

# Brownfields

## Success Story

### Roanoke Railway to Reuse

#### Roanoke, Virginia

In the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, the South Jefferson area of Roanoke, Virginia thrived with industrial activity and enterprises. Primary businesses of the area consisted of a Virginian Railway mechanical facility and train station, a building material supplier, a flour mill, and a metal fabricator. As the Roanoke economy and job market grew, so did levels of contamination in the surrounding environment.

The soil and groundwater of the South Jefferson area were laden with hazardous contaminants that were released from the industries. Contaminants included polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), volatile organic compounds (VOCs), lead, arsenic, iron, and polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs).

By the early 1960s, these larger properties were abandoned and left to deteriorate. The building material supplier became a scrapyards and the railway facilities became a collection of warehouses. The City of Roanoke realized that the vacant and underutilized land became a barrier for redevelopment and prosperity in the Jefferson Street Corridor. In May of 2000, the City of Roanoke formulated a South Jefferson Redevelopment plan to cleanup and revitalize the area.

### Paving the Way Toward Redevelopment

Working alongside of developers and consultants, the City of Roanoke set out to redevelop the South Jefferson industrial corridor. In 2006, the City of Roanoke received its first EPA Brownfields Assessment grant. The \$200,000 grant allowed the city to perform six Phase I Environmental Site Assessments (ESAs) and six Phase II ESAs to identify levels of known contaminants. Knowing the levels of contamination within a property helped developers invest in the area.

One assessment revealed that the scrapyards was in need of cleanup before any development could occur. Therefore, in 2008, the City of Roanoke applied for an EPA Brownfields Cleanup grant and received \$200,000. After thorough planning, the scrapyards was capped and received a certificate of completion from the state. Following 20 years of manufacturing and more than 60 years of being a scrapyards, the City acquired the property and cleaned it up for potential redevelopment.

South Jefferson's 110 acres situated in the heart of Roanoke initially separated neighborhoods and created blight. Through significant planning and effective partnerships, the City of Roanoke was able to achieve their vision and generate interest from developers to invest in the area.



Riverside One (offices) and the Carilion Clinic (medical) being built atop assessed brownfields in the South Jefferson area of Roanoke.

**EPA Grant Recipient:**  
City of Roanoke, Virginia

**Grant Types:**  
Community-Wide Assessment  
Cleanup

**Former Use:**  
Industrial

**Current Uses:**  
Mixed Commercial Development and  
Public/Open Space



South Jefferson was once a hub of industrial activity comprised of scrapyards and manufacturing facilities.



Virginia Tech's Carilion School of Medicine. The school's first class entered in the fall of 2010, only days after the building was constructed.

**“The EPA Brownfield grants were instrumental in preparing a 13-acre area for mixed use development to complement the Virginia Tech and Carilion efforts, establishing a true urban corridor on this former brownfield.”**

*Ian Shaw,  
Planning Administrator,  
City of Roanoke, Virginia*

## South Jefferson Today

During the planning phase, the City of Roanoke and the Roanoke Redevelopment and Housing Authority envisioned a biomedical corridor that would also generate other complementary development in the South Jefferson area. The first spark to successful reuse started with 25 acres assembled through a partnership with Carilion Clinic and later Virginia Tech to establish the Riverside Centre (an office building). The initial investment into revitalization was able to spur additional development for housing and other amenities.

Riverside One was the first of many successful redevelopment projects in South Jefferson. In 2009, the Carilion Clinic was completed and it now provides medical assistance to those in need. In 2010, the City of Roanoke continued their success by working with developers to construct the Virginia Tech School of Medicine and Research.

With the Carilion and Virginia Tech development underway, a private developer acquired a 13-acre portion of the redevelopment area in 2013 for a complementary mixed use development. This dense development along Jefferson Street includes two new apartment buildings with over 250 dwellings units and adaptive reuse of a historic structures that includes a restaurant, coffee shop and microbrewery with more to come. In three years the assessed value of these properties has increased from less than \$3,000,000 to nearly \$30,000,000. South Jefferson is no longer the abandoned and downtrodden community that it once was, but now a vibrant area bustling with promising development that is now valued at over \$200 million.

“Without the injection of EPA brownfield funds into sites such as The Bridges, these kind of transformational mixed use developments would never be financially feasible and therefore would never begin. The upfront work funded by the EPA is vital in doing sufficient remediation, and therefore reducing uncertainty, to ensure that a viable development is even plausible.”

– Richard Souter,  
Partner, WVS Companies

## Down the Road

The South Jefferson area of Roanoke is now a cornerstone for the economy of the city. The revitalization of vacant and contaminated properties has provided Roanoke with the opportunity to increase its tax base, provide jobs, and offer affordable housing.

Roanoke and the EPA continue to work hand in hand to assess and cleanup brownfield sites for potential redevelopment. The City of Roanoke is using additional brownfield assessment funding to remain active in the redevelopment of South Jefferson. New funding, strong leadership, and an effective plan all indicate that the City of Roanoke will continue to succeed in brownfield redevelopment.

### For more information:

Visit the EPA Brownfields website at [www.epa.gov/brownfields](http://www.epa.gov/brownfields) or contact Felicia Fred at 215-814-5524 or [fred.felicia@epa.gov](mailto:fred.felicia@epa.gov)