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American Clean Skies Foundation Releases Study: “Repurposing Legacy Power Plants”

Research Highlights Environmental and Economic Opportunities from Transforming Aging Coal-fired Power Plants in Urban Areas

Opportunities Exist at over 20 Riverfront Coal Plants Likely to Close In Urban Areas

Washington, D.C., August 10, 2011 – The American Clean Skies Foundation (ACSF), a Washington D.C. nonprofit, released a comprehensive study on the nationwide real estate development opportunities that exist in urban areas with the retirement of aging coal-fired power plants. The ACSF study, entitled **“Repurposing Legacy Power Plants: Lessons for the Future,”** highlights eight different case studies of power plant repurposing projects and identifies more than 20 different coal-fired power plants across the United States that are likely opportunities for redevelopment.

“Economic and environmental factors will accelerate the retirement of aging U.S. coal-fired power plants,” said Gregory Staple, chief executive officer of ACSF. “Our report uses case studies to provide a critical road map for communities that will help them repurpose these plant sites and capitalize on the opportunities to create healthier environments, foster new business activity and job development.”

The ACSF report was primarily written by Matthew Slavin, Ph.D. and Tatyana Brown of the Sustainingrüp, a consulting firm specializing in sustainable development. Dr. Slavin is the author of *Sustainability in America’s Cities* (Island Press, 2011).

Case Studies

A number of cases stand out as useful examples for site redevelopment. These include an impressive large-scale project at the Seaholm Power Plant in Austin, Texas, and the grand vision for redeveloping Station B in Sacramento, California.

Also instructive is the powerful fusion of mission and design that was achieved at the Homan Square Power House in Chicago.

The redeveloped Pennsylvania Railroad Powerhouse in Queens, New York, and the Station L Power Plant in Portland, Oregon, are also noteworthy as is the pragmatic approach taken in reconstructing the Chester Power Station near Philadelphia. However, experience with the South Street Power Station in Providence, Rhode Island, provides a cautionary tale.

Key lessons learned and shared in the study include:

- **Costs, Timeframes and Financing:** Costs for the redevelopment of aging power plants can range from \$40 million-80 million for mid-size developments to as much as \$150 million – 180 million for larger plants. The costs include decommissioning and demolition costs of between \$30 million - \$50 million for 500 MW facilities. Developers must consider the significant upfront costs and the time for completion. There are significant public financing options including the EPA Revolving Loan Fund; EDA’s economic development funds; HUD Block grants as well as tax incentives such as the low income housing tax credit, energy efficiency incentives and new markets tax credits.
- **Community Involvement and Implications:** It is important to engage community leaders in the planning and development of the site. In cases where efforts to reuse the power plant site have been led by private developers or utilities, developers have collaborated with municipal agencies, the city and the general public to meet community needs. For instance, developers of the Cannon Street Station have considered community needs in moving away from the concept of an “island” casino and theater. The revised plan will encourage the use of Bedford’s existing performance sites, restaurants and shops.
- **Design and Reuse:** Old coal plant sites present tremendous redevelopment opportunities. Their scale is impressive and can help revitalize whole neighborhoods and regions. Many sites provide a unique environment and amenities, including waterfront access. That proximity was leveraged by architects working on repurposing the old Ottawa Street Station in Lansing, Michigan. The plan for this site extends the city’s river trail system and adds an extensive riverside patio.

- Developers of many old power plant sites have also embraced clean energy and green building practices. In nearly all U.S. projects, the benchmark for building certification is the Green Building Council's LEED designation (LEED stands for Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design). LEED buildings exemplify sustainable site development and materials selection; they also maximize energy efficiency, water savings and improved indoor environmental quality.

In conclusion, Mr. Staple said, "The retirement and redevelopment of aging coal-fired power plants has a common focus on reviving the economies in America's cities. Repurposing these sites has the ability to dramatically transform communities for the people that live, work and visit them. Often the effect is to change a polluting coal-fired plant into a powerhouse for social, economic and environmental revitalization. These places are unique for their ability to foster an appreciation of history, an understanding of the present and a vision for the future."

ACSF Plan For Potomac River Power Plant in Alexandria, VA

In connection with the national site repurposing report, ACSF has also released a landmark \$450 million plan to redevelop the site of the coal-fired Potomac River Generating Station in Alexandria, Virginia, which dates from the 1940s. The 70-page plan envisions a mixed-use development with more than 200,000 feet of commercial and retail space; over 590 new riverfront homes; a museum and a clean energy business incubator.

Public Availability of Report

Printed copies of the ACSF reports are available from the Foundation and on-line at www.potomacrivergreen.org.

About the American Clean Skies Foundation

ACSF was founded in 2007 to advance America's energy independence and a cleaner, low-carbon environment through expanded use of natural gas, renewables and efficiency.

The Foundation is a not-for-profit organization exempt from federal income taxes under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code.

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