

WAHKONSA ANNEX BUILDING

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT, CLEANUP, REVITALIZATION

FORT DODGE, IOWA • EPA BROWNFIELDS CLEANUP GRANT



BACKGROUND

The City of Fort Dodge is located in north central Iowa at the crossroads of US Highways 20 and 169. Nearly 1,500 citizens reside downtown, and several thousand more workers commute into downtown on a daily basis, making redevelopment of the city center a high priority.

Situated in the center of downtown is the abandoned Wahkonsa Annex Building. The construction of this seven-story 134,000 square foot structure began in 1917 in order to expand the original Warden Plaza as the demand for lodging for business travelers and vacationers increased. It is part of what was once one of the largest hotel complexes west of the Mississippi River.

However, population decline and disinvestment in the mid-1970's left many multi-story buildings, including the Wahkonsa Annex, in the City's downtown, vacant and eventually abandoned.

The City acquired the Annex in 2016 with the intention of redeveloping the site, either through demolition or by remediating known asbestos contaminants before renovation. Through an extensive public input process it was determined that full abatement of asbestos containing material was preferred. The redevelopment plan aims to bring new life and purpose to the once thriving facility.

The Wahkonsa Annex is the latest property in the City's Brownfields Redevelopment Program, which has been in existence since 2000. The program has successfully assessed dozens of dilapidated, contaminated, or vacant properties and has spurred significant public and private investment in the downtown area.

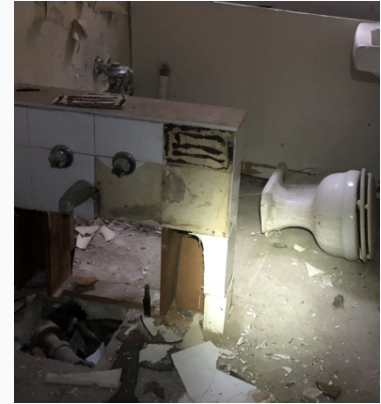
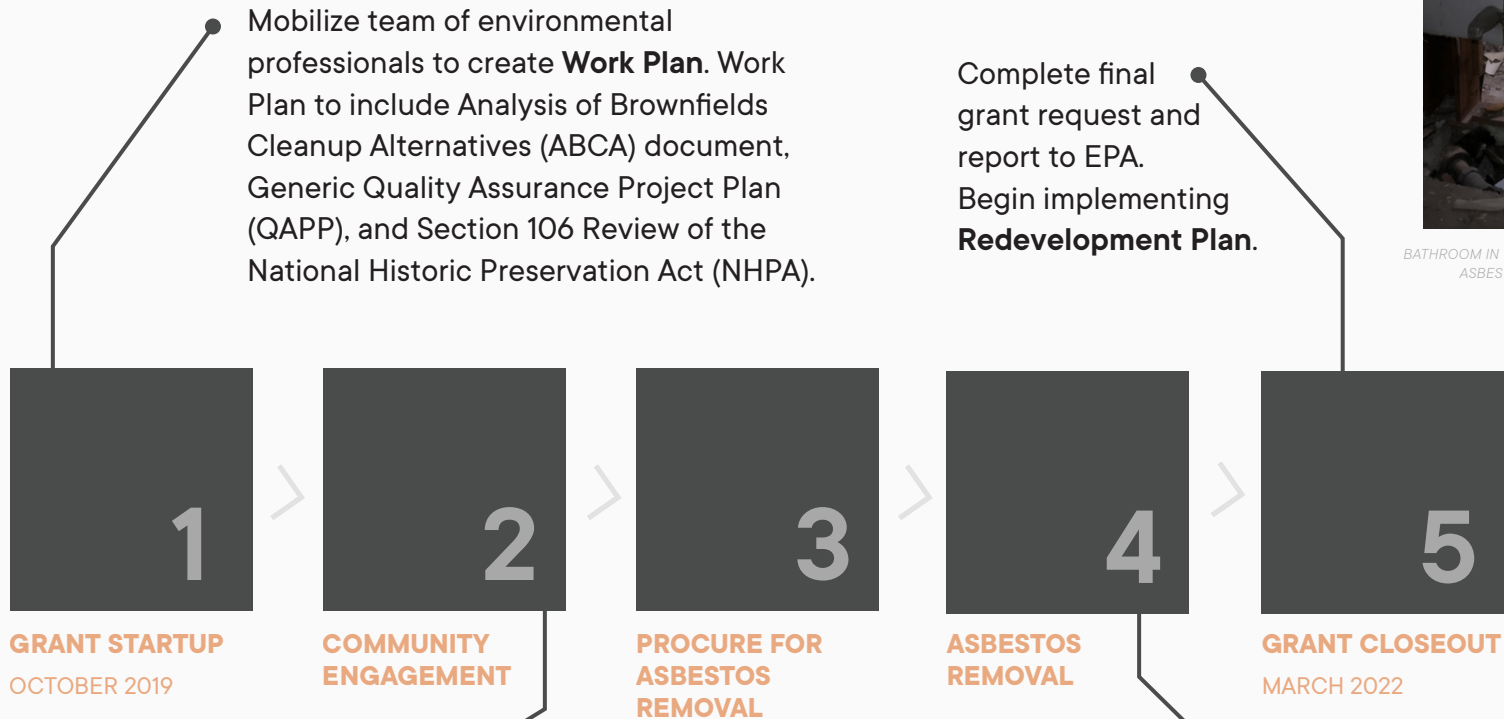


