

Wisconsin Clock Factory

PUB-RR-888

February 2011

Wisconsin Clock Factory

70 7th Street
Clintonville, WI
Waupaca County

3.5 Acres

Location: A mostly residential neighborhood - near school and parks.

Cooperation between local, county, state and federal governments provides much needed senior housing for a central Wisconsin community.

History

Before redevelopment, the former Wisconsin Clock factory in Clintonville stuck out like a sore thumb. The abandoned woodworking and clock manufacturer was surrounded by mostly residential neighbors, who watched the three acre facility quietly turn to rust.

A bulk oil facility operated at the site in the 1940s and '50s. The clock factory operated from 1973 through 1988, at which point it became Woodland Products woodworking company until 2003.

New ownership of Woodland Products was unable to maintain the large facility, and it fell into disrepair. After numerous complaints, the city of Clintonville inspected the property in July 2003. A number of violations were found,

including: an inoperable sprinkler system; barrels of unknown substances – both inside and outside the building; excessively tall grass and weeds; rubbish and debris; and inoperable vehicles and machinery. These findings were reported to the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR).

The old Wisconsin Clock Factory's proximity to a school and park made it a safety concern. To prevent children or adults from getting inside, the city boarded up the buildings and issued a raze order. At that time, the current owner was tax delinquent and filed for bankruptcy. Waupaca County foreclosed on the property in 2005 and agreed to let the city manage the cleanup effort. A private developer came to the city with interest in redeveloping the property.



The former clock factory was rusting away near residential homes and a school (photo courtesy DNR).

Investigation and Cleanup

Following the initial health and safety inspection, the DNR asked the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to take emergency action at the Clock Factory site. The company used paints, stains, solvents and other



Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources
Remediation and Redevelopment Program

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chemicals in the course of its manufacturing process. Analytical results of the drums and containers left on the property showed they contained hazardous substances such as acetone, ethyl benzene, methylene chloride, toluene and xylene.

After the owner was informed he was in violation of state environmental laws, he chose to voluntarily remove more than 50 storage containers.

Later on, Phase I and limited Phase II site assessments confirmed petroleum related compounds and some metal contamination in the soil and groundwater. Remediation work included demolition of all buildings on the property, with proper asbestos abatement. A 1,000 gallon underground storage tank was removed and sections of contaminated soil were excavated and sent to a hazardous waste landfill.



A Brownfields Site Assessment Grant from the DNR helped jump start this redevelopment project from closed plant to new senior housing units (photo courtesy DNR).

Redevelopment

A developer approached the city of Clintonville and Waupaca County to develop the site into senior housing, accommodations that were lacking in the community. Olen Village Senior Apartments were completed on the site, consisting of 24 independent living senior apartments.

Financial, Liability, Technical Assistance

Completion of the senior apartments was made possible through the perseverance and cooperation with the city, county, EPA and DNR's Remediation and Redevelopment (RR) Program.

The RR Program awarded the city of Clintonville a \$99,799 Brownfields Site Assessment Grant (SAG). The RR Program Project Manager also monitored the cleanup to ensure state standards were met.

Waupaca County assisted by acquiring the property through tax delinquency, thus receiving a state local government unit (LGU) exemption. A waiver by the county of the delinquent taxes was utilized as part of the match for the SAG grant. Additionally, the city was able to use \$52,000 in in-kind labor and equipment as additional matching funds for the grant.

Complete cost of the remediation was approximately \$206,000, with the developer funding costs not covered by the DNR's grant.

The final post-tax value of the senior housing complex and property was assessed at \$861,600.

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