

Brownfields

Success Story



Bringing Affordable Housing to a Historic Cotton Mill

Greensboro, Georgia

The City of Greensboro was selected to receive a brownfields assessment grant in 2007. Located 80 miles outside of Atlanta in Greene County, Greensboro (population 3,359) is a small, predominantly agricultural community. The City received \$200,000 to conduct environmental assessments at brownfields. The City identified three properties to be assessed with EPA funding. Brownfields assessments were conducted by the City to leverage the cleanup and redevelopment resources needed to reduce blight and improve opportunities for residents.

One of the brownfields that the City assessed with the EPA funding was the former Mary-Leila Mill property, located at 316 North West Street, within walking distance of downtown. The City worked closely with the bank and the developer at the time, to assist with the redevelopment of the property. The City used EPA grant funding on the Mill property to hire consultants to conduct both the Phase I and Phase II environmental site assessments.

Priming the Property for Redevelopment

The former cotton mill property required significant environmental assessment, including the \$115,000 of EPA brownfields funding. Taking the time to carefully develop a site reuse strategy and remediate the project site facilitated its reuse for housing. The site developer, Greensboro Mill, LP purchased the property and conducted the cleanup under the Georgia Department of Natural Resources Brownfield Program. The Environmental Protection Division approved the Corrective Action Plan and its amendments in 2017. The property had contamination relating to its operation as a cotton mill. The Cleanup consisted of the following activities:

- Contaminated soils in the impacted areas outside of the asphalt or concrete covered areas were excavated and removed from the property. Approximately 2600 tons of impacted soils were removed and transported to a Subtitle D Landfill.
- Confirmatory samples were collected from the excavated areas.
- Excavations were backfilled with fill material from an off-site location.
- Asphalt or concrete covered areas with contaminated soils beneath utilize engineering controls for the cleanup.
- An Environmental Covenant was recorded as the institutional control.



EPA Grant Recipients:

City of Greensboro, Georgia
Georgia Department of Natural Resources

Grant Types:

EPA Assessment Grant,
EPA State Response Program Grant

Former Use:

Cotton Mill operating for over a century



Current Use:

71 Loft Apartments



"We are extremely proud of what has been accomplished. We had to go through a lot of hoops and hurdles, but now we have a mill that has been revived."

Mayor Glenn Wright

The Mary-Leila Mill was a major employer in Greene County for more than a century. At one time 300 workers manufactured cotton sheeting.



Not until 2006 when cleanup was initiated would the historic mill begin its transformation.

Once the cleanup was completed, the Compliance Status Report, which was required by the Georgia Brownfield Act, could be submitted to the state. The report, which documents the environmental assessments and cleanup, is required under the state program for the property owner to obtain state liability protection. Through the state program the developer's environmental consultant was able to successfully mitigate health risks for the property's future residents.

EPA provides funding to States and Tribes to enhance state response programs and supports the cleanup of brownfield sites under state programs.

"Mary-Leila Lofts serves as a template for how to reuse and redevelop brownfield properties in rural Georgia. This redevelopment project not only provides beneficial reuse as affordable housing, but it preserves historic infrastructure and has resulted in a net positive on the environment." says Shannon D. Ridley, Georgia EPD Brownfields Coordinator.

The Mill Conversion

Redevelopment was more than 14 years in the making. After holding public meetings about the future redevelopment, the city took the necessary steps to rezone the property from industrial to *commercial planned unit development* in 2013. Renovation of the old mill was designed for individuals and families who earn between \$15,000 to \$30,000 per year and meet the requirements of the Georgia Department of Community Affairs' Section 42 Low Income Housing Tax Credit Program.

The successful construction of the 71 loft apartments has taken shape over the past four years and nearly all of the energy-efficient, affordable homes are occupied by working families. Historic features such as the exposed brick wall, arched windows, water tower and original wood plank flooring were preserved.

Over ten million dollars of the property owner/developer's money was invested in this property to make this project a success. In 2018, the Mary-Leila Lofts received the Georgia Trust for Historic Preservation Chairman's Award, which recognizes extraordinary efforts contributing to the preservation of Georgia's historic resources.

Other Communities

"EPA administers brownfields grants to communities all over the country, but in the southeast it's the former mills that really need brownfields grant funding" says Barbara Alfano, EPA Region 4 Brownfields Coordinator. "This community had the persistence often required to revitalize brownfields." EPA Brownfields Assessment and Cleanup grants are competed and awarded annually.

EPA 560-F-17-19
May 2019



For More Information

EPA Brownfields Program Website: www.epa.gov/brownfields

EPA Region 4 Brownfields Coordinator:

Barbara Alfano at 404-562-8923 or alfano.barbara@epa.gov

Georgia EPD Brownfields Coordinator:

Shannon D. Ridley at 404-657-8616 or ridley.shannon@dnr.ga.gov

Georgia Department of Community Affairs:

<https://www.dca.ga.gov>

Site Documents: Greene County Public Library