

BROWNFIELDS SUCCESS IN NEW ENGLAND

FORMER LEADER EVAPORATOR SITE

NORTHWEST REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION, VERMONT



Property Details

Property Address:	N25 Stowell Street, St. Albans, VT 05478
Property Size:	2.48 acres
Former Uses:	Woodworking, Fuel storage and sales, Clothing Manufacturing, Maple syrup production
Contaminants Found:	Petroleum, Polycyclic Aromatic Hydrocarbons (PAHs), Lead-based paint, Asbestos, Mold
Current Use:	27-unit apartment complex
Current Owner:	Champlain Housing Trust

Project Partners

Northwest Regional Planning Commission, City of St. Albans, Franklin County Regional Chamber of Commerce, Franklin County Industrial Development Corporation, VT Department of Health, VT Department of Environmental Conservation, VT Department of Economic Development, Housing Vermont, Champlain Housing Development Corporation, Conner Contracting, Inc., banks, non-profit organizations

Drivers for Redevelopment: The site is of historical importance within downtown St. Albans, having been home to several industrial/commercial occupants over the course of 120 years. Its most recent occupant was Leader Evaporator, which sold the property in April 2006 to Housing Vermont and the site was acquired in September 2006 by Champlain Housing Trust, the current property owner. The Northwest Regional Planning Commission (NRPC) was approached by the Connor Group, who in 2004 partnered with Housing Vermont, Champlain Housing Trust and NRPC in an effort to restore the two story factory for affordable housing. The building's layout for residential reuse was considered perfect, given that it was already equipped with elevators and had ample parking space. With limited housing available within downtown St. Albans, NRPC wanted to create a housing complex that would be affordable to residents based on income levels rather than property values. NRPC, Champlain Housing Trust and its project partners recognized that redeveloping the site would assist in boosting the area's economic vitality while maintaining the site's historic character.

Property History: In 1884, the site's two buildings were owned the W.B. Fonda and Co., a woodworking company with a fuel storage house/shop/garage, and the Willard Clothing Manufacturer Co. The site was purchased by Geo. H. Soule Co. and Fairfield Farms Maple Co. in the 1930s and eventually by Leader Evaporator, another maple syrup manufacturer, in 1964. Leader Evaporator decided to move and expand in the early 2000s; prior to their move in 2006, they paid for an initial environmental assessment that was completed in 2003. The results confirmed the presence of lead-based paint, asbestos, evidence of an underground storage tank that had been removed, oil-filled above ground storage tanks, and a concrete vault for heating oil. The property attracted the attention of the NRPC, which provided \$84,000 from its 2003 EPA Brownfields Assessment grants to further evaluate and delineate areas of contamination.

Funding Details

Brownfields Hazardous Substances & Petroleum Assessment Grants (2003):	
\$84,000	From a total of \$400,000 from these Assessment grants (\$200,000 each)
Leveraged Funding:	
\$6,100,000	(<i>approx.</i>) From Housing Vermont and Champlain Housing Trust for remediation and construction
\$505,000	For redevelopment
\$92,000	For remediation from the Vermont Community Development Block Grant Program provided by the City of St. Albans

Project Highlights

- Residential reuse of a historic property once used for industrial/commercial purposes.
- NRPC's partners, Housing Vermont and Champlain Housing Trust, spent \$6.7 million to remediate, restore, and revitalize the former Leader building, which included funding from the City of St. Albans and private donors.
- Created an economically efficient 27-unit housing complex, of which 24 units are designated as affordable. All of the units were leased before the complex opened.

Project Results: Following the assessments funded by Leader Evaporator and the NRPC's EPA Brownfields grants, a cleanup effort began, funded by a Community Development Block Grant awarded to the City of St. Albans. The assessments demonstrated that the contamination issues predated Leader Evaporator, and that the soil and groundwater had indeed been compromised by the site's above-ground oil storage tanks. The site's buildings, meanwhile, were found to have asbestos and lead paint contamination. The property's soils were contaminated with lead, PAHs, and petroleum products, which were excavated and capped; the lead-based paint and asbestos were removed; and petroleum contaminants in groundwater were naturally attenuated to safe levels. The site's heating oil concrete vault was drained, cleaned, and sealed, and mold was removed from tainted locations within the main building. Following cleanup, construction began in December 2006. The fully leased, 27-unit, Willard Apartment complex, equipped with energy efficient features and exposed the historic original beams, opened to its residents in February 2008.

Project Timeline

1884	Site occupied by woodworking and clothes manufacturing operations
1930s	Site purchased by Geo. H. Soule Co. and Fairfield Farms Maple Co.
1964	Site purchased by Leader Evaporator Company
2003	Initial environmental site assessments conducted
2006	Site purchased by Housing Vermont; St. Albans city council unanimously votes to approve the apartment complex; cleanup is completed and site ownership is transferred to Champlain Housing Trust
2008	Construction of Willard Apartments is completed