



Listen

Schedules

Programs

Blogs

Give

Search

KPBS is a public service of SAN DIEGO STATE UNIVERSITY

News

Arts & Culture

Family

Living

Events

- Border
- Economy
- Education
- Environment**
- Health
- Military
- Politics
- Public Safety
- Science
- Editors Roundtable
- Envision
- San Diego Week
- These Days
- Special Reports
- Election

**Support KPBS today!** [Give now >>](#)

Listen Now | 89.5 FM

ADVERTISEMENT

**Senior Housing Locator**  
Free assistance finding Senior Housing in your local area.  
[www.aplaceformom.com](http://www.aplaceformom.com)

**san diego solar panels**  
Financing Options with No Upfront Costs. Get a Free Online Quote Now  
[www.paramountequity.com/solar](http://www.paramountequity.com/solar)

**No On the Prop G Ban**  
Prop G will cost Chula Vista jobs. Vote No on Prop G on June 8, 2010.  
[www.NoOnG.net](http://www.NoOnG.net)

**San Diego 1-Day Coupons**  
Up to 90% Off the Best Stuff to do! Restaurants, Spas, Events and More.  
[www.LivingSocial.com](http://www.LivingSocial.com)

Ads by Google

Become a KPBS sponsor today!

### Most Popular

**Most Commented** | **Most E-mailed**

- Music: Bettye LaVette's British Rock Interpretations | 1 comment
- Activists Say Immigrant's Death Demonstrates Need For Immigration Reform | 15 comments
- One Book, One San Diego Wants Your Input For Next Book | 9 comments
- Calif. Advances Bill To Ban Carrying Unloaded Guns | 4 comments

ADVERTISEMENT

**Housing Grant Application**  
New Housing Funding Released! Don't Miss the Deadlines. Apply Now  
[www.NewUSAFunding.com](http://www.NewUSAFunding.com)

**San Diego 1-Day Coupons**  
Up to 90% Off the Best Stuff to do! Restaurants, Spas, Events and More.  
[www.LivingSocial.com](http://www.LivingSocial.com)

**San Diego Coupons**  
1 Huge Daily Deal On The Best Stuff To Do In San Diego! Official Site.  
[www.Groupon.com/San-Diego-Deals](http://www.Groupon.com/San-Diego-Deals)

**Mission Hills, San Diego**  
Search Listings For Free #1 In Mission Hills for 13 years  
[www.hernholmgroup.com](http://www.hernholmgroup.com)

Ads by Google

Become a KPBS sponsor today!

## National City Launches A Major Makeover

BY KENNY GOLDBERG  
May 28, 2010

AUDIO

[Pop up](#) | [Download](#)



Photo by Kenny Goldberg

Above: Trash trucks dump their loads in this dusty lot in National City. Local officials plan to convert this brownfield into a site for eco-friendly, low-income housing with green space and a community garden.



Photo by Kenny Goldberg

Above: The algae-choked Paradise Creek flows between the transfer yard and the city works yard. Developers plan to clean the creek and expand the green space.

SAN DIEGO — National City has dozens of abandoned or underused industrial sites. Some of these "brownfields" are contaminated. Thanks to federal and state grants, National City is transforming one brownfield in the heart of old town. The city has high hopes for this project.

In National City, just east of the 5 freeway, there's a 14-acre parcel of land that looks like it's seen better days.

On one side, there's a fenced in yard where city trucks dump their trash into long, rusty containers.

At the far end of the yard, there's a pile of dirt that's as big as a house.

Georgette Gomez is with the non-profit [Environmental Health Coalition](#).

"That pile is basically debris that has been swept throughout the city," Gomez points out. "You know when they do street sweeping and what not, they bring it over here. There's a lot of lead, different types of metals there, that are coming from the streets. Very heavy contaminated site over there."

On the other side of the property, there's a city works yard filled with large trucks.

The algae-choked Paradise Creek flows through the middle of the parcel.

"And when there's runoff here, it's going into the creek," Gomez says. "That creek is going into the South Bay, so that's where you start seeing the chain

of different impacts."

Patricia Beard is National City's redevelopment manager. She admits the entire 14-acre site isn't much to look at. But just wait a few years.

"It's gonna be a beautifully designed affordable housing about four stories tall, and the creek will be completely restored," says Beard, excitedly. "They'll be open spaces and park areas, and we're trying to fit into this project a community garden, as well."

The idea for transforming this brownfield began back in 2008. That's when National City officials decided to redesign parts of old town.

With the help of the Environmental Health Coalition, local residents got involved in the planning process. They identified the need for affordable housing, and made this site their number one choice.

The [Environmental Protection Agency](#) was so impressed with the plans, it chose the project as one of five nationwide to receive a sustainable communities grant.

"Because of this particular project, and given some of the environmental impacts that this community has suffered for so long, we felt this would be a good project to kind of highlight, and help move this forward," says the EPA's Brownfields Coordinator Noemi Emeric-Ford.

Her agency has given National City 1.2 million dollars. The money will be used to identify what contaminants are buried on the site, and help jump start the clean up.

The city has also received an eleven-million dollar grant from the state to build the affordable housing.

Emeric-Ford says when the project is finished, it will really improve the quality of life for local residents.

"What's great about this property," Emeric-Ford says, "Is not only are you adjacent to Paradise Creek, they're going to be expanding the park area, allowing for open space for people that already live there, and for people who are moving in, you'll have this great natural asset right in your back yard, but you also can walk to the trolley station, which we call a transit-oriented development."

National City's Patricia Beard says they've already started to identify some of the pollutants buried on site, one of which is benzene. That's been known to cause cancer.

Cleaning everything up will be the first task. Then comes construction of the 201-unit complex.

Beard says the transformation should be complete by 2016. She says after that, there are plenty of other sites to improve.

"We're the second oldest community in San Diego County, so we have a lot of dirt to clean up," Beard says. "But I think we're getting really moving and a lot of progress in this area. And with the partnerships we've had and the grants we've had through the various brownfield programs, I think we're getting there."

Beard figures just in National City's old town, there are 50 brownfields ripe for redevelopment.

---

## Share with others

 Facebook

 Twitter

 Email

Permalink:

Short URL:

---

## Log in to comment

Username: