

Brownfields Success Story



Revitalizing Lake City Through Educational Opportunities

Lake City, South Carolina

Lake City is located in Florence County, South Carolina, with a population around 6,675. It's located 25 miles south of the city of Florence and is included in the Florence Metropolitan Area. In the past, the economy of Lake City and the surrounding Pee Dee region was largely based on agriculture and textile industries. When parts of the local economy began to decline, the downtown Lake City started to suffer resulting in boarded up and blighted properties.

Lake City Plaza → The Continuum

In 2016, EPA awarded a \$400,000 Brownfields Assessment grant to the city of Lake City. Lake City used the grant to set up a Brownfields Task Force and conduct environmental assessments at 25 properties across the city. One property, Lake City Plaza, was targeted for redevelopment by the city because of its prime location on West Main Street. Lake City Plaza had once been home to various retail stores. By 2016, the strip mall was vacant and dilapidated – it was an eyesore.

Public- and private-sector partners came together to clean up and redevelop Lake City Plaza. Project partners included EPA, the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control, Lake City, the Greater Lake City Alliance, the Darla Moore Foundation and others. Site investigations addressed asbestos, underground storage tanks, and soil and groundwater contamination. Cleanup included consolidating pesticide-contaminated soils under a capped berm at the rear of the property, as well as asbestos abatement.

EPA Grant Recipient:
City of Lake City, South Carolina

Grant Type:
EPA Community-Wide
Assessment Grant

Former Use:
Vacant strip mall

Current Use:
A \$25 million, 46,000-square-foot
educational facility, business
incubator and community meeting
space



“The Continuum was made possible through the support of the Greater Lake City Alliance, the city of Lake City, EPA, the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control, and others. Their dedication to the redevelopment of this site has created the opportunity for students throughout Florence County and the surrounding area to access new and exciting collaborative educational opportunities. The EPA Brownfields Assessment grant was instrumental in the redevelopment of this site. Not only do Brownfields grants stimulate the economy and assist with much-needed redevelopment opportunities in blighted areas, but they also open the door to a variety of possibilities such as the Continuum.”

Jeanette Altman,
Executive Director of the Continuum

Partners in Education

The Continuum partners with Florence-Darlington Technical College and Francis Marion University to offer dual-enrollment college-level classes to area high-school students, as well as workforce training classes. During its first year, the Continuum served about 500 students. It plans to serve up to 2,000 students in the future.

The Continuum is preparing students for 21st-century jobs through classes ranging from general education courses in math, science and foreign languages to certification classes in nursing, welding, HVAC, trucking and forklift operation. A nearby manufacturing facility has already created three co-op positions for Continuum students.

After the site's brownfield issues were addressed, a private-public partnership redeveloped the property as the Continuum, a state-of-the-art career center for workforce education and training. Collaboration among the Darla Moore Foundation, Florence-Darlington Technical College, Francis Marion University and local businesses made the center possible.

The Continuum provides high-school students and adults with training, certifications and dual-credit courses. It also hosts a business incubator and community meeting space. South Carolina's governor and superintendent for education attended the Continuum's August 2019 ribbon cutting. The governor later highlighted the Continuum in his State of the State address and proposed \$50 million in funding to replicate the model in other rural parts of South Carolina.

Setting the Stage

"EPA's Brownfields grant has set the stage for the revitalization of the entire community," said Lake City Administrator Stephany Snowden. She noted that the Continuum has helped spur construction of a 45-unit affordable senior housing complex next door. EPA's Brownfields grant has also enabled other redevelopment projects in Lake City – four retail stores, two office spaces, a parking court and a social service facility. Other promising properties were assessed and await redevelopment.

Images used with permission of the Greater Lake City Alliance, Florence County, Florence-Darlington Technical College and Francis Marion University.

CONTINUUM



For More Information:

EPA Brownfields Program
www.epa.gov/brownfields

EPA Region 4 Brownfields
(404) 562-8729

Lake City Park

EPA Brownfields funding has helped transform another eyesore in Lake City into a beautiful park with a lake, boardwalk, fishing piers, canoe/kayak launch, gazebo, picnic shelter and restrooms. Funding from South Carolina's Brownfields Cleanup Revolving Loan Fund and a private foundation helped clean up the former landfill and public works storage facility. Lake City celebrated the park's grand opening in 2018.

