



Brownfields Success Story

Photo credit: Dan Regner and Louis Vieira.

Opening New Doors with Senior Housing Dellwood, Missouri

In November 2014, civil unrest following the death of Michael Brown left Dellwood, Missouri, facing significant challenges. Among the affected businesses was an auto supply store, one of 13 buildings destroyed by arson. Located in a census tract where 90% to 95% of residents are low-income and/or a sensitive population, the site remained vacant for years, symbolizing the broader economic difficulties of the community. The lot stood as a constant reminder of what had been lost, and there was a need to transform it into something beneficial for the community.

The Solution

In 2016, the St. Louis Economic Development Partnership sought assistance from EPA Region 7 to assess and prepare several blighted properties for reuse, including the former auto supply store. The EPA provided Land Revitalization Technical Assistance to support a design charrette in May 2017. During the charrette, community stakeholders, including residents, local officials and nonprofit organizations, identified senior housing as a critical local need. In addition, EPA supported a market analysis for the brownfield sites, which confirmed the demand for senior housing. The design charrette played a key role in ensuring the brownfields reuse aligned with the community's priorities.

The team's engagement with the community through public workshops and visioning sessions helped shape the redevelopment vision, ensuring that it was both realistic and achievable. This approach was essential for gaining support and ensuring the project met local needs.

With EPA Targeted Brownfields Assessment funding, a Phase I Environmental Site Assessment was conducted in June 2020, confirming the site was free of significant contamination and ready for redevelopment.



One of the buildings damaged during the unrest following the death of Michael Brown.

Key Funding Sources and Investments:

- **Total Project Cost:**
\$10 million, funded through a combination of EPA support, local investment and private sources
- **EPA Targeted Brownfields Assessment Funding:**
Approximately \$5,000 for a Phase I Environmental Site Assessment to confirm site suitability
- **EPA Land Revitalization Technical Assistance:**
Approximately \$90,000 to support design charrette and planning, including conceptual designs and market analysis
- **St. Louis County Port Authority Demolition Funds:**
Supported the demolition of blighted properties to make way for new development
- **Reinvest North County Fund:**
Supported community investment and redevelopment projects in North County, including Dellwood
- **New Market Tax Credits:**
Offered incentives for private investment in low-income communities



A rendering from the planning phase reflecting the community-driven design process where senior housing was prioritized.

“The cooperation between the Urban League, EPA and the St. Louis Economic Development Partnership was vital to overcoming challenges and driving success.”

Regional Leader

The Urban League of Metropolitan St. Louis led the redevelopment effort, combining EPA support with local and private funding to construct a \$10 million senior housing facility with 44 modern, affordable apartments for Dellwood’s aging population. “The EPA provided more than just funding,” says David Doyle, Land Revitalization Coordinator for EPA Region 7. “We offered technical support, such as market analyses, conceptual designs and sustainable redevelopment strategies, to help move the project forward.”

Collaboration played a crucial role in the project’s success, with strong cooperation between the Urban League, EPA and the St. Louis Economic Development Partnership helping to overcome challenges and ensure the project’s positive outcome. This effort demonstrated the power of working together for community development.

The project was a direct response to the community’s expressed needs, with residents voicing their desires, and the team following through to bring those visions to life.

Despite challenges such as rising construction costs and fundraising difficulties due to COVID-19, the partners remained committed. The pandemic severely impacted fundraising efforts, and many businesses that had initially shown interest in supporting the project moved on. Nevertheless, the team persisted, recognizing the importance of the project for the community.

The Outcome

By 2024, the transformation was complete. The former auto supply site is now a senior housing complex providing safe, affordable living spaces with amenities tailored to the needs of its residents, such as reliable transportation to medical appointments and family events. The facility employs a team for operations and resident support, including a building manager, a janitor and a part-time activities coordinator.

One resident shared that she has been very satisfied with her apartment, noting that it has everything she needs, such as a washer, dryer, dishwasher and mobility-friendly features, calling it her “little castle.” Being closer to family and the nearby community is also important to her.

Another resident mentioned enjoying his time in the area, highlighting the strong sense of community spirit where neighbors look out for each other. Living in close proximity to relatives and familiar faces has been a significant benefit.

