



Centre County underutilized site inventory



Adaptive Re-Use Scenarios for Underutilized Sites

Options for Revitalization

What is an underutilized site?

Underutilized sites are locations that are within reach of available infrastructure and that have real or perceived barriers to reuse or rehabilitation.

These sites may include vacant land, vacant or underutilized buildings and brownfields. This inventory can include information of the physical characteristics of each site (acres, soil type, slope, etc.), availability of utilities, access to transportation facilities and the character of the surrounding community (land use, zoning, etc.).

Vacant land within

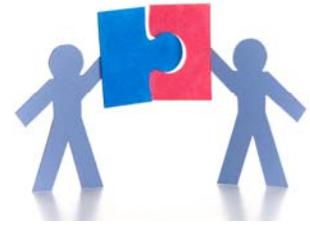
commercial, industrial, or mixed use zoning districts, of any acreage, is easier to identify and inventory by using sources such as the Centre County Tax Assessment Office’s *County Assessment Mass Appraisal* system (CAMA) and the GIS layer of tax parcels.

Vacant or underutilized buildings—where only a portion of the entire structure is occupied—are often more difficult to identify without performing community surveys and field verification. In central business districts, where the turnover of new businesses can vary

from town-to-town, keeping an updated list of commercial store fronts can be a daunting task.

Brownfield sites are abandoned or underused industrial and commercial facilities that are available for reuse. Expansion or redevelopment of a brownfield site may be complicated by real or perceived environment contamination (PA DEP N.D.).

For more information, visit the PA Department of Environmental Protection’s website at: <http://www.depweb.state.pa.us/>.



This document aims to help both municipalities and property owners understand what can be done with their underutilized properties so that they can suggest options to potential buyers.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- Underutilized site definition.....2
- Barriers to redevelopment.....3
- Adaptive reuse.....3
- Types of Adaptive Reuse.....4-10
 - Commercial to Commercial.....4
 - Commercial to Residential.....5
 - Industrial to Residential.....6
 - Industrial to Office/Community Center.....7
 - Industrial to Retail.....8
 - Retail to Retail.....9
 - Historic Preservation.....10
- Rehabilitation Steps.....11
- Design Example [611 Old 220, Boggs Twp.]12
- References.....13

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Barriers to redevelopment: Real or perceived?

Barriers to redevelopment, be they real or perceived, are the first hurdle or set of hurdles that must be overcome before a vacant or underutilized site can be reused or rehabilitated.

Real barriers are those that often involve regulatory issues such as zoning, lack of infrastructure, physical site factors, or in the case of brown fields, environmental contamination. Real barriers are usually cut-and-dry; they can either be fixed in the short- or long term, or in the worst case scenario, they may never be resolved. Real barriers can also be lack of development funds, lack of community support, or

total opposition to redevelopment by an individual or group. Not everyone is necessarily 'on board' with redevelopment projects.

Perceived barriers, however, involve social and psychological blockades based often times on misinformation or misleading information regarding a site.

Perceived barriers may be what has been widely accepted as fact regarding an underutilized site by community members when in fact the complete opposite is true.

Perceived barriers, when further investigated, become real barriers.

For example, an industrial site thought to have high levels of

contamination levels may have low levels that can be cleaned up for a fraction of the original estimated cost.

A commercial store front with a high turnover of tenants may have been perceived as having high rent or a slum landlord when in fact the store front was not visible to customers due to poor signage. A new, well lit sign hung out front soon attracted new customers.



The former Post Office in Punxsutawney, PA, was converted into a museum. (Punxsutawney Area CC N.D.)

Adaptive Reuse

Adaptive reuse is the process of adapting old structures for purposes other than those initially intended.

When the original use of a structure changes or is no longer required, as with

older buildings from the industrial revolution, architects can change the primary function of the structure, while retaining some of the existing architectural details that make the building unique.

In local communities, unused schools or Post Office buildings have been adapted for reuse as retail stores or offices.



The Cadillac Building in Bellefonte, PA, after the December 2009 fire. The structure was inspected and weight-bearing walls stabilized so that site clean up could begin. (Centre Daily Times N.D.)

Rehabilitation

Rehabilitating structures is the process of stabilizing and upgrading so the structure can be reused.

