

Integrated Revitalization Initiative

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01 Integrated Revitalization Initiative

The Integrated Revitalization Initiative develops tools to help communities and regions shift from an inefficient, project-by-project approach to redevelopment to a programmatic approach. This helps the community visualize, sequence, and fund the renewal of all of their built and natural assets, achieving synergies that give them more socioeconomic revitalization from each restoration investment. The Integrated Revitalization Guide is a specification tool that's available for use by the public and non-profit sector free of charge.

The Integrated Revitalization Initiative (IRI) has three purposes:

1. To research and develop effective insights, processes, and tools that will make it easier to plan and implement the revitalization of an area, based on restoring its built, natural, and social assets in an efficient, systematic manner.
2. To educate business, government, non-profit, and academic leaders in the use of these insights, processes and tools.
3. To facilitate the application of these insights, processes, and tools to real-world projects, so as to revitalize communities and natural resources as quickly as possible.

Integrated Revitalization™ tools and services

Integrated Revitalization™ tools and services are universally-applicable renewal aids. They're designed to work in all situations: rural or urban areas; industrial or agricultural properties; developed or lesser-developed nations; any form of local government; any size area or number of jurisdictions; over any time period...from short-term projects to ongoing programs.

Properly designed, a strategy based on Integrated Revitalization is relatively immune to political and most other external variables, and it's effective whether the primary goal is focused on economy, culture, health, or natural resources.

Integrated Revitalization turns the complex process of renewing all of an area's restorable assets (natural and built) into a series of integrated smaller projects. Each step should: enhance health and wealth; build broader support; recruit more expertise; add momentum; and move the initiative closer to a self-funding basis.

We could have a "problem" of depleted fisheries, watersheds, or other natural resources. We could have a "problem" of decrepit buildings and infrastructure in older communities. We could have a "problem" of exhausted farms, contaminated lands, or war damage. Or, we could have a vast wealth of restorable assets; natural, built, and social. Firms and communities that learn to integrate the 12 sectors of restorative development will be the economic growth leaders of the 21st Century.

- Storm Cunningham, January 13, 2004, Alexandria, VA (presentation to U.S. State Dept.)

The Integrated Revitalization Guide is at the heart of the initiative. It comprises two parts: the Asset Integration Guide helps ensure that each project (both new development and restorative development) contributes to the restoration of all of the applicable twelve sectors. The Stakeholder Integration Guide helps communities/regions encourage new restorative development projects, properly nurture those it already has, and capture the revitalizing momentum of those it has completed. [That momentum is captured through a combination of internal marketing, external marketing, and academic tie-ins that help turn those projects into new research, new curricula, and new local job skills.]

As the alliance for community renewal and natural resource restoration, the research/education program of Revitalization Institute is naturally integrative. Restorative development is defined as "socioeconomic revitalization based on restoring the built and/or natural environments". Integrated revitalization simply takes the "or" out of that definition: The power of Integrated Revitalization comes from programmatically restoring natural, built, and social assets together.

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Integrating the restoration of built, natural, and social assets adds tremendous new value, while creating powerful efficiencies and synergies. In other words, the costs decrease while the benefits increase. This dynamic has been demonstrated and proven hundreds of times in cities and rural areas worldwide, such as in large brownfields redevelopments, estuary restorations, regional revitalizations, etc.—where powerful synergies and significant cost efficiencies have been enjoyed by integrating many forms of restorable assets.

Why Should You Perform Restorative Development in the First Place?

