

Site Highlight

New Jail Opens on Former Brownfield Site in Richmond

From 1842 until 1997, the Swayne, Robinson & Co. Foundry operated on the near west side of downtown Richmond in Wayne County. A former grey-iron foundry, the facility manufactured farm implements and other machinery, such as wood lathes. At the time of its closing, it was the oldest family-owned foundry in America. Unfortunately, the property quickly became more than just an eyesore; it was an accident waiting to happen. A fire in March 1999 destroyed a large part of the structure. Soon after, the owners declared bankruptcy, leaving behind drums full of unknown liquids in the building. Piles of foundry sand covered much of the property. The deteriorating condition of the building allowed easy access, and signs of trespassers were obvious. Wayne County knew that something had to be done.

The county applied for a Brownfield Environmental Assessment from IDEM in March 1999. IDEM conducted the environmental investigation during the summer of 1999, and the report was completed in October 1999. Analytical results of the samples indicated low levels of contamination, including arsenic, polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), and dieldrin in the soil on the site, as well as low levels of ethylbenzene in one ground water sample. Additional sampling and a risk assessment were conducted by a private consulting firm hired by the county. Much of the contaminated soil was removed during redevelopment of the site.

Wayne County acquired the option to purchase the real estate from Swayne, Robinson & Co. for \$15,000 and forgave the taxes owed on the property and the environmental cleanup cost if the cleanup did not exceed \$100,000. If cleanup cost exceeded \$100,000, then the county had the option to back out of the deal. The county took possession of the property in June 2000.

During demolition and cleanup of the site, cooperation between the city of Richmond and the county allowed for foundry sand to be disposed of at the city-owned Richmond Sanitary Landfill at no cost to the county. The city of Richmond viewed the arrangement positively, acknowledging that the city eventually would have been responsible for cleaning up the foundry if the county had not stepped in.

Based on results of the environmental reports and risk assessment, IDEM issued a Comfort Letter to the county in August 2002, indicating that the property was suitable for redevelopment. Today, the site is home to the Wayne County Jail, capable of holding up to 418 inmates. Prisoners were transferred from the old jail, which was designed to hold 108 inmates, to the new one in August of this year. Many local residents were initially opposed to building the new jail at the site, preferring instead that it be developed commercially to bring more people to the downtown area. However, even those who were initially opposed understood the necessity of building a new jail. The site's convenient location to the courthouse and other county offices also made sense, and its aesthetically pleasing design enhanced the area, rather than detracting from it as originally feared. The increased size of the new jail also will allow the county to rent out cell space to other counties and the state in the future, bringing in additional revenue to the community. Once the county

assesses staffing needs at the new facility, there is a potential for additional job creation, adding to the economic benefits of the new jail.

The Swayne, Robinson & Co./Wayne County Jail project is another example of a successfully redeveloped brownfield site--turning an eyesore, a health hazard, and a financially stagnant property into an aesthetically pleasing, useful, income-producing, county-owned facility.



Before: View of the Swayne Robinson & Co. Foundry from the corner of N. 3rd St. and E. Main St.



After: View of the Wayne County Jail from the corner of N. 3rd St. and E. Main St.



Before: View of the Swayne Robinson & Co. Foundry from E. Main St.



After: View of the Wayne County Jail from E. Main St.

October 2004