

Brownfields Success Story

Lending a Helping Hand to Veterans in Need Indianapolis, Indiana

Haughville is a working-class neighborhood west of downtown Indianapolis with a population of approximately 8,000. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, many residents made their living at National Malleable Castings Co. Works, an iron foundry located near a heavily trafficked east-west arterial road. When the foundry went out of business, the city of Indianapolis claimed the land, and the site remained vacant for nearly 50 years.

The Opportunity

Steven Meyer, former administrator of Brownfield Redevelopment for the city of Indianapolis, believed the site had potential. “The land is surrounded by residential housing and sits next to a commercial corridor,” says Meyer. “There was no reason not to give it a second chance.”

When the site went unclaimed at a tax sale, the city donated the land to local developer Keystone Construction. Keystone expressed an interest in building housing for veterans who are homeless or at risk of homelessness and acquired low-income housing tax credits from the state and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development to aid in construction. An assessment revealed significant soil contamination, primarily from arsenic and polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs).

The Cleanup

Low-income housing tax credits are time-sensitive funds, so Meyer and his team coordinated with Keystone, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the Indiana Department of Environmental Management (IDEM,) and environmental consultants to create a plan that allowed the developer to use the funds before they expired. The city received preapproval on a \$200,000 Brownfields Cleanup Grant, which allowed for targeted soil excavation and PCB removal before the funds were officially distributed.



EPA Grant Recipient:

City of Indianapolis, Indiana

EPA Grant Type:

Brownfields Cleanup Grant

Former Uses:

Foundry

Current Use:

Veterans' Housing



The iron foundry left behind significant soil contamination.



Real-time soil confirmation testing allowed the team to quickly determine how much digging was necessary.



The construction team built a demarcation barrier to prevent digging in areas where contaminated soil couldn't be removed.

“Lincoln Apartments is a great example of the kinds of partnerships necessary to redevelop a site like this, especially on an accelerated timeline. We're proud that the Brownfields Program was able to assist veterans in need.”

*Steven Meyer,
Former Administrator of
Brownfield Redevelopment,
City of Indianapolis*

For more information:

Visit the EPA Brownfields website at www.epa.gov/brownfields or contact Matthew Didier at 312-353-2112 or Didier.Matthew@epa.gov.

The city also received additional funding from IDEM to conduct real-time soil confirmation testing to determine whether the sidewalls of the excavation pits were clean or whether additional digging was necessary. This came in handy when utility digging began. The initial assessment grant did not cover areas where developers planned to put water and power lines, but as digging continued, construction workers noticed discolored soil that an assessment showed was contaminated.

“It wouldn't have been possible to meet our deadlines without state funding and quick-turn work from the testing lab,” says Meyer. “They helped us make sure all our bases were covered. It was a real team effort.”

The west side of the site had contaminated soil that workers could not excavate, so the team installed a demarcation barrier and grew thick grasses there to function as a cap, preventing people from digging into the soil.

The Benefits

The apartments opened on the 150th anniversary of Abraham Lincoln's Gettysburg Address, a nod to the future residents' history of service and sacrifice. The 76-unit facility is Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design certified, meaning the building meets important energy efficiency and green building measures that minimize environmental impact.

Lincoln Apartments are located at an advantageous area for veterans looking to get back on their feet. The building is in a walkable neighborhood, located less than one mile from the Richard L. Roudebush Veterans Administration Medical Center. Public transit stops, a grocery store, and a shopping center are all within a few blocks.

The Indianapolis Brownfield Redevelopment Program won a Governor's Award for Environmental Excellence for its redevelopment efforts. According to Meyer, the award represents an ideal outcome for a brownfields redevelopment effort.

“At the beginning of any project,” he says, “we consider our end user—the group that will ultimately benefit from redevelopment. All the effort required to get this done on time was motivated by our desire to provide shelter to people who really need and deserve it.”