



BUICK BUILDING REC TO TECH

Brownfield Catalyst Case Study

November 2019

History of Mobile

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History of Mobile

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- ▣ Explored in 1519 by the Spanish and settled in 1559 but abandoned after hurricane
- ▣ Settled by French in 1702
- ▣ Later served as the temporary Capital of British West Florida
- ▣ Became an American City in 1813

History of Mobile

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- ▣ Oldest port in the region
- ▣ Became one of the nation's multicultural cities
- ▣ Site of the last slave ship to enter the US.
- ▣ Original home to Mardi Gras

Economy of Mobile

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Economy of Mobile

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- ▣ Grew to be one of the nation's largest deep water ports
- ▣ Port boomed from cotton and timber imports
- ▣ Became a significant ship building center during World War II era.
- ▣ Home to Brookley Field Air Base

Economic Impacts

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- ▣ Closure of Brookley Field
- ▣ Hurricanes Ivan and Katrina
- ▣ Closure of nearby International Paper Plant
- ▣ Closure of Cruise Line Terminal
- ▣ Financial crisis of 2008

Economic Statistics in 2008

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- ▣ Poverty rate of 51%
- ▣ Unemployment rate of 8.1% compared to US rate of 3.7%
- ▣ Per Capita Income of \$12,394 compared to \$21,587 US income

Mobile's Brownfields Program

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Mobile's Brownfields Strategy



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- ▣ Seek funding assistance from EPA's Brownfields Program
- ▣ Partner with EPA's TAB Program
- ▣ Prepare a Communitywide Assessment Grant
- ▣ Focus on downtown first (Hank Aaron Loop)
- ▣ Develop an inventory of sites

Mobile's Brownfields Strategy

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- ▣ Identify an area (Mobile's Auto Alley)
- ▣ Develop a vision for that area (Technology Corridor)
- ▣ Identify potential catalyst site

The Old Buick Building

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The Old Buick Building

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Site Characteristics

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- ▣ 40,000 sf building unoccupied for 13 years
- ▣ Placed on National Register of Historical Places
- ▣ Phase I ESA identified several Recognized Environmental Conditions (RECs)
- ▣ Phase II ESA identified PAHs in soil and some limited asbestos in building

Building Redevelopment

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- ▣ Developer (Rogers & Willard) decided to redevelop building due to relatively low environmental risk.
- ▣ Building was redeveloped into office building
- ▣ Three different companies initially moved in including Rogers & Willard (30 employees).
- ▣ Atlanta-based software development firm shifted its operations with 100 employees to building 2015

Catalyst Success!



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- ▣ Rogers & Willard also renovated adjacent building and property of former 1921-vintage Dodge Brothers Automobile
- ▣ Precision Engineers with 70 employees purchased and moved into this adjacent property and have expanded to over 100 employees.
- ▣ Thomas Roofing & Sheet Metal Company redeveloped site one block west

Catalyst Success!



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- ▣ ACE Engineering redeveloped adjoining site to southwest
- ▣ WheelerLofts Apartments redeveloped adjoining site to north
- ▣ Old Majestic Brewing Company redeveloped nearby
- ▣ Sixteen other similar projects are currently underway in Mobile

Economic Statistics Today

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- ▣ Poverty rate of 33.6%
- ▣ Unemployment rate of 2.5% compared to US rate of 4.1%
- ▣ Per Capita Income of \$20,528 compared to \$31,177 US income

Historical Photos

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After

2015 – Rural Sourcing Inc. (455 St. Louis) & Rogers & Willard Builders (451 St. Louis)



Before & After

Adjoining Neighbor to Northwest – Precision Engineering – 400 St. Louis



Before & After

Adjoining Southwest – ACE Engineering – 500 St. Michael



Adjoining North - Wheeler Lofts Apartments – 420 St. Louis Street



Before & After

One Block West – Thomas Roofing & Sheet Metal Company - 550 St. Louis



Before & After

Three Blocks West – 1. Old Mobile Antiques Gallery – 653 St. Louis (Brownfields Site)



2. Old Majestic Brewing Company – 656 St. Louis Street (former gasoline station)



Other Brownfields Efforts

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- ▣ Redevelopment of Brookley Field through Assessment Grant
- ▣ Assessment grant applied for targeting Africatown

