



Publication

Palouse, Washington: A small town takes big action on brownfields-

Technical Expert [Sarah Sieloff](#) has published a brownfield remediation success story from the town of Palouse – population 1,015 – in Washington state. The story of the brownfield site, which unfolded over nearly 150 years, illustrates the community benefit made possible when many stakeholders and sources of public funding successfully come together.–

In her article “[Palouse, Washington: A Small Town Takes Big Action on Brownfields](#)” published on July 1 in the [International City/County Management Association's Public Management Magazine](#), Sarah describes how a contaminated riverfront site evolved into commercial space that now houses a busy local brewery and veterinary clinic. Sarah, who, along with others at Haley & Aldrich, frequently advises clients on grant support services, concludes that the redevelopment in Palouse succeeded in large part because the city accessed state and federal grant funding repeatedly and creatively.–

The site in Palouse began life as a blacksmith shop and livery operation shortly after the town's founding in 1874. It then changed hands to become a welding shop, followed by a Conoco service station, then an agricultural supply operation that declared bankruptcy in 1985. With evidence that Conoco's storage tanks leaked into the river – including eyewitness reports of an oil slick on the water – and of other historical contamination, the [Washington Department of Ecology](#) removed all regulated storage tanks by 1992.–

Then, as Sarah writes, the site, “like so many other contaminated properties, sat. Around it, economic dislocation continued apace. Sure, people still needed to come downtown to collect mail, pick up groceries, or pay their taxes, but

Main Street was a shadow of its former self.”-

Efforts to make the site a part of the town’s recovery – rather than part of its blight – began in earnest when Palouse’s local government successfully petitioned for two Environmental Protection Agency [targeted brownfields assessments](#) in the mid-2000s. Those assessments revealed the nature and extent of the site’s contamination and made it possible for [remediation](#) to proceed with a complex combination of state, county, and city funding sources and initiatives.–

A local development team purchased the site in 2019. The vet office opened in 2022 and the brewery in early 2023, setting off a surge of renewal. “It has taken years of focused, patient work to get here, but Palouse’s Main Street now has four new businesses housed in three buildings, two of which are new and one of which was previously vacant for years,” writes Sarah.–

[Read the full article.](#)–