

Brownfields Success Story

From Glass to Green *Jeannette, Pennsylvania*

The City of Jeannette was once known as “Glass City” due to the preponderance of glass and related manufacturing facilities that located there beginning in the late 1800s. At the dawn of the twentieth century the local economy was bolstered by four glass manufacturing facilities, and in the ensuing years their number grew to seven.

The Jeannette Glass Company started production in 1898, and initially produced bottles and glass prisms designed to be set into sidewalks to let light into vaults and basements below. The company grew and the product line diversified. Eventually tableware was added and the Jeannette Glass plant grew to be the largest tableware glass factory in the world. The plant continued to produce tableware and other glass products until the company declared Chapter 11 bankruptcy in 1982 and closed.

The idled plant was purchased by a New York investor in a bankruptcy sale in 1983 with a promise that it would be restarted. Unfortunately it never reopened and three decades of poor maintenance, tax delinquency, and environmental irresponsibility combined prevented investors from considering acquisition and reuse. These conditions led to multiple citations from the City of Jeannette and Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (PA DEP). The deteriorated and hazardous physical conditions, and the environmental legacy of eight decades of glass manufacturing compelled the Westmoreland County Industrial Development Corporation (WCIDC) to acquire the property via tax sale in 2012. After four more years of legal challenges, culminating in a State Supreme Court decision, the WCIDC gained site control in 2016.

Preparing for Redevelopment

The Redevelopment Authority of the County of Westmoreland (RACW), partnering with the WCIDC, used funding from its 2014 U.S. EPA Brownfields Coalition Assessment Grant to conduct Phase I and Phase II environmental assessments beginning in May 2016. The WCIDC supplemented the U.S. EPA funding with its own funds to obtain a release of liability from the PA DEP in 2018 under Pennsylvania’s Land Recycling Program (aka Act 2).

On a parallel path to the environmental assessment and Act 2 process, the WCIDC undertook an aggressive two-phased site preparation program in 2017. The first phase included asbestos abatement and demolition of all site structures. The second phase involved removal of subsurface obstructions, site grading and placement of a soil cover. In June of 2018, the site was cleared and ready of its new productive use.



Former Jeannette Glass Plant Undergoing Demolition in 2017.

EPA Grant Recipient:
Redevelopment Authority of the County
of Westmoreland, Pennsylvania

Grant Type:
Coalition Assessment

Former Use:
Industrial

Current Uses:
Under Development for Industrial and
Public/Green Space



The 13.8 Acre Jeannette Glass Plant Site Preparation was Completed in Mid-2018



Old Bull Run Tunnel was removed to daylight the stream on the eastern boundary of the Former Jeannette Glass site.

The U.S. EPA Brownfields Assessment grants were essential in preparing the former Jeannette Glass Plant site to host the Elliott Company's expansion plans. The funds also facilitated the daylighting of Bull Run and the addition of greenspace in the urban environment.

Site Reuse

As the environmental assessment and site preparation processes were ongoing, an exciting reuse opportunity was proposed by the Elliott Company. The Elliott Company is a Jeannette-based manufacturer of technically advanced centrifugal and axial compressors, steam turbines, power recovery expanders, and cryogenic pumps and expanders used in the petrochemical, refining, oil & gas, and liquefied gas industries, as well as in power applications. Elliott will acquire the site from the WCIDC and construct a new facility to test cryogenic pumps and expanders. The new plant will bring 130 new high quality jobs to Jeannette and Westmoreland County. The site location is ideal for Elliott, as the pumps and expanders will be manufactured at Elliott's current Jeannette headquarters location approximately 1.5 miles from the site.

Elliott will not require the entire site for its new operations, and the development will incorporate significant greenspace. A major element includes the "daylighting" of Bull Run Creek which for many years was contained in a brick-lined tunnel that traversed under the Jeannette Glass site. With the assistance of the Westmoreland Conservation District, a plan was developed to reopen the stream for both aesthetic and functional purposes. The project was completed in 2019, and not only provides a desirable visage from the new homes adjacent to the site on 6th Street, it also expands Jeannette's storm drainage capacity for major wet-weather events.

Impetus for Community Revitalization

The U.S. EPA Brownfields Program provided an essential incentive to move forward with the redevelopment and productive reuse of a 13-acre moribund property in the very core of the City of Jeannette. Jeannette has struggled over the past several decades due to loss of industry and investment. The rebirth of this site is a critical element in the ongoing community revitalization strategy.

The confidence the Elliott Company has shown in Jeannette is contagious. The Redevelopment Authority of the County of Westmoreland, recipient of the U.S. EPA Brownfields Assessment Grant, announced in December of 2018 that its' associate agency, the Westmoreland County Land Bank sold 500 Clay Avenue in downtown Jeannette to Sobel's Obscure Brewere, LLC., for its new local microbrewery location. The long-vacant former M.A. Gillespie Company building, located only a block from the former Jeannette Glass site, will be transformed into an on-site brewery with live entertainment and weekend food trucks. It is expected to open in Spring 2020.



Former M.A. Gillespie Company location in downtown Jeannette, PA

For more information:

Visit the EPA Brownfields website at www.epa.gov/brownfields or contact:

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