

# Brownfields

## Success Story

### St. Johnsbury Hardware Store Site

St. Johnsbury, Vt.

A former hardware store property in the heart of downtown St. Johnsbury has been redeveloped into the St. Johnsbury Distillery, which produces craft rum and other spirits, with plans to open a tasting room and event space in the summer of 2020. The advent of the COVID 19 pandemic changed the business plan, and the distillery at this successfully redeveloped brownfield is now also producing hand sanitizer to meet the growing demand for this product.

Sitting at 74 Eastern Avenue on one of St. Johnsbury downtown's main thoroughfares, the parcel was first developed for residential use in the late 1800's and continued as a luncheonette, various retail stores, and a room-for-rent business over the years. The existing wooden building was built in 1969 and was the site of the St. Johnsbury Hardware store from 1976 until its closing in 2016. The site is flanked on two sides by three nearby dry-cleaning establishments that operated since the 1940s, with one still in operation today. All three properties are currently listed by the state as hazardous waste sites due to releases of tetrachloroethene. These vapors resulted in gas contamination in the soil below the distillery building slab that presented a risk of vapor intrusion into the building. Thanks to the investment of almost \$14,000 in EPA Brownfields assessment funding by three of the project partners, the developer was able to get a firm handle on the extent of contamination and devise a cleanup plan that was affordable, consistent with their plans for the property, and protective of workers and future users of the site. The partner agencies providing these critical funds were Vermont DEC, Northeastern Vermont Development Association and Lamoille County Planning Commission.

### Response to COVID 19 Pandemic and the needs of the State of Vermont

St. Johnsbury Distillery uses locally sourced ingredients for its spirits. They make their own alcohol, a decision that put the distillery in the position to easily produce hand sanitizer. The distillery joins other Vermont distilleries in producing hand sanitizer mostly for the local market including those in need and first responders, in order to help stop community spread of the disease. The distillery is now filling contracts for agencies within the state government as well. The distillery is still producing its rum and fulfilling curbside orders, but hand sanitizer has become its main product during this unprecedented time.



#### EPA Grant Recipient:

2018 Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation Phase 1 Assessment - \$2,829

2018 Northeastern Vermont Development Association (NVDA)/Lamoille County Planning Commission Phase 2 Assessment - \$10,676

#### Other Funding:

2019 NVDA Regional Revolving Loan fund for equipment purchase - \$100,000

2019 VT Agency of Commerce and Community Development Downtown tax credit funding - \$103,000

#### Grant Type:

Assessment

#### Current Use:

Distillery and future Event Space

#### Former Use:

Retail



*"Opportunity Zones: helping to bring investment to distressed communities"*





**“As the planning and development organization for our 3-county region of VT, NVDA was excited for the opportunity to work with the Hughes family on their important redevelopment project. Having access to EPA Brownfields funding allowed us to assist the owners in assessing the environmental conditions and plan for a remediation within their redevelopment. Utilizing our revolving loan fund, we were also able to assist with equipment purchases. This public – private partnership has resulted in a successful redevelopment in the heart of St. Johnsbury. St. Johnsbury Distillery will become an important destination that benefits other businesses in the downtown.”**

**Dave Snedeker, Executive Director  
NVDA**

**For more information:**

Visit the EPA Brownfields website at [www.epa.gov/brownfields](http://www.epa.gov/brownfields) or contact Christine Beling at 617-918-1792 or [beling.christine@epa.gov](mailto:beling.christine@epa.gov)

## Today

The site has been transformed from a vacant storefront into a vital downtown business that is already beginning to spark economic development and employment in the area. An empty restaurant building next door was for rent without any takers for several years. A new restaurant is set to open there in the summer of 2020, improving the outside appearance of the property and noting the selection of their location to align with the recent Brownfield redevelopment.

Brendan Hughes, President St. Johnsbury Distillery states: “St. Johnsbury is a special place. Having the opportunity to grow up here has really molded me into the person I am today. I couldn’t think of a better place to move back to and be an active member of the community. St. Johnsbury Distillery was started with the mission to help promote the town and surrounding areas through economic and social growth. We are surrounded by a great team all determined by this same goal that makes me excited for the times ahead.”

