

Brownfields Lead to Community and Youth Engagement

ADDRESS: 518 S. 6th Street, St. Joseph, MO 64501	
PROPERTY SIZE: 3.0 acres	
FORMER USE: Brick storage warehouse and vehicle maintenance, storage and distribution facility	
CURRENT USE: Experiential youth and community development facility	
EPA GRANT RECIPIENT:	PROJECT PARTNERS:
Heartland Foundation received a \$200,000 EPA Brownfields Cleanup Grant.	U.S. Department of Education, Health and Human Services, Missouri Department of Economic Development, National Synergizers, Kleinfelder



For additional data and geographic information for this and other Brownfields Grants, please visit EPA's:
Envirofacts - www.epa.gov/enviro/html/bms/bms_query.html
Enviromapper - www.epa.gov/enviro/bf

PROJECT BACKGROUND:

Negative population growth and urban disinvestment have blighted the St. Joseph, Missouri community for decades. Owned by St. Joseph Power & Light Company from 1916-1980, the three-acre warehouse facility located in the heart of downtown St. Joseph symbolizes the area's downturn. Vehicle maintenance, storage, and distribution activities conducted on the property contributed to the onsite contamination. Heartland Foundation, committed to building healthier communities, chose to invest in this property in hopes of sparking revitalization in this distressed area. Using private donations, Heartland Foundation acquired this property in August 2004. Phase I Assessments funded by Heartland Foundation revealed petroleum, asbestos, volatile organic compounds (VOCs), and lead in the property's soil. Through the use of the EPA Brownfields Cleanup Grant and approximately \$55,000 in leveraged funding from Heartland Foundation, cleanup activities were completed in 2006.

KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

- Addressed petroleum, asbestos, VOCs, and lead contamination in the soil.
- Created a safe and unique environment to enhance community building, civic engagement, and leadership development among local area youth and adults.
- Created a national model for regional civic learning centers and community revitalization.

OUTCOME:

Heartland Foundation converted the former warehouse into emPowerU, which houses the emPower Plant, community meeting space, Foundation programs and offices. Doors officially opened on August 31, 2007. The emPower Plant program serves as the national pilot for civic education and training for young people with the capacity to reach more than 15,000 students per year. Middle school curriculum requires students to develop civic engagement skills in the technology-rich learning lab. This unique program is aimed at retaining the local population by implementing a dynamic, innovative curriculum of civic engagement to create more educational and employment opportunities in the region. Heartland Foundation's emPowerU has generated much excitement throughout the region, as it demonstrates how revitalizing a prominent physical asset for civic education can spur the renewal of an entire community and region.



Interior view of emPowerU.