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INNOVATION QUADRANT
PORTLAND, OREGON, USA

The Portland Innovation Quadrant (IQ) is an institution, commercial, and industrial district in Portland’s central city that joins the city’s South Waterfront and Central Eastside neighborhoods. The IQ is anchored by four educational institutions: Oregon Health and Sciences University (OHSU), the Oregon Museum of Science and Industry (OMSI), Portland State University (PSU), and Portland Community College (PCC). These four anchor institutions are working in partnership with key public and private sector actors to propel regional economic development by cultivating people, research, community, companies, and ideas; capitalize on the collective resources of the IQ to actively promote a vibrant and recognized center of innovation, and pursue collaborative ventures, such as joint programming, resource sharing, and co-location that increases the capacity and impact of each partner organization.

OPERATION BETTER BLOCK
PITTSBURGH, PENNSYLVANIA, USA

Homewood Children’s Village (HCV) and Operation Better Block (OBB), in collaboration with the Mayor’s Office and local foundations, are advancing a place-based social and economic revitalization in Homewood, a primarily residential neighborhood of one square mile in the East End of Pittsburgh. Its population of 6,500 is 95% African American and has a median household income of less than $30,000. There are over 600 vacant properties and 1,000 vacant lots in the neighborhood. The neighborhood has a commercial corridor at its core with small businesses and organizations like a local library, YMCA, YWCA, and Bible Center Church. The initiative will promote engagement, equity, and inclusion as integral principles in the development of the area while creating a healthy environment, green collar jobs, local food production, and stronger schools. The Ecodistrict will weave together an ecosystem that supports residents and community organizations, empowering them to lead efforts to build new housing, neighborhood amenities, and infrastructure.
HOMEWOOD CHILDREN’S VILLAGE
PITTSBURGH, PENNSYLVANIA, USA

In addition to Homewood’s overarching Ecodistrict initiative, the Homewood Children’s Village is also focusing efforts on education issues in the East End Ecodistrict. To build economic prosperity in the ecodistrict, HCV aims to prepare students for post-secondary opportunities in local green collar and STEM jobs through in-school academic and social support, after school programming for children from grade school through high school, and adult education. Fostering an understanding of environmental concepts, job opportunities, and advocacy strategies in this manner will help stabilize families, create intergenerational conversations, and ultimately prepare more Homewood residents for the environmental and economic risks and potential on the horizon.

MUPINE DEVELOPMENT
CAPE TOWN, SOUTH AFRICA

South Africa currently has an enormous dearth of affordable housing — nearly 400,000 families are inadequately housed. Mupine is a planned affordable housing development in Cape Town that aims to develop holistic, mixe-use affordable housing where residents can live, work and play. Mupine is a site that is currently used as a golf course, owned by Old Mutual Investment Group. However, in light of current water shortages in South Africa and the lack of suitable and affordable housing sites close to the city, the site is being repurposed as a mixed-use affordable housing development that integrates public transportation and social, economic, and environmental sustainability principles. The redeveloped site will include reduced reliance on private vehicular transport by limiting the amount of on-site parking, and will reduce energy use through alternative technologies and resource efficient methods of construction. It will also include 700 affordable housing units, community and recreation facilities, green open space, and small-scale retail and business units.
METRO CENTRE PRECINCT
JOHANNESBURG, SOUTH AFRICA

The City of Johannesburg’s 40-year-old Metro Centre houses the City’s council chamber, with other City departments scattered in buildings throughout the surrounding community. The Centre is being redesigned as a complete precinct that aims to stitch together the urban environment, creating new pedestrian links between the neighboring Hillbrow and Braamfontein communities, improving the quality of public open and green spaces, and increasing transit-oriented design and public transport. The precinct’s transit improvements will include new cycle lanes, limited private vehicle parking, and paid on-street parking. The Centre will also include a larger council chamber, shops and restaurants, residential apartments, a hotel, a gym, childcare, an open-air amphitheater, food gardens, and government departments such as Home Affairs and the South African Social Security Agency. The precinct will link various education institutions including Wits and the University of Johannesburg. Finally, the precinct will offer affordable housing to residents.

BRAAMFONTEIN WEST
JOHANNESBURG, SOUTH AFRICA

Braamfontein West is a vibrant mix of small businesses, student and residential housing, commercial office buildings, educational institutions, and the Tshimologong Precinct, the tech hub of the Wits University, which houses the Johannesburg Centre for Software Engineering, the Microsoft App Factory, and IBM’s 12th international research lab. Like the rest of Braamfontein, Braamfontein West has experienced infrastructure upgrades over the past few years, including the installation of the University Corridor Cycle Lane, connecting staff and students of Wits and the University of Johannesburg. Despite good connectivity and access from prominent city locations, the 12 blocks of land are in dire need of regeneration. In the past, the precinct has witnessed isolation in light of urban development activities in the rest of the Braamfontein. In addition to working with EcoDistricts, Braamfontein West is using the Green Star - Communities tool to drive an advanced form of sustainable growth and planning for its proposed commercial, residential, and institutional schemes. Braamfontein West holds the potential to be a landmark regeneration development and the first of its kind that is employing a systematic Green Communities framework.
EcoDistricts started holding the annual Incubator in 2012 to build a network among leading city makers that work on innovative district- and neighborhood-scale regeneration projects. Since then, we’ve welcomed over 40 project teams from 33 cities and four countries to Portland for the annual event. This April 2017, we welcomed a diverse cohort of teams from Cape Town and Johannesburg, South Africa, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and Portland, Oregon.