Economic growth and increased quality of life can only be sustained if a society's economic model is based on increasing the efficiency and capacity of its built environment, and on increasing the health and productivity of its natural resources. Natural resources are—directly or indirectly—the basis of all wealth on the planet. This leads to three obvious conclusions:

1. New development (frontier mode) is only meant to establish a society: Staying in that mode too long is a rapid path to ruin. An economic model that leaves fewer resources in its wake—such as extracting non-renewable fuels, or building on top of watersheds, farmlands, and wildlife habitat—is a path to inevitable bankruptcy and decreased quality of life.
2. Conservation (maintenance mode) only works as an economic model if applied from the very beginning of a society. Once extensive damage has been inflicted to natural resources—and once communities are in severe decline—it is merely a slower path to ruin. An economic model based primarily on maintaining what we've built and conserving what's left of our natural resources is inappropriate when the human population is above carrying capacity, and is still increasing.
It's also inappropriate when every square meter of the earth's surface is contaminated. Merely trying to conserve some natural resources for future generations is a strategy that's doomed to failure when so many countries are still stuck in the new development mode. Damage, both new and old, must be healed as quickly as possible if economic growth and increased quality of life are the goal. "As quickly as possible" means that this healing must be a viable economic activity that is supported by government policies. It can't be based primarily on charity or taxes.
3. Restorative development is the only economic model that can create economic growth and increased quality of life, ad infinitum. Restorative development, by definition, leaves increased health and wealth in the wake of every successful transaction. The restorative work performed by businesses, NGOs, and government agencies already accounts for well over a trillion dollars (U.S.) annually, worldwide. The faster our public and private development entities switch from new development to restorative development, the faster our economy will grow, the faster our quality of life will improve, and faster our natural resources will come back to life.

How Integrated Revitalization Initiative works

Our Integrative Revitalization Initiative has three major aspects:

1. Research:
 - Identify gaps in restorative development research, and plug them;
 - Merge new and existing research with the development of curricula and new degrees; and,
 - Facilitate related technology transfer.
2. Education: Training exercises and more formal educational programs are being planned in areas such as project management.
3. Application: The Integrated Revitalization Initiative Partnership Program has been created to enable public revitalization efforts and private restoration/redevelopment projects to have ready access to companies, organizations, and post-secondary institutions that can help them apply integrated approaches to their work.

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- As a non-profit research and education organization supported by members, Revitalization Institute (RI) does not actually perform restorative development, though many of its post-secondary partners are engaged in such a work, nor does it currently offer any fee-based services. Given the dire condition of many of our natural resources, and given the distressed condition of so many communities, regions, and nations around the world, it's important that integrated approaches to restorative development be applied by governments, NGOs, and private companies as quickly as possible.
- With this in mind, we have created an Partner Network for our Integrated Revitalization Initiative. Now, communities, regional redevelopment agencies, government agencies at all levels, private developers, and non-profit organizations working for public and/or wildlife health can quickly find help. Whether they need a post-secondary institution to help them with research; an AEC (architectural/ engineering/ construction) firm that has proven expertise in all twelve sectors of restorative development (and who knows how to integrate them); an economic/market analysis firm to do a feasibility study, or a strategic planning firm that can create a custom revitalization strategy for them, our Partner Network is the primary source of expertise that takes an integrated approach to socioeconomic revitalization and/or natural resource renewal.

4T's

For a revitalization program to be efficient, successful, and accountable, it requires the "4T's":

- Theory
- Terminology
- Taxonomy
- Tools

Most community and regional revitalization programs--even when very well organized, managed, and planned--lack the defining features of a rigorous, repeatable strategy for success. As a result, they are often little more than a collection of good ideas, worthy projects, bold experiments, and inspiring visions. Sometimes, they have labels that give the illusion of a coherent strategy--such as "smart", "sustainable", or "green"--but these terms are primarily dialogue tools: They chiefly serve as rallying points for intelligent new thinking about development and growth. For a revitalization program to be efficient, successful, and accountable, it requires the "4T's":

Theory: Revitalization strategies should have a sound theoretical basis that can be tested, evolved, and relied upon. Integrated revitalization is based on two hypotheses:

- * Restorative development produces far more jobs and quality of life enhancement than growth based on new development (sprawl).
- * Integrating the restoration, remediation, and redevelopment of all twelve sectors of restorable assets--and integrating the involvement of all four stakeholder groups (government, business, non-profit, and academic)--produces a greater revitalizing effect than will the usual haphazard, project-by-project, or neighborhood-by-neighborhood approach. It also speeds the process, while greatly enhancing access to funding, both public and private. [see graphic]

Terminology: Revitalization dialogue must have a shared vocabulary to allow meaningful participation and maximum integration of the broad spectrum of professions, disciplines, and stakeholders that are required to address all of the restorable assets of a community, region, or nation.

