



Lima's Liberty Commons Project is Right on Track

LIMA, OH

In the 1970s and 1980s, Lima, Ohio, was hard-hit by industrial closings and defense-downsizing. When three of its major employers closed their doors, the city lost 8,800 jobs and was faced with 1.8 million square feet of idle industrial space. Now Lima is turning around, and a group of abandoned industrial sites along the city's railroad tracks is poised for profitable redevelopment. This change in the area's fortunes was made possible by EPA's Brownfields Economic Redevelopment Initiative, a program designed to empower stakeholders in their efforts to turn sites with actual or perceived contamination into productive community assets.

Using a \$200,000 EPA site assessment grant, the Lima Brownfields Pilot has targeted four properties for transformation into the 200-acre Liberty Commons Industrial Park, a business community that, when completed, will attract high-wage manufacturing. So far, the Pilot's activities have coordinated the assessment and cleanup of a Liberty Commons parcel that has been vacant for 18 years, prompted a unique study of Lima's rail resources, and leveraged more than \$1 million in funding toward a project expected to create more than 1,000 new jobs.

The 65-acre Lima Locomotive Works site within Liberty Commons produced locomotives for almost 60 years, and at one time was the third-largest locomotive manufacturer in the country. Prior to the

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JUST THE FACTS:

- Prior to the Brownfields Pilot, the 65-acre "Loco Works" site sat empty for nearly 20 years, surrounded by an economically declining neighborhood.
- The Pilot negotiated with the site's owner to demolish the property's blighted buildings and clear away all rubble and debris, in cleanup in accordance with the Ohio Voluntary Action Program.
- Redevelopment of the Loco Works site, expected to total \$1.4 million, has an estimated completion date of mid-2002.

The Pilot leveraged more than \$1 million in funding toward the Liberty Commons Industrial Park—a project expected to create more than 1,000 new jobs.

EPA's Brownfields Economic Redevelopment Initiative is designed to empower states, communities, and other stakeholders in economic redevelopment to work together in a timely manner to prevent, assess, safely clean up, and sustainably reuse brownfields. A brownfield is a site, or portion thereof, that has actual or perceived contamination and an active potential for redevelopment or reuse. EPA is funding: assessment demonstration pilot programs (each funded up to \$200,000 over two years), to assess brownfields sites and to test cleanup and redevelopment models; job training pilot programs (each funded up to \$200,000 over two years), to provide training for residents of communities affected by brownfields to facilitate cleanup of brownfields sites and prepare trainees for future employment in the environmental field; and, cleanup revolving loan fund programs (each funded up to \$500,000 over five years) to capitalize loan funds to make loans for the environmental cleanup of brownfields. These pilot programs are intended to provide EPA, states, tribes, municipalities, and communities with useful information and strategies as they continue to seek new methods to promote a unified approach to site assessment, environmental cleanup, and redevelopment.

Pilot, the "Loco Works" site sat empty for nearly 20 years after the facility shut down, a decaying dinosaur surrounded by a neighborhood that was steadily losing shops, restaurants and banks. The site's deterioration marked Lima as an old rustbelt city and made other businesses hesitant to develop it or nearby property. Several developers had approached the Loco Works' owner with interest in the site, but had ultimately declined to purchase it because of difficulties in obtaining thorough, up-to-date assessment results.

The Pilot successfully negotiated with the site's owner to demolish the property's blighted buildings, clear away all rubble and debris, and perform up to \$50,000 in cleanup in accordance with the Ohio Voluntary Action Program (VAP). During 1997, the owner destroyed all buildings except three deemed to have economic value, salvaging any valuable building materials. The Pilot then performed geo-probe sampling, an assessment method in which soil and/or groundwater samples are taken with minimal disturbance of the surrounding area, followed by environmental assessments. The assessment results revealed that soil cleanup would cost less than \$100,000, and that significant savings could be realized if engineering controls were put in place during redevelopment. With the Pilot's help, the City of Lima applied to the VAP for a No Further Action Letter for the Loco Works site, leveraging more than \$80,000 from local sources to help fund the application.

The City of Lima purchased the Loco Works site for \$687,500 in August 1999, using a purchase grant from the Ohio Department of Development. In December 1999, the city negotiated a \$1.5 million purchase agreement for the site with Global Energy, LTD., a local energy marketer. Global Energy plans to construct a 540 megawatt electrical generator on the site that would employ an innovative technology, coal gasification, to produce electricity. Coal gasification compresses municipal solid waste and coal into briquettes that are burned to power gas turbines, with pollution levels much lower than a coal-firing electrical plant. As many as 1,000 local workers will be hired for the plant's construction, and nearly 120 full-time jobs will be created by its operation. In addition, the resulting electricity will be available for as much as 30 percent lower than existing rates.

Redevelopment of the Loco Works site, expected to total \$1.4 million by its mid-2002 estimated completion, will be funded in part by a \$500,000 Ohio Urban and Rural Initiative Grant. A study of Lima's rail network conducted by the Ohio Rail Commission, and the design of a new short-line railroad to serve Liberty Commons, will be funded by a \$150,000 Defense Conversion Assistance Program (DCAP) grant. In the first initiative of its kind in the state, the Rail Commission will study the city's rail network and develop ways to link, develop, and market the rail lines that converge at the Loco Works site. The Rail Commission believes that once developed, the Liberty Commons project has the potential to be the largest rail site in Ohio, if not in the Midwest. The Pilot believes that the existence of these lines, which will provide a built-in transportation center for the businesses who choose to locate within Liberty Commons, will be a major asset for the project.

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Visit the EPA Brownfields web site at:
<http://www.epa.gov/brownfields/>

In the past two years, the City of Lima has received a total of six grants from almost as many sources to complement the one provided by EPA. These additional funds will finance cleanup and/or redevelopment in other areas of the Liberty Commons project. The city was awarded two \$10,000 grants from the U.S. Department of Justice's "Weed and Seed" program; one grant will be used to explore marketing strategies for the Liberty Commons project, while the other will provide supplemental funding for a Pilot-created database of underutilized sites in the city. A grant of \$500,000 from the Ohio Urban and Rural Initiative will support cleanup and/or redevelopment for the project as a whole, while another \$100,000 from the Ohio Department of Development will fund these activities at another former industrial site within the project area. One DCAP grant will be used for the rail study and the short-line railroad design, while another \$300,000 from DCAP will cover Liberty Commons' marketing activities once cleanup and redevelopment have progressed. For more information on the Lima Brownfields Pilot, contact Gary Sheely at (419) 221-5294.

