

Virgin Islands Port Authority

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL

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Introduction

Purpose of Article

The purpose of this article is to illustrate the roles that port authorities play in enhancing community development.

For port communities, the port is a fundamental aspect of the local economy and the livelihoods of the residents in that region. By improving gateway activity, port authorities help communities to grow, as more port traffic creates more jobs and revitalizes the local economy.

Additionally, port authorities can directly implement community development initiatives such as improving infrastructure for local businesses and residents of the community, refurbishing urban areas surrounding the port, and more.

To demonstrate these points, the article will explore several examples of how port authorities in various regions around the world have enhanced development in their own communities.

Example #1: New Jersey

Background

The Port of New York and New Jersey is located in the New York-Newark metropolitan area. The port is a gateway for international commerce, as it is located in one of the most concentrated consumer markets in the world and has immediate access to world-class transportation infrastructure, including international airports, interstates, rail networks and seaports (Crawford, 2007). It is also one of the largest natural harbors in the world and is the third largest port by tonnage in the U.S. (Port of New York and New Jersey).

Problems

Although the state had a vast supply of warehouse space, more than 850 million square feet, particularly near the port, was functionally obsolete (Crawford, 2007). Additionally, many of the existing facilities were too old, too small and unsuitable for modern IT technology that would allow for high-speed manufacturing and inventory control.

Shippers in the port were in need of larger, more modern warehouses with state-of-the-art IT infrastructure and security systems that contribute toward a more efficient supply chain.

The shortage of land for new distribution centers that can serve the New York-New Jersey port complex and support modern IT technology prevented New Jersey from being able to expand its role as a logistic hub.

Initiative: Transform Brownfield Sites and Underutilized Properties

To address these issues, the Port Authority of New York/New Jersey and the New Jersey Economic Development Authority (NJEDA) launched the Portfields Initiative in 2007. The goal of the initiative was to redevelop 1,000 acres of property within the port district to establish productive warehouse/distribution centers (Crawford, 2007).

The properties to be transformed represented roughly \$500 million in land costs and \$1.5 billion in construction value. The joint venture between the Port Authority and the NJEDA provides long-term financial, technical and other kinds of support to government agencies, developers and municipalities in order to implement the initiative (Crawford, 2007).

17 sites were selected for redevelopment due to their access to the New Jersey Turnpike and other major highways, as well as the Newark Liberty International Airport and Port Elizabeth/Newark. Many of these target sites were brownfields that qualified for financial assistance for assessment and environmental remediation. The properties would be developed by private-sector companies, either individually or through private-public partnerships (Crawford, 2007).

Results

- Captured more of the port's shipping-related warehousing/distribution business
- Enhanced aesthetic appearance of the district
- New jobs created
- Significantly expanded tax base
- Improved local road infrastructure
- Better environmental impact

Not only did the Portfields Initiative bring new jobs, a significantly expanded tax base, and an improved local road infrastructure, but it also ensured the long-term viability of the port as one of the nation's most important import-export hubs.

In 2016, the Port Industry solidified the 31 county New Jersey-New York-Pennsylvania Region's position as one of the leading distribution platforms for North America. Cargo movements grew, the cruise industry in New Jersey expanded, and the region's industrial space increased at an unprecedented rate, with the construction of millions of square feet of industrial and distribution centers. As demand for industrial space accelerated, the state was able to respond with new and expanded production facilities and ecommerce operations, with greatly increased occupancy rates (Strauss-Wieder, 2017).

As of 2016, the Port Industry in New Jersey now supports (Strauss-Wieder, 2017):

- 200,350 direct jobs
- 344,470 total jobs in New Jersey
- Nearly \$21 billion in personal income
- More than \$53.8 billion in business income
- Nearly \$7 billion in federal, state and local tax revenues, with local and state tax revenues of more than \$2.2 billion and federal tax revenues of nearly \$4.8 billion

The "perfect trifecta" noted in the 2014 economic impact report – a growing economy, high population density and expansion of ecommerce combined with extensive multi-modal infrastructure – has made New Jersey a leading location for such operations (Strauss-Wieder, 2017).

