Spotlight Community

Village of Hersey

In October 2007 the Osceola County Brownfield Redevelopment Authority received both a Hazardous Substance Assessment grant and a Petroleum Assessment grant from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The Brownfield Redevelopment Authority slowly began implementing its program; however, once momentum was built great results were achieved. The Hazardous Assessment grant has come to a close and the Petroleum Assessment grant is near completion.

Great results were achieved throughout Osceola County; however, no community benefited more from the EPA grant and the Osceola County Brownfield Redevelopment Authority’s efforts than the Village of Hersey. As a result, the Village of Hersey was selected as the Osceola County Brownfield Redevelopment Authority’s, Spotlight Community.

The Village of Hersey is a small village located in west central Michigan. In 1990 the Village’s population peaked at 409 residents. Since then it has experienced a 14.4% decline and now has 350 residents. The Village consists primarily of a main street surrounded by housing. Although a small community the Village had a commercial business district on Main Street. These businesses served the local population, as well as a local campground and well developed rails-to-trail that runs through the Village. The new decade brought the Village a new challenge as it lost all of its commercial businesses and was left with empty buildings.

Today, due in part to the Brownfield Assessment grants from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and assistance from Osceola County’s Brownfield Redevelopment Authority, businesses are back on Main Street. The Brownfield Redevelopment Authority assisted with four projects. When considering the value of the Brownfield Assessment program the first thing that often comes to mind are site assessments; however, the value of education is often forgotten. The educational component was critical in these projects. Through site assessments and education the Brownfield Program helped remove obstacles that were in place due to actual or perceived contamination. As a result businesses are back on Main Street, empty buildings now have occupants, community needs are now being met, and new opportunities are in place.

Closed in 2009 the Hersey Party Store reopened in 2010. One of the new owners referred to the Brownfield Program as a “bright spot” in their effort to reopen the business. When it closed it was the only gas station and convenience store in the Village. This was a minor inconvenience for local residents who picked-up items while outside of the village; however, it was having a more significant impact at the community operated campground. Campers did not like having to leave the community to pick-up convenience items. There was concern about how this was impacting camping site occupancy rates.

The reopening not only fulfilled a significant community need, but also resulted in the reuse of a vacant building, new jobs, private investment in the community, and addition to the tax roll.
The building was able to retain much of its historic nature after renovation.

Built in the 1890s the Hersey Roller Mills no longer served a useful purpose and had permanently been abandoned since 1950. Originally local farmers brought their wheat, rye, and corn to be ground and later the Roller Mill also produced enough electricity to both run its equipment and power the Village of Hersey. Today it has reopened as an old fashioned general store that retains its “ties to the past.” Along with the general store the new owner included an artesian shop and seasonal farmers’ market.

The project has resulted in the reuse of a vacant building, removal of blight, new jobs, and private investment in the community.

Closed for approximately a decade, the former Mama Mias restaurant has reopened under new ownership as the River Junction Restaurant. The availability of off street parking was essential for the restaurant to reopen. The Brownfield Program helped turn an adjacent vacant lot that once had structures on it into the needed parking.

The project has resulted in the renovation and reuse of a vacant building, reuse of an adjacent vacant lot, new jobs, private investment in the community, and an addition to the tax roll.

The Former Hersey General Store Site used to be home to one of the oldest remaining general stores in Michigan until 2008 when it was destroyed by fire. Due to new building codes the landlocked property lost almost all of its value and looked destined to remain an empty parcel serving no value to the community.

Due to the property’s nominal value the only way a property transfer would make economic sense was if the Osceola County Brownfield Redevelopment Authority performed the environmental due diligence for one of the adjacent landowners. The Brownfield Redevelopment Authority did performed a Phase I and Phase II Environmental Site Assessment and the property was sold.

The property was purchased by the Village of Hersey for future expansion of their overcrowded village offices that they share with the township. The property is currently greenspace on Main Street.