



Crown Intermodal Transportation facility constructed on the former Myers Property

## Success in Hammond: Former Myers and West Point Industrial Park Properties Redeveloped

Imagine a place that was once an open dumping ground that is now home to three separate businesses employing approximately 150 people. Residents in the city of Hammond don't have to imagine it – they can see it with their own eyes, and the process of revitalizing an underutilized industrial area in their community is still going strong. Another step in the journey took place recently when the Hammond Urban Enterprise Association (HUEA) received a Certificate of Completion for the Myers property in north Hammond. The Certificate, issued by IDEM's Voluntary Remediation Program (VRP), helps clear the way for expansion of one of the existing businesses – a development that may yield nearly 100 additional jobs.

The 46-acre Myers property is one of three adjoining sites in this area of Hammond that have been, or are currently being, addressed in VRP. Another, the West Point Industrial Park property, which was one of the first sites to receive assessment assistance from the Brownfields Program, has already completed the VRP process, and work on the third, Industrial Fuels and Asphalt property, is ongoing. All three properties are situated within a quarter-mile of Interstate 90, just 25 minutes away from downtown Chicago. Their location made the sites potentially attractive to businesses that need ready access to highways and major markets. However, several factors, including lack of infrastructure and concerns about environmental liability, hindered reuse of the sites.

For example, though neither the Myers nor the West Point Industrial Park properties were formally developed, both were subject to unauthorized dumping of materials such as tires, household trash, roofing shingles, and construction debris. In addition, the Myers property received significant amounts of steel mill slag during the early and middle parts of the last century. Finally, the Industrial Fuels and Asphalt property was the site of a petroleum refinery and asphalt production facility until it was abandoned in the late 1980s. These sites were unproductive and underutilized and became eyesores in the community.

That is when the HUEA got involved. The organization developed a vision for the three properties as an industrial park and enrolled all three sites into VRP. Its goal in doing so was to address concerns about environmental liability and remove that roadblock to economic redevelopment.

The West Point Industrial Park property was tackled first. The Brownfields Program completed a Brownfield Environmental Assessment at the property in 1996. Through

VRP, IDEM issued a Certificate of Completion, and the Governor's office issued a Covenant Not to Sue for that property in 1999. The completed project attracted three transportation companies – Central Transport, Federal Express Ground, and Hulcher Services.

Building on the success of the West Point development, Crown Enterprises of Warren, Michigan, purchased the 76 acres that comprise the Myers and Industrial Fuels and Asphalt properties from the city of Hammond in 2001, contingent upon the city completing the VRP process and obtaining an environmental release of liability from the Governor's office.

The city of Hammond, through the HUEA, committed over \$100,000 for environmental evaluation and cleanup of the Myers Property. The city also completed infrastructure improvements, including road enhancements, relocation of a gas pipeline from the interior to the perimeter of the property, and landscape improvements. Crown Enterprises, along with its partner, Central Transport, committed significant private funds to the project for additional infrastructure improvements and the construction of its trucking and logistics facility.

The first step in the development of the Myers property was surface debris and trash removal. Following that, a sampling approach was devised to evaluate environmental site conditions. Because there were no known source areas of contamination on the property to suggest specific sampling locations, a random approach to sampling was used. Soil samples were collected and analyzed for volatile organic compounds, semi-volatile organic compounds, polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), and metals. Samples were collected from both surface and subsurface soils, and samples of steel mill slag were also analyzed. The sample results indicated that site conditions met VRP default closure criteria for nonresidential sites, and the property was deemed eligible for closure.

Central Transport, which initially built a trucking facility on the West Point property, nearly doubled its local capacity by constructing a state-of-the-art facility on the Myers Property. The company currently employs about 115 workers at the West Point and Myers facilities and hopes to expand to about 210 workers when the project expansion is complete.

This project demonstrates how combined public and private efforts can lead to a successful conclusion. By completing the VRP process, the city of Hammond and Crown Enterprises were able to move forward with the sale and development of the property without concern for future environmental liability. New jobs for the community, an increased tax base, and a facelift for a neighborhood eyesore are all positive outcomes of this project.

Mickey Blashfield, spokesman for Central Transport and developer Crown Enterprises, calls the project a "win-win" for Crown Enterprises and the city of Hammond. "The city of Hammond has worked with us arm-in-arm all the way through the project. You can tell that the city leaders really want to attract investment."

"This is a project we're all very proud of," said Patrick Reardon, Executive Director of the HUEA. "It's extremely rewarding to drive by the site and see what's occurring there. It's an example of patience, vision, collaboration, and partnership, translated

to a meaningful redevelopment of a once vacant, unkempt, and financially questionable property into a model of Brownfield redevelopment.”

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