



## **Jimmy Johns Field** Utica, Michigan **2017 Community Impact Winner**

### ***Key Project Lesson:***

Jimmy John's Field is more than a baseball stadium. It is an outstanding example of what a successful public-private partnership (P3) for brownfield redevelopment can accomplish for a small, struggling community much in need of revitalization. While the stadium is a relatively small development, its impacts on the community have been monumental.

### **Overview**

The use of a public-private-partnership for redevelopment of a former unregulated municipal landfill into Jimmy John's Field represents a "game changer" in the world of community place-making. Jimmy John's Field celebrated its grand opening on Memorial Day 2016, and has already made a significant contribution to the revitalization of downtown Utica, a struggling community of only 4,800 residents. It has ended decades of neglect and failed developments on the site, addressed a 75-year-old environmental challenge, resulted in environmental restoration of the Clinton River and addition of new recreation opportunities, and is providing a catalyst for Utica to create common ground where people gather, businesses can thrive, and the community can access and enjoy its treasured natural resource, the Clinton River.

Jimmy John's Field occupies approximately 20 acres of land bisected by the Clinton River. The first known owner of the site was an individual who operated an unlicensed, unregulated municipal dump on the property from the 1950s to the 1970s. In 2003, the eastern parcel was sold to a developer of multi-family residences who attempted to construct condominiums on the site. However, the site was abandoned in 2007 before completion of the first building. The City reclaimed the property through tax foreclosure, and continues to own the property and lease it to the Jimmy John's Field developer.

This project is a classic example of a successful P3 with many public partners, including General Sports and Entertainment (GSE; the developer), the City of Utica (host community), Macomb County (host county), the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ), and Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC). Identifying, accessing, and coordinating ten public funding sources for \$6.7 million in brownfield redevelopment support was a major factor in the project's success. The partnership was enhanced by support from local private businesses who donated space in their facilities for project planning and public meetings and helped market the plan and drive more excitement for the new development.

The P3 team and private businesses worked hand in hand to creatively solve challenges, creating a redevelopment that significantly improved the social, environmental and economic conditions of the surrounding community. They did so by mitigating an environmental hazard; creating a vibrant sports/entertainment facility, community use areas, children's and community park spaces, a river walk, kayak launch, and river cleanup and habitat restoration; and catalyzing increased business activity in the city.

### **Featured Partners**

General Sports and Entertainment; City of Utica; US EPA; Michigan DEQ; Macomb County; SME

## Primary Reason for Redevelopment

General Sports and Entertainment (GSE) spent countless hours researching the best market for its “field of dreams,” a minor league baseball stadium. With plans to not only build a baseball stadium, but also to launch a new independent franchise of minor league baseball, they needed a site that offered more than just space. They needed the community, the culture, and environment that would not only support the economic development, but would embrace the mission and ensure its success. GSE found that community support, in everything from infrastructure to enthusiasm, in the City of Utica and throughout Macomb County. The City needed the redevelopment to address an environmental hazard, attract visitors, provide recreational opportunities for its residents, add to its tax base, stimulate increased business activity, and restore a treasured natural feature.

## Approach

The P3 team was created to tackle the huge challenges of building the project on an abandoned municipal dump site, cleaning and restoring the adjoining river, enhancing the community, and identifying and acquiring the brownfield funding needed to make it all happen. Through positive collaboration and partnerships, the team leveraged brownfield funding from government at all levels – City of Utica, Macomb County, Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ), and the USEPA. In total, the P3 team secured \$3 million in brownfield grant funding to address environmental response measures and constructability challenges associated with the landfill. During the 2015-2016 construction period, contractors installed methane gas mitigation systems, engineering controls to mitigate exposures to underlying waste material, and waste stabilization systems. An abandoned, 27,000 cubic-yard waste pile was also transported a licensed landfill.

The P3 team also secured another \$3.7 million in grants from the USEPA, MDEQ, Michigan Economic Development Corporation, U.S. Department of Transportation, and U.S. Forest Service for cleanup and restoration of the adjoining Clinton River, construction of a river walk and regional trail connections, and construction of a riverside park and other community recreational features.

## Innovative Techniques

**Economic Development:** The most innovative economic development elements of the project were:

- the vision and willingness, by a developer and small city, to consider such a large-scale (relative to the community size), non-traditional development on a non-traditional site, and
- the audacity and tenacity to believe that a successful, multi-party P3 team could be created to turn the vision into a reality.

**Project Economics:** The project required creation of an innovative, multi-faceted P3 team to develop and execute the complex financing strategy for the project. Over \$6.5 million was needed to make the project economically feasible and support added community benefits. The P3 team had to spend many weeks creatively identifying and matching possible funding sources to eligible elements of the project then applying to the various funding sources and complying with the source restrictions in allocating the funds to the appropriate project components and activities. The P3 ultimately secured the needed funding from ten local, state, and federal sources.

**Landfill Construction:** Removal of municipal wastes prior to construction was not economically feasible, so the project team had to develop innovative approaches for constructing the stadium over the landfill with no waste removal. Over 15,000 cubic yards of waste were relocated on site, special foundations were designed to support the stadium and field, and methane mitigation systems were used to protect enclosed spaces from high concentrations of landfill gas. The project components were designed to encapsulate remaining wastes and mitigate contaminant risks to human health and the environment.

