



EPA's Brownfields Success in New England

• Land and Community Revitalization •



SOUTH END GREENHOUSES, WATERBURY, CONNECTICUT

PROPERTY DETAILS	Address:	324 Mill Street Waterbury, CT 06706
	Size:	0.14 acres
	Former Use:	Residential; commercial
	Contaminants:	Polynuclear aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs), petroleum hydrocarbons (ETPHs), metals
	Current Use:	Greenhouses, community gardens, and educational outreach center
PARTNERS	Owner:	City of Waterbury
	Waterbury Development Corporation; Citizens Advisory Committee; City of Waterbury; Brass City Harvest; South End Neighborhood Association; Loyola Corporation	

FUNDING DETAILS	EPA Brownfields Assessment Grants:	\$20,966
	HUD Community Development Block Grant (CDBG):	\$170,000
	South End Community Benefits Fund:	\$12,000
	American Savings Foundation:	\$27,000
	Brass City Harvest:	~\$20,000
HIGHLIGHTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transformed a contaminated vacant lot into a community asset, creating new jobs in the process including the first-time employment of a neighborhood high school student, a part-time staff nutritionist, and four seasonal greenhouse employees. 	

Motivation for Redevelopment: Located in western Connecticut on the Naugatuck River, the City of Waterbury is thirty-three miles southwest of Hartford at the intersection of Route 8 and US I-84. Waterbury was once known as the “Brass City.” However, a strong manufacturing industry that meant prosperity, jobs, and dense development gave way to poverty and vacancy after the City’s economy experienced a major downturn in the 1980’s and early 1990’s. Today, there are brownfields in nearly every neighborhood while access to grocery stores often requires a vehicle.

Currently targeted for redevelopment is an area called the Central City Brownfield Corridor, which includes neighborhoods designated as having the highest poverty levels, high unemployment, predominantly minority population, tax delinquency, and numerous abandoned buildings. The Metro North rail line and highly restrictive zoning laws present an opportunity to achieve a significant transit-oriented redevelopment within the City. The brownfield corridor falls along a main local transit line wherein revitalization in this location has the potential to become the impetus to improve other parts of the city.

Property History: First developed as residential prior to the 1880’s, the dwelling at 324 Mill Street was used as a multi-family with additional commercial uses between the 1930’s and 1990’s. During this time, the building housed a barber shop, a grocer, and a toy shop. The City acquired the property in 1996 and demolished the building in 1998. These former uses resulted in combination of polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbon (PAH), petroleum hydrocarbon (ETPH), and metals contamination, which was found mostly in the surface soil. Based upon these findings and given the size of the parcel, a concrete cap was determined to be the most viable and cost-effective measure to alleviate public health concerns. Due to the site’s topographic change, the cap was laid in two parts bisected by a retaining wall.

Project Results: The 324 Mill Street project was seen as an opportunity to improve neighborhood quality of life. Though grocery stores are drivable, given the need for fresh food in the area, greenhouses would afford endless educational opportunities supporting nutrition and healthy lifestyle choices for neighborhood residents.

Brass City Harvest, which is a local non-profit committed to promoting urban agriculture and self-sufficient communities, manages the property for the city. The site now includes a solar-powered hoop house, a heated peaked greenhouse, and twelve traditional raised beds. Each bed is managed by a neighborhood family that qualifies for food assistance programs. Hydroponics, aquaculture, a homeless and homeless-at-risk agricultural vocational program, and youth 4H program all take place here. The property functions as a farmers market on summer weekends, and cooking classes are to be held at the greenhouse come fall. Fish grown in the aquaculture operation are donated to a local soup kitchen where culinary students learn to fillet them. South End Greenhouses has become a central meeting place for this community, hosting everything from pig roasts to neighborhood meetings. Ultimately, a collective dream transformed this vacant lot into a vibrant community asset that has already surpassed expectations.

TIMELINE	
May 1996	City acquires property
Apr. 2011	Phase I site assessment completed
Sept. 2011	Phase II site assessment completed
Dec. 2011	Cleanup begins
Jan. 2012	Cap Installed
Apr. 2012	Greenhouse construction completed
May 2012	Grand opening