

Brownfields Success Story

City Market – South End (Onion River Co-op)

Burlington, Vermont

A former industrial site in Burlington, Vermont has been redeveloped into a state-of-the-art, environmentally sustainable supermarket in Burlington's South End.

Onion River Co-op (Co-op), a consumer cooperative with over 13,500 members, had a vision of supplying wholesome local, organic and conventional foods to the community while also operating in an environmentally and socially responsible way. Located on the corner of Flynn Avenue and Briggs Street, the vacant Vermont Rail Systems property was ideally located for the market, but the industrial legacy of the site meant that brownfields issues would first need to be addressed.

Priming the Property for Redevelopment

Due to environmental contamination that included asbestos, lead, petroleum, and volatile organic compounds (VOCs), this property required significant cleanup and environmental monitoring activities. The Co-op project team was able to gain the needed expertise, funding, and support by partnering with several state and regional agencies, including the Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC), Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development (ACCD), and the Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission (CCRPC). DEC helped the Co-op develop a cleanup plan and enroll the site in the state's Brownfields program. CCRPC contributed \$20,000 toward site assessment and clean-up planning, and ACCD contributed \$200,000 from its Brownfields revolving loan fund program to help cover actual cleanup costs. The cleanup was completed under the oversight of DEC.

Today

City Market - South End opened for business in November 2017. In addition to the market, the \$13 million, 29,000 square foot facility includes a large indoor/outdoor café space, teaching kitchen, community meeting space, and Co-op offices. The market provides a large selection of local, organic, and conventional food, as well as Vermont-made products. While supplying much-needed healthy food to the community and cleaning up a contaminated vacant property, the facility boasts other innovative features, many of which help protect the environment.



Figure 1 City Market storefront on opening day.
Credits: City Market – Onion River Co-op

EPA Grant Recipient:
Chittenden County RPC
Vermont ACCD

Grant Types:
Assessment
Revolving Loan Fund

Former Uses:
Railroad maintenance, Trucking,
Contracting, Salt storage, Wood
reclamation

Current Use:
City Market Facility



Figure 2 Bicycle parking and maintenance area
Credits: City Market - Onion River Co-op



Figure 3 City Market's General Manager John Tashiro receiving the EPA's 2018 Environmental Merit Award on behalf of the Onion River Co-op

“The Co-op’s intent was to create a successful and vibrant market in Burlington's South End and create more opportunities for community support and engagement as well as employment with above market wages and benefits. We think the South End project has been successful in these areas and we’re excited to share it with our greater community! We appreciate the support of the many partners who worked with us along the way, including our team of contractors and architects with remediation funding from the EPA, Vermont DEC, Vermont ACCD, and the Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission. It has taken quite an amazing team to bring this dream to fruition and it’s one that will serve our Members and our community well for decades to come”.

John Tashiro
City Market General Manager

- The market is pedestrian-friendly and offers a covered bicycle parking and maintenance area to serve cyclists. On-bicycle customers also receive a 5 percent discount on purchases through the Bicycle Benefits program.
- The store’s state-of-the-art refrigeration system - the first such system in Vermont - uses transcritical carbon dioxide cooling technology, consuming a fraction of the energy used in typical grocery store refrigeration.
- Solar tubes, smart LED lighting, and high-efficiency blowers and fans further minimize electricity usage.
- Surplus food is taken daily to the Chittenden Emergency Food Shelf to help lower-income community members and minimize food waste.
- Customers are asked to support Vermont non-profits by rounding up their grocery bills to the nearest dollar. Through this “Rally for Change” program, Co-op customers have donated over \$670,000 in change in less than four years.
- The Co-op offers plow cost classes on food education and wellness in their new Community Teaching Kitchen.
- The Co-op has also signed a purchase and sales agreement with the well-respected Petra Cliffs Climbing Center and Mountaineering School for the south parcel of this property. This will allow both organizations to reach the greater community with broader wellness initiatives.
- The café space in the store includes two areas for Co-op Members to display artwork, one of the many benefits of Co-op Membership.
- The Co-op worked with local muralist, Tara Goreau, to decorate the inside of the store with three beautiful murals which tell the story of Vermont’s culture, local agriculture and an appreciation for the diversity of our community.

General Manager John Tashiro, Project Manager Pat Burns and the entire team at Onion River Co-op were presented with an Environmental Merit Award by EPA Region 1 in September 2018 for transforming this former Brownfields site into an innovative, sustainable, community-owned and environmentally-friendly supermarket. The opening of City Market - South End was a major milestone the neighborhood, as the market now employs over 100 people and serves over 1,500 customers daily. The Co-op has proven that environmental protection, economic development, and healthy communities can go hand-in-hand.

City Market is an EPA 2018 Environmental Merit Award Recipient for the leadership and commitment to environmental protection and healthy foods.

For more information:

Visit the EPA Brownfields website at www.epa.gov/brownfields or contact Frank Gardner, 617-918-1278, gardner.frank@epa.gov