

Brownfields Success Story

Cheers to a Revitalized Neighborhood Richmond, Virginia

The Fulton Hill neighborhood in Richmond, Virginia's East End has seen a significant increase in investment and redevelopment in the last 10 years. But, until recently, one area had been left largely untouched: a gorgeous waterfront site that sits along the Virginia Capital Trail, a 52-mile cycling path that runs from Richmond to Williamsburg.

Much of Fulton was damaged by severe flooding in the 1970s; many residents took Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Act funds and relocated, while the rest of Fulton Bottom was razed as urban renewal slum clearance. "Although redevelopment stalled for decades, we always believed in the site's potential," says Keisha Birchet, project development manager at the City of Richmond's Department of Housing & Community Development.

The Opportunity

In 2014, Stone Brewing, a brewery headquartered in Escondido, California, was looking to expand their operations on the East Coast. Stone chose the Fulton Hill site from a list of several potential spots, citing Richmond's central location as a shipping and distribution hub, a local population famous for their craft beer fandom and the generous incentives offered by the city.

Stone worked with the Richmond Redevelopment and Housing Authority, which owned the land, the Department of Housing & Community Development, and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development regional office to obtain approval to redevelop the area.

The Assessment

Using U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Brownfields funding, the city spent approximately \$62,000 to conduct Phase I and Phase II site assessments in 2015. While the land designated for brewery construction contained no environmental contamination, the site wasn't totally in the clear. A nearby pre-Civil War gasworks presented an obstacle. The gasworks hasn't been active since World War II, but its petroleum coal byproduct made the area a brownfields site.

Another factor designating the site as a brownfield was its previous use as a concrete mixing plant and staging area. The site sits partially below the flood plain, so structural fill and crushed concrete was brought in to raise the building pad by about six feet. Geopiers and rigid inclusions were required to improve the soil load-bearing capacity for the brewing tanks and equipment.



EPA Grant Recipient:

City of Richmond Department of Housing & Community Development

EPA Grant Type:

Brownfields Assessment

Former Uses:

Vacant, Gasworks, Concrete Mixing Plant and Staging Area

Current Use:

Brewery, Distribution Facility, Tasting Room



Stone worked closely with city and state officials to secure permission to redevelop the site.



The petroleum coal byproduct produced by an abandoned gasworks and the site's previous use as a concrete mixing plant and staging area designated it a brownfields site.





The brewery has become a popular gathering place for Richmonders passionate about craft beer and community service.

“Stone Brewing has revitalized a neighborhood that had been suffering from chronic disinvestment.”

*Keisha Birchet,
Project Development Manager,
Richmond Department
of Housing & Community
Development*

For more information:

Visit the EPA Brownfields website at www.epa.gov/brownfields or contact Stephanie Branche at 215-814-5556 or Branche.Stephanie@epa.gov.

The Development

Virginia's largest craft brewery was built in just 14 months. In total, 14.5 acres were developed to include the main brewery facility, two parking lots for 276 cars, and material receiving and distribution docks.

The production brewery and distribution facility site uses many found and reclaimed materials. Concrete blocks and granite slabs serve as seat walls, retaining walls and steps. The pedestrian bridge is repurposed from a site in Baltimore and provides access across the creek from the main parking lot to the brewery front doors.

Native landscaping and reforestation plantings have increased the biodiversity onsite and improve the Gillies Creek and James River watershed habitat. Stone also saved the trees cleared on the site and donated them to local woodworkers to make furniture that the company intends to repurpose and possibly use in the brewery tasting room.

This facility has pursued LEED Silver certification through the use of eco-friendly materials and design practices that include:

- 100,000 square-feet of photovoltaic solar panels
- Insulated pre-cast wall panels
- LED light fixtures with motion sensors
- Creative storm water management practices
- Efficient mechanical systems
- Reclaimed wood, steel and bridge structure

Towards the end of construction, Richmonders were treated to an unusual sight: Stone's high-end stainless steel brewing equipment making its way down the James River. The massive tanks, primarily shipped from Germany, couldn't be delivered through traditional means, and so were floated to the construction site.

The Benefits

The brewery opened its doors in February 2016 and began large-scale brewing operations later that summer. Birchet says that, in many ways, Stone has been the perfect corporate partner. The company has made a commitment to hiring locally, with 40 percent of its employees living in the city and 33 percent living in East End. The combination of the distribution facility, tasting room and restaurant are expected to bring 300 jobs to the Greater Fulton area. The brewery and distribution facility will employ 90 full-time employees with an average salary of more than \$57,000.

The city has significantly expanded its tax base with the arrival of Stone. Stone sales at the tasting room and restaurant are estimated to total \$10 million per year. Not only has this project activated an underused property that was not on the tax rolls, but it has also impacted the value of surrounding properties—many of which are being studied for the viability of development. Triple Crossing, a local Richmond brewery, has already announced an expansion to a property near the Stone site.

In 2017, Stone launched “Stone's Throw Down in RVA,” a music and beer festival to raise money for local organizations like the James River Association and Neighborhood Resource Center of Greater Fulton.

Plus, Stone and the Richmond Department of Public Utilities worked out an agreement to help treat local wastewater using effluent, which is water used in the brewing process that doesn't make it into the tap as beer. The city had been using a chemical compound to reduce nitrogen levels in the water, but the effluent offers a cheaper, natural alternative. The utility offsets Stone's wastewater treatment fees in exchange for this byproduct.

“Stone and Richmond make a great team,” Birchet says. “They brought a large vacant site back online, along with even more investment to the area, and they offer a product that people in this city love.”