



Project Berry Lane Park

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Development:
Berry Lane Park
Block bounded by Garfield Avenue, Communipaw Avenue, Woodward Street, and Carteret Avenue, Jersey City, New Jersey, 07304

Project Information



Project Overview

Located in Lawrence, Massachusetts, the Union Crossing project is a transformative urban Goal of the project: To redevelop multiple blighted brownfields in a densely populated, economically distressed neighborhood into a state-of-the-art public park.

Location of the site: Jersey City, NJ

Approximate size of the site (in acres): 17 acres

Former use of the site: Rail yards, junk yards, automotive repair shops, steel manufacturing facilities, and warehouses

Actual end use of the site: Public park with active and passive recreational uses

Date the project was completed: June 2013

What makes this project unique?

One of the most ambitious open space projects to be undertaken in Jersey City, New Jersey's history, Berry Lane Park has transformed

approximately 17 acres of former brownfields into a recreational area that is surrounded by residential properties. The project has been led by the Jersey City Redevelopment Agency (JCRA). Berry Lane Park is unique in that it incorporates design features—such as a butterfly hill—that were identified by community members in a series of planning design charettes in 2008. In fact, the project had been driven by local community groups since the late 1990s who have remained involved throughout the course of the project.

Further, the project is unique in that it is located in one of the poorest neighborhoods in Jersey City, known as Morris Canal, which also has a large minority population. In Morris Canal, nearly every major economic indicator is significantly higher than the state and national average. As of the 2006-2010 American Community Survey, the unemployment rate was twice the national and state averages. The income levels in Morris Canal were significantly lower when compared to the national, state, and even Jersey City averages. Further, nearly one in three families with children under the age of 18 were living in poverty, and nearly 30% of the population did not have a high school diploma. Thus this high-profile project was unique in that so much land was available for redevelopment with the potential to impact such a distressed neighborhood.

What were the primary funding sources?

Funding was a mix of both private and public and broke down as follows:

1. EPA Assessment Grants approximately \$525,000 across four grants for assessment, branding/outreach, work plan prep
2. EPA Cleanup Grants \$1.4 million covering seven sites across three funding cycles
3. Hudson County EPA Revolving Loan Fund \$522,204 including sub-grants for cleanup of two sites and a loan for cleanup of one site
4. HUD CDBG \$1,495,500 across three allocations
5. State Green Acres Fund \$2 million for acquisition
6. State Hazardous Discharge Site Remediation Grants of approximately \$415,000 for assessment and state regulatory oversight
7. Hudson County Open Space Fund \$4.4 million for acquisition
8. City Capital \$3 million for acquisition, legal fees, and EPA grant matches
9. Developer contribution \$750,000 for acquisition
10. Environmental settlements from prior property owners \$1,270,000 used to offset acquisition and remediation costs
11. Responsible Party (PPG Industries) \$7,330,000 for remediation and JCRA Project Manager salary
12. Rent and concessions \$200,000 used for general project costs

This amounts to a total of approximately \$23.3 million for redevelopment.

What contaminants were present on the site?

The 12 sites associated with the Berry Lane Park project were all brownfields with former uses such as rail yards, junk yards, auto repair shops, steel manufacturing facilities, and warehouses. In addition, the area was covered with historic fill. As such, the sites were contaminated with polyaromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs), PCBs, and various metals. In addition, Berry Lane Park is located on the former Morris Canal, which was decommissioned in 1924 and backfilled with contaminated material to include hexavalent chrome waste. Due to these activities, PPG Industries was the designated Responsible Party for the hexavalent chromium remediation.

Of the expenses outline above, approximately \$15 million was used for remediation. The remediation technologies that were used included reuse of historic fill soils and former building concrete on-site, removal of contaminated soils that could not be reused, and construction of a soil cap. A stormwater detention and infiltration system was also developed as part of the cap. In addition, remediation was integrated with development of the park so as to streamline the project.

Environmental Impact Questions

1. Could you describe the use of innovative environmental solutions in the project?

First, build-out of the park was integrated with the remediation process. This created efficiencies all stakeholders benefitted from, including the community in particular. Second, the stormwater detention and infiltration system was implemented into the site's cap. This stormwater system will retain an estimated 75% of 100-year storm, which is incredibly important in this neighborhood where stormwater and combined sewers are major challenges. Finally, two key project components were reused on-site; the historic fill soil that was deemed allowable for reuse, and the concrete from the former buildings that were demolished early on in the project.

