Large Scale Project 2006**

Halifax has one of the largest natural harbours in the world. As part of the Halifax Port Authority's vision to grow and diversify operations, the Seaport, located at the south end of the waterfront is to be transformed into a new mixed-use development. The area is to be the centre of the city's cultural life and economy as well as gateway into historic Halifax Harbour.

Serving tourist and cruise passengers, the site will include a Visitor's District, to accommodate increased cruise ship traffic, and a Cultural District, home to the new NSCAD University campus, as well as a mix of offices, artist studios, galleries and retail spaces. The design proposes plenty of open spaces, clusters of restaurants and public access to waterfront.

**Halifax Seawall Redevelopment Master Plan**  
Halifax, Nova Scotia



**Canpar Distribution and Logistics Facility** (Toronto Economic Development Corporation)  
Toronto, Ontario

The new Canpar Distribution and Logistics facility located in southwest Toronto exemplifies the quality work the Toronto Economic Development Corporation (TEDCO) is undertaking revitalizing former industrial sites across the City of Toronto. A 40 acre brownfield site, the lands of the Canpar project were home to metal manufacturing since the early 1900s until operations ceased in the late 1980s. TEDCO purchased and redeveloped the site as a package distribution centre serving key economic needs of the surrounding area. The facility was the first building owned by the City of Toronto to receive LEED certification. Remediation of the site adjacent to Canpar is almost complete and another project that creates employment land from brownfield properties is in development.

TEDCO was honoured to receive recognition from the industry noting that awards such as the CUI Brownie Award help to validate their efforts of growing business, jobs and employment in Toronto in a sustainable and environmentally responsible manner.

**Canpar Distribution and Logistics Facility** (Toronto Economic Development Corporation)  
Toronto, Ontario



**Block D Redevelopment**  
Kingston, Ontario  
**Best Medium Scale Project 2006**

Block D is a 7.14 acre site of waterfront property believed to have been built with fill imported from within the City of Kingston. The property, which was exposed to heavy industrial use until 1969, remained derelict and abandoned for decades. Block D was the first site to be redeveloped under the City of Kingston's Community Improvement Plan, which offers financial incentives to encourage the redevelopment of brownfields.

The remediation and redevelopment of Block D opened an important piece of waterfront to the citizens of Kingston. The development, which is proceeding in four different stages, has advanced steadily, bringing with it people and life.

For the City, the Brownie Award acknowledged its capacity and efforts as a partner in brownfield redevelopment. The improvements to the City's public realm as well as an improved tax base highlight the redevelopment's success. Nonetheless, reflecting on the project, the success of the project was a result of having the right financial incentives, a developer with experience with brownfields, and the right team leading the remediation process.

**Block D Redevelopment**  
Kingston, Ontario



**Christie Ossington Neighbourhood Centre**  
Toronto, Ontario



**Christie Ossington Neighbourhood Centre**  
Toronto, Ontario  
**Best Small Scale Project 2006**

The Christie Ossington Neighbourhood Centre (CONC) is a homeless shelter and transitional housing complex for Toronto men in need. The site of the CONC was once an abandoned and contaminated turn-of-the-century salt storage and horse stall warehouse. With funding from a federal homelessness granting program, the site was transformed into a 65 bed housing complex. The project continues to be celebrated for its creative integration of heritage features.

Since winning a Brownie Award, the CONC continues to operate at capacity, helping men in need transition back into society. The centre's architecture remains a key feature of interest for visitors and users. In particular, the respect shown towards the heritage of the site grounds the centre in the neighbourhood, giving it the symbolic strength as a "force of revitalization" for the wider community.

**Millcreek by the Grand**  
Cambridge, Ontario

Millcreek by the Grand is a 73-unit residential townhouse redevelopment on a former railway property in the Galt City Centre Core Area. The project was recognized for its creative financing and on-site risk management approach. Contaminated soils on the site that exceeded Provincial residential/parkland standards but met industrial/commercial standards were used as fill material for a neighbouring road. To reduce financial risk, the site was purchased using a take-back mortgage with the vendor agreeing to be financially responsible for any clean up, soil contamination, or other issues with the land.

The project applied to the City of Cambridge Contaminated Site Grant Program to reduce clean-up costs.

**Kaufman Lofts**  
Kitchener, Ontario  
**Best Small Scale Project 2005**

The Kaufman Footwear factory was designed by one of the great architects of the 20th century, American architect Albert Kahn. Built to last, the building was opened in 1908. As part of its Adaptive Re-Use Program, City Council cleverly pre-approved alterations to the building sympathetic to the original design, ensuring a bright future for the building.

The building is now the cornerstone of the Warehouse District, leading the renewal of downtown Kitchener. The success of the project is also providing a boost to the City's EDGE program. For the City, receiving the Brownie Award was a great honour, demonstrating that even small towns can compete on a national stage.

In 2003, the Kaufman Lofts were the venue for the Canadian Brownfields Conference.

**Kaufman Lofts**  
Kitchener, Ontario

