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Healing Earth, Helping Neighbors: Using Brownfield Remediation Projects to Advance Environmental Justice

The transformation of a former airport into one of the nation's largest mixed-use urban communities in Denver, Colorado is a powerful example of how Brownfield remediation projects can effectively advance environmental justice. The economic, social and environmental revitalization of Denver's Stapleton Airport presents us with the opportunity to study how foresight and community involvement has already served many populations and resulted in a boon for the City and County of Denver, business owners in the region, and perhaps most importantly, the communities surrounding the former airport.

In the mountains of Colorado, the Battle Mountain Redevelopment Project at the Eagle Mountain Superfund Site demonstrates how environmental justice is vital and can be achieved in rural areas. Continued progress towards environmental justice will require creative government and business solutions to revitalize smaller, scattered Brownfield sites throughout Colorado.

I. Brownfields and Environmental Justice Overview

- A. Definition and Overview of Colorado Brownfields Rules, Regulations and Policies
- B. Brownfield Implications with Environmental Justice
- C. Tying Environmental Justice and Brownfields Programs to Business Interests
 - 1. *Importance*
 - a. Funding
 - b. Timing
 - c. Expense
 - 2. *Challenges*
 - a. Gentrification & Displacement (redevelopment, not revitalization)
 - b. Potential for Remaining Contamination

II. Stapleton – Urban Brownfield Success Story

- A. History and By-the-Numbers
- B. Start-to-Finish Community Input
- C. Affordable Housing Programs
- D. Focus on Including Minority – Owned Business
- E. Job Training Programs

F. Other Efforts at Stapleton that Advance Environmental Justice

1. *Bilingual Support*
2. *Education – Denver School of Science and Technology*

G. Stapleton’s Legacy – Everyone Wins

1. *Environmental Achievements*
2. *Social achievements (Environmental Justice Successes)*
3. *Economic Output (City/County and Business Successes)*
4. *Lessons*
 - i. Early Community Involvement Invests Neighbors with a Stake in the Project
 - ii. Need for Publicity
 - iii. Preventing Displacement
 - iv. Revitalization is Possible

III. Battle Mountain Redevelopment Project – Rural CERCLA Site

A. Conditions Around Eagle Mine Superfund Site Before Project

B. Battle Mountain Redevelopment Plan

C. Examples of Environmental Justice

- Dirty, Boom-bust Industry Replaced With Clean, Steady Industry
- Community Involvement From Project Beginning
- Golf Course – Functional way to Cap Contaminated Soil, EPA-Endorsed, Supports Business Goals of Developer

IV. Challenges for the Future – Smaller, Separate Brownfield Sites

Scattered Sites have less Economic Appeal for Business Community

Potential Solutions:

- A. Government Incentives
- B. Area-wide Planning
- C. Environmental Insurance
- D. Progressive Financing