Example #2: Bellingham, WA

Background

The city of Bellingham is home to nearly 71,000 residents. The Port of Bellingham comprises an area of 1,500 acres, operated on by more than 200 companies across the marinas, industrial manufacturing, seafood processing and many other industries. The port property encompasses a waterfront, commercial airports, and commercial and industrial areas (Ache, Baker, Holst, Neely, & Walker).

Problems

Many of Bellingham's waterfront properties were idle and abandoned, with no public access. Georgia-Pacific Corp.'s pulp and paper mill closed in 2001, with a loss of 420 high-paying jobs and nearly \$1 million annually to the local economy, and nothing was done to repurpose the mill's properties.

These now unused properties resulted in significant losses to Bellingham's industry, a loss in jobs, and a loss in revenue for the local economy (Bellingham: Economy). Additionally, there was no connection between downtown Bellingham and the waterfront, as the space was unavailable to the public (Cohen, 2016).

Initiative: Revitalize Waterfront

In 2005, the Port of Bellingham became actively engaged in a coordinated economic revitalization and environmental restoration effort within the Bellingham Bay and waterfront (Ache, Baker, Holst, Neely, & Walker).

These efforts would address significant environmental contamination and revitalize the idle waterfront properties in order to respond to an increasing demand for commercial and recreational opportunities and to resurrect the waterfront economy.

Additionally, the initiative would rebuild the connection between the community and the port by allowing the waterfront space to be used by the residents of Bellingham (Cohen, 2016).

The efforts were supported by the Portfields Initiative, a federal interagency effort focused on the redevelopment of port and harbor communities, with an emphasis on environmental restoration and community revitalization.

The Port of Bellingham acquired 137 acres of waterfront property from Georgia Pacific and began to undertake the cleanup of contaminated upland and sediment sites over the next several years, as well as implement a comprehensive program of maritime improvements.

The Port's plans to redevelop the waterfront also include a new marina, a regional sustainable development center, improved public access (trails, parks), and mixed-use buildings, as well as the restoration and protection of natural habitat.

The first projects to be completed include roads, trails and residential buildings. The goal is that as the public begins regularly using the waterfront district, private business will follow (Gallagher, What is going on with waterfront redevelopment? Here are some answers, 2017).

Results

- Enhanced environment/aesthetic appearance of community
- Jobs created
- Improved public access – restored connection between community and port
- Commercial and recreational opportunities created

The waterfront project is bringing a lot of focus to the area, according to Don Goldberg, director of economic development for the Port of Bellingham (Hamann, 2018).

The port has now signed 12 new businesses to leases in the past year and helped five others expand as of August 2018. For the first time in its history, the port's occupancy rate has risen to almost 98 percent (Gallagher, A year after creating incentives for marine trade, port property is a hot commodity, 2018).

Example #3: Oslo, Norway

Background

The Port of Oslo is Norway's leading cargo and passenger port, with nearly 7 million travelers yearly and 50 to 70 calls of cargo and passenger ships each week (Oslo Havn). Half of the Norwegian population lives less than a three hour drive from the port, which is a short distance from the main road and railway.

Problems

Despite the fjord being one of Oslo's most prominent features, the city was largely cut off from the fjord by highways and industry (Nikel). The urban area surrounding the Port of Oslo was underdeveloped and not being properly utilized by either tourists or by Oslo's residents. The area was antiquated due to lack of development and was therefore not fulfilling its potential as a major tourism draw and a recreational, cultural, residential and commercial hub for Oslo.

Initiatives: Transform Port, Relocate Port Activities and Free Up Land for Urban Use

Plans for Fjordbyen, or "Fjord City" began in 2000 to renew long underprioritized areas in Oslo and use them for future-oriented urban development with housing, creation, and industry. A large part of areas that were currently being used solely for port activities would be developed for other purposes. In this way, the fjord was "to be brought in as part of the city and opened to the enjoyment of Oslo's population" (Oslo Council).

