



## Berry Lane Park- Jersey City Redevelopment Agency

Jersey City, New Jersey  
2017 Region 2 Winner

*Key Project Lesson: A strong vision, a broad and aligned team of stakeholders and funders and a strategic work plan incorporating best practices are essential for project excellence.*

### Overview

One of the most ambitious and complex open space projects to be undertaken in Jersey City's history, Berry Lane Park has transformed 14 acres of brownfields; former rail yards, junk yards, auto repair shops, and other 'dirty' industrial land uses - into a recreational centerpiece for the residents of one of the most underserved neighborhoods in the City, known as Bergen - Lafayette. The largest park owned by the City, its completion has resulted in a 12% increase in the City's open space and has led to transformational changes for the community.

The Berry Lane Park project is a lesson in citizen activism and strategic public-private partnerships. Residents of one of the most underserved and highest density neighborhoods in the United States had a vision to transform the blighted and abandoned brownfields around them into viable open space to improve the health, safety, and quality of life of the community. Since completion in June of 2016, thousands visit the park and enjoy its amenities weekly. In addition, the City's first segment of the Morris Canal Greenway, a statewide trail in the footprint of the historic Morris Canal, traverses the park and provides 1,900 linear feet of pedestrian and biking access.

The new park has provided an important catalyst for change in the Bergen – Lafayette community, spurring development of new mixed-use and affordable housing and commercial enterprises in a neighborhood that previously struggled to attract investment. The Berry Lane Park project has demonstrated a viable roadmap and best practices for brownfield financing techniques, land conservation, sustainable development and public policy initiatives which can be replicated in other areas of the United States.

### Featured Partners

- City of Jersey City
- Morris Canal Community Dev. Corp.
- Friends of Berry Lane Park
- BRS, Inc.
- Dresdner Robin
- WCD Group, LLC
- MAST Construction Services, Inc.
- PPG
- US EPA Region 2
- NJ Dep. of Environmental Protection
- Hudson County Economic Dev. Com.
- Hudson County
- NJ Economic Development Administration
- US HUD

## Primary Reason for Redevelopment

According to Census data, Jersey City's population density is over 17,000 people per square mile: a population density which is over 200 times the average population density in the U.S. A state formula used to calculate the proper apportionment of open space in New Jersey communities indicates that Jersey City should contain 356 acres of land dedicated to open space and recreational purposes. According to the City's Recreation and Open Space Master Plan (2007), the City currently maintains 120.76 acres of open space, indicating the need for an additional 235 acres.

## Approach

In the late 1990s, community members recognized that existing large tracts of vacant and underutilized brownfields could be combined to create one large park. With the help of a 1997 EPA Brownfield Pilot grant, this vision was memorialized with the adoption of the Morris Canal Redevelopment Plan in 1999. The City and the Jersey City Redevelopment Agency (JCRA) partnered with the Morris Canal Redevelopment Area Development Coalition in 2008 to hold a series of community design charettes and to keep the community informed throughout the project.

To assemble the land needed for the park, in 2007 the Agency began the process of acquiring 11 different "sites." Much of the land was vacant and underutilized. Former uses included abandoned rail yards, used car sales, junkyards, repair shops, vacant warehouses, and parking lots. The eleven sites were carefully assessed for environmental contamination over several years.

Remediation of the park occurred between 2012 and 2013 and involved hot spot removal and offsite disposal of tanks, PCBs and lead contaminated soil, along with the placement of a 2 foot thick soil cap across the entire site. Altogether, 210 cu yds of tires, 1,800 cu yds of debris, 49,095 tons of hexavalent chromium, and 19 underground storage tanks were removed. Approximately 1.2 million gallons of contaminated groundwater were captured and treated and over 100,000 tons of clean fill were brought onsite.

Construction of the park was done in phases, with the most significant beginning in 2015. It was opened to the public in June of 2016, three years after the completion of remediation. The three-year design and construction project moved rapidly because of effective public private partnerships, cooperation amongst all partners, and a strategic approach to the workplan and the use of resources.

## Innovative Techniques

Multi-modal Access: The site is adjacent to regional light rail and public bus stops. The Morris Canal Greenway, a statewide plan to construct a trail along the route of the former Morris Canal, traverses the park. The first segment of the Morris Canal Greenway constructed in Jersey City is located in Berry Lane Park.

Historic Context: The Morris Canal is on the NJ State and Federal Register for Historic Places. The JCRA worked closely with the State Historic Preservation Office and interested parties to design the park and incorporate historic features.

