

# Brownfields Success Story

## Prime Tanning Mill *The Edge (Berwick, Maine)*

Prime Tanning Mill in Berwick, Maine which operated for over 150 years, was left in disrepair for over a decade after it closed in 2008. Today, the site is occupied by new businesses and has become a housing model for rural Brownfields redevelopment in New England. With the help of federal, state and private funding as well as cooperation between municipal, community and private parties, the 11-acre former leather factory now serves as a focal point for the town. Since this redevelopment, Berwick is expanding its downtown with plans to improve transportation corridors surrounding the site. This will improve access to a centralized economic hub of the community. It is a blueprint for how municipal, community and private groups can come together to reimagine and rebuild a neglected area, fueling local economy and revitalizing a town center.

### Priming the Property for Redevelopment

Sharing a border with New Hampshire, Berwick acts as a southern gateway to Maine, with more than 20,000 cars passing through each day. With Brownfields redevelopment, downtown has grown from approximately 25 acres to 36 acres, which includes 200 residential units and 100,000 square feet of commercial space.

Before redevelopment, downtown Berwick was in poor shape. Its only distinct feature was the vacant mill with minimal character other than its smokestack.

The initial vision for transforming downtown Berwick came from a collaboration between town officials, residents of Berwick, and a local hedge fund which purchased the deed for the property in 2010. A subcommittee of residents was formed to address questions on what to do with the vacant mill. After much deliberation, Berwick was given temporary ownership of the site through a public-private partnership. This allowed the town to seek federal funding.

To date, EPA has provided more than \$5 million of Brownfields funding to assess and clean up the site. These funds were provided through sources that include assessment funds from Maine Department of Environmental Protection, as well as seven direct EPA cleanup grants and Revolving Loan Fund subgrants. Furthermore, loans from Southern Maine Planning and Development Commission, and RLF loans from Maine Department of Economic and Community Development completed the redevelopment.



2025 aerial view photo of 'The Edge' Development in Downtown Berwick, Maine.  
(photo credit: SMPDC)

**EPA Grant Recipient:**  
Berwick, Maine

**Grant Types:**  
Assessment, Clean up  
and RLF Loan Funds

**Current Use:**  
Mixed-use Commercial  
and Residential Space

**Former Uses:**  
Leather Tannery Mill



Photo of Prime Leather Tannery campus in April 2018, pre-demolition. Its distinct smokestack is clearly visible.  
(photo credit: SMPDC)



**BY THE NUMBERS:** As of September 2025, The Edge has 41 Residential units built with 265 total planned & 12 Commercial Units built with around 30 total planned. (photo credit: SMPDC)

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Raegan Young

Special Projects & Communications Manager Southern Maine Planning and Development Commission (SMPDC)

When asked about the project, Raegan Young of Southern Maine Planning and Development Commission says, “The size and level of contamination make this project a particularly long and challenging one... it makes us even more proud to play a part in how far it has come. The EPA RLF funds have made it possible to effectively address the environmental contamination while also supporting a thoughtful and desirable redevelopment.”

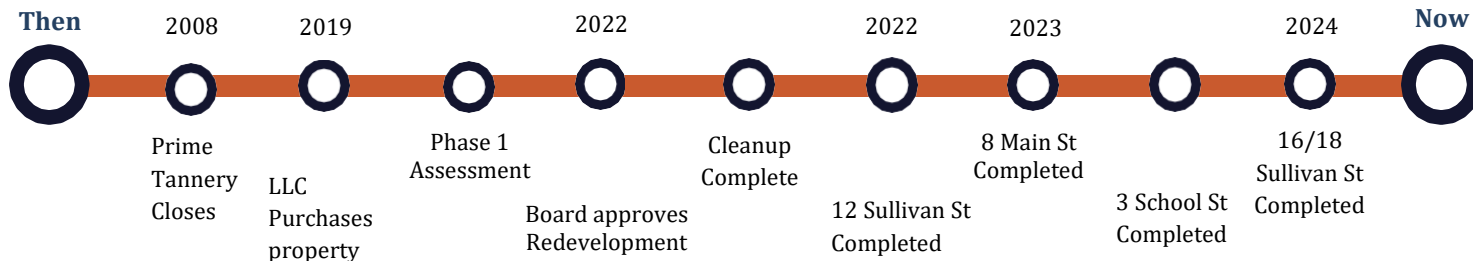
EPA funding was instrumental in enabling the town to start the project before handing over to a private developer. Berwick transferred ownership back to the local hedge fund in 2019. The property was then sold to an LLC with a five-year plan to spend over \$80 million to complete cleanup work.

The first stage of site redevelopment involved demolishing over three acres of mill buildings which left behind soil contaminated by hazardous materials such as lead paint, asbestos, PCBs and soil vapor. Old abandoned tanning hides were also found. A barrier system, consisting of granular fill on top of filter fabric, loam and seed was engineered as the principal remedy to protect future users of the site. To support the new barrier system, underground pipes were installed to manage stormwater runoff.

According to a former Envision Berwick committee member and environmental consultant on the project, a crucial element for successful Brownfields Redevelopment is having a project 'champion.' To him, this person is responsible for driving the project to completion while fostering community cooperation. Envision Berwick committee highlights the power of local community involvement.

## Today

As of 2025, the project has seen several completed buildings. The first structure was a commercial building, which used original portions of the mill. The space now hosts a pizza restaurant, dental spa, deli butcher, child daycare center, gym, golf simulator and hair salon. New buildings now host residential apartments at 12 Sullivan and 8 Main streets – the project’s crown jewel, according to some residents – with more apartments on the way. When completed, this development will include 11 new buildings and a new Main Street running through the heart of downtown Berwick.



### For more information:

Visit the EPA Brownfields website at [www.epa.gov/brownfields](http://www.epa.gov/brownfields) or contact Will Lariviere at 617-918-1231 or [Lariviere.William@epa.gov](mailto:Lariviere.William@epa.gov)