The redevelopment has spurred additional projects along West Florissant Avenue, encouraging further investment in the area. Local leaders are actively purchasing and repurposing vacant, damaged properties to encourage investment and prevent economic decline.

For more information:

Visit the EPA Brownfields website at www.epa.gov/brownfields/technical-assistance or contact the Region 7 office at 800-223-0425 or R7_Brownfields@epa.gov.



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Michael Holmes, Regional Executive Vice President of the Urban League, and Tammie Davis, Building Manager, sharing a moment together at the Senior Housing Center, where collaboration has made the project a success.



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Residents like Frank Stallworth (left) and Hiawatha Davis (right) are part of a close-knit community, where neighbors support and care for each other.

With support from EPA, the project has shown how communities can create tangible benefits for residents and drive meaningful redevelopment. More than just a building, the redevelopment signifies a step forward for Dellwood, illustrating how collaboration and clear goals can lead to impactful outcomes.

Partnering with EPA

The Dellwood senior housing project demonstrates the practical benefits of EPA assistance in supporting local brownfield projects. Communities looking to undertake similar initiatives can learn from Dellwood's approach:

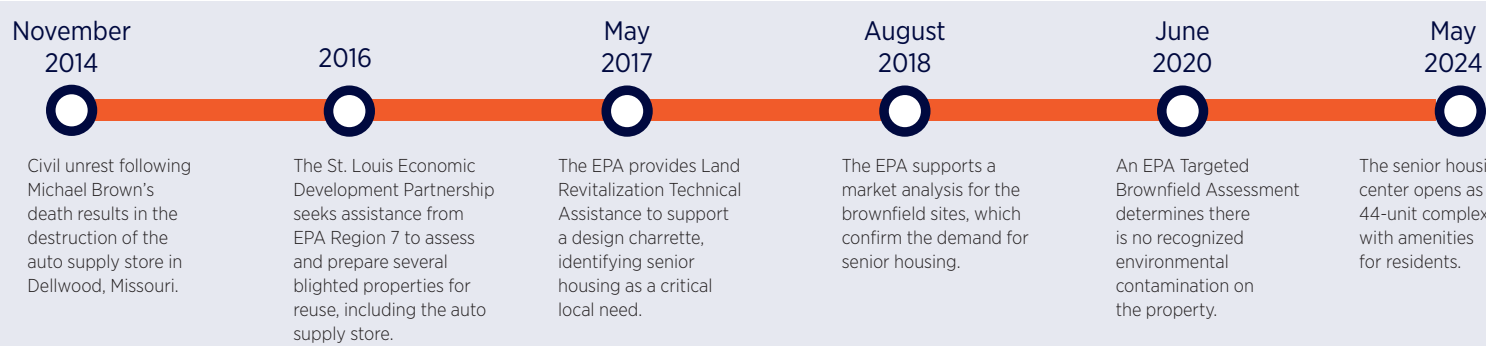
- **Identify community needs:** Engage with residents and stakeholders to determine the most pressing needs for the site.
- **Leverage EPA resources:** Use tools like environmental assessments, market analysis and design charrettes to build a strong foundation for brownfield site reuse.
- **Foster collaboration:** Partner with local organizations, nonprofits and government entities to align goals and share resources.
- **Plan for sustainability:** Incorporate features that ensure long-term viability, such as energy-efficient upgrades and robust community engagement.

The EPA's technical assistance is both straightforward and adaptable, serving as a resource that communities can effectively utilize to achieve their redevelopment goals.

For communities facing similar challenges, the Dellwood project serves as an example of how to turn blighted properties into valuable assets. By promoting sustainable development, the EPA's Brownfields and Land Revitalization Program provides practical support for long-term community improvement. "This project shows what's possible with the right tools and partnerships," Doyle says.

The Urban League Senior Housing Center plays a crucial role in Dellwood's redevelopment. It represents more than just a building; it is about creating a safe and thriving community for seniors, ensuring they feel valued and secure as part of the area's revitalization.

Urban League Senior Housing Center Redevelopment Timeline



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