

CASE STUDY

PROJECT HARAMBEE

CATEGORY

Water Conservation
Pollution Reduction

LOCATION

Atlanta, GA

CONTACT

Atlanta Project
404-881-3400
www2.gsu.edu/~wwwtnc/info/contact.htm



SYNOPSIS

Project Harambee (a Swahili word meaning "let's pull together") is a joint grassroots community effort of EarthBond and the Brown Village of the Atlanta Project to reduce pollution and increase energy and water conservation in Atlanta's Brown Village neighborhood. The Brown Village neighborhood is one of the "clusters" that is a part of the Atlanta Project, created by former President Jimmy Carter. The Atlanta Project was created as a way to have people within the community solve the problems that concern them. Basically, the community has the ability to decide what it needs.

SITUATION

Brown Village, a community located in the southwest section of the City of Atlanta, is comprised of 29,000 residents who are primarily African-American, 26% of whom live below poverty level. Area residents were concerned about problems in their community, including pollution, the lack of jobs, and low income levels. The first challenge was to increase community awareness of conservation methods and benefits.

PROJECT APPROACH

EarthBond, an Atlanta-based environmental nonprofit organization, began a discussion with the Brown Village in 1992 to explore the possibility of developing a collaborative community project. The discussion process included a series of community forums and Brown Village executive council meetings, to obtain community approval for the proposal. At no cost, Project Harambee distributed ultra-low-flush (ULF) toilets, low-flow showerheads, and energy conservation information to 340 residents. Meanwhile, local elementary schools participated in an environmental education program. Project Harambee also offered energy demand management kits to 100 residents. The energy conservation kits included a problem-solving fact book, compact fluorescent bulbs, water heater blankets, pipe insulation, and caulking. The measures of success include:

- Residents will save more than \$200,000 over five years as a result of the installation of the new water and energy-saving fixtures.
- The Atlanta Water Department projects a savings of more than 6.1 million gallons of water annually.
- The average participant will save approximately \$109 on his or her annual water bill.
- The program will reduce atmospheric pollution by 80,000 pounds annually.
- Wastewater requiring treatment will be reduced by 13,000 gallons per day.

RESULTS/ IMPACTS

Project Harambee has proven itself beneficial for all. The residents saved money, the City of Atlanta realized water savings and reduced pressure on the wastewater treatment facility, and jobs were created in the community during the implementation of the project, providing crucial economic stimulation. Water consumption from the local Chattahoochee River has been reduced by more than 56,000 gallons per day and community residents are predicted to save \$200,000 over five years; money that can be returned to the local economy. The positive impacts include:

- Participants received an ultra-low flush toilet that operates at 1.6 gallons of water per use, compared to existing toilets that use as much as seven gallons per use.
- More than 90% of residents installed the toilets themselves, excluding the elderly who received the services of Brown Village plumbers. Local plumbers agreed to install the toilet for \$25, but most completed the work free of charge.
- Six community jobs were created during the implementation of the project. All residents engaged in employment were formerly unemployed individuals who assisted in program management, canvassing, customer service, physical distribution and tracking, and collection of old toilets.
- This project was replicated in a federally designated Empowerment Zone comprising several other Atlanta neighborhoods. In collaboration with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the Georgia Power Company, 1,500 ultra-low-flush toilets and 3,000 low-flow showerheads were distributed. Organizers anticipate savings of 30 million gallons of water and \$160,000 each year.

This project is ongoing and was recently honored at a bipartisan Congressional reception with a Distinguished Appropriate Technology Award.

PARTNERS

Project Harambee is managed by EarthBond, an Atlanta-area environmental nonprofit organization. Significant funding was received from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the City of Atlanta Water Department, the Turner Foundation, Southface Energy Institute, CTSI Corporation, and the residents of Brown Village. Project Harambee formed partnerships with the CAMP/NAACP and Our Cousin's House to assist in project implementation.

FUNDING

More than \$50,000 in funding was received for the project, with thousands of more dollars reflected in in-kind donations, including expertise and labor. Community residents are slated to save \$200,000 over five years.

KEYS TO SUCCESS

By following the Brown Village's grassroots approach to community empowerment, the program was extremely successful and earned greater commitment and a sense of ownership by the residents than would have occurred otherwise. An educational opportunity was offered to the people and a chance to be proactive and involved. Another great key to success was having a thorough plan that would directly benefit the community members by providing jobs, financial savings, and a cleaner, more pleasant living environment.

SOURCES

- US Department of Energy, Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy, Smart Communities Network,
http://www.sustainable.doe.gov/success/project_harambee.shtml
- The Atlanta Project, History May-August 1995
<http://www2.gsu.edu/~wwtap/about/history/history5.html>