

Brownfields

Success Story



Mixed-Use Revitalization of a Historic Downtown

Hernando, Mississippi

The former Reliable Equipment facility includes three property parcels on Highway 51 South on the northwest border of Mississippi. Historically, the property has been used for tractor supply and repair operations. Those industrial uses contaminated soil with petroleum hydrocarbons. Despite the contamination, the city of Hernando recognized the potential of the property and actively took steps to attract developers to the area. The site is adjacent to the town square, and is considered the gateway to the city's historic downtown.

Redevelopment Tools: Brownfields Grant and State Tax Incentives

In 2012, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) awarded the city of Hernando a \$400,000 Brownfields community-wide assessment grant. The city used the funds to perform nearly 30 environmental assessments at local contaminated properties. As part of public educational outreach, the city of Hernando also used the grant to fund a 3-day charette. The charette was a collaborative meeting in which community partners and leaders, developers and local residents had an opportunity to discuss ways to return the assessed properties to beneficial reuse. The process allowed the community to share reuse priorities and goals – giving them a chance to help reshape the future of their town. The charette also provided participants with information about two state-sponsored tax incentive programs - the Mississippi Economic Redevelopment Act and the Brownfields tax credit, which is affiliated with the state's Brownfields Incentives Act. Both programs aim to entice private sector developers to clean up and reuse brownfield sites. The Mississippi Economic Redevelopment Act provides an incentive to defray the remediation costs associated with cleaning up contaminated property. Under the Brownfields tax credit, remediation costs at brownfield sites are eligible for a 25% tax credit.

The city's outreach efforts resulted in significant interest in Brownfield redevelopment. After learning about the Brownfield assessment grant and the state-sponsored incentives at the charette, a local business owner decided to purchase two of the property parcels that make up the Reliable Equipment site. In June 2016, the Mississippi Commission for Environmental Quality issued a Brownfield Agreement with the new property owner for the remediation of the Reliable Equipment site.



EPA Grant Recipient:
City of Hernando, Mississippi

Grant Type:
EPA Community-Wide
Assessment Grant

Former Uses:
Industrial: Tractor Supply and
Repair

Current Status:
Efforts at the site have resulted in
building renovations, the creation
of two new businesses and over
50 new jobs.

Future Development:
Five new, single-family homes
under construction.





“The EPA Brownfields Assessment grant has truly made an impact in the city of Hernando, allowing for the cleanup and redevelopment of properties that were contaminated or perceived to have environmental issues. The grant has given the city an opportunity to provide education and outreach in the community encouraging redevelopment of these sites.”

Gia Matheny,
Economic Development
Director
City of Hernando, Mississippi



For More Information:

EPA Brownfields Program
Website
www.epa.gov/brownfields

EPA Region 4 Brownfields
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Cleanup included excavation and off-site disposal of contaminated soil, backfilling the areas with new, clean soil and construction of new, expanded parking areas. The initial Brownfield Agreement called for demolition and removal of the on-site building; however, the property owner recognized the potential in the existing structure and sought to restore it for new commercial use. The state approved the use of the existing building and the property owner began renovations. The goal of the property upgrade was to retain the original historic design of the building exterior, while completely redesigning the interior of the space. Following state approval of the cleanup and completion of the property upgrades, the property owner leased the new space to a local restaurateur.

New Commercial and Residential Use

Today, the once-contaminated Reliable Equipment site is home to Uncle Bubba's BBQ. Since opening its doors in June 2019, this thriving new restaurant has been providing residents and visitors with good food and live entertainment. It includes an outdoor patio, seating for 200 and a full bar. The business employs about 50 people and has breathed new life into the once blighted property. In early 2020, the property owner leased another small piece of the on-site building to another local business owner who now operates a high-end retail boutique out of the space. The business created three new part-time jobs and resulted in an additional investment to design and decorate the business interior.

The successful cleanup and redevelopment of the property caught the eye of another local developer, who decided to purchase the third site parcel. The third, once-vacant property is now being developed into a new pocket neighborhood. Once completed, the development will include five new, single-family homes. Due to the city's close proximity to Memphis, and its number one ranked public school system in the state, the city of Hernando experienced a population increase of 107% between 2000 and 2010. The new homes will help address the city's steadily growing population and associated need for additional housing options.

Looking Forward

The EPA and state worked side-by-side with the city to help navigate the Brownfields grant process and the resulting cleanup and redevelopment of the Reliable Equipment site. Today, new development at this former industrial property bolsters the local economy and provides the community with new businesses, jobs and housing options. The close proximity of these new commercial and residential amenities to the rest of the city's downtown area improve the walkability of the community, resulting in reduced vehicle miles travelled.

The restoration of the original site building has sparked interest among other area business owners to improve their own buildings, which will further improve the overall appeal of the historic downtown area. In addition, another local developer has recently shown interest in using state tax incentives to cleanup and redevelop another Brownfield site, less than one block away from the former Reliable Equipment site. These new developments are a testament to the effectiveness of public outreach, collaboration, and the use of EPA Brownfields grants and state-sponsored tax incentives to successfully restore and redevelop contaminated properties. City-wide, the 2012 EPA Brownfields Assessment Grant resulted in the availability of 90 acres for reuse, the creation more than 70 jobs and the ability of the city to leverage more than \$50 million in funding.