

Our House Senior Living

PUB-RR-861

February 2010

Our House Senior Living

235 N. Congress St.
Richland Center, WI
Richland County

2.3 acres

Location: A city block in a former industrial section of Richland Center, close to the Pine River.

Shifts in the economy and road changes turned this strip of Richland Center into a conspicuous eyesore, until the city partnered with the DNR for help.

History

Like other Wisconsin towns, Richland Center enjoyed more than 100 years as an industrial hub along a railroad route. Business built up near the center of town along the Pine River, including tanneries, lumber mills, leather processing plants, service stations and more. But when the industrial economic wave of the 20th century began to crest and fall, parts of the city began to show its age. A decision to re-route State Highway 14 along Orange Street suddenly made this blighted section of town highly visible.

City leaders analyzed the problem and looked for help. They recognized some of the properties that could be redeveloped fit

the brownfield description. Two of those properties were Sutton Electric and Matt's Auto Body. These both sat on the same city block and had lengthy histories of environmental contamination from past industrial and commercial usage, without a clear responsible party.

Richland Center leaders created the Orange Street Commons Redevelopment Corridor, and purchased the two properties from their owners.



The former Sutton Electric and Matt's Auto Body were targeted for redevelopment by Richland Center city officials (photo courtesy DNR).

Investigation and Cleanup

A Phase I Environmental Site Investigation of both properties revealed much about their past usage. Sutton's Electric was an electric motor repair shop, as well as a tractor dealership. Matt's Auto Body was formerly used as a welding shop.



Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources
Remediation and Redevelopment Program

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<http://dnr.wi.gov/org/aw/rr>



The Phase II investigation revealed contamination from heavy metals, arsenic, chromium, lead and polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons. These pollutants were found at levels dangerous to human exposure.

A complete site investigation was conducted, followed by demolition of existing buildings and safe removal of asbestos. Some of the contamination was allowed to remain, provided that the barrier that covers the impacted soil remains in tact. Certain soils that posed a health risk were incorporated into berms and landscaping on the property. Others were transported to off-site hazardous waste landfills.



Completion of the Our House Senior Living Facility raised the property value of the block by more than \$400,000 (photo courtesy DNR).

Redevelopment

With the former buildings torn down and the environmental contamination properly contained, the two properties could be sold to a new buyer. The new purchaser used the land to build the Our House Senior Living Facility and Memory Care. This new construction removed the rundown buildings and increased the property tax value from just \$57,000 to \$469,000.

This block's redevelopment is the first step in what Richland Center leaders hope will be an expansive downtown transformation.

Financial, Liability, Technical Assistance

Richland Center leaders applied for and received two Brownfields Site Assessments grants (SAG) from the DNR's Remediation and Redevelopment Program (RR Program). The two grants totaled \$60,000 dollars, and the city matched that total dollar for dollar. The DNR Stewardship Program provided another \$115,000.

The RR Program project manager provided oversight for the redevelopment work at the site and approved the property for closure.

Contacts

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