

# brownfields

Success Story

## GREEN JOBS RESULTING IN SUSTAINABLE CAREERS

Richmond, CA

**The Richmond Brownfields Job Training Partnership (RBJTP) program offers disadvantaged and unemployed city residents the job training and support network they need to develop environmental careers.**

### HIGHLIGHTS

Local private firms have committed to hiring program graduates.

The 250-hour program provides graduates with six certification modules tailored to the local and regional job markets.

The City of Richmond's Employment and Training Department (ETD) has leveraged millions of dollars from local private sector employers for its training programs.



Asbestos class creates decontamination area using PVC pipe, plastic sheeting, and duct tape

In 2009, the City of Richmond, California was awarded a \$500,000 EPA Brownfields Job Training Grant to support the operation of the Richmond Brownfields Job Training Partnership (RBJTP or Partnership) program. EPA's Brownfields Program awards job training grants to training programs that teach unemployed and underemployed individuals how to evaluate and clean up former industrial and commercial sites.

### Community History

The City of Richmond is a diverse community with a rich history. The city has served as an industrial and commercial hub since the beginning of the 20th century. Its growth has been linked to its geographic placement, as it is accessible by both land and sea. In the past century, the city has experienced a population boom, a severe decline, and an eventual resurgence.

Richmond first began to industrialize in 1899 when the Santa Fe Railroad made Point Richmond its western terminus, followed two years later by Standard Oil Company building a refinery. By 1905, the year Richmond became incorporated as a city, the area had been established as an industrial town. The outbreak of World War II greatly increased the pace of industrialization in Richmond, as it became home to the biggest wartime shipbuilding operations on the West Coast. The city became a boomtown almost overnight, with its population quadrupling from 1940 to 1943. People streamed in from across the country to become part of the workforce, living in temporary housing units.

After the war, Richmond experienced a rapid decline in both industrial production and population. By 1960 the population had decreased by 30 percent and deindustrialization had taken root. To address waning industrial production, the city initiated many redevelopment projects, taking advantage of its vacated shipyards to encourage the growth of new industrial and commercial opportunities. These projects created strong growth in warehousing, distribution, and chemical and research facilities. Since the 1960s the city's population has recovered; however, the legacy of Richmond's industrial production has left an indelible mark on the community. California's Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC) has identified more than 25 sites, covering over 14 million square feet, as brownfields.

While Richmond's residents are diverse, with minority groups making up over 75 percent of the city's population, the city suffers from serious social and economic problems and is considered a disadvantaged community. The recent severe economic downturn has hit Richmond especially hard, adversely affecting unemployment in a community that already suffers high poverty and high school dropout rates.

### **Richmond Brownfields Job Training Partnership**

Richmond used its EPA Brownfields Job Training Grant to create the RBTJP, a program designed to educate, train, and place participants in the environmental cleanup and green industries workforce. The Partnership is administered through the Richmond BUILD program, which is part of the city's Employment and Training Department (ETD). Richmond BUILD is the city's green job training program and the city has used its experience and expertise to jumpstart the Partnership.

The RBTJP is a three-year program comprised of four 10-week training cycles. The majority of the training will take place during years one and two, with follow-up services, refresher training and program evaluation in year three. Each 10-week cycle will include nine components totaling 250 hours of training. The Partnership will train about 130 participants and has an anticipated job placement rate of 80 percent. It will benefit from its collaboration with the Richmond BUILD program, which has a waitlist of over 350 people that can be tapped for qualified participants.

The training program includes six certification modules including: Hazardous Waste Operations and Emergency Response Standard (HAZWOPER) certification; lead, asbestos and mold abatement certifications; Bay Area Technical Training (BATT) certification; and Richmond BUILD certification. BATT certification is provided by the Bay Area Training Trust and teaches trainees about the hazards and safeguards related to work in refineries, chemical plants, and other industrial facilities. Richmond BUILD certification trains the participants in construction skills and educates them on the current California Green Building Standards Code, which includes areas such as energy efficiency, HVAC design, construction waste reduction, and environmental quality. Participants are also given hands-on training in both solar electric and solar thermal installation.

Participants in the Partnership must be residents of the City of Richmond, considered low income, classified as unemployed or underemployed, and express genuine interest in pursuing a career in the environmental or green jobs industry. Applicants to the program are assessed to determine their math and literacy levels, as well as their pre-construction skills aptitudes. Once accepted, participants complete an Individual Education and Employment Plan (IEEP) that sets personal goals to be achieved during and after training.

### **Leveraged Support**

The Richmond BUILD program has been a model of effective and broad public-private partnerships since its creation in 2007. It has won several awards including the 2008 FBI's Director's Community Leadership Award. Its success has allowed the city to leverage significant resources for the Partnership.

Richmond BUILD is comprised of three facilities totaling over 35,000 square feet and includes classrooms, a computer lab, and open space for hands-on

construction training. Program funding has also been leveraged from key partners, including: Richmond Housing Department, Neighborhood Stabilization Program, and the Energy Efficiency Block Grant. Other key partners will provide non-environmental programming to RBJTP training participants—including Opportunity West, a community-based organization in Central Richmond; West Contra Costa Adult Education; and Contra Costa Community College.

**Five graduates of the RBJTP program were hired to assist in the Gulf of Mexico cleanup in the wake of the Deepwater Horizon oil spill.**

The Richmond Housing Authority (RHA), as well as a number of private environmental firms, has expressed strong interest in hiring graduates of the RBJTP program. Backing this interest is a First Sources Hiring Agreement that contractors working for the RHA's Lead Abatement program, as well as several other cleanup and redevelopment programs, must hire city residents. The Lead Abatement program alone will need approximately 200 workers, many of whom are likely to be RBJTP program graduates.

The RBJTP program will also benefit from leveraged private sector support, both in terms of hiring commitments and funding. The ETD received a six-year, \$2.4 million commitment from the city's major petroleum firm for its training programs. The financial commitments of this firm and several other private sector employers increase the incentive for these companies to hire RBJTP program graduates.

## **Program Graduates' Success to Date**

As of October 2010, 3 classes have completed the RBJTP training program, with 22 out of the 34 program graduates already finding work. The average hourly wage for those who graduated and found employment is \$16.25. The employment of five program graduates is particularly interesting. These graduates were hired by a private firm to assist in the cleanup of the BP Gulf Oil Spill. They are provided free room and board, meals, transportation between Louisiana and Richmond, CA every four weeks, a per diem and \$17 per hour plus overtime and double-time. They work aboard a ship in the Gulf utilizing the training they received from the RBJTP program while gaining valuable work experience. The job training program in Richmond, CA continues to prepare its graduates for participation in the environmental workforce.