The Incubator introduces teams to EcoDistricts’ next-generation neighborhood-building model and tool for taking action — EcoDistricts Certified. This framework provides city makers with a collaborative, holistic approach to creating places where we all want to work and live. With two-thirds of the world’s population expected to live in cities by 2050, how we build cities, especially at the neighborhood and district level, is the biggest challenge of our lifetime.

The neighborhood teams that attended the Incubator in 2017 are all facing unique challenges, unified around the same goal: sustainable, equitable urban development that doesn’t leave anyone behind.

The EcoDistricts-related projects that brought the Cape Town team 10,000 miles across the Atlantic is called the Old Mutual Mupine Development, a planned mixed-use affordable housing development in downtown Cape Town that is designed to reverse decades of racial segregation that continues long after apartheid. The Mupine project will replace a golf course on land owned by the Old Mutual Life Assurance company. As planned, the development will offer 700 affordable housing units, interspersed with recreation facilities and small-scale retail and business spaces. The plans incorporate green design principals like bio-gas digesters and reed beds for water purification, along with plenty of pedestrian paths and green open spaces. Limited on-site parking and an existing rail connection with the rest of the city will encourage residents to leave their cars at home. It is designed to be a catalytic project from the City — showcasing its commitment to sustainability and livability.

We also welcomed a team representing the Portland Innovation Quadrant (IQ), a chunk of the central city anchored by four education institutions: the Oregon Health & Science University (OHSU) and Portland State University (PSU) on the west side of the river, and Portland Community College (PCC) and the Oregon Museum of Science and Industry (OMSI) on the east side. Together, the IQ represents a large public investment in the south end of the central city that will ultimately be home to many more jobs and residents. The project will cement the city’s growing reputation as a progressive hub for creativity.
Two teams at the Incubator hailed from the Homewood neighborhood in eastern Pittsburgh. The predominantly African American neighborhood has struggled for decades with chronic disinvestment and high levels of unemployment, homelessness, and pollution, which ironically has left the area ripe for redevelopment. The neighborhood has over five thousand vacant lots, but in the past 48 months property values have doubled and rentals have quadrupled. The organizations Operation Better Block and Homewood Children’s Village are working to help prepare Homewood’s residents for the coming changes, starting with about 2,000 children in three schools. Homewood hopes to apply EcoDistricts’ whole systems approach to building community.

The final two teams were also from South Africa, each tasked with redeveloping part of downtown Johannesburg. The Metro Centre Precinct and Braamfontein West both propose a mix of commercial buildings and residential housing; the former incorporates a city council chamber, while the latter encompasses the technology hub of the Wits University.

For three days, participants worked learned from expert facilitators and faculty, and compared notes during presentations, work sessions, and tours to different parts of Portland to see how local planners and developers were dealing with the city’s explosive growth. Throughout the event, social networking opportunities helped attendees connect with fellow Incubator participants and faculty to share experiences, build knowledge and create a strong network of urban regeneration peers. Each team came away with a roadmap for taking action and a sense of common purpose with their colleagues from across the globe.
Feedback + Survey Results

**ATTENDEE TITLE BREAKDOWN**

79% of 2017 Incubator team members were CEOs or managers, a 21% increase from 2016.

**ATTENDEES INDUSTRY BREAKDOWN**

Attendees came from diverse industries, but Economic + Community Development and Real Estate + Development professionals encompassed nearly half of the practitioners in the room.

**OVERALL SATISFACTION**

A total of 100% of 2017 attendees ranked their overall satisfaction as exceptional or very good. This was a 10% increase in high satisfaction ratings from the 2016 Incubator and 5% increase from the 2015 Incubator.
**MOST VALUABLE ASPECT**

2017 Incubator attendees ranked the most valuable aspect of the event as “being exposed to cutting-edge practices.”

- **71%** Exposure to cutting-edge practices
- **59%** Interacting with industry leaders
- **59%** Case studies of district projects
- **47%** Networking opportunities
- **29%** Demonstrating leadership in new markets
- **12%** Business development opportunities

**SATISFACTION WITH FACULTY + FACILITATORS**

95% of 2017 attendees ranked the quality and diversity of faculty and facilitators at the Incubator as exceptional or very good.