In 2003, work began on the Bjorvika sector by the city council and in 2004, the Port of Oslo's strategic plan for 2003-2011 adopted the following major orientations (Davoult, Oslo, a new step for the city – port relationship, 2016):

- maintaining the ferry and cruise activity in the heart of the city;
- relocating port activities (particularly one of the container terminals) close to the city center and concentrating them in the SouthPort zone;
- as a result, freeing up some 50 hectares of land and earmarking for urban use;
- reinvesting proceeds from the sale of port land in efforts to transform the port and its new projects.

In addition to the Bjorvika sector, redevelopment also began for the Tjuvholmen sector in 2005.

Results

- Underdeveloped areas have become a cultural district
- City and fjord are now connected
- Public access and transport has been upgraded
- Recreational and commercial opportunities created
- Tourism and population growth spurt

Redevelopment work has been largely completed for the Bjorvika sector, including its iconic Opera House. The Oslo Opera House, designed by Oslo and New York-based Snohetta, was unveiled in April 2008 and instantly became one of the city's most celebrated buildings, winning multiple awards including the coveted Mies van der Rohe architecture prize (Kingsland, 2018). Since the opening of the Opera House, the area has seen "unprecedented change" and is now internationally identified as a cultural district (Nikel) (Davoult, Oslo, a new step for the city – port relationship, 2016). The project has been one of the largest waterfront developments in Europe and the biggest urban development project in Norwegian history (Nikel).

Furthermore, the developments completed across Tjuvholmen's 51 hectares in 2014, including a Museum of Modern Art, have earned a Global Award for Excellence from the Urban Land Institute (Davoult, Oslo, a new step for the city – port relationship, 2016).

In 2018, a museum to house the work of Norway's most celebrated artist, Edvard Munch, is expected to open next to the Opera House. The city is also planning to open up the waterfront areas for recreational, cultural, residential and commercial use, with emphasis on public access, public and private transport and sustainable development. A brand new public library is also in the works (Nikel).

The waterfront has become a tourism magnet, and Oslo has become one of the fastest growing capital cities in Europe in the last few years, growing by about 10,000 people per year (Nikel).

Example #4: San Antonio, Chile

Background

The Port of San Antonio is the main seaport in Chile and is also one of the most important in the South Pacific area. It is the main docking seaport for ships arriving from Asia, and it is Chile's first port by tonnage (iContainers). The city of San Antonio's economic activity centers around the port. The city has about 90,000 inhabitants (Davoult, San Antonio Port: Incentivising Port-City Integration through Citizen Participation, 2017).

Problems

Although the city's economy was centered around the port, the link between the port and the San Antonio community was weak. The lack of use of the waterfront and the unavailability of waterfront public spaces for people to use negatively impacted the city's relationship with the port. The area surrounding the port was underdeveloped and outdated, and the port itself was not as competitive as it could be due to lack of capacity.

Initiatives: Modernize Northern Sector, Increase Port Capacity and Promote Citizen Participation

In May 2014, the city approved a modification of the Municipal Development Plan, which established the sectors necessary for future development of the port and set aside spaces for the development of the city.

In order to strengthen the link with the community and promote port-city integration, the process of modifying the plan involved more than 100 meetings with local residents, local and regional authorities, and other interest groups. This citizen participation was imperative to allow a balanced and coordinated development between the port and the city.

San Antonio Port also made two commitments that sought to contribute to the integral development of the community and improves the quality of life for all its inhabitants (Davoult, San Antonio Port: Incentivising Port-City Integration through Citizen Participation, 2017):

- The modernization of the northern sector for tourism, culture, and urban recreation activities, including an extension of the Paseo Bellamar coastal walkway and the construction of the new San Antonio office building, the first floor of which will have a boardroom open to the community.
- The development of a nature reserve in the Mouth of the River Maipo to allow for tourism, recreational activities and bird watching, among other things, adding value to this important space that has been designated a site of international importance in the conservation of migratory shore birds.

