

Conference highlights land reuse

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Issue date: 4/24/09 **Section:** [News](#)

The Drexel University Engineering Cities Initiative discussed the future landscape of Philadelphia April 23 and April 24 during a two-day conference, "Greening the Post-Industrial City: Innovative Reuse of Philadelphia's Idle Lands."

The conference brought together faculty and lawmakers to discuss sustainability as well as ideas to reuse idle properties.



Media Credit: Francesca Martelli

"It's estimated that there are about 30,000 to 60,000 citywide sites that are considered idle," Josephine Faas, Engineering Cities research coordinator, said. "We want to see how we can redevelop those lands to be economically and environmentally sustainable."

Jennifer Britton, program manager for Engineering Cities, said the conference allows Drexel to enter the conversation about the "nuts-and-bolts planning" for the future Philadelphia.

"The faculty involved in Drexel Engineering Cities Initiative have a number of interesting, practical ideas to offer about some of the directions the City can take and an impressive array of creative and technical expertise that can help guide implementation," Britton said. "Hosting the conference gives us a chance to introduce ourselves to the other stakeholders in this area and to solidify our own ideas and vision for the City."

The first day consists of four back-to-back panels on redevelopment, acquisition and remediation of the properties. Mark Alan Hughes, the director of sustainability for Philadelphia will speak after the panels.

The second day focuses on reuse strategies of the lands, with two panels running at a time. Faas said the panels will discuss what can be done with lands already acquired. Drexel faculty will moderate each panel.

"I'm excited because we've got great people coming to speak," Faas said. "Sustainability is an issue that really needs a voice."

Drexel Green worked with and supported Engineering Cities in the conference. Carl "Tobey" Oxholm, the dean and chief executive officer of the Sacramento Center for Graduate Studies, said the organization's goal is to support the staff and students by publicizing the conference on and off campus.

"Engineering Cities is the perfect expression of how a university can apply its best resources to the biggest challenges facing our society and our planet," Oxholm said.

Engineering Cities held a conference on emergency preparedness against natural disasters in October 2008 at Drexel. Britton said the conference targeted vulnerable populations, such as the elderly and children in the Delaware Valley region.

"We brought together a range of stakeholders from social services, medical services, public safety, public health and city and municipal planning as well as academics working on topics related to disaster and risk," Britton said.