

Member Perspective: Jason Hanna

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What are the benefits and opportunities around brownfield redevelopment in our region?

Ten years ago, we were a nation dependent on securing foreign sources of fuel such as natural gas. The natural gas that heats our homes and fuels our manufacturing industries traveled great distances and was at times was produced in countries fraught with political issues. However, in the last eight years, due to the advancement of onshore unconventional drilling, we have tapped vast resources inside our nation's borders. We are now a nation rich with natural gas and the opportunities afforded by its usage. Here, in the greater Philadelphia region, the opportunities abound due to our proximity to the largest unconventional gas reservoir in the U.S. – the Appalachian Basin (Marcellus and Utica shale).

There exists a concern that using natural gas offsets our goal of using renewable energy such as solar or wind-powered energy to power our everyday lives and we don't often read about the environmental benefits of using natural gas. The fact is, we as a nation are reliant on the infrastructure we've built, and cannot simply "flip the switch" to using purely renewable energy tomorrow. The technology and the infrastructure simply does not exist yet. As we move toward this goal, however, the use of natural gas offers immediate environmental benefits that should be recognized. One such benefit is improving our air quality by replacing less efficient coal and oil with clean-burning natural gas.

A second benefit relates to the economic development occurring in our region as a result of the opportunity of a new supply of natural gas to feed new industry and to energize redevelopment of so-called brownfield sites in our region. Each one of us can identify brownfield sites in our towns and region – perhaps a vacant gas station properties, or empty lots that used to house a factory. Due to its rich industrial heritage, the Greater Philadelphia region has a wealth of brownfield sites, many located along our rivers, railways and highways. In some places, there are entire clusters of brownfields that are poised for redevelopment. These sites often are in close proximity to rail service and transportation centers to allow access to market and as well as have required utilities within the parcel for immediate development.

At Langan, our environmental consultants and engineers help developers identify and revitalize brownfield properties so they can become clean, viable, and often tax revenue-generating sites.

The increased economic development we are experiencing in our area due to the energy industry is creating a demand for real estate in areas where no greenfields exist, yet brownfields abound. Through Langan's active involvement with the Greater Philadelphia Energy Action Team, we seek to promote the use of brownfields for energy facilities by using site selection tools and Pennsylvania's progressive brownfield program to identify, cleanup and redevelop sites. The outcome is good for the environment, good for the local neighborhood, and good for the regional economy.

If you are interested in learning more about the work of the Greater Philadelphia Energy Action Team (GPEAT) or becoming an Action Team member, please contact [Erin Vizza](#). Members of GPEAT have the opportunity to work on issues surrounding the development of the energy and manufacturing sectors in the Greater Philadelphia region through working groups focused on Business Attraction and Marketing; Natural Gas Use; and Advocacy.

Learn more about the the opportunities and challenges for Greater Philadelphia to leverage the Marcellus/Utica natural gas resources to accelerate growth in our region detailed in the "[A Pipeline for Growth: Fueling Economic Revitalization with Marcellus and Utica Shale Gas](#)" report.