During the series of planning design charettes, community members identified additional environmental components to be incorporated. This most notably included reuse of the former coal silos and development of a butterfly hill to serve as a green roof over the concession area.

2.How were the environmental results identified and measured?

The Berry Lane Park project encompassed 12 brownfield sites. Due to funding requirements, each site had its own stand-alone Remedial Investigation Workplan, Remedial Investigation Report, Remedial Action Workplan, and Remedial Action Report. This led to detailed breakdowns regarding the amounts of contaminants removed and clean fill emplaced on each site, all of which were tracked by the project's environmental engineers and construction management company.

The key environmental result sought by community members was the removal of the hexavalent chromium from the area. PPG operated a chromium chemical plant on Garfield Avenue in Jersey City for nearly 40 years. The health concerns that residents encountered were obviously very alarming and were exacerbated when they would see neon-colored soil that was evidence of the hexavalent chromium.

3.Could you describe the breadth and depth of the remediation required, and was it executed under a consent order or other legal mandate?

After extensive investigation and delineation activities over the course of over three years, remediation lasted for nine months and included the removal of: 210 cubic yards of tires, 1,800 cubic yards of debris, 1.2 million gallons of contaminated groundwater, 49,095 tons of hexavalent chromium, and 19 underground storage tanks. In addition, 100,000 tons of clean fill were brought onsite. Remediation of the hexavalent chromium contamination was completed under a consent decree between the NJ Department of Environmental Protection, PPG Industries/Honeywell, and the City of Jersey City. The JCRA was then brought in to oversee completion of the project on behalf of the City.

4.What was most challenging about the project?

The most challenging part of the project was negotiating the investigation and remediation agreements between the JCRA and the Responsible Party, PPG. PPG was known to be the Responsible Party for the hexavalent chromium for many years. Remediation went unaddressed for quite some time, which led to the aforementioned consent order. Once the JCRA was brought on board to lead the project on behalf of the City, they formed a public-private partnership with PPG. The two parties negotiated agreements whereby the JCRA oversaw all investigation and remediation activities on behalf of PPG. The level of detail in these agreements was highly complex and required the involvement of many lawyers. In the end, both parties ended up with agreements there agreed to. But getting there took months of negotiations!

5.Did the project receive any loans, grants or financial assistance from any public or private organizations?

Yes, the project included a mixture of local and federal public funding as well as private funding. Please see response above for a detailed breakdown of these funding sources.

6.Could you describe the collaboration that occurred among multiple parties to enable the project to excel?

Without collaboration between the local and state agencies, the Responsible Party, and the community, this project would not have come to fruition. The local agency that led the project, the JCRA, attended monthly meetings of the Morris Canal Redevelopment Area Coalition and Community Development Corporation, a non-profit organization dedicated to addressing brownfields in the Morris Canal neighborhood. This provided a valuable tool for keeping the community aware of the project's progress and an opportunity to answer any of their questions or concerns.

Another critical piece of collaboration was that between the JCRA and the Responsible Party, PPG. PPG was known to be the Responsible Party for the hexavalent chromium for many years. Remediation went unaddressed for quite some time, which led to the aforementioned consent order. Once the JCRA was brought on board to lead the project on behalf of the City, they formed a public-private partnership with PPG. The two parties negotiated agreements whereby the JCRA oversaw all investigation and remediation activities on behalf of PPG. This resulted in a detailed schedule of values that allowed for fixed cost sharing between PPG and the JCRA. This schedule included an administrative fee that PPG paid the JCRA for their Project Manager's time. In this unique instance, a private Responsible Party paid a public agency to oversee their remediation project. Given the many funding sources that went into the project, the schedule of values also served as the universal basis for reimbursement from all funding sources.

7.What type of innovative designs and energy-efficient technologies were implemented?

Berry Lane Park's innovative design features included:

1. Reuse of the on-site former coal silos
2. The use of permeable pavers
3. Butterfly hill with a green roof over the concession area
4. A stormwater system that will retain 75% of the stormwater associated with a 100-year storm

8. What recyclable materials were used to classify this as a "green" development?

As was aforementioned, historic fill soil was reused on site, and the concrete and building debris was crushed and reused onsite. It is also worth noting that the project included the planting of over 600 new trees, thereby created a new urban forest and wildlife habitat. The park is located at a station of the Hudson-Bergen Light Rail line. Finally, Berry Lane Park is also part of the statewide Morris Canal Greenway project, which is working toward constructing a greenway across New Jersey along the former Morris Canal.