Furthermore, to boost its competitiveness, the Port of San Antonio aimed to not only increase the volume of goods handled but also to ensure the development of human capital.

Results

- Strengthened the link between port and community
- Improved quality of life for San Antonio residents
- Added value to the space with recreational activities
- Boosted tourism
- Port growth has driven local GDP

With the growth of international trade with Chile in recent decades, the importance of San Antonio as a port has continued to grow. Port activity is the main driver of the local economy, and its direct and indirect contribution to local GDP is estimated to reach 50% (AIVP, 2016).

The now modernized Paseo Bellamar walkway, managed and financed by San Antonio Port, is the public space most highly valued by the local community. The space is open to the entire community, with 52 artisanal stalls, two cafes and snack bars. San Antonio Port also actively participates in the San Antonio Cultural Centre and works with the San Antonio Unido sports club, as well as participates in educational projects related to port activity in the area.

Growing community participation, through various means, in port operations, initiatives, and projects have contributed to greater integration between the port and the city, allowing both to create a common view of San Antonio's development for the future. In a survey, the city found that more than half of survey participants stated that the port and its activities drive development in the city. Additionally, a significant portion of those surveyed believe that the port's commitment to the city is positive and said that the redevelopment of Paseo Bellamar was the best change to the city in recent times (AIVP, 2016).

Example #5: Mossel Bay, South Africa

Background

Despite being the smallest of the commercial ports along the South Africa coast, the Port of Mossel Bay is an important contributor to the economy of the Garden Route and Southern Cape. The port is the fishing industry base of the region, with facilities for fleet maintenance and for processing catches (Global Africa Network, 2017). Mossel Bay has a population of approximately 130,000 and the Municipality generates 65% of its own revenue (Sandpiper News, 2014).

Problems

Mossel Bay's harbor caters for the fishing and natural gas industries, but which handles little other commercial cargo. Thus, it has little in the way of sophisticated infrastructure (Mossel Bay Municipality, 2017). The infrastructure is old, the slipway needs to be upgraded, and quays need to be reinforced. Further limitations include the small turning circle inside the port, the lack of cranes to handle containers, and the difficulty of moving cargo in and out of the port (Roux, 2017).

As research indicates that sardines are moving toward the Southern Cape, this may result in fishing vessels from the West Coast increasingly having to make use of the harbor. Upgrades of the slipway are imperative for the fishing industry to comply with legislation (Roux, 2017).

Initiatives: Upgrade and Build New Facilities, Develop Skills and Supply Chain

Transnet National Ports Authority (TNPA) has set out to transform the port of Mossel Bay along with other South African Ports into a “People’s Port” where local communities and businesses have access to and are able to participate in port activities. TNPA has introduced several programs to promote radical economic transformation, localization and supplier development (Whitehouse, 2018).

These programs include training people to join the maritime and engineering fields through learnerships and an adopted schools program that fosters the development of maths and science in students from historically disadvantaged schools (Whitehouse, 2018). Supplier development initiatives include encouraging local small business, capacity generation, IP transfer, and training/bursaries for local South Africans (Whitehouse, 2018). TNPA’s Section 56 program and leasing policy opens up participation in port activities to businesses owned by historically disadvantaged individuals.

Additionally, TNPA has developmental plans for the Port of Mossel Bay that will ensure economic growth for the region, such as establishing a mixed-use waterfront with retail, commercial, and industrial facilities, as well as dock for cruise line passengers that will bring in thousands of tourists to the Garden Route (Chetty, 2018).

Finally, an upgrade to the slipway is in the pipeline to support the local fishing and other industries (Chetty, 2018).

Results

- New business opportunities and catalysts for economic growth
- Generates economic development through the utilization of South Africa’s abundant maritime resources
- Creates sustainable jobs for the local community
- Attract investment to the area
- Local community/businesses have access to and are able to participate in port activities

Overall, TNPA’s initiatives are projected to create a smart, safe, and secure port system with the infrastructure and capacity to promote economic growth, job creation, transformation, and sustainable benefits for port communities (Whitehouse, 2018).

