

DOWNTOWN SANDUSKY REINVIGORATED BY BROWNFIELD CLEANUP

Brownfields Blocked Access to Lake Erie

Sandusky is a town of 24,000 residents on the shores of Lake Erie. Despite its proximity to the Cedar Point amusement park, Sandusky experienced the same economic challenges that impacted many other Ohio cities in the late 20th Century. For decades, downtown Sandusky lost residents along with commercial, industrial, and retail businesses. In devising a turnaround plan, city leaders focused on one million square feet of abandoned factories and warehouses on the northern edge of downtown that created an eyesore and blocked access to the lake. The area had been used for papermaking and other industrial purposes since the 1890s, and the presence of environmental contamination in the soil and groundwater made redevelopment too expensive for the private sector to take the lead. The site's proximity to the lake presented another layer of complexity for environmental controls. Given the property's importance and potential, the city decided to purchase the land and to lead development efforts.

Redevelopment Fast Facts:

- **\$3 million CORF grant**
- A 195-unit lakeside condominium that generates **\$700,000 in annual property taxes**, along with a marina and restaurant
- **Downtown redevelopment successes**, including new retail, townhouses, pier renovations, and a new City Hall

A Catalytic Spark for Downtown

Redevelopment plans focused on creating an anchor project that would spark the rejuvenation of the city's downtown. The city decided to repurpose the site for residential and recreational uses through the construction of a three-story condominium building and a marina with a

The Clean Ohio Program

Between 2002 and 2013, the Clean Ohio Revitalization Fund (CORF) program invested \$400 million in catalytic funds to assist communities in the environmental testing and cleanup of brownfields across the state. Local investments were oftentimes made to complement state investment. The program contributed to the redevelopment of more than 7,600 acres of contaminated land around the state, and placed Ohio as a national leader in brownfields redevelopment. Local communities were given the flexibility to define the best possible reuse of these sites.

The City of Sandusky received two other Clean Ohio grants to cleanup the former Apex Manufacturing site and the former Sandusky Cabinet site.



Counties in green received Clean Ohio funds for assessment, cleanup, or both.

seasonal restaurant. In 2003, the city competed and received a \$3 million CORF grant to help with the costs of cleanup and demolition on the Chesapeake property adjacent to the lake, as well as with cleanup of the Tricor and Keller Building just to the south.

Today, the Chesapeake Lofts building contains 195 individually-owned condominiums. The city retains ownership of the marina and leases the property to the restaurant. The condominiums generate approximately \$700,000 in total annual property tax payments on a site that previously sat vacant for many years.

The project has proven to be a transformative development that catalyzed the rebirth of downtown. "Before 2004, downtown was dead," said Matt Lasko, the Chief Development Officer for the City of Sandusky. "Revitalization of the

"Revitalization of the Chesapeake property created a spark and turning point for downtown..."

*- Matt Lasko,
Chief Development
Officer for the City of
Sandusky*

Chesapeake property created a spark and turning point for downtown," he added. After the Lofts were built, new restaurants and retail businesses began to locate downtown, and many of the older 2 or 3 story mixed-use buildings are starting to have residential units again. A small hotel was built a block away.

The city is doing everything it can to sustain the economic momentum from the project. City Hall, which is currently east of downtown, is relocating to vacant buildings within two blocks of the Chesapeake site. Townhomes will be placed on the Keller Building part of the site in 2018. Just east of the Chesapeake, the Jackson Street Pier is the departure point for charter fishing expeditions and for passenger service to the Lake Erie islands. The pier will be overhauled to add greenspace for events and gatherings.



Chesapeake building before renovation



Tricor Keller Building before demolition

For more information visit:
www.greaterohio.org/brownfields