DOWNTOWN FORT DODGE, IOWA. PHOTO COURTESY OF GREATER FORT DODGE GROWTH ALLIANCE



EXTERIOR OF WAHKONSA ANNEX. PHOTO COURTESY OF CITY OF FORT DODGE

PROJECT SUCCESS TIMELINE



BATHROOM IN WAHKONSA ANNEX BUILDING CONTAINING ASBESTOS. PHOTO COURTESY OF IMPACT7G, INC.

Stakeholders and the general public provided valuable input to the cleanup of the Wahkonsa Annex Building at several open houses in 2020. A dedicated website was also created for the project: fordodgebrownfields.com

INTERIOR PHOTOS OF WAHKONSA ANNEX WHERE ASBESTOS CONTAINING MATERIALS WERE DISCOVERED DURING INSPECTION. PHOTO COURTESY OF IMPACT7G, INC.



Over 50 building materials tested positive for asbestos. These included, but are not limited to: flooring, mastics, ceiling texture, pipe insulation, and roofing components. Asbestos Containing Materials (ACMs) were found on every level of the 134,000 square foot complex. REW Services successfully removed all ACMs specified in the Project Manual from the Wahkonsa Annex in the Winter of 2021/2022.

THE REDEVELOPMENT PLAN

Once cleaned up, the site will be ready for redevelopment in conjunction with the adjacent Warden Plaza. The City is actively seeking a developer for the Warden. The fate of the Wahkonsa Annex will be contingent upon the result of Warden Plaza.

What are the environmental benefits of redeveloping the Wahkonsa Annex?

A 2020 study¹ completed for the EPA found a myriad of environmental benefits related to redevelopment, including improved water quality and reduced greenhouse gas emissions.

- On average, redeveloping brownfields reduces the residential vehicle-miles traveled (VMT) from new growth by 25 - 33 percent.
- Redeveloping brownfields reduces the amount of impervious surface expansion by 73 - 80 percent.
- Redeveloping brownfields typically allows for the reuse of existing infrastructure, including roadways, utilities, and stormwater features.
- For every 1 acre of brownfield redevelopment, approximately 1.3 - 4.6 acres of new impervious surface will not need to be built.
- Cleaning up brownfield properties can also lead to residential property values rising by 5 - 15.2 percent within 1.29 miles of the site.²

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1. Environmental Benefits of Brownfields Redevelopment: A Nationwide Assessment, 2020.

2. Haninger, K., L. Ma, and C. Timmins. 2017. The Value of Brownfield Remediation. *Journal of the Association of Environmental and Resource Economists* 4(1): 197-241.



EXTERIOR OF WAHKONSA ANNEX. PHOTO COURTESY OF CITY OF FORT DODGE