- **5%** Average
- **26%** Exceptional
- **69%** Very Good

**SATISFACTION WITH EVENT VENUE**

Nearly two-thirds of Incubator attendees felt the Incubator venue, Ecotrust, was exceptional. We agree — this is the seventh year we’ve hosted the Incubator at Ecotrust.

- **33%** Very Good
- **67%** Exceptional
SUGGESTIONS FOR 2018 AND BEYOND

We are continuously working to improve the Incubator event experience year after year. We asked our 2017 cohort to share constructive suggestions on how we can make next year’s Incubator our best event yet.

“Would be helpful to have feedback identifying team blind spots, so we can gain valuable perspectives from experienced EcoDistricts practitioners on the areas where work still needs to be done.”

“The Incubator presentation portions were informative, but jam packed. Include more time for plenary discussion and having a longer third day.”

“The North/Northeast Portland gentrification and displacement tour was the best part of the whole trip and I would love for it to be mandatory for all future Incubators. The tour was so eye opening and it really put into perspective what we’re doing all of our work for. I felt humbled by the situation and everyone’s reaction to it was emotional, but also heartwarming.”

“Include scheduled time to reflect on tours as groups — it creates space for teams to cross-interact and share learnings from other site visits.”

“The time for allocated work sessions was tight. I understand that the intention was to get a feel for the Protocol, but more time around the table and shorter tours would have worked better. Or, extend the Incubator to a full three days.”

“Simplify the presentations, do more hands-on and interactive activities, and create more time for teamwork.”

“Add an extra day to allow teams to interact with each other. Everyone has expertise areas that overlap with others, and it would have been great to share knowledge with the cohort that everyone could bring back to their communities.”
2017 Faculty + Facilitators

NWAMAKA AGBO
NEXT ECONOMY INNOVATION FELLOW, MOVEMENT STRATEGY CENTER
FACILITATOR

KYLE ANDERSEN
PRINCIPAL, GBD ARCHITECTS
TOUR FACULTY

MICHAEL ARMSTRONG
SENIOR SUSTAINABILITY MANAGER, PORTLAND BUREAU OF PLANNING & SUSTAINABILITY
FACILITATOR

LEONARD BARRETT
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ERIC COREY FREED
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CAT GOUGHNOUR
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SUZANNE HAWKES
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SARAH IANNARONE
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RENEE LOVELAND
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FACILITATOR

MARA ZEPEDA
CEO, SWITCHBOARD
TOUR FACULTY

CHARLENE ZIDELL
DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE RELATIONS AND
COMMUNICATIONS, ZIDELL COMPANIES
TOUR FACULTY
Next Steps

Each year, EcoDistricts strives to deliver ongoing engagement and support for Incubator teams. Past teams participated in our two-year Target Cities pilot program. Others have continued working with EcoDistricts Facilitators and Faculty as expert advisors to their development challenges. Five teams are currently pursuing EcoDistricts Certified. Here’s what our 2017 Incubator teams have been up to since the event.

PITTSBURGH, PA – HOMEWOOD

Homewood is one of three neighborhoods in Pittsburgh — along with Millvale and the Uptown Innovation District — using the EcoDistricts model to implement sustainable, equitable urban change. Since the 2017 Incubator, EcoDistricts has hosted a Foundation workshop in Pittsburgh to equip local leaders with deeper knowledge of the EcoDistricts Protocol and Certification process. EcoDistricts will continue working with the Homewood team through our two-year EcoDistricts Cities program, funded by the Kresge Foundation, to build capacity in underserved urban communities.

PORTLAND, OR – INNOVATION QUADRANT

Since the 2017 Incubator, the Innovation Quadrant team had worked to solidify a governance structure that will help move the work forward. Along with EcoDistricts, the Innovation Quadrant won a grant from Meyer Memorial Trust to support the transformation of Portland’s South Waterfront into the city’s science, technology and innovation hub and ensuring that every investment and programmatic decision meets stringent, articulated equity, climate protection and resilience standards. The project will use the EcoDistricts Certified equity and sustainability performance platform to create a governance structure and guide the development of goals, objectives and standards.

CAPE TOWN AND JOHANNESBURG, SOUTH AFRICA

EcoDistricts is continuing its work in Cape Town as part of our Advisory Services team work. In November 2017, EcoDistricts staff members and a team from the U.S. that included Incubator facilitators hosted a five-day, in-country training for municipal and civic leaders in the Woodstock-Salt River precinct of Cape Town. The workshop prepared the Cape Town team to advance project governance and civic engagement; ecological design and water management; urban design excellence and capacity building in affordable and mixed-income housing; and neighborhood-scale economic development and wealth creation. The Cape Town training will serve as a pilot model for additional work in Johannesburg and overall adoption of the EcoDistricts Certified framework in South Africa.