This process entails that permanent changes to the structure not only follow local construction codes but historic preservation

guidelines may also exist. Structures listed on the National Register of Historic Places will have certain planning phases throughout the process.

Local historic boards may also take an interest in the adaptive reuse and

rehabilitation processes. The end use and façade should not only reflect unique architectural details but should compliment surrounding uses.

Commercial to Commercial

General Example

The Getty Gas Station in Long Island City is in a commercial district which connects an older, industrial district with a newer, residential district. The planned adaptive use of the service station into the Long Island City Bakery first made headlines in 2009. Construction began on the bakery in the summer of 2010. Fuel will still be sold at this location. The lead architects on the project, the Office for Design and Architecture of New York City, explained that the service station's open floor plan, the area where the garage is, offers adequate space in which interior walls can be constructed. The adaptive reuse project of the Getty Gas Station is estimated to cost \$1.4 million.



Local Example

In the 1980s, the property at 202 North Water Street in Bellefonte Borough was an automobile repair shop and inspection station. The building was purchased in the 1990s and converted into Maria's Italian Restaurant. The building underwent several exterior and interior upgrades in the past decade. In this scenario, environmental remediation for underground fuel storage tanks was not necessary because the garage did not sell gasoline like many of its competitors.



Commercial to Residential

General Example

Memphis, Tennessee's old Keathley Pie Factory in its Cooper-Young District, offers mid-town living with downtown flair. It is close to many shopping and dining options.

There are four different floor plans ranging from 750-1,000 square feet, which are adorned with many modern touches and sleek design. It is with hope that this apartment complex will help further the development of this historic neighborhood and provide a modern living option to those who like the historic charm of the surrounding neighborhood.



(Raspberry CRE 2011)



(Raspberry CRE 2011)

Local Example

In 2000, the former Lime Dust Tavern property at 188 Upper Coleville Road was purchased and converted into two apartments, one of which is handicap accessible. The property had been vacant for nearly 15 years. The building's structure was in relatively good condition however the exterior and landscaping were blighted. The conversion of the former commercial business to a multi-unit residence also brought much needed affordable housing to the Coleville area. This commercial reuse project is on a much smaller scale than one in an urban setting where former warehouse spaces are often converted in loft-style apartments. However, the landlord identified the housing needs in the neighborhood and made an investment which has benefited the local community. The same owner has retained the property since the year 2000, made much needed improvements to a delinquent building, and likely raised the property values of the surrounding homes.



Industrial to Residential

General Example

“Completed in 2006, this adaptive re-use project consists of 20 residential condominiums in the former Bernon Worsted Mill building, located in Woonsocket, RI. Abutting the Blackstone River, the units, featuring 14’ high ceilings, original wood floors, and arched windows, each ranging between 1200 and 2000 SF. Besides the units themselves, the project also features a new main entry lobby, egress stair, and elevator lobby, and covered parking area. The project, listed on the National Register of Historic Buildings, also required careful exterior design detailing to satisfy the State’s Historical Preservation and Heritage Commission requirements” (SPM Design 2009).



Local Example

Brockerhoff Mill in Benner Township, built by Henry Brockerhoff, was formerly a Grist Mill in the mid- 1800s. Today it is being renovated into apartments. The charm of the old brick building makes it appealing to apartment hunters who are looking for a little historic charm, but do not want to live in downtown Bellefonte. It is also located very near Spring Creek and Fisherman’s Paradise.



Industrial to Office/Community Center

General Example

The Bottleworks Ethnic Arts Center in Johnstown, PA is the former the Tulip Bottling Company. It is located in the Cambria City Historic District of the city, which is slowly becoming the arts district within the city. Its initial creation was a result of the growing interest in the vast array of ethnicities in the area and was used for the Johnstown Folkfest, which started in 1990. Today, its façade has been decorated with a new mosaic that reflects the history of the building and efforts of the community.



(Bottle Works N.D.)



(Daily American 2011)

Local Example

The former Pennsylvania Match Factory in Bellefonte is available for lease in the Waterfront Business District. Its location in downtown Bellefonte, allows for many reuse opportunities including dining, shopping, offices, studios, banks, and more. Tenants can lease from 3,000-18,000 square feet.

