

# Dept. of Natural Resources: City Of Watertown receives EPA Region 5 Brownfields Success Award

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**MADISON, Wis.** – The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) celebrates the city of Watertown, Wisconsin for receiving the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Region 5 Brownfields Success Award.

The DNR nominated the city of Watertown in April 2023, and the award was presented to the city on Aug. 8, 2023, during the U.S. EPA Region 5 Open House at the National Brownfields Training Conference in Detroit, Michigan.

The award celebrates the Bentzin Family Town Square brownfield redevelopment project, an anchor for the community's downtown corridor. Watertown used funding for the project from the DNR's [Wisconsin Assessment Monies \(WAM\) program](#) and [Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Grant](#), along with over \$2 million in additional funding from other sources.

Watertown city officials wrote in their 2022 Impact Report that this investment in redevelopment "has already paid dividends by increasing downtown activity, opening doors to more employment opportunities and encouraging other business owners to update their properties."

The Bentzin Family Town Square, a one-acre property located at 1 W Main St., formerly housed a hair salon, pharmacy, restaurant, karate studio, and the printing press and offices of the local newspaper. Environmental investigations identified petroleum-contaminated soil prior to cleanup and demolition. After almost a decade of planning, the official ribbon cutting for the Bentzin Family Town Square was held in May 2023.

The town square was designed to be an open, inviting and beautiful space that provides a central place for community activities and gatherings for guests of all ages and abilities.

The town square also provides a portal to the Rock River with an accessible boat and kayak launch, celebrates the unique and rich history of the city with a regionally produced art installation, and promotes tourism and community activity with a plaza for music performances, markets and food trucks. In addition, the town square offers activities for kids with a splash pad and interactive water art piece. It also connects the library to the downtown corridor with a new central entrance and “front porch” leading directly to the town square.

The DNR has a wide range of financial and liability tools available to help local governments, businesses, lenders and others clean up and redevelop brownfields in Wisconsin. Tools include [Ready for Reuse](#) financial awards, which may be used for environmental cleanup, and the [Wisconsin Assessment Monies \(WAM\) Program](#), which partners with communities to help clean up and redevelop run-down or underused properties that detract from a community’s potential.

DNR staff around the state are available to meet with community leaders to discuss brownfield projects through [Green Team](#) meetings or offer technical assistance to private entities.

More information about the DNR’s brownfield cleanup programs and services is available on the [DNR’s brownfield webpage](#). More redevelopment success stories around the state of Wisconsin are featured on the [Wisconsin Brownfield Success Stories map](#).