

Brownfields

Success Story

Ferrous Site

Lawrence, Mass.

The Ferrous Site, home to a new park and future housing and commercial development, is an example of how a former mill city can leverage EPA funding to bring a defunct industrial site back to life. Through the efforts of EPA's Brownfields program, the City of Lawrence and community organizations, the Ferrous Site has become central to the new Lawrence Gateway neighborhood, with its affordable housing, parks, restaurants, and stores.

Lawrence, created as a planned industrial community in 1848, has had 273 Brownfield sites over the years. This city, renowned for textile and paper production, saw factories shut down, resulting in jobs leaving town with the demise of the New England manufacturing industry. Historically, Lawrence attracted immigrants from all over the world seeking jobs in the city's massive mills. The city's industrial roots were powered by a network of canals moving water through raceways under the mills and powering the mill machines through a system of belts and wheels.

As technology advanced, turbines under the mills generated energy to support production. By the 1950s, industrial production was migrating to other regions of the US with less expensive production costs. An increase in textiles being imported in the 1970s led to a rapid closing of many factories and the layoff of many thousands of workers. Many factories remained vacant for over four decades. .

Priming the Property for Redevelopment

\$3.6 Million in US EPA Brownfields Funding Helped Lawrence Meet Redevelopment Goals

The Reviviendo Gateway Initiative was created by an all-out coordinated effort of public agencies, businesses and community groups all working to improve the economy, environment and quality of life in Lawrence. The Gateway Initiative has been funded by private and public sources including over \$3.6 million in EPA Brownfields funds awarded to the city for a number of sites in that area since 1996. The project focused on improving transportation and infrastructure, cleaning up four mill complexes, transforming landfills, and creating affordable housing and parks. Over the past 20 years, two community development corporations – Lawrence CommunityWorks and Groundwork Lawrence – have played important roles in the transformation of the Gateway District. Groundwork Lawrence, established through a partnership between the EPA and the National Park Service, has played a leading role in Brownfield remediation and park



Figure 1 - Courtesy of the City of Lawrence, Mass.

EPA Grant Recipient:

City of Lawrence (project managed by Groundwork Lawrence)

Grant Types:

Assessment

Current Uses:

Public park, affordable housing, and commercial

Former Uses:

Metals foundry, machine shop, coal distribution facility, window manufacturing facility



Figure 2 - Courtesy of the City of Lawrence, Mass.



Figure 3 - Courtesy of the City of Lawrence, Mass.

“The Ferrous site is the culmination of work that represents the best in Lawrence; housing development and park green-space that will improve the quality of life of all Lawrence residents. I want to thank the EPA for their commitment to making Lawrence better as well as our state and federal delegation and community partners who have helped to transform a once dilapidated site to a flourishing community treasure.”

Dan Rivera, Mayor

City of Lawrence, Mass.

For more information:

Visit the EPA Brownfields website at www.epa.gov/brownfields or contact Christine Lombard at 617 918 1305 or Lombard.chris@epa.gov.

development. Lawrence CommunityWorks has played an important role by creating affordable housing and commercial development. The two organizations are collaborating on the Ferrous Site – one of the last redeveloped sites in the Gateway District. The 7.5-acre site, located at the confluence of the North Canal and the Spicket and Merrimack rivers, for over 100 years hosted a foundry where machines and parts were forged to support the city’s textile and paper mills. When the foundry closed in the 1990s, it left behind multiple buildings and a large sprawling mound of spent burnt orange sand castings. An investment of about \$164,000 in the city’s EPA Brownfields funding paid for the assessment of the Ferrous Site, leading to its cleanup and redevelopment and serving as a catalyst to the overall revitalization of the Lawrence Gateway.

Today

The Ferrous Site redevelopment marks a significant milestone for the Reviviendo Gateway Initiative. Over the past decades, a vision of transformation for this area of the city has become reality - and with it, the creation of an entire new neighborhood. In 2014, Groundwork Lawrence acquired three acres of the Ferrous Site to establish the Ellen Swallow Richards Park, a park that prioritizes restoring natural ecology and creating green infrastructure to support runoff from the adjacent foundry site. Funding for the project came from a \$2.75 million grant from the Massachusetts Gateway City Parks Program. One of the goals behind developing the park is to encourage redevelopment of the adjacent foundry. To realize this goal, the park included a large swale and rain garden at the top of the bank along the Merrimack River and sand castings were consolidated into a landform with a sloping meadow and steep grassy side slopes. A pavilion now sits in the park near the end of the North Canal where the water spills 20 feet into the Spicket River. Lawrence CommunityWorks, which redeveloped several mill buildings west of the Ferrous Site creating 133 units of affordable family housing, last year bought the remaining 4.5 acres of the Ferrous Site for the Island Parkside Housing project. The goals of the project are to build 80 units of affordable family housing, provide more parking to support adjacent commercial properties, and expand the Ellen Swallow Richards Park by setting aside over two acres of open space. Island Parkside will be funded by the state, the federal government and Lawrence CommunityWorks. The entire project is scheduled to be done by the summer of 2023.



Figure 4 - Courtesy of the City of Lawrence, Mass.