



For Worcester, the New Gateway Park is an Impressive First Step in an Area-Wide Transformation

Worcester, Massachusetts

Located just under 50 miles from Boston, the historically industrial City of Worcester, Massachusetts covers some 37 square miles in the state's approximate center. Despite its size, Worcester has less than 100 acres available for new development—and with more than two hundred documented brownfields, the city recognized that restoration of these idle and underused properties was crucial to promoting development, revitalizing its economy, and reversing the high unemployment and poverty rates found in some of its neighborhoods. On an 11-acre former industrial area now known as Gateway Park, the city and its partner, Gateway Park LLC, are developing a bioengineering research and mixed-use complex that is transforming the once-underused area, drawing millions of dollars in private investment, and creating hundreds of new jobs.

Long invested in transforming its brownfields, Worcester was the recipient of an EPA Brownfields Assessment Pilot grant in 1999. This funding was used to investigate contamination levels on the South Worcester Industrial Park property, which the city is currently redeveloping into 1.7 million square feet of industrial, manufacturing, and warehouse space. For Worcester's north side, Gateway Park LLC created a master redevelopment plan for a 55-acre, mostly industrial area rife with underused, likely contaminated properties. While active businesses still remained in this target area, including an art museum and some commercial facilities, idle brownfields within these 55 acres included former steel manufacturers, auto body shops, and a plating company.

What would become the first major project within the north Worcester target area was initiated by a partnership between two non-profit entities: the Worcester Polytechnic Institute (WPI), which had been looking for a location for its newly funded bioengineering wing; and the Worcester Business Development Corporation (WBDC). These two organizations formed Gateway Park LLC and through it, purchased multiple properties totaling 11 acres within the larger project area. One of these 11 acres, once home to the New England Plating Company, was designated as the future parking location for the planned, mixed-use complex.

Given its history of metal plating activity, this one-acre property proved the most difficult and most expensive site to clean.



The new WPI Life Sciences and Bioengineering Center (foreground) and the renovated industrial building, which contains offices, meeting rooms, and shared facilities (at left).

JUST THE FACTS:

- With more than 200 documented brownfields, the City of Worcester recognized that restoration of these idle and underused properties was crucial to promoting development, revitalizing its economy, and reversing high unemployment and poverty rates.
- State and federal funding that included an EPA Brownfields Revolving Loan Fund grant enabled cleanup of an 11-acre former industrial area targeted as a mixed-use, biotechnology/biomedical facility and business incubator.
- When development is fully realized, the new "Gateway Park" will create 2,500 new jobs, including 300 biomedical research positions—as well as more than \$6 million in annual taxes.

Gateway Park's master plan calls for the rehabilitation and construction of buildings containing 1,564,800 square feet of mixed-use space, and 1.7 acres of residential development. The project was recognized in 2006 with the James D.P. Farrell "Brownfields Project of the Year" award from the Environmental Business Council of New England.

Gateway Park LLC received two \$350,000 cleanup loans from the Massachusetts Development Finance Agency and had dedicated one of those loans solely for the former plating property, but still found itself needing additional cleanup funds. The solution was found within a \$1.28 million EPA Brownfields Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) grant awarded to Worcester in August 2005. With an additional \$200,000 provided to the Gateway Park project from the RLF, cleanup of the former plating company property and the remaining 10 acres was completed in March 2006. This cleanup included demolition of buildings and the safe disposal of thousands of square feet of asbestos-containing debris. Building materials were also recycled whenever possible.

Gateway Park's first building, completed in Spring 2007, is the \$40 million, four-story, 124,600-square-foot Life Sciences and Bioengineering Center. WPI occupies some three-quarters of the Center, which houses the university's graduate research programs in biology and biotechnology, biomedical engineering, chemical engineering, and chemistry and biochemistry. On the first floor, Massachusetts Biomedical Initiatives created the Gateway Park Incubator—a facility that includes laboratories, shared equipment, and offices for up to six startup biomedical companies. The remainder of the building is being leased to business and commercial entities.

In all, Gateway Park's master plan calls for the rehabilitation and construction of buildings containing 1,564,800 square feet of mixed-use space, and a 1.7-acre parcel has been designated for residential development. On the one-acre site of the former plating company, a 200-space parking lot and a 640-space parking garage are now complete. The Economic Development Administration provided a \$2.5 million grant to the project for this parking development, while the U.S. Department of Transportation awarded \$1.8 million for improvements to public road access in the project area. In addition, the State of Massachusetts awarded a \$2 million grant to the city for infrastructure improvements within Gateway Park.



An interior view of one of the modern laboratory bays in the WPI Life Sciences and Bioengineering Center at Gateway Park.

The Gateway Park project was recognized in 2006 with WPI's receipt of the James D.P. Farrell "Brownfields Project of the Year" award from the Environmental Business Council of New England—an award presented annually to a project that exemplifies excellence in overcoming social, economic, technical, and institutional challenges. When development is fully realized, WBDC estimates that Gateway Park will create 2,500 new jobs, including 300 biomedical research positions—as well as more than \$6 million in annual taxes. For more information on Worcester's Gateway Park project and Brownfields Revolving Loan Funds, please contact EPA Region 1 at (617) 918-1105 or at www.epa.gov/region01/brownfields/.

CONTACTS:

For more information contact
U.S. EPA REGION 1
(617) 918-1105

Visit the EPA Brownfields Web site at:
www.epa.gov/region01/brownfields/