

Perry, Iowa: Former Petroleum UST Site Rejuvenated with New Community College

Perry is a small rural Iowa town that has been bucking the trends. While many rural Iowa communities have lost population over the last 10 years, Perry's population has grown by 18%. Perry has worked hard to ensure that its downtown business district remains viable. Over the last decade a historic hotel was restored, a network of recreational trails was established on former railroad property, municipal offices were relocated into a historic building, and a historic downtown district was established. However, much of the city's center still has vacant and underutilized buildings. The City of Perry has continued to work to acquire many of these properties to revitalize, enhancing Perry's viability and growth.

The City was considering potential locations for a new community college. The Des Moines Area Community College (DMACC) sought to build a new facility in Perry that would partner with area high schools, and offer college and adult educational opportunities. The City of Perry would select and acquire the properties, and DMACC would construct the buildings. The selected properties had once included an automotive service garage, warehouse, and railroad right-of-way. The City sought assistance from the US EPA's Brownfield 104(k) Environmental Assessment Grant Program for environmental due diligence before obtaining the properties. While historic property uses were noted, signs of contamination were not. Perry acquired the selected properties, and DMACC began construction in July 2010.



Many abandoned and underutilized brownfield sites border the City of Perry's historic downtown district.

During excavation for new footings, workers found an abandoned UST and construction stopped. The City contacted the Iowa Brownfield Redevelopment Program at the Iowa DNR for technical and financial assistance in order to ensure that the UST was properly removed and conditions evaluated. Within 48 hours the DNR Brownfield Program was able to provide funding to the City for UST removal and site assessment.



Discovery of an abandoned UST halts work on the new college campus.

The DMACC construction project got back on schedule, and opened in the fall of 2011. This 15,000 square foot, \$3.6 million project was funded in part by a State of Iowa I-Jobs program, the City of Perry, and area economic development and industrial alliances.

The economic impact of temporary construction jobs created by this project was greater than \$1.5 million in wages over the 18-month construction period, with an annual payroll of more than \$400,000 for college campus operations. This new community college continues to build on Perry's efforts to reinvigorate its historic downtown district and promotes "infill" development of previously developed and underutilized properties.



This \$3.6 million, 15,000 square foot community college campus opened in 2011.

DMACC at Perry VanKirk Career Academy, 1011 2nd Street, Perry, Iowa
Parcel Number - 02-10-351-022
2014-Assessed value after adjustments - \$1,685,130