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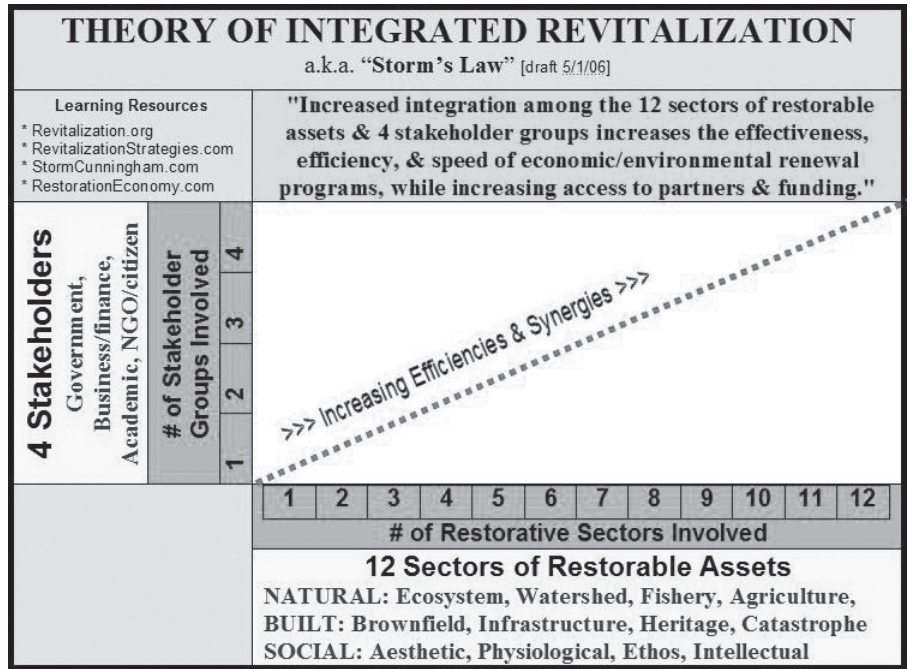
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Taxonomy: Revitalization tactics should be based on a logically organized system of measurable actions. This provides a simple, replicable way to inventory your restorable assets, organize your restorative actions, monitor the results, and easily adjust your strategy over the years, based on that feedback.

* The first part of our taxonomy is this: Budgets and planning processes must be in “trimodal” format, meaning that all 3 modes of the development lifecycle are clearly separated. Those three modes are new development (also known as ‘sprawl’ or “frontier mode”); maintenance/conservation; and restorative development. It’s impossible to systematically shift development activities from new development to restorative development if the latter isn’t even a budget category.

* The second part of our taxonomy is this: An area’s revitalization agenda can be divided into 12 sectors, and the restoration of each of these 12 sectors can be measured according to 3 “restorable functions/values”.



Tools: Appropriate theory, taxonomy, and terminology will do wonders for an area’s ability to have an effective dialogue and to craft a useful vision to guide their revitalization strategy, but it takes practical tools to ensure that the actual projects and programs spawned by this strategy accomplish what they were meant to accomplish.

* Projects are evaluated according to our Asset Integration Guide’s 24 metrics. These help ensure the maximum level of integration among the 12 sectors, thus producing a much greater “bang for the buck” in terms of socioeconomic revitalization.

* Programs are evaluated according to our Stakeholder Integration Guide’s 7 factors that help ensure the maximum level of continuity and integration in a community or region’s ongoing revitalization effort. Properly designed and implemented, an integrated revitalization program becomes the “flywheel” of socioeconomic renewal, capturing and perpetuating the momentum added by each restoration project.