The location along the water gives it good aesthetic qualities for new tenants and the flexibility of square footage can be attributed to the open floor plan of the old factory.



(RE/MAX N.D.)



Industrial to Retail

General Example

Franklin Commons in Phoenixville, PA is a mixed used educational, recreational and corporate facility. The building is the town's old silk mill and manufacturing site. There is a total of 225,000 square feet and 200,000 of it is on one floor. The open floor plan of the large building allows parties interested in space to have it built to suit.

The most popular spaces in the building are the Franklin Bistro, the Franklin Conference Room, and Franklin Hall (perfect for receptions or parties).



(LoopNet, Inc. 2011)



(Franklin Commons 2009)

Local Example

Bellefonte Mill Complex

The **Old Bellefonte Silk Mill** served the industry from 1920-1938, and then was associated with the metals industry from 1939-1997. Today the Silk Mill is the perfect location for new waterfront shops and dining.



The **Gamble Mill Restaurant and Microbrewery** is located next to the Silk Mill building. Its former use was a grist mill, and it has been a restaurant since the mid-1980s. Today the restaurant also hosts banquets, parties, and receptions. The interior is very authentic looking, and has a casual and historical character.



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Retail to Retail

General Example

The former G.C. Murphy Department Store Number 130 in Bedford, PA is now an art gallery and antique store; Founders Crossing. It has 20,000 square feet of shopping space over two floors. It also has an Eatery with gourmet salads and sandwiches. Since 1992, it has been the home of over 145 different artisan and antique merchants.



Local Example

Tussey Mountain Outfitters occupies the warehouse space at the former Centre Oil and Gas Company on West Linn Street in Bellefonte. The warehouse space was converted easily into a retail space for kayak and canoe rental. The large garage door offers easy access for customers and clients, and the open floor plan allows the retailer to modify the sales displays as needed. The building is also located next to Spring Creek where Tussey Mountain Outfitters constructed a slalom course and offer on-site kayak and canoeing courses. The multi-unit building is utilized by several other businesses, most of which use office space.



Historic Preservation

General Example

The Lewisburg Hotel was first established in 1834 in downtown Lewisburg, PA. Generations of travelers have used this hotel since its establishment, which can be attributed to its close proximity to the PA Canal, the old East-West Turnpike, and two major rail lines.

It was closed from 1992-1997, and was then bought and refurbished into what it is today. Both its interior and exterior reflect its Victorian roots. It functions as a hotel, restaurant, and venue for various events.

Images: Lewisburg Hotel



Local Example

Adaptive reuse is a great tool for historic preservation. At left, the Bellefonte Historic Railroad Station was converted into the visitors' center. The structure has become an icon in Talleyrand Park and its restoration is a prime example of adaptive reuse for historic preservation. Not to fall behind in the times, the Bellefonte Inter Valley Area Chamber of Commerce installed free wireless internet service into the train station in 2008 so that residents and visitors could use the Internet while enjoying Talleyrand Park.