**Enhancing the Community and Environment:** The project was designed not only to create a baseball stadium, but to incorporate complementary development to enhance the community and improve the environment. These included allowing the City use of the stadium complex for community events, restoring and improving the Clinton River and associated habitat, creating connections to regional hike

and bike trails, and adding parks and other recreational facilities for the citizens of Utica, Macomb County, and Southeast Michigan.

## Challenges

The successful completion of the project was dependent on the Project Team overcoming the challenges summarized below using the innovative techniques described above:

**CHALLENGE 1: Building a Public Private Partnership.** The success of the project depended on creating a multi-disciplinary public private partnership to rally public support, identify and obtain needed financial incentives, design the project components, and obtain necessary design/construction and regulatory approvals and that had the foresight and perseverance to ensure its successful completion.

**CHALLENGE 2: The Site.** The site was a 20-acre former municipal waste landfill on the banks of the Clinton River. Over 450,000 cubic yards of waste was present to depths of over 20 feet, and a 27,000 cubic-yard pile of excavated waste had been left by a previous developer. Methane was present at levels up to 40% by volume in soil gas, and other organic and inorganic contaminants posed a threat to human health. The project design had to account for supporting structures on unconsolidated waste, the need for grade changes of over 10 feet with no waste removal from the site, protection against methane intrusion, disposal of a 27,000 cubic-yard waste pile, and stabilizing existing waste and preventing waste migration into the river, all in an efficient and affordable manner while preparing to manage the unknown conditions they would find under the waste.

**CHALLENGE 3: Enhancing the Community and Environment.** The landfill wastes had migrated into the river and posed significant health risks to the community. The community and developer wanted a multi-purpose project to not only create a sports destination, but mitigate human and environmental threats, provide additional recreational and community event opportunities, clean and enhance the City's primary natural feature (the Clinton River), and provide opportunities to enjoy the local and regional natural environment.

## Benefits

Jimmy John's Field is more than a baseball stadium. It is the catalyst the community needed to begin a much needed revitalization. While the stadium is a relatively small development, its impacts on the community have been monumental. In addition to restoring and protecting the Clinton River and bringing a state-of-the-art baseball stadium to the city, Jimmy John's Field has provided:

- a unique opportunity for partnership between public and private entities,
- community-building use of the stadium for private and charity events,
- a children's playground and whiffle ball park,
- a sustainable shared-use parking lot,
- a new park and kayak launching facility,
- a connection to downtown Utica that has spurred the development of several new businesses, and
- tourism, which is a new industry for the City.

### Before – Unregulated Municipal Landfill



### After – Celebrated Community Asset

<b>Project Address:</b>	7171 Auburn Road, Utica, MI 48317
<b>Contact Person:</b>	Andy Appleby
<b>Phone:</b>	248-601-2200
<b>Email Address:</b>	appleby@generalsports.com
<b>Names of Participants:</b>	GSE, US EPA, Michigan DEQ, Macomb County, City of Utica, SME, Frank Rewold and Son, Inc., Pendulum Studios, Peter Basso Associates, Inc., Livingston Engineering, HRC
<b>Number of Acres:</b>	20 acres
<b>Former Uses:</b>	Unregulated municipal landfill
<b>Current Uses:</b>	Baseball field, community playground, kayak launch
<b>Former number/Types of jobs:</b>	0
<b>New number/Types of jobs:</b>	20 full-time, 400 part-time
<b>Type of Site:</b>	Former unregulated municipal waste landfill (Dump)
<b>Regulatory Program:</b>	State contaminated site management program; exempt from waste management regulations
<b>List of Major Contaminants:</b>	Methane, volatile organic compounds (VOCs), semi-VOCs, arsenic, barium, copper, lead, hexavalent chromium, cyanide, mercury, selenium, silver, and zinc
<b>Magnitude of Contamination:</b>	More than 420,000 cubic yards of contaminated municipal waste material; explosive levels of methane gas
<b>Greatest Challenge(s):</b>	How to build on a municipal dump; managing the physical and environmental threats; acquiring and coordinating needed project funding
<b>Length of Time to Remediate Site:</b>	1 year, 10 months
<b>Primary Reason for Redevelopment:</b>	Suitability of site, location and community support, culture and environment for the development and community need for economic growth.
<b>Years Abandoned or Challenged:</b>	75 years
<b>Cleaned up under Consent Decree:</b>	No
<b>List of Financial Assistance:</b>	USEPA Brownfield RLF Grant; Michigan CMI, SWQIF, Site Reclamation, and CRP Brownfield Grants; SAFETEA-LU, MDEQ Emergency Response Fund Grant, EPA Great Lakes Restoration Fund, City of Utica DDA Grant, , US Forest Service Great Lake Restoration Initiative Grant
<b>Other Financial Techniques Utilized:</b>	Public-Private Partnership (P3)
<b>New Tax Revenues:</b>	Unknown
<b>Community Outreach Activities:</b>	Public meetings and updates, groundbreaking ceremony
<b>Innovative Environmental Regulatory Techniques:</b>	Obtained exemption from waste management regulations, which allowed on-site relocation
<b>Innovative Remediation Techniques:</b>	Project was designed to consolidate and encapsulate of wastes with no off-site disposal of construction waste
<b>Innovative Economic Development:</b>	Large sports complex and river recreation improvements in a small town created economic benefits through a new source – tourism, increased tax base to fund economic development, and stimulation of existing and newly created businesses
<b>Land Conservation:</b>	Local riverwalk, regional trail connections, river restoration, community playground, kayak launch
<b>Sustainable Development:</b>	Construction on a landfill leaving all waste in place
<b>Federal Partners:</b>	US EPA