Financing Techniques: Project financing of \$38M involved over 40 sources, each with specific timeframes, loans, regulatory and matching fund requirements that were knitted together to maximize leverage.

Public - Private Partnership: An innovative cost sharing agreement with the responsible party, PPG, enabled the cleanup of both the chrome and non-chrome remediation with a single mobilization. This agreement provided a framework to integrate all of the required remediation with the park's construction.

Land Conservation: As part of funding agreements, a conservation deed restriction was placed on the property, ensuring its use as open space into perpetuity.

Sustainable Development: Sustainable elements include LED lighting, permeable pavers, native and drought tolerant plantings, nearly 700 newly planted trees and an expansive subsurface groundwater recharge area equal to 3.8 acre feet. This system captures and infiltrates 70% of a 100 year storm event, reducing overall stormwater discharge by 50%.

## **Challenges**

One of the biggest hurdles involved obtaining funding for what would become a \$38 million project. The JCRA secured over 40 different sources of funding from a variety of entities: government (federal, state, local), non-profit foundations, and private parties responsible for the contamination.

## **Benefits**

The park is “state of the art” and includes multiple athletic fields, basketball and tennis courts, a playground and splash pad water feature, a fitness course, a dog run, a picnic grove, a plaza with historic canal-related features, an outdoor amphitheater and a pedestrian/bikeway along the former Morris Canal.

Transforming over 14 acres of brownfields into a beautiful park has made the neighborhood a more desirable place to live. The park has also proven to be a catalyst for change in the neighborhood, with new mixed use and housing developments underway.



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<b>Project Address:</b>	1 Berry Road, Jersey City, NJ 07304
<b>Contact Person:</b>	Ben Delisle, Director of Development, JCRA
<b>Phone:</b>	201-761-0822
<b>Email Address:</b>	DelisleB@jcnj.org
<b>Names of Participants:</b>	City of Jersey City, Morris Canal Community Development Corporation, BRS, Inc., Dresdner Robin, MAST Construction Services, Inc. New Jersey DEP, PPG, EPA Region 2, WCD Group, LLC
<b>Number of Acres:</b>	14 acres of brownfields
<b>Former Uses:</b>	Morris Canal, railroad, junk yards, parking lots, auto repair, fuel storage, etc.
<b>Current Uses:</b>	Public Park and portion of the Morris Canal Greenway
<b>Former number/Types of jobs:</b>	businesses were located- no net job loss.
<b>New number/Types of jobs:</b>	Public Works Department – approximately 5
<b>Type of Site:</b>	Recreational and transit
<b>Regulatory Program:</b>	LSRP, USEPA
<b>List of Major Contaminants:</b>	Polyromantic hydrocarbons (PAHs), PCBs, heavy metals, historic fill, hexavalent chromium waste, 19 USTs
<b>Magnitude of Contamination:</b>	Extensive site-wide soil contamination
<b>Greatest Challenge(s):</b>	Scale of problem, site assemblage, financing
<b>Length of Time to Remediate Site:</b>	9 months active remediation, ongoing groundwater monitoring
<b>Primary Reason for Redevelopment:</b>	Elimination of slum and blight. Recreation and open space
<b>Years Abandoned or Challenged:</b>	Canal since 1924, other varies, in excess of 30 years
<b>Cleaned up under Consent Decree:</b>	Yes
<b>List of Financial Assistance:</b>	City of Jersey City, Hudson County Open Space Grant, NJ DEP Green Acres, EPA Brownfield Grants, EPA Revolving Loan Fund, NJDEP Hazardous Discharge Site Remediation Fund, NJDEP Trails Grant, HUD CDBG, NJEDA NCR Grant, Baseball Tomorrow Fund, PPG Environmental Trust
<b>Other Financial Techniques Utilized:</b>	Responsible Party cost share agreement.
<b>New Tax Revenues:</b>	Open Space use
<b>Community Outreach Activities:</b>	Since 1997, Morris Canal Redevelopment Corp, the City, and JCRA have joined to conduct outreach and inform the public
<b>Innovative Environmental Regulatory Techniques:</b>	Cost Share Agreement among JCRA, Responsible Party, and NJDEP.
<b>Innovative Remediation Techniques:</b>	Combined parcel remediation strategy
<b>Innovative Economic Development:</b>	park has spurred new housing development
<b>Land Conservation:</b>	Created 14+ acre green oasis in the heart of one of the most densely populated urban areas in the country
<b>Sustainable Development:</b>	Permeable pavers; 167,000 cubic feet storm water infiltration system, LED lighting, native planting, adjacent to mass transit
<b>Federal Partners:</b>	USEPA, USHUD