

Brownfields

Success Story

Sanford Energy Corridor

Sanford, Maine

Sanford is the seventh largest community in Maine, located in the southwestern corner of the state. The city has identified a need for a solar energy corridor to support their plans in revitalizing over two million square-feet of former textile mills in the city center. Downtown properties were deemed too small to support a large solar array. To help promote sustainable redevelopment of the mills, the city created the Sanford Energy Redevelopment Corridor. The corridor extends from the downtown mill district to the rural CGA site, a city-owned Brownfields property, which once housed a circuit board recycling facility is approximately 17 acres.

Energizing the Property for Redevelopment

From the mid-1860s, the city's industrial base was established along the Mousam River, which flows through the city-center, primarily for textile mills. Many of the mills, once contaminated by industrial waste, have been assessed and are being cleaned up with U.S. EPA and state Brownfields funding. The CGA site was selected to be part of the energy corridor for its size, city ownership, and proximity to a transmission line. However, the CGA site contained over 3,000 tons of circuit board waste, coated with copper and heavy metals. There were also dilapidated buildings and infrastructure, an underground storage tank, waste pits, and contaminated soil and groundwater. The city first outlined a plan to partner with a developer to site a large solar farm with battery storage, switches, and a substation to create a virtual grid for Sanford. This renewable energy option was designed to attract developers to invest in the downtown mill district. In addition to the planned energy corridor, the city was in the process of constructing a 45-mile fiber optic network. This was to further serve the downtown mill area with high-speed internet, creating new job opportunities within walking distance for future employees in the redeveloped space.



Drums and waste materials littered the property. Circuit board waste covered the 17-acre site and created a public and environmental hazard. (photo credit: EPA)

EPA Grant Recipient:
City of Sanford, Maine

Grant Types:
Assessment and Cleanup Grants
Revolving Loan Fund
128(a) State/Tribal Funding

Current Use:
Solar array to support downtown redevelopment corridor

Former Uses:
Circuit board recycling facility



Circuit board waste with high levels of copper and other metals impacted soil and water at the site. (photo credit: EPA)



Circuit boards strewn across the property created environmental issues and soil and water. (photo credit: EPA)

“The site was covered in environmental hazards and was a nuisance to the surrounding community. Being able to remove 4,000 tons of waste and start the initial site work for a solar array has improved the whole area. ”

Former Sanford Planning Director
Beth Della Valle (Sept 29, 2022)

In the 2000s, the abandoned property quickly became a dumping ground. Residents urged the city to obtain the property. In 2010, Sanford acquired the site through tax foreclosure and evaluated options for cleanup. “The site was covered in environmental hazards and was a nuisance to the surrounding community. Being able to remove 4,000 tons of waste and start the initial site work for a solar array has improved the whole area,” said former Sanford Planning Director, Beth Della Valle. (Sept 29, 2022; Sanford City Manager Office article).

The city worked with the EPA, Maine Department of Environmental Protection, waste removal companies, and contractors to clean up the site. The cleanup process cost approximately \$1.4 million. Most of the funding was from state and regional revolving loan funds and EPA Brownfields funding. Cleanup activities included solid waste removal, tree clearing, wetland restoration, soil screening, remediation, and planting new trees.

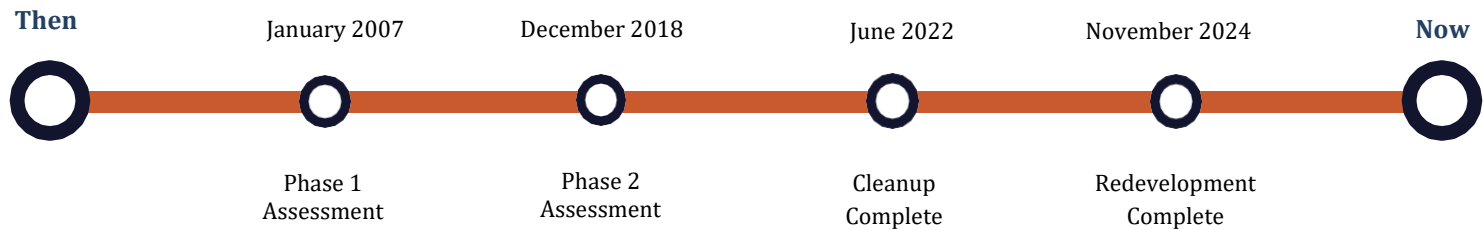
Installation of the solar array began in spring 2023 on the CGA property and an abutting property owned by the Maine Turnpike Authority. Energy created on the city-owned section of the solar farm will be used in the downtown mill district, providing an additional incentive for mill district redevelopment.

Today

In November 2024, the new solar array – rated at 7 megawatts – was completed and went online. This completes the transformation of a contaminated site into a source of clean energy for the local community. The project also represents a big step forward for Maine’s ambitious renewable energy goal of reaching 80% renewable energy by 2030 and 100% by 2050.



Solar array today. (photo credit: City of Sanford, Maine)



For more information:

Visit the EPA Brownfields website at www.epa.gov/brownfields or contact Dorrie Paar at 617-918-1432 or paar.dorrie@epa.gov