

Brownfields

Success Story

Maine National Guard Armory South Portland, Maine

A former armory that was vacant for almost a decade has been redeveloped into a martial arts center, convenience store, and gas station. A right-of-way connects the 2.7-acre property to neighborhoods along a walking and biking trail in South Portland.

The former Maine National Guard Armory, an 83-year old building that changed hands several times in the last four decades, was redeveloped with an eye towards historic preservation. The City of South Portland and a developer worked together to make the property a vibrant addition to the neighborhood.

Priming the Property for Redevelopment

Throughout the late 19th and early 20th centuries, armories were built across the country in urban areas. Construction accelerated during the F.D. Roosevelt administration in response to the Great Depression and outbreak of World War II. The armories housed equipment of state National Guard units and provided areas for assembly and training. The Maine National Guard Armory was built in 1941 and the Maine Department of Defense used the 34,838-square-foot armory until the 1990s. When the property was auctioned in 2002, the Museum of Glass and Ceramics purchased it and occupied the space for about four years.

In 2006, the City of South Portland conducted a Phase 1 assessment and bought the property in a bankruptcy proceeding and then held it for about 10 years, leasing the space intermittently during that time to the Maine Military Museum and a sound stage company. However, efforts to lease the building were made more difficult due to the presence of hazardous building materials and contamination. The City eventually solicited proposals, selected a developer, and collaborated on brownfields assessment and cleanup as well as an inventory of historic design features that could be preserved during redevelopment. In 2015, the city completed a Phase 2 site assessment and hazardous building materials inventory without EPA funds. In 2016, the city sold the property to a local real estate developer, who leveraged \$4 million to complete the redevelopment. This outcome represents a 25:1 multiplier effect on the \$160,000 investment of EPA funds for the cleanup.

The City of South Portland took possession of the site in 2006, applying for cleanup funding through the Greater Portland Council of Governments. Through its EPA-funded Brownfields Revolving Loan Fund, the Council awarded the city a cleanup loan for \$160,000 and the city provided \$32,000 in matching funds toward the cleanup.



View of Maine National Guard Armory before redevelopment. (Photo credit: City of South Portland)

EPA Grant Recipient:
Greater Portland Council of Governments

Grant Types:
Revolving Loan Fund

Current Use:
Gas Station, Convenience Store, and
Martial Arts Studio

Former Uses:
Maine National Guard Armory



View of Armory's redeveloped modern gas station. (Photo credit: City of South Portland)



View of redeveloped Maine National Guard Armory.
(Photo credit: City of South Portland)

The funding was used to inventory hazardous materials on the property, including asbestos, petroleum products, and building materials, which were then abated and shipped offsite for proper disposal. A developer, a for-profit real estate company, agreed to repay the brownfields loan at the time of closing.

The outcome is a one-of-a kind facility that includes a convenience store and gas station on the first level as well as a martial arts studio on the second level. The fueling stations were installed behind the main building on the site of the former drill hall pad, a unique decision in that most modern gas stations place pumps in front of the building so they can be seen from the road. This was done to preserve the historical façade of the armory, which was guaranteed through a deed restriction.

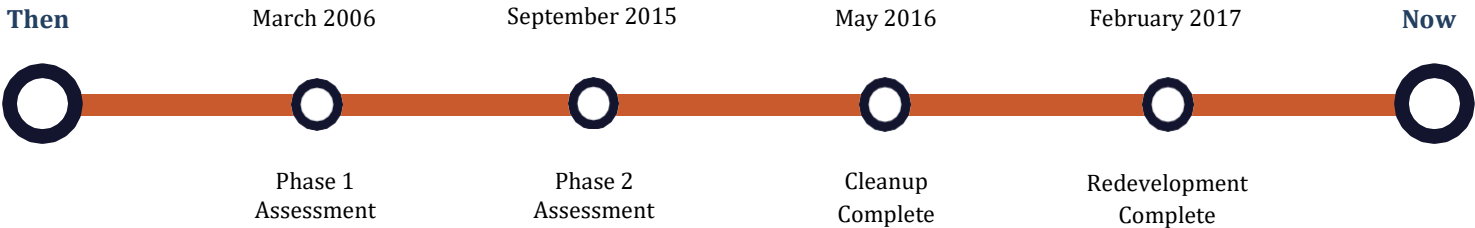
Today

This privately-owned historical building is now home to a convenience store and state-of-the-art gas station. There is also a martial arts studio occupying the second floor, which is now functioning at full capacity, offering summer camps and after-school programs for local youths.

The city retained a trail easement across an electric utility company's adjacent transmission line right of way to provide access from the property to Hinckley Park, a large forested park with trails and a pond. Across from the armory, a former rail-line turned trail called the Greenbelt Walkway runs the entire length of the city with space for biking, running, and walking. This trail extends the length of South Portland and connects the armory property with the neighborhoods along the Greenbelt. The economic development and historic preservation of the armory brought new life to an underutilized property, created jobs, and created new connections to trails within South Portland and to neighboring communities.

"This project demonstrates the redevelopment potential of historic properties, and how they can be re-used in creative ways. The EPA Brownfields program was integral to facilitate the necessary demolition and clean up that resulted in a mixed-use development and preserved the most historically significant part of the building."

Joshua Reny, Assistant Manager for the City of South Portland



For more information:

Visit the EPA Brownfields website at www.epa.gov/brownfields or contact Jessica Dominguez at 617-918-1627 or Dominguez.Jessica@epa.gov