

SAINT REST FOOD MINISTRY FOOD TO SHARE

Brownfields Success Story

From Meatpacking Plant to Food Hub

A Brownfields Transformation in Fresno

An abandoned meatpacking warehouse in Fresno, California, has been transformed into a vibrant community food and resource hub. Led by Saint Rest Baptist Church and the City of Fresno, with support from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the site is now home to the Saint Rest + Food to Share Hub.

The Opportunity: Revitalizing a Vacant Site

After previous business owners left the property, it had sat dormant for years, burdened by neglect and environmental challenges. Like many older industrial properties, it required environmental assessment and cleanup before it could be safely reused. Once identified as a potential catalyst for revitalization, the site became a rallying point for community members and local leaders to reimagine its future.

"When we first assessed the site, we recognized the challenges posed by contamination and years of neglect," says David Densley, Projects Administrator for the City of Fresno. "But we also saw the potential for transformation and knew that, together, we could turn those barriers into the foundation for a valuable community asset."

The Role of EPA, Fresno Metro Ministry and Other Community Partners

In 2011, EPA supported early community engagement and action planning through Land Revitalization Technical Assistance. In 2015, the city received an EPA Brownfields Area-Wide Planning Grant to complete its Elm Avenue Revitalization Strategy. EPA also provided site assessment resources—including a Targeted Brownfields Assessment and a Community-Wide Assessment Grant—to help



Former meatpacking plant prior to cleanup and renovation.

Key Funding Sources and Investments

Total Project Cost: Approximately \$6.27 million

Federal Support

- EPA Brownfields and Land Revitalization Program:
 - Technical assistance for brownfields action planning, community engagement and reuse financing strategies
 - \$175,000 Area-Wide Planning Grant
 - \$121,496 for environmental assessments and cleanup planning
- EPA Brownfields Revolving Loan Fund: \$191,000 awarded as a subgrant for environmental cleanup
- U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Earmark Funding: \$665,000

the city identify and address environmental concerns, such as asbestos-containing materials, ammonia tanks and oil drums.

Cleanup was made possible through a Revolving Loan Fund subgrant from the City of Fresno, with Fresno Metro Ministry playing a significant role in securing the funding and helping the project come to fruition. This cleared the way for the safe reuse of the property.

EPA brownfields technical assistance providers, including the Council of Development Finance Agencies and Groundwork USA, offered additional support throughout the project. The council helped stakeholders navigate redevelopment financing, while Groundwork USA supported community engagement. Project funding also came from the California Strategic Growth Council's Transformative Climate Communities program, Kaiser Permanente, Tarlton and Son, Inc., and local partners.

"Collaboration was key," says Daniel Moher, Land Revitalization Coordinator for EPA Region 9. "By bringing together federal, state, local and community resources, we were able to turn a challenging site into a valuable asset."

The Result: The Saint Rest + Food to Share Hub

In May 2024, the newly renovated 6,800-square-foot facility opened its doors, welcoming the community into a space dedicated to food recovery and distribution. Located in a historically disinvested neighborhood—ironically situated in one of California's top agricultural regions—the area had long been classified as a food desert. Early stakeholder engagement confirmed that access to fresh, healthy food was a top community priority, making a food hub the ideal use for the site.

The hub collects surplus food from local businesses and redirects it to service centers and community organizations. A commercial kitchen supports cooking classes and nutrition programs, and monthly food markets offer fresh produce and household goods to local residents.

"This is about more than food," says Pastor DJ Criner of Saint Rest Baptist Church. "It's about restoring dignity and equipping people to lead healthier lives."

The project created 51 jobs during redevelopment and continues to uplift staff, volunteers and partner organizations through ongoing community programming.

"This experience underscores the power of collaboration," says Moher. "When we work hand-in-hand with the community, we're not just cleaning up land—we're creating momentum for lasting change."

Key Funding Sources and Investments

State and Local Support

- Two California Transformative Climate Communities Grants totaling \$1,383,787
- City of Fresno American Rescue Plan Act Funds: \$429,420

Private and Philanthropic Support

- Kaiser Permanente: \$1,000,000
- Tarlton and Son, Inc.: \$527,394
- Community Medical Centers: \$365,000
- CalViva Health: \$355,000
- Central Valley Community Foundation (anonymous donor): \$250,000
- Trinity Health/Saint Agnes Medical Center: \$200,371
- Kresge Foundation: \$175,000
- Valley Children's Healthcare: \$100,000
- JD Food: \$100,000

Additional Community and In-Kind Contributions

- Support from Fresno Metro Ministry, individual donors and local organizations contributing services, labor and gifts: \$297,000



Newly renovated commercial kitchen provides a clean, modern space for food prep and nutrition classes.

For more information:

Visit the EPA Brownfields website at www.epa.gov/brownfields/technical-assistance, or contact Daniel Moher at Moher.Daniel@epa.gov or 415-972-3210.



The Saint Rest + Food to Share Hub offers a welcoming space for food distribution, education and community programs.



Community members gather on distribution day to receive fresh food and connect with local support services.

Moving Forward

The Saint Rest + Food to Share Hub shows how former industrial properties can be repurposed to meet current community needs. With thoughtful planning and strong partnerships, revitalized spaces like this can offer lasting value and support a wide range of local initiatives.

“This project shows that no challenge is insurmountable,” says Densley. “Together, we’re creating a community where everyone can thrive.”

“ With EPA’s support, we didn’t just clean up a site—we created a place that feeds families, builds skills and brings people together. This project shows what’s possible when resources meet real community vision. ”

— Pastor DJ Criner,
Saint Rest Baptist Church



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