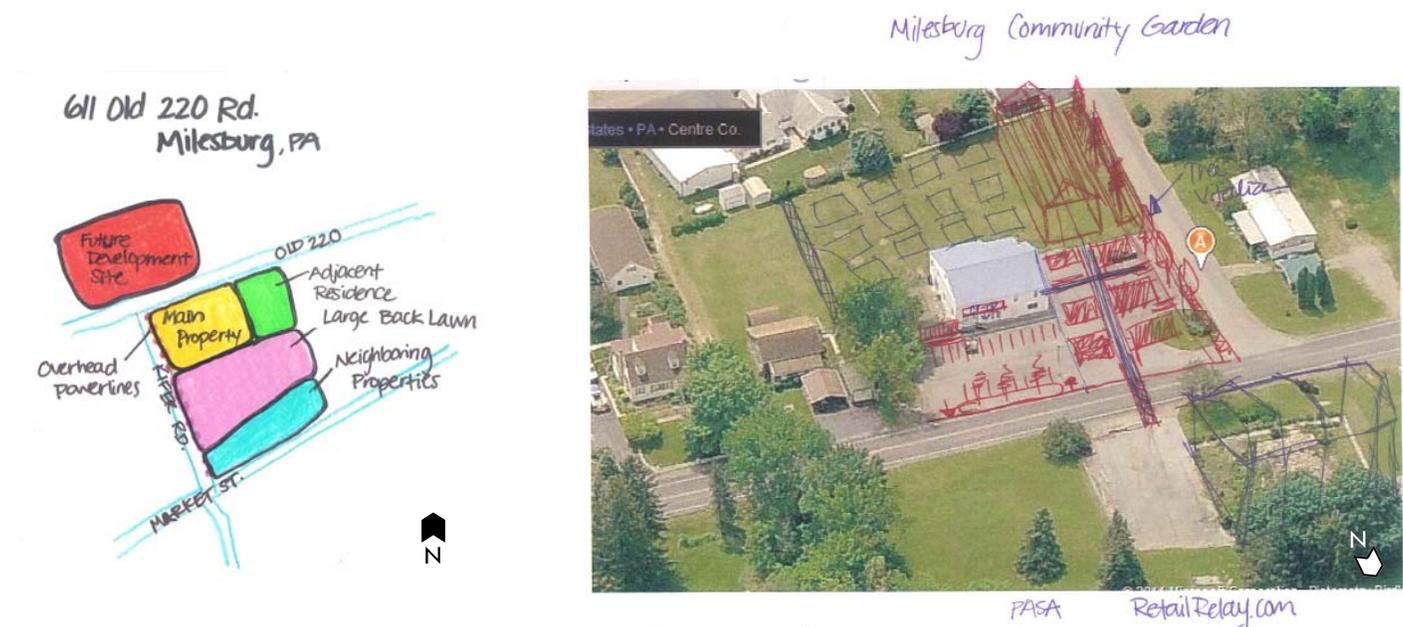
Rehabilitation Steps: The Process of Design

In rehabilitating an underutilized site or building, there is a process that is used by many contractors and designers that will help produce the best outcome. The process of rehabilitation and design is often almost as important as the final product, and can lead you to conclusions that would have otherwise been overlooked. The process is simply summed up by the following:

- Site Selection
- Site Analysis
 - Climate-Including Solar orientation and wind patterns
 - Measurements— Both indoors and outdoors.
 - Discrepancies/Amenities-What essentials are missing? What does it have that needs to be kept or that is valuable?
 - Views— Views of the outdoors from the indoors, façades, outdoor view of building
 - Photos
 - Location
 - Utilities-Overhead and underground
- Research— Historical information as well as precedent examples for new renovations
- Preliminary Designs and Ideas
- Final Design
 - Details
 - Costs
 - Materials
 - Phasing

611 Old 220, Boggs Township— Site Analysis

Analysis to Concept [Refined concept to follow on next page]



611 Old 220, Boggs Township



This property in Milesburg was a former garage that was turned into a daycare on the first floor and apartments on the second floor. It is no longer in operation, but, seeing its simple structure and amount of land surrounding it, it has the potential to become a community or regional cooperative organization.

A Co-op is an organization that is owned and run by a group of individuals for mutual benefit. They are meant to serve as a place that meets economic, cultural, and social needs (Wikipedia 2011). This type of co-op would be retail based and centered on the food economy. It could serve the immediate community or be used as a distribution center for the larger region.

The proposal is merely a concept for building and land use, and would require further consideration of local zoning and land development ordinances.



Milesburg Co-op Concept Precedents:



If a **neighborhood cooperative**, or even a **regional cooperative** were based out of this location in Milesburg, it could provide locals and the region with fresh produce and other goods for a low cost.



Community garden plots can be farmed by the Co-op or rented by members of the community who can sell their produce to the Co-op who will re-sell it or use it to make items on a Co-op café menu.



Trellises can not only be used to **provide a screen** from the street, but also to grow more plants on (i.e. fruits or vegetables). It is more aesthetically pleasing than a solid wall and will have a function.



Planting a small amount of **fruit trees** in the back of the property adds some shade and verticality to the currently open and exposed site.



An **improved and sustainable streetscape** will make the site more appealing and the water collected in **roadside swales** can be used to water the plants in the community garden. **Street trees** will also enhance the streetscape and will need to mind overhead wires.



Greenhouses or hoop houses will be useful for food production in the winter. Since the site is small, it will be easy to get water to the plants in the greenhouse. They can be used for flower production in the summer.

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