# Case Study of Russellville Fire Station

## Keys to Success

- Project Description
- Economic Value
- Challenges & Advice
- Benefits
- Stewardship Meaning

The old Russellville fire station was so small and inadequate that the fire trucks could not be pulled entirely out of their bays to be washed without sitting in the street, creating traffic issues. City officials considered various properties for a new station, settling on the site of a former car dealership, which closed at the end of the 1980s. After the dealership closed, PCBs, left from a processing plant that was on-site in the 1950s, were found in the Town Branch (a stream running through the property), which led to a $10 million settlement for remediation and a requirement to maintain a cap-in-place and monitor wells on the property forever. The building, which had been empty for years, was in terrible shape, had broken windows, a rotting wooden awning and was an eyesore. The site had become a brownfield.

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After the city received a Community Development Block Grant to renovate the structure, the building was gutted and an addition was made to accommodate a modern, energy-efficient kitchen and training room. A 2,000-gallon rain barrel, placed behind the building, is used to water the sod. Energy-efficient heating and a three-hour firewall were other improvements made to the structure, which was renovated to LEED standards, although money was not spent to have it certified.

The previous property owner donated the property, including the fields behind the building, to the city for its new fire station. The fields have been converted into a sports complex and wetlands for the community. It was cost-effective to reuse the building rather than buy land to build a new facility, though the structure had to be gutted.

"It's easier to get people on board for a project if they see that you are trying to keep the costs down," says Kaye Simmons, grant writer for the city.

This was evident during the renovation when the firemen donated their time

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painting floors and saved $12,000. Before clean up and renovation, the property valuation administrator valued the property at $758,000. The current assessment is $1.5 million.

Though the property was given to the city, grant funds were needed to renovate the building. For the grant, it was necessary to write a comprehensive management plan. An ordinance prohibiting any new wells also had to be passed before the city could proceed with the project. Another requirement is that there can be no breaks in the pavement without testing.

Four miles of the creek had to be cleaned and the banks replaced. In the sports complex area, nearly 60,000 tons of clean fill dirt were hauled in to get the soccer field above the floodplain. In the building, the large doors to the eight bays would barely raise and lower, so new insulated doors with UV glass were purchased and installed.

The land behind the fire station is now a sports complex for the community.

Bill Pearson, the city building inspector, says there have been no complaints about the new station, and the community is proud of the transformation.

"This project was ideal for a community our size because people pitched in to help," says Mayor Mark Stratton.

The new station contains enough bays to accommodate all the fire trucks and equipment. The property has an extensive paved area in front for washing the fire trucks and generally fits the needs of the department. Behind the station, the sports complex provides turf and natural grass playing fields for the entire community to use, which benefits an even greater number of citizens. The wetlands, installed to help clean up the area, educate local high school science students about natural habitats.

"The station has made a world of difference," says Chief Billy Poole. "The old station was half this size.

New bay doors with UV glass cost no more than repairing the old ones.

The workout area had been in the bays where it was hot, and the training room was cramped. Now other fire departments and EMS units come here for training. The men are proud and love the new station."

Now the city has a fire station that is a model for other towns, the former eyesore is gone and a functional, sustainable building is in its place. The building was renovated according to LEED guidelines, making it more energy-efficient and cost-effective.

**Helpful Hint:** **The Division of Compliance Assistance offers training and resources for the redevelopment of brownfield properties. See dca.ky.gov/.**