



# Sustainable Options for a Former Lumber Company Town

## Sustainability Pilot Background

EPA's Brownfields Sustainability Pilots provide technical assistance to assist communities in achieving greener, more sustainable results when redeveloping brownfields. These pilots also provide models for other communities across the country.

EPA provided technical assistance to Humboldt County, California for sustainable redevelopment of a former lumber mill and the surrounding community. The project included evaluating sustainable options for the town's Master Plan and assistance in analyzing two different green rating systems. EPA also supported the development of green guidelines for remodeling historic Victorian homes unique to Northern California.



## Samoa Peninsula Project Background

The Samoa Peninsula is located in northern California and is a 9.5 mile long, one mile wide land barrier between Humboldt Bay and the Pacific Ocean. The Town of Samoa, a former lumber company town, is located on the Samoa Peninsula. In 2004, Humboldt County received an EPA Assessment grant to conduct Phase I and II environmental site assessments (ESAs) on parcels in the town. A Phase II ESA found high levels of lead and other chemicals from past mill operations. The Samoa Pacific Group LLC, the developer that purchased the town including 99 existing historic residences in 2001, plans to apply to Humboldt County's Brownfields Revolving Loan Fund for funding to clean up soil surrounding the homes. Once cleanup is complete, current tenants of the properties will have the opportunity to purchase the homes. The developer and Humboldt County sought EPA technical assistance to evaluate the town's Master Plan for sustainable options and to assist homeowners with identifying sustainable upgrades for the historic homes.

## Project Highlights

EPA's technical assistance included the development of two reports. The first report, *Recommendations for Sustainable Site Analysis*, is an evaluation of the town's Master Plan overlaid with two green rating systems. The second report, *Sustainable Solutions for Historic Houses in Northern California*, is a voluntary green code and green rehabilitation manual for historic homes.

The first report evaluated the town's current Master Plan against the criteria for two green rating systems, Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design for Neighborhood Development (LEED-ND) and Land and Natural Development (LAND) Code. Under LEED-ND, the Master Plan scored well for brownfields redevelopment, restoration of wetlands and habitats, walkable streets, access to public spaces, and stormwater management, among other criteria. The Master Plan scores even better under the LAND Code rating system for an integrated development that avoids any impacts to a delicate ecosystem (dunes) and includes compact lots, low impact parking and plantings, and access to public transit.

To complement the Master Plan analysis, EPA provided technical assistance to create guidelines for homeowners on how to renovate and rehabilitate Victorian style, wood framed homes. The *Sustainable Solutions for Historic Homes in Northern California* guide focuses on the historic Victorian homes in the Town of Samoa built in the early 1900s. The information also applies to many wood framed houses built throughout the region during the same time period.

The guide recommends smart, sustainable choices for rehabilitating an historic home in the following areas:

- Treatment Standards
- Structural Details
- Preserving Exterior Details
- Insulating for Improved Energy Performance
- Upgrading Heating and Ventilation
- Plumbing Improvements
- Electrical and Lighting Systems
- Sustainable Materials for Interior Finish
- Landscaping

## ***Challenges and Lessons Learned***

### **Addressing a Unique Climate**

The Town of Samoa is located on a peninsula about one mile wide, flanked by Humboldt Bay and the Pacific Ocean. Residents deal with wind, fog and a generally cool climate that make it difficult to maintain a consistent temperature within homes. EPA support included an evaluation of the most efficient energy upgrades to the houses, taking into account the climate and structure sensitivity of historic homes.

### **Local Expertise Important to Project Success**

Local expertise was invaluable. The developer and county assembled local contractors, historians, woodworkers and others who preserved Samoa houses to consult on the project. The green rehabilitation manual included information from local contractors, who helped fill the gap on local building materials and climate considerations. Local staff participated with support from an EPA Assessment grant for the area.



*Street view of historic Victorian homes in Samoa, California.*

The project is awaiting approval of the Master Plan by the California Coastal Commission and site cleanup. Humboldt County and EPA sent copies of the reports to the Coastal Commission and will be distributing copies of the green rehabilitation manual to the general public, including the renters of the historic homes.

### ***Sources for Additional Information***

For more information on this project, please see the full Samoa Peninsula technical assistance reports at: [http://www.epa.gov/brownfields/sustain\\_plts/factsheets/samoa.pdf](http://www.epa.gov/brownfields/sustain_plts/factsheets/samoa.pdf) and [http://www.epa.gov/brownfields/sustain\\_plts/reports/green\\_home\\_guide\\_final.pdf](http://www.epa.gov/brownfields/sustain_plts/reports/green_home_guide_final.pdf)

### ***Regional Contact Information***

For more information on the Samoa Peninsula project, please contact:

**Diane Strassmaier**

**EPA Region 9**

415-972-3247

[strassmaier.diane@epa.gov](mailto:strassmaier.diane@epa.gov)