



Mixed-use sites like Station Square (shown) benefit communities through myriad green aspects, and also help to enhance the local economy. © Fred Forbes Photogroupe.

SUBURBAN TRANSFORMATION

STATION SQUARE IS REDEVELOPED FROM AN ABANDONED BROWNFIELD SITE TO A SUSTAINABLE, MIXED-USE COMMUNITY.

BY BARTONPARTNERS ARCHITECTS/PLANNERS

Hindsight is 20/20 and allows people to learn from past mistakes. Years ago, individuals were less aware of their surroundings and the impact their actions would have on the environment in the future. A lack of understanding, care, and regulations led companies to continually “dump” hazardous by-products of their manufactured goods, resulting in thousands of abandoned industrial sites that still exist today. In 1980, as citizens became more educated on environmental issues, Congress established the Superfund Program, administered by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (US EPA), to locate, investigate and initiate a nationwide clean-up of these areas.

Because many Superfund sites were former homes to big organizations, these conveniently positioned properties are becoming prime redevelopment locations.

Today, many of them have been put into productive reuse, thereby benefiting the local community through a cleaner environment, enhanced economy, and improved quality of life. Thanks to the efforts of an environmentally sensitive development team, a portion of the North Penn-Area 7 Superfund site, located just north of Philadelphia, is on its way to a total transformation — from aban-

doned brownfields to a sustainable, mixed-use community.

This successful outcome is the result of a coordinated approach to redeveloping sites with environmental constraints. Dewey Commercial Investors, LP, (Lansdale, Pa.) led the clean-up effort of North Penn-Area 7 to develop the new community known as Station Square. Other team players include Pennsylvania-based BartonPartners Architects/Planners, RT Environmental Services, Inc., and DBP Construction Management, LP. Their combined efforts have efficiently turned the initiative to change this area into a “smart growth” reality.

“The project involved the redevelopment of an EPA Superfund site that was previously used as an industrial facility that had been vacant since 1991,” said Gary Brown, president of RT Environmental Services, Inc., who were heavily involved in the remediation process,

Charles Elliott, senior vice president of Dewey Commercial Investors, LP, said: “Extensive environmental testing and remediation has been conducted at the site, which will culminate in an Act 2 liability release for clean-up to statewide residential health standards. The

STATION SQUARE

PENN-AREA 7 SUPERFUND SITE, LOCATED JUST NORTH OF PHILADELPHIA

APARTMENT HOMES, PLUS A 48,800-SQUARE-FOOT COMMERCIAL CENTER — SHOPS AT STATION SQUARE FEATURES A BRANCH BANK, RESTAURANT, OFFICE SUITES, GROUND FLOOR RETAIL AND A MUNICIPAL COMMUTER PARKING LOT.

TEAM: DEWEY COMMERCIAL INVESTORS, BARTONPARTNERS ARCHITECTS/PLANNERS, RT ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES, AND DBP CONSTRUCTION MANAGEMENT.



The "main street" layout of the community lends to convenience in accessing neighborhood amenities. © BartonPartners.

US EPA and the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection have worked closely with us to ensure the project stays on schedule and to protect both the environment and the future residents and users of the development," he said. "Our ability to successfully redevelop the site was greatly helped by the Act 2 Land Recycling Program and the officials at the PADEP and US EPA. In fact, The Pennsylvania State Employees Retirement System (PASERS) has committed an investment of \$9.5 million of the total expected development cost of \$55 million."

BartonPartners developed a site plan for the entire project, and integrated planning with architecture to create a residential section that provides housing for approximately 650 residents. The 346 market-rate rental apartment homes are organized around a half-mile-long boulevard (www.livestationsquare.com). The focal points are three "village greens," each with their own identity, unique functions and landscaping. Station Square will also include an adjoining 48,800-square-foot commercial center known as the "Shops at Station Square," with a branch bank, restaurant, office suites, ground floor retail, and a municipal commuter parking lot.

Laid out in "main street" fashion, the core will adopt a design idiom that reinterprets vintage station architecture. Apartment residents and transit riders alike will be able to stroll through the convenience-oriented retail, follow the covered walkway leading to nearby Pennbrook Station, or walk to work in the

office complex across the street. Locals can travel regionally to major area employers (including pharmaceutical plants), or enjoy Philadelphia's amenities without ever having to drive their cars.

Good planning has created a pedestrian-oriented venture that has turned around a blighted site in the midst of established residential and office communities. By utilizing existing infrastructure, the project doesn't require the local municipalities to make any further investments in this regard. Reuse of the existing site provides the opportunity to meet requirements for new housing due to population growth; reinvigorates the tax base that would have been lost if the site remained vacant; increases transit "ridership;" and, lessens the need for greenfield development to protect valuable open space.

The team worked closely with local officials who provided constructive comments that allowed site-plan approval to occur in a straightforward and efficient manner. Large retention basins were used to minimize redevelopment impact. Vapor barriers were included in the apartment-house construction to assure that any low levels of solvents that may have remained following the remedial process did not impact residents. The end result of these efforts is a sustainable community.

Because of the mixed-use nature of the plan, an "overlay zoning ordinance" was developed that sets forth new standards for building spacing, street types, on-

street parking, and other criteria that diverts from conventional zoning to give the neighborhood its unique look and feel. Transit-oriented development (TOD), such as the Station Square project, marks a shift in national and regional policy on land-use and transportation. Many public agencies now encourage development that combines uses within walking distance of transit stops. Not only will a once-depleted site be revived, but Station Square will also become one of the first projects on the East Coast of this new generation of "streetcar suburbs."

With its mixture of products and uses, Station Square serves several purposes: It turns a deserted area into a revitalized community and enhances the economic conditions of the surrounding area by providing housing, retail, and work — all in one convenient location. Continuing forward, by combining heightened public awareness with conscientious vision and development, many more such projects can be realized. ■

Founded in 1990, BartonPartners Architects/Planners, Norristown, Pa., is an award-winning, full-service architecture and planning firm nationally recognized for its innovative work in a broad range of housing products. The firm specializes in rental and for-sale residential design, including market-rate single and multi-family development, affordable housing, adaptive reuse, mixed-use urban in-fill, active adult and continuing-care retirement communities, and historic rehabilitation.