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## Community and Economic Development in North Carolina and Beyond Blog: Charlotte's ReVenture Park: Sustainability-Focused Industrial Redevelopment

By CED Program Interns & Students

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Located on the western edge of Charlotte, ReVenture Park is an underutilized 667-acre industrially zoned area currently being redeveloped by a team led by Forsite Development. The long-term vision sees the site – once occupied by a textile dyeing operation – turned to a thriving hub for renewable energy projects, with ~600 acres of adjacent residential and mixed-use commercial development. Totalling nearly 1,300 acres, the heroic ReVenture Park project will serve as a case study for creative, sustainability-focused Brownfield and Superfund redevelopments throughout the United States.

### Contamination Lingo: Superfund Status

Contamination is a key consideration many redevelopments face during a project's lifecycle. Developers are often able to take advantage of incentives related to the productive redevelopment of contaminated sites. The CED in NC blog has featured a number of articles related to sites designated as Brownfields, which the EPA defines as contaminated sites where state and local organizations are involved in the clean-up and revitalization (see "Primer on Brownfields Redevelopment", "How to Use Federal and State Brownfields Programs to Accomplish a Community Revitalization Project" and "Brownfields Programs as a Revitalization Tool: NC Case Studies").

ReVenture is not only a designated Brownfields site, but was included on the Superfund National Priorities List, designating the site as a top federal and national priority for the Environmental Protection Agency. The Superfund designation indicates that the federal government is or plans to be involved in the clean-up effort, and is typically denotive of the highest level of complexity related to remediation.

### ReVenture History

ReVenture Park was home to textile dyeing operations dating back to 1935, which resulted in significant and pervasive contamination on the site. In 1985, the site was acquired by Clariant Corporation, and Clariant has spent upwards of \$40 million on remediation to date. In 2012, following years of joint effort among Forsite Development (who initially partnered with Clariant on a sale-leaseback of the former textile mill site), the EPA and North Carolina's Department of Environment and Natural Resources, the site was removed from the Superfund list, a key milestone as the project began shifting from clean-up to redevelopment and reuse.

### Creating Green Collar Jobs

Over recent years, intensifying global competition has put significant pressure on US-based manufacturing. Once-thriving manufacturing and industrial complexes and parks similar to the ReVenture site can be found across the United States, and, like ReVenture, the dormancy of these sites has come at the cost of manufacturing jobs.

The ReVenture team's economic development goals include creating "green collar" jobs through building ReVenture into a home for economically-viable renewable energy production and businesses focused on clean energy technologies, research and development. The current development pipeline of green projects includes the following:

- 5-megawatt biomass combined heat and power plant that will showcase cutting edge technology with substantially fewer emissions than traditional systems
- Redevelopment of 350,000 SF of existing industrial buildings to foster renewable energy, alternative fuel and recycling entrepreneurs
- Multiple renewable projects in various stages of negotiations and/or development, including a 4-megawatt solar project



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- Energy crop research demonstration with UNC Charlotte and NC State University
  - Single stream recycling facility
  - Bio-fuel production facility that will convert non-recyclable plastics into fuel
  - Biomass fuel drying

Once home to ~1,000 textile workers, ReVenture is well-positioned to generate both employment growth as well as sustainable infrastructure to benefit the region for decades to come. Beyond the business-focused benefits, ReVenture seeks to combine sustainable, educational, environmental and residential initiatives and intertwine environmental responsibility and sustainability into each of the diverse uses for the project's total 1,245 acres.

### Putting It All Together

The mix of uses for the project spans residential, office, retail and industrial and will create one of the most unique eco-industrial parks in the country. Forsite Development is keenly focused on maximizing green space and leveraging the outdoor natural environment, with approximately 2.5 miles of water frontage along the Catawba River and Long Creek. The area is subject to a 175-acre conservation easement, which Forsite is expanding to create additional greenway areas, open space and protected natural areas.

Approximately half of the total acreage will be dedicated to residential, office and commercial uses. This mixed-use eco-district will incorporate cutting-edge sustainability building and design concepts, all while maximizing green space. This will create an altogether transformative and unique experience for those looking to live in the approximately 3,000 dwellings currently planned for the eco-district. Finally, the Carolina Thread Trail will connect the eco-district to the US National Whitewater Center, allowing folks who live around ReVenture to conveniently take advantage of the myriad wildlife and outdoor offerings.

### Closing Thoughts

ReVenture Park is a project of truly titanic scope: nearly 1,300 acres, significant environmental concerns and contamination, multiple public and private stakeholders, involvement at both the federal and local government levels and a capital requirement projected to be approximately \$900 million to bring the full vision to fruition. However, ReVenture's success – both to date and future – will serve as a valuable case study and playbook for hundreds of communities across the country facing environmental concerns related to dormant industrial center sites.

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