

## **Brownfields Comfort Letter helps old site get new life in Leesburg**

The 9.95-acre former Leesburg Elementary School located at 101 E. Church Street now has a new look and use. The site contained a two-story, 50,000-square foot building constructed in 1946 with two smaller out-buildings used for class rooms, parking lots, a playground, basketball court and two baseball fields used by local baseball teams. The school was vacated after a new elementary school was constructed. Due to a number of recognized environmental concerns, including groundwater containing chlorinated volatile organic compounds (VOCs) originating from a facility up-gradient of the site, Maple Leaf Farms (a duck processing company) requested a Comfort Letter in February 2011 from the Indiana Brownfields Program (Program) so that the site could be redeveloped as its world headquarters.

Following additional investigative activities, a Comfort Letter was issued on April 15, 2011 to address the prospective purchaser's liability issues, facilitate the real estate sale, and ultimately foster the redevelopment of the site. The Comfort Letter facilitated Maple Leaf Farms' purchase of the former Leesburg Elementary School from Warsaw Community Schools in April 2011. Had no one purchased the former elementary school, the school system would have needed an estimated \$500,000 to demolish the site buildings. Since that time, the company has invested more than \$4 million to completely renovate the main building into an up-to-date world headquarters with offices for more than 80 employees. Updates included the addition of a state-of-the-art demonstration kitchen and company store, where patrons can purchase the company's products.

Program staff attended the October 2011 grand opening of Maple Leaf Farms new world headquarters where CEO Terry Tucker performed the official ribbon cutting.



*Before: Former Leesburg Elementary School, Leesburg*



*After: Maple Leaf Farms, Leesburg*

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