

# Brownfields Success Story

## Turning a Steel Mill Brownfield into Hope

*Steelton, PA*

In the early 2000's, local officials in Steelton Borough announced their vision of turning a former steel mill brownfield site into the redevelopment that would spark Steelton's renaissance—all in the shadow of the former industrial giant. A small, aging steel town just south of Harrisburg, Steelton was established in 1880 to house immigrant workers of the towering steel mill along the Susquehanna River. Steelton's story reads like so many other rust belt communities whose titans of industry have either packed up and left town, or are a shadow of their former selves. By the 2000s, the mill that once employed thousands was left with roughly 500 employees and subject to regular talks of closure and layoffs. Steelton Borough existed under the looming spectre of its largest employer closing in the midst of a long-term economic struggle, characterized by vacant storefronts, declining tax revenues, and no commercial development on the horizon. Taking the story into their own hands, Steelton Borough officials and private and public partners utilized \$631,000 in EPA Brownfields grants to leverage over \$3.1 million in federal, state, and local investments to make their vision of a renaissance a reality.

Fast-forwarding 15 years later, ground is broken on The Steel Works development by Integrated Development Partners (IDP), a \$40 million project comprising over 101,000 square feet of mixed-use commercial, retail, office and affordable market-rate housing. Future tenants include: a Dollar General store, Senior Life healthcare center, and a federally-funded healthcare provider. The project will also create 41 apartment units, office and retail space, and "The Brickyard" - a community green space and amphitheater. While the steel mill continues to operate directly in the background, the Steel Works will usher in the commercial activity of Steelton's future.

### A Complex Site Requiring Multiple Resources

The brownfield site of The Steel Works is an approximately six-acre collection of multiple parcels with varying historical uses including a vacant gas station, an auto mechanic garage, a funeral home, a former bar, and a former restaurant. The largest parcel consists of a paved-over former steel mill canal that stored water for use in the steel-making process. The sheer diversity in uses on this former industrial site created a mixed bag of environmental conditions that required significant resources.



Concept drawing of a 41-unit apartment complex, one of many planned reuses of the Steel Works brownfield site.

#### EPA Grant Recipient:

Steelton Borough  
Dauphin County

#### Grant Types:

2007 Hazardous Substances Grant  
2009 Petroleum Assessment Grant  
2013 DEP Brownfield Grant  
2017 EPA County-Wide Brownfield Grant

#### Former Uses:

Steel Mill Recycled Water Canal  
Gas Station  
Auto mechanics Garage  
Funeral Home  
Restaurants  
Bar  
Residential

#### Future Uses:

Dollar General Store  
Senior Life Health Center  
Apartment Units  
Office and Retail Space  
Community Green Space and Amphitheater



Former structures on The Steel Works site included a gas station/garage, auto mechanic garage, bar, two restaurants, apartment buildings, a funeral home, and a cinderblock storage structure. EPA funds were paired with local and private dollars to complete demolition of these structures and remediate the project site.



Officials break ground on The Steel Works Development on October 7<sup>th</sup>, 2020. The first retail tenant will open their doors by year end.

***“This is what economic development is about. Giving people a reason to come to Steelton Borough and enticing them to stay.”***

- Jonathan Bowser  
Integrated Development Partners



A concept plan for The Steel Works includes a mix of retail, office space, apartments, a healthcare facility, and The Brickyard Community Park and Amphitheatre.

From 2007 to 2009, Steelton Borough utilized a \$200,000 EPA Community-Wide Brownfields Hazardous Substances Grant and a \$200,000 EPA Community-Wide Petroleum Assessment Grant to conduct environmental investigation on the site, resulting in Phase I studies for the site as well as additional monitoring.

In 2013, the Borough utilized an additional \$180,500 Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection Brownfield Grant coupled with EPA funds to perform Underground Storage Tank (UST) removals at the site of the auto garage and gas station, demolish one gas station/garage, one auto garage, one former bar, and one restaurant on site, and install groundwater monitoring wells.

In 2017, with the USTs removed and most structures cleared from the site, the Borough utilized another \$231,000 in EPA County-Wide Brownfields Grant funds to complete a Phase II assessment of the site which the developer is utilizing to guide site work. Fortunately, the Recognized Environmental Concerns identified in the report were standard-fair for the developer and can be remediated without major complication.

In 2019, the Dauphin County Land Bank invested \$219,500 to demolish and level grade all remaining structures under IDP ownership, paving the way for site work and vertical construction. In addition, EPA funds also helped leverage over \$1 million in local dollars, \$308,000 in Dauphin County Local Share Municipal Grant funds, and additional state dollars to prepare the site. As of the October 7<sup>th</sup>, 2020 groundbreaking, IDP plans to have vertical construction completed on the first pad, where the Dollar General will open by year-end. The Senior Life facility is expected to open in 2021 with completion of retail, office space, and apartments occurring by 2022.

### **The Impact of The Steel Works on Steelton Borough**

The stakeholders responsible for the Steel Works Project held fast to their vision through years of trials including the 2008 recession—and for good reason. The Steel Works is projected to bring over 100 new jobs to Steelton Borough as well as an additional \$214,202 in annual tax revenue. It will also bring a much-needed healthcare center to the community. Potential future uses could further address the food desert status of Steelton through the establishment of a grocery store tenant, and the need for pre-K education programming through the establishment of an early education facility.

More importantly, the project brings long-awaited hope to a community that has endured a prolonged economic decline mirroring the decline of its largest employer. In the shadow of the towering steel mill, on the brownfield once used in its production, a renaissance is finally underway.

#### **For more information:**

Visit the EPA Brownfields website at [www.epa.gov/brownfields](http://www.epa.gov/brownfields) or contact:

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