

BANGOR DAILY NEWS

Brewer to get award for mill redevelopment

Posted Sept. 30, 2009, at 7:59 p.m.

BREWER, Maine — When the Eastern Fine Paper Co. mill closed in January 2004, leaving behind half-buried hazardous waste, leaky oil tanks and other environmental dangers, city officials decided they had to take action to clean up the site and prepare it for redevelopment.

For its efforts, the city recently was awarded The Phoenix Award, a prestigious honor given to individuals and groups that “solve critical environmental challenges of transforming blighted and contaminated areas into productive new uses,” the Phoenix Award Web site states.

“City leadership had the forethought and state of mind to take control of our destiny,” D’arcy Main-Boyington, Brewer’s economic development director, said Tuesday. “We thought, ‘We’re going to make something happen.’”

The city took over ownership of the mill property in May 2004 and formed South Brewer Redevelopment LLC to assume responsibility for owning and redeveloping the site.

SBR and the city then successfully applied for more than \$2 million in Brownfields cleanup funds from the U.S. [Environmental Protection Agency](#) and state funds that were used to mitigate the hazards.

The hazardous waste probably would have scared most developers away — including [Cianbro Corp.](#), which has changed the former mill into a 500-employee module manufacturing facility — had it not been for the city’s proactive work to attain cleanup funds from state and federal agencies.

The South Brewer site’s contamination “was by far the biggest obstacle we had, as it is with any mill site anywhere,” Main-Boyington has said.

Brewer’s undertaking also is one of the largest industrial cleanup projects ever done in Maine.

Brewer is very similar to other communities nationwide that are facing the loss of industry and is a good example of public-private partnerships, Denise Chamberlain, a Brownfields expert who is chairwoman of the award committee, said on Wednesday.

“That was really a nice project to be able to highlight,” she said. “They did a really wonderful job and now the community is reaping the results.”

In addition to finding millions in state and federal cleanup funds to assess the dangers and to mitigate the hazards, “they did a great job in accelerating the cleanup of the project,” Chamberlain said.

The Phoenix award is given annually based on the magnitude of the Brownfields project, innovative techniques used, how solutions to regulatory issues were resolved and impact of the redevelopment on the community, she said.

Brownfields are abandoned, idled or underused industrial or commercial facilities where expansion or redevelopment is complicated by environmental contamination.

The goal of the Brownfields program is to make sure chemicals and other hazards are cleaned up so the facility does not pose a threat to the environment or nearby homes.

After the Eastern Fine mill closed, the EPA, the U.S. [Department of Environmental Protection](#) and state DEP spent \$1.5 million to \$2 million on clearing out and cleaning up the mill, as well as heating the facility after it closed to prevent the chemical-filled pipes from bursting.

In May 2005, the EPA issued Brewer a \$350,000 Brownfields assessment grant. Then in 2006, it granted the city \$1 million in revolving loan funds. In 2007, South Brewer Redevelopment was awarded \$200,000 in EPA cleanup grants, and the city was awarded a \$400,000 Brownfields grant.

Pittsfield-based Cianbro also applied for and was awarded \$550,000 in revolving loan funds from the EPA to pay for a portion of the cleanup of the 41-acre South Brewer site.

In addition to the Brownfields funding, the city and SBR also acquired \$3.55 million in federal funds for the entrance and shoreline improvements, and two state grants, \$15,000 for planning and \$400,000 for cleanup and demolition.

Each year, between 12 and 15 Brownfields projects are honored with The Phoenix Award and include at least one from each of the EPA's 10 regions.

Brewer city officials will travel to the 2009 National Brownfields Conference in New Orleans to accept the honor in November.

"We had a lot of great partners," Main-Boyington said. "It was a partnership. None of us could have done this alone."

nricker@bangordailynews.net

990-8190

<http://bangordailynews.com/2009/09/30/news/bangor/brewer-to-get-award-for-mill-redevelopment/>
printed on July 11, 2011