



Bridgeport's Restored Gateway Leads to a Whole New Impression

Bridgeport, Connecticut

Whether arriving by boat or train, or just driving through on the I-95 overpass, visitors to Bridgeport, Connecticut, at last have a positive first impression of the city. Redevelopment of brownfields at the city's gateway into a baseball stadium and arena has initiated new economic stability, new jobs, and the much-needed restoration of the city's derelict industrial areas.

In recent years, Bridgeport suffered severe economic decline brought on in part by the departure of vital industry, and the abandonment and perceived contamination of former industrial sites. Coming close to bankruptcy in 1990 due to its continued financial deterioration, Bridgeport had become one of the poorest yet most highly taxed cities in the nation. Nowhere in the city was this economic decay more evident than at the former Jenkins Valve site, located directly at Bridgeport's main gateway. Visitors coming in via the city's ferry, from Amtrak and Metro-North Railroad cars arriving at Bridgeport's train terminal, and in vehicles buzzing overhead on the Interstate 95 overpass, were all subjected to a clear view of the abandoned, run-down property. This former industrial manufacturing site sat unused for nearly ten years.

Thanks in part to assistance from EPA and other federal agencies, Jenkins Valve and other unused industrial sites within Bridgeport have undergone dramatic transformations. Using a portion of the \$200,000 assessment grant provided to the city as part of EPA's Brownfields Pilot Program in August 1994, a city-wide inventory was performed to identify potential brownfields. The Jenkins Valve site and two adjacent brownfields, the former Sprague Meter and Drummond McCall sites, were included in this inventory. Following Pilot assessments of the Jenkins Valve site, the Zurich Re corporation stepped in and invested \$10 million to clean up and redevelop the property. The City of Bridgeport put up a \$7 million bond for the project. This long-idle property is now the 5,500-seat Ballpark at Harbor Yard, which opened in May 1998 as the new home of the Bridgeport Bluefish.

The success of the ballpark spurred interest for redevelopment of the adjacent Sprague Meter and Drummond McCall sites, which have since been transformed into a 10,000-seat arena and parking garage. The Arena at Harbor Yard opened in September 2001 and is the home of the American Hockey League's Bridgeport Sound Tigers and Fairfield University's basketball teams, as well as a venue for concerts and special



Jenkins Valve site

JUST THE FACTS:

- Using a portion of Bridgeport's EPA Brownfields Assessment Pilot grant, a city-wide inventory was performed to identify potential brownfields.
- Brownfields Pilot-funded assessments of the former Jenkins Valve site led to a \$10 million cleanup and redevelopment effort. The property is now the 5,500-seat Ballpark at Harbor Yard, which serves as home for the local baseball team.
- The success of the ballpark project spurred redevelopment of two adjacent brownfields that have since been transformed into a 10,000-seat arena and a parking garage.

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events. The new parking garage is used by commuter rail travelers as well as those visiting the arena. To make this project a reality, the State of Connecticut invested \$35 million, the City of Bridgeport invested more than \$10 million, and Volume Services invested \$10 million after signing a contract to be the long-term operator of the facility. Redevelopment of these three sites created 721 jobs, 68 of which are full-time.

The comprehensive effort to redevelop Bridgeport's brownfields includes the Grow Bridgeport Fund (GBF), a capital access loan fund for growing small businesses. Although not established specifically for site assessments or remediation, loans have been made available for these purposes. The \$7 million fund is comprised of \$1,750,000 in U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Section 108 funding; \$475,000 from a HUD Economic Development Initiative (EDI) grant; and \$1,000,000 from the Economic Development Administration of the Department of Commerce. The State of Connecticut and four member lending institutions are also contributors to the GBF. In addition, the administration that manages the GBF also manages the \$350,000 received by the City of Bridgeport from EPA's Brownfields Cleanup Revolving Loan Fund grant program.

The collaboration and partnership of multiple federal agencies have allowed Bridgeport's cleanup and redevelopment efforts to progress well beyond the assessment and planning stages enabled by EPA's initial \$200,000 brownfields grant. As stated by a long-time supporter of Bridgeport's efforts: "To give you an idea about how much things have changed, the City of Bridgeport has received over 200 inquiries about this Pilot from developers and other investors [since the program was initiated]...we continue to build on the momentum generated by the Brownfields Pilot." Visitors to Bridgeport greeted by a view of new ballpark and arena can testify to the success of the city's efforts.

CONTACTS:

For more information contact
US EPA - Region 1 (617) 918-1424
Or visit EPA's Brownfields Web site at:
<http://www.epa.gov/brownfields/>



*Bridgeport's new stadium, home of
the Bridgeport Bluefish*