



In Worcester, Working Together to Restore Former Industrial Land for Public Use

WORCESTER, MA

With a diverse history of industry and manufacturing dating back more than 200 years, the City of Worcester, Massachusetts is now providing examples of how partnerships between federal, state, and private entities and the local community can produce results far beyond what a single organization might expect.

In June 1996, EPA awarded a \$200,000 Brownfields Pilot grant to the Central Massachusetts Economic Development Authority (CMEDA), an organization established one year earlier by the state to oversee the area's brownfields efforts. In addition to funding environmental assessments that help return idle properties to use—including a former foundry site now being redeveloped into a Marriott hotel—the Brownfields Pilot has helped CMEDA form partnerships to leverage millions to restore an abandoned mill property into natural, recreational greenspace. A key outcome of this effort will be a unique museum that celebrates the rich industrial history of Worcester.

Beginning in January 1999, the City of Worcester, with assistance from CMEDA, has held meetings that include community representatives, the state Department of Environmental Management (DEM), the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor Commis-

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JUST THE FACTS:

- The Central Massachusetts Economic Development Authority (CMEDA) was established by the state to oversee the area's brownfields efforts.
- In addition to environmental assessments, the Brownfields Pilot has helped form CMEDA partnerships to leverage millions to restore an abandoned mill site into recreational greenspace.
- The Massachusetts Highway Department will eventually contribute as much as \$4 million to construct vehicle and pedestrian bridges, parking areas, bike paths, and for landscaping.

An area encompassing several former industrial properties including the former Wire Works site will enjoy 40 miles of new bike paths, new walkways across restored greenspace, and tourist kiosks describing the history of the Blackstone Canal.

EPA's Brownfields Economic Redevelopment Initiative is designed to empower states, communities, and other stakeholders in economic redevelopment to work together in a timely manner to prevent, assess, safely clean up, and sustainably reuse brownfields. A brownfield is a site, or portion thereof, that has actual or perceived contamination and an active potential for redevelopment or reuse. EPA is funding: assessment demonstration pilot programs (each funded up to \$200,000 over two years), to assess brownfields sites and to test cleanup and redevelopment models; job training pilot programs (each funded up to \$200,000 over two years), to provide training for residents of communities affected by brownfields to facilitate cleanup of brownfields sites and prepare trainees for future employment in the environmental field; and, cleanup revolving loan fund programs (each funded up to \$500,000 over five years) to capitalize loan funds to make loans for the environmental cleanup of brownfields. These pilot programs are intended to provide EPA, states, tribes, municipalities, and communities with useful information and strategies as they continue to seek new methods to promote a unified approach to site assessment, environmental cleanup, and redevelopment.

sion (BRVNHCC), Preservation Worcester, the Worcester Historical Museum, and the Massachusetts Audubon Society. Comprising the new "Visitors Center Task Force," this group is working to transform a selection of former industrial properties—most notably, the abandoned, former Quinsigamond (Indian for Worcester) Wire Works site—into a visitors center with a History of the Industrial Revolution theme, and an environmental training center that will cover the spectrum of HAZMAT prevention and cleanup.

Funding for this transformation, while not fully in place, is coming from a variety of sources. EPA's Brownfields Pilot helped leverage \$50,000 for initial assessments of the area. The Massachusetts Highway Department purchased the targeted sites, and will eventually contribute as much as \$4 million to construct vehicle and pedestrian bridges, parking areas, and bike paths, and for landscaping around the visitor's center. The state DEM contributed \$500K toward development of educational stations that will be placed throughout the restored greenspace. The BRVNHCC has contributed nearly \$260,000, with \$1 million in additional funds budgeted. And a Brownfields Fund established by the state and managed by the Massachusetts Development office could provide additional assessment and cleanup funding for the project.

When the goals of the Visitors Center Task Force are met, the area will enjoy 40 miles of new bike paths, new walkways stretching across nearly 30 acres of restored greenspace, and tourist kiosks describing the history of the Blackstone Canal. A 70,000-square-foot building on the former Wire Works site remains in excellent condition, and will be used to house the new visitor's center, the environmental training facility, and concession stands for tourists. A bike shop is also under consideration for the building, to support the new bike paths planned for the area.

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Visit the EPA Brownfields web site at:
<http://www.epa.gov/brownfields/>

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