

Brownfields

Success Story

Creative Paper and Packaging Co.

Worcester, Mass

Ninety new apartments will soon be available on five acres that once hosted a paper recycling company. The site of the former Creative Paper and Packaging Co. is the future home of a \$20 million development of one- and two-bedroom apartments. The site is located along the James Street Corridor in Worcester, which is a gateway to the city from the southwest. This area has been recognized by the state as having high unemployment and high asthma rates.

The Creative Paper and Packaging Co., a 124,100-square-foot single-story building at 175 James St., was used as a cardboard recycling facility from the 1980s through 2011. Prior use of the property was as a cardboard box manufacturer. In 2011, the company ceased operations at the site, and the site sat empty. In January 2012, a portion of the roof collapsed, and all utilities were shut off, including water for fire suppression.

Priming the Property for Redevelopment

The Worcester Fire Department contacted EPA's Emergency Response program in early 2013 with concerns about barrels of chemicals remaining in the 57-year-old building. EPA found multiple 55-gallon drums and containers of hazardous, ignitable, corrosive, and reactive chemicals along with asbestos pipe insulation in the building.

At the request of the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection, EPA's Emergency Response program did a cleanup in the summer and fall of 2013 to address the most time-critical issues at the site. This short-term cleanup cost \$191,000 and included removing the drums, containers, and asbestos pipe insulation.



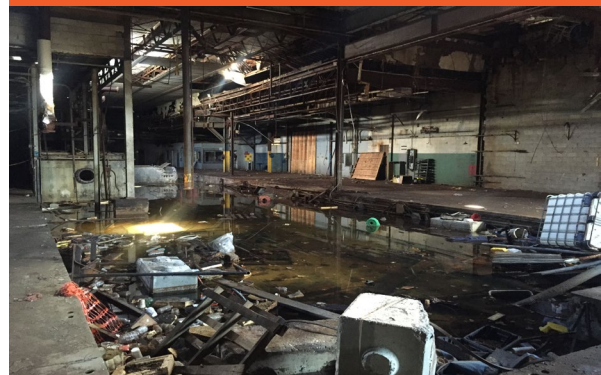
Phase I Apartment Construction (photo credit: City of Worcester)

EPA Grant Recipient:
City of Worcester, Mass

Grant Types:
Assessment, Cleanup, and
Revolving Loan Fund

Current Use:
Townhouse-style Housing

Former Uses:
Cardboard Recycling Facility



Inside of abandoned site prior to cleanup (photo credit: City of Worcester)



Rendering of final project (photo credit: City of Worcester)

“A contaminated, underutilized property has been remediated and put back to productive use, leveraging \$20 million in private investment to create 90 units of much needed housing for our community.”

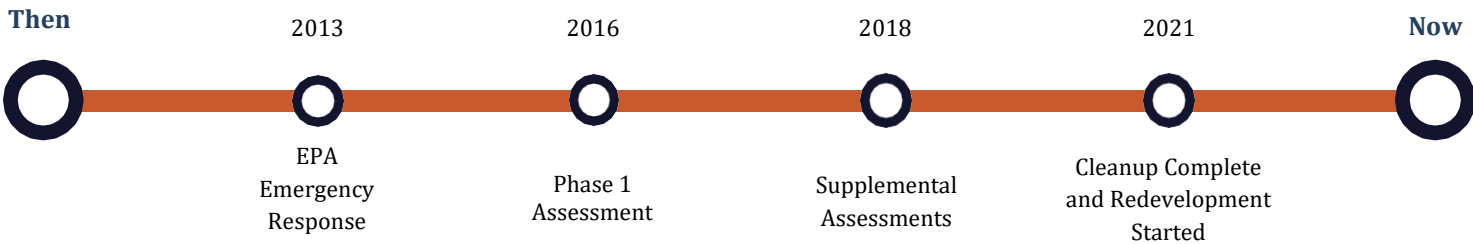
Peter Dunn
Chief Development Officer, City of Worcester

The City of Worcester remained concerned about the vacant site because of additional asbestos in the building and residual contamination in the soils and wanted to see it redeveloped for a productive purpose. Because of their extensive experience with EPA’s Brownfields program, the city charted a course to take control of the property and use the Brownfields process to complete cleaning up the site and readying it for redevelopment.

The City of Worcester took ownership of the property through tax foreclosure in 2014, rezoned the parcel as residential, and asked for proposals to redevelop the property. Through this process, a private developer was selected to redevelop the site into much-needed market rate housing that would transform the James Street corridor. The developer funded Phase I and II environmental assessments from 2016 through 2019 to further characterize any residual pollution left on the site after the EPA Emergency Response action.

Today

Through its Brownfields Revolving Loan Fund program, the city loaned the developer \$1.25 million in March of 2020 that paid to demolish the building, remove additional asbestos and other hazardous building materials, and excavate and remove soils contaminated with PCBs and arsenic. Phase I of the construction developed 16 market rate apartments in 2022, ranging in size from 900 to 1,200 square feet. The remaining phase of project will include 74 additional units for a total of 90 units. The new apartment complex, called 175 James Street, is revitalizing a gateway corridor that welcomes people coming into Worcester. Investments from this project have spurred other improvements along this corridor, including a mixed-use retail complex, a new self-storage business, and improvements to nearby Hadwen Park. Residents of the James Street Corridor are enjoying a revitalization of their neighborhood with this project transforming an eyesore into rental housing.



For more information:
Visit the EPA Brownfields website at www.epa.gov/brownfields or contact Katy Deng at 617-918-1286 or Deng.Katy@epa.gov.