



Sites in Reuse

Joslyn Manufacturing and Supply Co. Superfund Site

49th and France Avenue, Brooklyn Center, Minnesota 55422



From left to right: The Wickes Furniture building; the Baker Furniture building; the Caribou Coffee building

Site size: 30 acres

Site Reuses: Four companies currently operate on the site. They are: Wickes Furniture, Minnesota Toro Inc., Baker Furniture, and Caribou Coffee.



INTRODUCTION

The Joslyn Manufacturing and Supply Company site was one of the worst Superfund sites in Minnesota, and was considered an eyesore by many in the community. Now, as France Avenue Business Park, it has become one of the first Superfund sites in the state to be redeveloped for commercial use.

SITE HISTORY

From 1920 to 1980, a succession of companies treated wooden poles and ties at the 30-acre Joslyn site, in the city of Brooklyn Center, a suburb six miles northwest of downtown Minneapolis. Over the course of the wood treating facility's operations, contaminated wastewater and sludge from the wood treating processes were disposed of in ponds and pits on the site, contaminating ground water and soil. After ceasing operations in 1980, Joslyn removed wood-treating solutions and properly disposed of them at a hazardous waste facility in 1981. In 1983, the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) named Joslyn as a responsible party for the site and requested that Joslyn investigate and clean up the site. The Joslyn facility was listed on the National Priorities List (NPL) in 1984, but through an agreement with EPA, MPCA continued to oversee the site's cleanup. In 1988, after completing the remedial investigation, Joslyn excavated additional contaminated soil and disposed of it in a hazardous waste

landfill. The site's ground water is being cleaned using a pump-and-treat system, which continues to be operated and maintained by Joslyn. After cleanup of the site was completed, Joslyn placed a fence around the vacant property to protect the remedy.

THE REUSE PROCESS

It was not long before the site's reuse potential caught the eye of Real Estate Recycling (RER), a redevelopment company specializing in previously contaminated land. RER approached the City of Brooklyn Center to discuss the possibility of redevelopment. Initially, the City was skeptical about the possibility of redeveloping the site, given the site's complexity, negative perceptions of the site, and the amount of funding needed. However, with RER as the motivator, the City was willing to fully and actively cooperate in the redevelopment project.

One obstacle to reuse was Joslyn's unwillingness to sell or redevelop the property. Joslyn thought that allowing the property to be redeveloped would increase the company's liability. After a year and a half of talks with Joslyn, RER was able to convince the company that the redevelopment envisioned by RER would actually decrease Joslyn's liability.

In 1999, Joslyn agreed to sell the property to RER, with

the stipulation that Joslyn would not be responsible for any additional environmental costs associated with the redevelopment. To help comfort lenders' liability concerns, the part of the Joslyn site that RER wanted to redevelop was deleted from the state Superfund list in 1999 and the NPL in 2002. The West Area of the site was not included in this "partial deletion;" it is still being remediated. RER also increased the area available for redevelopment by purchasing several small adjacent parcels. After RER purchased the site, public meetings were held to gather input from the local community, which largely supported redevelopment of the site.

In order to make the site safe enough for reuse, additional remediation had to be done, beyond what Joslyn was required to do under the 1985 consent order. RER sampled and subsequently remediated contaminated soil to levels that would allow for industrial redevelopment. Government grants, funding from RER, and tax increment financing provided by Brooklyn Center helped fund the additional cleanup beyond the \$17 million dollars that Joslyn had already spent. Three restrictive covenants were placed on the Joslyn site to ensure the protectiveness of the remedy. First, no water wells may be constructed on the site. Second, the site is limited to industrial use. Third, rights of access are preserved for state and federal environmental agencies for the purposes of inspection and investigation, and for Joslyn in order to operate and maintain the ground water pump-and-treat system.

THE FRANCE AVENUE BUSINESS PARK

The redevelopment of the Joslyn site as France Avenue Business Park proceeded in three stages. The Wickes Furniture distribution center, completed in 1999, now employs 80 people. The second phase of the redevelopment includes the building that houses Minnesota Toro Inc. and Baker Furniture, and was completed in 2001. The third phase of the redevelopment is the Caribou Coffee Company headquarters, which was completed in 2004 and houses company offices, a coffee shop, and space for roasting, storing, and distributing coffee beans. Each of the three phases won an Award of Excellence from the Minnesota chapter of the National Association of Industrial and Office Properties (NAIOP). The Caribou Coffee headquarters also won the Minneapolis/St. Paul Business Journal's 2004 Best in Real Estate Award for best new industrial building.



An aerial view of France Avenue Business Park

Tom Bublitz, a community development specialist with the City of Brooklyn Center, said, "At first, it seemed like [redevelopment] was too difficult to be done. We weren't sure we could pull it off." Bublitz admits the project was difficult due to the technical nature of the redevelopment and the negative perception of the site that had developed over the years. However, when he reflects on the successful redevelopment of the site and what it means to the community, he says, "Working on this project was one of the most rewarding experiences I've had."

The transformation of the Joslyn Superfund site into the France Avenue Business Park shows that an experienced redeveloper, a motivated City, and a redevelopment-oriented state environmental agency can cooperate to overcome sizable obstacles on the road to redevelopment. The Joslyn site, one of the first Superfund sites in the state to be redeveloped for commercial use, will serve as a model for other Superfund sites in the state and country.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT:

EPA Region 5:

Jena Sleboda
Remedial Project Manager
77 West Jackson Blvd.
Chicago, IL 60604-3507
Phone: (312) 353-1263
Email: sleboda.jena@epa.gov
Site Summary: <http://www.epa.gov/region5/superfund/npl/minnesota/MND044799856.htm>