

Brownfields

Success Story

From Abandoned School to Main Event

Weirton, West Virginia

Year after year, children attended the Cove Elementary School in downtown Weirton, West Virginia as their parents worked at nearby Weirton Steel. But the decline of the steel industry in the Northern Panhandle of West Virginia coincided with the decline of the school. After educating students since the 1920s, the Cove Elementary officially closed its doors in 1991.

The building sat vacant for nearly two decades as the City of Weirton considered the best use for the property. All manner of ideas—from turning it into a museum highlighting the region’s steel-producing history to renovating it as senior housing to knocking it all down and paving it as a parking lot—were considered until the city finally chose to repurpose it as a community event center. But environmental concerns on the property stalled redevelopment plans.

The Cleanup

In 2005, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) awarded the Brooke-Hancock-Jefferson Metropolitan Planning and Development Council a Brownfield Assessment Grant to help determine what contamination, if any, might be present. A Phase I Environmental Site Assessment revealed asbestos. To help address this, EPA awarded the City of Weirton a Brownfield Cleanup Grant in 2009. After remediation was completed, the Cove School was demolished and construction of the event center began.

The Benefits

EPA funding proved to be the catalyst for repurposing the site. The Weirton Event Center opened in 2012, creating five full-time jobs to oversee daily operations at the facility. The center has become a gathering place for Weirton residents and is used for all types of community events and outdoor concerts. Events take place both in the main building and on the outdoor field, where a free concert is held each week in the summer.



The Cove Elementary School in Weirton, West Virginia (pictured here in 2005) sat vacant for 20 years before the property was redeveloped.

EPA Grant Recipients:

Brooke-Hancock-Jefferson Metropolitan Planning and Development Council, City of Weirton

EPA Grant Types:

Brownfield Assessment, Brownfield Cleanup

Former Use: School

Current Use: Event Center

“ When the recession hit and we were opening and marketing a new venue, we didn’t know what the result would be. When hundreds of people came out that first night, we knew we’d made the right investment for our region.”

*Danny Greathouse,
Former Hancock
County Commissioner
(via West Virginia Executive)*

For more information:

Visit the EPA Brownfields website at www.epa.gov/brownfields or contact Joe Nowak at 215-814-3303 or Nowak.Joseph@epa.gov.