



# Rising from the Depths in Naugatuck Valley: The Restoration and Reuse of Idle Land

## NAUGATUCK VALLEY, CT

A former landfill in Seymour, Connecticut, dormant for 20 years, avoided by investors and developers alike, now has a future. Soon, the old Silvermine Landfill will be the new home of the Haynes Construction Company. In the neighboring cities of Thomaston and Beacon Falls, the owners of former commercial and industrial sites are finally making arrangements to pay long-overdue property taxes, fattening up city tax rolls by more than \$500,000. And in nearby Ansonia, the charred remains of an abandoned building were removed to make room for a park enjoyed by residents of an adjacent senior citizen's center.

These four cities, along with Derby, Naugatuck, Oxford, Waterbury, and Watertown, are encompassed not only by the Naugatuck Valley but by EPA's Naugatuck Valley Brownfields Pilot. Awarded in October 1996, the Pilot was designed to help remove contamination uncertainties regarding former commercial and industrial properties, or brownfields. Covering only 10 percent of the state's land area, the 45-mile Naugatuck Valley includes an estimated 20 percent of the state's brownfields.

In addition to providing the assessment funding needed to remove potential developers' fear of the unknown, the Brownfields Pilot is

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## JUST THE FACTS:

- Covering only 10 percent of the state's land area, the 45-mile Naugatuck Valley includes an estimated 20 percent of the state's brownfields.
- In the City of Beacon Falls, the owners of a former manufacturing facility paid more than \$500,000 in back taxes following assessment proposals by the Brownfields Pilot.
- In the City of Derby, a former mixed-use property is being assessed by the Pilot using more than \$180,000 in leveraged funds.

*In Beacon Falls, the owners of a former manufacturing facility paid more than \$500,000 in back taxes to the city, following assessment proposals by the Brownfields Pilot.*

**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.

helping to form partnerships between developers, local environmentalists, property owners, and city officials. In Thomaston, the Pilot worked with a local community group to develop a reuse plan for the former Plume & Atwood Brass Mill, idle since 1992. The Pilot's assessments prompted the site's owner to negotiate with the city for payment of more than \$81,000 in back taxes, rather than risk losing the property to foreclosure. A cleanup plan has been approved by the city, and the owners have agreed to provide public access to the site along the Naugatuck River, where a new park and museum are among the planned reuses. Similarly, in Beacon Falls, the owners of a 60,000-square-foot former manufacturing facility paid more than \$500,000 in back taxes to the city, following assessment proposals by the Brownfields Pilot.

Restoration of Naugatuck Valley's brownfields has extended beyond the activities of the Brownfields Pilot as well. A portion of the former Seymour Specialty Wire Company site was purchased by the Stop & Shop company, which conducted environmental assessments, is performing the necessary cleanup, and is building a new supermarket that will bring new jobs to the area, meeting a critical community need. The City of Seymour has since asked the Pilot to conduct assessments on another portion of the site, which the city hopes to redevelop into a new police station. In the City of Derby, Home Depot will occupy a 10-acre former industrial site where the previous owner funded assessments. Home Depot is now conducting cleanup prior to redevelopment. Meanwhile, just across the street, a former mixed-use property is being assessed by the Pilot using more than \$180,000 in leveraged funding—\$100,000 in U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds, \$50,000 from the Community Foundation for Greater New Haven, and \$30,000 from EPA Region 1.

At the confluence of the Naugatuck and Housatonic Rivers lies O'Sullivan's Island, part of the City of Derby. Local environmentalists and citizens' groups see cleanup and restoration of this island and its riverbanks as a top priority, and the Brownfields Pilot adopted the island as its primary target. More than 90 drums of pollutants were taken off the island during an emergency removal action in 1985. The Brownfields Pilot performed assessments on the island in March 1999, and is now working with EPA Region 1 to determine the feasibility of phytoremediation—an innovative technology that uses plants or trees to extract contaminants from soil—to further prepare the site for redevelopment. Eventually, the riverbanks surrounding O'Sullivan's Island will be restored to pristine condition, and residents will enjoy a new park, a marina, and pedestrian and bicycle paths.

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

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