The reintroduction of the Mossel Bay Dias & Port Festival, held in partnership with the Mossel Bay Municipality, also aims to bring the public into the port, grow awareness of the role the ports play in the economy, and promote career and business opportunities amongst local communities (Whitehouse, 2018).

Greater access to the Mossel Bay harbor through the implementation of a cruise terminal, as well as the transformation of the waterfront, should increase both local and international tourism and attract investment to the area, which is a pivotal driving force for local economic development (Chetty, 2018).

The Section 56 program and leasing policy also supports transformation and promotes access to new entrants, ushering in a new era where ports are able to serve communities more inclusively and sustainably (Whitehouse, 2018).

Example #6: Tema, Ghana

Background

Tema Port is the bigger of two seaports of Ghana, handling 80 per cent of the country's national exports and imports. The harbour is located 18 miles from the capital Accra and serves as both a loading and unloading port for goods, both for Ghana and the land-locked countries to the north (Portside, 2015).

Tema services a wide range of industrial and commercial companies, producing or handling everything from petroleum products, cement and food items, to iron, steel, aluminium products and textiles. Most of the country's main export, cacao, is also shipped from Tema (Portside, 2015).

Problems

Tema Port suffers from both an underdeveloped beach and shipping inefficiencies caused by the strain of current infrastructure. These inefficiencies result in higher costs for Ghana's retailers, as the port and connecting roads form a critical part of the supply and distribution network for retailers.

Initiatives: Build New Port, Expand and Upgrade Main Highway

APM Terminals, an international container terminal operating company, and its partners are investing USD 1.5 billion to build an entirely new, modern, and multi-purpose port in Tema on the currently undeveloped beach adjacent to the existing port (Maersk, 2018).

The investment will also include an additional USD 200 to 300 million to be used for expansion and upgrade of the country's main highway, the Accra-Tema Motorway. The 19 km highway is the country's most important travel and commercial corridor, linking the port with the capital Accra, the primary destination and origin for cargo coming through the port (Maersk, 2018).

Results

- Revitalized supply chain and distribution network, removing time and waste
- Lowers costs and improves profitability for local businesses, leading to business growth
- Improvements in port productivity
- Jobs created, increased employee earnings, business sales and taxes
- Increase in trade – improve Ghana's competitiveness, leading to boosted export and imports

The projected positive socio-economic impact of APM Terminals' initiative is significant. QBIS Consulting conducted a socio-economic impact study of the project and found that the new Tema port will impact Ghana both through the labor, goods, and services required for its construction and operation, as well as through the enhanced cargo handling services that will improve the import and export of goods, thereby improving Ghana's competitiveness (Maersk, 2018).

Both factors will create jobs in addition to raising employee earnings, business sales and taxes. Moreover, improvements in port productivity, truck turnaround times, documentation, clearing and forwarding processes, among many other things, will all help remove time and waste from local retailers' supply chain, lower their inventory and storage costs in the process and enable Ghana's businesses to grow.

The new infrastructure will be invaluable to Ghana, as more capacity, modern equipment, and deep water access for larger ships will help attract trade and lower the overall costs of trade and transport. It will also relieve a lot of the congestion within major ports in the region.

According to QBIS estimates, the increase in trade will increase the revenues of Ghana's import and export companies, which will lead to as much as a USD 1.1 billion rise in Gross Value Added to the Ghanaian economy and as much as 450,000 new jobs (Maersk, 2018).

Conclusion

Key Takeaways

As illustrated above, port authorities can profoundly impact community development. Some of the primary benefits of development initiatives from port authorities include jobs created, improved trade, growth for local businesses, and a strengthened link between port and city that allows for a thriving economy and community.

Such benefits can be achieved through upgrading port facilities and increasing their capacity, improving infrastructure for both the port and region, refurbishing and modernizing urban areas, improving public access to waterfront properties, encouraging citizen participation in port related activities and much more.

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