Regional Revitalization Initiatives

Revitalization Institute is committed to helping communities, development agencies, and non-profits all around the world to form regional revitalization initiatives. As many have learned from sad experience, creating a multi-jurisdictional renewal program is often difficult. Rather than making the first step the signing of a formal agreement--or memorandum of understanding--that commits multiple jurisdictions or stakeholders to working together, it is recommend that you take a gentler, more evolutionary approach.

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Start with a workshop or summit that helps partners see the advantages of regional revitalization. With a shared vision, shared terminology, shared tools (such as the Integrated Revitalization Guide), and shared models, renewing each community in a way that contributes to the renewal of other communities in the region becomes a lot easier.

Such a meeting creates a regional dialogue and fosters complementary projects that lead naturally to an eventual formal agreement when the time is right. Probably the most efficient way to launch this process is with our one-day Revitalization Vision Workshop.

Your county, state/province, region, or nation probably has a wealth of restorable assets: derelict old buildings, decrepit infrastructure, exhausted farmlands, depleted forests, dying fisheries, distressed watersheds, failing ecosystems, etc. Your area might also be economically challenged, and in need of a powerful revitalization catalyst. Or, individual communities in your area might have successful restoration and revitalization projects, but you can't figure out how to leverage them into sustainable regional economic growth and increased quality of life.

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Regional Revitalization Initiatives are designed to integrate stakeholders (business, academic, government, and non-profit), integrate assets (all twelve sectors), and integrate communities. This integration happens as a result of shared tools, shared learning, and shared interests.

Regional Revitalization - Why?

Why a regional approach? One of the major problems facing economic development planners, natural resource managers, etc. is fragmented governance, whereby most power lies in the hands of municipalities, with states, provinces and counties having minimal influence. This style of governance (often referred to as "local controls" or "home rule" in the U.S.) has undeniable benefits, such as local decision-making by people who are intimately familiar with the situation, rather than centralized control from afar. But it also has at least two major flaws.

One of these flaws is that the local politicians/managers often lack the sophistication or legal expertise it takes to resist powerful regional or national developers whose plans are not in the best interest of the community. The well-publicized political steamrolling of small communities by certain big-box retailers is a classic case in point.

The other major weakness of fragmented governance is the difficulty of doing regional planning, many states have both weak counties and minimal state power over a large number of small municipalities. For instance, Pennsylvania has 2565 municipal governments, and New Jersey has 566 municipal governments (with an average size of just 13.1 square miles). This makes it almost impossible to execute (or even discuss) environmental planning, smart growth strategies, public transit, and other issues that

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require a regional approach. The result is often a pernicious, counterintuitive combination of slow economic growth with fast sprawl.

What's needed is an approach that retains the best qualities of home rule, while delivering the benefits of regionalism. While the quality of execution will determine success or failure in the long run, the most important first step lies in defining the goal and region...in other words, selecting the right activity and the right geography. Either one can work quite well on its own, but can be tremendously powerful when combined. The activity suggested (no surprise here) is restorative development. Restoration is unsurpassed in its ability to bring together and motivate diverse stakeholders.

The integrating focus that often works best is water (although transportation and catastrophe can also be excellent integrators). It might be an estuary, a watershed, a river, an urban waterfront, an urban stream, a large lake, an aquifer, a reef, or an ocean, but water has unsurpassed ability to unite people. Combine a restorative model with a focus on water, and you've got a sound foundation for a regional initiative. Once you've got the region united around water, you can start talking about regional approaches to transportation, power, or...?

The power of water as a focus for regionalism isn't a new insight. John Wesley Powell published an 1890 essay entitled "Institutions for the Arid Lands," which recommended that the ideal unit of governance for the American West would be commonwealths defined by watersheds. He said "there is a body of interdependent and unified interests and values, all collected in [a] hydrographic basin, and all segregated by well-defined boundary lines from the rest of the world. The people in such a district have common interests, common rights, and common duties, and must necessarily work together for common purposes." For more on Powell and on applications of his thinking, read *Working Across Boundaries: A Framework for Regional Collaboration* from the July 2004 issue of *Land Lines*, the excellent newsletter of the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy.

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