



In St. Louis, Dr. MLK Business Park Dreams Renewed

St. Louis, Missouri

In St. Louis, Missouri, the 26-acre, 16-block Dr. Martin Luther King Business Park had been reduced to a few crumbling, abandoned buildings and an unofficial storage lot for used tires over the course of a few decades. Committed to renewing hope in this area located north of downtown, the City of St. Louis looked to EPA for help. EPA funding, along with local private and public investment, helped clean up and turn around a 6-city block, 20-acre property within MLK Park. The end result was the creation of one large, campus-style business park, known as the St. Louis Commerce Center, which has provided local companies a place to build and provide jobs within the city's urban core.

Throughout the 1900s, the future MLK Business Park property was initially used for residential and eventually commercial and industrial uses, creating hundreds of vital jobs. But as St. Louis began to grow, businesses and industries slowly migrated to the suburbs, and by the 1990s, the area had suffered from this urban decay. The city had lost half of its jobs and two-thirds of its population since 1960 to outside areas while being saddled with thousands of abandoned or publicly held sites, including the MLK Business Park property.

A \$200,000 EPA Brownfields Assessment Pilot grant awarded in 1996 made it possible for the city to perform an environmental investigation on a six-block area within the MLK Park, where a large pharmaceutical company, a foundry, automotive repair shops, dry cleaners, and other industrial and commercial businesses had once operated. Both soil and groundwater were found to be polluted with benzene, petroleum, and other highly toxic substances.

Cleanup required the removal of more than 20,000 tons of soil. More than 50,000 square feet of asbestos-containing materials were also removed. The city excavated more than 20 underground storage tanks from the site and surrounding properties. In addition to hazardous waste removal, other cleanup technologies such as capping and groundwater treatment were used. Soil and groundwater remediation and asbestos abatement costs totaled more than one million dollars. The state's brownfield remediation tax credit of about \$1 million, combined with a contribution from the city's economic development agency, paid for the cleanup.

Balke Brown Associates, a local developer, worked with EPA and the City of St. Louis during cleanup of the parcels. "We took a derelict, abandoned piece of property with a lot of environmental problems and



St. Louis Commerce Centers I and II

JUST THE FACTS:

- An EPA Brownfields Assessment Pilot grant enabled the city to perform assessments on a six-block area within the Martin Luther King Business Park, where a pharmaceutical company, a foundry, automotive repair shops, dry cleaners, and other industry had once operated.
- Cleanup required the removal of more than 20,000 tons of soil, more than 50,000 square feet of asbestos-containing materials, and 20 underground storage tanks.
- A state brownfield remediation tax credit of about \$1 million, combined with a contribution from the city's economic development agency, paid for the cleanup.
- Cleanup was followed by development of a large, campus-style business park known as the St. Louis Commerce Center, which has provided local companies a place to build and provide jobs within the city's urban core.

"We took a derelict, abandoned piece of property with a lot of environmental problems and transformed it into a productive commercial property. It has already started to encourage surrounding brownfield redevelopment in the area."

*—Don Land, Senior V.P. of local developer
Balke Brown Associates*

transformed it into a productive commercial property," said Don Land, Senior Vice President of Balke Brown Associates. "It has already started to encourage surrounding brownfield redevelopment in the area."

Balke Brown Associates designed the St. Louis Commerce Center in two phases, completed in February 2000 and March 2002, respectively. Phase I is 150,000 square feet of office and industrial space while Phase II is significantly larger, with 336,000 square feet of similar usage. The combined 486,000 square feet of much-needed, north-side space is currently 100% leased to seven tenants, including: Gateway CDI; Killark Electrical Products; Swank Motion Pictures; McLeod USA Telecommunications; Sigma-Aldrich, GPX; and Bryan Cave.

In addition to creating more than 210 new jobs, the Commerce Center is a major revenue producer that has added a new sense of hope in this area of St. Louis. The Center's success has stimulated nearby brownfields redevelopment, including the newly-built St. Louis Gateway Classics Sport complex and neighboring single and multi-family housing units. "Sometimes it takes just one project to do it," remarked Kevin McGrew, Brownfields Coordinator of the St. Louis Development Corporation, on the area's revitalization.

By transforming 20 blighted acres into a premiere business park, the City of St. Louis has set a new standard. The large scale and vision of this project have changed regional attitudes toward brownfields redevelopment and set a precedent for other projects in the city to follow.

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Visit the EPA Brownfields web site at:

<http://www.epa.gov/brownfields/>



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