

Brownfields Success Story

Hiram School Site

Hiram, Maine

An old elementary school building that was closed down in 2008 when the state consolidated schools in southern Maine has been redeveloped into the home of a company that makes organic granola. Built in 1979, the Hiram Elementary School was abandoned in 2008 and two years later the company opened up its new plant there, bringing new jobs to Hiram, a town of about 1600 residents that was historically a center of farming and timber harvesting.

Priming the Property for Redevelopment

When an organic granola and food producer local to Maine was seeking a larger facility, the executives at this growing business were drawn to 10,000 square feet of single-story space and 8.2 acres of land at the vacated elementary school. The presence of asbestos-containing building materials and underground fuel tanks, however, complicated plans to use the building. The company worked with EPA as well as state and local partners to clean up the former elementary school building so it could be redeveloped as an asset to the town and its business community.

The Southern Maine Planning and Development Commission provided about \$25,000 of EPA Brownfields funding to determine the extent of contamination at the site and the cost of cleanup. With this knowledge, the granola producer went ahead with buying the property in 2015 and paid to renovate and clean the former school building.

Funding Details

EPA Assessment Funding.....	\$24,653
Private Cleanup Funding.....	\$40,000
Finance Authority of Maine Redevelopment Loan.....	\$200,000
Private Redevelopment Funding.....	\$550,000
Total:.....	\$814,653



Aerial View of Solar Panels (photo credit Grandy Oats)

EPA Grant Recipient:
Southern Maine Planning and
Development Commission

Grant Types:
Assessment

Former Uses:
Hiram Elementary School

Current Use:
Granola and food production



Solar Panels (photo credit Grandy Oats)



Granola and Food Production Area (photo credit Grandy Oats)

Today

After the cleanup was finished, granola production was moved to its new home in Hiram. With support from the US Department of Agriculture’s Rural Development program, the company built a new warehouse for storing raw and organic materials, and installed 288 solar panels on the school’s old sports field. The solar panels power the entire facility, including computers and ovens, moving the food production facility toward their goal of being a net-zero carbon emissions facility.

The solar cells at the site generate more than 95,000 kWh of clean energy a year. Using clean energy instead of fossil fuels reduces the amount of greenhouse gases the facility emits into the atmosphere by an amount equivalent to driving an average passenger vehicle 160,000 miles. That’s the same as driving from Hiram to San Francisco and back 25 times.

The new expanded facility produces 2 million pounds of granola, trail mix, and roasted nuts annually and employs over 30 people. When the company moved into the old elementary school building, it became the largest employer in Hiram. This development provides an example of how environmental protection and economic development can go hand-in-hand, as the company has helped make the small rural town of Hiram a healthier and more prosperous community. Based on these positive outcomes, EPA Region 1 honored the company with an Environmental Merit Award in April 2017.

“This project provided great benefit to a small, rural community - reuse of a closed school building, job creation, environmental remediation and a net-zero carbon emission manufacturing facility.”

Chuck Morgan,
Economic Development Director
Southern Maine Planning Development
Commission

Then

July 2008

March 2014

October 2014

July 2015

Now



School Becomes
Vacant

Phase 1
Assessment

Phase II
Assessment

Cleanup and
Redevelopment
Complete

For more information:

Visit the EPA Brownfields website at www.epa.gov/brownfields or contact Frank Gardner at 617 918 1278 or Gardner.frank@epa.gov