

Chiquita Processed Foods

PUB-RR-891

February 2011

Chiquita Processed Foods
300 East Main Street
Sun Prairie, WI
Dane County

12 acres

Location: A formerly industrial area of downtown Sun Prairie, near Koshkonong Creek.

The city of Sun Prairie utilized public and private resources to turn two closed manufacturing plants into a retail and residential destination.

History

For nearly 100 years, downtown Sun Prairie was home to a canning factory. The facility was last owned and operated by Chiquita Brands International. In 2001, Chiquita filed for bankruptcy and closed the plant, which employed 170 people. However, by the end of the year, the city of Sun Prairie purchased the Chiquita property as part of their downtown redevelopment project.

Investigation and Cleanup

Crews discovered environmental contamination while removing a 10,000-gallon underground gas storage tank from the cannery site in 1989. During the tank removal, 409 cubic yards of petroleum contaminated soil were excavated from the former tank bed and disposed of at a licensed hazardous waste landfill. The excavated area was eventually covered with a pavement cap.

Despite cleanup efforts, monitoring wells showed low levels of petroleum volatile organic compounds (PVOCs) in groundwater on the site. After several years of monitoring, contaminant levels eventually dropped below state legal limits. The DNR was able to grant closure to the site with regard to PVOCs in 1996.

Between 1996 and 2001, other site remediation work was completed, including the removal of another leaking underground storage tank. Following the sale of the property, the city of Sun Prairie hired crews to demolish several cannery buildings while properly handling asbestos.

Sampling under the building revealed further petroleum contamination, which again led to the proper removal of some soil and capping remaining contamination with a parking lot.



The city of Sun Prairie turned a crisis into an opportunity by redeveloping the Chiquita Cannery shortly after the company closed its doors (photo courtesy DNR).

Redevelopment

In a deal reached between the city and Chiquita, the city purchased property and a neighboring



Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources
Remediation and Redevelopment Program

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porcelain manufacturing site as part of a master plan to redevelop the downtown. The city accepted a development proposal to create a \$20 million commercial and residential development called Cannery Square.

The area is now a vibrant destination that attracts residents, shoppers and tourists to downtown Sun Prairie. Cannery Square features approximately 127 residential homes and apartments, retail stores, a coffee shop, restaurant and a central plaza with an eye-catching fountain.

Developers maintained the spirit of the cannery by converting one of the plant buildings into a restaurant. In addition, the building houses more retail space and 14 luxury apartments on the second and third levels.

Prior to redevelopment, property tax assessments for the properties involved in the redevelopment totaled \$1,955,700. As of January 2010, the assessed value for the entire site had grown to \$25,372,300.



A portion of the Cannery Square redevelopment involved remodeling existing cannery buildings (photo courtesy DNR).

Financial, Liability, Technical Assistance

This project came to fruition with the help of local leaders, state government and private developers.

The DNR's Remediation and Redevelopment (RR) Program provided a \$30,000 Brownfields Site Assessment Grant to pay for demolition of several cannery buildings and assess contamination underneath. Additionally, an RR Program project manager provided technical and liability assistance throughout the cleanup.

The Wisconsin Department of Commerce made significant contributions via a \$84,219 Petroleum Environmental Cleanup Fund Award in 1995 to remove a leaking underground storage tank. An additional \$750,000 in cleanup funding was made through a Commerce Brownfield Grant.

The city of Sun Prairie has contributed more than \$17 million to redevelop this entire section of downtown. Funds were used to purchase the property and provide demolition costs and infrastructure. Funding was supported through the creation of a tax incremental financing district.

Veridian Homes and DSI Real Estate Group helped redevelop the site and oversaw construction of Cannery Square.

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